

**Home from home or a melting pot? The impact first-year university
accommodation has on students' university and post-university
experiences.**

Helen Meek, BSc (Hons), MA

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Lancaster University

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Abstract

Home from home or a melting pot? The impact first-year university accommodation has on students' university and post-university experiences.

Helen Meek

Despite numerous studies exploring student accommodation (SA) and students' transition to university there is a lack of focus on the impact of the allocation of SA and resulting 'housemates' on students' experience both at university and post-university.

This study explores students' experiences of SA, with a particular focus on the impact of SA on their networks and social capital, not only at university but also post-graduation. The theoretical framework draws on Bourdieu's 'thinking tools' of habitus and forms of capital along with a discussion of the concepts of 'homophily' and 'propinquity' which influence network formation.

The research, a case study of Lancaster University, adopts a mixed-methods approach including an online questionnaire with 255 responses and 15 semi-structured interviews with Lancaster University undergraduate alumni.

Key findings revealed first-year shared university accommodation, particularly in relation to housemates, had a major impact on students' transition to university life, both positive and negative, and had a long-lasting impact post-graduation. First-year accommodation was a key site for making friends and developing social networks. Therefore, HEIs' allocation process is important because, due to the concept of propinquity, students were more likely to become friends with those living nearby. This provides HEIs with the opportunity, through their allocation process, to create households of diverse students to help facilitate social integration and enable students to connect with others they would not normally encounter. However, the research revealed many students were drawn to others they regarded as 'similar' based on the concept of homophily, and major differences can result in conflict. Networks based on first-year SA continued to be exceptionally valuable post-graduation

in terms of providing enduring friendships, partners and important sources of support. However, there was little evidence to suggest they were a particularly useful source of social capital in terms of seeking and finding employment, whereas familial social capital continued to be of primary importance.

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List of Abbreviations

BAME	Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic
EMA	Education Maintenance Allowance
FASS	Faculty of Social Sciences
FST	Faculty of Science and Technology
GDPR	General Data Protection Regulations
HE	Higher Education
HEI	Higher Education Institution
HEFCE	Higher Education Funding Council for England
HESA	Higher Education Statistics Agency
IMD	Index of Multiple Deprivation
LU	Lancaster University
LUMS	Lancaster University Management School
MMG	Maximum Maintenance Grant
NUS	National Union of Students
OFS	Office for Students
PIS	Participant Information Sheet
PBSA	Purpose Built Student Accommodation
RQ	Research Question
SA	Student Accommodation
TA	Thematic Analysis
UCCA	Universities Central Council on Admissions
UCL	University College London
UG	Undergraduate
US	United States

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Author's declaration:

This thesis results entirely from my own work and has not been offered previously for any other degree or diploma.

I confirm the word-length conforms to the permitted maximum.

Signature:

Helen Meek

Chapter 1: Introduction and Background

1.1 Introduction

Higher Education (HE) is often seen as 'offering the best way of addressing social inequalities and increasing social mobility' (Brown, 2016 p.viii). As far back as 1963 with the publication of the Robbins Report there was belief in the principle of equality of opportunity and 'equal academic awards for equal performance', that HE 'should eliminate artificial differences of status' (Committee on Higher Education, 1963 p.265) and everyone qualified should be offered a place in HE. However, equality of opportunity may not be the reality for many university students.

Ashwin argues the educational purpose of HE 'is to bring students into a transformational relationship to knowledge which changes their sense of who they are and what they can do in the world' (Ashwin, 2020 p.3). HE not only educates but also enhances students' employability and facilitates their personal growth. However, the purpose and reality of HE may be different due to ongoing inequalities.

Bourdieu's social reproduction theory suggests the education system perpetuates entrenched inequalities because it is socially and culturally biased towards dominant middle-class culture (Bourdieu and Passeron, 1990). Middle-class students are more likely to succeed than working-class students who lack the required cultural capital (Thomas, 2001). Cultural capital relates to social class and is 'the ability to act "cultured" by embodying the language, accents and mannerisms of the elites' (Biggart, 2002 p.278). Inequalities within education also exist with regard to race (Bhopal and Pitkin, 2020, Bhopal, 2024) and gender (Haywood and Mac an Ghail, 2013). Reay (2009) agrees existing inequalities are reproduced through education and therefore the desired transformation is not always achieved. The people we meet and friends we make at university may also influence our experiences.

The network of new university friends may reinforce class inequalities rather than breaking them down, as suggested by Brown: 'it is those with money, networks and cultural resources who are most able to stay in the competition and find ways of sustaining their privileged class location' (Brown, 2016 p.ix). An important source of new friendships and networks is first-year SA (Blimling, 2015), often meeting students with differing backgrounds, values and attitudes, which can also contribute to students' growth and sense of belonging.

The majority of UK students (82.6%) move out of the family home into either university or private accommodation to attend university (HESA, 2025b). This is despite over half of young people in the UK (55.8% in 2014/15) choosing to study locally and attend a university less than 55 miles away from their parental home (Donnelly and Gamsu, 2018). This tradition of UK students moving away from the family home to live and study is common in the UK, North America and China (Holton, 2020). However, in many other European countries and Australasia more students study locally and live in the family home (Whyte, 2019). Donnelly and Gamsu (2018) investigated the distance travelled by students to attend university and discovered significant differences between students of different social class, ethnicity and whether they attended state or private education. Students from disadvantaged groups were much less likely to move out of the family home to attend university. The report concluded student mobility 'is a major dimension of inequality within higher education choice and experience' (Donnelly and Gamsu, 2018 p.4).

Moving into shared accommodation either in university halls of residence or privately rented accommodation can be a significant step towards becoming a student, gaining independence and developing a greater sense of self (Cheeseman, 2017). This experience can have a profound effect on students' experiences both in the short term, such as adjusting to university life, mental health and wellbeing (Chow and Healey, 2008), and also the longer term, such as the network of friends developed and extent to which this influences life choices and post-university opportunities (McCabe, 2016).

Despite previous research into SA, there appears to be little research exploring the impact of first-year shared living, particularly housemates, on students' experiences, social networks and friendships post-graduation, especially the extent to which this experience may contribute to ongoing inequality or may have a transformational impact on students' lives.

1.2 Personal Motivation

As a lecturer at Lancaster University (LU) for over 22 years I observed the impact of first-year SA on students' experiences, from students meeting their best friends and enjoying every minute of shared living through to students feeling lonely or experiencing conflict or bullying and even those contemplating dropping out of university due to shared living experiences. Forty years ago, I left my parental home to study in Leeds and shared a flat with complete strangers who are now my closest friends. When I first commenced this thesis, one son had experienced the joy and pain of shared university living and two more were due to fly the nest and embark on university life. I appreciate the profound influence of this experience and was keen to explore this topic in greater depth.

1.3 Rationale for the Study

There has been a great deal of research exploring different aspects of SA such as living together in SA (Holton, 2016c, Holton, 2017), a comparison between students living at home and those in university accommodation (Holdsworth, 2006, 2009a, 2009b), student learning in residences (Blimling, 2015), strategies for shared living (Walker and Richter, 2008), issues relating to social inequality and the differing experiences of students from middle- and working-class backgrounds and the impact of 'race', culture, sexual orientation and gender (Taulke-Johnson, 2010, Mark and Harris, 2012). However, there appears to be little research focusing specifically on students moving out of the family home into university accommodation, in terms of their experiences of shared living and networks and the impact of these on their experience of university life and post-graduation.

A major benefit of studying at university is the opportunity to meet a diverse range of people from different cultures, countries and backgrounds (Tsuo, 2015). The level of diversity varies depending on the university as many UK HEIs are socially selective. Adjusting to student life and living away from home for the first time can be a stressful experience and being around like-minded people can help students settle into university life. This is the dilemma facing universities when allocating accommodation to new students. Should they match students with 'similar' students or should they 'mix up' students from different backgrounds to provide the opportunity to meet a diverse range of people and encourage students from different backgrounds and cultures to develop 'boundary-crossing friendships' (Hudson et al., 2023)? Rosenbaum (2018) investigated university policies on allocation of SA. The research revealed universities had different policies ranging from those who actively sought to provide 'balanced communities' to those allowing students to book rooms online and therefore being able to share with friends. In 2022/23 there were 720,205 (30.6%) non-UK students studying full-time in UK universities (HESA, 2022). These students come from diverse cultures with differing cuisines and lifestyles. These differing backgrounds and cultures could influence the extent to which students' experiences of shared accommodation are shaped.

If students are allocated rooms with friends or based on similarities, the principle of homophily (McPherson et al., 2001), living with others of the same nationality and/or background may provide security and safety in the familiar. This may be particularly important due to increasing numbers of students reporting poor mental health and wellbeing (UCAS, 2021). University students' mental health and wellbeing has come under the spotlight with high number of student suicides at Bristol University (Lightfoot, 2019) and a non-completion rate of 6.7% of first-year 'young' students in the UK in 2018/19 (HESA, 2019). Mental health concerns are regarded as a main driver to dropping out (Neves and Hewitt, 2021). However, students may miss out on the opportunity to encounter people from different backgrounds which may widen their horizons and help universities create diverse and inclusive communities (Mayhew et al.,

2016). By living and interacting with people 'like me' our position can become reinforced and our views and beliefs strengthened rather than challenged (McPherson et al., 2001). This may then reinforce existing types of social capital, 'the value that one gains from personal connections' (Biggart, 2002 p.278), rather than providing opportunities to meet people from diverse backgrounds 'not like me' and perhaps expand one's social capital. Bourdieu (2002) believes social capital contributes to reproduction of class inequality because the dominant middle-classes have greater access to contacts and use these to continue their dominance, for example by leveraging these contacts when looking for employment.

Rosenbaum (2018) stated 'The allocation of student accommodation is an important and long-lasting social force in Britain, but one which appears largely under-researched'. Universities play an important role in facilitating social mobility and it is concerning to think university policy on allocation of SA may have a profound and long-term effect on student mobility. Bradley acknowledged the allocation of SA 'is a difficult and neglected topic' (Rosenbaum, 2018).

According to Mayer and Puller (2008 p.329) 'universities are important venues for formation of social networks' and can have a significant impact on all areas of life. For example, a longitudinal study of medical students' networks found students' grades were influenced by their choice of friends (Woolf et al., 2012). SA is an important site for developing friendships (Blimling, 2015) and these friends may influence students, not only whilst studying, but perhaps long after graduation. HE aspires to provide all students with equal opportunities, particularly securing post-graduate employment. However, post-graduate opportunities may be influenced by who you know, as much as what you know, often referred to as the concept of the 'old boy (and girl) network' (Mayer and Puller, 2008). Securing suitable graduate level jobs is becoming increasingly difficult with approximately one-third (31%) of graduates not employed in graduate or high-skilled jobs (Anon, 2016) and therefore having personal contacts can help to facilitate employment. 'Friendship is important. Getting

your first job is often dependent on knowing the right people' (Bradley in Rosenbaum, 2018).

The purpose of this study is to investigate, using a Bourdieusian 'lens', the experiences of UK undergraduate alumni of LU, the case university, living in first-year university SA who graduated within the last 10 years. The research focuses on their experiences of living in first-year shared accommodation and its impact on their ability to adjust to university life and their experiences at university, particularly the impact of their housemates. The study also explores the extent to which people one meets in first-year accommodation influences one's social networks and acquisition of social capital not only at university, but also post-graduation.

1.4 Research Aim and Questions

The overall aim of this study was to explore how former UK undergraduates described their experiences of first-year university shared living and its impact on their university and post-graduation lives. To answer this broad research aim, the following specific research questions were developed:

1. To what extent does first-year SA impact on UK students' experience of university, particularly the impact of housemates?
2. To what extent do friends met in first-year SA, and other university friends, influence UK students' post-university life, particularly in terms of their networks and finding and securing employment?
3. How does first-year SA influence students' social capital and networks?

1.5 Research Approach

This exploratory study adopts a case study approach (Yin, 2014), based on LU, a campus-based collegial-style university. A mixed-methods approach (Schwandt, 2007), including quantitative and qualitative data, was used to provide a more in-depth understanding of, and 'more perspectives on the

phenomena being investigated' (Easterby-Smith, 2008 p.71). The quantitative data was collected via an online questionnaire exploring undergraduate alumni's experience of first-year SA and its impact on their experiences whilst at university and post-graduation. The sample consisted of LU UG alumni who graduated between 2010 and 2020 and lived and studied in the UK before attending university. Qualitative research was undertaken in the form of 15 semi-structured interviews with alumni. The interviews helped to 'build up a deep and rich picture' (Tight, 2017 p.167) of students' experiences.

1.6 Research Context and Background to the Case Study

Lancaster University, established in 1964, was one of the original 'plateglass universities' (Beloff, 1968) created to help 'open up and diversify higher education' (Domingo-Calabuig and Lizondo-Sevilla, 2020 p.98). This desire to expand HE to everybody rather than a privileged few was reflected in the university's motto 'Patet omnibus veritas' which translates to 'Truth Lies Open to All' (Lancaster University, 2025b). The campus-based university is in the North-West of England, 3-miles outside Lancaster. Over the last 60 years LU has grown into a research-intensive, selective and highly ranked global university (Lancaster University, 2025c). However, it is not part of the Russell Group which consists of 24 of the UK's most prestigious research-intensive universities (Russell Group, 2025). There are approximately 16,000 students based at the LU Bailrigg campus (Lancaster University, 2023b) from over 100 countries, 21.6% of which are black, Asian or ethnic minority, a growth of 5.1% over the past five years (Lancaster University, 2023a). The university also has international campuses and partnerships (Lancaster University, 2023a).

SA is a key part of LU's offering centred around their college system and designed to provide a more intimate environment in which to live and work (McClintock, 2011). The university owns and manages eight undergraduate colleges housing between 600-800 students each and a graduate college housing approximately 1,000 students. UG students are guaranteed on campus accommodation in first year if they firmly accept an offer (Lancaster University,

2025a). Most students choose to move off campus in their second year and live in Lancaster in shared privately rented accommodation with other students.

1.6.1 Undergraduate Student Accommodation Allocation Process

LU's website provides information on accommodation and explains the allocation process. Applicants are asked to express the college and room type they prefer along with whether they want catered or self-catered accommodation or single-gender accommodation. The university provides the opportunity for applicants to include additional information. The website states they do not use personality-style questions because they 'want to give everyone the chance to form friendships with people with differing interests, cultures and backgrounds. We believe that this makes us a truly diverse community' (Lancaster University, 2025d). The university states they try to place new students together to help adjust to university life. Students with a disability or impairment are encouraged to notify the university so suitable rooms can be found.

In May 2019 the Head of Accommodation at LU confirmed the process for allocating rooms was the same as on their website and confirmed lifestyle information, such as attitudes to socialising, is not collected. However, students can provide further information. It appears LU allocates places to ensure a balance of nationality and gender and then places are allocated randomly.

1.7 Significance of Study

Despite numerous studies exploring students' transition to university there appears to be little attention given to the impact the allocation of SA and resulting 'housemates' has on students' experience both at university and later in post-university life. This study will be of significance as it will contribute to our understanding of how experiences of shared living of first-year students impacts on experiences of university life, networks developed and ultimately whether these networks influence their lives post-graduation. The study is based on a

case study, but the findings will help to inform other universities' policies and procedures on allocation of first-year accommodation

1.8 Thesis Overview

Chapter 2 discusses relevant literature relating to SA, its development and impact on student experiences, networks and social capital.

Chapter 3 presents the theoretical framework which draws on the work of Bourdieu's thinking tools of 'habitus' and 'forms of capital' (Murphy and Costa, 2015) and the concepts of 'homophily' and 'propinquity' which influence network formation. This chapter also explores graduate employability to provide a context for the discussion of the importance of social networks developed whilst at university on post-university life. The chapter concludes with implications for the study.

Chapter 4 outlines the research paradigm and design of the study and justifies the choice of data collection methods. The approach to data analysis is explained and ethical considerations are highlighted.

Chapter 5 presents the online questionnaire findings in relation to the impact of SA on students' experiences and networks whilst studying at LU and post-graduation.

Chapter 6 presents the semi-structured interview findings. Thematic analysis was used to analyse the interviews (Braun and Clarke, 2022) and six key themes are identified and presented.

Chapter 7 draws together the findings from the quantitative and qualitative research and discusses them in relation to relevant literature and the theoretical framework which is based on Bourdieu's 'thinking tools' of habitus, field and forms of capital.

Chapter 8 provides conclusions, discusses my contribution to knowledge, addresses any limitations and discusses recommendations for policy and practice and future research.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

2.1 Introduction

HE is often regarded as a key way of increasing social mobility, reducing social inequalities and accessing good careers and higher incomes, particularly for people from lower social classes (Bradley and Ingram, 2012, Waller et al., 2014, Brown, 2016). Despite increased participation and widening access to HE (Reay et al., 2001, Brooks and Everett, 2009, Bolton, 2023) there continue to be inequalities in the ways in which students experience and engage in HE and therefore 'entrenched privilege continues in HE' (Owens et al., 2017 p.2). The poorest students (those receiving free school meals) were 55 times less likely to gain a place at Oxbridge than those from an independent school (The Sutton Trust, 2010) and after graduation earn 10% less for the same degree from the same institution (Deardon et al., 2016). This research suggests social structures determine success rather than education due to students from diverse backgrounds having differing experiences and access to resources, particularly social capital and networks (Bourdieu, 2002). The purpose of this thesis is to investigate first-year students' experiences of shared university accommodation with a particular focus on social capital and networks to explore the extent to which SA, the way in which universities allocate places and the people one meets in first-year accommodation, impacts on university experiences and post-university lives.

The literature review discusses the purpose of SA and its historical development. It highlights the impact of SA on students' experiences and particularly, social networks. The strategies used by HEIs to allocate places in SA are explored along with implications of these strategies.

2.2 Student Accommodation (SA)

Moving away from home to study at university is 'a deep-seated part of English culture' (Augar, 2019 p.195) and a distinctive feature of British HE compared with other countries in Europe and Australasia where students often study locally and live at their parental home (Whyte, 2019). In the UK in 2023/24, 82.6% of full-time first-year UG students did not live in parental homes, 53.4% of first-year students lived in

purpose-built student accommodation (PBSA) and 46.6% in privately rented accommodation (HESA, 2025b). This 'residential' experience has been regarded as a 'truly transformative process' (Skidmore in British Property Federation, 2019 p.4) concerned with not only learning new knowledge and skills, but enhancing all areas of lives (Brooks et al., 2021). However, Chatterton (2010) believed mobile students from wealthier backgrounds have more choice and greater opportunities to access HE and therefore SA reinforces existing inequalities and ability to move away from the family home is a 'strongly embedded elite practice' (Chatterton, 2010 p.510). Reynolds (2020) believes the importance of SA has largely been ignored from the discussion around student mobility. With the expansion of HE, shift from 'elite to mass participation' (Tight, 2009 p.57), opening of post-1992 universities (former polytechnics) and increase in numbers of mobile students all fuelled the need for more SA. Despite growing numbers of commuting students (Holdsworth, 2006, Finn, 2017a, Holton and Finn, 2018b, Henderson, 2020) universities continue to regard SA as an essential and important part of their offering which plays a key role in socialisation of students and helps to develop a sense of community (Blakey in Haselgrove, 1994).

The model of the residential university is based on the idea 'living together is a prerequisite of learning together' (Watson, 2014 p.xxii). SA plays an important role in helping the transition from the family home to independent living which is symbolic of the transition from childhood to adulthood (Holdsworth, 2009b). Holton (2015b) found halls of residence were important vehicles for learning how to 'become' a student. To provide a context for this thesis I identify key developments in SA.

2.3 Key Developments in SA

2.3.1 Establishment of Oxford and Cambridge

The origins of residential SA, in the western world, started with Oxford University, estimated to have been established in 1167, and Cambridge University, founded in 1209 (Stone, 1974). Originally accommodation was not provided and students travelled to study (Whyte, 2019). The impetus for SA was provided by students who sought accommodation as lodgers. However, as student numbers increased this

caused conflict between 'town' and 'gown' and therefore Oxbridge considered how to accommodate their students (Silver, 2004). By the end of the fifteenth century Oxbridge students lived in organised communities and colleges were established, a means by which to manage academic, moral and social behaviour (Whyte, 2019). The Oxbridge college system provided students with somewhere to live but also a community for students and academics to interact academically and socially (Tight, 2009). Although Oxbridge is regarded as the originator of residence-based HE in the UK, the unique college system which is also responsible for student selection and teaching has not been fully replicated by other HEIs.

2.3.2 Development of London Based Universities (19th Century)

The stronghold of Oxbridge was broken in the 1820s with the founding of University College London (UCL) and later Kings College, London which became the University of London. Originally SA was not provided as students were expected to continue to live at home and the development of non-residential HE was born. The assumption being SA was unnecessary and even detrimental to student welfare. Soon afterwards in 1832 Durham University was established, a collegiate residential university, attempting to emulate Oxbridge (Whyte, 2019). Demand for HE increased and in response the University of London offered HE via satellite colleges in various industrial centres (Spire, 2017) but these were still non-residential.

2.3.3 HE Expansion Via Civic Redbrick Universities

New HEI's were established in England's industrial cities such as Manchester but students continued to commute (Whyte, 2019). However, students were dissatisfied by lack of 'esprit de corps' and as a result in 1876 the Quakers opened Dalton Hall, the first hall of residence in Manchester (Ibid 2019). Other halls followed, meeting needs of students wanting to escape their parental homes and 'live a new life, learning new ways, making new friends, acquiring habits of independence' (McDougall, 1906 p.39). The importance of SA was increasingly being recognised and in 1925 the University Grants Committee highlighted the urgent and far reaching need for more residential halls (UGC Minutes, 1925). This was followed by the National Union of Students in 1938 who claimed a university without residences was

not a university (NUS, 1938). However, the proportion of students living in student residences varied greatly depending on the HEI. For example, in 1938, 79% of students lived in SA at Exeter University compared with only 10% at Liverpool University (CVCP, 1946).

2.3.4 Post-war 1940s/1950s

After the second world war, SA steadily increased but lack of funding was the biggest barrier, both in terms of universities funding student residences and students being able to afford to pay rent. From the 1940s onwards grants became more widely available for students and governments began to underwrite student residences enabling universities to invest in campus residences (Whyte, 2019). Across the country 67 new halls of residence were built between 1944 and 1957 (UGC, 1975). Post-war Britain saw the rise of a national HE system with students free to travel to study rather than having to study locally facilitated by the creation of the Universities Central Council on Admissions (UCCA, now UCAS), a national applications system, in 1961 (Kay, 1985).

2.3.5 Plateglass Universities (1960s)

In 1963 the Robbins Report ambitiously suggested HEIs should provide approximately 60% of undergraduate students with accommodation (Committee on Higher Education, 1963). However, demand outweighed supply and universities could not provide sufficient accommodation and therefore students turned to private rentals, perhaps not offering such attractive living conditions (Brothers and Hatch, 1971). Plateglass universities such as Lancaster and York emerged in the 1960s in areas of England where government believed communities would benefit from their development, particularly in 'green field' sites. Student residences were regarded as an integral part of the university and incorporated into their design. Lancaster and York universities both adopted the collegiate system (Beloff, 1968) but unlike Oxbridge they did not adopt the college teaching approach. Students continued to leave home to attend university despite the expense and the reduction in student funding. In many cases students could have chosen to study closer to home and live in the parental home. However, many students believed relocation would enable

them to 'establish a new life' (Morgan and McDowell, 1979). This was particularly the case for upper- and middle-class students whereas 'lower-middle-class and working-class students' were more likely to live at home or attend HEIs with limited accommodation and therefore least likely to benefit from SA (Committee on Higher Education, 1963).

2.3.6 Expansion of SA (1980s/1990s)

The expansion of HE led to most HEIs being unable to meet demand for SA, partly fuelled by growth of polytechnics with little SA, and increased reliance on the private sector. The provision of private SA became an attractive proposition due to falling interest rates and availability of buy-to-let mortgages. There was major growth in building of new SA and upgrading of existing accommodation to meet increasing expansion of HE and changing perception towards students as 'consumers' (Tight, 2011). The launch of post-1992 universities, formerly polytechnics, further fuelled the need for SA. However, responsibility for its provision was shifting away from HEIs themselves which was evidenced in the 1997 Dearing Report where there was no mention of SA, apart from as an inclusion in the accounts (National Committee of Inquiry into Higher Education, 1997).

2.3.7 Current Situation

SA is still regarded as an important part of a university's offering but it has become more of a profit-making activity for the private sector providing PBSA or working jointly with universities (Tight, 2011). Many universities are unable to provide accommodation for all students due to increasing student numbers and lack of available finance and land (Rugg et al., 2002, Hubbard, 2009). This combined with potential for reliable and higher rental income has attracted the private sector (Wilkinson and Greenhalgh, 2024). There has also been a shift in student preferences with some students prepared to pay a premium for PBSA with additional facilities such as ensuite bathrooms, social areas and gyms (Knight Frank and UCAS, 2023).

The involvement of the private sector has generally improved standards of SA but costs have also risen. The average annual rent in PBSA in 2021/22 in the UK was £7,374, an increase of 61% since 2011/12 (NUS and Unipol, 2021). The increase in PBSA has contributed to 'studentification' (Smith, 2005) of many city centres, where some residential areas are becoming dominated by students, not only in the UK but in other countries such as Australia, (Fincher and Shaw, 2009, Holton and Mouat, 2021), China (He, 2015), (Ackermann and Visser, 2016) and Ireland (Kenna, 2011).

The provision of SA is a fine balancing act and a challenge for HEIs. The increased demand for SA and a slow-down in building has sometimes resulted in a shortage of accommodation for students arriving at university. In 2023 there were reports of first-year students being unable to find SA and therefore switching universities (Jeffreys and Convery, 2023).

In 2014/15 over a third (247,710) of first-year students lived in university-maintained accommodation. Since then, there has been a decline in percentage terms to 23.9% (249,250) in 2023/24. However, the Covid-19 pandemic in 2020 resulted in many students studying online from their family homes rather than returning to university. Alongside an increase of 44.4% in the number of first-year students from 722,860 in 2014/15 to 1,043,960 in 2023/24 there has been a reduction in the proportion of first-year students living in university-managed accommodation due to an increase in privately owned halls and number of first-year students living in their own homes. HESA data (Appendix One) suggests the proportion of first-year students living in their parental/ guardian homes has remained relatively stable (17.4% in 2023/24), despite an increase in number of commuter students (HESA, 2025a). There also appears to be a new category consisting of students who live a reasonable distance from university commuting and staying a couple of nights during term time, perhaps 'sofa surfing' with friends (Blakey, 2024). Approximately a quarter (23.9%) of all first-years live in university-maintained accommodation and therefore when managing allocation of rooms, universities should consider the impact on students' experiences (HESA, 2025a). This is particularly important for LU with a higher proportion (64.9%) of new first-year undergraduate students living in university-owned accommodation in 2023/24 (HESA, 2024a).

2.4 Impact of SA on Students' Experiences

There has been much research on the impact of student living arrangements on students' experiences such as the transition of young people from home to university and identity development (Kenyon, 2002, Patiniotis and Holdsworth, 2005, Chow and Healey, 2008, Holton, 2015a). The impact of accommodation on academic success and integration into the university community has received much attention (Blimling, 1999, Beekhoven et al., 2004, Pascarella and Terenzini, 2005, Blimling, 2015, Spire, 2017, Spire, 2019, Webb and Turner, 2020). Consideration of issues relating to social inequality and the differing experiences of students from middle- and working-class backgrounds and the impact of 'race', culture, sexual orientation and gender have been explored (Mark and Harris, 2012, Taulke-Johnson, 2010). The impact of SA design on development of friendships, academic success and integration into the university community, including the impact on wellbeing, has been researched in recent years (Walker and Richter, 2008, Nimako and Bondinuba, 2013, Holton, 2016c, 2017, British Property Federation, 2019, Brown et al., 2019). The experiences of commuting students have also received attention (Holton and Finn, 2018a, Gabi and Sharpe, 2021, Tett et al., 2025). Commuting or 'stayed education' students (Pokorny et al., 2017) found it more difficult to make friends and partly attributed this to the absence of shared living providing an important site to meet people and establish friendships. The impact of student housing on local communities is also an important research area (Chatterton, 1999, 2010, Smith, 2008, Hubbard, 2009).

Research focused on SA is largely split into two categories. Firstly, research associated with external factors such as the impact of gentrification and studentification on students and communities and broad issues relating to the political economy, affordability and inequality, for example Smith (2008), Reynolds (2020), Sotomayor et al. (2022) and Wilkinson and Greenhalgh (2024). Secondly, research focusing more on impact of internal dynamics of SA such as the effect of co-habiting on student experiences, for example Blimling (2015) and Holton (2016b, 2016c). This study is specifically concerned with the impact of internal factors on student experiences, but it is important to acknowledge the wider discussion on SA.

The research on student residences is diverse but there is consensus regarding its important impact on students. However, despite extensive research SA continues to be an important but under-researched topic in relation to interactions between co-habiting students (Holton, 2016a) and particularly their networks as a result of the allocation process (Bradley in Rosenbaum, 2018).

The 1963 Robbins Report highlighted the importance of university accommodation 'they provide a sense of real community' and 'compensate for any inequalities of home background' (Committee on Higher Education, 1963 p.195 & p.7). Brothers and Hatch found living in university accommodation 'was a means of enriching the students' experience of higher education' and drawing them 'into relationships with a wider range of people' (1971 p.171). Universities are therefore important sites for developing social networks (Mayer and Puller, 2008). SA plays an important role bringing together young people living away from home for the first time (NUS and Unipol, 2018), developing friendships (Blimling, 2015) and social networks. These are important for support, integration and developing a sense of belonging at university which are key to student success. SA influences many aspects of students' experiences, particularly, student retention and development of friendships at university which will now be discussed.

2.4.1 Student Retention

There is concern within HE about the number of UG students failing to complete their studies. The most often cited reasons are choosing the wrong subject and financial problems. However, accommodation was cited by 18% of respondents as the reason for withdrawal along with 23% citing emotional difficulties with others (Yorke, 1999). Thomas (2002) identified several factors affecting student retention, one of which was 'academic and social match' concerned with the extent to which students felt they fitted in, and this included consideration of living arrangements and other networks. Bradley (2017 p.35) identified four main types of reasons for UG dropping out of university: 'homesickness; 'fish out of water'; 'academic issues', and 'money problems'. Homesickness and feeling like 'a fish out of water' may be exacerbated by a lack of feeling of belonging in shared university accommodation. Wilcox et al believe students need successfully to integrate into the 'social world of the university'

in order to develop meaningful relationships and social networks, without which they are more likely to drop out (2005 p.708). An important sphere for developing one's social network is first-year accommodation.

Wilcox (2005) highlighted the importance for first-year undergraduates in 'making compatible friends' and particularly significant were friends made in shared accommodation. These friendships were found to be the strongest, provided much emotional support and were even regarded as family. Thomas (2002) found friendships and social networks were key to student retention and suggested HEIs could help foster social networks through living arrangements.

Jopling and Valtorta (2018) found making friends and building meaningful relationships at university was regarded as one of the greatest challenges when starting university. Living arrangements were found to be key to forming enduring friendships and students expected to form these friendships with people they lived with. Therefore, living arrangements can influence the extent to which students become integrated and develop a sense of community and therefore influences student retention (Tinto, 1993, Thomas, 2002, Wilcox et al., 2005, Murphy et al., 2020). Wilcox (2005) also found many first-year students struggled living with incompatible students which supported research by Mackie (2001) and Christie (2002). According to Neves and Hewitt (2021) the main driver for students dropping out of university were mental health concerns. There is growing concern around the decline in wellbeing among UK HE students (Neves and Hillman, 2018, 2021). Student wellbeing and mental health is under the spotlight with more students declaring mental health conditions (UCAS, 2021), being referred to mental health support services (Williams et al., 2015), more reports of student drop-outs due to mental health problems and increasing numbers of student suicides (Thorley, 2017, Office for National Statistics, 2022). Research has shown students' experiences of SA can have a major impact on wellbeing and mental health (Whyte, 2019, Knight Frank and UCAS, 2019, Knight Frank and UCAS, 2021). Foulkes et al. (2021) identified the divergent impact of SA on student wellbeing, either as great support or great unhappiness.

2.4.2 Friendships in HE Accommodation

Holdsworth (2009a) found 'making new friends' was an important motivation for students choosing to study away from their family home. SA has been found to be a primary site in which first year students make friends and develop networks (Christie et al., 2002). Hudson and Rockenbach (2025) identified campus spaces as being pivotal for facilitating friendship across social boundaries and identified SA as being a key space for fostering diverse peer networks. University applicants regard accommodation as playing an important role in making friends and becoming socially integrated (Unite Students and Higher Education Policy Institute, 2017). This research revealed students believed their accommodation would be the source of friendships rather than courses or societies. Living with 'like-minded' students they would get on with, and perhaps become friends, was regarded as more important than the actual accommodation. However, almost half of students were anxious about living with strangers and this figure was higher from lower socio-economic groups or those identifying as gay, lesbian, bisexual or other sexuality (Unite Students and Higher Education Policy Institute, 2017). This research highlights the importance of the process by which students are allocated rooms in shared accommodation and suggests the process should be approached with care. It has major implications for student welfare and formation of friendships as flat mates will often be the first people students meet (Hillman in Jones and Blakey, 2020) and they are more likely to become friends with people who live nearby (Rubin, 2012). Back (2008) found friendships occurred due to proximity and chance. Godley (2008) referred to this as propinquity and found it to be the strongest determinant of friendship groups in college students. Stinebrickner and Stinebrickner (2008) found students spent more time with those they lived with than non-housemates and location of rooms was a key predictor of student interactions.

Chow and Healey (2008) explored first-year students' transition from home to university and found SA was instrumental in establishing relationships and an important 'place' for developing attachment and identity. Failure to make friends can result in homesickness and unhappiness (Denovan and Macaskill, 2013). Shared living has potential to create friendships which have 'long standing significance'

(Heath, 2004 p.173). Holton (2016a) explored extent to which communal spaces in halls influenced the experience of students and found living in halls was generally a positive experience with most students getting on, feeling safe and socialising with flatmates. However, only just over half of respondents stated they would live with flatmates next year. Students acknowledged the wider role of halls in their overall student experience as they thought it was more than just somewhere to live and expected to make friends there. Interestingly, participants did not see halls as an opportunity to meet people from different cultures and thought it would be a home from home (Ibid 2016a). Holton (2016a) found many factors influenced students' experiences of communal living including design, layout and cost and interactions between flatmates.

Holton argues 'friendship is crucial in developing meaningful and lasting interactions in shared living arrangements' (2017 p.5). One of these interactions may be transference of social capital between students which Williams (2005) believes underpins community cohesion in non-familial co-housing. Making friends and acquiring social capital is entrenched in the purpose of HE (Dickinson, 2019).

The social dimension of shared living was regarded as important as housemates were the first people, other than family members, many students lived with. Living with friends 'as a family created a new level of intimacy that old pre-university friends could neither compete with, nor understand' (Kenyon, 2002 p.91). Meeting new people, perhaps from different backgrounds with different cultural tastes and values, can be an important influence on young people as they transition towards adulthood (Kenyon, 2002).

Blimling (2015) believes a key goal of SA should be creating a sense of community, providing emotional support and helping students adjust to university life and suggests a number of propositions can facilitate a sense of community or belonging to be developed in SA. These include: the closer together students live the increased chance of them meeting and becoming friends; the more time spent together, and the more similar the students, the more likely they will become friends; and living units arranged around an academic programme or lifestyle/interest rather than being randomly allocated is more likely to develop a sense of community. Blimling (2015)

appears to promote the idea of allocating places in residences based on the principle of homophily (McPherson et al., 2001) i.e. similarity, as he believes this helps to develop friendships and community. However, this ignores benefits of meeting students from different backgrounds and developing an inclusive and diverse university community.

SA provides frequent contact and opportunities to socialise but a challenge for accommodation providers is whether to match 'similar' students to facilitate formation of peer groups or to randomly allocate students or even socially engineer the mixing of people 'not like me' to provide opportunities to meet students from different backgrounds. The next section of the review will explore the allocation of places.

2.5 Allocation of Places

Students often make lifelong friends with fellow housemates at university (Rosenbaum, 2018) but is the formation of households due to luck or design? Bradley believes the allocation of places in SA is 'an important and long-lasting social force in Britain' but is a 'difficult and neglected topic' which is 'largely under-researched' (Rosenbaum, 2018). The BBC investigated how universities allocated rooms in SA. Different universities adopted different strategies when allocating SA places. For example, universities such as Bristol University and Kings College London, claimed to aim for diverse balanced communities with a mix of genders and nationalities and LU tried 'to avoid homogenous groups in one area'. Many universities, such as Keele, Kent and Oxford Brookes, stated they tried to mix British and international students. Whereas Glyndwr put students from the same country together and East London planned to have a mainly international hall. In contrast, other universities such as Warwick and Strathclyde tried to match students with similar interests, hobbies or outlook on life which they believed would help transition to university (Rosenbaum, 2018). Some universities implement systems to allocate places in residences based on characteristics/lifestyle of students. For example, University of Bedford uses a 'special algorithm' to match 'similar flatmates' and friends can request to live together (University of Bedfordshire, 2023). Yale University is trialling a Roommate Matching App to help identify ideal housemates (Owen, 2022).

Wilcox (2005) believed universities could try to identify students' preferences in terms of characteristics of potential flatmates, for example whether they would prefer single-sex accommodation, non-smoking, lively or quiet flatmates. The researchers acknowledged this may increase the administrative burden but felt this could help improve retention of many students withdrawing due to incompatible flatmates. The BBC research found a few universities allowed existing friendship groups to choose to live together and students could book specific rooms which may result in groups of friends living together. In contrast, University of West of England stated they did not generally house friends together. Seventeen of the 100 universities stated they offered an alcohol-free option and 39 offered quiet areas (Rosenbaum, 2018). The NUS and Unipol undertook a survey of HEIs and private accommodation providers exploring how needs of different student groups were met. HEIs provided more specialist types of accommodation compared with private providers. For example, in 2021, 68% of HEIs provided adapted rooms for ambulatory disability compared with 35% of private providers, 68% provided single gender blocks compared with 48% of private providers, 30% provided quiet blocks compared with 14% of private providers, 20% provided alcohol-free blocks compared with 2% of private providers and 30% provided adaptations/support for neurodivergent students compared with 14% of private providers (NUS and Unipol, 2021).

In addition to formal allocation of places there may be unintentional grouping of students which may inadvertently result in segregation of students. The style and price of SA is likely to influence the profile of its occupants (Hillman in Jones and Blakey, 2020). For example, cheaper accommodation, often with shared bathrooms, may attract students from lower-income households whilst those from more wealthy families select more expensive rooms, often with en-suite facilities, resulting in a 'pecking order of where students live' (Bradley cited in Rosenbaum, 2018).

Alternatively, inadvertent segregation by race, religion or culture may occur, such as international students requesting quiet flats or Muslim students preferring single sex accommodation (Andersson et al., 2012). This may unintentionally reinforce the concept of homophily and the idea 'birds of a feather flock together' which may provide fewer opportunities to mix with people from different backgrounds and has implications for the types of networks and social capital students encounter. Bradley

believes 'students themselves are very aware of this segregation' and believes universities should try to mix students from different social classes, perhaps using home postcodes. This inadvertent segregation is not necessarily new as Schelling (1971) suggested segregation can occur as a result of organisational practices, partly due to economic factors but not necessarily entirely, where the poor are separated from the wealthy.

The images portrayed in university brochures of ethnically diverse students enjoying their shared living space is perhaps far from reality due to the segregation resulting from the allocation of places process (Andersson et al., 2012).

Bradley acknowledges the importance of social networks and recognises people one meets in university accommodation could be an important source of social capital: 'Friendship is important, getting your first job is often dependent on knowing the right people' (Rosenbaum, 2018). However, issues to do with discrimination in university residences have led to some universities implementing policies which perhaps unintentionally lead further to segregation of students. University of Birmingham introduced LGBT halls to provide a safe space and protect LGBT students from discrimination. Despite this possibly solving short-term issues it has been met with criticism as it does not address wider issues of prejudice and discrimination. Universities face a dilemma when allocating accommodation. On the one hand, they want to encourage diversity, equality and integration and therefore want to mix students from different backgrounds, cultures and sexual orientations. Hudson (2018) argues when assigning roommates HEIs should try to achieve a diverse mix to provide opportunities for cross-cultural friendships. However, on the other hand, universities want students to feel comfortable in their SA and this is often achieved by living with others perceived 'as like me', i.e. based on the concept of homophily (McPherson et al., 2001). Thomas (2002) recommended HEIs reviewed their accommodation provision and processes as part of their widening participation strategies. The friends one makes in university accommodation could be an important source of social capital and therefore the university allocation process may have significant implications.

2.6 Chapter Summary

The literature review provided an overview of SA. In particular, the chapter discussed the purpose of, and historical development of, SA. The impact of SA on student experiences in relation to student retention and development of friendships were explored. The chapter also discussed implications of the impact of university allocation strategies of SA on students' experiences. The next chapter will present the theoretical framework which underpins this study and draws on Bourdieu's 'thinking tools' of habitus, field and capital (Murphy and Costa, 2015).

Chapter 3: Theoretical Framework

3.1 Introduction

This chapter presents the theoretical framework using Bourdieu's 'thinking tools' of habitus, field and capital (Murphy and Costa, 2015), particularly social capital, to help understand and explain students' networks during and post-university. It is impossible to separate completely the forms of capital and therefore the framework explores all forms of capital. According to Bourdieu, one's 'habitus' is influenced primarily by one's family and education. Therefore, one's social capital, i.e. contacts, are likely to be from similar social groups which helps to explain social reproduction, as working-class students are more likely to have limited access to 'useful' social capital. Universities are important sites for developing social capital and networks (Mayer and Puller, 2008) and therefore may provide students with opportunity to expand their social capital outside existing social groups and disrupt the social reproduction cycle. Meeting people in SA is a potential means of students developing social capital and networks.

The theoretical framework builds on Bourdieu's concept of 'social capital' and explores networks and social capital specifically in the field of HE. It discusses the strength of ties within a network because tie strength can influence the nature of the network. Network formation is influenced by many factors of which two key concepts are 'homophily' and 'propinquity'. 'Homophily', where people are generally attracted to similar people, may not expand one's social capital. In contrast, 'propinquity', where people are more likely to develop relationships with people in proximity, may disrupt social reproduction by providing opportunities to meet people 'not like me' and expand one's social capital and network.

The chapter then discusses networks post-graduation with a focus on graduate employability because it is often believed 'it is who you know rather than what you know' (Jacobson, 1914) when finding employment. The people one meets at university, for example in first-year SA, may be an important source of social capital which could help find and secure employment.

3.2 Bourdieu

Bourdieu provides valuable insight into reasons for continuing inequalities in HE and the importance of habitus and forms of capital (Bourdieu, 2002). Bourdieu provides a 'framework to understand social mobility that takes seriously how forces from the past can affect present and future outcomes' (Friedman and Savage, 2018 p.79). Bourdieu believed education to be a 'mechanism for consolidating social separation' (Grenfell, 2012 p.28) and reproducing rather than challenging social inequality. An increasing number of studies have used Bourdieu's approach to class to explore HE inequality (Reay et al., 2009, Reay et al., 2010, Bathmaker et al., 2013, Bradley, 2017, Scandone, 2018). Adopting a Bourdieusian lens in social mobility research is useful (Grenfell and James, 1998) as it is multidimensional and helps to better understand social mobility (Lawler and Payne, 2018). Holton used Bourdieu's (1986) concept of social capital to explore freshers' experiences of living in SA and how they 'manage their heterogeneity in what are primarily homogenous spaces' (Holton, 2016b p.72). I believe Bourdieu's theories of habitus and capitals can help better understand students' experiences in SA with a particular focus on how it influences social capital.

3.2.1 Habitus

Bourdieu's social reproduction theory attempts to explain intergenerational continuation of social inequality and suggests the education system perpetuates entrenched inequalities. One's 'habitus' is a key determinant of one's position in society and shapes the ways in which one views the world and influences students' experiences of HE and life post-graduation. Bourdieu describes habitus as 'systems of durable, transposable dispositions' (Bourdieu and Nice, 2013 p.72) acquired through the socialisation process and internalised by individuals and refers to a particular social group's behaviour, values, norms and attitudes. These values, which are socially and historically constructed, influence all aspects of, and choices in, life (Robbins, 1993). Habitus is regarded as similar to 'character' but with a major difference being it is 'a set of acquired characteristics which are the product of social conditions... totally or partially common to people who have been of similar social

conditions' (Bourdieu, 2005 p.45). Bourdieu believed family and education to be two crucial influences in forming one's habitus and other key influences include peer groups and other social environments (Bourdieu and Nice, 2013). These dispositions shape current and future practice and determine a 'way of being' which is enduring and slow to change and is also evident in many different fields/situations (Maton, 2012 p.50). Habitus is personal and yet also shared with others of a similar background and class. 'Lifestyles are thus the systematic products of habitus' (Bourdieu and Nice, 2010 p.168). Habitus influences all types of action, but it limits options, and actions are more likely to be reproductive than transformative (Bourdieu 1990). People are born into a particular habitus and one's class can have an enduring and significant impact on one's life.

There are two key aspects of Bourdieu's concept of habitus. Firstly, the belief there is a dominant group, within particular social groups, with a vested interest in maintaining the status quo by controlling access to education and work. Secondly, these groups act to reproduce themselves. This dominance is due to 'cultural capital' such as knowledge, language, culture and symbols used to legitimise the power and status of the ruling classes (Thomas, 2001). The dominant group design the systems, such as education systems, to reward those from dominant groups who have access to money, knowledge, power, networks etc. Therefore, people from non-dominant groups have difficulty in accessing and fitting into these systems. Those with the most resources, and therefore power, enforce their own attitudes, values and lifestyle on to those who do not possess the necessary resources as the legitimate and right way to do things. Bourdieu refers to this process as 'symbolic violence' (Bourdieu, 1992 p.167).

Bourdieu argued middle-class students in HE were more successful than working-class students not because they were more intelligent but because the curriculum was 'biased in favour of those things with which middle-class students were already ex-curricularly familiar' (Robbins, 1993 p.153). In contrast, working-class students were, as referred to by Bourdieu, lacking in 'cultural capital'. Educational institutions can therefore be regarded as socially and culturally biased and reinforce the dominant culture in which middle-class students are more likely to succeed than working-class students, who do not possess the necessary cultural capital (Thomas,

2001). This reinforcement continues into the labour market where employers may discriminate against certain groups of graduates and recruit middle-class students, often from elite universities. Bourdieu believed this is the means by which employers retain their dominance and power and reproduce themselves (Bourdieu and Passeron, 1990).

Bourdieu's theory of social reproduction is often criticised for being deterministic and ignoring the reality some people escape the inevitability of this cycle (Miles, 2000). However, Bourdieu acknowledged one's habitus could change through experience or deliberate actions but believed this change was gradual and a child's dispositions act 'as the scaffolding of habitus' and are 'long lasting; they tend to perpetuate, to reproduce themselves, but they are not eternal' (Bourdieu, 2005 p.45) and dispositions evolve over time. Maton also argues Bourdieu is not suggesting all behaviour is predetermined by our upbringing but instead is a result of the relationship between 'one's dispositions (habitus) and one's position in a field (capital), within the current state of play of that social arena (field)' (Maton, 2012 p.51). It is therefore impossible to understand the behaviour of people based only on habitus; we also need to consider the 'fields' in which they are active.

3.2.2 Field

Field refers to a 'structured system of social relations at a micro and macro level' (Grenfell and James, 1998 p.16). It refers to the space in which 'interactions, transactions and events occur' and is regarded as a battlefield in which people have to negotiate and compete (Thomson, 2012 p.66). For example, fields include education, religion, housing and workplaces. In the context of this study the field comprises the university, SA and the graduate labour market. Bourdieu views the field as a competitive game with rules and participants have differing levels of knowledge about the rules depending on their 'capital' (Bourdieu, 1992). Participants' habitus and capital will also influence the extent to which they understand the rules of the field and can engage in the game (Thomson, 2012 p.66). Bourdieu often referred to a social field as a football game as they are both occupied by agents, bounded by rules and affected by the condition of the field (Thomson, 2012). However, unlike a football field, a social field is not a level playing field as some

players have more capital than others and they can also use capital to their advantage to accumulate and become more successful (Thomson, 2012). The extent to which people feel comfortable in these fields often depends on their habitus. Bourdieu's concept of habitus is useful in helping to understand 'how young people from different backgrounds succeed at being a student' (Holdsworth, 2006).

Our behaviour, the choices we make and our experiences in various 'fields' are influenced by our habitus. For example, children of university-educated parents may see higher education as a natural progression compared with children of non-university educated parents who are less likely to regard higher education as a viable option. Langa Rosado and David's research (2006) in Spain and UK categorised these two groups of 'choosers' as being, firstly, the 'embedded' one regarding HE in terms of 'certainty and entitlement' and the obvious next step after school. In contrast, the second group, referred to as 'contingent choosers', did not assume HE was the natural progression and instead weighed up the costs and benefits of HE and may be less likely to enter HE. 'These two patterns of choice reveal different "familial habituses" that corresponds to different social classes' (Langa Rosado and David, 2006 p.362).

Working-class children at university often find themselves as 'fish out of water' as they find themselves in environments in which they are not comfortable (Bourdieu and Passeron, 1990) due to a mismatch between habitus and field, referred to as hysteresis (Hardy, 2012). Christie and Burke (2021) used the concept of habitus to explore the experiences of working-class students at university and in their early careers. Rather than HE being the 'great equaliser', it was found dispositions of working-class students were at times incongruent with expectations of HE. Previous studies revealed students who are first generation in their family to attend university may lack the necessary capitals for success (O'Shea, 2016) and have little knowledge of 'the rules of the game'. SA is a key field in which students meet people from different backgrounds and possibly expand their social capital.

3.2.3 Forms of Capital

Bourdieu (1987) regarded the social world as a multidimensional space structured according to the distribution of key forms of capital, the properties of which are 'capable of conferring strength, power and consequently profit on their holder' (Bourdieu, 1987 p.4) and determine one's class background (Bourdieu and Nice, 2010). Capital exists in three forms: economic; cultural and social (Bourdieu, 2002). Economic capital relates to one's monetary capital, savings, investments and assets. Cultural or informational capital relates to one's personal tastes, knowledge and skills. Social capital refers to one's resources based on one's connections and network of personal contacts. Bourdieu also identifies symbolic capital which is 'the form the different types of capital take once they are perceived and recognized as legitimate' such as prestige or recognition (Bourdieu, 1987 p.4). These forms of capital are largely inherited and influence our early years and development.

Children from upper/middle-class families gain advantage due to their family's wealth (economic capital), valuable social networks (social capital) and, in a more complex manner, 'cultural capital' such as the way one speaks, acts and dresses and one's knowledge of arts, culture, politics etc. Bourdieu argues capital attracts capital, but people do not possess equal amounts. For example, students entering higher education possess differing amounts of capital depending on their habitus. Some are disadvantaged whilst others are advantaged due to their backgrounds, inherited wealth and family connections and this influences their choices regarding HE (Schofield et al., 2023). The forms of capital can be, with differing levels of difficulty, converted into other forms. For example, middle-class children who succeed educationally can convert their cultural capital into economic capital when securing employment (Bourdieu and Nice, 2010). Working-class parents not only have less economic capital but also lack the social networks and knowledge which lead to the reproduction of privilege (Reay et al., 2001).

3.2.3.1 Economic Capital

Economic capital refers to one's wealth, monetary capital, savings, investments, income and assets and is 'immediately and directly convertible into money'

(Bourdieu, 2002 p.281). Therefore, families with economic capital can leverage their resources to purchase objects or services to facilitate their children's educational journey. For example, a specific area for studying in the house, textbooks and personal tutors often lead to higher educational achievement (Caro et al., 2014). Economic capital can be acquired quickly, such as by winning the lottery, whereas social and cultural capital cannot be acquired in quite the same way and often requires extended exposure to a particular social habitus. Economic capital can be converted to social and cultural capital but this requires differing levels of effort (Bourdieu, 1986). For example, it may take a long time to acquire and build a social network of relationships which can be leveraged to one's advantage (Bourdieu, 1986).

3.2.3.2 Cultural Capital

Cultural capital 'is the ability to act "cultured" by embodying the language, accents and mannerisms of the elites' (Biggart, 2002 p.278) and influences one's decisions and actions (Archer et al., 2003 p.17). Cultural capital in itself has no monetary value but in certain conditions can be converted into economic capital (Bourdieu, 1986) such as the selling of works of art. According to Bourdieu cultural capital exists in three distinct forms. Firstly, the embodied state which is connected to individuals as enduring dispositions of the body and mind such as accent and etiquette and is not immediately transmissible to another person. Secondly, the objectified state, which is more tangible than embodied cultural capital, where it is connected to objects (cultural goods) such as books, dictionaries, encyclopaedias, works of art, sculptures or machines and unlike the embodied state can be transferred instantaneously to others. Finally, cultural capital in its institutionalised state is connected to institutions such as schools or universities, for example being awarded a degree from Oxbridge (Bourdieu, 1986). Bourdieu argues the dominant culture in educational establishments is of the elite groups and therefore the cultural capital of upper- and middle-classes is valued and rewarded. In contrast, the cultural capitals of the lower classes are devalued (Stahl, 2015).

3.2.3.3 Social Capital

Bourdieu (2002) argues social capital is a means of reproducing class inequality due to the unequal distribution of resources, with dominant classes having greater access to networks ensuring their continued dominance. Bourdieu defines social capital as ‘the aggregate of the actual or potential resources which are linked to the possession of a durable network or more or less institutionalised relationships of mutual acquaintance or recognition’ (Bourdieu, 1997 p.51). Therefore, social capital is a feature of a group and can only be accessed via networks and interactions through the relationships in the group. Access to particular social networks allows people to mobilise their social capital and transform it into other forms of capital, such as economic, therefore maintaining their advantages in particular ‘fields’ (Holt, 2008). Social capital is not only concerned with the numbers of people and value of those people in the network but also with leveraging those assets. Abrahams (2017 p.627) makes the distinction between ‘the reproduction of social capital through the transmission of networks from one generation to the next and the production of social capital for oneself through “networking”’. Holton (2016b p.63) found in first-year SA, despite perpetuating ‘disadvantaged access to social capital’, some students with non-traditional backgrounds were able to draw on non-student social capital to fit in. This study explores whether students acquire social capital through networking with people they share with in first-year SA.

3.2.4 Concluding comments on Bourdieu

A common criticism of Bourdieu’s theoretical approach is it is overly deterministic (Miles, 2000 p.23), focused on inheritance and reproduction and therefore fails to acknowledge the presence of mobility (e.g. Goldthorpe et al., 1987). However, these criticisms are often regarded as too simplistic and fail to recognise Bourdieu’s acknowledgement we live in a probabilistic world where individuals and society are interconnected (Mahar, 1990).

Despite criticisms of Bourdieu’s framework (e.g. Calhoun et al., 1993, Brooks, 2008), many researchers exploring continuing inequalities in HE find the concepts of

habitus and forms of capital helpful in explaining class differences in access to, and choice of HE, and continue to base their work on Bourdieu's theoretical framework.

Bourdieu's view of social capital is deeply entwined with the mechanisms of social similarity (homophily) and spatial proximity (propinquity) despite rarely mentioning these terms (Bourdieu, 1986). Instead, he locates them within his broader theory of habitus, field and social space. According to Bourdieu, the clustering of similar people is a manifestation of shared dispositions and positions within social structures rather than independent drivers. However, Bourdieu explicitly states actors can 'cumulate the advantages of propinquity and the advantages of distance' when describing how actors exploit or reinforce social or spatial nearness in their pursuit of accumulation (Bourdieu, 1989 p.16). Bourdieu tends to limit homophily/propinquity to habitus and field position and pays less attention to micro-interactional tie formation than the network literature (Bottero, 2009, Bottero et al., 2011). Therefore, similarity and proximity are regarded as important even though Bourdieu frames them as effects of habitus/positions rather than independent variables (Bourdieu, 1986).

In the 1960s Bourdieu 'demonstrated the low level of integration amongst the student body and the extent to which students remained divided by class, particularly in their cultural tastes and practices' (Lane, 2000 p.64). Lack of social diversity in HE is still apparent today with elite universities continuing to be predominantly white and middle-class (Reay et al., 2005). The HE sector is more diverse than 50 years ago, but diversity appears to be within the system rather than existing within HEIs themselves. There continues to be a divide between prestigious research-led universities and teaching-only universities, consisting predominantly of 'new universities' established post-1992, with a higher proportion of working-class and ethnic minority students (Langa Rosado and David, 2006). Langa Rosado and David found enduring class inequalities and concluded despite the 'massification of HE... it has not yet created universities for the masses' (2006 p.361). Many HE institutions have 'widening access' programmes to try and increase HE participation from under-represented groups (Osborne, 2003, David et al., 2010, Younger et al., 2019) but they continue to face challenges in recruiting particular types of students and providing a socially integrated community. This study therefore explores the role of

university accommodation in trying to facilitate integration of students from different backgrounds and its impact on social capital.

3.3 HE Networks

This section builds on Bourdieu's concept of social capital and discusses networks in HE and highlights the implications of tie strength, homophily and propinquity in the development of social networks.

The significance of social capital, networks and the patterns which exist within networks have long been recognised (Feld, 1981). It has been the focus of much research, Granovetter (1973), Bourdieu (1986), Coleman (1988), Putnam (2000) and Brown (2021) acknowledging both negative and positive effects of social capital. Social capital, unlike other forms of capital, exists in the relationships between and among actors rather than in actors themselves i.e. a social network (Coleman, 1988). These social networks create value, i.e. social capital, by providing access to resources and information through connected people (Putnam, 2008). Networks enable us to help each other as different types of resources flow through our networks such as money, time and knowledge, in addition to other helpful resources such as trust, friendship and social norms. Therefore, networks exist between people and social capital is located within these contacts but must be leveraged to take advantage of the contacts. However, homophily can result in people mixing with others, similar to themselves, which can limit the variety of experiences and knowledge to which we have access (Brown, 2021).

Networks consist of social interactions/relationships which form the basis of society and are loosely connected in social circles (Simmel, 1955) and are important for communication and community (Granovetter, 1983). However, these social networks can be mobilised to ensure reproduction of habitus and class advantage (Goldthorpe et al., 1987). Being part of the 'right network' affects the extent to which we succeed at school, whether we go to university and which university we attend, career prospects, who we marry, where we live and even when we will die. This pattern of networks is often repeated through generations resulting in continued division (Brown, 2021). Devine (2004 p.185) argued social capital was 'highly significant in

the reproduction of advantage' and as equally significant as economic and cultural capital in pursuit of educational and career advancement.

University is often a place where strong and enduring friendships are forged, particularly in first year and provides 'access to influential social networks and associational memberships by means of the social capital that education confers' (Pascarella and Terenzini, 2005 p.587). The benefit of attending university is more than gaining superior knowledge in order to access higher levels of economic capital, it is also the people you meet and the networks you form (Bradley and Ingram, 2012). Brooks and Waters (2010) suggest mobility is embedded in the networks of family and friends and as such these ties lead to social reproduction. Attending university may broaden these networks and provide opportunities to develop 'mobility capital'. One of the primary ways in which students make friends is through their shared accommodation (Christie et al., 2002, Wilcox et al., 2005) and is a key part of many students' experience of higher education. Therefore, student-centric spaces, such as shared university accommodation, provide the social capital necessary for students to develop or transform their student habitus by developing friendships and social activities (Holton, 2015b, Chatterton, 1999).

Brown (2021) states it is not the size of the network, with an average person having around 1,500 people in their network, but who and how we connect which is important. Brown believes most people have approximately 50 true friends and will be closest to about 10 people. Kadushin (2012) suggests the average person's effective network size is about 150 and the size of one's network is 'bounded by human cognitive abilities', but he acknowledges this may have doubled in western countries (Kadushin, 2012 p.57). Brown (2021) suggests we have access to more forms of social capital the larger and more disparate our network.

University can be a common environment in which to meet one's life partner. Brothers and Hatch (1971) found twice as many graduates living in SA married someone they met at university compared with graduates living at home. This research is dated. However, a recent survey by One Day University Love League polled 2,000 UK graduates and found 20% of British students met 'the loves of their life on campus' (One Day University Love League, 2023).

3.3.1 'Fish out of Water'

Many students from working-class backgrounds found themselves as 'fish out of water' (Bourdieu and Passeron, 1990) at prestigious universities when surrounded by privately educated students such as those in the paired peer project (Bradley, 2018). The Paired Peer project, a longitudinal study comparing working-class and middle-class students' experiences in the University of West of England (UWE), a 'new' university, and the University of Bristol, an 'old' established Russell Group University, found major differences in working- and middle-class students' engagement with HE. For example, Bradley (2018) found students from the 'dominant-class' had sufficient economic, social and cultural capital, often assisted by attending an independent school, to join 'old' research-led Russell Group universities. In contrast, students from the 'dominated classes' either did not enter HE, joined via a foundation degree or chose a 'new' post-1992 university. The study found working-class students at the University of Bristol struggled to fit in due to the culture dominated by upper/middle-class students. Many worked to cover living costs and therefore were unable to participate in extra-curricular activities which would enhance their CV. In contrast, middle-class students were often subsidised by their parents (Bradley et al., 2018). Rubin (2012) found working-class students felt less of a sense of belonging at their universities and tended to be less socially integrated than middle-class peers. Social integration was regarded as important because developing relationships with other students provided access to social and informational support. It is estimated 82% of students move away from home to attend university and children of middle-class families see leaving home to attend university as being a natural and first step towards independence (Patiniotis and Holdsworth, 2005b).

3.3.2 Strength of Ties

Social ties forming the patterns of relationships within our networks are influenced by three factors: the number of people we connect with; the extent to which we are centrally positioned within the network; and 'how densely interconnected we want our friends and family to be' (Brown, 2021). The denseness of a network will be

influenced by the strength of the ties i.e. whether they are strong or weak ties. Granovetter (1973) highlighted the importance of the 'strength of weak ties' which help to diffuse influence and information and may break down class advantage and contribute to social mobility. Granovetter defined a tie's strength as a 'combination of the amount of time, the emotional intensity, the intimacy (mutual confiding), and the reciprocal services which characterize the tie' (1973 p.1361). Weak ties, those with people outside immediate networks of family and friends, allow connections to be made with people not directly accessible. Through these weak ties, information and ideas, often different to one's immediate network, can be accessed. Granovetter (1983) demonstrated the importance of weak ties when searching for and securing jobs. Lin et al. (1981) built on Granovetter's work and demonstrated people used their social ties, particularly 'weak ties', to help achieve occupational mobility. Brown (2021) suggests a combination of strong and weak ties is beneficial to community wellbeing as the strong ties help to tie people together and create dense networks. However, this perhaps limits the links/influence with people outside the community. Therefore, weaker ties can spread information/influence more widely by providing links between dense networks. Brown suggests weak ties can 'help break down barriers, such as those caused by class or racial differences' (2021 p.9).

Gittell and Vidal (1998) distinguished between two types of social capital. Bonding social capital is sourced from within-group ties and is 'the type that brings people closer together who already know each other', and bridging social capital is found outside these ties and is 'the type that brings together people or groups who previously did not know each other' (Gittell and Vidal, 1998 p.15). Granovetter (1983) believes weak ties are more important in terms of bridging rather than bonding. Homophily can reinforce bonding social capital whereas heterophily can create bridging social capital with ties across different groups (Ramos et al., 2024). Students' housemates may be an important source of weak ties which can bridge diverse and dense networks. Therefore, they could potentially be useful for accessing information, particularly about career opportunities.

3.3.3 Homophily or a Melting Pot?

3.3.3.1 Homophily

The concept of 'homophily' is defined as 'the principle that a contact between similar people occurs at a higher rate than among dissimilar people' (McPherson et al., 2001 p.416). Networks are often influenced by 'homophily' (from the Greek 'love of the same') (ibid 2001) which suggests we connect with people like ourselves in all aspects of our lives (Lazarsfeld and Merton, 1978, McPherson and Smith-Lovin, 1987, Marsden, 1987, McPherson et al., 2001, Kossinets and Watts, 2009). This concept, based on the premise 'birds of a feather flock together', was first discussed in relation to social theory by Lazarsfeld and Merton (1978). The concept of homophily can be applied to individuals, groups, organisations or other social units (Kadushin, 2012). However, for the purpose of this study the focus will be on homophily in relation to individuals. On an individual level people with common attributes are more likely to connect or be friends. The friends we make, our romantic partners, spouses and other social and professional contacts are more likely to be similar in terms of age, gender, class, education and race etc than randomly selected members of the same population. Kossinets and Watts (2009) and Leenders (1996) suggest homophilous ties are more stable and enduring.

McPherson developed the concept of homophily as a distinct mechanism in networking theory and measures homophily's effects on tie formation (McPherson et al., 2001). In contrast, Bourdieu regarded homophily as an outcome of position/habitus and it is built into his model of how social capital is produced, maintained and converted. Bourdieu does not ignore homophily; the mechanism is apparent in his work on class homogamy, shared habitus and field proximity, for example elite education (Bourdieu and Clough, 1996), academic networks (Bourdieu, 1988), class based-marriages (Bourdieu, 1976) and taste (Bourdieu and Nice, 2010). These all help to generate 'similar-ties' and become social capital even if presented as effects of position/habitus rather than independent drivers.

Lazarsfeld and Merton (1978) differentiated between status and value homophily. Status homophily refers to either ascribed characteristics such as gender, age or

race or acquired characteristics such as education, class, occupation and marital status. Value homophily refers to attitudes and beliefs such as political allegiance. Homophily is a complex process because people with similar attitudes tend to socialise and therefore are more likely to have the same attitudes which creates a 'chicken and egg' situation – which comes first? Not only do similar people 'flock together' (McPherson et al., 2001) but they reinforce one another's ideas.

Monage and Contractor (2003) proposed two main lines of reasoning for the occurrence of homophily and suggested it occurs due to the theory of self-categorisation (Turner, 1987) and the similarity-attraction hypothesis (Byrne, 1971). The similarity-attraction hypothesis proposes people are more likely to interact with similar people or ones with similar attitudes. This may be due to mutual understanding leading to increased trust. According to the self-categorisation theory groups are formed when people categorise themselves based on social similarities and differences such as age, race, gender, education, profession etc and use these categories to identify others who are similar or different and are therefore more likely to interact and form groups with those perceived as similar. Therefore, the ideas 'birds of a feather flock together' (McPherson et al., 2001 p.417) and 'similarity breeds connections' (McPherson et al., 2001 p.415) help to explain the theory of homophily.

Blimling (2015) suggests people are drawn to social groups where they are likely to be accepted and therefore age, race, gender, social class and religious beliefs are often characteristics drawing people together and perhaps even developing friendships. This natural tendency to be drawn towards 'people like me' tends to produce homogenous social groups and explains why we probably have a lot in common with our closest 50 friends (Brown, 2021). Yuan and Gay suggest homophily brings together similar people and therefore also makes it less likely we will interact with those we regard as 'different' and therefore state 'homophily not only unifies, it also divides a network' (2017 p.1067) and raises important sociological questions about 'segregation, inequality and even the transmission of information between groups' (Kossinets and Watts, 2009 p.434). Therefore, flocking together of like-minded people can result in 'undesirable social outcomes' such as people 'being unable to access life-changing resource such as social capital and

cultural capital' (Brown, 2021 p.12). Kadushin (2012 p.204) believes 'social networks based on homophily may be fundamentally unfair' and can result in segregation and racial prejudice which is difficult to overcome. By interacting with people 'like me' our position becomes reinforced and groups can become socially isolated (Verbrugge, 1977).

Higher Education's civic mission includes 'cultivating understanding across our differences and advancing social progress toward equity' (Hudson et al., 2023 p.227). Therefore, universities aspire to create diverse and inclusive environments and yet SA can be one of the least diverse spaces on campus as students seek to live with others from similar backgrounds and characteristics (Owen, 2022). Also, some universities choose to allocate places based on similarities rather than differences in background, gender, race, culture, social class, hobbies and interests. This may reinforce existing social capital and contribute to social reproduction rather than providing opportunities to meet people from diverse backgrounds 'not like me' and expand one's social capital.

3.3.3.2 Melting Pot

Reay stresses the importance of education valuing diversity and the importance of decreasing social distance between people: 'there's mistrust, wariness and anxiety about people who are different from us'. By bringing together children in the classroom, albeit in schools, 'they start to learn that what they share is much greater than the differences between them' (Ferguson, 2017 p.1). Perhaps the same perspective could be applied to shared living with people from differing backgrounds, races and nationalities i.e. a melting pot in which they become integrated and 'promotes a sense of community and social solidarity' (Berray, 2019 p.143). One way of encountering diversity is by sharing an on-campus flat with students from different backgrounds, races and cultures which can promote open-mindedness to diversity (Mayhew et al., 2016 p.544). However, some university policies for allocating accommodation based on similar characteristics, or even inadvertently, may result in a lack of mixing between students from different cultures, ethnicities and backgrounds.

University campuses not only have the capacity but even a duty to 'create communities by drawing people into contact with those who are different from themselves' (Andersson et al., 2012 p.512). Andersson et al. (2012) questions the concept of universities as melting pots, because student halls can highlight differences and result in the separation of different types of students into homogenous groups. Previous research has focused on the important issue of diversity in university accommodation in a range of contexts such as ethnicity and gender (Andersson et al., 2012), sexuality (Taulke-Johnson, 2010) and (inter) nationality (Fincher and Shaw, 2009), all highlighting challenges facing students sharing accommodation. Universities attempting to mix students from different backgrounds, cultures and sexual orientations has sometimes led to cases of prejudice, bullying and victimisation. Bathmaker acknowledges the importance of SA in providing opportunities for students from different backgrounds to mix and makes a specific recommendation: 'Student accommodation may perpetuate segregation by social class, rather than provide opportunities for social mixing. If university is to broaden students' experiences of social diversity then universities need to consider mechanisms to encourage social mixing, rather than segregation' (Bathmaker et al., 2016 p.165). This was echoed by Hudson et al. (2023) who believes HE needs to create environments in which 'boundary-crossing friendships' can flourish.

The idyllic vision of a 'melting pot' of disparate student groups brought together and 'set down next to the unexpected neighbour' (Massey, 2005 p.151) does not necessarily result in harmonious relationships in peer-shared accommodation. Andersson et al. (2012) found conflict between home and international students resulting from communication difficulties due to differing attitudes towards socialising, food and alcohol. Holton (2017 p.9) found 'peer-shared living experiences were co-produced through friendships, encounters and the emotional and social networks performed in the flats' i.e. they did not passively consume their shared accommodation. Participants reported varying experiences of living alongside students of different ages, genders, ethnicities and nationalities. Hudson et al. (2023 p.248) highlights the need for students and educators to be prepared to deal with prejudice or conflict resulting from 'tense or hostile interactions' across social boundaries.

The principle of homophily is evident across all types of relationships within society (Kretschmer et al., 2024) and therefore may create unwanted segregation and even reinforce racial and other forms of prejudice. The idea HEIs are essentially 'melting pots' for mixing students from different backgrounds, social classes, ethnic groups, religions etc is not necessarily the case and instead, due to homophily, students gravitate towards students whom they perceive as being similar. However, university accommodation providers may be able to facilitate social connections between students 'unlike me' through the methods in which they allocate places in university accommodation by providing opportunities for students to live alongside students from different backgrounds. As a result, they can learn about other cultures, attitudes and religions and become more understanding and tolerant of differences. This strategy could be seen to utilise the 'contact hypothesis' developed by Allport (1979) in the 1950s, and supported more recently by Pettigrew and Tropp (2000, 2006, 2008) as a way to increase social integration and reduce prejudice. Allport (1979) believed people fear the unknown and are uncomfortable when encountering differences. Therefore, by providing opportunities for contact, fear and anxiety are reduced and by bringing different groups together this may help to overcome prejudices and facilitate social integration. On an individual basis, prejudice has shown to be reduced by 'boundary crossing friendship' i.e. friendships between people who have differing beliefs and values (Hudson et al., 2023 p.228). Through deep engagement with those who differ, students become more skilled at 'bridging social boundaries and meaningfully contributing to our pluralistic society' (Ibid, 2023 p.228) to create a more 'just and equitable society in which people of different religious, spiritual and secular worldviews can flourish' (Ibid 2023 p.250).

3.3.4 Propinquity

In addition to the idea 'birds of a feather flock together', research has also shown distance affects social relationships. Cabrera and Najarian (2015) found many types of social networks are shaped by the propinquity effect. Festinger et al. (1963) was first to identify the 'propinquity effect', where students were more likely to form relationships with those to whom they lived nearby.

Living alongside a group of diverse students may help to provide opportunities to develop friendships based on common interests rather than on ethnicity or social background due to propinquity principles. Staff responsible for allocating places in residences could consider 'diverse propinquity' where students are in proximity, and therefore frequent contact, with students across 'social boundaries' (Hudson et al., 2023). Having a house mate of a different racial/ethnic background can have a positive effect (Saenz, 2010, Camargo et al., 2010, Martin et al., 2014). Research has shown living in proximity to students from different ethnicities and cultures helps to break down stereotypes and facilitates friendships with people from diverse backgrounds (Shook and Fazio, 2008b, 2008a, Laar et al., 2005, Crisp and Turner, 2011). Mark and Harris (2012) explored roommate relationships of white first-year students and found those assigned a roommate of a different race were more likely to have friends of that race than those assigned a white roommate.

Human networks are created through the actions of not only individuals but also institutions (Kadushin, 2012). The extended contact effect (Paolini et al., 2007, Turner et al., 2007) suggests institutions may be able to reduce prejudice by encouraging 'interworld friendships' (Hudson et al., 2023) by creating environments in which these strong relationships can develop, for example where students are in proximity and interact frequently with diverse students such as in SA. Therefore, Hudson et al. (2023) suggests 'worldview diversity' should be considered when assigning students to halls. The actions of LU when allocating accommodation may facilitate the development of social networks based on propinquity, being in the same place at the same time (Kadushin, 2012). According to Kadushin, 'once connection happens, once people are linked, there is a tendency for them to acquire the same characteristics, values or social statuses from one another' (2012 p.14). Propinquity may have a disruptive effect on social reproduction by providing the opportunity to live with people from different social groups. The social networks developed in first-year accommodation may influence students' experiences whilst at university but also post-graduation, perhaps even helping to secure graduate employment.

3.3.5 Graduate Networks and Employability

This section explores graduate employability to provide a context for the discussion of the importance of social networks developed whilst at university, possibly in SA, on post-university life. Graduate employability is a key concern for HEIs with increasing focus on graduate outcomes (Nghia et al., 2020). Research shows graduates are less likely to be unemployed and will generally have higher salaries than non-graduates. However, the lifting of the cap on university places has contributed to a hyper-competitive graduate job market (Bradley and Waller, 2018) with many graduates unable to secure 'graduate-level' jobs. Despite increasing number of students in HE from lower socio-economic backgrounds there is evidence of continuing 'unequal graduate outcomes in terms of employment trajectories in the UK' (Waller et al., 2018 p.xv), such as research by Commission on Social Mobility and Child Poverty Commission (2014) and The Sutton Trust (Montacute, 2019, Hecht et al., 2020). This disadvantage is due to a complex web of factors such as students' experiences pre-university, whilst studying and post-graduation (Brown, 2016).

3.3.5.1 Disparity in Graduate Outcomes

Research suggests students from lower socio-economic groups are often disadvantaged in the graduate labour market when compared with middle-class graduates (Purcell et al., 1999, Smith et al., 2000, Purcell et al., 2013). For example, despite students from state schools doing as well, if not better, than privately educated students, they are less likely to secure graduate position in elite professions (Friedman et al., 2015). Britton et al. (2019) found graduates from higher-income backgrounds were likely to earn higher salaries. This was supported by Sullivan (2018) who found people from high-income families were more likely to be in the top 5% of earners compared with those from lower-income families, particularly those privately educated. Despite more companies recruiting people from a wider variety of backgrounds, those from higher social class families continue to dominate higher-paid jobs (Donnelly and Gamsu, 2019). Overall, in the UK people from more privileged backgrounds are disproportionately more likely to work in the

elite professions such as law or medicine (Montacute, 2019). Friedman and Laurison (2019) explored graduate outcomes and access to the elite professions and identified a powerful 'class' ceiling. They found inequity in graduate outcomes between students from disadvantaged backgrounds compared with students from more privileged backgrounds, even if they attended the same university. When comparing students graduating from Russell Group universities, a student from a disadvantaged background with a first-class degree is less likely to get an elite job than a student with a lower second degree from a more privileged background.

Wright and Mulvey (2021) suggest these differences cannot only be attributed to higher education credentials as research has shown even when controlling for university attended and course studied, upper-middle-class graduates were more likely to work in professional jobs with higher salaries (Friedman et al., 2015, Britton et al., 2019, Friedman and Laurison, 2019). Britton et al (2019) found graduates from high-income families had 21% higher median earnings than those from low-income families and when course studied and university attended were controlled there was still a 10% difference, suggesting social class impacts graduates' careers. Coulson et al. (2018) suggested differences in earnings may be due to several factors, including low levels of social, cultural and financial capital. The Paired Peers project found working-class students were less able to mobilise the necessary resources and capitals required to 'play the game' post-graduation (Brown, 2016). Social networks are important in the labour market as many people find work through family, friends and their wider network (Montgomery, 1991, Mouw, 2003, Tholen et al., 2013). Bradley (2018) found working-class students were less likely to have contacts in elite professions and therefore lacked the knowledge or introductions needed for successful applications.

3.3.5.2 Access to Networks

Purcell et al (2013) found inequalities accessing useful networks partially explained inequalities in graduate outcomes. Wright and Mulvey (2021) suggest one of the contributing factors is upper-middle-class students can convert 'classed resources' to 'positional advantage', for example by using their social networks to help secure internships.

Social class influences young people's access to internships and work experience (Hunt and Scott, 2018) due to lack of connections (Bathmaker et al., 2013).

UpReach's research showed university students from independent schools were 4.5 times more likely to secure work experience through 'the family or some of their friends' than state-educated peers. Privately-educated students were six times more likely than state school students to connect at school with parents working in professional careers (Lough, 2019).

Internships have been highlighted as a means by which social inequalities are reproduced because many are low or even unpaid (Cullinane and Montacute, 2018). Therefore, socio-economically disadvantaged students either cannot afford to take them or do not have the necessary contacts or resources to identify possible internships (Wright and Mulvey, 2021). Internships were often not advertised and often secured through family social networks (Montacute, 2019), were more likely to be secured by middle-class students (Abrahams, 2017), with financial assistance from parents (Bradley and Waller, 2018), and often led to permanent positions (Brown, 2016).

Brown et al. (2004) found despite universities widening participation initiatives, working-class students continued to struggle to gain jobs with elite companies with the highest salaries and attributed this to a lack of 'personal capital'. Finn acknowledges HE is trying to make some types of mobility 'possible, normal and valuable' but believes 'it is students' and graduates' personal networks which sustain, direct and give emotional context to mobility practices during and after completing university' (Finn, 2017b p.768). Therefore, students' networks and access to social capital may influence their ability to find and secure graduate employment. The amount of, and access to, social capital may help to explain the inequalities existing in the graduate employability market (Tomlinson, 2017).

Bourdieu and Boltanski (1978) argue 'scholastic capital' is no longer sufficient and people must leverage a priori forms of capital, such as economic, social and cultural capital to find employment successfully. Research has highlighted the classed nature of graduate employment (Brown and Scase, 1994, Brown et al., 2004, Smetherham, 2006, Burke, 2016). For example, working-class graduates may lack social capital in

the form of personal connections and recommendations which many graduates from middle- or upper-class backgrounds rely on when job hunting (Burke, 2015).

Personal contacts are frequently used to find information about job opportunities as demonstrated by Granovetter (1974) who found 65% of managerial workers found jobs through contacts. Tholen et al. (2013), in their study of educational elites, found social contacts were important when seeking employment, particularly in graduate markets with an oversupply of suitably qualified applicants. 'Education plays a crucial role in providing networks and connections but also legitimising it' and many graduates actively use their educational contacts to find employment or work experience (Tholen et al., 2013 p.147). Espinoza et al. (2025) recommended universities should foster networking to provide opportunities for all students, particularly those from less advantaged backgrounds, and SA may be one such arena in which to do this.

Christie and Burke (2021) highlighted the influence of family background on young graduates' career paths and found family and friends and the resulting social capital 'have emerged as pivotal in facilitating eventual graduate employment' (Christie and Burke, 2021 p.87). Middle-class students were found to be more willing to leverage their networks to gain a 'foot in the door', perhaps because the field was more aligned to their habitus whereas working-class students were more reluctant to utilise their contacts as they regarded this as morally unacceptable, perhaps because they felt insecure in a typically middle-class field (Abrahams, 2017).

First-year SA could be an important site in which to expand one's social network and develop social capital and therefore whom one finds oneself living next door to may not only influence one's experience at university but also post-graduation in terms of employment.

3.4 Implications for The Study

The literature review revealed extensive research into the purpose and development of SA in the UK. The form and type of SA has changed in recent years but its impact on student experiences is undeniable, particularly in relation to student retention,

development of friendships and social network formation. However, despite wide-ranging research, Reynolds (2020) suggests ‘the significance of student accommodation in determining the mobility of students has been largely omitted from discussion’. Therefore, this study explores the importance of SA in providing access to networks and social capital, which may contribute to social mobility, using Bourdieu as the theoretical framework. In particular, it considers the under-researched topic of co-habiting students (Holton, 2016a) and the implications of the process adopted by HEIs when allocating places, which has largely been ignored in the literature (Bradley in Rosenbaum, 2018). Homophily and propinquity both influence the development of social networks and therefore these concepts are central to the theoretical framework and inform the research design. Much previous research has explored students’ experiences of SA whilst they are studying rather than its longer-term impact. Therefore, this thesis addresses this gap in the literature by also investigating the impact of SA post-graduation and regarding, particularly, graduate employment.

3.5 Chapter Summary

This chapter presents the theoretical framework using a Bourdieusian lens to explore the impact of SA on student experiences not only whilst at university but also post-graduation, with a particular focus on networks and social capital. In particular, the concepts of strength of ties, homophily and propinquity are explored as they help to explain the formation of social networks. Graduate employability is also discussed because social networks can be important mechanisms for learning about and securing graduate positions. University, and particularly the people one encounters in first-year SA, may expand one’s social network. Finally, the chapter discusses the implications of the literature review and theoretical framework for the study. The next chapter will present the research methodology adopted in this study.

Chapter 4: Research Design and Methodology

4.1 Introduction

This chapter presents the research design and methods used to explore the experiences of undergraduate students living in shared university accommodation during first year and its impact on post-university lives. The chapter begins with an introduction to me, the researcher, and my ontological and epistemological stance which frames the research. The methodology and case study design are outlined along with a rationale as to why a questionnaire and semi-structured interviews were employed. The chapter discusses the data collection tools and analysis techniques and reflects on the methodology before concluding with ethical considerations.

4.2 The Researcher

Thomas (2009 p.109) states ‘the person doing the research takes a central role in the interpretation’ and discovery of knowledge. It is impossible to separate the inquirer from the researched as knowledge is socially constructed and therefore the researcher is central to its interpretation. As a constructivist researcher I need to recognise how my own background, attitudes and experience impact the construction of knowledge created and its interpretation (Creswell, 2014). The constructivist perspective recognises ‘human beings do not find or discover knowledge so much as construct or make it’ (Schwandt, 2007 p.39) and therefore it is ‘impossible to separate the inquirer from the inquired into’ (Guba and Lincoln, 1989 p.88). In the 1980s I met life-long friends in SA. As a tutor I see the impact first-year SA and flat-mates have on students’ experiences and their ability to adjust to university life. I am also a parent of university-aged children who experienced the anxiety of wondering who they would live with, and their lived experiences of SA. These three perspectives may influence the research and my interpretation of reality. As a lecturer at LU I considered myself an ‘insider researcher’ (Trowler, 2014), and was mindful the impact this may have on the research but discuss this later in the ethics section (4.10).

4.3 Research Position

Lincoln and Guba (2013 p. 37) identify four central questions in the pursuit of knowledge: 'What is the nature of reality?' (the ontological question); 'What is the nature of the relationship between the knower and the knowable?' (the epistemological question); 'How does one go about acquiring knowledge?' (the methodological question); and 'Of all the knowledge available to me, which is the most valuable?' (the axiological question). The answers to the second and third questions are constrained by one's ontological perspective.

Thomas (2009 p.76) stresses the 'need to acknowledge one's positionality and how this affects one's interpretation' and therefore by adopting a constructivist paradigm I acknowledge my findings will not reveal objective 'truths' (Crotty, 1998) but instead will be an interpretation of the data based on construction of knowledge and will recognise 'reality is multi-layered and complex' (Cohen et al., 2011 p.17). The participants in the study gave their own meaning to events and these meanings 'are part of their construction of the world' (Cohen et al., 2011 p.15). Therefore, my aim is to 'understand, explain and demystify social reality' (Cohen et al., 2011 p.15) as interpreted by the respondents. Despite acknowledging the lack of objective 'truths' it is still possible to adopt a balanced and systematic approach (Thomas, 2009 p.76).

4.4 Ontology

It is widely acknowledged researchers must be able to justify choice of methods in relation to one's research philosophy and view of the world (Gray, 2004 p.31). Twining (2017 p.A2) suggests ontology relates to 'beliefs about the nature of being and reality', refers to the different ways in which we view the world (Thomas, 2009 p.86) and is concerned with answering the question 'what is the nature of reality?' (Guba and Lincoln, 1989 p.83). As a constructivist researcher my view of the world is there is no single reality but many, as reality is socially constructed and 'entities exist only in the minds of the persons contemplating them' (Lincoln, 2013 p.39). A key ontological assumption of constructivism is the idea of 'relativism' (ibid 2013). A relativist ontology contends many socially constructed realities exist which are not governed by natural laws. 'Truth is defined as the best informed and most

sophisticated construction on which there is consensus' rather than the single reality realists would assert (Guba and Lincoln, 1989 p.84). Due to the relative nature of constructivism and the relationship between the researcher and researched which is context-specific 'knowledge is not "discovered" but rather "created", it exists only in the time/space framework in which it is generated' (Lincoln, 2013 p.40).

There is no one objective 'truth' about the experiences of my participants in first-year SA but instead multiple interpretations influenced by many factors including their background, experiences, the external environment, family, friends and also the interaction between myself the 'researcher' and them as 'participant' as they 'actively create meaning' (Silverman, 2009 p.226). I will interpret their meaning using theory to construct diverse yet shared understanding of participants' realities.

4.5 Epistemology

If ontology is concerned with answering the question 'what is reality?' then epistemology is concerned with answering the question 'what is the source of knowledge?' (Beck, 1979 p.3) and provides 'a philosophical background for deciding which kinds of knowledge are legitimate and adequate' (Gray, 2004 p.16).

Crotty (1998) suggests epistemology influences the chosen methodology. Easterby-Smith (2008) believes having an epistemological perspective is important for a number of reasons. It helps to clarify issues relating to research design, while an understanding of research philosophy helps the researcher to recognise which designs fit. Knowledge exists everywhere and is interpreted by the researcher and therefore the researcher's own value position is considered in the research process because data are not just collected but created (May, 2001 p.26). Unlike in natural reality where the laws of science exist, to a greater extent, social reality requires a different approach because facts are not independent of the channel through which they are interpreted (Crotty, 1998) and therefore what we discover cannot be separated from how it is discovered (May, 2001 p.27). Thomas (2009) suggests as knowledge is fragile it is important not to be too overconfident with one's conclusions. This contrasts with the scientific method, which would be trying to establish cause and effect and law-like generalisations.

During the research process the research participants and I constructed knowledge about student experiences of SA through the social interaction of the online interviews and our shared knowledge of LU was key to this construction.

4.6 Methodology

Choice of methodology is influenced by one's theoretical perspective (Crotty, 1998) and therefore this section justifies my methodology from a constructivist researcher's perspective.

The methodology presented in this section appears to be logical and linear but, in reality, by adopting a constructivist perspective the methodology was more iterative, interactive and open (Guba and Lincoln, 1989). There was movement back and forth between the literature review, the questionnaire design and analysis and the interviews. Crotty (1998) argues the division of methods into quantitative methods, associated with positivist research, and qualitative methods, associated with constructionist research, is not justified. He suggests it is possible to use either quantitative or qualitative methods, or both, to achieve research questions, whether we are an objectivist or a constructionist researcher. Crotty argues if one is a constructivist researcher then both qualitative and quantitative research findings must be treated equally as constructions and 'talk of objectivity, or validity, or generalisability' are no longer relevant (1998 p.16).

4.6.1 Mixed-methods Research

Mixed-methods research is the 'notion of using multiple methods to generate and analyse different kinds of data in the same study' (Schwandt, 2007 p.198). This study employed a mixed-methods approach combining quantitative and qualitative research methods in its research design (Tashakkori and Teddlie, 2003, Creswell, 2014). I believed the combination would provide a more in-depth understanding of and 'more perspectives on the phenomena being investigated' (Easterby-Smith, 2008 p.71). Mixed-methods research allows investigation of both the 'what' (quantitative) and 'how' or 'why' (qualitative) forms of research questions (Cohen et al., 2011) and these complement each other rather than oppose each other

(Thomas, 2009 p.83). Using a mixed-methods approach also provides the opportunity to discover divergent views and 'reflect different voices and perspectives' (Tashakkori and Teddlie, 2003 p.17).

I adopted an 'Explanatory Sequential Mixed-methods' approach which involved two phases of research (Creswell, 2014 p.220). The first phase consisted of collecting mainly quantitative survey data via an online questionnaire. The questionnaire aided sampling as it identified potential participants for the interviews, one advantage of the mixed-methods approach (Denscombe, 2008). The second phase involved qualitative semi-structured interviews using 'purposive sampling' (Punch, 2014 p.211) to select respondents from the questionnaire. According to Creswell (2014), analysis of the quantitative data is done before the qualitative research is conducted in order to inform the qualitative research and the analysis is done separately and then compared to help with interpretation. However, in my study this was somewhat more of an iterative process with initial analysis of the questionnaire data used to inform the selection of respondents for the interviews but then the questionnaire findings were revisited.

Alternative research designs were considered in the early stages of the research project. I considered a longitudinal study where I would interview students in first year and then conduct follow-up interviews in their final year. However, I decided there would be ethical issues associated with researching current students. Grounded theory was considered which aims to derive theory out of research data which is 'grounded' in the views of the research participants (Bryman, 2004). However, previous research provided a theoretical base for this study and theory generation was not a key goal of this study. I also dismissed using phenomenography which is concerned with mapping the different ways in which people experience and perceive phenomena, in this case SA (Marton, 1986). This method was deemed inappropriate given the multi-faceted nature of the research project and the research questions.

4.7 Case Study Design

A case study is appropriate to try and understand 'how' and 'why' (Thomas, 2016) and in this study I was interested in exploring 'how' students were allocated first-year accommodation and 'why' and 'how', this impacted their experiences. Tight regards case studies as a type of research design and suggests 'case studies are small-scale research with meaning' which are bounded in scope, but can make 'significant contributions to knowledge' (Tight, 2017 pp. 17 & 1). Case study research is not regarded as a method but a scaffold to support the study. In this study a single instrumental descriptive case study based on one university (Yin, 2014), was regarded as the most appropriate approach. Using multiple research methods helped to achieve 'deep understanding' and allowed for triangulation of data from the questionnaire and case participant interviews as the data overlapped. The interviews allowed me to explore in greater depth in contrast to the questionnaire findings which were broader (Woodside, 2016 p.6).

Case studies are regarded as particularly suitable for educational settings (Stake, 1995, Merriam, 1998, Yin, 2014, Hancock and Algozzine, 2017) as they are complex organisations consisting of many actors, functions and relationships. Case study research is consistent with a constructivist researcher's approach which recognises 'alternative interpretations' and 'the complexity and embeddedness of social truths' (Cohen et al., 2007 p.256) and is therefore a preferred method for constructivism research (Simons, 2009).

As this study is based on one university it is impossible to claim the findings are representative of all universities. However, the hope was the findings would provide a rich, in-depth understanding of the experiences and dynamics of shared student living and its impact on students' experiences. Stake (1995) suggests cases with easy access should be selected to maximise what we can learn. Therefore, the university was chosen due to the ease of access to 'what people think, do and feel' (Jorgensen, 1989 p.56), and as a staff member, students, staff, alumni and policies were more accessible than other institutions.

Key strengths of case study research are: its depth and understanding of context and process (Flyvberg in Denzin and Lincoln, 2011); it 'illuminates the readers' understanding of an issue (Stark and Torrance in Somekh and Lewin, 2005); it deals with complexity and can be invaluable in helping to understand, extend experience and increase conviction about a subject (Stake, 1995). The aim of case research is 'particularisation not generalisation' (Stake, 1995 p.8) in order to provide a 'rich portrayal of a single setting to inform practice' (Simons, 2009 p.24).

Limitations of case study research include the inability to generalise from one case to the population as a whole, lack of 'external validity' and reliability (Tight, 2017). However, when using a case study method researchers are more concerned with 'the unique features of the case' regarded as the 'ideographic approach' in contrast to the 'nomothetic' approach concerned with generating findings which could be generalised across time and place (Bryman, 2004 p.50). Case studies are also criticised for the time involved and the volume of data generated. Yin (2014) defends the use of case studies and argues this criticism is levelled at ethnographic type studies where data generated can be vast, rather than all case studies. A further challenge of case study research is deciding where to draw the boundaries in terms of what to include (Stark and Torrance in Somekh and Lewin, 2005). In my situation, it was difficult to decide where to draw the line around the case study. I decided to include alumni who graduated within the last 10 years because I was interested in whether their contacts from university had been useful in later years.

Bryman (2004) proposes case studies can employ both quantitative and qualitative research and can be used for both induction (theory generation) and deduction (theory testing). This study is a combination of deductive and inductive approaches. The online questionnaire explored a wide range of views of graduates and explored the association between various variables such as graduates' background and the extent to which they adapted to university life and utilised their network (deductive). The semi-structured interviews adopted more of an inductive approach and sought to generate theory about student experiences of shared living and the impact on their lives, both at university and post-university, despite being deductive in terms of being informed by theory and literature.

Often in academic research, researchers guarantee respondents and organisations anonymity. However, given the nature of the case study I decided not to anonymise the university and, as a member of staff, its identity would be obvious. Therefore, when applying for ethical approval I could not ‘guarantee institutional anonymity’ (Trowler, 2014 p.43). However, I was able to ensure the identity of my respondents was protected by using anonymised names.

4.8 Data Collection Methods

The case study methodology can investigate a wide variety of evidence ‘documentation, archival records, interviews, direct observations, participant-observation and physical artefacts’ (Yin, 2014 p.105). Therefore, for this case study, qualitative and quantitative data collection instruments were utilised which included an online survey and semi-structured interviews with LU’s undergraduate alumni. University reports, policies and website were also consulted to provide background information.

Primary research data collection took place between January 2020 and July 2020. The questionnaire was launched in January 2020 and was closed in July when sufficient respondents for the semi-structured interviews were recruited and all interviews completed. The semi-structured interviews were conducted between May and July 2020.

4.8.1 Study Participants

The population of interest was LU alumni who graduated from an undergraduate degree between 2010 and 2020 and had lived and studied in the UK prior to attending university.

The goal was to recruit ‘traditional’ students’, rather than mature students, who had moved away from the parental home and lived in university-managed shared SA. The focus of the study was UK-based students because the issues relating to student social mobility and inequality are of particular significance in this context and much embedded in British culture. I also considered the length of time since

respondents graduated. I was originally going to include alumni who graduated within the last five years. However, I decided, as I was exploring the experiences of alumni and the impact of their Lancaster network not only during their degree but after graduating, I would extend this to 10 years. Respondents would be reflecting on events and experiences from a significant time ago and therefore would be relying on their memory which could potentially affect the research findings.

4.8.1.1 Impact of Memory

The research methodology relies on the retrospective accounts of alumni with a temporal gap ranging from 3 to 13 years between the lived experience of first-year SA and the act of reporting. This obviously has implications regarding the extent to which the respondents are accurately recalling their experiences and how they reconstructed their past through the lens of their current identity.

Schwarz et al. (2007) argues human memory limits what people can accurately recall and report on and therefore suggests real time data capture can provide more accurate data. However, in this research this was not possible because I was retrospectively investigating experiences of first year SA. However, retrospective reporting is regarded as more feasible when the type of information being collected is infrequent, rare and important (Schwarz et al., 2007) such as in the case of first year experiences of SA, which are more memorable than routine events such as use of public transport.

However, given the length of time between the experience and the research it is worth considering the implications for the research findings. Conway and Pleydell-Pearce (2000) identify the concept of the 'self-memory system' (SMS) and argue memories are not retrieved as static files but are instead reconstructed to support the current 'working self'. In this research graduates may align their memories of SA with their current professional status or personal relationships. Therefore, memories are constructive rather than reproductive and may not completely reflect the actual event due to seven types of 'sins' (Schacter, 2022). Three of these 'sins' refer to 'omission' which relate to various types of forgetting: transience (less able to access information over time); absent-mindedness (breakdown between attention and

memory) and blocking (inability to access information stored in memory). Four 'sins' of commission relate to distortion of memories; misattribution (relating a memory to the wrong source); suggestibility (memories coming from suggestions or misinformation); bias (distortions which occur retrospectively due to current knowledge and beliefs) and persistence (intrusive recall of events) (Schacter, 2022). This framework is intended to acknowledge the way in which memory functions in everyday life rather than highlighting 'fatal flaws in the architecture of memory' (Schacter, 2022 p.37). All of these 'sins' may be applicable to alumni's memories of first-year SA but bias, transience and misattribution are perhaps most relevant.

Memories of events may fade over time and are subject to bias but memory of 'ones' emotional reactions to events is long-lasting, vivid and easily retrieved' (Levine and Safer, 2002 p.169). Therefore, it is likely respondents recalled their emotional reactions to first-year SA as it was a period of great change. However, the findings may be a result of memories fading over time. For example, the intensity of negative emotions may fade faster than positive ones (Levine and Safer, 2002) which may be relevant when interpreting the satisfaction rates with SA in the questionnaire.

Due to the time delay between experiences of first-year SA and the research being conducted respondents memories may be subject to transience, i.e. respondents are less able to access the required information. Tourangeau et al. (2000) suggests respondents use estimation strategies in surveys when precise information is not available. Therefore, the survey results may perhaps not be a true reflection of their actual experiences. Bradburn et al. (1987) suggests when memory fails respondents infer answers based on their current situation. For example, the responses to the question asking about whether flatmates 'were like me' may be influenced by whether they are still friends with those people and the assumption they were similar.

Misattribution (Schacter, 2001) may occur if alumni appropriated memories belonging to their flatmates rather than themselves due the retelling of stories over the years and then believing they were their own actual memories.

Memories are complex and it is difficult to know whether respondents accurately recall their true experiences, particularly given the time delay between the experience of living in first-year SA and the research. However, given the unique and

influential topic and the question phrasing it is hoped the findings will provide an accurate representation of alumni's experiences of first-year SA.

4.8.2 Online Questionnaire

An online questionnaire was selected to investigate and compare attitudes, knowledge and behaviour as it is efficient, low-cost in both money and time, participants can complete the questionnaire when and where convenient, on any device, data entry is direct, it avoids interviewer bias and assures anonymity (Gray, 2004, Sue, 2016). The survey was the first phase of the primary research and the questionnaire was designed using Qualtrics, an online questionnaire package enabling the researcher to design, collect and analyse data in one integrated environment (<https://www.qualtrics.com/uk/>). A link to the questionnaire was generated in Qualtrics and distributed via social media. The questionnaire was designed to gather mainly quantitative data about alumni's experiences of shared university living and their social networks developed through university life. However, open-ended questions were also included to allow respondents to share more detailed responses. The survey was also designed to aid sampling and identify potential participants for the semi-structured interviews.

4.8.2.1 Questionnaire Design

Questions relating to family background and habitus such as parental education and school attended drew on the work of Bourdieu and Nice (2013) and postcode was included to allow categorisation by POLAR4 (Office for Students, 2024). The focus and wording of the pre-university questions, such as reasons for applying to university, were informed by Holton's study of UK students' living arrangements so the results could be compared (Holton, 2018). Questions relating to satisfaction with accommodation and attitudes towards housemates built on the work of Holton (2016a) and the concept of 'homophily' i.e. 'flatmates were like me' (McPherson et al., 2001). The questions about social capital and networks were informed by the work of Bourdieu (2002), Kadushin (2012) and Brown (2021) and contacts for finding jobs drew on the work of (Granovetter, 1974) and Tholen et al. (2013). Burke (2015, 2016) provided useful context for the questions relating to graduate employment.

The classification questions (including the questions about personal circumstances prior to attending university) were located at the end of the questionnaire. These types of questions may have been perceived as more objectionable but respondents may be less likely to quit at this stage or see them as less objectionable in the context of the previous questions (Oppenheim, 2005, Toepoel, 2016). Had they been located at the beginning of the questionnaire respondents may have been offended by questions about income or disability and not continued with the questionnaire. Throughout the questionnaire participants were offered the option of 'prefer not to say' in case they did not want to disclose things about themselves. The majority of the multiple-choice questions offered participants an 'other' category in case their responses did not match the options provided and they could include an open-ended response (Oppenheim, 2005). Filtering questions were used so only relevant questions were asked to help increase response rates (Cannell, 1985). In addition to the multiple-choice questions, four open-ended questions were included to provide the participant with the opportunity to expand on their responses. The final question asked whether they would be willing to take part in an interview and, if so, asked them for their email address. Appendix Two contains further information regarding how relevant literature and theory informed questionnaire design. A copy of the questionnaire is in Appendix Three.

4.8.2.2 Piloting

Creating effective questionnaires which elicit desired responses from respondents is time consuming and often requires several iterations to produce an effective questionnaire (Oppenheim, 2005). To ensure respondents understood the questions, check routing worked effectively and identify potential problems, the questionnaire was piloted in two ways (Oppenheim, 2005). Firstly, I invited a recent graduate from LU to complete the questionnaire whilst I was in attendance. The respondent completed the questionnaire online as they would in the actual study but at the same time made comments about any questions they were unsure about and anything they thought could be improved. The questionnaire took eight minutes to complete, which I believed to be appropriate. As a result of this pilot I revisited the terminology in the questionnaire to make sure the language was accessible, reworded the

question about securing work via a contact, revisited the classification questions and expanded the sample to include alumni graduating since 2010. I then distributed the link to five other recent graduates and asked them to complete the questionnaire and provide feedback. I made a few minor adjustments to the wording of a few questions such as the response options to the question on salary. I also shared the questionnaire with a trusted colleague, competent in quantitative research, for feedback and they confirmed they could not see any potential issues.

4.8.2.3 Sampling and Distribution of the Questionnaire

Random sampling of the university's alumni was not feasible as I did not have access to the whole population i.e. it is an 'inaccessible population' (Burns and Burns, 2008 p.182). Therefore, non-probability 'convenience sampling' (Creswell and Guetterman, 2019) was used where volunteers were asked to take part in the survey via the alumni LinkedIn group. I initially thought it would be relatively easy to recruit alumni as I imagined the alumni office would be willing to email alumni with a request to take part in my research. The General Data Protection Regulations (GDPR) introduced in May 2018 means students have to provide explicit consent (European Commission, 2019) and opt in to receive marketing type emails but I was confident a large majority of the alumni would have opted in. However, the alumni office was reluctant to contact alumni as they were inundated with similar requests from other researchers and instead suggested contacting alumni initially via LinkedIn.

There is limited research regarding the use of LinkedIn as a mechanism for recruiting respondents (Stokes et al., 2019). However, LU has a closed alumni LinkedIn group. As an alumna I joined the group and hoped to recruit respondents by this mechanism. I considered the ethics of using the LinkedIn group as a means of recruiting respondents and decided, as the LU Ethics guidelines state 'no person shall be subject to unreasonable persuasion to become involved in research' (Lancaster University, 2009), as long as I did not place undue pressure on the members I would be operating ethically. I also used 'snowball' sampling where I asked respondents to distribute the questionnaire to their network of other alumni (Toepoel, 2016). I also distributed the questionnaire link on X (formerly Twitter) and LU's colleges kindly retweeted the link. The plan was to gather a minimum of 100

responses to the questionnaire. Toepoel (2016) states there is no formula for calculating the sample size when using non-probability sampling as the likelihood of being selected is not known.

The challenges I faced using LinkedIn to recruit respondents was the potential of an unrepresentative sample as those alumni who had been more 'successful' and had greater networks may be more likely to use LinkedIn and therefore may be over-represented in the sample. As an online survey is self-selecting (Ruths and Pfeffer, 2014) I was concerned the resulting sample may be over-represented by alumni graduating with degrees from the faculty in which I work because they perhaps recognised my name and as a result were more likely to respond to the invitation to participate.

4.8.2.4 Incentive

I was concerned I may have a low response to the questionnaire. Cohen (2018 p.503) suggests 'an important factor in maximising response rates is the use of incentives'. Research has indicated the offer of an incentive can increase response rates (Görizt et al., 2008). However, research on lottery-type incentives suggests they have little or no effect on response rates (Toepoel, 2016). However, I felt an incentive may raise interest in the survey and therefore I offered an incentive in the form of entry into a free prize draw to win either a £50 Amazon voucher (selected by the winner) or a £50 donation to a charity of choice.

4.8.2.5 Questionnaire Data Analysis

The data generated was largely quantitative, measuring students' attitudes, experiences, and perceptions of shared university accommodation and life post-university with a few free-text questions. Toepoel (2016) suggests before analysing the data it should be cleaned by removing all unnecessary variables such as entry errors, respondents' identifying information and illogical answers. There were 317 responses of which 247 were fully complete and eight were 80% complete and therefore I decided to include these and analysed 255 responses.

Basic quantitative analysis included descriptive statistics suggested by Tight (2017 p.171) such as frequencies, percentages, measures of central tendency (averages) and measures of dispersion (ranges). For example, mean scores were calculated for questions such as the reasons students decided to go to university and the reasons why students chose to study at Lancaster University to compare the relative importance of these factors. Likert scales (1=Strongly Disagree to 5=Strongly Agree) were used to explore and compare the attitudes of the respondents. By converting the individual responses into mean scores, such as the mean satisfaction of accommodation, or the mean scores relating to respondent's attitudes to their housemates such as 'flatmates were like me' or 'flatmates were from different nationalities' it was possible to identify a 'centre of gravity' for the institution. It allowed me to characterise the environment of Lancaster University rather than just the individuals within it and transformed individual psychological states into a sociological metric of the 'field'. The data was presented using tables, bar charts and pie charts. The data was exported to SPSS for further analysis. Cross-tabulations were conducted to identify correlations between two factors (Burns and Burns, 2008). For example, is there any relationship between student background and whether they secured a job at a company due to their network? These relationships were explored using the chi-square test. Chi-square investigates the extent to which the actual sample percentages are significantly different to the expected values (ibid 2008). The P-value indicates the extent to which the results are likely to be similar or different to the expected value and therefore identify whether there are significant differences between the two groups. For example, is there an association between school attended and income? Differences between mean scores were explored using Independent Samples T-tests (ibid 2008). The primary justification for using means and T-tests on Likert scale data (1=Strongly Disagree to 5=Strongly Agree) lies in the robustness of parametric statistics. Methodological literature, particularly the work of Norman (2010) argues parametric tests are valid for ordinal data provided the sample size is sufficient. The thesis utilised a sample of 255 and therefore according to the Central Limit Theorem (Burns and Burns, 2008 p.187) the sample size is sufficient and the sampling distribution of the means will approximate normality. Therefore, I could rely on the sensitivity of the T-test to detect differences between groups such as Male vs. Female, State vs. Independent school etc.

Ethnicity, type of accommodation and school attended were recoded into two categories to allow a comparison of means using an independent samples T-Test:-

- White and BAME¹/other (possibly non-white adopted by Yorke and Longden (2008))
- College on campus and other accommodation.
- Independent and state schools

The open-ended questions enabled respondents to share further comments about the people they met at university. These responses were analysed using thematic analysis (Braun and Clarke, 2022).

4.8.3 Semi-structured Interviews

The purpose of the semi-structured interviews was to explore in greater depth the 'how' and 'why' questions relating to alumni's experience of shared university living in first year. Yin (2014) suggests interviews are one of the most important sources of case study evidence. Semi-structured interviews were chosen to allow me to reorder the questions, change the direction of the interview, ask additional questions, respond to something which had not been anticipated and 'allows for probing of views and opinions where it is desirable for respondents to expand on their answers' (Gray, 2004 p.217). Gray argues 'the well-conducted interview is a powerful tool for eliciting rich data on people's views, attitudes and the meanings that underpin their lives and behaviours' (ibid p.213). However, interviewing is not simply the process of asking and answering questions it is the creation of 'a contextually bound and mutually created story' (Fontana and Frey in Denzin and Lincoln, 2008 p.116). Using

¹ BAME stands for Black, Asian and minority ethnic. This definition is widely recognised and used to identify patterns of marginalisation and segregation caused by attitudes toward an individual's ethnicity. Advance HE recognises the limitations of this acronym, particularly: the assumption that minority ethnic students are a homogenous group, the acronym's function as a label to describe minority ethnic groups of people, rather than identities with which people have chosen to identify and the perception that BAME refers only to non-white people, which does not consider white minority ethnic groups' (Advance HE, 2020). Lancaster University acknowledges the difficulties with the term 'BAME' and avoids its use and instead adopts the phrase 'Black, Asian and Ethnic Minorities'.

the semi-structured interview approach the interview guide highlights several topic areas and if necessary prompts the respondent (Flick, 2023).

The original intention was to conduct the interviews either in person or online depending on the geographical location of the participant. The use of video interviewing has become more prevalent as it is possible to retain the benefits of in-person interviewing such as being able to read body language, maintain eye contact and provide visual cues whilst at the same time reducing time and travel costs (Hanna, 2012, Janghorban et al., 2014, Deakin and Wakefield, 2014, Lo Iacono et al., 2016, Archibald et al., 2019). Due to the Covid-19 pandemic all interviews were conducted and recorded using Microsoft Teams.

4.8.3.1 Sampling

Respondents completing the online questionnaire were asked whether they would be willing to take part in further research in the form of an interview. Of the 255 responses analysed, 127 (49.8%) respondents agreed to participate in an interview. I used 'purposive sampling' (Punch, 2014 p.211) to select participants on a quota basis such as gender, time since they graduated, degree programme, college, level of satisfaction and measures of deprivation in order to provide a range of respondents to reflect the population who completed the questionnaire and 'employed maximum variation' (Creswell, 2013 p.156). Appendix Four compares this data across key variables.

In broad terms the interview participants reflected those respondents who had completed the online questionnaire. For example, 46.7% of questionnaire respondents' parents attended higher education compared with 46.7% of interview participants and 55.6% (average 2021-2020) of LU home undergraduates' parents (HESA, 2024b). Men were under-represented in the survey (27.8%) compared with 50.5% (average 2011-2020) of LU home undergraduates (HESA, 2024b). Therefore, I chose to interview a slightly higher proportion of men.

There is little agreement about sample size in qualitative research (Gentles et al., 2015). There are many factors influencing the sample size in qualitative research but

Mason suggests saturation is a key factor in deciding the sample size i.e. one keeps collecting data until ‘new data does not shed any further light on the issue under investigation’ (Mason, 2010 p.2) . Bertaux (1981) suggests 15 is the minimum sample size for any qualitative study and I therefore conducted 15 semi-structured interviews with alumni. Table 4.1 provides an overview of the respondents. Appendix Five provides a more detailed analysis of the respondents.

Pseudonym	Year graduated	Faculty	Gender	Ethnicity
Yasmin	2015	LUMS	Female	White British
Sophie	2018	LUMS	Female	White British
Nadine	2010	FASS	Female	White British
Nicola	2018	FASS	Female	White British
Sienna	2014	FASS	Female	White British
Leon	2017	FASS and FST	Male	White British
Cheryl	2017	FST	Female	White British
Ralph	2012	Law	Male	White British
Oscar	2014	LUMS	Male	White British
Layla	2018	FASS	Female	Mexican/British
Mia	2017	LUMS	Female	Bangladeshi
Frank	2015	FST	Male	White British
Milo	2011	LUMS	Male	White British
Byron	2016	FST	Male	White British
Flo	2016	LUMS	Female	Indian

Table 4.1 Overview of Respondents

4.8.3.2 Topic Guide Development

Hennink (2010) stresses the importance of building rapport at the beginning of the interview and getting to know the participant in order to create an atmosphere in which the participant is willing to share their experiences. Gray (2004 p.223) defines rapport as ‘an understanding, one established on a basis of respect and trust between the interviewer and respondent’ and Oppenheim (2005 p.89) describes it as

an 'elusive quality'. Therefore, at the beginning of the topic guide I started with an easy open-ended question about using video calls designed to put them at ease.

The topic guide was designed to explore in greater depth respondents' experience of first-year SA building on their questionnaire responses and answering the 'why' questions. The first part of the topic guide related to the respondent's life since graduation and this was explored with an open-ended question: 'I think you graduated in x from y can you tell me about what you have been doing since you graduated?'. Prompts were used where necessary to explore ongoing friendships/networks from Lancaster, particularly those forged in first-year accommodation, career development and contacts for finding jobs (social capital). These questions were informed by the work of authors such as Granovetter (1974), Kadushin (2012) and Burke (2015, 2016).

The second topic explored respondents' pre-university experiences to investigate their habitus and capital by discussing their background, education and parental education which drew on the work of Bourdieu (2002) and Bourdieu and Nice (2013). Motivations to attend university were informed by Holton (2018). The third major topic focused on first impressions of SA and their experiences, particularly the impact of housemates on their transition to university life. Similarities and differences between housemates were discussed to explore the influence of 'homophily' (McPherson et al., 2001). Sources of friendships were discussed along with the impact of 'propinquity' (Festinger et al., 1963) on those friendships. Problems such as homesickness and areas of conflict were explored, drawing on Fincher and Shaw (2009), Taulke-Johnson (2010) and Andersson et al. (2012), and how heterogeneity was managed.

The topic guide then explored second and final year experiences of SA, who they lived with and their experiences. I included a question about the impact of Covid-19 on their network, particularly Lancaster friends (included after feedback from colleagues). The topic guide concluded with a final question asking whether they had anything else they wanted to share with me regarding their network of Lancaster friends and their importance post-graduation. The semi-structured interview guide is

in Appendix Six. Further information regarding the linkages between theory/literature and research tools is in Appendix Two.

4.8.3.3 Piloting

To check the order, flow and clarity of the questions I shared the questions with two trusted colleagues who provided valuable feedback. I then conducted a pilot interview with a previous student who had completed the online questionnaire. This allowed me to test the interview questions in a 'real' semi-structured interview environment and gain feedback on my interview technique. The pilot interview went extremely well and only minor adjustments to the questions were required. The main aspect of the interview which I reflected on was the need to focus 100% on the respondent and what they were saying rather than worrying about the next question and also to 'listen carefully and talk as little as possible' (Lareau, 2021). The data from the pilot interview was included in the study because the respondent met the sampling requirements.

4.8.3.4 Incentive

Offering incentives to respondents to take part in research can improve response rates and people's willingness to participate (Göriz et al., 2008). Therefore, I offered participants the choice of a £20 shopping voucher or a £20 donation to a charity of their choice as a thank you for their time. The charitable donations were well received with a wide variety of charities being nominated including RNLI, BLM and food banks.

4.8.3.5 Interview Process

Before the interviews the respondents were emailed a copy of the participant information sheet (PIS) and consent form to sign (see appendices eight and nine). Microsoft Teams was used as this is the preferred secure university medium. Due to the Covid-19 pandemic and the acceleration of the use of video technologies at work (Parker, 2020), people were more familiar with and comfortable using video calls. However, I was concerned it may be more difficult to develop rapport (Fontana and

Frey, 2013) and communicate effectively (Fielding and Thomas, 2015) whilst conducting video interviews. However, I found video interviewing to be successful and was able to provide encouraging visual cues to the participant such as smiling and nodding my head.

The drawbacks were similar to those highlighted by Deakin and Wakefield (2014), poor internet connection and dropout being particularly problematic. However, if the internet connection was poor, I suggested switching off the video function and just used audio. This proved equally successful and in one case I think it was beneficial because the participant really opened up to me in a way, perhaps, they may not have, had we been using video.

In the interview I adopted 'warm and open communication to start building a relationship' and rapport (Salmons, 2014 p.202). I chatted about the participants' experiences of using video calls and explained the purpose and structure of the interview. I explained I worked at LU and this 'shared social and cultural knowledge' helped to build rapport and empathy and gave meaning to the responses as I was familiar with the university and its accommodation (Foster, 1994 p.141). I asked if they had any questions regarding the interview. I reiterated their participation was voluntary and they could withdraw up to two weeks after the interview. However, if they withdrew after this date, it would be difficult to remove their data as it would have been anonymised. I also confirmed they were happy for me to record the interview. I checked their responses in the questionnaire and linked the interview questions to ensure I was collecting additional data. At the end of the interview, I thanked them for their time and confirmed whether they would like a shopping voucher or a charitable donation.

After the interviews, I transcribed and shared the transcripts with the respondents to check the contents were accurate and invited them to share any further comments. This process allowed respondents to share any further information and according to Salmons 'closes the circle, completing the interview contract they accepted in the consent agreement' (2014 p.205). I used a random name generator to create pseudonyms for each respondent to maintain anonymity and ensure confidentiality.

4.8.3.6 Semi-structured Interview Data Analysis

The interview data was analysed using Reflexive Thematic Analysis (TA) (Braun and Clarke, 2019) as it provides a clear process and allows for both deductive and inductive data analysis (Braun and Clarke, 2022 p.10). The analysis was inductive, as the coding and theme generation was driven by the data, but also deductive as the data analysis was shaped by the theoretical lens of Bourdieu and the theoretical framework. Braun and Clarke provide a process for analysing data but acknowledge following a procedure is insufficient and argue it is important to be reflexive when conducting thematic analysis and the need to 'emphasise the fluid, the contextual and contingent, and indeed theory' (Braun and Clarke, 2020 p.2). I was mindful of my positioning as both a university staff member and parent influenced what I 'saw' within the data. This subjectivity, regarded as an essential element of reflexive TA (Braun and Clarke, 2022), shaped the data analysis. I adopted Braun and Clarke's six stage thematic analysis process (Braun and Clarke, 2022).

Familiarisation involved transcribing the interviews by downloading the transcripts in MS Teams, listening to the interviews and checking/correcting the transcripts taking into account Braun and Clarke's advice about what makes a quality transcript such as identifying each speaker by pseudonym and not 'correcting' the text (Braun and Clarke, 2013). This process, along with reading the transcripts and note-taking, helped me immerse myself in the data and start to explore and interpret the respondents' experiences (Hennink et al., 2010).

My approach to coding was mainly inductive where the analysis was 'grounded in' the data but also deductive using my theoretical framework and particularly Bourdieu as a lens to explore the data and codes were identified within the data. 'Codes are labels which assign symbolic meaning to the descriptive or inferential information compiled in a study' (Miles et al., 2020 p.62). To further explore the data, I used NVivo, a qualitative analysis package. NVivo is not the panacea of qualitative research but is 'a set of tools that will assist you in undertaking an analysis of qualitative data' (Bazeley and Jackson, 2013 p.2). I formatted the transcripts to help facilitate analysis. For example, the 'headings' in Word which identified the speaker facilitated autocoding for who was speaking, which allowed the efficient use of query

tools to explore different respondents' views. I reviewed each transcript and coded the data to relevant codes. I included respondent attribute data collected from the questionnaire such as gender, year graduated, faculty, age to allow comparisons between different respondents. As I coded I identified patterns but was mindful to reflect on any inconsistencies not fitting the patterns (Saldana, 2021). I also made notes using linked memos in Nvivo to document my reflections. However, I combined coding in Nvivo with manual coding using pen and paper as I felt this helped me to get 'closer to the data' and hear the voices of the respondents more clearly.

Coding is key to the development of themes as themes are an 'outcome' of coding (Braun and Clarke, 2020, Saldana, 2021). Ryan and Bernard (2016) suggest themes not only come from the codes but also the researcher's knowledge and understanding of the topic. I immersed myself in the data, reading and revisiting the transcripts, considering and reflecting, a process which took place over several months, after which I generated initial themes by grouping together codes to produce themes such as 'familial social capital, 'homophily' and 'propinquity', but these were more like 'topic summaries' rather than 'a pattern of shared meaning' which according to Braun and Clarke (2022 p.77) is the ultimate goal of theme generation in reflexive TA.

Braun and Clarke (2020 p.340) describe themes as 'multi-faceted crystals' which represent numerous codes. Therefore, I clustered codes, identified core ideas which related to my research questions and produced six overarching themes. These themes are presented in the findings chapter and supported with direct quotes from the respondents.

4.9 Reflections on the Methodology

Generalisability in social research 'is about the extent to which research findings can be applied in settings other than the setting in which the original research took place' (Thomas, 2009 p.109). The desire to produce generalisable results is often regarded as the holy grail of research. However, this is rarely possible, or even desirable, given the unique conditions and flexible nature of the phenomena under investigation. This study is an interpretative case study of LU, therefore the study

'make(s) no grand claims about generalisability or causation' (Thomas, 2009 p.77) and results will not necessarily be generalisable to other universities. However, the study could provide insight to help inform LU and other universities' policies and procedures relating to allocation of first-year accommodation. Despite the inability to generalise the findings from the study, the findings can still provide 'insights and illuminations' (Pring, 2010 p.109). Stake (1995) suggests it is difficult to generalise from single cases compared with other research designs but acknowledges people can learn much about the general from single cases.

Riege (2003) identifies four design tests: confirmability, credibility, transferability and dependability, which are used predominately for constructivist research and these are discussed in relation to this study.

Credibility refers to the level of confidence in the 'truth' of the findings and is equivalent to the internal validity criterion of positivism (Lincoln, 1985). Member-checking, 'the practice of checking your analysis with your participants' (Braun and Clarke, 2013 p.282), was employed to increase the level of credibility in the study. I sent a copy of the transcript to each participant for them to verify. They were also encouraged to provide additional comments if they felt their views were not fully represented or had further comments.

Transferability involves demonstrating findings could be applied to other situations or context (Lincoln, 1985). It corresponds to the concept of external validity in positivist research where the goal is to generalise the findings to other contexts. In constructivist research generalisability is not necessarily the goal and instead the applicability of the findings to other contexts is determined by those who wish to apply them (Lincoln, 2013). This transferability is possible using 'thick descriptions' (Geertz 1973) to provide evidence for making judgements about similarities between cases. In this study, I provided detailed 'thick descriptions' of the context and background of the study so the reader could decide whether the findings apply to his or her situation.

Dependability relates to the reliability criterion in positivist research and is concerned with the extent to which the same results would be produced if the study was replicated (Lincoln, 1985). It refers to having an audit trail and as I provided a

detailed discussion of the decisions I made and how the data was gathered and analysed, I have addressed the issue of dependability.

Confirmability corresponds with the positivist call for objectivity and is defined as 'the degree of neutrality, or the extent to which the findings of the study are shaped by the respondents and not researcher bias, motivation, or interest' (Lincoln, 1985 p.299). In order to enhance confirmability of the study I clarified my assumptions and worldview from the beginning of the study (Merriam, 1998 p.205). The data was systematically collected and analysed to avoid cherry picking data to support my initial assumptions about living in first-year university accommodation.

4.10 Ethical Considerations

Ethics relates to 'the attempt to formulate codes and principles of moral behaviour' (May, 2001 p.61) and therefore in the context of undertaking social research it is concerned with protecting participants from harm and the integrity of the study. The study included data collected from human subjects and was conducted in accordance with the ethical standards set out by LU and ethical approval was gained before data collection commenced.

I was mindful of the impact of being an 'insider researcher' (Trowler, 2014) and decided not to conduct research with current students, as this may have created conflict of interest and issues relating to power differentials between the students (the researched) and myself (the researcher) (ibid p.7). Therefore, I conducted research with LU's alumni to overcome the power imbalance issue. I was also aware as a member of staff I may have impacted the participants' responses as they may have been less forthcoming about negative experiences in case they offended me (Shah, 2004).

Ethical considerations included ensuring informed consent, safety of respondent and researcher, right to withdraw and confidentiality (Tight, 2017). A copy of the ethics approval form is provided in Appendix Seven. Data collection took place during the Covid-19 pandemic and therefore the ethics approval forms were revisited to ensure they were still valid for virtual data collection. No changes were necessary as they

already stated interviews could be conducted online. However, contact details of Covid-19 support organisations were provided on the PIS in case respondents needed support.

The ethics approval process asked whether the topic under investigation was a 'sensitive topic'. SA was not likely to be regarded as a sensitive topic. However, it is impossible to know what response this may evoke in the respondents during the interview. Even something which may seem fairly mundane could evoke an unforeseen response in the respondent and therefore 'researchers need to be prepared for a whole range of emotional responses from a whole range of research participants' (Hallowell et al., 2005 p.17). The interviews were conducted during the Covid-19 lockdown and, in one case, the respondent was a nurse working on a Covid-19 intensive care ward and became quite emotional talking about her experiences. When this happened, I listened sympathetically, did not rush the respondent and provided her with the opportunity to share her experiences even if they did not relate to the topic. Interviewees may find value in being interviewed (Bradbury-Jones et al., 2011) and in this case providing respondents with the opportunity to reminisce about their university experiences and talk about their experiences of living in lockdown was an unintended benefit of the project. Many respondents emailed after the interview to say how much they enjoyed participating in the interview.

According to Gray (2004) 'the key to ethical involvement is not just obtaining consent but informed consent' (Gray, 2004 p.59). Informed consent refers to 'a freely given agreement on the part of the researched to become a subject of the research process' (May, 2001 p.62). At the beginning of the questionnaire respondents were provided with a description of the research, its purpose and a reminder participation was voluntary and they could withdraw within two weeks, a link to LU's data management policy and contact details of the researcher and supervisor. They were informed by continuing with the questionnaire they were giving their consent. A PIS (Appendix Eight) outlining the aims of the research, explaining participation was voluntary and providing contact details of the researcher and supervisor and a consent form (Appendix Nine) were shared with interviewees, and they were asked

to return the consent form before the interview. All respondents were assured of anonymity (British Sociological Association, 2017) and given a pseudonym produced by a random name generator to protect their identity. Participants were provided with the opportunity to review the interview transcript, make any changes they felt necessary and add any other comments before the data was analysed to ensure the transcripts were a true representation of the interview. The interviews were conducted using Microsoft Teams meetings allowing for secure recording and storage of the interviews.

Survey data was collected using Qualtrics, an integrated online survey package. Responses were stored online in the survey database until the data collection period was complete and responses were then downloaded into Excel and SPSS and deleted from the online survey database. All data was stored in GDPR-compliant password-protected OneDrive.

4.11 Chapter Summary

This chapter clarified my epistemological positioning and discussed my approach to research design and methodology. It outlined data collection and analysis methods and illustrated the linkages between the research questions, the data collected and the literature which informed the data collection questions. The final sections reflected on the appropriateness of the methodology and any ethical considerations. The next three chapters will present the findings and discussion of the questionnaire and interview data related to each of the three research questions.

Chapter 5: Online Questionnaire Findings

5.1 Introduction

The online questionnaire was designed to gather quantitative data about the impact of first-year accommodation on students' experiences and identify a purposive sample of potential interview participants for the second phase of the primary research consisting of semi-structured interviews with alumni. To complete the questionnaire respondents had to have graduated with an undergraduate degree since 2010 from LU and studied and lived in the UK before attending LU.

I exceeded my target of 100 responses and received 317 responses. Of these, 255 responses were sufficiently completed to analyse (247 fully completed and eight did not finish but completed at least 80% of the questions).

This chapter presents the questionnaire findings and these will be discussed along with the findings from the semi-structured interviews in chapter 7. The findings begin with an overview and background of the respondents to provide a context for the study, and are then structured around the first two research questions:-

1. To what extent does first-year SA impact on UK students' experience of university, particularly the impact of housemates?
2. To what extent do friends met in first-year SA, and other university friends, influence UK students' post-university life, particularly in terms of their networks and finding and securing employment?

RQ3 'How does first-year SA influence students' social capital and networks?' will be addressed in the discussion chapter.

5.2 Overview of Respondents

- 69.0% were female, 27.8% male, 0% stated 'other', 0.8% preferred not to say and 2.4% did not answer (n=255). There were proportionately more female respondents (69.0%) than home female first-year students at LU in 2020 (50.8.1%) (HESA, 2024b). However, research has shown females are more

likely to respond to surveys than males (Becker and Glauser, 2018, Becker, 2022).

- 85.1% (217) were White English/Welsh/Scottish/Northern Irish/British which is slightly higher than LU's home undergraduates in 2020 (79.5%) (HESA, 2024b).
- 21.6% (55) stated they had either a disability, learning difficulty or chronic health condition whilst studying at Lancaster. 13.7% of students were registered at the university with a known disability which is similar to the national average of 15.0% in 2021/22 (HESA, 2024c) but lower than at LU (home undergraduates) in 2020 (17.2%) (HESA, 2024b). However, the respondents would have joined before 2020, when reporting disabilities was less common.
- No respondents stated they were in care or a care leaver.
- Three respondents stated they were either a young carer or parent.
- 9.8% (25) of respondents stated they received free school meals, which is a similar proportion (7.5%) to home undergraduate students at LU in 2020 (HESA, 2024b).
- 7.4% (19) of respondents stated they received the 16-19 bursary.
- 15.3% (39) of respondents stated they received, or were entitled to, the Education Maintenance Allowance (EMA).
- 36.1% (92) stated they received the maximum maintenance loan.
- The percentage of students attending fee paying schools for 6th form (12.2%) is slightly higher than the national average of 8.0% in 2021/22 (HESA, 2024c). However, there is representation of respondents from a wide range of schools and colleges.
- 46.7% (119) of either or both of respondents' parents had a university degree, which is comparable with the national average of 47.0% in 2021/22 (HESA, 2024c). However, in 2020, 60.2% of LU home undergraduates' parents had a degree (HESA, 2024b).

For further detailed analysis of the respondents' backgrounds see Appendix Ten.

5.3 Respondents' Backgrounds

5.3.1 Measures of Deprivation

Respondents had the opportunity to share the postcode of where they lived before university. Postcodes were provided by 62.5% of respondents. These postcodes were classified according to POLAR4 (participation of local areas), which classifies UK areas according to the proportion of young people participating in higher education aged 18 or 19 (Office for Students, 2024). POLAR4 classifies local areas into five quintiles (groups) with quintile 1 being lowest levels of participation and educational advantage and 5, highest levels of participation and educational advantage.

Quintile	Mean participation rate in H.E.
1	18.6%
2	27.8%
3	35.5%
4	44.1%
5	64.4%

Table 5.1: POLAR4 Participation Rates in HE. Source: (HEFCE, 2017 p.12)

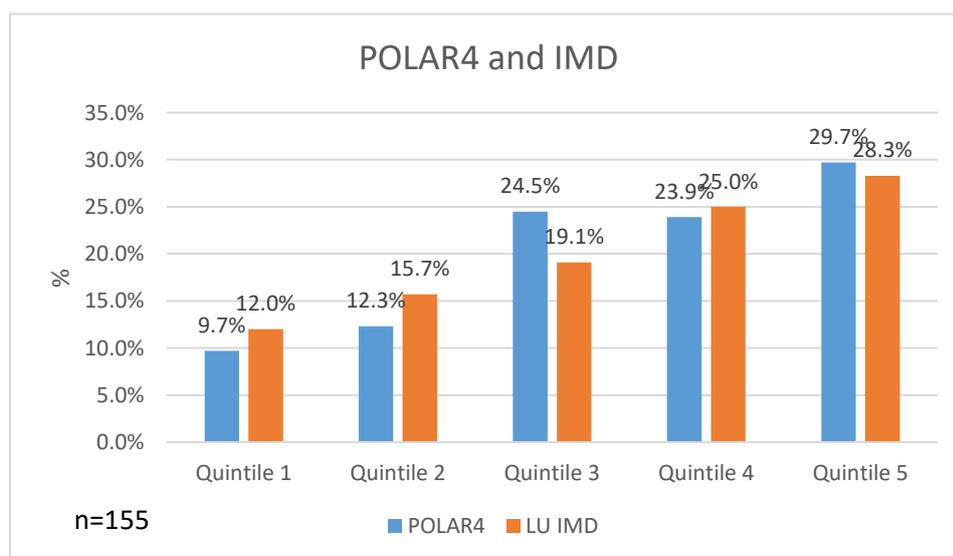


Figure 5.1 Percentage of respondents in each of the POLAR4 Quintiles compared with LU IMD Quintiles in 2020 (HESA, 2024b)

Of those respondents providing postcodes, 9.7% of respondents lived in postcodes with the lowest levels of educational advantage (quintile 1) compared with 29.7% living in areas from the highest levels of educational advantage (quintile 5). The POLAR4 data was compared with LU's Index of Multiple Deprivation (IMD) (HESA, 2024b). This suggests the sample is largely representative of the wider population and LU's home undergraduates, with more respondents from educationally advantaged groups and fewer from educationally disadvantaged groups.

5.3.2 Reasons for Deciding to attend University

The findings relating to factors influencing decisions to go to university were interesting but not essential and are therefore in Appendix Eleven. However, over half of respondents (135) provided further reasons for attending university.

5.3.3 Factors Influencing Choice of University

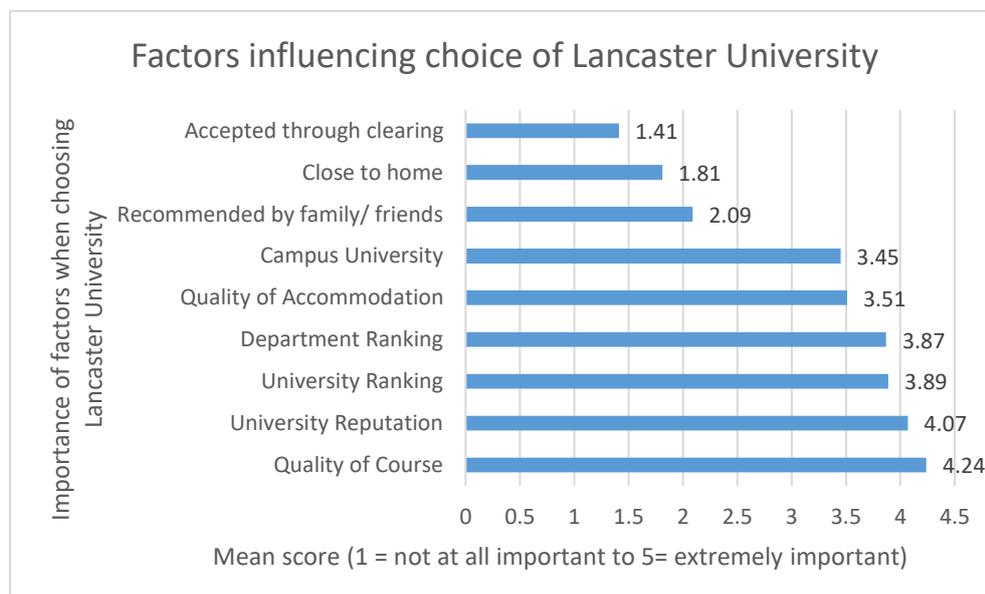


Figure 5.2 Factors Influencing Choice of LU

Choosing a university close to home (mean score: 1.81) or one recommended by family/friends (mean score: 2.09) were not regarded as particularly important when choosing LU. Quality of course (mean score: 4.24), university reputation (mean score: 4.07), university ranking (mean score: 3.89) and department ranking (mean score: 3.87) were all regarded as important/ extremely important when selecting LU.

Quality of accommodation (mean score: 3.51) and campus university (mean score: 3.45) were regarded as moderately to very important which suggests these are of importance but to a lesser extent than academic factors.

Figure 5.3 provides a more detailed breakdown of the responses regarding the importance of accommodation and shows over half (53.7%) of respondents regarded the quality of the accommodation as either very or extremely important, which illustrates SA is an important part of the university offering.

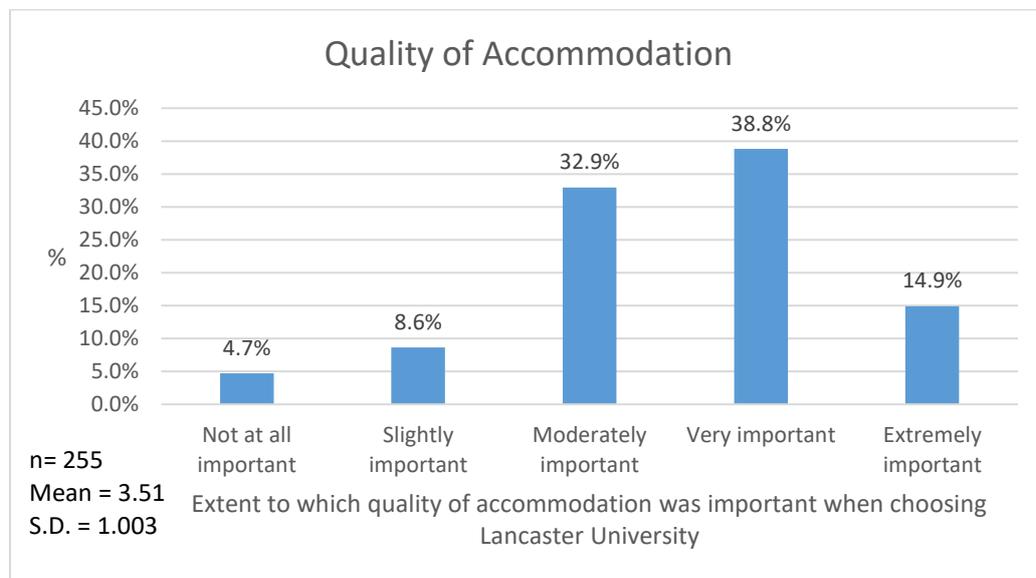


Figure 5.3 Importance of Accommodation when Choosing LU

5.3.3.1 Other Reasons for Choosing Lancaster

Ninety-one respondents provided other reasons for choosing LU. Fifteen respondents mentioned the importance of the college system and/or accommodation in choosing LU as illustrated by this response.

'I chose Lancaster as my first choice as it had lovely accommodation...'

5.4 RQ1: Impact of first-year SA on students' experiences

The presentation of the findings in this section includes questions which relate to the impact of first-year university accommodation on students' experiences whilst at LU.

5.4.1 Number of Students Sharing

Those living on campus, in a rented student house or private student hall of residence were asked how many people they shared with.

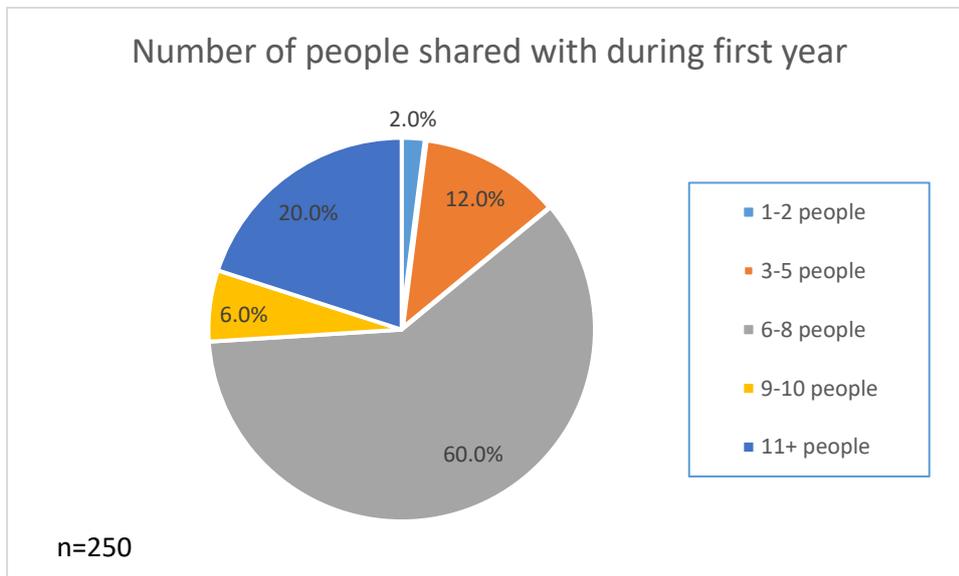


Figure 5.4 Number of People Shared with during First Year

- Sixty percent of respondents shared with between 6-8 people.

5.4.2 Satisfaction with first-year living arrangements

Overall, respondents were satisfied with first-year living arrangements, with a mean score of 3.95 and over three-quarters of respondents (78.5%) stating they were either somewhat satisfied or extremely satisfied.

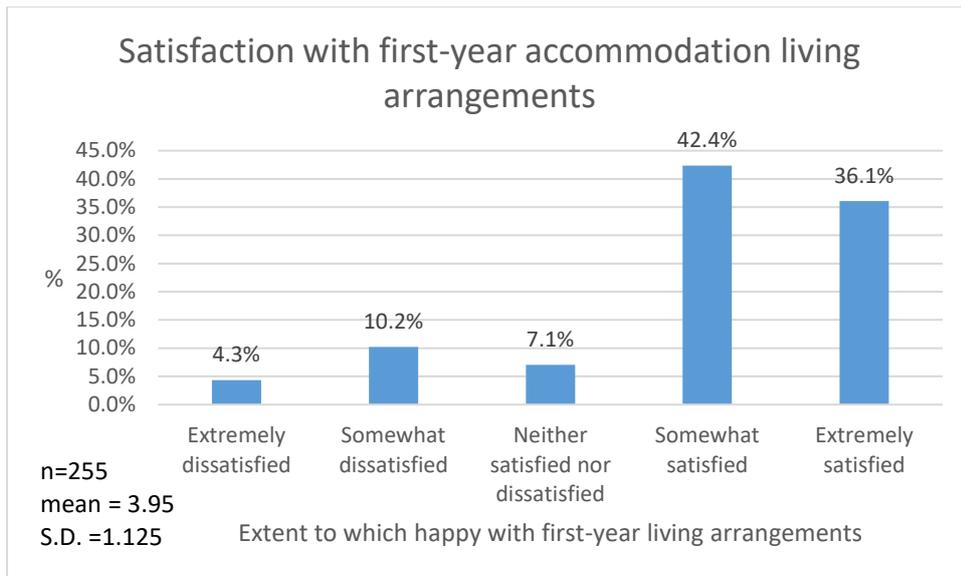


Figure 5.5 Satisfaction with First-year Accommodation Living Arrangements

Independent samples T-Test were conducted, and it was found there was no association of satisfaction with:

- Ethnicity
- School attended
- Gender
- Disability
- Free school meals
- 16-19 bursary
- EMA
- Maximum maintenance grant (MMG)
- Parental education

5.4.2.1 Lived with in Second Year

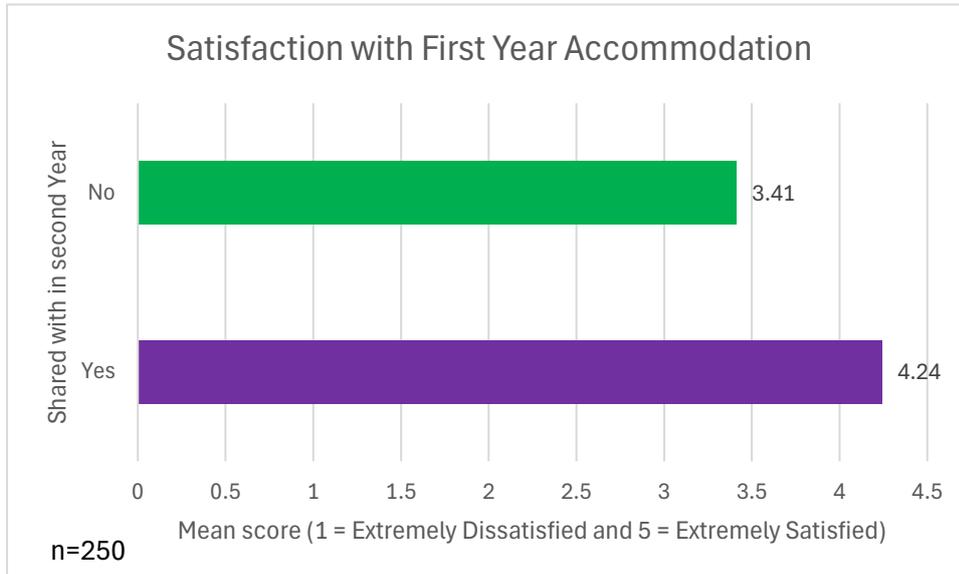


Figure 5.6 Comparison of Satisfaction with First-Year accommodation

The mean score for satisfaction with first-year accommodation for those who lived in second year with any of the people they shared with in first year was statistically significantly different from those students who did not live in second year with any people they shared with in first year. Students who lived in their second year with any people they shared with in first year had higher satisfaction with first-year accommodation than those who did not live with people they shared with in first year (See Appendix Twelve for T-Test results and explanation of significance).

5.4.2.2 Dissatisfaction with SA

Despite the high level of satisfaction with accommodation, 14.5% of respondents were either extremely or somewhat dissatisfied with first-year living arrangements and they were asked to explain their dissatisfaction. These responses were post-coded into the following themes (themes are included with seven or more comments):-

- Flatmates were not people I would be friends with/socialise with/unhygienic flatmates (14 comments).

'Had nothing in common at all with my flatmates. Spent as much time as possible out of the flat socialising with friends I'd made through my course and societies'.

'I shared a bathroom with one other student who used to smoke in the shared bathroom and leave cigarette butts in the sink. It was a wet room so there was no window to open for ventilation and the smell got in your hair. My flatmates were quite noisy and I generally didn't feel like I fitted in with them'.

- Conflict with flatmates (10 comments).

'Flatmates were very rude. Hardly ever came out of their rooms, never spoke when in the kitchen. Everyone else seemed to have amazing new flat families and I couldn't even get mine to talk to me. It felt very lonely and like I'd failed'.

- Outdated/inappropriate accommodation (8 comments)

'No communal sofa area'.

'Furthest away from uni. and small and not very comfortable or friendly communal space (no sofas etc).

Most of the open-ended responses for the reasons for dissatisfaction with first-year living arrangements related to flatmates rather than the actual accommodation, illustrating the significant impact flatmates have on students' experiences. Incompatible flatmates even led to loneliness and mental health problems.

5.4.3 Experiences of shared living in first year

Those living on campus, in a rented student house or private student hall of residence were asked about their experiences of shared living in first year.

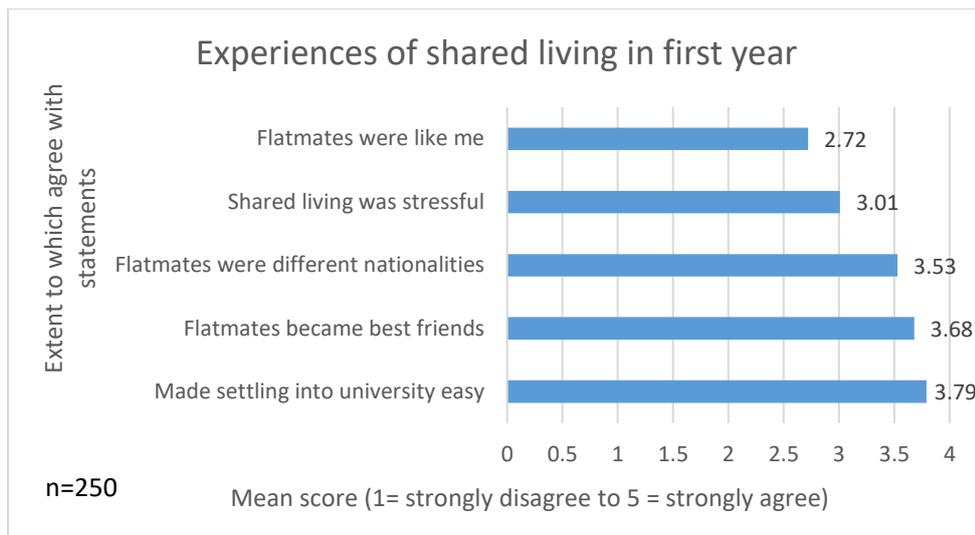


Figure 5.7 Attitude Statements Regarding Experiences of Shared Living in First Year

A mean score of 3.79 for the statement ‘The people I shared with made settling into university easy’ illustrates the importance of the shared living experience on helping students adjust to university life. The statement ‘Some of the people I shared with became best friends’ had a mean score of 3.68 and nearly half (48%) strongly agreed with this statement, highlighting the important role of SA in developing friends and networks.

A mean score of 2.72 (somewhat disagree to neutral score) for ‘my flatmates were like me’ suggests many students did not regard their flatmates as similar. In fact, only just over a third (36.4%) of respondents agreed or strongly agreed with the statement ‘flatmates were like me’. In addition, the mean score for the statement ‘My flatmates were from different nationalities’ was 3.53 (neutral to somewhat agree), which suggests students were living in accommodation with a mix of nationalities. These two findings suggest the allocation of places is not necessarily based on the principle of ‘homophily’, supporting the university’s policy of trying to achieve a mix of students.

The mean score of ‘living in shared accommodation was stressful’ was 3.01 (neutral). However, 43.2% of respondents agreed or strongly agreed shared living was stressful, which illustrates it can be a source of conflict and stress. See Appendix Thirteen for further information on these attitude statements.

Independent samples T-Test showed there was no association of any of these statements with:

- School attended
- Disability
- Free school meals
- 16-19 bursary
- EMA
- MMG
- Parental education
- Type of accommodation

An independent Samples T-Test was conducted to evaluate the hypothesis 'White and BAME and male and female students differed significantly in their experiences of shared university living'. Ethnicity and gender were the independent variables and the dependent variable was the mean score of the five statements relating to experiences of shared university living. Significance level $\alpha = 0.05$. See Appendix Fourteen for the T-Test Tables and explanation of significance.

5.4.3.1 Ethnicity

There were only associations between ethnicity and 'my flatmates were like me' and 'some of the people I shared with became my best friends'.

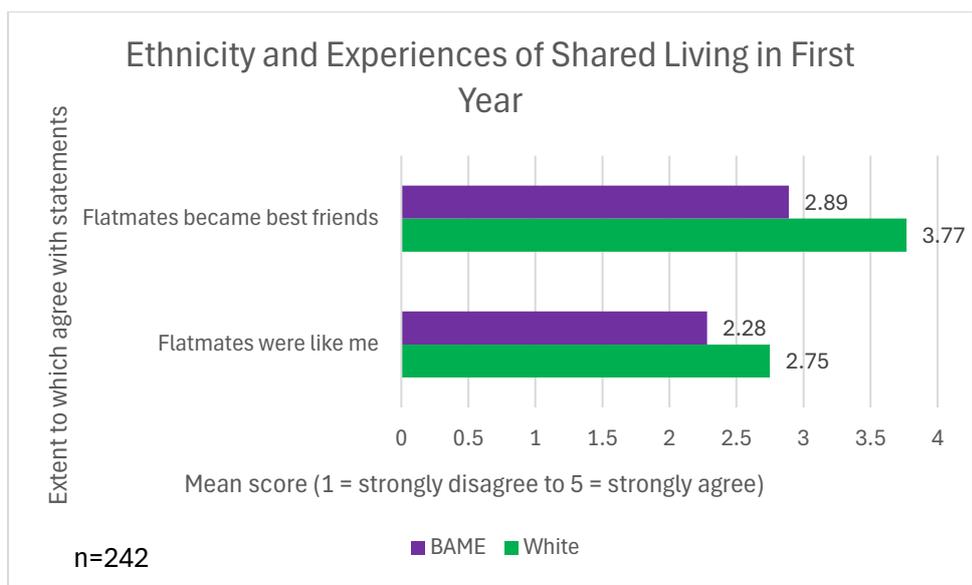


Figure 5.8 Ethnicity and Experiences of Shared Living in First Year

White students were statistically more likely to agree with the statement ‘my flatmates are like me’ than BAME/other students and statistically more likely to agree with the statement ‘the people I shared with became my best friends’ than BAME/other students. BAME/other students were less likely to describe their flatmates as like them, probably because of their minority status, and less likely to become best friends with their flatmates, which suggests the concept of homophily is evident in relation to ethnicity.

5.4.3.2 Gender

There was no association between any of the statements and gender apart from ‘The people I shared with made settling into university easy’.

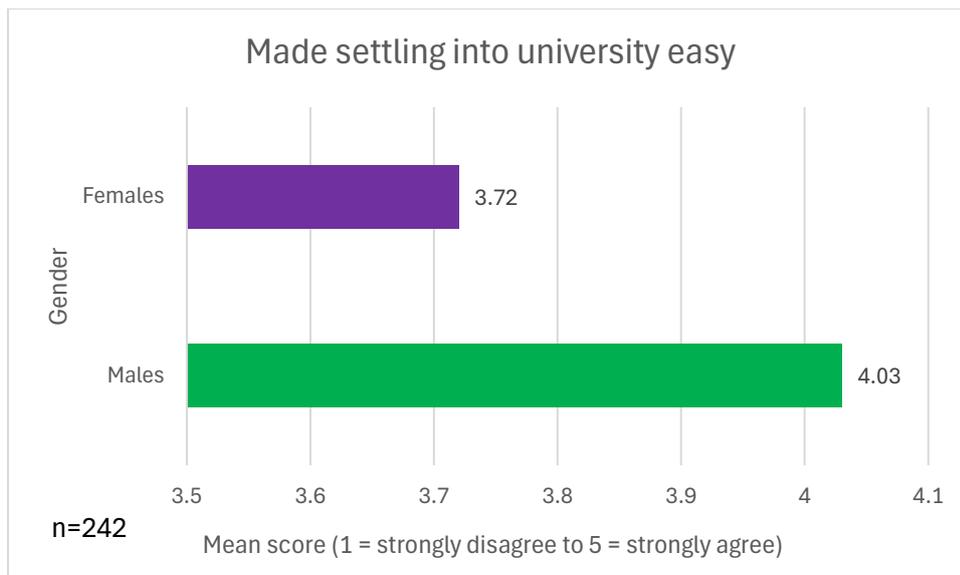


Figure 5.9 Impact of gender on made settling into university easy

Male students were statistically more likely to agree with the statement ‘the people I shared with made settling into university easy’ than females. This perhaps suggests males regarded their housemates more positively and were less likely to experience conflict in shared living.

A Pearson Chi-Square test was conducted in SPSS to explore whether there were any significant differences in experiences between students from different POLAR4 quintiles. For all five statements the number of cells with an expected count of less than 5 was lower than expected and therefore the results are insufficiently accurate. In addition, for all five statements the p-value was larger than 0.05 and therefore there is insufficient evidence to conclude the variables are associated. One-way Anova revealed there was no association between any of the five statements and POLAR4 quintiles.

5.4.4 Other comments on impact of first-year shared living on university experiences

Over two-thirds (70.6%, 180) of respondents provided a response when asked to share other comments on their experiences of shared university accommodation, which indicates this was an issue of great interest and had a major impact on their experiences of university. Many of the respondents provided lengthy and insightful

comments which also suggests this was an important topic. Most comments related to experiences relating to housemates rather than the accommodation itself. This suggests the actual accommodation was less of an issue, but the social aspect of first-year SA is important, which highlights the importance of this thesis. The responses were highly polarised with many respondents stating their experiences of shared university living led to long-term friendships and successful adjustment to university life. However, there were other students who found their experiences of shared living to be difficult and led to loneliness and even mental health problems. Sixty-nine (38.3%) of the responses were positive, 73 (40.6%) mixed and 38 (21.1%) negative in nature. The responses were post-coded into themes. Evidence for key themes is provided in the form of quotes/data extracts from the questionnaire responses. It is impossible to discuss all the themes and therefore I present the themes with five or more responses (number of responses in brackets).

5.4.4.1 Friends for life/Important for Developing Friendships (39)

It appears many students made lifelong friends with those they shared with in first-year SA:

‘Great accommodation and I now have friends for life’

‘I met my best friend living in the same flat in first-year at university. We bonded immediately by being in the same boat and our friendship has lasted nine years despite us moving to opposite ends of the country after graduating’.

In particular, first-year accommodation was a place where some students met their partners:

‘I met my wife-to-be in my flat in first-year. She was a returning student and I was a first-year’.

‘I also married someone I shared with in first-year, although we didn’t live together for the rest of uni’

In addition to comments about developing lifelong friends there were many comments regarding the importance of first-year accommodation in helping to make friends:

'Shared campus college accommodation gave me the chance to meet new people in a comfortable setting in a supportive college community'

Making friends was an important aspect of helping students to transition to university and feel comfortable in their new environment:

'Moving in with my first-year flat was ground-breaking. I felt like I found a group of friends so I wasn't going to be lonely at uni! We were a really close flat in my first-year, 7 of the 8 of us even went on holiday to Portugal for 2 weeks, staying at my flatmates house in Lisbon.'

5.4.4.2 Different/melting pot (36)

Many respondents spontaneously commented on the perceived differences between their housemates and themselves in terms of background, ideas, beliefs, university year, nationality, gender, geographical location, degree studied, personality, interests, attitudes to drinking, partying and sociability and the impact it had on their experiences of shared living. Views were polarised, with some respondents regarding the opportunity to meet 'people not-like me' as positive:

'Uni gives you the experience to meet people who aren't like you but can become your closest friends'

This comment acknowledged the value in encountering different values rather than being surrounded by similar 'voices':

'Living in shared accommodation was generally a fun and great experience. It exposed me to different people, different ideas, different beliefs; most importantly it showed me we all wanted something better for ourselves'

Meeting different types of people in shared accommodation was regarded as a significant life experience:

'...there was something really powerful about being thrust into a cohort of people you have nothing in common with, with the exception that you chose Lancaster.... We quickly became fast friends.... I didn't make friends on my course - my housemates were and still are the most important people to me... It was truly the most formative experience of my life'.

Some respondents enjoyed sharing with international students:

'I loved having flatmates from different nationalities and backgrounds, I even got to stay with one of my flatmates from Milan - my first solo holiday'.

However, despite being seen as a positive experience, some respondents acknowledged differences could result in difficulties:

'My accommodation was predominantly international which provided a great opportunity to meet different people from varying nationalities and cultures. Whilst this was great I would also say it can initially make it difficult to settle into university life due to differing interest/social activities'.

One respondent stated they felt issues resulted from the cultural differences but acknowledged they felt this was undesirable:

'Lancaster has a very large Asian population and I think it's really sad that it's seems as if we have two university communities existing together on one campus. Language barriers are a big factor here but due to awkwardness, students often fall into a habit of avoiding and hiding from these housemates instead of trying to break down barriers and build bridges'.

This comment was echoed by another respondent:

'We have a wide variety of different nationalities at the uni. which I believe generally mix well when living together. However, I have noticed that the more the cultures differ between housemates (eg: western and East Asian), or the greater the language barriers..., the more the likelihood of those living situations to be negative/isolating/unsociable. I think a negative living experience really effects the overall university experience'.

Respondents acknowledged the potential issues between domestic and international students and suggested some sort of training/induction may help alleviate some of the issues:

'There was probably a language and culture issue there but some kind of induction or awareness raising would've helped all parties'

5.4.4.3 Conflict/did not bond (23)

Conflict, misunderstanding and inconsiderate behaviour created rather hostile living conditions which in some cases led to dissatisfaction with the accommodation:

'I lived in a townhouse (11 other people). It was constantly messy and unclean, we had several disciplinary meetings with the college dean. Several members of the house felt it severely impacted their mental health. It at times created a hostile environment between those who were causing the mess and those affected by it. There were positive experiences in that house but often outweighed by the negative ones.'

For a small number of respondents shared living was not necessarily a positive experience and did not bond with housemates, even in some cases resulting in loneliness:

'None of my flatmates were friendly with one another and I had no friends within my flat. Felt a little isolated. It was lonely'

5.4.4.4 Quality of Accommodation (19)

Despite most comments being related to relationships with housemates there were comments about the quality of the accommodation. There were several positive comments about the accommodation such as:

'Great accommodation'

'I loved that we had a communal space for us all to gather and socialise, but that we each had our own space to escape when needed'

However, other comments related to:

Untidy/crowded kitchens

'The cleanliness of the kitchen was unbearable'

'The flat had a shared kitchen for 10 people with only one cooker, making meal-times difficult to manage'

Dirty accommodation

'When I first moved into the room it wasn't even checked/cleaned properly and there was a pair of dirty knickers behind the radiator from the previous tenant. I had to clean the room when I first took use of it'

5.4.4.5 Contributed to positive university experience (14)

Other comments focused more generally on their first-year experiences:

'Friends I made in student accommodation in first-year contributed to the overall positive university experience'

5.4.4.6 Impact on mental health (10)

In addition to comments about loneliness, some respondents commented on the impact of their first-year SA experiences on their mental health, both positively and negatively. Some respondents commented on the positive impact on their mental health:

'The high quality of the accommodation and my positive experiences with flatmates positively impacted my mental health, ability to achieve academically and overall first-year experience'

Friends in shared accommodation were also a source of support during a period of great transition:

‘Living with 12 also made me think more about others and respecting others living environments but also gave me a fantastic support network away from home’

In contrast, some respondents highlighted the negative impact shared living had on their mental health:

‘Massively impacted upon my already fragile mental health, and had a knock-on experience of having to go back into halls in second year since I ended first-year with no friendship group’

‘Could go weeks without seeing some people in the flat. Everyone kept themselves to themselves which led to a massive feeling of isolation and loneliness. First-year was everything I didn’t expect uni to be and massively knocked my confidence’.

5.4.4.7 Similar/homophily (8)

There were comments about how similarities helped with adjustment to university life and forming friendships:

‘All fresher flat so we were all at the same stage in our degrees and had a shared experience’

One respondent commented they felt they would have had a more negative experience if they had shared with more international students:

‘Bonded with all of my uk flatmates and still friends with most. Would’ve been a very different and potentially isolating if it had been a higher weighting of international students’

Another respondent acknowledged they may have missed out by not sharing with international students but also recognised this was perhaps easier:

'I lived with 7 other British people which potentially made me miss out on other cultural experiences but possibly made the sometimes confusing nature of living away from home for the first time a bit easier.'

One respondent suggested the university should try to match like-minded people which would reinforce the concept of homophily:

'I think Lancaster should do more to ensure they place like-minded people in correlating flats. I didn't want a party flat but some people who wanted to socialise would have been good'

In contrast one respondent felt there was insufficient mixing of nationalities:

'Not diverse enough in terms of nationalities being evenly split between flats'.

Two respondents mentioned 'Pendle Ghetto' and 'Pendle Posh'. 'Pendle Ghetto' referred to the non-ensuite rooms and 'Pendle Posh' the ensuite rooms which perhaps resulted in non-intentional homophily due to differing budgets between students from different backgrounds with perhaps students from more wealthy families choosing ensuite rooms in 'Pendle Posh'. One respondent commented:

'I lived in posh Pendle. My housemates were classist and racist so it forced me to make friends outside of my flat and join loads of societies. I didn't enjoy being at home at all.....There was 7 of us and 5 of us were English speaking and had grown up in the UK - meaning there was no efforts in integrating the international students, which I thought wasn't fair at all...I think the way accommodations are organised needs to be re-evaluated because it really sets the tone'

5.4.4.8 Life Lessons (6)

Respondents commented on the wider life lessons they learnt from sharing with others such as negotiation and compromise:

'I learned a lot about living with others, how to compromise and resolve issues etc.'

'I think shared living is important in first-year because it teaches you how to adapt to difficult situations and how to live with people you didn't choose to live with.... I also think shared living is important because it teaches you how to live with strangers in the real world. I wish I had been placed in a flat with kinder people'

5.4.4.9 Luck (6)

Several respondents acknowledged the part 'luck' played in their experiences of shared living;

'As you can't choose who you live with it very much feels like luck of the draw - I was very lucky that I am still best friends with 4 of the 7 other people that I lived with'

'I was lucky to have amazing flat mates which I am still friends with some years later. Definitely made me love university'

This suggests respondents believed allocation of places was largely random and therefore positive experiences were due to luck rather than design.

5.4.4.10 Like a family/home from home (5)

Several comments highlighted how their housemates became their family and even referred to the accommodation as home from home:

'They were like your family - telling you to be better at your exams, or encouraging you to go for JCR election and helping you put up posters'

'Certain flat mates became family and it made Lancaster a home away from home. I was very shy before attending university, and most definitely a home bird. The collegiate system and on campus accommodation made the transition from home life to university life extremely enjoyable'

‘Shared living was great... It provides a real sense of community and home away from home when you’re surrounded by people who are also 18, first time away from home and you can draw a lot of comfort from that’.

5.4.5 Second Year Living Arrangements

In the second year 67.6% (169) of those living on campus, in a rented student house or private student hall of residence lived with people they shared with in first year. This illustrates the important role of first-year accommodation in helping to build friendships and develop social networks. Approximately a third (32.4%, 81) chose to live with other people.

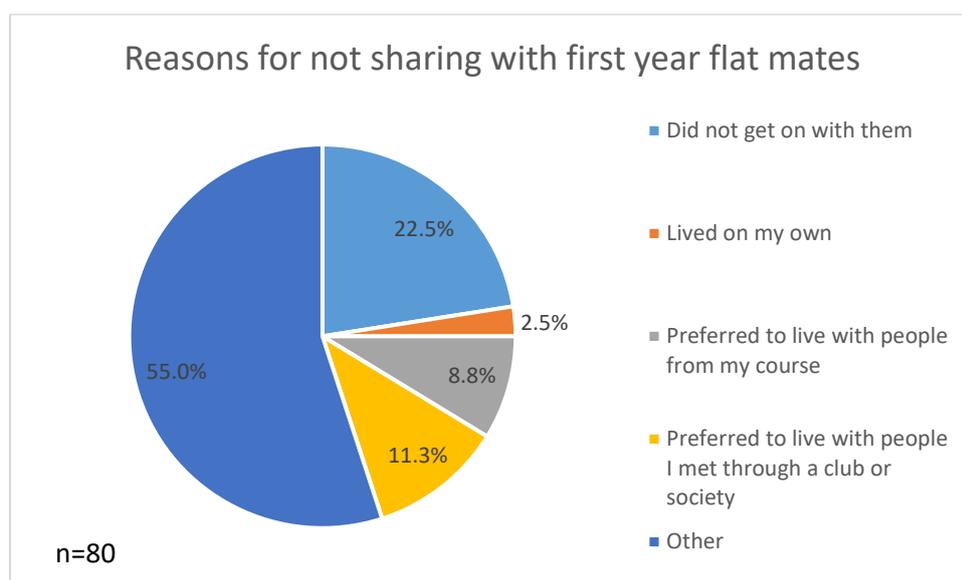


Figure 5.10 Reasons for Not Sharing with First-year Flatmates

Just over a fifth (22.5%) stated they did not live with first-year flatmates because they ‘did not get on with them’, which suggests they experienced incompatibility with those they shared with. However, over half of respondents (55.0%) gave other reasons for not sharing with first-year flatmates. The responses were diverse and included responses such as went on study abroad, wanted to stay on campus, lived with different people from same college and moved home and commuted.

5.4.5.1 Differing Experiences of Shared Living in First-year

An independent Samples T-Test was conducted to evaluate the hypothesis ‘those students who chose to live in the second year with people they shared with in the first year differed significantly in their experiences of shared university living to those who chose not to share’. Second-year status was the independent variable and the dependent variable was the mean score of the five statements relating to experiences of shared university living. Significance level $\alpha=0.05$. See Appendix Fifteen for the T-Test Tables and explanation of significance.

All the statements apart from my flatmates were from different nationalities showed an association with whether the students shared with first-year flatmates in the second year.

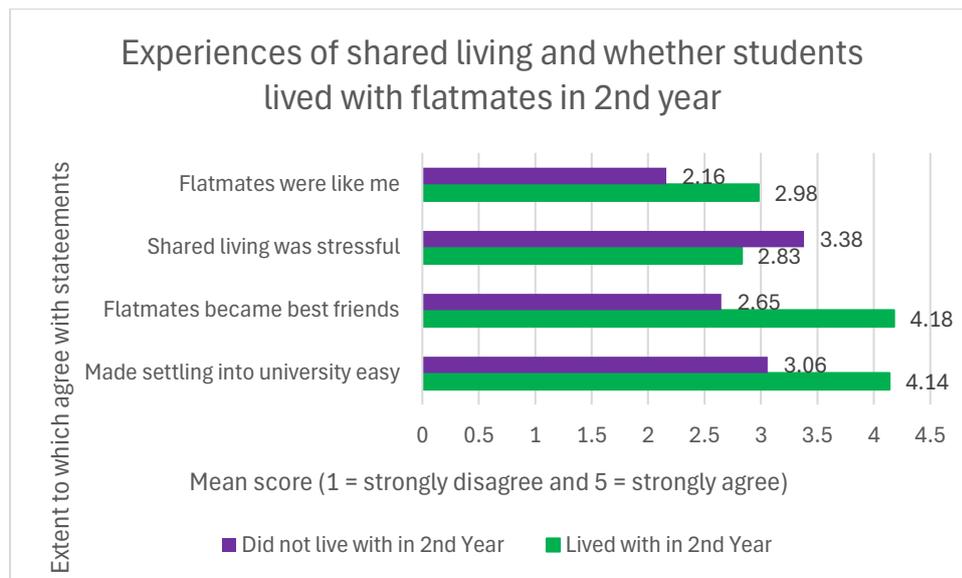


Figure 5.11 Experiences of shared living and whether students lived with flatmates in 2nd year

Students who agreed their flatmates were like them, who became their best friends and ‘made settling into university easy’ were significantly more likely to share with first-year flatmates in second year. In contrast, those students who agreed ‘Living in shared accommodation was stressful’ were less likely to share with first-year flatmates in the second year. This suggests homophily and friendship were key aspects when selecting flatmates to live with in second year and were key factors in adjusting to university life.

5.5 RQ2: Influence of friends met in first-year SA and other university friends on post-university Life

The findings in this section includes responses to questions which relate to the impact of university friends, particularly friends shared with in first-year accommodation, on post-graduation life in terms of their network and whether they provided contacts for finding jobs.

5.5.1 Contacts to find a job

Respondents were asked whether, whilst studying at Lancaster or since graduating, they had ever secured work experience, an internship or a job where they knew somebody who worked there (or a relative or friend who knew somebody working there).

- 32.7% (84) stated they had secured work experience, an internship or a job where they knew somebody who worked there (or a relative or friend who knew somebody working there). 67.3% had not (n=254.) This suggests personal contacts continue to be important when searching for job opportunities.
- Over half (51.2%) of respondents who found a job through a contact did so through relatives (26.2%) or family friends (25%), which highlights the continuing importance of familial social capital.
- Only 4.8% (4) of those who found a job through a contact did so through somebody they met in first-year accommodation. This was perhaps lower than expected but as many of the respondents had graduated relatively recently, perhaps they were not in positions of sufficient seniority to assist with job opportunities.

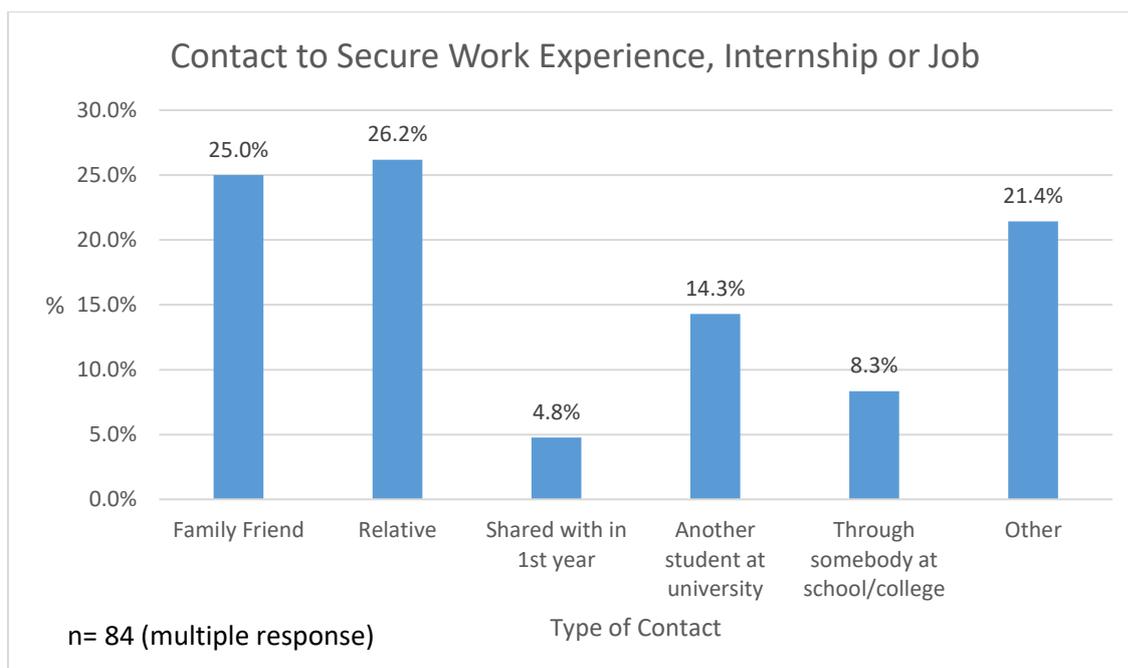


Figure 5.12 Type of Contact to Secure Work Experience, Internship or Job

'Other' included, among others, contact through work, university network and sport.

Criteria such as gender, disability, degree classification, whether parents attended university etc were cross-tabulated with whether respondents secured a job, work experience or an internship through a contact. The chi-square test showed there was no association for any criteria apart from disability (see Appendix Sixteen for a full list of the criteria, the T-tests and explanation of significance).

Those who said they had a disability whilst studying at LU were significantly more likely to have secured a job, internship or work experience through a contact.

Respondents who stated they had found a job through a contact were asked to explain their relationship and how this helped in finding and securing employment. Only one of 84 comments mentioned meeting someone in first-year accommodation who helped with job hunting.

Based on the questionnaire findings, there is little evidence to suggest the people one lives with during first year are helpful in securing employment. Instead, contacts from one's family of origin appeared to be more important. However, perhaps in the

future when alumni are in more senior positions, they may offer more help in providing contacts for employment.

5.5.2 Network of People still in contact with

To better understand the breadth and depth of respondents' networks they were asked to state the number of people from LU they were still in contact with.

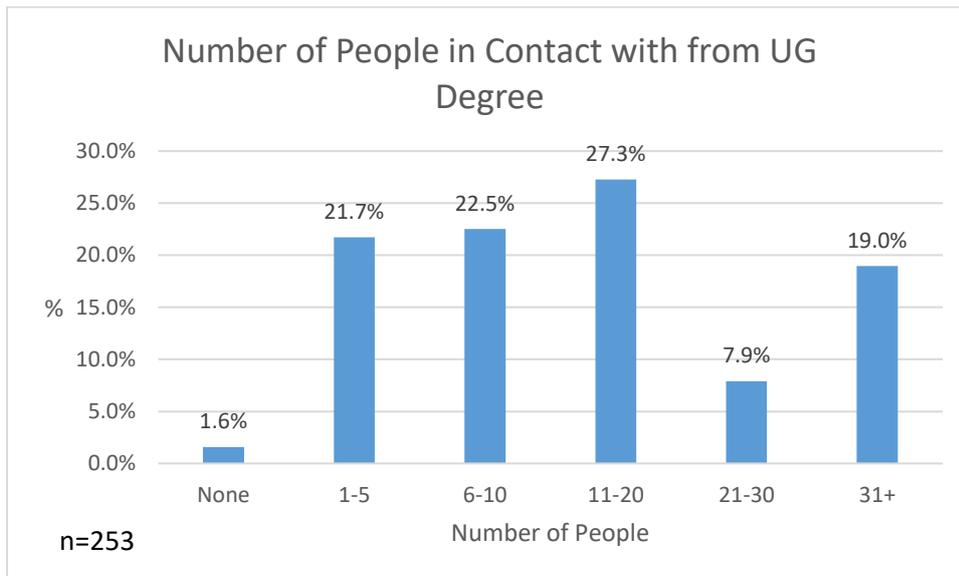


Figure 5.13 Number of People In Contact With From UG Degree

Over half (54.2%) of respondents were still in contact with 11 or more people from their undergraduate degree, illustrating the people one meets during undergraduate degrees are a key part of a graduate's network.

5.5.3 Nature of Contact

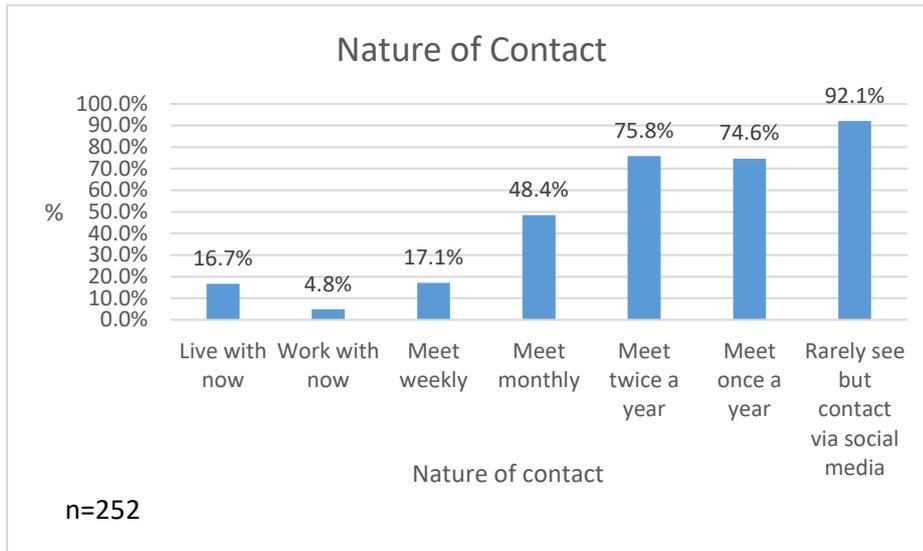


Figure 5.14 Nature of Contact

The nature of contact with people varied considerably but, interestingly, 16.7% lived with people they met during their undergraduate degree at LU. Nearly half (48.4%) continue to meet contacts monthly. Approximately three-quarters of respondents continue to meet with friends in person once or twice a year and 92.1% use social media to keep in contact.

5.5.3.1 Live With

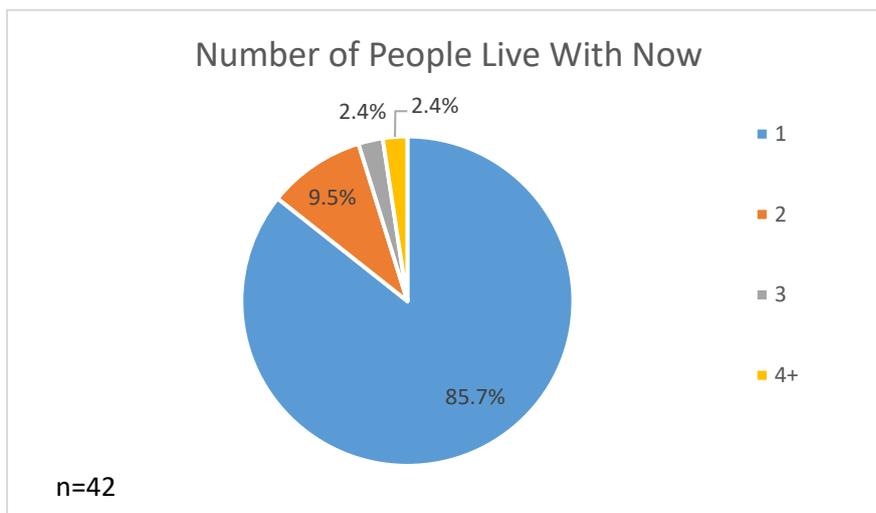


Figure 5.15 Number of People Living with Now From LU

Respondents who stated they lived with people they met at LU were asked how many people they lived with. The majority (85.7%) stated they lived with one other person.

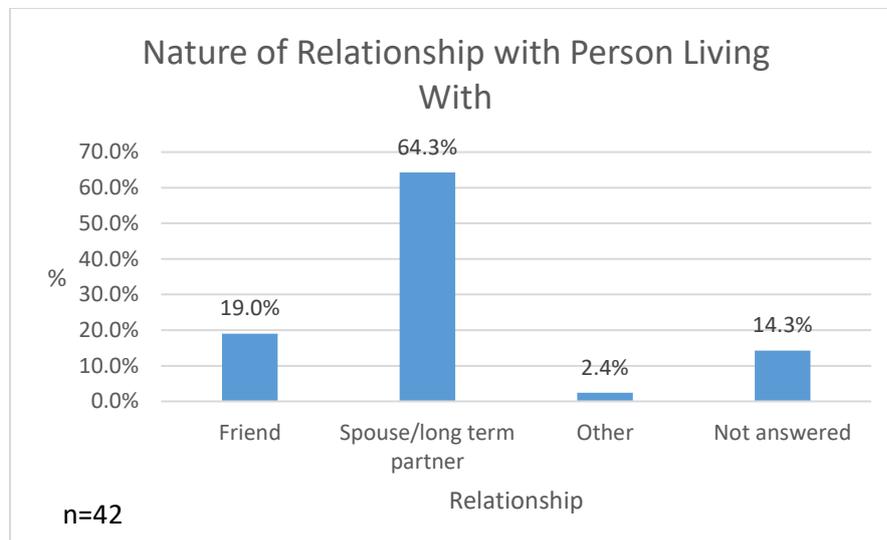


Figure 5.16 Nature of Relationship with the Person they Live with Now

Over two-thirds (64.3%) of respondents who lived with someone from university lived with their spouse/ long-term partner, highlighting the number of alumni who met their long-term partner at LU.

5.5.3.2 Work With

Twelve respondents worked with people they met whilst studying on their undergraduate degree. Seven worked with one person they met at university, two worked with two people and two people worked with four or more people they met at university.

5.5.4 Further Information About Friends

There were 133 further comments about the people met at university (52.1% of respondents); many were extensive, highlighting the interest in this topic and the significant importance of first-year accommodation in forming friendships. It was impossible to categorise them meaningfully into unique themes because the

responses were diverse and multi-faceted. However, there were three predominant themes.

5.5.4.1 Meeting Partners

Twenty-three of the respondents mentioned they met their long-term partner/ spouse at Lancaster, which again highlights the number of alumni who met their partners at university and opportunities for developing social capital:

'I met my husband working at the college bar... Mine and my husband's housemates were the bridesmaids and groomsmen at our wedding. 120 people at our wedding were people we went to university with, much to the horror of my parents'.

This comment highlights the potential impact of university on graduates' networks.

5.5.4.2 Enduring Nature of the Friendships

The following quote encapsulates the sentiments of many of the comments regarding the strong and enduring nature of the friendships:

'I made the strongest friendships of my life at Lancaster. I met most of my friends through my course, clubs and societies, College events and through friends (e.g. the flatmate of a friend on my course). I lived with one friend in my final year and some years later, we shared an apartment for over two years. I am frequently in touch with my Lancaster friends via texts, WhatsApp and phone calls. I consider them to be my closest friends and I think this is as a result of the shared experiences we had at Lancaster'.

5.5.4.3 Difficulties in Making Friends

Most of the comments focussed on the positive aspects of making friends and the rich and enduring friendships they enjoyed following graduation. However, there were a few comments from alumni who found making suitable friends at university to be very difficult:

'I don't see anyone, haven't done at all since graduating. I didn't form friendships at university, and I strongly believe that was due to my personal living arrangements. By missing out on the university experience, and the natural relationships you form by being on campus/student accommodation, I found it difficult to approach people who were in existing friendship groups'.

It appears this respondent did not have the opportunity to participate in the 'full' university experience. Perhaps they were living in private rented accommodation and missed out on the experience of shared university living. This highlights the importance of shared university living in facilitating and making friendships.

5.5.5 Frequency of Contact with Network of University Friends

The results in figure 5.17 show a large number of alumni have extensive networks of people they met during their time as an undergraduate at LU and many regularly meet in person. For example, for those with contacts they meet on an annual basis, three-quarters (75.5%) meet with between one and eight people. Over half (53.2%) of those who meet monthly meet between one and three people.

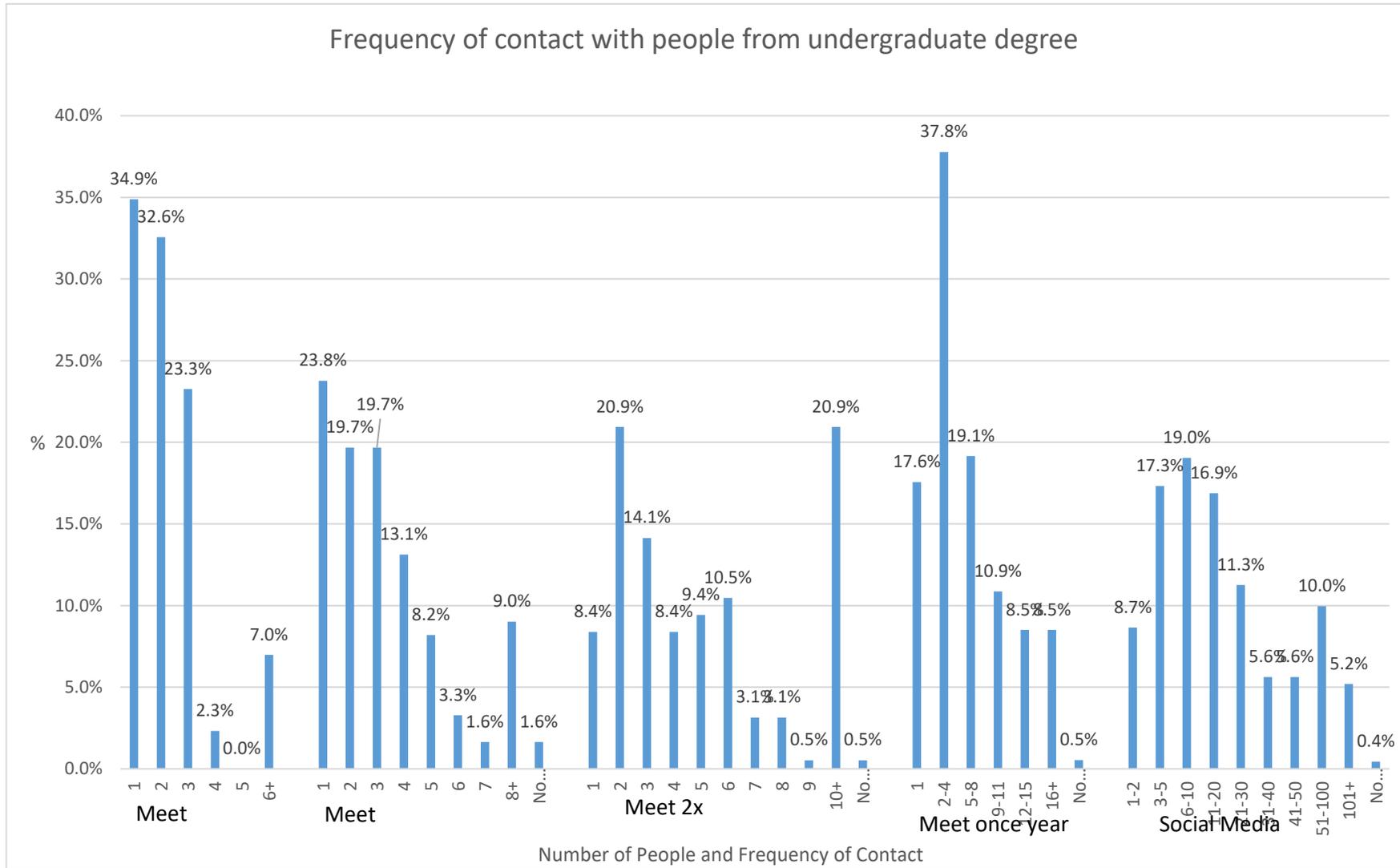


Figure 5.17 Frequency of Contact with People from UG Degree

5.6 Chapter Summary

This chapter presented an overview of key findings from the online questionnaire. The respondents were largely representative of home first-year undergraduate students at LU in terms of faculty, degree classification, ethnicity, disability, free school meals, parental education, type of school attended for sixth form and measures of deprivation. Quality of accommodation was moderately to very important when choosing LU but not as important as academic factors.

There was high satisfaction with first-year living arrangements. However, a minority of respondents were dissatisfied and in most cases the reasons related to flatmates rather than accommodation.

The findings revealed the respondents were living with a mix of nationalities and did not necessarily regard their flatmates as 'like me'.

Nearly a third of respondents stated they had secured work experience, an internship or a job where they knew somebody who worked there. However, very few respondents found a job through a contact they met in first-year accommodation. Familial social capital was important with over half of those who secured work experience, internship or a job citing their contact was either a family friend or relative. Respondents were still in contact with many people they had met at university, illustrating their importance in a graduate's network. Nearly a fifth lived with somebody they had met at LU and two-thirds of these were spouses/long term partners, which suggests university is a key site for meeting life partners. It was clear friends met at university were a key part of their post-university-life network.

The next chapter will present the findings from the semi-structured interviews.

Chapter 6: Interview Findings

6.1 Introduction

This chapter presents the findings of the semi-structured interviews with alumni from LU which explored the impact of first-year shared living on first-year experiences and post-graduation. A purposive sample of 15 respondents was selected from the 127 questionnaire respondents who agreed to participate in further research. Respondents were selected to provide graduates from a range of colleges, faculties, backgrounds, ethnicities, satisfaction with SA and whether they secured jobs via contacts. Table 6.1 provides an overview of the respondents. Appendix Five provides a more detailed analysis of the respondents.

Pseudonym	Year graduated	Faculty	Gender	Ethnicity
Yasmin	2015	LUMS	Female	White British
Sophie	2018	LUMS	Female	White British
Nadine	2010	FASS	Female	White British
Nicola	2018	FASS	Female	White British
Sienna	2014	FASS	Female	White British
Leon	2017	FASS and FST	Male	White British
Cheryl	2017	FST	Female	White British
Ralph	2012	Law	Male	White British
Oscar	2014	LUMS	Male	White British
Layla	2018	FASS	Female	Mexican/British
Mia	2017	LUMS	Female	Bangladeshi
Frank	2015	FST	Male	White British
Milo	2011	LUMS	Male	White British
Byron	2016	FST	Male	White British
Flo	2016	LUMS	Female	Indian

Table 6.1 Overview of Respondents

The interviews were analysed using Braun and Clarke's (2022) six-phase reflexive thematic analysis process as explained in section 4.8.3.6. As Braun and Clarke contend, 'quality reflexive TA is not about following procedures 'correctly' (or about 'accurate' and 'reliable' coding)' (2019 p.594) but instead is a creative storytelling process for interpreting and understanding a topic. I

therefore used the codes to help develop themes which are ‘creative and interpretive stories about the data’ (Braun and Clarke, 2019 p.593). A mind map illustrating the relationship between the ‘codes’ and resulting themes is in Appendix Seventeen. The chapter presents the interview data using six key themes in relation to student experiences of shared university living in SA whilst at university (RQ1) and post-graduation (RQ2) and extracts from the interviews are used to support the analysis (see table 6.2). RQ3 relating to the impact on social capital and networks will be discussed in the next chapter where the findings from the questionnaire and interviews will be brought together and discussed in relation to relevant theory and literature.

Research Question	Theme	
1. To what extent does first-year SA impact on UK students’ experience of university, particularly, the impact of housemates?	1.	University housemates: luck of the draw?
	2.	First-year accommodation and housemates are key to adjustment to university life.
	3.	Birds of a feather’: ‘similar’ students ‘flock’ together.
	4.	Widening horizons.
2. To what extent do friends met in first-year SA, and other university friends, influence UK students’ post-university life, particularly in terms of their networks and finding and securing employment?	5.	Bonds that bind us.
	6.	Extending networks and developing social capital.

Table 6.2 Summary of Themes

6.2 RQ1: Impact of First-year SA on Students’ Experience

There were four themes which related to the impact of first-year SA on students’ experiences and each of these are broken down into sub-sections.

6.2.1 Theme 1: University housemates: luck of the draw?

The first theme captures the importance of first-year student accommodation in helping to make friends and adjust to university life, particularly the perceived random nature of the allocation process.

6.2.1.1 Luck

All participants were unsure as to whether the university randomly allocated accommodation places or whether they used various criteria to allocate rooms to students with similar or different characteristics as illustrated by Frank.

'I was enormously lucky with the people I mean, almost all the people who I speak with at Lancaster who went through the first-year accommodations, say they were really lucky with their first-year picks. So I think whatever the process, worked well for those people. I was particularly lucky... My assumption has always been that it's the kind of thing that should really be random, because that's what life sort of is'.

Frank thought the process should be random to reflect the serendipitous nature of life and referred to the role of luck when discussing his positive experience of his housemates which was also a recurring theme in many of the interviews (seven respondents).

Layla not only felt lucky with her flatmates but also stated that had she not been happy with her flatmates she would not have enjoyed her university experience to the same extent and even suggested she might have wanted to drop out.

'I think that [hearing about her sister's challenging experience of shared living at another university] made me realise a) I was I was very lucky in the people that I got put with and, b) I think if I had gone downhill like, quickly, maybe I would have, I don't know, like, either wanted to drop out or like go home more or not enjoyed it'.

Sophie felt the allocation process was appropriate which echoed the views of nine other respondents.

'Well, yeah, I think they made a good job of it. I don't know what they did, but they made it quite mixed with different people'.

6.2.1.2 Importance of College

LU's college system was regarded by most respondents (9) as an important factor when choosing LU and for deciding their accommodation preferences because each college offers particular types of accommodation and positions itself differently. For example, Grizedale offers townhouses, flats and a range of ensuite accommodation and is regarded as 'the social college' (Lancaster University, 2024). Respondents were able to express a preference for a college and then whether they preferred ensuite or standard accommodation as explained by Milo.

'I remember, it was the first question you had to set your preference to which college you'd be in and so I think you had to say your first and second, or maybe even third choice'.

Colleges were regarded as important and most respondents (12) stated it had a positive impact on their first-year student experience, such as Nadine who thought it helped her develop a sense of belonging.

'Loved it. I absolutely loved it.... it gave you a better sense of belonging... I think it gave you a better sense of identity as well. You know 'cause like I say it was, it was massive, Lancaster and probably even bigger now. It's like a town and so like I guess your college is like your little village that you stayed in. So yeah I loved it. I loved the college'.

None of the respondents stated they had made a wrong choice with their college selection/allocation.

6.2.1.3 Unintentional Segregation

Despite most respondents believing the allocation of places was random, several acknowledged the possible unintentional grouping of similar students because of the allocation process. Frank highlighted segregation based on

student income/class. He thought students with less disposable income selected non-ensuite accommodation because it was cheaper. He discussed his non-ensuite accommodation, which he described as 'Pendle Poor' compared with more expensive ensuite accommodation in 'Pendle Posh'.

'I have a feeling that it just sorted by cost... whether you want a bathroom was kind of the main factor... it was the cheapest with six... - Pendle Poor... You know, I picked it because of cost and I know a few other people picked it because of costs... I certainly think Pendle Posh where we had some friends.... felt the housemates were very cliquey and from a particular background, which was public school [private/independent school], and a fair amount of money'.

A further unintentional segregation mentioned by respondents was where students stated they did not drink alcohol, and this perhaps resulted in sharing accommodation with religious groups who did not drink alcohol. Milo recalled his wife's experience.

'My wife was a good example [did not drink alcohol]... this was her first time away from home, she really missed her family and day one when she moved in... I think maybe four of the six were Asian and Muslim girls... and she ended up in an all-girls, small dorm predominantly with... certain people that have other beliefs and you know their beliefs mean they don't drink and they don't... go out partying and things like that'.

Selecting a particular college may also have led to grouping of students with similar outlooks. Sienna believed each college had its own personality and this would therefore attract particular types of students.

'One thing I think... that is fairly unique to Lancaster is the college system and because the colleges all really have their own identity'.

6.2.1.4 Allocation Process

Respondents had mixed views when asked how they felt places should be allocated. Oscar's quote represented several respondents' (11) views that the allocation process should be random, so people lived with a wide range of housemates from different backgrounds.

'I think I quite like the idea of being random in the sense that you're then exposed to people different to you and from, you know, different backgrounds and maybe different countries and things like that'.

Ralph explained why he felt people should not necessarily be matched according to particular characteristics/criteria.

'I would disagree that you should put people together on whatever measure. You don't know that you're going to get on... I left University, a different person than when I arrived and I think part of that experience is moving in and dealing with people and getting to know people that are different to you. This Sam, who's, the guy I lived with all the way through I don't think if you'd have said at 18, Ralph, would you like to be friends with this guy? I think, no, we're both very different. I was sort of very into rugby and outdoor sports. He's a young conservative... we're now great friends and part of that is through shared experience but I think if I'd have been given the option whether I wanted to live with him I probably wouldn't have done'.

Ralph's experience illustrates the point opposites can attract and by living alongside people we regard as dissimilar to ourselves we can expand our experiences and knowledge, and it helps to create more diverse social networks. Oscar echoed Ralph's view and went on to say students can join societies or clubs where they are more likely to find people with similar interests.

'I had a good experience with being randomly matched with people ... from different backgrounds... I think University has a role to introduce

people from a wider set of backgrounds and then if you want to find people similar to you, that's what kind of roles of societies and joining clubs'.

Nadine referred to this randomness as creating a 'melting pot' and liked the fact the allocation process did not necessarily place students on the same degree together.

'it seemed like a melting pot. I don't know how other unis do it, but it wasn't done according to what degree you were doing'.

Mia, a British Bengali Muslim who lived in a townhouse of 12 predominantly white people, thought households should consist of a mix of people from different backgrounds, nationalities and religions but perhaps it would help to have some sort of matching of people to make sure individuals did not feel isolated.

'I think definitely we should be mixing people so that you can learn from one another, learn about different cultures, learn about different experiences. But I think when it's in houses of 12, having three people with common interest, and then another three people with common interest, but then each of those selective groups are very different to each other would be quite good. I know that would be really hard to actually do... I don't believe that we should have a whole house of international students and a whole house of this kind of students... we should be mixing people together. But if they can have some sort of interest, that would be handy'.

Byron agreed with the random allocation of places but echoed Mia's concerns about being isolated if you were the only person from a particular background.

'I think that basically it should be almost entirely random. If it was me, I want to mix with people from as many different places as possible. And maybe with a bit of familiar.... I suppose it's easy for me to say that because I'm part of like the majority group. So if I was going to a foreign

University and I was the only English person in my flat and everybody else spoke a different language that might be a bit difficult'.

Milo believed the process should be random but acknowledged it may be necessary in certain situations to make provision for certain students such as students with disabilities or those wanting to live in an alcohol-free household.

'Yeah that's I think ultimately if someone has a preference and they state that they need certain provisions in place I think obviously you have to cater for that as number one but where somebody doesn't really have any specific needs or requirements, I think mixing it up is good you know. Mixed dorms I think are great you know, it gets a great balance between the people in there. And I think also from different departments or different courses is also really great because you meet friends off your courses, it's a separate bunch of people you have an opportunity to meet. But then through your housemates and through the people they meet it opens up a whole new level of social groups'.

Ralph agreed households should consist of a range of different types of students but acknowledged homophily occurred and many students tended to gravitate to those from the same country.

'I think it was nice to have a mix of international and domestic students, although I think the international students tended to sort of keep themselves to themselves, but I think that's true of anyone else... you're going to find people that you can communicate with more easily'.

Milo acknowledged it may be helpful to place similar students together, so they feel comfortable and highlighted the challenges with mixing students from different backgrounds, particularly different countries.

'the whole point of university experience other than what you get out of it, at the end, is the life experiences, the social experiences. It's a tricky one because international students are going to feel very isolated if they're by themselves if they struggle with the language or completely different

culture. So there may be an element of matching. You know, say, if you've got an eight-room accommodation, then maybe you can have two international students, and the rest of it can be a bit more mixed up so you can kind of blend it.. So, you know, best case scenario, you've got a couple of small groups that get along really well and then end up interacting with other cultures, people of different persuasion or mind. But I think what comes with that is risk as well because if you do bring people of different opinions or cultures or beliefs together, yes, there's the potential for people to learn and grow, but there's also potential for people to do the opposite. Depending on who they are as individuals, you know, you can't force someone to be open minded'.

Ralph, Milo and Oscar knew people from college/school who also went to LU but decided they did not want to live together as they wanted to meet new people.

'I think we rather sensibly made a decision to try and make other friends... But we sort of said, look, you know, we should probably make sure we get to know other people here, because that's sort of the point'
Ralph.

6.2.1.5 Resolving Issues

Cheryl thought some sort of questionnaire to identify similar interests could be helpful in allocating places in accommodation but acknowledged there is no perfect method.

'Maybe a little bit of a questionnaire to kind of determine sociableness. Just that you want to go out and you're interested in certain things and maybe pair up people at least put one or two people with similar interests in the flat together, just to see how it works, but there's no perfect way of doing it'.

Mia agreed and thought a questionnaire may be useful in placing students with similar interests. Mia was one of the few respondents who did not enjoy her

first-year accommodation experience and did not get on well with her housemates as she felt she had nothing in common with them. This may explain her desire for some sort of matching of similar students which may have avoided the difficulties she experienced.

'I think a questionnaire of similarities could help. Even to put somebody in there who you think might be very similar to me just as a one person, almost like a buddying system would be quite good'.

Nicola also experienced difficulties in her first-year accommodation and believed people would get on better with similar students.

'I think it's a shame but it's always gonna work out better if you have people who are similar'.

Layla acknowledged there was no perfect process for allocating rooms but believed it should be easier for students to move accommodation if necessary.

'However much you fill out a questionnaire based on personality, it's very hard to match people without knowing them. Erm so I think, to be honest, the way they do it (randomly) is probably the easiest way. But I would say maybe if someone was sort of a few months and really unhappy in their flat, make it slightly easier for them to move'.

6.2.2 Theme 2: First-year accommodation and housemates are key to adjustment to university life

The second theme relates to the role of shared university living and its impact on the transition to university life. Housemates were regarded as the first potential opportunity to make friends and develop relationships when starting university. Many respondents (11) expected to make friends with people they lived with. All respondents highlighted the major impact of housemates on their experiences at university. In most cases the impact was positive but for a minority of respondents their first-year accommodation and housemates had a negative impact on their university experience.

Sienna discussed the importance of housemates on the student experience and how this developed her as a person and how she learnt about the world through her friendships. However, she acknowledged the impact could be positive or negative but whatever the experience made her the person she became.

'I do just think the people you live with are the people that have a massive effect on your experience at university... I only know Lancaster but they are the people whether it's a positive or negative effect, it could be the person you live with drove you to distraction and forced you to become a very patient person. Or they may be like me that I was very lucky that the person that I lived with is, is my best friend for life and has taught me so much about myself and about the world'.

6.2.2.1 Source of Support

Yasmin explained how the sociableness of her flatmates enhanced her university experience and believed a negative experience with housemates could lead to feelings of being homesick.

'I think without my flatmates being the sort of people that also loved going out it definitely wouldn't have been so great... That was the main friendship group but I think if I didn't have that then, it would have been completely different and then you would definitely be feeling homesick'.

Several respondents highlighted the importance of housemates as a source of support, such as Frank whose father died during his second year at university.

'Well, at various times we've (first-year flatmates), very much been there for each other. My dad died when I was in second year. And my first-year flatmates were the most supportive people during that time, they came across for the funeral and were generally lovely throughout'.

Oscar also highlighted the support he received from his housemates both socially and academically.

'100% it was like it made it such a positive experience and I could also count on them for help. Because I didn't have an A level in maths and the economics was quite mathsy. I had two flatmates that could help explain stuff to me. Not only just kind of from a social point of view, but academically as well... I remember on the first or second night out, I lost my keys and one of my flatmates... he came with me to retrace my steps and find them'.

6.2.2.2 'Like a Family'

Three respondents, including Oscar, referred to their households as 'family' and recalled the importance of this in adjusting to life away from their own families.

'We were very tight knit group and for the whole year, always cooked as a group and had mealtimes together.... it was really nice to have like a little family away from home'.

Frank also referred to his household as a family and believed this replacement family provided support during what can be a challenging period of transition.

'I think we were just a quite a happy family group, which I think a lot of us needed in that first year. Certainly, some of us got very homesick during the first term and for various other reasons we sort of all needed a family group... I would say our flat itself was almost like a nuclear family and then the other block were really sort of extended familial relations really....The flat that I was in as I say was my family and really beyond first year'.

6.2.2.3 Design of Accommodation

Several respondents (5) made comments relating to how the design of their accommodation facilitated socialising and making friends. Layla's accommodation situation helped her to mix with people outside her immediate household.

'Yeah, so even though we were in that group of nine, you could walk around the entire floor. So there was maybe 60 of us, we weren't like together all the time and some people were sort of more friends with some than others. I think that was really nice ... maybe in your flat where, you didn't necessarily like click with all of them. You could just like wander around and see who else was out'.

Layla discussed the importance of kitchens as a space to socialise, highlighting the importance of communal spaces providing opportunities for serendipitous encounters.

'We could just go into like other people's kitchens and socialise with them and there was quite a lot of people as well'.

This was also highlighted by Byron:

'If you wanted to sit in the kitchen, there would always be somebody in there even at like four in the morning and there would be someone to talk to and most people did generally join in'.

6.2.2.4 Sources of Conflict

There were many comments about the positive impact of first-year accommodation and housemates on the student experience and how they helped with the transition to university. However, most respondents (10) also recalled negative aspects, mainly minor, of their shared living experience. Milo did not experience any major problems in his household but acknowledged issues relating to cleanliness and cleaning could cause conflict.

'Living with other people was weird. I suppose having a shared kitchen could be a bit annoying, you get some people who are real militants that want everything super clean, and you have messy students and, you know, you get arguments about the recycling, tidying up and people stealing each other's spoons or milk or you know, things like that can get a little bit tedious'.

Unfortunately, Nicola and Mia both found first-year university shared living challenging and both suffered from mental health issues which they both believed stemmed from their living situations. Nicola reported feeling homesick and felt this was because of her unhappiness in her household.

'Things were not good in the house. They weren't talking to me, there's that atmosphere, I was missing home. I was quite homesick I think partly because I wasn't enjoying myself at uni. so just wanted to be home. Because of the atmosphere I didn't want to go downstairs to the kitchen so I kind of stopped eating or would have just some snacks and stuff up in my room. And that's all I would have. I was even cheeky enough to get a travel kettle and put that in my room, which I shouldn't have. But I could make a cup of tea in my room without having to go downstairs and face anybody'.

Nicola discussed the possibility of moving but decided things may not improve if she joined a new household late in the term and was probably better to stay where she was because at least she understood the situation. Due to problems with her household she spent more time with people on her course. The situation had such a profound impact on Nicola she received counselling.

'They did talk about moving accommodation but there was no guarantee... it would be any better. Whereas I might as well stay here. I know what the situation is, so I ended up doing that and seeing counselling during the second term and third term in first year, and which yeah, definitely kind of helped. I just started spending time with the people from my course'.

Mia also experienced difficulties with her housemates.

'In first year, my mental health wasn't the best because of how much I struggled... because of the living conditions, and my mental health and not having a good group of friends, because I am very sociable. Erm I think all three of those elements impacted my experience in first year erm and the living conditions.... to the point where if I was walking down

the spine and they were walking past me, they would never make eye contact, they would never say hi. It made me feel like an outcast inside my living accommodation which wasn't a nice experience'.

6.2.3 Theme 3: Birds of a Feather': 'similar' students 'flock' together.

First-year university shared living may provide opportunities for students to meet new people from different backgrounds and expand their social networks and develop their social capital. This could particularly be the case if accommodation is allocated randomly and there would be the possibility of a working-class, state-educated and first-in-family student living next door to a privately-educated son or daughter of a barrister or doctor or an international student. This theme highlights the reasons as to why this idea of a harmonious melting pot of students from different backgrounds, cultures and religions does not necessarily occur in practice. Many respondents (13) commented on how they gravitated towards people they regarded as 'similar' when first arriving at university i.e. the concept of homophily (McPherson et al., 2001), perhaps because they found reassurance and comfort in having shared experiences and things in common. Nadine stated she felt people are drawn to like-minded people.

'26 (students in her kitchen) in mine so I think those of who were the most similar just sort of all gravitated together'.

6.2.3.1 Background

There was evidence respondents from similar backgrounds were drawn to each other. For example, Nicola explained how her friendship with Sarah started because they were both 'northern' and studying similar subjects.

'Sarah was from Preston, so she was really nearby so I kind of made friends with her like being Northern and kind of having that similarity. Plus, she was doing English literature and language. So we were going

to have some lectures together. I kind of made really good friends with her'.

6.2.3.2 Culture and Language

Ralph believed UK and international students did not necessarily mix due to language issues.

'We as UK students tend to congregate together because, you know, it's easy, isn't it? Erm probably the same for them (international students) and that it's easy to chat away in their language with their own sort of cultural references erm than it is for them to talk to us in English and let alone us trying to speak in Chinese'.

This perception of international students not wanting to socialise with home students may be an excuse given by home students who are reluctant to make the effort required to overcome language and cultural barriers. These barriers are therefore not broken down and cross-cultural friendships are not developed. This was acknowledged by Nadine:

'There were four people from America, a few from China as well whom we didn't mingle with so much. At the time we were like they never hang out with us but in hindsight, I think we probably could have done more to include them'.

Sienna also acknowledged the desire for people to be with people from the same culture.

'I lived with her [Chinese student] and she eventually found the friendship group that was sort of Asian. I think she joined the Chinese society... so that she could find people that were like her. And then in my second year, when I lived with a big group of people, there were two Chinese students. And they very much did keep to themselves and spent a lot of time with their friends from the same country. It's a difficult one

because I completely understand people wanting to be surrounded by the people they see as similar to them'.

The desire to associate with 'similar' people seemed to be particularly important for students from minority groups who perhaps felt rather isolated. Flo was Indian and explained the excitement she felt when meeting another Indian student at freshers' week.

'There was times in freshers where it was just. Oh my god you're asian too. Our first conversation was your Indian. I'm Indian. Did you watch this movie I watched that movie. And literally after that, it was like, we're gonna be friends now'.

Nicola felt she had little in common with her housemates and therefore sought out friends outside her house.

'I did kind of start thinking, I don't see these being my kind of my main group (housemates). Erm just because we didn't have stuff in common'.

However, Nicola also acknowledged just because people are similar, they are not necessarily going to become friends.

'I think it's always gonna work out better if you have people who are similar... but I don't think you can ever tell what people are going to be like and what people are going to get on. I've seen plenty of friendships where you look at the two of them and I never would have put them together. It's like, you're like chalk and cheese. And then others where they're so similar and get on like house on fire but others are so similar, but they absolutely can't stand each other'.

6.2.3.3 Implications of Homophily

Frank highlighted potential problems with the tendency for people to gravitate to people with similar attitudes as this may result in lack of diversity.

'I don't know whether socially you know, from a societal perspective, it's necessarily good to just group people who are going to, on paper agree with each other and whether that creates more echo chambers and less diversity of thought'.

Nadine also mentioned the potential side-effect of homophily being the segregation of those perceived as different.

'Like I say unfortunately in hindsight, maybe we did sort of exclude some of the people that didn't have the same interests'.

However, Byron acknowledged people could develop friendships with people they perceived as different if provided with the opportunity to get to know people, such as in shared living in SA.

'I think if we were put in a position where we had to talk to each other for 10 minutes, then yeah, we would have probably become friends because we got on really well. And although he wasn't interested in computer stuff, and I definitely wasn't interested in American football, because we're both quite open to learning about new things. By the end of it, he was playing my games. I was watching his football, it worked'.

6.2.4 Theme 4: Widening horizons?

This theme reflects the respondents' unanimous agreement shared university accommodation provides the opportunity to mix with people from diverse backgrounds and to be exposed to different attitudes and perspectives despite the tendency to be drawn to 'similar' people. Sienna encapsulated the views of many respondents (10) when she stated shared university living broadened her horizons.

'It broadens your horizons. I think one of the greatest and most important things about being at university is learning to be independent, and not leaning too much on people who have come from a similar background to you and trying to understand how other people live'.

6.2.4.1 'People not-like me'

Sienna also went on to say shared living provided opportunities to meet and develop meaningful relationships with people you would not necessarily meet elsewhere.

'I don't know if we would be as close as we are now because we never ever would have crossed paths if it wasn't for us living together. She comes from Barrow in Furness'

Byron was the first in his family to study at university and had not travelled a great deal within the UK, let alone overseas, and welcomed the opportunity to meet people he perceived as 'different'.

'I met some very interesting people it was a good experience (shared first-year living). It was good to meet people from different backgrounds.... When I started uni I'd never been abroad, because we just couldn't afford to... the furthest city I'd been to was Manchester. And so it broadened my horizons'

Nicola's experience of shared living was challenging but she still acknowledged the positive impact of meeting people from diverse backgrounds.

'It didn't work out but I think it's good that you get that chance to mix with people that you wouldn't have done. For me, I think a big part of uni, it's that chance to mix with all sorts of different people and learn and gain from that and all right mine was more negative, but I certainly gained from it in terms of, you know, resilience and confidence'

Oscar grew up in a predominantly white rural area and found starting university to be an eye opener.

'I grew up in Wiltshire so it's very kind of sheltered. I think that's the one big eye-opening thing when you go to university there's suddenly all these different ideas. I was very sheltered compared with people that

maybe grew up in the city. It's a very white area to grow up in and I just wasn't exposed to people from any other backgrounds'.

Sienna believed one of the benefits of joining LU was the opportunity to meet people from diverse backgrounds in SA and yet acknowledged it was sometimes comforting to be around people from a 'similar' background but felt these people could be found elsewhere.

'I think one of the great benefits of Lancaster as a university is how international and multicultural it is. I think it's a really important part of being at any university that you are surrounded by people who are different to you. I completely understand that being around people that are sort of comforting to you, that you know, that they have had similar experiences, is really important (from a mental health perspective) but I think there are other places than accommodation that you can find those people'.

Several respondents (8) highlighted the important role of SA in meeting people outside their course. Frank, an engineering student, enjoyed meeting a diverse range of people in his accommodation which he felt he would not meet on his course.

'I think that was the most valuable thing about the Lancaster experience for me was that having friends outside of my course... My gut reaction is that courses generally attract similar people. You know, engineering wise, I mean it predominately attracts white men. I think that's the case with lots of courses... And so for me the strength of my accommodation was that I was with people who were different. Even though I've said we had common ground. That really was by chance, not by design and I think that that was very important'.

6.2.4.2 Race and Ethnicity

Several respondents (8) believed shared university living played an important role in meeting and getting to know students from different ethnic groups. Flo,

an Indian student, believed university plays an important role in mixing students from different backgrounds and cultures and providing the opportunity to learn about different cultures.

'There's no point just being friends with people who are similar to you... I think University is the place where you meet people from all different like avenues... obviously I'm like Indian. So I knew people at Lancaster, who I wouldn't say I was the first Asian person they'd ever met, but probably the first Asian person they've ever interacted with. Erm they probably wouldn't have done that back at home as there were not that many of us where they lived. So, for them, it was like probably a bit more of a learning experience because they were like, Oh, I didn't realise you could drink or you eat meat or you did this or that. It kind of gets rid of those, like, misconceptions that a lot of people have... probably didn't get that in London ... said they'd never really spoken to a brown person beforehand, but definitely at Lancaster I got it like four or five times where it was like, oh, you're the first [Asian] person I've ever really spoken to'.

Ralph echoed Flo's views that being exposed to different cultures can help to facilitate integrate and breakdown racial barriers.

'I certainly do believe in kind of being exposed to other cultures. I think is quite important. Just being around someone, really I forget, there's a famous quote that someone says about travel, being, like the cure for ignorance basically, or like xenophobia. So exposing sheltered people to like lots of varying cultures is quite good'.

Milo's girlfriend, a white UK student, was placed in a flat with predominantly Asian girls and was worried about living with others with such different backgrounds. However, once she got to know them, she found it a positive experience, learnt a great deal and one of the girls became her best friend. This experience helped to break down cultural barriers.

'She was introducing herself to people that had a completely different outlook on life to her and different choices. So she really struggled. However, the first night she was upset and then she got to know them. And actually, one of the girls, Tash was, you know, her best friend throughout uni and still stays in very good contact with now... Whilst Tash did not drink alcohol and things like that she still used to come out on all our nights out and party with us...It's a learning curve coming from places where it's not as diverse. But actually it was a fantastic experience.... I think through that, both of us, you know, got a better understanding of her culture and, you know, her faith. You know, there were many times where we had conversations about all kinds of stuff. And the friendship that we built means that we could be very candid and challenge it and say why we don't agree or you know, be very open and honest with each other about it, which I think, you know, only helped us both in our understanding of each other and it was a great experience. So she wouldn't have picked who she lived with, but she wouldn't have changed it now'.

Most respondents (10), such as Layla, believed it was important to mix students in SA from different countries and cultures to help facilitate cultural integration.

'I think, it is important to mix cultures. I think especially coming from, like someone who studied languages and went abroad etc I think it's so needed right now in the UK to mix cultures and to mix backgrounds and to mix races and whatnot to try and help people interact with different cultures. Because I think as much as there were certain differences between people in our flat. It was nowhere near as much as you'd get between different cultures... I think it's very important'.

Respondents such as Sophie explained achieving integration can be difficult due to assumptions international students do not necessarily want to mix with UK students.

'Sometimes people asked me, why have you got so many Asian friends? Because they think Chinese students don't know how to socialise with the British, but I think it's just understanding what prevents that, and it's just because sometimes they don't know how to express themselves, but as soon as they know that you're OK to talk to, they'll open up fully'.

Flo also agreed there was an assumption among home students that international students would not want to mix with them.

'Even though I have a different ethnicity, I probably didn't get the same treatment as they did (international students) because they probably did have it a lot worse because I think sometimes people didn't give them a chance. It was just the assumption that Oh, they'll be friends with all the other Chinese people, they might have tried to say hi or something, but then they just leave it at that they wouldn't like try again'.

However, a minority of respondents (4), such as Cheryl, felt some international students had little interest in socialising with home students.

'Okay, I'm going to speak very frankly. Erm they stuck in their little cliques... All of the Asian international students I knew had no interest in socialising or being part of any culture in the UK. I tried with certain people and a lot harder than I tried with others.... I do think... they do close themselves off more than they probably should at a British University'.

This quote perhaps highlights the challenges facing international students when studying in what is still a predominantly white middle-class HEI. Frank agreed but could understand why international students may want to mix with students from the same country.

'Two of the students were Chinese and they very much kept themselves to themselves, we very rarely saw them. And they often went off and did things with another flat that was predominantly Chinese and allowed them to be themselves I guess, which is fair enough'.

Byron appreciated it might be difficult for international students studying in an overseas university to mix with home students.

'I suppose it's easy for me to say because I'm part of the majority group. If I was going to a foreign University and I was the only English person in my flat and everybody else spoke a different language that might be a bit difficult'.

6.2.4.3 Fish out of Water

A minority of respondents (2), such as Mia, felt they did not fit in with the people with whom they lived and could be regarded as a 'fish out of water' (Bourdieu and Passeron, 1990).

'Moving in was fine when I met everyone erm yeah everybody was nice. Sometimes I did feel like I didn't fit in an awful amount... I felt like I didn't fit in as much because the majority of the people that I lived with erm were white and always drank and there was a whole big drinking presence in the first week during freshers week erm and me coming from a Bengali Muslim family, we didn't drink'.

6.2.4.4 Propinquity

Several respondents (4), such as Flo, commented on how they formed friendships with people who lived in close proximity, supporting the idea of the propinquity effect (Festinger et al., 1963).

'I think first-year we all socialised together and I think that was probably more because of location. Erm in terms of having things in common I wouldn't say we all had a lot of things in common I think it was more because we all shared the same flat that we became friends'.

Due to the principle of propinquity SA provides HEIs with the opportunity to encourage social mixing of students from diverse backgrounds.

6.3 RQ2: Influence of friends met in first-year SA and other university friends on post-university Life

First-year SA was a key site for making friends and developing a social network which had an enduring impact on respondents' lives even after graduation. There were two themes which related to the influence of university friends on post-university life.

6.3.1 Theme 5: Bonds that Bind Us

This theme encapsulates the longevity of the friendships and networks made in first year, particularly due to the shared experiences of living in SA. There was unanimous agreement among all the respondents friends made during first year, particularly, their flatmates, became important friends as explained by Nadine.

'I'd say I'm better friends with my Lancaster friends than I am with my work friends... My Lancaster uni. friends are definitely the most important. I speak to them probably more than I speak to most other people'.

6.3.1.1 'Best Friends For Life'

Layla stated her closest friends were her university friends.

'I still consider them my best friends today. Erm I've made some friends here, obviously, but I think like the closest ones, erm are definitely the ones from uni'.

Milo echoed these views and added he had not met many people since university who had made such an impact on his life.

'I would say people I've met at Lancaster certainly people that I lived with... the main people that I'm still in contact with is, you know, friends for life kind of people they are the closest people to me in my life. I've

yet to meet other people since University, apart from when I was travelling, but in a normal environment, you know, a lasting impact on my life anyway, and being a friend through the years’.

Sienna felt her university friends were more enduring than other friendship groups.

‘So, by far the friends I’ve made from Lancaster are the ones that I am still closest to and we still have these like group friendships. I have lovely individual friendships from other places, but the group aspect of everybody staying friends, and especially the six of us that is something that I don’t have in any other walk of life where I’ve made this friendship group of people that have stayed for nearly 10 years’.

Many respondents such as Yasmin referred to friends they met through first-year accommodation as becoming ‘best friends’.

‘So all of my first-year flat mates were all like the best friends. We all live all around the country which doesn’t make meeting up easy. Although, at the moment (due to covid) with zoom probably we are talking more than ever. We have calls every week for a couple of hours with some beers and a quiz’.

The bonds many respondents developed through shared SA bound them together as explained by Sienna.

‘Because of the friends we made, there was 40 of us all in the same building. They’ve all become friends for life and one girl who I lived with is my best friend in the whole entire world. I think it’s a friendship for life. I think first-year of university is always strange for people. And it’s always the bonds you form then are going to be very important for you forever. I think because it was such a strange time for us. We just really pulled together. Me and Emily are completely different people I don’t think in a different situation we would have met so it just means that we’ve formed

this amazing bond but probably wouldn't have happened in another situation... Just creates that amazing bond that you keep for life'.

Nicola regarded her friendship with housemates as deeper and more honest than other friends.

'So, we've always been a group very open and talked about that, and very much kind of, I think, looked out for each other in those respects. and not being afraid to say, you know, if you're acting out of turn, or if you need, you know, if something's not right, we will tell each other... those weren't conversations I've ever had with friends before. It all felt very kind of grown up and a lot more kind of a deeper'.

The friendships gained whilst at university were regarded by Mia as being like family and an important part of her life.

'I think this group of friends are the most important...The group of friends that I have from Lancaster University are basically my family. They are my very close networks and throughout everything so they're significantly important in my life'.

Sienna also commented on how she learnt about the world and widened her horizons through their friends.

'I was very lucky that the person that I lived with is, is my best friend for life and has taught me so much about myself and about the world'.

6.3.1.2 Distance is no Object

All respondents including Leon mentioned they maintained university friendships despite the fact they did not live close by.

'A lot of them are people who choose to stay in touch even though we haven't seen each other physically in a long time. I would definitely consider it to be you know, very close friends, I could definitely lean on them if I needed to'.

Layla's university friends lived in different countries and yet she still regarded them as friends for life.

'I've got one friend who is living in Norway. Another one living in Paris, another one in Germany. Me over here in Mexico, it's quite nice that three friends from uni have come to visit me in Mexico since I've been here... I get the feeling that they're like friends for life.'

6.3.1.3 Life-Partners

First-year SA played an important role for 3 of the 5 male respondents who met their future wives in their first-year accommodation. For Frank this seemed to carry on a family tradition.

'It's only a tradition of two generations but both my parents met each other within half an hour of my mum moving, because my dad was helping first-years move in whilst he was a second year and yeah, I met my wife in my flat's kitchen, doing some awful ice-breaking exercise.'

6.3.1.4 Covid-19

The interviews were conducted during the summer of 2020 when the country was in the middle of the Covid-19 pandemic and not socialising. Many respondents such as Sienna commented on the importance of their friends from Lancaster at this challenging time.

'So we video call each other every Friday and... we've started a pub quiz group, where we invite everybody in our six, and then anybody else from Lancaster, erm to join in and we get 30 people a week now full of Lancaster graduates. So ... Yeah, this group we have, we do tend to try to meet up a few times a year anyway, but because of this whole COVID situation, it has really pulled everyone together in this constant communication and wanting to see each other on a weekly basis as opposed to just a few times a year... So we've all been just completely

there for each other, constantly checking in on each other. I'd say once a week I receive some sort of gift from one of them'.

Mia explained due to Covid-19 her university friends had been meeting up online a lot more frequently than they did in person before Covid.

'They've been more important now. We all talk, we have our weekly quizzes, which just helps to bring us together and just to catch up... I think because of COVID, we are in touch more often because before this, we'd only meet up for birthdays, or big celebrations say four times a year probably we'd meet up but because of COVID we're meeting up more online, we're talking more, we're watching films together playing quizzes... So I think it's had a positive impact on our friendship'.

6.3.2 Theme 6: Extending networks and developing social capital

This theme highlights the importance of university friends in extending one's network.

6.3.2.1 Contacts for Jobs

Five of the 15 respondents stated in the questionnaire they had secured work experience, an internship or a job where they knew somebody who worked there or a relative or friend who knew somebody working there. However, none of the respondents mentioned directly hearing about work opportunities or securing work experience, an internship or a job through anybody they lived with. The contacts were more likely to be family, family friends, university staff or students they met in other ways, such as in the case of Layla, who's aunt made the initial contact with her employer.

'So that was my auntie who lives here she had given photography lessons to one of the business partners. Erm so she made that like initial communication with her'.

Some parents were a valuable source of social capital and provided support and contacts to their children when job-hunting. Sienna, for example, went to work at her father's company after graduation.

'I sort of fell into it basically the organisation that I work for, my dad works there and when I was 15, I did some work experience there. And then I was sort of doing that post University job hunting and they offered that I could essentially build a role around the company, so it wasn't sort of they had a job role in mind.... It just turned into this role where I have the most amazing opportunities to build the role around what I can and enjoy doing'.

Nicola had not secured a job at a company where she knew somebody, but her parents were careers advisers, and she admitted they were a great source of help when applying for jobs. Nicola was a valuable source of social capital to her friends as her parents also offered careers support and advice to them.

'Yeah, they're really great. And they have always helped me with like applications... and they're always willing to help my friends as well which is really great because all my friends turn to me and be like "help me with my personal statement help me with my CV".'

6.3.2.2 Key Part of Network

Several respondents (5) believed the people they met at Lancaster were influential on their lives and even suggested they were more important than their actual degree, as illustrated by Mia.

'I think they (contacts from Lancaster) are more important, than the degree. Yeah, I think they play a really important and key part in my life'.

Flatmates were not necessarily a key source of information for job hunting, but they all mentioned how important the people they met at LU were on their lives after graduation. All respondents were enthusiastic about talking about their time at Lancaster and reflected on how much they enjoyed their time there and

the remarkable people they met. Several of the respondents commented on how much they enjoyed taking part in the interview such as Nadine.

'I know I said to Mum... it will be nice doing this because I loved Lancaster and it will be nice to have something positive to talk about for a bit to distract from what I'm usually thinking about'.

All respondents could recall with great clarity, even if several years ago, the first time they moved into their first-year SA and met their housemates. This perhaps indicates the significance and importance of, and impact it had on, their lives.

6.4 Chapter Summary

This chapter provided an overview of the key findings from the 15 interviews conducted with alumni who graduated from LU with an undergraduate degree between 2010 and 2020. The data was presented according to six key themes, four themes related to RQ1 which explored the impact of first-year accommodation on students' experiences and two themes concerned with RQ2 explored students' experiences post-graduation. The next chapter will discuss the findings from both the questionnaire and the interviews in relation to relevant theory and literature and explore the extent to which shared first-year SA contributes to students' social capital.

Chapter 7: Discussion

7.1 Introduction

This study, using the lens of Bourdieu (Bourdieu and Passeron, 1990), explored first-year students' experiences of shared living in SA and its impact on transition to university and post-graduation, particularly its impact on social networks. The previous two chapters presented the findings from the questionnaire completed by 255 LU alumni and 15 in-depth interviews with selected respondents. This chapter draws together the findings from the quantitative and qualitative research and presents a discussion of the findings related to the literature review and the theoretical framework based around Bourdieu's 'thinking tools' and the concepts of homophily and propinquity.

The success in recruiting respondents for the questionnaire and interviews demonstrates the willingness and interest of people to talk about their experiences of first-year shared university living with fondness and enthusiasm. The extensive number and depth of further comments gives an indication of the importance and significance of first-year SA and its impact on students' lives not only during their degree but also post-university. All interviewees could recall with great clarity the first time they moved into their accommodation and met their housemates, which establishes this experience had a profound and lasting effect. These findings extend previous research which revealed the important role of SA in the transition to university (Kenyon, 2002, Patiniotis and Holdsworth, 2005, Chow and Healey, 2008, Christie, 2009, Holton, 2015b, Holton, 2016a).

For many students, moving away from home to university is a key part of the student experience which provides independence and transition into adulthood (Kenyon, 2002). In particular, living in SA can be an 'emotional period of transition' (Holton, 2016a p.4) for students navigating the move out of the parental home and into communal living with random strangers. This study focused on students moving out of the family home into SA and therefore did not include commuter students who are more likely to be non-traditional

students continuing to live in their family home and commute to university (Holton and Riley, 2013, Donnelly and Gamsu, 2018, Holton and Finn, 2018b). SA plays an important role in facilitating the transition to university but is a 'strongly embedded elite practice' (Chatterton, 2010 p.510). Many students from working-class backgrounds choose to study locally and do not have the opportunity or desire to live in SA and therefore SA may lead to 'geographies of exclusion' (Reynolds, 2020 p.12) and can contribute to continuing social and educational disadvantages (Christie, 2007). The networks one may encounter in first-year SA may further contribute to these inequalities and the findings from this study help to provide insight on this important issue.

Research into SA has been heavily focused on the UK ever since Brothers and Hatch (1971) first explored the impact of residences on students due to the tradition for many UK students to move out of their family home into SA when studying at university. However, there has been increasing international research into SA, for example in New Zealand (Sotomayor et al., 2022), Australia (Fincher and Shaw, 2009, Holton and Mouat, 2021), Ireland (Kenna, 2011), South Africa (Ackermann and Visser, 2016) and China (He, 2015), so despite this case study focusing on a UK HEI the findings will be relevant to an international audience.

The discussion will be organised around the three research questions.

7.2 RQ1: To what extent does first-year SA impact on UK students' experience of university, particularly, the impact of housemates?

7.2.1 Introduction

SA plays a key role in supporting students who have left home, ensuring they have a suitable environment in which to study effectively and can help with mental wellbeing (Knight Frank and UCAS, 2021). The questionnaire findings found quality of accommodation was a relatively important factor (mean score

=3.51)² when selecting a university, with over half (53.7%) of respondents regarding the quality of the accommodation as either 'very important' or 'extremely important', demonstrating the view accommodation is a key aspect of a university's offering (Haselgrove, 1994). However, the research findings reveal housemates were more important than the actual accommodation.

The questionnaire and the interview findings both highlight the major impact first-year SA had on students' experiences, mainly positive but in some cases negative. The discussion of the first research question includes the role of shared living and adapting to university life, the impact of the allocation process, importance of friendships, mental health and the impact of the design of accommodation on student experiences.

7.2.2 Shared Living and Adapting to University Life

Satisfaction with first-year living arrangements was high, with a mean score of 3.95 and over three-quarters of respondents (78.5%) stating they were either somewhat satisfied or extremely satisfied. This indicates a similar level of satisfaction found by Holton in his study of Plymouth University Halls where 79.4% of respondents indicated their hall had lived up to expectations (Holton, 2016a). Interestingly, students who chose not to live with any of their first-year housemates in the second year had lower levels of satisfaction (mean score of 3.41 compared with 4.24) which suggests the dissatisfaction was due at least in part to the people they shared with rather than the accommodation. A relatively small proportion of respondents (14.5%) stated they were either extremely or somewhat dissatisfied with first-year living arrangements. When asked about the reasons for their dissatisfaction, most comments related to their housemates rather than the actual accommodation. This confirms the idea that

² Mean scores are based on a scale of 1-5 with 1 being the lowest score and 5 being the highest score

much dissatisfaction was with the people rather than the accommodation itself and advances previous research which found students struggled to live with others with whom they were incompatible (Wilcox et al., 2005).

First-year shared living was instrumental in helping students to settle into university, with the highest mean score (3.79) of all the attitude statements validating and extending the findings of Christie et al. (2002), who found accommodation played an important role in students' experiences. For example, Layla not only felt lucky with her flatmates but also stated had she not been happy with her flatmates she would not have enjoyed her university experience to the same extent and even suggested she might have wanted to drop out of university. This substantiates the view of Piper et al. (2017), who believed students who felt integrated into their accommodation were less likely to drop out, an important factor in improving university retention rates.

Housemates were demonstrated to be an important source of support. For example, Oscar's experience when his flatmates helped him when he was struggling with maths established a direct connection between social and cultural capital (Bourdieu, 2002). Frank also found his first-year housemates to be a great source of support when his father died, advancing Blimling's (2015) belief SA should create a sense of community and provide support.

Bourdieu considered countries, cities or regions as 'social spaces' but 'did not view social spaces as the physical place where social interactions occur' (Reed-Danahay, 2022 p.7), despite being closely related. However, I propose SA should be regarded as a 'social space' as it is produced by students engaged in social practices and influenced by their habitus and capitals. In turn, students' position in this social space 'shapes their understanding of what is possible (their aspirations)' (Reed-Danahay, 2022 p.8). I think SA is an extremely important 'social space' because it influences and shapes students at a time when they have been released from their family habitus and are experiencing new ways of living and viewing the world which not only influences their university experiences but also affects their aspirations and even life trajectories.

7.2.3 Impact of Allocation Process

At the time of the research, LU stated they tried to achieve a good balance of gender and nationality in SA, did not purposefully match students and tried to 'avoid homogenous groups' (Rosenbaum, 2018). This is supported by the findings from the attitude statements where students tended to disagree with the statement 'flatmates were like me' and agreed with the statement 'flatmates were different nationalities', demonstrating the view the allocation process was not based on the principle of homophily (McPherson et al., 2001). The allocation process can create social networks based on propinquity and therefore has a major influence with whom one develops friendships (Kadushin, 2012). The questionnaire revealed this was the case as respondents tended to agree with the statement 'flatmates became best friends' (mean = 3.68) with nearly half (48%) strongly agreeing with this statement, which shows students are likely to become friends with those they live with.

Despite most respondents believing the allocation of places was random and the apparent mixing of students from different backgrounds, genders and nationalities, there was some evidence of the unintentional segregation of students as identified by Schelling (1971) and Bradley cited in Rosenbaum (2018).

The pricing of the accommodation at the time of the research appeared in places to result in some segregation as perhaps students from wealthier families selected ensuite rooms and those from lower incomes selected the cheaper non-ensuite rooms such as those referred to as 'Pendle Posh' and 'Pendle Poor' respectively. This exposes how economic capital limits the opportunity to extend social networks. The implications being, students are perhaps mixing with 'similar' people and those from lower income families are not having the same opportunity to meet others from wealthier families, perhaps with greater social capital (Bourdieu, 2002), who could help to extend their social network. This strengthens Hilman's belief the style and price of SA influences the characteristics of the occupants (Jones and Blakey, 2020).

There was also some evidence from the interviews of inadvertent grouping according to race, religion or culture as highlighted by Andersson et al. (2012) due to requests for single-sex, alcohol-free or quiet accommodation. For example, Milo's wife's housemates were Muslims as she had requested an alcohol free flat. This may unintentionally reinforce the concept of homophily which may provide fewer opportunities to mix with and learn from people from different backgrounds/cultures and has implications for the types of social networks to which students are exposed.

The process by which universities allocate places appears to have an important impact on students' experiences of shared living and their ability to adjust to university life, which extends the findings of Christie et al. (2002). The interviews revealed respondents believed the process to be random and often referred to their good fortune in terms of flatmates as being down to 'luck'. However, a couple of respondents felt a questionnaire to ascertain interests/characteristics and a degree of 'matching' may have helped to overcome the challenges they experienced with their experiences of shared living. This extends the view of Wilcox et al. (2005), who believed universities could try to establish students' preferences for flatmates to try and avoid large numbers of students withdrawing from university due to problems with incompatible housemates. Blimling (2015) also supported the idea of allocating places based on students' characteristics. However, this may further reinforce the principle of homophily and resulting unintentional segregation and may be at odds with one of LU's core values which is to 'aspire to an inclusive community of communities' (Lancaster University, 2021).

Bradley in Rosenbaum (2018) supported the view of mixing students from different backgrounds and social classes by allocating places based on home postcodes. A key benefit of SA is the opportunity to meet people from diverse backgrounds and for all students to be regarded as equals despite differing backgrounds (Committee on Higher Education, 1963). There was no evidence to suggest students from different genders, ethnicities or backgrounds had differing experiences in relation to levels of satisfaction of first-year accommodation living arrangements, which suggests the allocation process

appears to be successful from this perspective. However, BAME students were less likely to say their flatmates became their best friends or they were 'like me', suggesting they were less likely to develop friendships with similar people. All interviewees believed shared SA provided the opportunity to mix with people from diverse backgrounds, such as Sienna, who said she developed meaningful relationships with people you would not meet elsewhere. Sacerdote (2001) demonstrated who you live next door to affects behaviours and outcomes, which highlights the importance of the SA allocation process.

7.2.4 Importance of Friendships

Making friends and acquiring social capital (Bourdieu, 2002) is entrenched in the purpose of higher education (Dickinson, 2019). In particular, Blimling (2015) highlighted the important role SA plays in developing friendships and social networks. University applicants believed first-year accommodation played an important role in making friends and developing a sense of community, as found by Unite Students and Higher Education Policy Institute (2017).

The questionnaire and interview findings both advanced the view accommodation is a key place to make friends as over two-thirds (67.2%) of respondents agreed or strongly agreed with the statement 'flatmates became best-friends'. This extends Jopling and Valtorta's (2018) research, which found 65% of their respondents agreed their accommodation helped them to make friends and Holton's (2016a) research where 78.8% of respondents expected to make friends in halls. All interviewees discussed their best friends, many of whom they met in first-year accommodation and how these friendships helped them make the transition to university. This concurs with Wilcox et al's (2005) research of first-year undergraduates which found students' primary social networks focused on their accommodation, not their courses. It also highlighted the importance of making 'compatible friends', particularly those made in shared accommodation, in helping to socially integrate and transition into university. Friendships made in first-year accommodation were found to be the strongest, provided support and were even regarded as surrogate family which was also evident in my research with respondents referring to their housemates

as 'family' and their flats as 'home from home', which concurs with Holton (2016a) who found 50.4% of respondents expected halls to be a 'home from home'.

Bourdieu suggests people want to feel a sense of belonging and 'at home' and this was evident in my research with many respondents discussing feeling at home, like a family and other expressions relating to belonging (Reed-Danahay, 2022). However, as acknowledged by Bourdieu, some people can feel out of place, such as Mia and Nicola, who did not regard their student household as 'home from home' perhaps due to hysteresis as their habitus did not align with the social space (Bourdieu, 1990).

The importance of making friends with people in first-year accommodation was highlighted by those students who did not live in their second year with people they shared with in first year (32.4% of respondents). For these respondents, not only were they less satisfied with their first-year shared living, they found it to be more stressful, flatmates were less likely to become best friends and were regarded as 'less like me', and they were less likely to say shared living made settling into university easy. It could therefore be suggested because these students did not bond with the people they shared with in first year it had a major impact not only on friendships but also on their student experience as living with people they did not like was difficult. However, these students found friends elsewhere through their courses or societies. Holton (2016a) found 53.9% of respondents either strongly agreed or agreed with the statement 'I would live with my flatmates again next year', which is lower than the 67.6% of respondents in my study who chose to live with those they shared with in first year. However, in both cases, first-year flatmates were strong candidates for sharing with in second year. The research extends the findings of Wilcox et al. (2005) who also found students' primary social networks were centred around accommodation rather than courses.

Thomas (2002) found friendships and social networks were key to student retention. The additional comments in the questionnaire and the interviews provided anecdotal evidence of the importance of SA in student retention but as

all the respondents in my study had all successfully graduated there was no first-hand evidence to support this. It is likely students' habitus, capitals and issues relating to hysteresis (Bourdieu, 1990) influenced retention but this research did not explore this specifically. However, my research validates previous research (Walker and Richter, 2008, Holton, 2017, Brown et al., 2019) which shows the importance of friendships, particularly those made in first-year accommodation, in the transition to university life and enhancing the student experience.

7.2.5 Mental Health

Student mental health was not the focus of this study but because the topic was highlighted as important in relation to SA and given current concerns about student wellbeing (Thorley, 2017, Hughes and Spanner, 2019, Neves and Hewitt, 2021) it cannot be ignored. The findings from both the questionnaire and the interviews highlighted the impact of first-year SA on student mental health and extends the research of Knight Frank and UCAS (2021) who found accommodation to be the most important factor influencing student wellbeing. Respondents commented on both the positive and negative effect on their mental health. Most interviewees stated friends in shared accommodation were often regarded as a great source of support and enhanced their first-year experience. The open-ended responses in the questionnaire also highlighted the positive impact of shared living on mental health. In contrast, negative experiences took their toll on respondents' mental wellbeing and often led to loneliness, isolation and loss of confidence, as in the case of Mia and Nicola and some of the questionnaire respondents. This advances the work of Wilcox et al. (2005) who also found many first-year students struggled to live with incompatible students and this led to problems. Strong supportive friendships and networks, together with a sense of belonging and community, can help to improve mental wellbeing and SA plays an important role in achieving this, which advances the findings of (Knight Frank and UCAS, 2021).

7.2.6 Layout and Design of Accommodation

Design of SA was not an intended topic for this study but some of the additional comments in the questionnaire and interview data highlighted the impact of design and layout on students' experiences of shared living and advanced many of Holton (2016a)'s findings. Holton (2016a) recognised the importance of communal space but also acknowledged interactions could not be forced and conflict may lead to withdrawal from shared spaces, which concurred with my research. Communal areas were regarded by several respondents, both in the questionnaire and interviews, as important spaces to meet people and socialise and helped to facilitate relationships, extending the work of Easterbrook and Vignoles (2015), who found design features encouraging interaction led to stronger interpersonal bonds and had a positive effect on wellbeing . However, there were situations when communal areas were avoided due to conflict between flatmates. This echoed Foulkes et al. (2021), who found communal areas such as kitchens could be either 'positive' places or places to avoid as they could be a source of conflict and result in increased physical isolation, as was the case for Mia and Nicola.

The design and layout of the accommodation relates more to the accommodation itself than the people living there but this research revealed it had a major impact on the ability of students to socialise and form relationships. This extends the work of Kleeman et al. (2023) who found residents who did not use communal areas are more likely to be lonely. This is therefore an important consideration for universities. I concur with Holton's (2016a) recommendation students' should have an input into the design of SA in addition to Fincher and Shaw's (2009) call to involve universities, government, housing providers and developers in the process to help identify suitable communal spaces and avoid underused areas.

7.3 RQ2: To what extent do friends met in first-year SA, and other university friends, influence UK students' post-university life, particularly, in terms of their networks and finding and securing employment?

7.3.1 Introduction

This study not only investigated the impact of first-year accommodation on students' experiences and development of friendships and networks at university but also explored the extent to which these networks endured post-graduation. The discussion of research question two covers the nature and size of the network of university friends' post-graduation and the extent to which this network of friends contributed to their social capital in terms of using these contacts to find jobs.

7.3.2 Network of University Friends

The questionnaire and interview findings both found the people one meets during undergraduate degrees are a key part of a graduate's network, advancing the view of Pascarella and Terenzini (2005). Over half (54.2%) of respondents in the questionnaire were still in contact with 11 or more people from their undergraduate degree. Only 1.6% of respondents had no contact with anybody from their undergraduate degree. The nature of the contact varied considerably but the findings suggest the contact is enduring, with nearly half of respondents meeting up monthly and approximately three-quarters continuing to meet friends in person once or twice a year. Interestingly, 16.7% lived with people they had met at LU. Over half (52.1%) of respondents provided optional comments about the people they met at university, which highlights the importance and interest in this topic. The interviews and open-ended response questions on the questionnaire both provided further evidence of the enduring nature of the friendships.

The nature of the friendships formed in first year, particularly with flatmates, appeared to be more enduring and distinctive compared with friendships

developed in other spheres of life such as work environments. Milo, along with many other respondents, referred to feeling 'closer' to flatmates than other types of friends and Nicola stated they were 'deeper'. This confirms the findings of Brooks who also found respondents cited their university friendships were 'closer, deeper and more open' than other friendships (Brooks, 2007 p.705). Frank and other respondents referred to their housemates as 'family'. Kenyon (2002) found this was perhaps due to living as a 'family', which provided greater levels of intimacy than other types of friendships. 'Friends for life' and 'best friends forever' were frequently used to describe friends encountered in first-year accommodation. Living alongside people appeared to develop deeper bonds than with other types of friends. Comments from the open-response questions also echoed these findings and attributed the strong friendships to shared experiences.

Of those respondents who stated they lived with someone from university two-thirds (64.3%) lived with their spouse/ long-term partner, which equates to 10.7% (27) of all respondents and illustrates the importance of university in meeting life partners and developing familial social capital (Bourdieu, 2002). The open-ended responses also highlighted the number of alumni meeting long-term partners at Lancaster with 23 respondents mentioning they met their partners at university and three of the five male interviewees meeting their future wives in first-year accommodation. This extends the rather dated findings of Brothers and Hatch (1971), who found graduates living in SA were twice as likely to marry someone they met at university than those living at home. More recent academic research is limited but a 2023 survey by One Day University Love League polled 2,000 UK graduates and found 20% of British students met 'the loves of their life on campus' (One Day University Love League, 2023).

Marriages result in a pooling of social capital (Bourdieu and Nice, 2010) and depending on the couple's background they may contribute to ongoing social reproduction or possibly act as a disrupter (Toft and Jarness, 2021). Atkinson (2025) argues interpersonal love is one area of Bourdieu's work which has been largely overlooked. It was mentioned as an afterthought in *Masculine Domination* (Bourdieu, 2001) but did not inform his work. Atkinson suggests

'interpersonal love is not only bound up with but can itself operate as a form of 'capital'' and also forms the basis of a 'field' of intimate relations (2025 p.645) .

Friendships formed at university formed key aspects of all interviewees' social networks. At the time the research was conducted, the UK was in the middle of the Covid-19 pandemic and socialising was restricted. Several of the interviewees spontaneously commented on the importance of their Lancaster friends as a source of support during that challenging time.

Most respondents and interviewees highlighted the important role first-year accommodation played in developing enduring friendships transcending graduation. This extends the work of Heath, who found shared living has the potential to create friendships with 'long standing significance' (Heath, 2004 p.173). This raises questions about those students who choose to commute to university and do not have the opportunity to live in SA. As Pokorny et al. (2017) discovered, 'stayed education' students found without shared living spaces, developing friendships was more difficult. This also raises questions about the nature and strength of 'stayed education'/commuting students' friendships and whether these students miss out on developing close and enduring friendships at university. Perhaps mature or local students do not want/seek these types of relationships. If so, perhaps they also miss out on extending their social capital through these friends.

7.3.3 Social Capital and Contacts for Jobs

Five of the interviewees and approximately a third (32.7%) of questionnaire respondents stated they secured work experience, an internship or a job where they knew somebody who worked there or a relative or friend who knew somebody who worked there. This contrasts with Granovetter (1974) who found 65% of managerial workers found jobs through personal contacts. However, this research is over 50 years old and the world is a different place. The internet has widened access to information, more people study at university and perhaps job opportunities are now more widely communicated. Also, recruitment policies are more stringent to avoid nepotism. Nevertheless, the

findings highlight the continuing importance of social networks when looking for a job. This confirms the findings of Tholen et al. (2013), who also found social contacts were important when seeking employment. They also extend Mouw (2003)'s view that being 'well connected' is an advantage when seeking employment and therefore SA is a potential site for developing connections.

However, only 4.8% of questionnaire respondents who found a job at a company where they had a connection did so through somebody they met in first-year accommodation and only one of the interviewees mentioned directly hearing about work opportunities or securing work experience, an internship or a job through anybody they lived with. Bradley in Rosenbaum (2018) suggested people you meet in SA could be an important source of social capital. However, there is little evidence to suggest who one shares with in first year at university is going to be highly influential in helping one to find work experience, internships or jobs. However, it may be flatmates or family members of flatmates were not sufficiently senior/influential to help secure internships, work experience or jobs. Perhaps in the future they may utilise their first-year flatmates for finding or securing employment. Alternatively, the nature of the support/connections may not directly relate to job opportunities but may be more indirect in the form of cultural capital (Bourdieu, 2002), such as sharing experiences, providing feedback on applications, offering advice etc. For example, Nicola's parents were career advisors and offered advice to her friends. Social capital is more than just having contacts to find jobs and includes wider resources acquired through social networks such as information and support and is about feeling part of a community (Putnam, 2000). Despite little evidence first-year housemates were important for job hunting, the research revealed they were important sources of support, information and ideas which advances the work of Jackson (2025).

This research was only conducted with LU alumni and therefore similar research in other HEIs may reveal different results, particularly in universities such as Oxbridge that are renowned for the opportunities provided by their social networks: 'it [Oxbridge] provides graduates with networks and cultural capital that allow them to build connections with successful people' (Montacute,

2019 p.13). Previous research has revealed the ability to enter the graduate workforce continues to be classed with students from non-traditional/working-class backgrounds finding it more difficult and less likely to earn as high a salary as graduates from more middle-class backgrounds (Hecht et al., 2020), partly due to lower levels of social capital (Burke, 2015). The questionnaire did not reveal any significant differences between 'traditional' and 'non-traditional' students in terms of contacts, but further research may be necessary to explore this in greater depth.

Relatives were the most frequently cited contact when looking for a job, with over a quarter (26.2%) of respondents selecting this option, which supports Bourdieu's theory family are a primary source of social capital (Bourdieu, 2002). Family friends were also important contacts with a quarter (25.0%) mentioning them, extending previous research such as Christie and Burke (2021), who found family and friends to be important when seeking graduate employment. Despite the opportunities to expand one's social capital at university, particularly in relation to the people one lives with in first year, it appears familial social capital continues to be the most valuable. The data establishes the enduring dominance of familial social capital post-graduation, with 51.2% of contacts coming from relatives or family friends. This study focused on students who moved away from home to live at the university which perhaps over-represents 'traditional' students who may already have extensive social familial networks to draw on. Perhaps 'commuter' students who are often more likely to come from lower-income families, perhaps with more restricted familial social networks, benefit from extending their social capital at university to a greater extent than traditional students.

Despite little evidence of flatmates being important in relation to social capital to help source work opportunities, they were undeniably important on a personal and social level and even for finding love.

7.4 RQ3: How does first-year SA influence students' social capital and networks?

7.4.1 Introduction

Despite increasing participation in HE, the continuing inequalities in HE is well recognised (Reay et al., 2001, Brooks and Everett, 2009, Bolton, 2023). The theoretical framework drawing on Bourdieu's 'thinking tools' (Murphy and Costa, 2015) acknowledges the importance of family background, education, forms of capital and the resulting 'habitus' on student (in)equality. Many inequalities can be attributed to differences in students' 'habitus': ingrained habits and dispositions, (Bourdieu, 2005), economic capital, such as one's monetary capital, savings, investments and assets, cultural capital, relating to one's personal tastes, knowledge and skills, and social capital, resources based on one's connections and network of personal contacts (Bourdieu, 2002). Habitus is influenced primarily by one's family through the socialisation process and influences our behaviour and the choices we make. One's access to economic, social and cultural capital greatly influences one's life choices and opportunities. Each form of capital is different; however, they are all entwined and interconnected, and it is difficult to discuss one without another. However, this study was particularly focused on the impact of SA on social capital and its longer-term impact on social networks post-graduation. To distinguish between social networks and social capital it is useful to think about social networks consisting of linkages between two or more people and social capital being embedded in the linkages between people (Coleman, 1988). Lin (1999) regards social capital as assets in networks, but for social capital to become a useful resource those assets must be leveraged. In contrast, Bourdieu regards social capital as a process by which the dominating class maintain and reproduce their position (Bourdieu, 2002).

Higher Education continues to be an unlevel playing field and inequalities still exist depending on students' backgrounds. For example, students' familial social capital can be an important source of contacts for students not only when

they are seeking information about applying to university but also when they are looking to enhance their employability prospects (Bradley, 2018). SA may provide opportunities for students to extend their networks and develop their social capital and networks (Blimling, 2015). This may be particularly useful for students from non-traditional backgrounds who perhaps cannot rely on family networks to provide contacts, information and links to suitable companies and help find and secure internships, work experience and graduate positions. As discussed in section 2.5, the process by which universities allocate places in accommodation may have a major impact on the friends one makes due to the concept of propinquity (Festinger et al., 1963), i.e. one is more likely to make connections with people living close by. This may therefore provide opportunities to mix with people from a wide range of backgrounds, make friends and develop one's networks and social capital. The discussion of research question three includes the impact of homophily on students' social networks, the impact of propinquity on social networks, the extent to which SA helps to create diverse social networks and the extent to which SA contributes to the reproduction or transformation of social inequality.

7.4.2 Homophily in Social Networks within Student Halls

Homophily relates to the concept similar people are attracted to each other (McPherson et al., 2001) and therefore it is more likely our networks will consist of people with similar characteristics. The questionnaire findings revealed many students did not believe their 'flatmates were like me' (mean score of 2.72 = somewhat disagree to neutral score) with only 36.4% agreeing or strongly agreeing with this statement. Also, a mean score of 3.53 (neutral to somewhat agree) for 'My flatmates were from different nationalities' suggests students were living with a mix of nationalities. These two findings suggest the university is generally allocating places randomly, resulting in a mix of students, and is not allocating based on homophily. This extends the view of Brown (2016), who believes SA should provide opportunities for students from different backgrounds to mix.

However, despite respondents stating their housemates were not like them and were of different nationalities, there was evidence from the interviews and open-ended responses on the questionnaire many students formed friendships with people in their accommodation they regarded as 'similar', i.e. based on the concept of homophily (McPherson et al., 2001). This perhaps provided participants with a feeling of familiarity which at a time of major change many found reassuring. In many cases, the similarities were based on status homophily (Lazarsfeld and Merton, 1978), such as those of Nicola, who formed a friendship based on being 'northern', Flo, who became friends with a fellow Indian student, and Sienna and Ralph, who believed students often made friends with those from the same culture and shared the same first language. These findings extend the similarity-attraction hypothesis (Byrne, 1971), where people are more likely to interact with similar people, and also the theory of self-categorisation (Turner, 2014), where people categorise themselves on social similarities and differences such as race, education and gender and identify others with similar characteristics and are more likely to interact and develop relationships with these people.

Finding 'similar' people with shared interests appeared to be important in the acculturation process of adjusting to university life and SA was one of the key sites for finding these people. This advances the work of Wilcox et al. (2005) who also found first-year students' primary social networks were focused on their accommodation, rather than their course. Over two-thirds (67.6%) of students who lived on campus went on to live in second year with those they shared with in first year, illustrating the importance of first-year accommodation in building friendships and networks. The questionnaire revealed students dissatisfied with first-year accommodation often cited incompatible flatmates as the reason for dissatisfaction rather than the accommodation itself.

Nearly a third (32.4%) of students living on campus chose to live with other people in the second year for many different reasons but many related to incompatibility with first-year flatmates. These students were also less satisfied with first-year accommodation than those who lived with people they shared with in first year. These students were less likely to believe their flatmates were

'like them' and less likely to become best friends with them, which again suggests homophily is important in forming friendships and networks. These students went on to live with other people they met through other avenues such as their course, sport or societies. The findings revealed they felt they had more in common with these people, which again signifies the importance of homophily.

Ethnicity appeared to be an important factor, with BAME/other students less likely to describe flatmates as 'like them' and less likely to become best friends with their flatmates from first year. BAME students often found themselves in the minority and perhaps due to homophily were less likely to make friends in their flats due to a lack of 'similar people'. Mia, a Bengali Muslim, experienced difficulties in her first-year accommodation and felt she did not fit in because most of her housemates were white and she felt isolated, which was exacerbated by not being part of the drinking culture in the flat. This extends the work of Hopkins (2011), who found many Muslims felt excluded from many campus areas as they did not wish to socialise in bars where the majority of social events were held. There also appeared to be evidence the dominant groups did not try particularly hard to break down barriers and form friendships with others of different nationalities or cultures, a form of unintentional segregation.

Brown (2021) highlighted the natural tendency for people to be drawn to others like them which tends to produce homogeneous groups and explains why people have a lot in common with their closest friends. However, homophily can have negative consequences, as people are less likely to interact and form friendships with those regarded as different, can result in dividing networks (Yuan and Gay, 2017), as was evident in this research often based on ethnicity, and can also result in segregation and inequality (Kossinets and Watts, 2009). Andersson et al. (2012) highlighted self-segregation in university halls which occurred when students lived in halls with students seeking out others 'like them', often based on ethnicity and class. This also extends the findings of Blimling (2015), who found people are drawn towards social groups where they are likely to be accepted based on characteristics such as race. There was

evidence in both the questionnaire and interviews many students gravitated to people they regarded as similar despite the opportunity to meet people from all different backgrounds due to the 'throwntogetherness' (Massey, 2005) of university halls.

The negative consequences of homophily as identified by Kadushin (2012) and Yuan and Gay (2017) were highlighted by Frank when he reflected on the idea of 'matching' flatmates based on common attributes/attitudes which he believed may lead to a lack of social mixing and even '*echo chambers and less diversity of thought*'.

7.4.3 Propinquity

The allocation of SA places was found to be extremely important due to the concept of propinquity (Festinger et al., 1963), as flatmates were found to be a key factor in determining whether students successfully transitioned to university life. Stinebrickner and Stinebrickner (2008) found location of rooms was a key determinant of student interactions and students spent more time with housemates than other people, findings that were also evident in this research. Both the questionnaire and the interviews substantiated the importance of propinquity in the development of social networks, which echoes the findings of Festinger et al. (1963), who found students were more likely to form relationships with those whom they lived near. Flo indicated her friendships were due to propinquity as they all shared the same flat. Flatmates were highly likely to become friends, often best friends, due to the unique situation of living together. It could therefore be proposed propinquity may disrupt the process of homophily or at least complement or counteract it.

The university therefore possesses a powerful tool in the form of their room allocation process to facilitate the development of networks based on the principle of propinquity (Kadushin, 2012) to create diverse networks. The questionnaire findings and interviews both revealed cases where living alongside flatmates of different ethnicities and cultures helped to break down racial stereotypes and facilitate friendships between students from diverse

backgrounds. These findings advance the previous research of Laar et al. (2005), Shook and Fazio (2008a, 2008b), Crisp and Turner (2011), Mark and Harris (2012) and Carrell et al. (2019). Proximity between individuals can lead to friendships and can therefore 'transgress group boundaries imposed by homophily', highlighting propinquity's role in diversifying networks (Rohrer et al., 2021 p.1).

Therefore, room allocation can play an important role in facilitating cultural and racial integration, which reinforces Hudson (2018)'s work arguing HEIs should try to achieve 'diverse propinquity' when assigning roommates to provide opportunities for cross-cultural friendships. However, research has shown, due to ignorance and intolerance, attempts to mix students from different backgrounds regarding ethnicity (Fincher and Shaw, 2009, Andersson et al., 2012) and sexual orientation (Taulke-Johnson, 2010) can result in prejudice, bullying and victimisation, which was evident to some extent in this research. Therefore, universities have a responsibility to facilitate social mixing of students from diverse backgrounds which echoes the views of Hudson (2018) and Bathmaker et al, who stated 'If university is to broaden students' experiences of social diversity then universities need to consider mechanisms to encourage social mixing, rather than segregation' (2016 p.165). This may potentially involve educating students and providing opportunities for enhancing cultural and racial awareness.

7.4.4 Facilitating the creation of diverse social networks?

A key role of universities is to widen students' horizons and facilitate social and cultural integration (Hudson et al., 2023). This was highlighted by Sienna who thought LU was international and multicultural and believed it was important to meet people who were different. It could be argued the university has a responsibility to encourage social, racial and ethnic integration through the allocation process. Despite evidence of homophily occurring in LU accommodation, there was also evidence the intentionally mixed allocation of students sometimes enabled friendships and networks to be created between students from different backgrounds who would not normally meet. For

example, Sophie developed friendships with several Asian students, including those in her flat, and felt this was because she was more willing than other UK students to take the time to understand their culture around socialising. Perhaps this is evidence of the university's success at facilitating and supporting 'boundary-crossing friendships' (Hudson et al., 2023 p.246). This has important implications for social mobility because, as Salazar (2018) suggests, mobility is about boundary-crossing.

Many respondents in the questionnaire specifically focused on the opportunity provided by SA to meet and become friends with people 'not like me', with different ideas and beliefs. Milo's wife, a white UK student, lived in a flat of predominantly Muslim students and at first was rather worried about living with others from such different backgrounds. However, she found this to be a positive experience, learnt a great deal about the different culture and one Muslim student became her best friend. Sophie and Milo's wife's experiences demonstrate the successful application of the 'contact hypothesis' (Allport, 1979), suggesting people fear the unknown and are uncomfortable when encountering differences. Therefore, by providing opportunities for contact, in this case in SA, fear and anxiety may be reduced, prejudices may be overcome and social integration may be facilitated. This finding advances the work of Mark and Harris (2012) who also found SA provided opportunities for contact and even friendship with others of a different race and this can help us to understand the integration of society. Pettigrew and Tropp (2006) found the contact theory not only worked in terms of races and ethnicities but applied to other groups which would be relevant in SA where people were from different social classes or sexual orientations.

The contact hypothesis may provide opportunities to mix with diverse groups of people. However, proximity in mixed households does not automatically improve intergroup relations and can even entrench boundaries or even result in avoidance strategies, which is supported by the work of Pettigrew and Tropp (2006), who found it could even lead to prejudice and racism, as was the case for Mia.

Therefore, the idea of a 'melting pot' of different backgrounds, classes, nationalities, cultures, religions and sexual orientation living in harmony was not always the case in the accommodation, which was in line with research undertaken by Fincher and Shaw (2009), Taulke-Johnson (2010) and Andersson et al. (2012), who found intolerance and ignorance of minority groups sometimes led to conflict and even cases of prejudice, bullying and victimisation. Mia, a Bengali Muslim felt she did not belong and felt like 'a fish out of water' (Bourdieu and Passeron, 1990) and even referred to herself as '*an outcast*'.

The questionnaire revealed BAME students did not have significantly lower levels of satisfaction with first-year accommodation compared with White British students. However, students from minority backgrounds were less likely to become best friends with their flatmates and regarded their flatmates as less 'like me', advancing the idea people are drawn towards others based on 'status homophily' (Lazarsfeld and Merton, 1978). The findings from the questionnaire revealed first-year accommodation provided excellent opportunities to meet and become friends with students from diverse nationalities and cultures. Several of the interviewees also believed it was not only an opportunity to meet different types of people but was also an important means of helping to create racial and cultural integration by encouraging people to interact with people from different cultures.

However, many respondents also highlighted the challenges and difficulties they encountered when sharing with international students due to language barriers and cultural and social differences which due to awkwardness often resulted in students avoiding each other rather than trying to break down barriers and build bridges.

A key theme which was discerned throughout the whole project was the important role first-year shared living played in the overall student experience and how negative experiences can have a major impact on the student experience.

This study only explored home students' experiences of first-year accommodation and therefore the views of international students were not documented. However, the experiences of international students were discussed by several of the interviewees who acknowledged challenges facing international students living in a foreign country and studying in their second language. For example, Flo felt some home students assumed international students only wanted to socialise with others of the same nationality and therefore did not try to form friendships with international students. In contrast, Cheryl felt international students preferred to mix with students of the same nationality but was perhaps not particularly sensitive to the challenges international students faced with being a minority in a predominantly white British university. Byron acknowledged how difficult it must be for international students having to overcome language barriers.

Language barriers and differences in attitudes towards socialising, food and alcohol were identified by Andersson et al. (2012) as potential sources of tension between home and international students. This was also the case in this research where one questionnaire respondent suggested the greater the differences between flatmates the greater the likelihood of conflict.

Despite LU allocating places to achieve a mix of students, in most situations students appear to continue to seek out others they perceive as similar and therefore are not necessarily helping to facilitate diverse networks of students. To try and facilitate social and cultural integration perhaps some sort of cultural awareness programme could be included in the student induction programme.

7.4.5 Reproduction or Transformation?

Bourdieu believed education reproduces rather than challenges social inequality and is a 'mechanism for consolidating social separation' (Grenfell, 2012 p.28) as it favours the privileged, further disadvantages the already disadvantaged and therefore students' experiences are highly differentiated depending on their habitus (Bourdieu and Passeron, 1990). Bourdieu has been criticised for being deterministic and ignoring the reality some people become

upwardly mobile and escape the inevitability of this cycle (Goldthorpe et al., 1987, Miles, 2000). However, Bourdieu acknowledges one's habitus can change and be shaped through experience and the fields in which one operates, so 'habitus is durable but not eternal' (Bourdieu, 1992). Change is slow and traditional divisions are hard to break down. In this study, there is evidence higher education can be both reproductive and transformational, which advances Ashwin (2020)'s view of higher education. For example, for Ralph and Oscar, who both attended state comprehensive schools, whose parents had not attended university and who, in the case of Oscar, received free school meals and the 16-19 bursary (measures of deprivation), attending LU was truly transformational as they both went on to secure highly paid jobs in prestigious careers (law and business consultancy). Their working-class 'habitus' was certainly shaped and influenced by their experiences of higher education which could be said to have disrupted their natural working-class trajectory. In contrast, for Cheryl and Sienna, who were both privately-educated and whose parents went to university, attending LU was reproductive as they were always on a trajectory towards success, with Sienna securing a position in her father's company and Cheryl securing a highly paid position in a technology company.

However, throughout the study there was evidence habitus had a major influence on respondents' experiences at university. For example, Mia (of Bangladeshi origin, a first in family to attend university, registered disabled and receiver of free school meals) struggled to adjust to university life, particularly in her SA, due to hysteresis, a mismatch between her habitus and field, and referred to herself as an 'outcast' which could be likened to the concept of a 'fish out of water' (Bourdieu and Passeron, 1990).

Adjusting to university life was also influenced by one's habitus. For example, respondents suffered from homesickness in varying amounts. It appeared students who were more familiar with the 'field' of HE, perhaps because siblings or other relatives had attended university, were more likely to adjust to life at university and struggle less with feelings of homesickness.

Differences in economic capital were evident in the research with some respondents from more disadvantaged backgrounds stating price of accommodation was a consideration. As mentioned earlier, this perhaps resulted in grouping of students according to financial resources such as in the case of 'Pendle Poor' and 'Pendle Posh'. Differences in participants' cultural capital were also evident with a working-class respondent commenting on 'Pendle Posh' residents as 'cliquey', 'public school educated' with 'a fair amount of money' which was also manifested in their accents and manner.

The research findings revealed social capital in the form of contacts was important when seeking employment, work experiences or internships, with approximately a third (32.7%) of questionnaire respondents stating they secured work experience, an internship or a job where they knew somebody who worked there or a relative or friend who knew somebody who worked there, which extends previous research (Granovetter, 1974, Mouw, 2003, Tholen et al., 2013, Christie and Burke, 2021). However, only 4.8% of questionnaire respondents reported the contact was somebody they had met in first-year accommodation. In contrast, familial social capital appeared to be more important, with over half (51.2%) of respondents stating the contact was either a family friend or relative. This confirms the enduring nature of familial social capital post-graduation and extends Abrahams' (2017) view social capital can be reproduced by the transmission of networks from one generation to the next.

It is worth noting the respondents graduated from university between 1-10 years ago so perhaps in the future they may further utilise the network they developed in first-year accommodation. It could also be their peers at the time of the research were insufficiently senior in their careers or lacked leverage to help facilitate employment. Despite flatmates not being key sources of social capital in terms of seeking and securing employment, they were undeniably important in the development of enduring friendships and social networks, and even long-term romance. Proximity in social space can facilitate the accumulation of social capital (Bourdieu et al., 1999) which was apparent in this research where students acquired knowledge, ideas, information and contacts.

The importance of shared living in first-year SA cannot be underestimated in terms of its impact on students' experiences, social networks and developing long-term friendships and relationships. Therefore, the allocation process of SA has a fundamental role to play in ensuring social mixing and avoiding unintentional grouping of students which may inadvertently result in segregation of students.

Using a Bourdieusian lens, alongside the concepts of homophily and propinquity, to explore students' experiences of SA, and particularly the importance of networks and social capital, has illustrated the continuing relevance of Bourdieu's conceptual tools within educational research. However, my research further demonstrates HE is not necessarily reproductive and can help to facilitate social mobility. First-year accommodation was an important site for developing social networks and resulting social capital with the research revealing these networks were enduring and continued to be of great importance post-graduation.

7.5 Chapter Summary

This chapter discussed the key findings from the questionnaire and interviews in relation to relevant theory and the theoretical framework which was based upon Bourdieu's 'thinking tools'. The research demonstrated first-year shared SA, particularly in relation to housemates, had a major impact on students' transition to university life, whether this was positive or negative. First-year accommodation was a key site for making friends and developing social networks. Therefore, the process by which HEIs allocate places is of key consideration because due to the concept of propinquity students were more likely to become friends with those whom they lived in proximity. This provides HEIs with the opportunity, through their allocation process, to create households consisting of students from diverse backgrounds. This allows students to connect with others they would not normally encounter. However, the research revealed many students were still drawn to others they regarded as similar or had common interests based on the concept of homophily. This chapter argued SA shapes transition and belonging through propinquity and

homophily. Living with people from diverse backgrounds can foster boundary-crossing ties but can also lead to conflict and HE both reproduces and (sometimes) transforms social inequality via habitus and capitals.

The networks and friendships developed through first-year accommodation were not only important whilst at university but were enduring post-graduation. However, there was little evidence to suggest this network was a particularly useful source of social capital in terms of seeking and finding employment. This study contributes to the discourse around the role of SA in the transition to university but also reveals new insights regarding its impact post-graduation.

The next chapter will present the conclusions from this research according to the three research questions, discuss my contribution to knowledge, highlight limitations of the study and provide recommendations for future research.

Chapter 8: Conclusions

8.1 Introduction

This study explored the impact of SA on students' experiences during their time at university but also post-graduation, using a Bourdieusian lens particularly focusing on social capital. Previous research found accommodation is an important part of many HEIs' offerings, playing a key role in socialisation of students, helping transition to university life and developing a sense of community (Blakey in Haselgrove, 1994, Christie et al., 2002, Kenyon, 2002, Beekhoven et al., 2004, Chow and Healey, 2008, Blimling, 2015, Holton, 2015a, 2016b, 2016c, 2017). However, relatively little attention has been paid to interactions between co-habiting students, the impact of university SA allocation processes on networks and social capital, and the longer-term influence of SA on students' lives post-graduation. The case study research was conducted with Lancaster University undergraduate alumni who graduated between 2010 and 2020.

The previous chapter provided a discussion of the findings of the questionnaire and in-depth interviews and related these to relevant literature. This chapter provides conclusions based on findings of the study structured around the three research questions and the contribution to knowledge this research makes to the field. Limitations of the study are addressed before finally discussing recommendations for policy and practice and future research.

8.2 Conclusions

8.2.1 RQ1: To what extent does first-year SA impact on UK students' experience of university, particularly, the impact of housemates?

This research reaffirms existing research but also sheds further light on the major impact of first-year SA on students' experiences. Over three-quarters of questionnaire respondents were satisfied with first-year living arrangements (78.5%) and stated it helped them to settle into university with a high mean

score of 3.79. However, dissatisfied students stated much of their dissatisfaction was due to problems with people they shared with rather than the accommodation itself. This highlights the important role of the SA allocation process as who one lives with may have major implications for students' experiences. Therefore, HEIs need to consider carefully the process by which they allocate places in first-year accommodation due to the principle of propinquity (Festinger et al., 1963), suggesting people will be more likely to form relationships with people who live closeby.

LU claimed to try to 'mix' students and 'avoid homogenous groups' (Rosenbaum, 2018) and the research largely supported this view. This had a largely positive effect in that students welcomed the opportunity to meet a diverse range of people from different backgrounds and countries and learn about different cultures. However, many students were drawn to, and formed closer friendships with, others regarded as 'like me', reinforcing the idea of homophily (McPherson et al., 2001). This study regards homophily and propinquity as independent mechanisms which influence network formation in contrast to Bourdieu, who does not ignore propinquity and homophily, but theorises them differently and suggests they are products of social spaces and habitus rather than independent drivers.

There was some evidence in the interviews of unintentional segregation due to pricing of accommodation, at the time the students were at Lancaster, resulting in students from wealthier backgrounds selecting en-suite accommodation and those from lower income families selecting shared bathrooms. Requests for single sex, alcohol free or quiet accommodation also appeared to result in inadvertent grouping by race, religion or culture. Therefore, students perhaps have less chance of meeting people from different backgrounds, extending their networks and therefore social capital (Bourdieu, 2002). This may be further exacerbated in other HEIs who adopt more of a 'matching' system where they try to house 'similar'-minded students together and in some cases enable prospective students to sign up to live with existing friends. There is no ideal way of allocating first-year places as it is impossible to predict how people will get on, but HEIs should consider the implications of their process. This

research suggests HEIs should try to achieve a balance of mixing people from different backgrounds but also some students from similar backgrounds. This will provide the opportunity to meet a wide range of people from different backgrounds, extend one's network and learn about different cultures and yet at the same time provide familiarity which can be reassuring at a time of great change. However, this may result in factions. There was evidence some people crossed group-boundaries and formed friendships with people from diverse backgrounds, disrupting homophily, and benefited from these experiences, echoing the work of Hudson et al. (2023) and Hudson and Rockenbach (2025). However, in other cases prejudice and ignorance caused conflict and resulted in disharmonious households. It is important to put in place ways of mediating and resolving these issues because if not it may lead to problems such as bullying or racism. This reaffirms Hudson and Rockenbach's recommendations for HEIs to provide informal spaces and opportunities for cross-cultural mixing and integrating 'diversity-related or intercultural content' into curriculum (2025 p.480). This would be even more important for commuting or mature students.

The hysteresis effect helps to explain 'fish-out-of-water' experiences reported by some participants. This theoretical framing illuminates why certain students, due to their habitus, felt out of place in SA, whereas others quickly felt a sense of belonging (Bourdieu, 1990).

This research revealed students' primary social networks and friendships were based on their accommodation rather than courses, supporting previous research (Wilcox et al., 2005). These friendships were regarded as particularly important as they were often referred to as surrogate family and regarded as important sources of support, reaffirming previous research (ibid 2005). Student mental health and wellbeing is becoming an increasingly concerning problem in HE and students' accommodation has been identified as a key factor influencing student wellbeing (Knight Frank and UCAS, 2021). The interviews and comments from open-ended questions on the questionnaire both revealed the impact first-year accommodation had on students' mental health in both negative and positive ways. Negative experiences were reported to lead to loneliness, isolation and loss of confidence and even thoughts of dropping out

of university, supporting previous research (Neves and Hewitt, 2021). In contrast, satisfaction with housemates and a supportive and friendly network contribute positively to student wellbeing and mental health.

8.2.2 RQ2: To what extent do friends met in first-year SA, and other university friends, influence UK students' post-university life, particularly, in terms of their networks and finding and securing employment?

University friends, particularly those formed during first-year accommodation, were regarded as important in post-university life with over half (54.2%) of respondents remaining in contact with eleven or more people from their undergraduate degree. The nature of contact varied but, interestingly, 16.7% lived with people they met during their undergraduate degree, nearly half (48.4%) met monthly and three-quarters met once or twice a year.

Approximately a tenth of questionnaire respondents met their long-term partner/spouse at university and three of the five male interviewees met their wives in first-year accommodation, illustrating the significant role university can play in meeting life partners.

There was an overriding theme throughout the questionnaire and interviews relating to the special and enduring nature of friendships formed at university, particularly in first-year accommodation. Respondents referred to them as 'friends for life', 'best friends forever' and 'surrogate family' and described these friendships as deeper and more intimate than friendships made in other areas of their lives, reflecting previous research (Brooks, 2007).

Espinoza et al's (2025)'s research revealed the importance of social capital for employment opportunities. This is also evident in this research with approximately a third of respondents having some form of personal contact with a company in which they had secured work experience, an internship or a job. However, only 4.8% of questionnaire respondents stated they found a job through a contact they met in first-year accommodation. I originally embarked on this research thinking SA may be a more important source of social capital

and contacts when looking for employment as previous research has found weak ties are important when looking for employment (Lin et al., 1981, Granovetter, 1983). However, respondents graduated between 1 and 10 years before the research was conducted and perhaps this network may be utilised to a greater extent in future. SA appeared to create both 'strong' and 'weak' ties as evidenced by the extensive networks formed post-graduation which can prove important when job hunting, particularly weak ties (Granovetter, 1983).

Bourdieu (1986) defines social capital as resources embedded in durable networks, which perhaps reinforces the finding familial contacts often played a more instrumental role in gaining employment than friendships forged in SA. This perhaps contributes to ongoing inequalities in the graduate labour market (Bourdieu, 2002, Burke, 2016).

Bathmaker (2021) adopted a Bourdieusian lens to explore 'graduate capitals' made up of various capitals, some of which may be acquired at university. However, habitus and positioning in the field continued to influence 'graduate capitals', which supports the finding of this research which suggests familial social capital continues to be significant post-graduation.

Despite little evidence that flatmates were important in relation to social capital to help find work opportunities, they were undeniably important on a personal and social level, even for finding love and may provide a longer-term source of social capital.

8.2.3 RQ3: How does first-year SA influence students' social capital and networks?

Bourdieu regards one's habitus as a key determinant of one's position in society, influenced significantly by family and education (Bourdieu and Nice, 2013), and something that shapes one's view of world, practice and aspirations (Maton, 2012). Habitus influences and interacts with forms of capital which are largely inherited in our formative years. Familial social capital can provide access to networks which can be useful in providing information and contacts

for advancement. This research revealed familial social capital continued to be the most important form of social capital when job hunting. Students from non-traditional backgrounds may have large networks but not necessarily the right networks. They are less likely to have access to influential and powerful contacts who have knowledge and links to help career advancement (Burke, 2016). Therefore, first-year SA could be an important site for acquiring social capital, particularly for students from non-traditional backgrounds, via their housemates and their housemates' families. This research revealed first-year accommodation was a key source of social capital, but not necessarily in terms of finding employment, and an important site for forming friendships and networks. However, in the longer term, alumni may utilise their former housemates further as their careers develop.

SA provides opportunity to meet people from a wide variety of different backgrounds due to the 'throwntogetherness' (Massey, 2005) nature of the way in which many HEIs allocate students to specific accommodation. Due to the concept of 'propinquity' (Festinger et al., 1963), respondents were more likely to form relationships with people they lived with. This was evident in comments from respondents in the interviews and questionnaire, where 67.6% of students living on campus went on to live in second year with those they shared with in first year. Propinquity appeared to 'disrupt' homophily to some extent. Therefore, HEIs may have a powerful tool at their disposal to try and create diverse networks to provide opportunities for students to meet people from differing backgrounds, facilitate acquisition of social capital and help to breakdown racial and cultural barriers. The questionnaire findings revealed LU appeared to be largely successful in achieving diverse groups as many students did not believe their 'flatmates were like me' and agreed 'My flatmates were from different nationalities'. Living alongside students from different backgrounds is a good opportunity to learn about different cultures and ways of life, and even to reduce racism and prejudice (Allport, 1979).

However, Bourdieu emphasises the durability of dispositions and class-based taste suggesting short-term exposure to diversity in SA alone may not change deeply ingrained dispositions and is insufficient to overcome social boundaries

(Bourdieu and Nice, 2010). In fact, mismatches between habitus and field can lead to alienation rather than integration.

Perhaps due to 'homophily' (McPherson et al., 2001), the interviews revealed many students gravitated to those they regarded as 'similar' in terms of background or interests. The inadvertent segregation due to pricing and specific requests for accommodation such as single-sex or alcohol-free also appeared to possibly create less diverse groups of housemates and could be regarded as more of a 'home from home', therefore perhaps limiting opportunities to expand one's social capital through forming relationships with people from differing backgrounds. For example, some students from non-traditional backgrounds with perhaps less extensive and useful networks may form friendships with similar students rather than students from more privileged backgrounds with more powerful and potentially useful networks. However, it is important to consider individuals' situations.

In contrast, there was also evidence of respondents forming friendships and networks with students from contrasting backgrounds, nationalities and cultures, often commenting on how this helped them to learn and expand their knowledge of different cultures. This supports the idea of SA being a 'melting pot' for meeting students from diverse backgrounds and providing opportunities to expand one's social capital. However, the research also revealed students from ethnic minorities were less likely to regard flatmates as 'like them' or become best friends with them and often felt rather isolated. Challenges and tensions could arise from sharing with international students due to language barriers and differing cultural practices which inhibited integration. This is the dichotomy facing HEIs when allocating places in SA. On the one hand, they want to place students with others they feel an affinity with, so they make an effective transition to university life and hopefully avoid mental health problems. However, on the other hand, universities have a responsibility to create inclusive and diverse communities which may be facilitated by placing students with others from a wide range of backgrounds, cultures and races in the hope this provides opportunity for students to learn about other cultures and form networks with 'people not like me'. This also has wider implications for lack of

diversity in many HEIs where minorities often feel marginalised. Rienties and Tempelaar (2018) argue it is important for HEIs to facilitate cross-cultural ties by utilising active measures to mix students. However, Fjelkner-Pihl (2022) found this did not seem to have any long-term effect and called for HEIs to continue to create opportunities for students to mix and interact beyond the first term to increase chances of a more long-term effect, particularly important for commuting or mature students (Fjelkner, 2023).

8.2.4 Contribution to Knowledge

This research focused on trying to address the research gaps recognised in the literature review and particularly responds to calls for further research into ‘the significance of student accommodation in determining mobility of students’ (Reynolds, 2020 p.14), interactions between co-habiting students (Holton, 2016b) and students’ networks and social capital resulting from the allocation process of university accommodation (Bradley in Rosenbaum, 2018).

Using Bourdieu (2002, 2005) as a lens, this research sheds new light on a specific context in the form of a case study (Tight, 2017) which investigates the impact of SA at LU on undergraduate students’ experiences, particularly acquisition of social capital. Previous studies have largely focused on researching students’ experiences of SA whilst studying at university. In contrast this study takes a different approach by focusing on graduates and exploring not only the impact of first-year SA on their student experience, whilst studying, but also investigating the longer-term impact on students’ post-graduation and its impact on their social capital and formation of networks.

The findings from this study add to the expanding body of research exploring the impact of SA on student experiences. This study confirms propinquity and homophily are important independent drivers of tie formation and resource flow and shape formation of social networks, in this case in SA, rather than being an outcome of position/habitus, as Bourdieu proposed.

It prompts further discussion about the important role of the SA allocation process which has largely been overlooked in previous studies. This study supports previous research which revealed the major impact SA had on student mental health and wellbeing (Knight Frank and UCAS, 2021) and provides further support for the call for an integrated approach to students' mental health and wellbeing whilst living in SA. In addition to contributing to existing literature on SA, this study provides valuable insight for SA providers reflecting on implications of their allocation process in terms of the extent to which it facilitates social mixing and integration. The research revealed mixing students from different backgrounds, nationalities and cultures to some extent helped to break down barriers and create more cultural awareness. However, it could also create misconceptions and conflict and therefore it is important to have systems in place to try and address these tensions and break down barriers.

This study also raises important issues regarding implications of the research for commuter/'stayed education' students (Holdsworth, 2006, Pokorny et al., 2017, Tett et al., 2025). These students lack opportunity to meet people in SA, a primary site for developing friendships and social networks (Wilcox et al., 2005). Therefore, there are not only short-term implications in terms of adapting to university life but also longer-term implications of missing out on developing important networks and possible sources of social capital post-graduation. This reinforces the role of HEIs in providing opportunities for networking and relationship-building outside SA, such as in the classroom and student union, to ensure all students can meet students from diverse backgrounds.

The theoretical framework was based on Bourdieu's 'thinking tools' of 'habitus' and 'economic, cultural and social capital' (Murphy and Costa, 2015). The concepts of 'homophily' (McPherson et al., 2001), 'propinquity' (Festinger et al., 1963) and 'tie strength' (Granovetter, 1973), which influence network formation, were also used to explore the impact of SA on students' journeys from first year through university and onto post-graduation. This thesis makes a distinct and original theoretical contribution to the sociology of higher education by extending Bourdieu's conceptual framework into the specific, under-theorised field of SA. While previous studies have utilised Bourdieu to examine university

choice (Reay et al., 2005) or the academic curriculum (Bathmaker et al., 2016) this research establishes SA as not only a place to live for students, but as a primary 'social space' (Bourdieu, 1989) where capitals can be acquired, converted and developed.

The findings extend previous work such as Holton (2016c) by providing empirical evidence the 'random' allocation of rooms acts as a form of 'engineered propinquity'. This mechanism has the unique capacity to disrupt the 'birds of a feather' dynamic of homophily (McPherson et al., 2001) forcing a collision of differing habituses that can result in either the reproduction or transformation of students' worldviews and even in some cases, severe hysteresis (Bourdieu, 1990) possibly leading to withdrawal and isolation. This contributes a nuanced 'spatial' dimension to the debate on social mobility, arguing that mobility is constrained not just by degree certificate, but also by the physical 'throwntogetherness' (Massey, 2005) of SA.

The findings suggest class inequality, due to differences in 'habitus', continues to exist as evident in differing motivations for attending university and the extent to which some students felt like a 'fish out of water' at university (Bourdieu and Passeron, 1990). Therefore, Bourdieu's 'thinking tools' continue to provide a useful way of exploring class differences in HE. However, the research also revealed university was not only reproductive but for many students was transformatory, providing access to 'economic capital' in the form of graduate employment and opportunities to extend their 'social capital' via the network of university friends, particularly those met in first-year SA, and to enhance their 'cultural capital' through increased knowledge and qualifications. Overall, the research acknowledges first-year SA makes an extremely important contribution to graduates' friendships, networks and social capital at university and post-graduation.

This research, situated within Bourdieu's theoretical framework of habitus, field, and capital combined with the concepts of propinquity and homophily, contributes to the overall international discussion about the role of SA in students' experiences. This lens helps to interpret the influence of shared first-

year SA on students' experiences, networks, and post-graduation trajectories and demonstrates how powerful, positively or negatively, this seminal year can be for residential students. However, it raises further issues regarding its long-term impact on social capital and networks and issues relating to benefits and challenges of mixing diverse groups of students.

8.3 Limitations

One limitation of this research is its dependence on self-reported data which may create social-desirability bias (Marlow and Crowne, 1961). Respondents may provide responses they believe are desirable and under-report less desirable behaviours. This reliance on self-reporting may also be an issue due to the length of time elapsed between the respondents' experiences of first-year SA and the research taking place which could potentially be between three and 14 years. Therefore, respondents' recollections may be incomplete, inaccurate or distorted. However, the nature of the topic is not necessarily sensitive or contentious, so it is more likely respondents provided honest responses. The respondents were keen to express their views, as indicated by the number of responses provided to the open-ended questions in the questionnaire. This may also suggest an over-representation of respondents with strong and/or positive views about SA. The survey was anonymous and interviews were confidential, helping to mitigate against dishonest responses (Kang and Hwang, 2023). Therefore, it is hoped the self-reported data provides an accurate representation of respondents' behaviour and views.

There are potential limitations with the questionnaire. Firstly, the length of the questionnaire may have resulted in some respondents becoming fatigued and abandoning the questionnaire before completion (65 respondents did not complete), which may have affected the results. However, given the good response rate of 255 completed questionnaires exceeding my target of 100, I do not think this had major implications for the quality of the data. Secondly, there were more female respondents (69.0%) than the national average of female first-year students (57.1%) (HESA, 2024c), which could suggest the sample is not representative of the general population. However, research has

shown females are more likely to respond to surveys than males (Becker and Glauser, 2018, Becker, 2022) and the statistical analysis did not show any major differences between males and females.

This study focused on UK undergraduate alumni living in first-year SA at LU and therefore the findings are not necessarily generalisable to other HEIs. However, combined with previous research exploring the impact of SA on students' experiences, it is hoped findings from this study can contribute to a greater understanding of the implications of the SA allocation process.

8.4 Recommendations

Recommendations are organised around implications for policy and practice and future research.

8.4.1 Implications for Policy and Practice

This work will be shared with the accommodation team at LU, who expressed an interest in the findings when the project commenced in 2020.

LU's processes for allocating students to first-year accommodation appear to be largely effective. However, it is still worthwhile for them to review their policies, provision and pricing to avoid any unintentional segregation resulting from the allocation process. For example, they could consider mixing students from different social classes, perhaps by using home postcodes/POLAR4 categories which categorise households according to HE participation and educational advantage. The accommodation team may review their policies to make it perhaps easier for students who are dissatisfied with accommodation/flatmates to move. Pricing of accommodation may result in segregation and therefore it is important to review the pricing structure of accommodation and possibly consider offering discounted rates/bursaries to students from more disadvantaged backgrounds.

HEIs should consider implications of their provision of, and policies regarding, SA on formation of households. The literature review revealed HEIs adopted

various strategies for allocating first-year accommodation but there is no magic formula for allocating places. This is the dichotomy facing HEIs because, on the one hand, they may want to provide opportunities for social mixing and meeting people 'not like me', possibly from different backgrounds, races and cultures. However, on the other hand, people find comfort in being with 'similar' people. Therefore, it is recommended the allocation process results in a mix of students with varying backgrounds but also ensures there are potentially some housemates with whom they have things in common. Despite increasing the complexity of the allocation process, it may be useful for universities to capture further information about students and their preferences. SA is a key site for meeting people from different backgrounds. HEIs which allocate places based on similarities may have to consider other ways to encourage students to cross boundaries, and this would also benefit commuter/'stayed education' students. Increased satisfaction with accommodation may lead to higher levels of student retention. It may be helpful to include some form of student induction during the first few weeks of term to help raise awareness of cultural and racial differences and break down barriers.

Students' experiences of SA can have a profound impact on students' mental health and wellbeing. Therefore, HEIs and private accommodation providers have a duty of care for their students and should have policies and practices in place to identify and deal with students struggling with mental health issues. The British Property Federation (2019) provides excellent guidance which acknowledges the important role SA providers play in providing wellbeing support and provides a comprehensive range of practical recommendations.

8.4.2 Recommendations for Future Research

I have found this research to be thought-provoking and rewarding but perhaps unsurprisingly it has raised many questions worthy of further research. The following topics have emerged during this study and may be considered in future projects.

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- This research involved alumni who graduated from LU between 1-10 years ago and therefore many respondents were in early stages of their careers. Therefore, it would be extremely interesting to undertake a follow-up study with the same respondents to explore their continuing social networks, with a particular focus on SA contacts and extent to which these were used for career development.
 - The sample for this study focused on UK home students and purposely excluded commuting, mature and international students as the study was primarily designed to explore the impact of SA on UK home students. However, the research findings revealed many international students faced challenges whilst living in SA. Therefore, research exploring international students' experience of living in shared SA would be interesting. As commuting students were also excluded from the study it would be worthwhile comparing their social networks and acquisition of social capital with those of students living in SA to explore the extent to which living at home affects development of friendships and social networks.
 - The study focused on LU and therefore findings may be different at other HEIs with differing characteristics, locations, history or accommodation allocation policies. For example, Gamsu and Donnelly (2020) did not include LU as one of their universities in 'elite' communities and therefore perhaps they are not regarded as somewhere to study to meet people of influence. Therefore, conducting a similar study in contrasting HEIs may reveal different results. For example, it may be expected to find social networks and social capital developed at Oxbridge to be of greater importance despite the universities' efforts to widen participation. It would also be interesting to research HEIs with differing policies for allocating first-year accommodation, comparing HEIs who randomly allocate places with other HEIs who use more of a matching system or who allow students to sign up with friends.
 - Student experiences of living in first-year SA had a major impact on their transition to university and could be a contributing factor to student retention. This thesis focused on alumni and therefore did not include

any respondents who dropped out of university. If it were possible, it would be interesting to conduct research with students who dropped out of university during first year to explore the contribution first-year accommodation made to their decision to drop out.

Chapter 9: Appendix One

Term-time accommodation	2014/15	2015/16	2016/17	2017/18	2018/19	2019/20	2020/21	2021/22	2022/23	2023/24
Provider maintained	247,710	248,385	258,180	262,640	256,055	254,055	225,295	245,895	238,375	249,250
%	34.3	33.7	33.7	33.5	31.7	29.5	24.2	25.4	21.9	23.9
Private-sector halls	70,465	81,645	82,300	86,680	92,250	100,265	89,120	112,840	106,915	108,500
%	9.7	11.1	10.8	11	11.4	11.6	9.6	11.7	9.8	10.4
Parental/guardian home	135,820	135,375	140,860	148,405	152,445	161,600	200,345	172,335	171,210	182,025
%	18.8	18.4	18.4	18.9	18.9	18.7	21.6	15.7	15.7	17.4
Own residence	103,750	107,915	124,485	128,860	132,475	147,940	185,345	180,275	159,540	191,900
%	14.4	14.6	16.3	16.4	16.4	17.2	19.9	18.6	14.7	18.4
Other rented accommodation	113,780	109,580	111,445	111,400	120,825	139,135	138,475	170,700	262,040	222,640
%	15.7	14.9	14.6	14.2	15.0	16.1	14.9	17.7	24.1	21.3
Other	23,235	25,165	24,015	25,750	27,970	30,820	38,230	48,130	67,750	62,525
%	3.2	3.4	3.1	3.3	3.5	3.6	4.1	5.0	6.2	6.0
Not Available	28,100	28,590	24,370	21,100	24,055	26,525	52,610	36,950	81,805	27,120
%	3.9	3.9	3.2	2.7	3.0	3.1	5.7	3.8	7.5	2.6
Total	722,860	736,660	765,485	784,835	806,540	862,265	929,420	967,125	1,087,735	1,043,960

Table 9.1 Term-time accommodation of First-year full-time and sandwich students 2014/15 – 2020/21 Source: (HESA, 2025a).
% = percentage of year total calculated by Meek

Chapter 10: Appendix Two

Research Question	Questionnaire	Interviews	Informed by Literature
1. To what extent does first-year university accommodation impact on UK students' experience of university, particularly, the impact of housemates?	Pre-university information (type of school, location, reason for applying to university/Lancaster university, parental education, whether they were in care, a carer, eligible for free school meals, entitled to 16-19 bursary or Education Maintenance Allowance (EMA) or received maximum maintenance loan) University information (year graduated, faculty, degree classification). Classification questions (gender, ethnic group, disability, postcode). First-year experiences (type of accommodation, college, numbers shared with, experiences of accommodation/ flatmates, level of satisfaction with accommodation). Dissatisfaction with first-year accommodation/ living arrangements (for participants who were either very or somewhat dissatisfied). Other comments shared living during your first-year and the impact it had on experiences of university.	Can you tell me about where you lived before going to Lancaster University and studying for A levels/ btech/IB? Prompts: subjects studied, motivations to attend university, family/ school influence. Can you tell me about your family and background? Prompts: parents' education/ occupation, type of area. Why did you choose Lancaster University? Prompts: importance of accommodation, college. Tell me about your first impressions of life at Lancaster in your accommodation? Prompts: housemates, interests, socialising, live with in 2 nd year, process for allocating places. How did who you lived with influence your first-year experience of university? Prompts: homesick, problems, adjusting, making friends, college. What advice would you give to the people allocating students to rooms/ flats in terms of who shares with who?	Family background/ Habitus (Bourdieu and Nice, 2013) Postcode POLAR4 (Office for Students, 2024) Reasons for applying to university (Holton, 2018) Satisfaction with accommodation (Holton, 2016a) Propinquity (Festinger et al., 1963, Kadushin, 2012, Stinebrickner and Stinebrickner, 2008) Allocation of Places (Rosenbaum, 2018, Owen, 2022) Unintentional Grouping in accommodation (Andersson et al., 2012, Hillman in Jones and Blakey, 2020)
2. To what extent do university friends influence UK students'	Post-university experiences (social networks, salary, employment, location). Other comments about people met at university and keep in touch with (e.g.	Perhaps we can start with you telling me what you have been doing since you graduated? Prompts: after graduation, contact with Lancaster friends, career	Importance of university friends (Pascarella and Terenzini, 2005, Brooks, 2007)

Research Question	Questionnaire	Interviews	Informed by Literature
experiences of post-university life, particularly, in terms of their network and finding and securing employment?	how often they meet up, became best friends/ partners, frequency of contact, living with, working with etc) Securing jobs through contacts	development, importance of network in finding or securing employment. Thinking about your friends/ contacts from Lancaster have you been in touch with them during this time (Covid-19)? Tell me about your first impressions of life at Lancaster in your accommodation? Prompts: similarities/ differences. Anything else you want to share about the people you shared with in your first-year or the other people you met at university and how this affected your life?	Contacts for finding jobs (Granovetter, 1974, Tholen et al., 2013) Graduates and social capital (Burke, 2015, 2016) Social networks (Kadushin, 2012, Brown, 2021) Homophily (McPherson et al., 2001) Social Capital (Bourdieu, 2002) Friendships, social capital and networks (Wilcox et al., 2005, Blimling, 2015, Jopling and Valtorta, 2018, Dickinson, 2019) Importance of accommodation in making friends (Unite Students and Higher Education Policy Institute, 2017) Importance of social networks in finding jobs (Bradley cited in Rosenbaum, 2018)

Table 10.1 Linkages between the first two research questions, the questions asked in the questionnaire and interviews and how these were informed by relevant literature.

Chapter 11: Appendix Three

Copy of Questionnaire Designed in Qualtrics

Q1 Thank you for taking the time to complete this questionnaire. I am an academic member of staff in the Marketing Department and also a PhD student at Lancaster University exploring Alumni's experiences of living at Lancaster University whilst studying their undergraduate degree and the impact this had on their experiences at university and also, since graduation. Your responses will help me to better understand the impact that living in shared university accommodation has on students' experiences. You may also help universities to develop more appropriate policies on allocation of first-year accommodation.

As a thank you for completing the questionnaire you can choose to be entered into a prize draw to win a £50 Amazon voucher or alternatively you can ask for a donation of £50 to be made to a charity of your choice. The lucky winner will be emailed after the study is complete.

The questionnaire will take approximately 10 minutes to complete and you must meet all the following criteria:-

- Studied your undergraduate degree (UG) at Lancaster University
- Graduated since 2010 (including 2010)
- Must have studied and lived in the UK before attending Lancaster University

Taking part in the study is voluntary and you can stop or withdraw at any time before you submit your responses. You can withdraw from the study up to 2 weeks after submitting your questionnaire but only if you provide an email address.

All information will be anonymous and confidential and will not be used for any other purpose than this study. All research will adhere to the Lancaster University Ethics Code of Practice.

If you have any questions about the questionnaire or wish to withdraw after you have submitted your response please contact: Helen Meek h.meek@lancaster.ac.uk 01524 510991 If you have any concerns or complaints that you wish to discuss with a person who is not directly involved in the research, you can also contact: Dr Richard Budd r.budd@lancaster.ac.uk

For further information about how Lancaster University processes personal data for research purposes and your data rights please visit our webpage:

www.lancaster.ac.uk/research/data-protection Your data will be held securely at Lancaster University.

By continuing with the survey you consent to participate, meet all the criteria and acknowledge that your participation is voluntary and you can withdraw from the study if you wish.

Q2 What year did you start your undergraduate degree at university?

- 2005 or earlier (1)
- 2006-2011 (2)
- 2012 onwards (3)

Q3 What year did you graduate from your undergraduate degree at Lancaster University?

- 2020 (1)
- 2019 (12)
- 2018 (2)
- 2017 (3)
- 2016 (4)
- 2015 (5)
- 2014 (6)
- 2013 (7)
- 2012 (8)
- 2011 (10)
- 2010 (11)
- Other (9)

Skip To: End of Survey If What year did you graduate from your undergraduate degree at Lancaster University? = Other

Q4 What faculty did you graduate from (UG) at Lancaster University?

- Management School (1)
 - Arts and Social Sciences (2)
 - Health and Medicine (3)
 - Science and Technology (4)
 - Other (please explain) (5)
-

Q5 How important were each of the following when deciding to go to university in the first place?

	Not at all important (18)	Slightly important (19)	Moderately important (20)	Very important (21)	Extremely important (22)
Gaining an experience (1)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Leaving home (2)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Gaining a qualification (3)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Parental expectation (4)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Improve career prospects (5)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Q6 Please provide any other reasons why you decided to go to university in the first place

Q7 How important were the following factors when choosing Lancaster University?

	Not at all important (37)	Slightly important (38)	Moderately important (39)	Very important (40)	Extremely important (41)
Close to home (1)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Quality of course (2)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Reputation of the university (3)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Recommended by family/ friends (4)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Accepted through clearing (5)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Campus university (6)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Ranking of university (7)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Ranking of Department/course (8)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Quality of accommodation (9)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Q8 Please explain any other reasons for choosing Lancaster University

Q9 What type of school/college did you attend for 6th form/A levels/BTECH/IB?

- 6th form college (1)
 - State comprehensive (2)
 - State grammar school (3)
 - Fee paying/independent/private school (4)
 - Other (please state) (5)
-

Q10 Did you go straight from school/ college to Lancaster University for your undergraduate degree?

- Yes (1)
- No (2)

Display this question:

If Did you go straight from school/ college to Lancaster University for your undergraduate degree? = No

Q11 Why did you not go straight to university?

- Took a gap year (1)
 - Attended Lancaster University as a mature student (2)
 - Attended another university and then moved to Lancaster (3)
 - Other (please explain) (4)
-

Q12 Did one or both of your parents have a university degree?

- Yes (1)
- No (2)
- Not sure (please explain) (3) _____

Q13 What accommodation did you live in during your first-year?

- College on campus (1)
 - Privately rented student house (2)
 - Parental home (3)
 - Own home (4)
 - Private student hall of residence, eg City Block (5)
 - Other (please state) (6)
-

Display this question:

If What accommodation did you live in during your first-year? = College on campus

Q14 Which college did you live in during your first-year undergraduate degree?

- Bowland (1)
 - Cartmel (2)
 - County (3)
 - Grizedale (4)
 - Furness (5)
 - Fylde (6)
 - Lonsdale (7)
 - Pendle (8)
 - Other (please explain) (9)
-

Display this question:

If What accommodation did you live in during your first-year? = College on campus

Or What accommodation did you live in during your first-year? = Privately rented student house

Or What accommodation did you live in during your first-year? = Private student hall of residence, eg City Block

Q15 How many people did you share with in your first-year accommodation (in addition to you)? This may be in a flat, house or the number of people sharing a kitchen.

- 1-2 (6)
- 3-5 (2)
- 6-8 (3)
- 9-10 (4)
- 11 or more (5)

Display this question:

If What accommodation did you live in during your first-year? = College on campus

Or What accommodation did you live in during your first-year? = Privately rented student house

Or What accommodation did you live in during your first-year? = Private student hall of residence, eg City Block

Q16 Thinking about the people you shared with in your first-year please state the extent to which you agree or disagree with the following statements

	Strongly disagree (11)	Somewhat disagree (12)	Neither agree nor disagree (13)	Somewhat agree (14)	Strongly agree (15)
My flatmates were like me (1)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
The people I shared with made settling into university easy (2)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Living in shared accommodation was stressful (3)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Some of the people I shared with became my best friends (4)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
My flatmates were from different nationalities (5)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Q17 Please state the extent to which you were happy with your first-year accommodation/ living arrangements

- Extremely dissatisfied (25)
- Somewhat dissatisfied (26)
- Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied (27)
- Somewhat satisfied (28)
- Extremely satisfied (29)

Display this question:

If Please state the extent to which you were happy with your first-year accommodation/ living arrang... = Extremely dissatisfied

Or Please state the extent to which you were happy with your first-year accommodation/ living arrang... = Somewhat dissatisfied

Q18 Why were you dissatisfied with your first-year accommodation/ living arrangements?

Display this question:

If What accommodation did you live in during your first-year? = College on campus

Or What accommodation did you live in during your first-year? = Privately rented student house

Or What accommodation did you live in during your first-year? = Private student hall of residence, eg City Block

Q19 Please feel free to share any other comments about your experiences of shared living during your first-year and the impact it had on your experiences of university

Display this question:

If What accommodation did you live in during your first-year? = College on campus

Or What accommodation did you live in during your first-year? = Privately rented student house

Or What accommodation did you live in during your first-year? = Private student hall of residence, eg City Block

Q20 Did you live in your second year with any of the people you shared with in your first-year?

Yes (1)

No (2)

Display this question:

*If Did you live in your second year with any of the people you shared with in your first-year?
= No*

Q21 Why did you choose not to live with those that you shared with in your first-year?

Did not get on with them (1)

Preferred to live with people from my course (2)

Preferred to live with people that I met through a club or society (3)

Lived on my own (4)

Other (please state) (5)

Q22 Whilst studying at Lancaster or since graduating have you ever secured work experience, an internship or a job where you knew somebody that worked there (or a relative or friend that knew somebody that worked there)?

Yes (1)

No (2)

Display this question:

*If Whilst studying at Lancaster or since graduating have you ever secured work experience,
an intern... = Yes*

Q23 How did you know this person?

- Through somebody I shared with in my first-year at university (1)
 - Through another student that I met whilst at university (2)
 - Family friend (3)
 - Relative (4)
 - Through somebody at my school/ college (5)
 - Other (please state) (6)
-

Display this question:

If Whilst studying at Lancaster or since graduating have you ever secured work experience, an intern... = Yes

Q24 Please tell me about this job(s) and how knowing this person/people helped you find the job(s) or influenced your application(s), if at all

Q25 Thinking about the people you met during your undergraduate degree at Lancaster. How many people do you still keep in contact with (this could range from people you meet regularly to people that you rarely see but have as a contact on Facebook)?

- None (1)
- 1-5 (2)
- 6-10 (3)
- 11-20 (4)
- 21-30 (5)
- 31 + (6)

Q26 Thinking about the people you still keep in contact with from your undergraduate (UG) degree at Lancaster, how do you keep in contact.

	Yes (1)	No (3)
Live with them now (1)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Work with them now (2)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Meet up weekly (3)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Meet up monthly (4)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Meet up twice a year (5)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Meet once a year (6)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Rarely see but keep in contact via social media (7)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Display this question:

If Thinking about the people you still keep in contact with from your undergraduate (UG) degree at L... = Live with them now [Yes]

Q27 How many people do you live with now that you met at Lancaster on your UG degree?

- 1 (1)
- 2 (2)
- 3 (3)
- 4 or more (4)

Display this question:

If How many people do you live with now that you met at Lancaster on your UG degree? = 1

Q28 Is this person you live with your:-

- Spouse/ long term partner (1)
 - Friend (2)
 - Other (please state) (3)
-

Display this question:

If Thinking about the people you still keep in contact with from your undergraduate (UG) degree at L... = Work with them now [Yes]

Q29 How many people do you work with now that you met at Lancaster on your UG degree?

- 1 (1)
- 2 (2)
- 3 (3)
- 4 or more (4)

Display this question:

If Thinking about the people you still keep in contact with from your undergraduate (UG) degree at L... = Meet up weekly [Yes]

Q30 How many people do you meet weekly that you met at Lancaster on your UG degree?

- 1 (1)
- 2 (2)
- 3 (3)
- 4 (4)
- 5 (5)
- 6 or more (6)

Display this question:

If Thinking about the people you still keep in contact with from your undergraduate (UG) degree at L... = Meet up monthly [Yes]

Q31 How many people do you meet monthly that you met at Lancaster on your UG degree?

- 1 (1)
- 2 (2)
- 3 (3)
- 4 (4)
- 5 (5)
- 6 (6)
- 7 (7)
- 8 or more (8)

Display this question:

If Thinking about the people you still keep in contact with from your undergraduate (UG) degree at L... = Meet up twice a year [Yes]

Q32 How many people do you meet twice a year that you met at Lancaster on your UG degree?

- 1 (1)
- 2 (2)
- 3 (3)
- 4 (4)
- 5 (5)
- 6 (6)
- 7 (7)
- 8 (8)
- 9 (9)
- 10 or more (10)

Display this question:

If Thinking about the people you still keep in contact with from your undergraduate (UG) degree at L... = Meet once a year [Yes]

Q33 How many people do you meet once a year that you met at Lancaster on your UG degree?

- 1 (1)
- 2 -4 (2)
- 5-8 (3)
- 9-11 (4)
- 12 -15 (5)
- 16 or more (6)

Display this question:

If Thinking about the people you still keep in contact with from your undergraduate (UG) degree at L... = Rarely see but keep in contact via social media [Yes]

Q34 How many people do you rarely see but keep in contact via social media that you met at Lancaster on your UG degree (this could include people you have as friends on Facebook/ contacts in LinkedIn)?

- 1 - 2 (1)
- 3-5 (2)
- 6-10 (3)
- 11-20 (4)
- 21-30 (5)
- 31-40 (6)
- 41-50 (7)
- 51 -100 (8)
- 101 or more (9)

Q35 Please feel free to share any further comments about the people you met at university that you still keep in touch with (e.g. how often you meet up, became best friends/ partners, frequency you are in touch, living with, working with etc)

Q36 What is your current salary?

- £20,000 or less (1)
- £20,001 - £25,000 (2)
- £25,001 - £30,000 (3)
- £30,001 - £40,000 (4)
- £40,001 - £50,000 (5)
- £50,001 - £60,000 (6)
- £60,001 - £70,000 (7)
- £70,001 - £80,000 (8)
- £90,001 - £100,00 (9)
- £100,001 or more (10)
- Prefer not to say (11)

Q37 Where do you currently live?

- London (1)
 - South East other than London (2)
 - South West (3)
 - West Midlands (4)
 - East Midlands (5)
 - North West (6)
 - Yorkshire (7)
 - Wales (8)
 - Scotland (9)
 - Northern Ireland (10)
 - North East (11)
 - Non UK (please state country) (12)
-

Display this question:

If Where do you currently live? = North West

Q38 Where in the North West do you currently live?

- Lancaster (1)
 - Elsewhere in Lancashire (2)
 - Greater Manchester (3)
 - Merseyside (4)
 - Cumbria (5)
 - Cheshire (6)
 - Other (please state) (7)
-

Q39 What degree classification were you awarded for your undergraduate degree from Lancaster University?

- 1st (1)
 - 2.1 (upper second) (2)
 - 2.2 (lower second) (3)
 - 3rd (4)
 - Pass degree (5)
 - Other (please state) (6)
-

Q40 Please identify if any of the following applied to you (please tick all that apply)

	Yes (1)	No (2)	Prefer not to say (3)
Before attending university you were in care or a care leaver (1)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Before university you were a young carer or parent (2)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Before university you were in receipt of, or entitled to free school meals (3)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Before university you were in receipt of, or entitled to the 16-19 bursary (4)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Before university you were in receipt of, or entitled to, the Education Maintenance Allowance (EMA) (6)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
At university you received the maximum maintenance loan (5)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Q41 Can you recall the postcode of where you lived before you attended university?

Yes (please include it in the text box) (1)

No (2)

Prefer not to say (3)

Q42 Are you?

Male (1)

Female (2)

Other (3) _____

Prefer not to say (4)

Q43 Which of the following best describes your ethnic group?

White English/Welsh/Scottish/Northern Irish/British (1)

White Irish (2)

White Gypsy or Irish Traveller (7)

Any other white background (please describe) (3)

Mixed/multiple ethnic group - white and black caribbean (4)

Mixed/multiple ethnic group - white and black african (9)

Mixed/multiple ethnic group - white and asian (10)

Any other mixed/multiple ethnic background (please describe) (11)

Indian (12)

Pakistani (13)

Bangladeshi (14)

Chinese (15)

Any other asian background (please describe) (16)

Black african (17)

Black caribbean (18)

Any other black/african/caribbean background (please describe) (19)

Arab (20)

Other (please state) (6)

Prefer not to say (5)

Q44 Did you have a disability (physical, sensory or mental health) or a learning difficulty (e.g. dyslexia) or chronic health condition (e.g. epilepsy, diabetes or asthma) whilst studying at Lancaster University?

Yes (1)

No (2)

Display this question:

If Did you have a disability (physical, sensory or mental health) or a learning difficulty (e.g. dys... = Yes

Q45 Was your disability/ learning difficulty or chronic health condition registered with Lancaster University when you were an undergraduate student there?

Yes (1)

No (2)

Not sure (3)

Q46 Would you like to be entered into the free prize draw to win a £50 Amazon voucher or a donation to a charity of your choice?

Yes (please give your email address) (1)

No thank you (2)

Q47 I am really keen to find out more about Lancaster University's Alumni's experiences both at university and also since graduation. Would you be willing to take part in an interview with me either face to face or by video link to share your experiences further? In return you will receive either a £20 shopping voucher or I will make a donation of £20 to a charity of your choice. I will contact you to arrange a mutually convenient time.

Yes (please provide your email address - if not provided earlier) (1)

No (2)

Chapter 12: Appendix Four

Table 12.1 Comparison of University student profile, questionnaire respondents, respondents willing to participate in further research and the profile of the participants.

Attribute	Sample for Interview		Agreed to Participate		Completed questionnaire	
	Count	%	Count	%	Count	%
Gender						
Male	6	40	40	31.5	71	27.8
Female	9	60	87	68.5	176	69.0
Prefer not to say/ no response					8	3.1
Ethnicity						
White British	13	86.7	114	89.8	217	85.1
Non-white	2	13.3	13	10.2	28	11.0
Prefer not to say/ no response					10	3.9
College						
County	2	13.3	23	18	40	16.5
Fylde	3	20.0	18	14.2	37	15.3
Furness	3	20.0	17	13.4	34	14.0
Pendle	3	20.0	15	11.8	23	9.5
Grizedale	1	6.7	15	11.8	20	8.3
Cartmel	1	6.7	20	15.7	52	21.5
Bowland	0	0	8	6.3	15	6.2
Lonsdale	1	6.7	7	5.5	20	8.3
Other (Private)	1		4	3.9	10	4.0
Faculty						
Other					15	5.9
LUMS	6	40	59	46.5	109	42.7
FST	3	20	18	14.2	48	18.8
FASS	6	40	49	39.3	78	30.6
FHM			0	0	5	2.0
Education						
Private/ind	3	20	13	10.2	31	12.2
State	12	80	114	89.8	224	87.8
Parents Uni?						
Yes	7	46.7	72	56.7	119	46.7
No	8	53.3	55	43.3	133	52.2
Other					3	1.2
Disability						
Yes	3	20	32	25.2	55	21.6
No	12	80	95	74.8	194	76.1
No response					6	2.3
Free school meals						
Yes	2	13.3	15	11.8	25	9.8
No	13	86.7	110	86.6	224	87.8

Attribute	Sample for Interview		Agreed to Participate		Completed questionnaire	
No response					6	2.3
Satisfied with accommodation						
Satisfied	13	86.7	94	74.0	200	78.5
Dissatisfied	2	13.3	25	19.7	37	14.5
Neutral			8	6.3	18	7.1
Job from contact						
Yes	5	33.3	51	40.2	84	32.7
No	10	66.7	76	59.8	170	67.3
Year graduated						
2010	1	6.7	10	7.9	12	4.7
2011	1	6.7	6	4.7	17	6.7
2012	1	6.7	8	6.3	12	4.7
2013	0	-	6	4.7	16	6.3
2014	2	13.3	11	8.7	18	7.1
2015	2	13.3	13	10.2	25	9.8
2016	2	13.3	20	15.7	28	11.0
2017	3	20	17	13.4	31	12.2
2018	3	20	14	11.0	34	13.3
2019	0	0	15	11.8	42	16.5
2020	0	0	6	4.7	20	7.8

Chapter 13: Appendix Five

Table 13.1 Summary of Interview Participants

Pseudonym	Year grad.	Faculty	Gender	Ethnicity	College	School	Parents Attended University	Disability	Free School Meals	16-19 bursary or EMA	Satisfied with accommodation	Job from contact
1.Yasmin	2015	LUMS	Female	White British	Fylde	Independent	No	No	No	No	Extremely satisfied	No
2.Sophie	2018	LUMS	Female	White British	Furness	State	Yes	No	No	No	Somewhat satisfied	No
3.Nadine	2010	FASS	Female	White British	County	State	No	No	No	Yes	Extremely satisfied	No
4.Nicola	2018	FASS	Female	White British	County	State	Yes	No	No	No	Extremely dissatisfied	No
5.Sienna	2014	FASS	Female	White British	Pendle	Independent	Yes	No	No	No	Somewhat dissatisfied	Yes
6.Leon	2017	Joint FASS and FST	Male	White British	Pendle	State	No	Yes	No	No	Somewhat satisfied	No
7.Cheryl	2017	FST	Female	White British	Fylde	Independent	Yes	No	No	No	Somewhat satisfied	Yes
8.Ralph	2012	Law	Male	White British	Furness	State	No	No	No	No	Somewhat satisfied	No
9.Oscar	2014	LUMS	Male	White British	Furness	State	No	No	Yes	Yes	Extremely satisfied	No
10. Layla	2018	FASS	Female	Mexican/ British	Fylde	State	Yes	Yes	No	No	Somewhat satisfied	Yes
11. Mia	2017	LUMS	Female	Bangladeshi	Grizedale	State	No	Yes	Yes	No	Somewhat satisfied	Yes
12. Frank	2015	FST	Male	White British	Pendle	State	Yes	No	No	No	Somewhat satisfied	No
13. Milo	2011	LUMS	Male	White British	Pendle	State	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	Extremely satisfied	No
14. Byron	2016	FST	Male	White British	Cartmel	State	No	No	No	No	Somewhat satisfied	No
15. Flo	2016	LUMS	Female	Indian	Lonsdale	State	No	No	No	Yes	Somewhat satisfied	Yes

Chapter 14: Appendix Six

Topic Guide for Semi-structured Interviews

Ice breaker – What's your experience of using video calls?

Introduction - I am aware that you graduated in xxx from xxx What degree did you do?
And you now live in the xxx

Perhaps we can start with you telling me what you have been doing since you graduated?

- What did you do after graduation?
 - With any friends from Lancaster?
 - Return to family home?
- Do you keep in touch with friends from Lancaster?
 - Who, how often and how? – meeting up/ social media
 - How important are your friends from Lancaster in your social life?
 - Travel – any live overseas that you may visit? Did you share with them in the first-year?
 - Any particular 'useful' contacts that you made at Lancaster?
- How has your career developed since graduating from Lancaster?
 - Jobs?
 - How did you hear about these jobs?
- Secured any jobs where you knew someone that worked there?
 - Who, their role, how did you get the job?
 - In particular, anybody you shared with in your first-year at university?

Pre University Experiences

- Can you tell me about where you lived before going to Lancaster University and studying for A levels/ btech/IB
 - Subjects studied (type of school)
 - Reasons for going to university
 - Parental/ school/sibling/ family influence
- Why did you choose xxx At Lancaster?
 - Accommodation?
 - How did you decide what accommodation you wanted to apply for?
 - Can you remember the process for choosing accommodation?
 - Were you allocated your first choice accommodation?
 - Importance of the college system?
- Can you tell me about your family and background
 - Understand your parents went to/did not go to university?
 - What did they study and where?
 - First generation going to university?
 - What impact if any did this have on your choice to go to university/ choice of uni, ease of application, knowledge
 - Parents occupations?
 - Type of area in which you lived?
- Overall, to what extent, if any, do you think your family, background and type of school has influenced your life at university and post-university?

First-year

- Tell me about your first impressions of life at Lancaster in your accommodation?
 - You lived in xxx and were xxx
 - If shared accommodation
 - What were your first impressions of your house mates?
 - Where were they from? International/ UK/ Europe/ Asian?
 - Did they have similar interests?
 - Similarities/ differences?
 - Did you socialize together?
 - How did you get on during the year?
 - Did you live with any of them in the second year? Who?
 - Do you think the process of allocating accommodation to first-years was appropriate? Why/ why not?
- How did who you lived with influence your first-year experience of uni?
 - Easy to fit in?
 - Did you feel homesick/ have difficulty in settling in?
 - How was this influenced by your living arrangements?
 - Any problems in your first-year?
 - How was this influenced by your living arrangements?
 - Who did you socialise with at university?
 - Flatmates, others on course, others from clubs and societies – which clubs?
 - Importance of the college?
- What advice would you give to the people allocating students to rooms/ flats in terms of who shares with who?
 - Is there anything they could do differently?
 - What factors should they consider?
 - Do you think completing some sort of pre enrolment questionnaire and the matching of people based on this would help?
 - Should universities be trying to match similar students together or mix people up?
 - Choose who you live with?

Second year – how did this work out?

Final year - Back on campus?

Anything else you want to share about the people you shared with in your first-year or the other people you met at university and how this affected your life?

- Do you think you will see many of them again/ keep in touch
- How important are the contacts you made at university?

Covid-19

- How has Covid-19 affected you and your career?
- Thinking about your friends/ contacts from Lancaster have you been in touch with them during this time?
 - How important has this network been to you at this time?
 - More or less important than other groups of friends?

-
- Have you provided support to anybody that you met at Lancaster/ or they have provided support to you?
 - Type of support? Emotional, financial, career/ jobs etc

Chapter 15: Appendix Seven

Instructions: Before completing this application form please read the instructions and questions on the ethics webpage under the heading: **'What level of review is required for my project?'**

Please also refer to NOTES in this form for guidance.

Helen Meek CH22 – Ethics Approval

This checklist is for Educational Research students only

Checklist to establish level of review required (for doctoral students and their supervisors)

Introduction:

All researchers at LU must take personal responsibility for the conduct of their research. If you are undertaking a project that involves human participation or personal data, ethical review is required and you must not begin your research until you have obtained ethics approval for your project. If your project involves the use of secondary data only, ethics review is also required.

This checklist will help you and your supervisor decide which level of ethics review your study requires.

You and your supervisor need to go through the checklist together, complete it and then follow the required ethics review process, i.e. minimal risk, low risk or significant/major risk (see below).

ALL DOCTORAL STUDENTS WHOSE RESEARCH INVOLVES WORKING WITH HUMAN PARTICIPANTS AND/OR PERSONAL DATA (REGARDLESS OF THE LEVEL OF REVIEW REQUIRED) HAVE TO COMPLETE THE FASS LUMS RESEARCH ETHICS APPLICATION FORM. The form can be downloaded from the Faculty's research ethics pages: <http://www.lancaster.ac.uk/arts-and-social-sciences/research/ethics-guidance-and-ethics-review-process/>

All completed checklists and application forms together with a note informing about the outcome of the review have to be sent to the relevant PG programme administrator.

General information

Student name: Helen Meek

PhD programme: Educational Research

First supervisor: Richard Budd

Second supervisor:

PLEASE NOTE: If your project involves the use of secondary data only, the relevant sections of the FASS LUMS REC application form need to be completed and unless other ethical issues apply, the project will be reviewed by your supervisor.

Part 1: Level of review required. Please answer the following questions.

Section A: The nature of your study

Is your research of the following kind? Please delete as appropriate.

1. Research with adults in private interactions (such as an interview, questionnaire or focus group). You will have provided the participants with substantive information about the research (usually in form of a participant information sheet) and they will have consented, in writing based on that information.

YES

2. Observational research taking place in a public venue, either physical (e.g. a town square, conference, or meeting open to the public) or virtual (e.g. a public chat room) where adult participants might reasonably expect that their behaviour would be observed by third parties and without the researcher interacting directly with the participants. If the observations include asking questions and/or seeking information about a participants, then an information sheet should be given to the participant and consent should be sought in the same way as in a.

NO

3. Research with completely anonymous adult participants, with no contact details or other uniquely identifying information (e.g. date of birth) being recorded. An example would be a study that uses an anonymous questionnaire as the only data collection tool.

NO

Section B: The topics/s of your study

4. Does your research involve discussion of a personally sensitive subject that the participant might not be willing to otherwise talk about in public and that they may find difficult to talk about with a researcher (e.g. medical conditions; income and money; religious or political views that may be sensitive and/or controversial)?

NO

5. Does your study include topics that the participants may find distressing? For example, does your study invite participants to remember difficult moments in their lives or to talk about things they currently struggle with? Note that participants may very well agree to talk about these issues or experiences but that this could involve them becoming distressed (for example during an interview); in other words: is there a risk of the participants experiencing psychological stress or anxiety when taking part in your project?

NO

However, they may perhaps indirectly discuss subjects that they find distressing such as difficult experiences associated with university or post university life such as bereavement, relationships, money worries etc

6. Is there a risk that the nature of the research topic might lead to disclosures from the participants concerning their involvement in illegal activities or other activities that represent a threat to themselves or others?

NO

However, the students may possibly disclose information regarding illegal activities such as drug taking whilst at university.

Section C: The research participants

7. Does your project involve participants who are unable to give informed consent, or in a dependent position (e.g. children, people with learning difficulties, people with mental health problems, young offenders, people in care facilities or prisons)?

NO

Section D: Your relationship to the potential participants

8. Do you have a current or prior relationship with potential participants? Please note that if you are directly involved in the teaching or assessing of participants this is considered a perceived pressure to participate.

NO

However, I may have taught some of Lancaster University Alumni whilst they were studying at Lancaster.

Section E: Deception

9. Will deception of any kind be involved in your research?

NO

Section F: Use of gatekeepers & the possibility of coercion

10. Will you use a gatekeeper to help you gain access to research participants (a gatekeeper is somebody who facilitates/grants access to or contact potential participants for you)?

No

I am intending to use the Lancaster University Alumni Linked In group to contact Lancaster University Alumni. If this proves unsuccessful I will then contact the Alumni office to see if they can assist but this will be unlikely.

10a. If you have responded 'yes' to question 10, is the gatekeeper in a position of authority or influence over potential participants (for example the gatekeeper may be the participants' teacher or head teacher or they may be the participants' line manager or employer) and may they be able to exert pressure on the participants to take part in your research?

11. Will the participants be subjected to any undue incentives to participate? (Receipt of a project report or a reasonable reimbursement such as travel/lunch costs or a voucher would not be considered undue incentives.)

NO

I intend to offer an incentive of a shopping voucher or a donation to a charity of their choice.

Section G: Use of visual images

12. As part of your study, will you create and/or use and disseminate visual images (still or moving) of the research participants?

NO

Section H: Risks to you (the researcher) or to the participants

13. Does taking part in the project expose the participants to any risks other than considered every day risks? For example, are there any risks to their physical wellbeing? Is there a risk to their reputation?

NO

14. Does conducting this research expose you to any unusual risks? For example, does your study involve lone working, travelling long distances and/or working in foreign countries that might not be considered safe?

NO

Part II: Which application process and which level of review is required for your study?

As a PhD student in the Department of Educational Research, your application for ethics review will follow one of three possible processes.

If you have answered **YES** to questions 1, 2 or 3 (section A), and **NO** to questions 4-14, your study is eligible for the minimal risk process and will be reviewed by your supervisor only.

If you have answered **NO** to questions 1-3 and **YES** to any of the questions 4, 8, 10, 10a and 12, your study is likely to be low risk. It will initially be reviewed by your supervisor and second supervisor (who may, however, seek advice from the ED Res REC and/or may request the Ed Res REC to review this study).

If you have answered **YES** to one or more of questions 5, 6, 7, 9, 11, 13 and 14 your study is likely to carry with it ethical risks that are significant and it will be reviewed by the FASS LUMS Research Ethics Committee.

SECTION ONE [Must be completed by all applicants]

Project Details	Answer
Name of applicant/researcher	Helen Meek
Title of Project: Note 1	The impact that first-year Lancaster University accommodation has on students' university and post-university experiences.
Department	Educational Research
Appointment/position held by applicant within FASS or LUMS	PhD Student (FASS) and Senior Teaching Fellow (LUMS)
ACP ID Number (if applicable)	N/A
Funding source (if applicable)	N/A
Grant Code (if applicable)	N/A

NOTE

¹ Make your title short and descriptive so that people can easily identify the main topic of the research. The title of your project does not need to be the same as the title you propose to use for your publication (e.g. your thesis).

Type of study

Involves existing documents/data only or the evaluation of an existing project with no direct contact with human participants. **Complete sections [one](#), [two](#) and [four](#) of this form**

Includes direct involvement by human subjects (including but not limited to interviews, completing questionnaires, social media and other internet based research). **Complete sections [one](#), [three](#) and [four](#) of this form.**

Contact details

1. Contact information for applicant:
 E-mail: h.meek@lancaster.ac.uk
 Telephone: [07940826900](tel:07940826900) (please give a number on which you can be contacted at short notice)
 Lancaster University Address: [D07 Charles Carter, Department of Marketing, LUMS, Lancaster University. LA1 4YX](#)

2. Names and appointments/position of all members of the research team:

Name of research team	Appointment/position
Helen Meek	PhD Student

PhD Students

Complete this section if this is a PhD student project

3. Project supervisor(s) names: [Dr Richard Budd](#)

SECTION TWO

Complete this section if your project involves existing data only, or the evaluation of an existing project with no direct contact with human participants

1. Anticipated project dates (month and year) [Note 2](#)

Start date: [1/10/2019](#) **End date:** [1/7/2021](#)

NOTE

² These dates should indicate when you wish to begin your project (taking into account the timescale of the ethical approval process) and when funding ends or your thesis will be submitted.

2. Please state the aims and objectives of the project (no more than 150 words, in lay-person's language) [Note 3](#):

The aim of the study is to explore how former undergraduate students at Lancaster University (case university) describe their experiences of shared living at university and how this impacted on their university and post-graduate lives. The objectives are:-

- To what extent do Lancaster University graduates feel that university policy relating to the allocation of accommodation impacts on first-year students' experience of university?
- To what extent do students' first-year social networks influence their transition to university and their first-year experiences?
- To what extent does this network of university friends influence students' social mobility and post university life?

NOTE

³ This summary should concisely but clearly tell the reviewer (in simple terms and in a way which would be understandable to a general audience) what you are broadly planning to do in your study.

3. Please describe briefly the data or records to be studied, or the evaluation to be undertaken.

The study will be based on a case study of Lancaster University. Secondary data may involve Higher Education Statistics Agency (HESA) data, the Destination of Leavers Survey (DLHE) data and Lancaster University data about incoming undergraduate students and accommodation requests and allocations. Documentary information will be reviewed such as Lancaster University's policy on student accommodation and the university website. Primary research will include a survey of Lancaster University undergraduate Alumni (that have graduated within the last 8 years). These Alumni will be contacted through the Lancaster University

Alumni Linked in group and also by distribution of the questionnaire on social media and word of mouth. Those participating in the survey will be asked if they would be willing to take part in further research and these students may then be contacted to participate in an in-depth interview.

4. How will any data or records be obtained?

Secondary data sources will be readily available via the web. Primary research will be obtained by contacting Lancaster University Alumni via the LinkedIn Lancaster University Alumni group, distributing the questionnaire on social media and also by asking respondents to share the questionnaire link with other Lancaster University Alumni. Interviews will be conducted with questionnaire respondents who agree to be interviewed.

5. Confidentiality and Anonymity

If your study involves re-analysis and potential publication of existing data but which was gathered as part of a previous project, conducted by another individual or collective, involving direct contact with human beings, how will you ensure that your re-analysis of this data maintains confidentiality and anonymity as guaranteed in the original study?

N/A

6. What plan is in place for the storage of data (electronic, digital, paper, etc)?

[Note 4](#)

All data will be stored for a minimum of 10 years. All files, such as word files, and data (eg excel spreadsheets and SPSS) will be stored in Lancaster University Microsoft OneDrive to ensure confidentiality and security. Qualtrics (university licensed) will be used to gather and analyse data and this is password protected.

Please ensure that your plans comply with the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) and the UK Data Protection Act 2018 .

NOTE

⁴State clearly where and in what format your data will be stored.

Timescales: The standard guidance we provide to people about length of time for retaining data is for a minimum of 10 years. This is not a requirement but a general recommendation. Your study may have a rationale for retaining data longer, but if so, please explain. Where electronic data is to be stored for longer than the recommended period, we recommend storing data on University storage. If data is collected or stored by own devices they need to be encrypted. For data sharing with external partners we recommend using Box.

Data security: Data stored on all portable devices (eg laptops) should be encrypted as well as password protected; data stored on the University server does not, however, need to be encrypted. If you are based and work predominantly away from the University, give consideration to how you will store the data securely as you undertake your research, and how it will be securely transferred to the LU campus for longer term storage.

7. What are the plans for dissemination of findings from the research? [Note 5](#)

The findings of the results will be presented in my PhD thesis and then possibly published in academic journals, newspaper articles and conference proceedings.

NOTE

⁵Dissemination covers a wide range of activities including (but not limited to) reports, academic submissions (such as theses and journal articles), newspaper articles, etc.

8a. Is the secondary data you will be using in the public domain?

Yes

8b. If NO, please indicate the original purpose for which the data was collected, and comment on whether consent was gathered for additional later use of the data.

N/A

9. What other ethical considerations (if any), not previously noted on this application, do you think there are in the proposed study? How will these issues be addressed?

Informed and voluntary consent will be obtained from all respondents. I may be known to some of the respondents as I could have been one of their tutors had they studied in LUMS. I will stress that participation is voluntary and as I am no longer their tutor there is no conflict of interest.

10a. Will you be gathering data from discussion forums, online 'chat-rooms' and similar online spaces where privacy and anonymity are contention?

No

10b. If yes, your project requires full ethics review. Please complete Sections [1](#), [3](#) and [4](#).

N/A

SECTION THREE

Error! Reference source not found. Complete this section if your project includes direct involvement by human subjects

NOTE:

In addition to completing this section you must submit all supporting materials such as participant information sheet(s), consent form(s), interview questions, questionnaires, etc. See the [checklist](#) at the end of this form for guidance.

1. Summary of research in lay terms, including aims (maximum length 150 words) [Note 6](#):

The purpose of this study is to investigate the experiences of Lancaster University Alumni that have graduated with an undergraduate degree within the last 8 years. The research will focus on their experiences in their first-year, in particular those living in shared accommodation, and the impact this had on their ability to adjust to university life and their experiences at university. The study will also explore their post university experiences in terms of the social networks they maintain and whether their first-year shared living relationships and the other people they met impacts on their social mobility. Research Aim: How do former students of the case university describe their experiences of university shared living and how might this impact on their university lives and also post-degree lives?

NOTE

⁶ The summary should concisely, but clearly, tell the reviewers what you are planning to do. It is very important that you describe your study in such a way that it is understandable to a general audience. Your study will be reviewed by colleagues from different disciplines who will not be familiar with your specific field of research and it may also be reviewed by the lay members of the FASS-LUMS Research Ethics Committee; therefore avoid jargon and use simple terms.

2. Anticipated project dates (month and year only) [Note 7](#)

Start date: October 2019 **End date:** July 2021

NOTE

⁷ These dates should indicate when recruitment will begin, (taking into account the timescale of the ethical approval process) and when funding ends or your thesis will be submitted.

3. Please describe briefly the intended human participants (including number, age, gender, and any other relevant characteristics): [The intended respondents will be undergraduate Alumni of Lancaster University that have graduated in recent years \(maximum 8 years\). They will be aged 21 and over could be either male or female. They will have lived and studied in the UK before attending university and will have lived in shared student accommodation in their first-year. As this will be a convenience sample it is difficult to anticipate the response rate but I hope to gain at least 100 and probably a maximum of 500 responses to the questionnaire and between 15-20 interviews.](#)

4. Are members of the public involved in a research capacity, for example as data collector (e.g. participatory research) and if so, do you anticipate any ethical issues resulting from this? [Note 8](#)

No

NOTE

⁸This does not refer to members of the public being interviewed, but to forms of participatory research, where you invite members of the public to collect data.

5. How will participants be recruited and from where? [Note 9](#)

Participants will be recruited via LinkedIn (Lancaster University's closed Alumni group), possibly via the Alumni office, social media and possibly via word of mouth (appendix 1 shows the LinkedIn message). Participating respondents will have to meet the recruiting criteria that they graduated from Lancaster University with an undergraduate degree within the last 8 years and lived and studied in the UK before attending university. If respondents do not meet the criteria they will be thanked for their time and they will be unable to complete the questionnaire. The qualifying respondents will be asked if they are willing to take part in further research and if so, they will be asked to provide an email address. I will then review the number of students willing to take part in further research and depending on the number of responses either contact them all to arrange an in-depth interview or select a sample to contact.

NOTE

⁹Please include here (if applicable) information about the following: How will participants be able to find out about the study? Will all volunteering participants be included or may you have to turn some away? If you will use different recruitment procedures for different participant groups, clearly indicate this and outline each set of procedures.

6. Briefly describe your data collection methods, drawing particular attention to any potential ethical issues.

Data collection will take 2 forms:

- 1) On line questionnaire designed in Qualtrics that will be disseminated to Lancaster University Alumni via LinkedIn, the Alumni office, social media or snowballing.
- 2) Semi-structured interviews with between 15-20 Alumni that agree in the questionnaire to participating in further research.

There are no particular ethical issues relating to these data collection methods.

7. Consent

7a. Will you take all necessary steps to obtain the voluntary and informed consent of the prospective participant(s) or, in the case of individual(s) not capable of giving informed consent, the permission of a legally authorised representative in accordance with applicable law? [Yes](#)

If yes, please go to question [7b](#).

If no, please go to question [7c](#).

7b. Please explain the procedure you will use for obtaining consent? [Note 10](#)

Please include sample participant information sheets (PIS) and consent forms in your application. If applicable, please explain the procedures you intend to use

to gain permission on behalf of participants who are unable to give informed consent. Please include copies of any relevant documentation.

When recruiting respondents for the questionnaire the first page will provide information on the purpose of the study, assure them of anonymity and gain their consent. It will also provide a link to the university website where they can find further information on how the university stores and manages their data (see appendix 2).

Those respondents that are willing to participate in the in-depth interviews will be provided with a participant information sheet (see appendix 3) and asked to complete a consent form (see appendix 4). The consent forms may be signed electronically as the interviews may be conducted at distance over skype.

NOTE

¹⁰ Please include sample participant information sheets (PIS) and consent form(s) or verbal consent protocol (where written consent is not possible) in your application. Written consent is preferable but may not always be possible. If you are using the verbal protocol, please explain why this is appropriate and how you plan to record the consent (for example audio-recording, coded table, etc.). A sample participant information sheet and consent form are available [here](#). A sample verbal protocol is available [here](#). If non-handwritten forms of consent will be used in the study, explain why and what they will be.

If your research includes anonymous surveys for data collection, no consent form will be used because that would compromise anonymity. However, a cover sheet or opening page/section or some type of introduction should clearly inform participants that by completing the survey they are providing consent for the use of the data for research. The cover sheet or introduction may also remind participants of other aspects of what they are agreeing to (but without requiring them to sign or type identifying information such as a name at the end of the information).

If you are using computer-based forms of data collection, describe carefully how consent processes will be addressed.

7c. If it will be necessary for participants to take part in the study without their knowledge and consent at the time, please explain why. (For example covert observations may be necessary in some settings; some experiments require use of deception or partial deception – not telling participants everything about the experiment).

N/A

8. What discomfort (physical and psychological eg distressing, sensitive or embarrassing topics), inconvenience or danger could be caused by participation in the project beyond the risks encountered in normal life?

Please indicate plans to address these potential risks. [Note 11](#)

State the timescales within which participants may withdraw from the study, noting your reasons. [Note 12](#)

The only real discomfort that the respondents may experience will be the inconvenience of, and time to complete the questionnaire and to take part in the interview. To minimise this I will ensure the questionnaire will take no more than 10 minutes to complete and the respondent will have the chance of winning a £50 shopping voucher or a donation to a charity of their choice. The in-depth interviews will be conducted at a time that is convenient to the

respondent and they will be thanked for their time by providing them with a £20 shopping voucher or a donation to a charity of their choice.

The subject under investigation, student accommodation, is not obviously a sensitive subject but first-year at university may have been a difficult time for some students and therefore it may be a sensitive subject and will need to be dealt with sensitively. Also, it is impossible to predict what response may be invoked in the respondent during the interview. Even something that may seem a fairly mundane topic can invoke an unforeseen response in the respondent. For example, I may contact the respondent at a difficult time such as when they have recently suffered a bereavement or perhaps the questions prompt painful memories such as a relationship breakup. It is difficult to predict the triggers that may cause vulnerability in the respondent. However, I will ensure that I listen sympathetically where necessary, not rush the respondents and provide respondents with the opportunity to share their experiences even if they are not focused specifically on the questions being discussed. I will have the contact details for organisations that may be able to offer support if necessary such as The Samaritans.

The study will include a discussion on careers since graduating. There may be the possibility that some graduates are still struggling to find suitable employment and I will provide in both the questionnaire and at the end of the interview, contact details for Lancaster University's careers service which is available to all alumni.

Respondents will be informed that their participation is voluntary and that they will be free to withdraw at any time during their participation in the study (before and during the questionnaire completion and interview) and up to 2 weeks following the interview or questionnaire completion and their data will be removed from the study. For those respondents completing the online questionnaire that do not leave their email address for the purpose of taking part in further research or participation in the free prize draw it will be impossible to remove their responses once they submit the questionnaire. This will be made clear in the information at the beginning of the questionnaire.

NOTE

¹¹Be as thorough as possible in anticipating potential sources of discomfort. Provide a plan for addressing the discomfort that may arise during the conduct of the research and discomfort that may develop following the conduct of the research, potentially as a consequence of participation in the research. We suggest you include possible sources of support in the Participant Information Sheet. You may also consider providing a debriefing sheet.

¹²**Time limits for withdrawing from the study:** please avoid the phrase "participants may withdraw at any time" because withdrawal for most studies is time limited. For example, once you have published your data, withdrawal is clearly not possible in the true sense. You may want to consider a reasonable time period for withdrawal following data collection, depending on the type of study you are doing, for example:

- i. If you are collecting interview data and will be conducting simultaneous data collection and analysis, it may be reasonable to give participants a 2 week period following the interview to withdraw their data. [For other studies, longer periods of time may be appropriate.] An example of wording that may be used is "Participants are welcome to withdraw from the study at any time

-
-
- before or during the interview and up to 2 weeks following their interview (or survey completion).”
- ii. If you are collecting your data via focus groups or group interviews, it is impractical to allow participants to withdraw their contribution once the group has started and recording begun. An example of wording that may be used is “Participants are welcome to withdraw from the study at any time before the focus group begins, but will not be able to withdraw their contribution to the discussion once recording has started.” You should be explicit in this section about your intention to brief participants about this at the start of the focus group (for example during the setting of ground rules).
 - iii. If you use anonymous surveys, you need to clearly indicate to participants that they will NOT be able to withdraw their data/contribution once they have submitted it because it will not be possible to identify it as theirs.

9. How will you protect participants’ confidentiality and/or anonymity in data collection (e.g. interviews), data storage, data analysis, presentation of findings and publications? [Note 13](#)

The questionnaire will be anonymous to ensure confidentiality. Respondents will be asked to provide an email address if they wish to take part in further research or the free prize draw but these will only be used for this purpose and they will not be asked for their name. The respondents in the in-depth interviews will be given pseudonyms to protect their identity and any other identifying details will be masked/changed to ensure comments cannot be traced back to the respondent. The actual names of the interview respondents will appear on the consent forms but these will be scanned and stored in Lancaster University Microsoft OneDrive to ensure they are stored securely. The original hard copies of the forms will be destroyed immediately in confidential waste. Only the researcher will have access to these Microsoft OneDrive files.

The interviews will be recorded to ensure the findings are a true reflection of what was actually said and to help aid analysis. As soon as the interviews have been completed the recording file will be transferred into Lancaster University Microsoft OneDrive and the recording deleted from the recording device. The recordings will not be saved with any reference to the name of the respondent (only their pseudonym).

NOTE

[13](#)In the context of research confidentiality means that you will only disclose information that participants share with you in the forms agreed by them in the consent form. In most case, this includes offering anonymity, i.e. using pseudonyms and ensuring that individual participants cannot be identified in your dissertation/publications/presentations.

If, as part of your study, you will take photographs of participants or if you will film participants, please explain what you intend to do with these images. You may only use these images to help you with your data analysis. In that case, you will not show these images to other people nor will you use them in publications/your thesis. Or, you may want to use images of participants in your publications and presentations. In that case, you need to ask participants to consent to your use of these images. These images make them identifiable, unless

you pixelate/blurr faces. Whatever you intend to do with images of participants, make sure to explain this on the application form and also in the information sheet and consent form.

In some studies, it is possible that in the course of the research information arises that gives the researcher cause for concern and that may require her/him to breach confidentiality. For example, if in an interview a participant discloses information that indicates that they or others may be at risk of harm, the researcher may need to share this information with others. In your PIS, when eliciting consent, explain the limits to confidentiality. This is in particular important when working with vulnerable individuals or groups.

10. Do you anticipate any ethical constraints relating to power imbalances or dependent relationships, either with participants or with or within the research team?

If yes, please explain how you intend to address these? [Note 14](#)

Yes. There is always the possibility of a power imbalance when conducting face-to-face interviews. I will stress to the respondents that their participation is voluntary, that anything they say will be treated confidentially, that their personal views are extremely valuable and they can be completely honest. I will explain that my position as an academic at Lancaster University should not influence their responses.

NOTE

¹⁴ For example, if you are a teacher/former teacher conducting research in the school/language school you used to or are still working in, what are the implications for research participants? Explain clearly that their participation or decision not to take part does not affect their studies or any assessments.

11. What potential risks may exist for the researcher and/or research team?

Please indicate plans to address such risks (for example, noting the support available to you/the researcher; counselling considerations arising from the sensitive or distressing nature of the research/topic; details of the lone worker plan you or any researchers will follow, in particular when working abroad. [Note 15](#)

No obvious risks as I will be conducting most of the research via Skype at Lancaster University. There may be the possibility that I travel to carry out some of the interviews but this is unlikely as the students could be living all around the globe. However, I may travel within the North West of England to conduct interviews if the respondents are located locally. Local respondents will be given the option of a face-to-face interview or Skype. All respondents will be graduates of Lancaster University so I am not arranging to meet complete strangers. I will ensure that my next of kin is aware of where I am travelling to, where the interview is being held, the time and how long it is expected to last. I will then check in and out by phone so that they are aware that I am safe and well. Any potential issues I will discuss these with my supervisor.

NOTE

¹⁵The University's guidance on Lone Working can help you with this, see here: <http://www.lancaster.ac.uk/depts/safety/files/loneworking.pdf>

12. Whilst there may not be any significant direct benefits to participants as a result of this research, please state here any that may result from participation in the study.

The respondents may feel that they are helping to improve university policy on allocation of accommodation to first-years which may enhance future students' lives. Respondents of the questionnaire can enter into a free prize draw to win a £50 shopping voucher or a £50 donation to a charity of their choice. Interview respondents will be thanked for their time in the form of a £20 shopping voucher or a donation of £20 to a charity of their choice.

13. Please explain the rationale for any incentives/payments (including out-of-pocket expenses) made to participants. [Note 16](#)

To encourage participation in the questionnaire respondents can opt in to be entered into a free prize draw to win either a £50 shopping voucher or a donation to a charity of their choice. The option of a charitable donation may be more motivating to some respondents so I will give them this option. The in-depth interviews may last between 30 minutes and one hour and it is asking a great deal of respondents to give up this amount of time. Therefore, to thank them for their time they will be given either a £20 shopping voucher or they can elect to have a £20 donation made to a charity of their choice. These incentives are modest and therefore will not put undue pressure on the respondents to participate.

NOTE

¹⁶ If you are intending to use incentives/payments, keep in mind that they should be modest so as not to suggest coercion of the participants. If you are reimbursing for travel, please indicate the financial limit of the reimbursement.

14. What are your plans for the storage of data (electronic, digital, paper, etc.)? [Note 17](#)

All data and files (word, excel, SPSS, powerpoint) will be stored securely in Lancaster University Microsoft OneDrive. I will not store any files on my laptop. Data held in Qualtrics (university licences) is only available using Lancaster University login and password. Data will be held for 10 years after the completion of the study and then destroyed. As a member of staff I will be in a position to manage/destroy the data after 10 years. If I leave the university before this date I will nominate another member of staff to take over this responsibility.

I will be responsible for managing the data and only I will have access to the data. However, there may be some situations in which I allow my PhD supervisor access to the data. The PhD thesis will be held both electronically and as a hard copy at Lancaster University.

Please ensure that your plans comply with the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) and the UK Data Protection Act 2018 .

NOTE

¹⁷Data storage: non-audio and non-video data. State clearly where and what format your data will be stored.

Timescales: The standard guidance we provide to people about length of time for retaining data is 10 years (minimum). This is not a requirement but a general

recommendation. Your study may have a rationale for retaining data longer and for various intended purposes, but if so, please explain. For example, some data may be specifically collected with intent to be added to a formal databank (quantitative or qualitative), or there may be plans for secondary data analysis that is anticipated from early in the design of the project. Where electronic data is to be stored for longer than the recommended period, it should only be kept on Lancaster University servers, and not on portable or home devices.

Data Stewardship: Please state who will have guardianship of the stored data (and if you are a student, who will be responsible for storing/deleting your data once you have completed your course). Please also include information on who will see the data (e.g. supervisors; research team members; transcribers)

Location: If your data is stored centrally or will be accessible to others, you should note in your application who will have access to the data.

Data security: Data stored on all portable devices (eg laptops) should be encrypted as well as password protected; data stored on the University server does not, however, need to be encrypted.

If you are based and work predominantly away from the University, give consideration to how you will store the data securely as you undertake your research, and how it will be securely transferred to the LU campus for long term storage.

15. Please answer the following question only if you have not completed a Data Management Plan for an external funder.

15a. Do you intend to deposit your (anonymised) data in a data archive? [Note18](#) Yes
No

NOTE

¹⁸ Most funders require researchers to preserve and share their data via a data archive. Lancaster University's Research Data Management Policy also suggests that all researchers, PhD students included, should store and archive their data in ways appropriate to the specific study and type of data. Please note that if you store data in a data archive where other researchers, upon request, can have access to this data, this needs to be explained on participant information sheets & consent forms.

There are different ways of storing and sharing data, but you are likely to follow one of these two options:

Example 1: Data will be deposited in Lancaster University's institutional data repository and made freely available with an appropriate data license. Lancaster University uses Pure as the data repository which will hold, manage, preserve and provide access to datasets produced by Lancaster University research.

Example 2: Data will be offered to the UK Data Archive (as per the standard ESRC procedures) or another similar data archive.

For further guidance on data archiving, please see here: [Library Deposit your research data](#)

15b. If you have responded 'no' to question 15a, please explain briefly why you cannot share your data via a data archive or repository. [Note 19](#)

The anonymous questionnaire data will be placed in the Lancaster University's data repository (Pure) and made freely available with an appropriate data license. The nature of my qualitative data is such that, anonymising the data in order to make it suitable for external access might lead to such volumes of the transcripts being changed/removed that it would no longer be meaningful.

NOTE

¹⁹You may have reasons for not making your data widely available. For example, due to the small sample size, even after full anonymization, there may be a small risk that participants can be identified. It may also be the case that due to the (commercially, politically, ethically) sensitive nature of the research, no participants consented to their data being shared.

You can find more information about ethical constraints on sharing data on this site:

[Library data access statements](#)

16. Will audio or video recording take place?

no audio video

16a. Will portable devices (laptop, USB drive, audio- and video- recorders, etc) be encrypted (in particular where they are used for identifiable data)?

yes no

16b If it is not possible to encrypt your portable devices, please comment here on the steps you will take to protect the data. [Note 20](#)

Data will not be stored on USB's or a laptop only in Lancaster University Microsoft OneDrive. A portable recording device may be used to audio record the interviews which cannot be encrypted. Therefore, the audio file will be uploaded to Lancaster University Microsoft OneDrive as soon as possible and the recording deleted immediately. The recording device will be stored securely until the file is uploaded.

NOTE

²⁰Transporting audio/video data: you should state that if you store any identifiable data (audio recordings, participant contact details etc) on portable devices such as a memory stick or laptop you will use encryption. Password protection alone is not sufficient for identifiable data. Information on encryption is available from ISS <http://www.lancs.ac.uk/iss/security/encryptionoptions/> and their service desk is also able to assist.

If your portable device cannot be encrypted, you must confirm that any identifiable data (including recordings of participants' voices) will be deleted from the recorder as quickly as possible (eg when they have been transferred to a secure medium, such as a password protected & encrypted PC) and state that the device will be stored securely in the meantime.

16c What arrangements have been made for audio/video data storage?

At what point in the research will tapes/digital recordings/files be destroyed?

[Note 21](#)

The audio files will be stored in Lancaster University Microsoft OneDrive. They will then be transcribed by myself and the audio files will be deleted once the PhD is completed.

NOTE

[21](#) **Storage.** Audio and video data is considered more sensitive than most written data because of its capacity to threaten confidentiality more directly. There are, however, no fixed deadlines, and recordings such as oral histories may be kept in perpetuity.

With audio data that does not need to be kept for the long term, it is common to erase/destroy the recording once it has been transcribed and checked. However, we suggest that you retain the recordings until your work has been examined and/or published, in case you need to check the original recordings for any reason.

For video, it may depend on the types of analyses proposed for the study. There may be good reason to keep the data longer, but the key in completing this section of the application form is to be explicit about timescales for storage, and the reasons for your timescale should be clearly indicated and explained.

16d. If your study includes video recordings, what are the implications for participants' anonymity? Can anonymity be guaranteed and if so, how? If participants are identifiable on the recordings, how will you explain to them what you will do with the recordings? How will you seek consent from them?

N/A

17. What are the plans for dissemination of findings from the research? If you are a student, include here your thesis. [Note 22](#)

Please also include any impact activities and potential ethical issues these may raise.

The findings of the results will be presented in my PhD thesis and then possibly published in academic journals, newspaper articles and conference proceedings. The findings may be shared with members of staff at Lancaster University that are involved in the allocation and management of student accommodation.

NOTE

[22](#) Dissemination covers a wide range of activities including (but not limited to) reports, academic submissions (such as theses and journal articles), study summaries, and publications:

- If you are a student, be sure to include your academic paper (such as dissertation or thesis) as a form of dissemination.
- Phrasing regarding publication should reflect that you may pursue submission for publication, but you cannot guarantee that the dissemination will include publication. For example, you may write "Results of the research may be submitted for publication in an academic/professional journal."

18. What particular ethical considerations, not previously noted on this application, do you think there are in the proposed study? [Note 23](#)

Are there any matters about which you wish to seek guidance from the FASS-LUMS REC?

N/A

NOTE

²³It is rare that studies have no ethical considerations at all. Try to be thorough and thoughtful when considering this question. You should not try to invent issues, and at the same time, do not assume that by noting a problem you are hurting your application. This section provides an opportunity for you to demonstrate to the committee that you have a substantial and clear understanding of the potential ethical issues, and that you have given thought to how to address them (even if they may not be able to be addressed perfectly).

SECTION FOUR [Must be completed by all applicants]

Statement and Signatures

By submitting and signing this form, I confirm that

1. • I understand that as Principal Investigator/researcher/PhD candidate I have overall responsibility for the ethical management of the project and confirm the following:
 2. • I have read the Code of Practice, [Research Ethics at Lancaster: a code of practice](#) and I am willing to abide by it in relation to the current proposal.
 3. • I will manage the project in an ethically appropriate manner according to: (a) the subject matter involved and (b) the Code of Practice and Procedures of the university.
 4. • On behalf of the institution I accept responsibility for the project in relation to promoting good research practice and the prevention of misconduct (including plagiarism and fabrication or misrepresentation of results).
 5. • On behalf of the institution I accept responsibility for the project in relation to the observance of the rules for the exploitation of intellectual property.
 6. • If applicable, I will give all staff and students involved in the project guidance on the good practice and ethical standards expected in the project in accordance with the university Code of Practice. ([Online Research Integrity training](#) is available for staff and students)
 7. • If applicable, I will take steps to ensure that no students or staff involved in the project will be exposed to inappropriate situations.
- **I confirm that I have completed all risk assessments and other Health and Safety requirements as advised by my departmental Safety Officer: please tick this box to confirm**

Please note: If you are not able to confirm the statements above please contact the FASS-LUMS research ethics committee and provide an explanation.

Applicant electronic signature: [Note 24](#)

Date: 20/9/2019

NOTE ²⁴ If you are a student, make sure that you have discussed the project and the application with your supervisor. Build in enough time in your preparation schedule for your supervisor to properly review your application and give their comments before submitting it for ethical review.

Student applicants:

Please tick to confirm that you have discussed this application with your supervisor, and that they agree to the application being submitted for ethical review

Project Supervisor name: [Dr Richard Budd](#)

Date

application discussed [15/8/2019](#)

Students must submit this application from their Lancaster University email address, and copy their supervisor in to the email with this application attached

All applicants (Staff and Students) must complete this declaration:

I confirm that I have sent a copy of this application to my Head of Department (or their delegated representative). Tick here to confirm

Name of Head of Department (or their delegated representative) [Dr Richard Budd](#)

In addition to completing this form you must submit all supporting materials. For examples of supporting documents see the **checklist** below. [Note25](#)

Checklist

- Advertising materials (posters, emails)
- Letters/emails of invitation to participate
- Participant information sheets
- Consent forms
- Questionnaires, surveys, demographic sheets
- Interview question guides/interview schedules
- Focus group scripts
- Confidentiality agreement (if using an external transcriber)
- Debriefing sheets, resource lists

NOTE ²⁵

If you experience formatting issues in your supporting documents after you have copied and pasted them here, at the end of this application form you may find the following guidance useful:

1. On your keyboard select F1 (or click on the Microsoft Word help button at the top right of this document)
2. Enter this text in the search field: 'keep source formatting' then select 'Control the formatting when you paste text' and follow the guidance in the 'help window'.

Chapter 16: Appendix Eight

Participant Information Sheet – Interviews

Participant information sheet

Lancaster University Alumni – University and Post-University Experiences

For further information about how Lancaster University processes personal data for research purposes and your data rights please visit our webpage:
www.lancaster.ac.uk/research/data-protection

I am a PhD student at Lancaster University, and a marketing lecturer, and I would like to invite you to take part in a research study about your first-year experiences of living whilst at Lancaster University and your post university experiences in terms of the people from Lancaster you keep in touch with, or not, and your career development.

Please take time to read the following information carefully before you decide whether or not you wish to take part.

What is the study about?

This study aims to explore your experiences whilst you were an undergraduate student at Lancaster University, in particular relating to student accommodation, and also your experiences since graduating in terms of the people from Lancaster that you have kept in touch with and also your career development.

Why have I been invited?

I have approached you because I am interested in understanding how your first-year experiences at Lancaster University influenced your life as a first-year student, in particular student accommodation, and how they may have influenced your life after graduation.

I would be very grateful if you would agree to take part in this study.

What will I be asked to do if I take part?

If you decided to take part, this would involve taking part in an interview with me, either face to face or by video, that would last between 30 minutes and 1 hour. I would ask you questions about your memories of your first-year at Lancaster and also your experiences since graduating including whether you have kept in touch with people from Lancaster University and your career.

What are the possible benefits from taking part?

Taking part in this study will help our understanding of first-year student experiences, and in particular shared living at university and may help to shape future policies on how accommodation is allocated to students. As a thank you, you will receive either a

£20 shopping voucher or a £20 donation to a charity of your choice, whichever you prefer.

Do I have to take part?

No. It is completely up to you to decide whether or not you take part. Your participation is voluntary.

What if I change my mind?

If you change your mind, you are free to withdraw at any time before or within 2 weeks after completing the interview. If you want to withdraw, please let me know, and I will extract any ideas or information (=data) you contributed to the study and destroy them.

What are the possible disadvantages and risks of taking part?

There are no major disadvantages or risks to taking part in the study. It is not expected that the topic will be sensitive. However, some people may find this an emotive subject and if you think it will make you feel uncomfortable, there is no requirement to participate. You will have to give up 30-60 minutes of your time for the interview.

Will my data be identifiable?

After the interview, only I, the researcher conducting this study will have access to the ideas you share with me. I will keep all personal information about you (e.g. your name and other information about you that can identify you) confidential, that is I will not share it with others. I will remove any personal information from the written record of your contribution.

How will we use the information you have shared with us and what will happen to the results of the research study?

I will use the information you have shared with me for research purposes only. This will include my PhD thesis and other publications, for example journal articles or newspaper articles. I may also present the results of my study at academic conferences and share the findings with staff at Lancaster University.

When writing up the findings from this study, I would like to reproduce some of the views and ideas you shared with me. I will only use anonymised quotes (e.g. from my interview with you), so that although I will use your exact words, you cannot be identified in our publications.

How my data will be stored

Your data will be stored in Microsoft OneDrive, a secure storage system that only I, the researcher, will be able to access. I will keep data that can identify you separately from non-personal information (e.g. your views on a specific topic). In accordance with University guidelines, I will keep the data securely for ten years.

What if I have a question or concern?

If you have any queries or if you are unhappy with anything that happens concerning your participation in the study, please contact myself in the first instance:
Helen Meek: h.meek@lancaster.ac.uk 01524 510991 or

PhD Supervisor: Dr Richard Budd r.budd@lancaster.ac.uk 01524 510625

If you have any concerns or complaints that you wish to discuss with a person who is not directly involved in the research, you can also contact:

Head of Department - Educational Research:

Prof Carolyn Jackson: c.jackson2@lancaster.ac.uk 01524 592883

Due to the Covid-19 pandemic I appreciate this may be a difficult time for you. If you require any mental health support please visit:-

<https://www.nhs.uk/oneyou/every-mind-matters/coronavirus-covid-19-staying-at-home-tips/>

<p>This study has been reviewed and approved by the Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences and Lancaster Management School's Research Ethics Committee.</p>
--

Thank you for considering your participation in this project.

Helen Meek

Chapter 17: Appendix Nine

PARTICIPANT CONSENT FORM

Project Title: Lancaster University Alumni – University and Post-University Experiences

Name of Researcher: Helen Meek

Email: h.meek@lancaster.ac.uk

Please tick each box

1. I confirm I have read and understand the information sheet for the above study. I have had the opportunity to consider the information, ask questions and have had these answered satisfactorily.	<input type="checkbox"/>
2. I understand my participation is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw at any time during my participation in this study and within 2 weeks after I took part in the interview, without giving any reason. If I withdraw within 2 weeks of taking part in the study my data will be removed.	<input type="checkbox"/>
3. I understand any information given by me may be used in future reports, academic articles, publications or presentations by the researcher/s, but my personal information will not be included and I will not be identifiable.	<input type="checkbox"/>
4. I understand my name/my organisation's name will not appear in any reports, articles or presentation without my consent.	<input type="checkbox"/>
5. I understand any interviews will be recorded and transcribed and that data will be protected on encrypted devices and kept secure.	<input type="checkbox"/>
6. I understand that data will be kept according to University guidelines for a minimum of 10 years after the end of the study.	<input type="checkbox"/>
7. I agree to take part in the above study.	<input type="checkbox"/>

Name of Participant

Date

Signature

I confirm that the participant was given an opportunity to ask questions about the study, and all the questions asked by the participant have been answered correctly and to the best of my ability. I confirm that the individual has not been coerced into giving consent, and the consent has been given freely and voluntarily.

Signature of Researcher /person taking the consent

Date

_____ Day/month/year

Consent can be provided either by adding an electronic signature or typing in your name and date and emailing the form to me or by printing, signing, scanning and emailing me the form.

Chapter 18: Appendix Ten

Questionnaire Respondents' Background

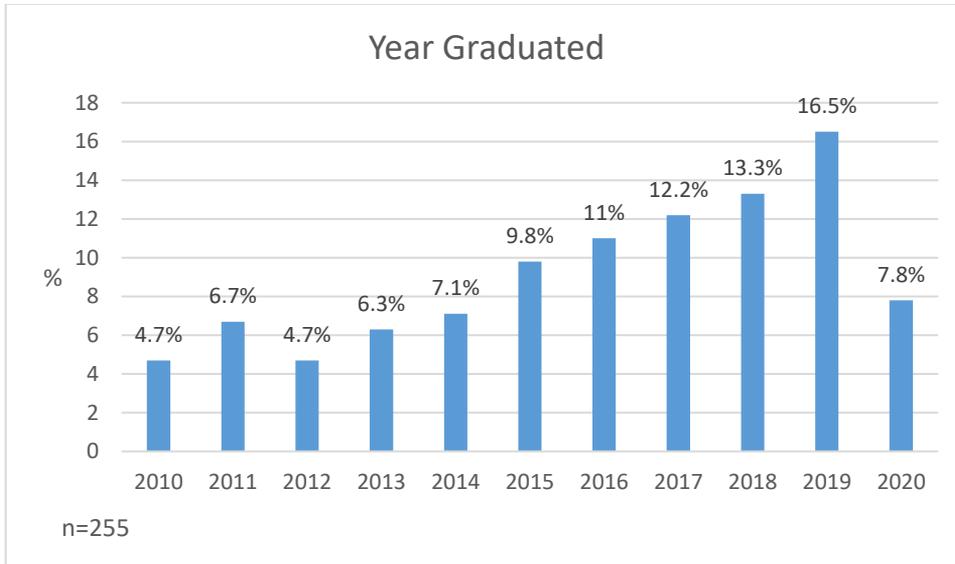


Figure 18.1 Year graduated from undergraduate degree at Lancaster University

- 31.4% of respondents started university between 2006-2011 and 68.6% in or after 2012 when tuition fees were increased to £9,000 per year (n=255).
- There was a good range of respondents across all 10 years in which Alumni graduated.

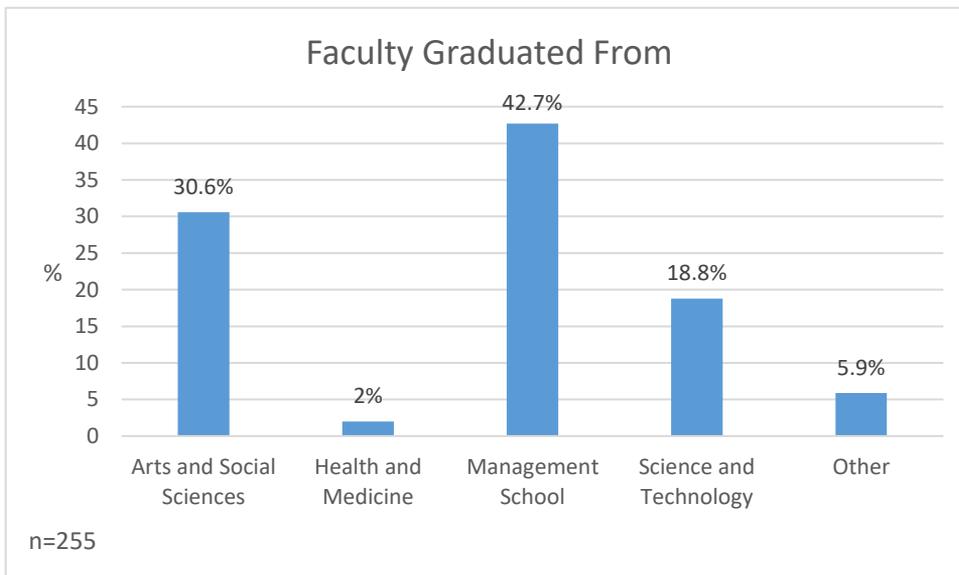


Figure 18.2 Faculty graduated from for undergraduate degree at Lancaster University

- There were respondents from all faculties. However, Health and Medicine (H&M) was established in 2006 with 50 students which perhaps explains the low number of respondents from H&M.

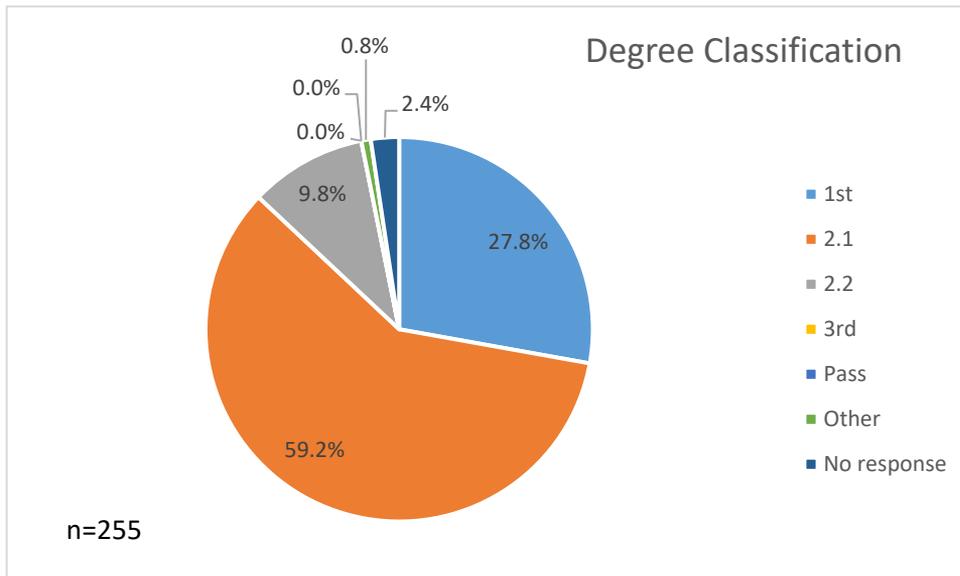


Figure 18.3 Degree classification for undergraduate degree at Lancaster University

- Respondents graduated with a range of degree classifications. In 2019 28.9% of undergraduate students graduated from Lancaster University with a first-class honours degree which is a similar proportion to the sample of students completing the questionnaire (27.8%). Approximately half (50.2%) of students graduated with a 2.1 compared with 59.2% of the sample and 17.5% graduated with a 2.2 compared with 9.8% of the sample. This comparison suggests the sample is largely representative of the student population in terms of degree classification gained.

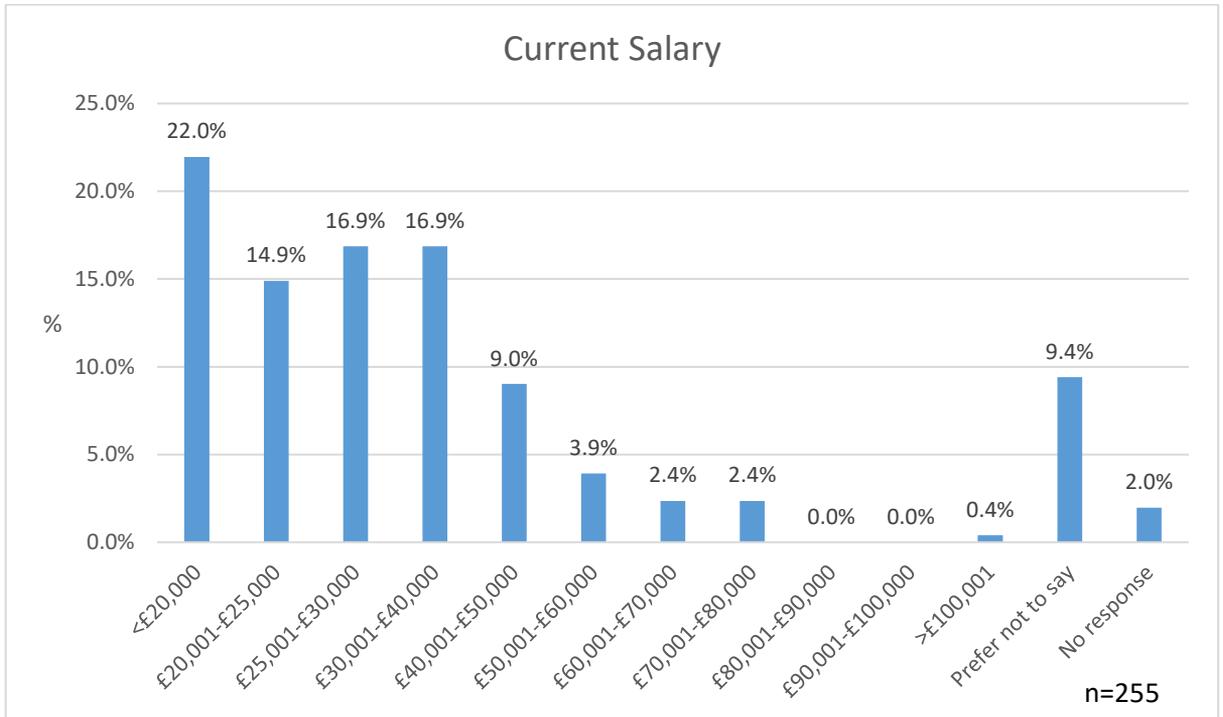


Figure 18.4 Current salary

- Despite nearly 1/10th (9.4%) of respondents preferring not to state their current salary there was a good range of current salaries.

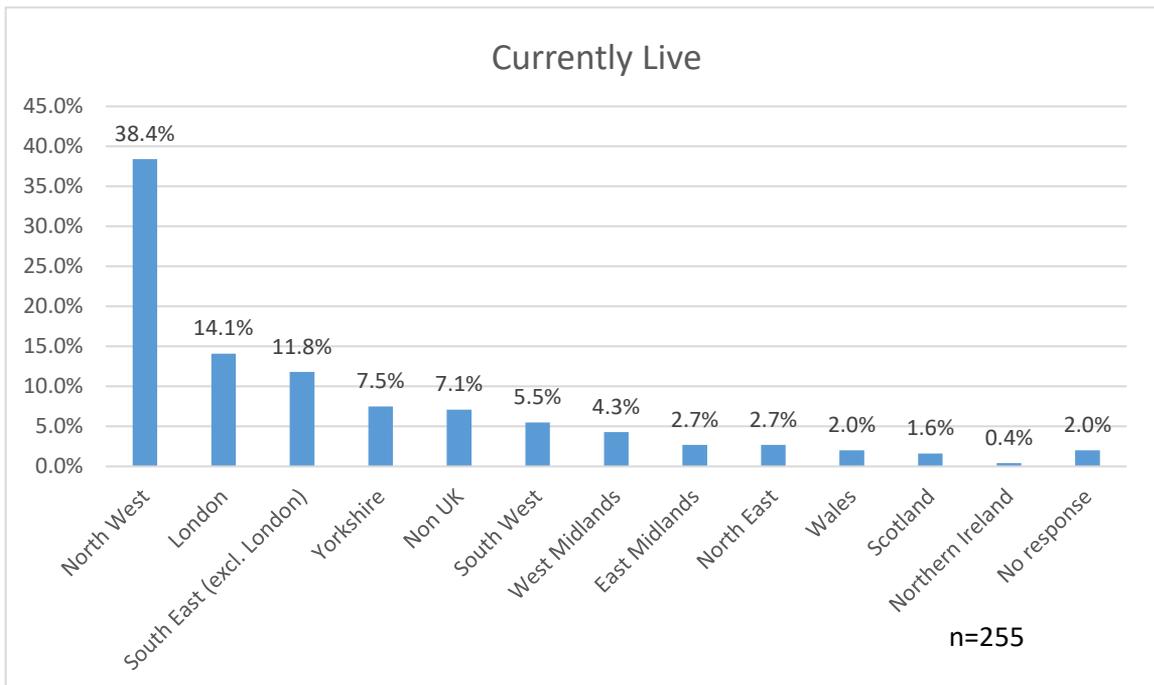


Figure 18.5 Region currently live

- Over a third (38.4%) of respondents lived in the North-West of the UK with respondents living in all other areas. Interestingly 7.1% of respondents lived overseas. Those living in the North-West were asked where they live in the North-West and over a third (35.7%) of respondents lived in the Greater Manchester area. However, a quarter (25.5%) continued to live in Lancaster.

Ethnicity

The respondents were:-

- 85.1% (217) were White English/Welsh/Scottish/Northern Irish/British.
- The remaining respondents were:-
 - 6 no response
 - 4 preferred not to say
 - 3.9% (10) were any other white background (Polish, Greek, White- Greek, Italian (north), Italian, Scandinavian, European, Italian, White and British & Kiwi)
 - 2.0% (5) Indian
 - 1.6% (4) Mixed multiple ethnic group (white/Asian)
 - 2 each of black African and Chinese
 - 1 each of Bangladeshi, White/ black African, white/black Caribbean, white gypsy or Irish Traveller, white Irish

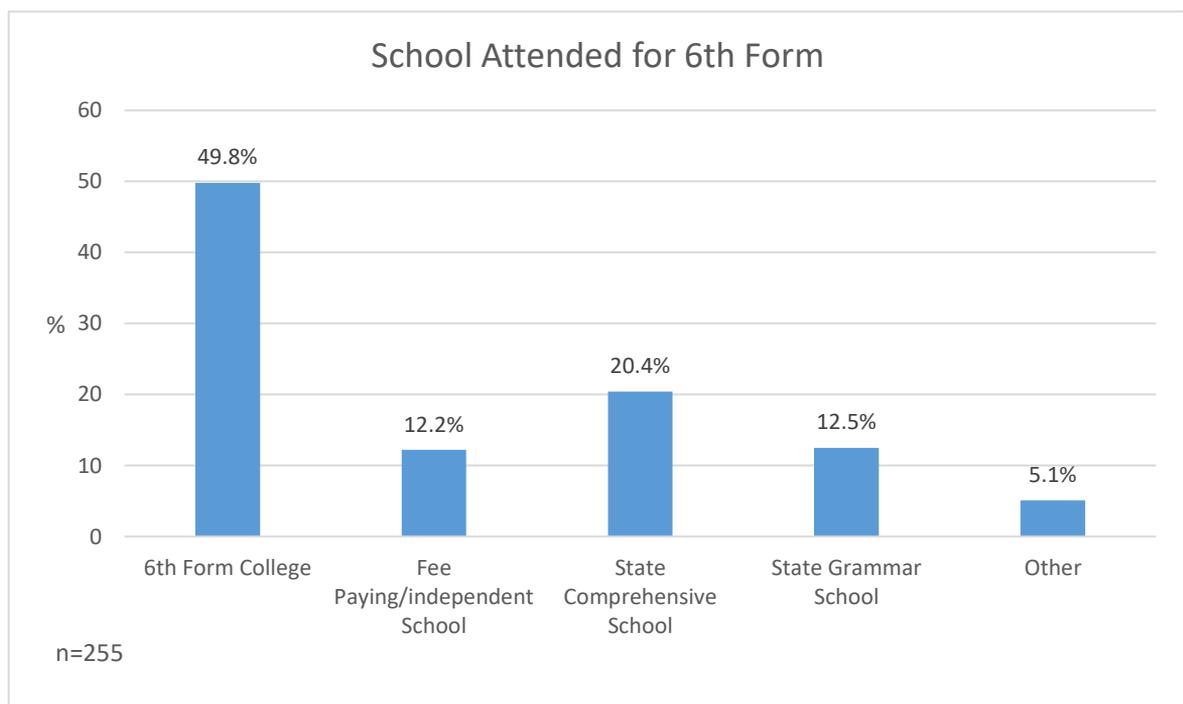


Figure 18.6 School/college attended for 6th Form/ 'A' levels/ BTECH/IB prior to studying at Lancaster University

Other included: International Baccalaureate (IB) school (2), Academy (1), 6th form attached to secondary school (1), Arts College (1), BTEC agriculture

college (1), distance learning college, (1), high school 9-12 grade (1), Irish leaving certificate (1), Lyceum (1), Partially selective school (1), secondary school in Italy (1) and specialist land-based college (1).

88.2% (225) went to university straight from school. The remaining 11.8% (30):

- 18 took a gap year
- 3 were mature students
- 7 attended another university before coming to Lancaster
- 2 other. One did not have a clear idea of what they wanted to do – ‘stayed close to home and worked full time for 2 years’ and the other ‘Attended Loughborough on a foundation course briefly, dropped out and took a gap year. Also studied another A Level in that gap year to attend a higher ranking university (Lancs)’.

46.7% (119) of either or both of the respondents’ parents had a university degree which is comparable with the national average of 47.0% in 2021/22 (HESA, 2024c). However, in 2020 60.2% of Lancaster University home undergraduates’ parents had a degree (HESA, 2024b). Over half (52.2%, 133) stated neither parent attended university and 1.2% (3) were not sure (2 had dropped out and one achieved a Diploma rather than a degree).

Chapter 19: Appendix Eleven

Reasons for Deciding to attend University

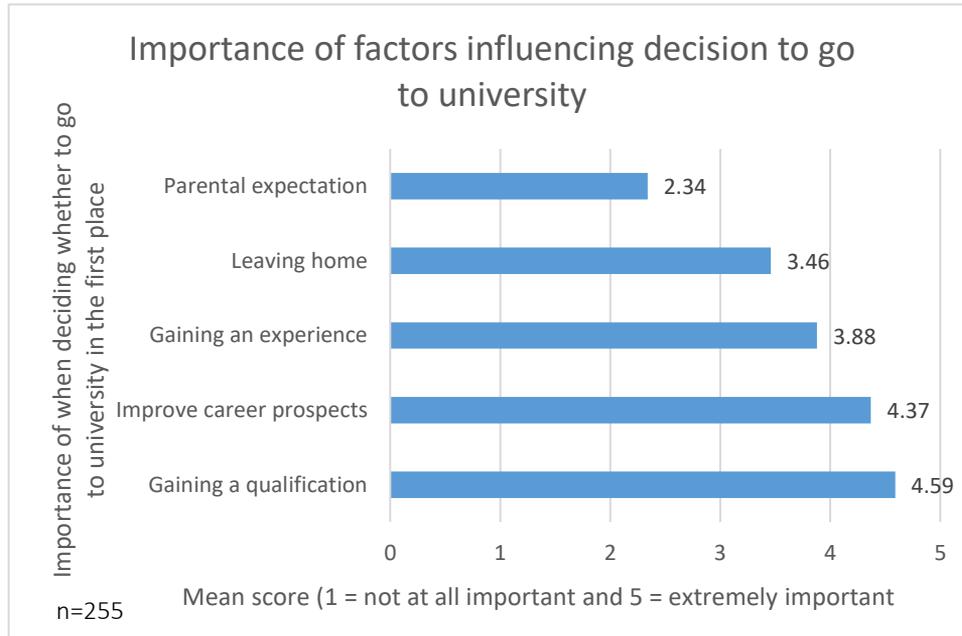


Figure 19.1 Factors Influencing Decision to go to University

Parental expectation was the only reason for attending university to be regarded as unimportant (mean score of 2.34). Gaining a qualification was regarded as the most important reason for attending university (mean score of 4.59) followed by improving career prospects (mean score of 4.37).

Independent samples T-Tests were conducted, and it was found there was no association between factors influencing the decision to go to university with the following:-

- Ethnicity
- School attended
- Disability

Gender Differences

An independent Samples T-Test was conducted to evaluate the hypothesis males and females differ significantly in their reasons for attending university.

Gender was the independent variable and the dependent variable was the mean score of the 5 factors which influenced the decision to attend university. Significance level $p = 0.05$.

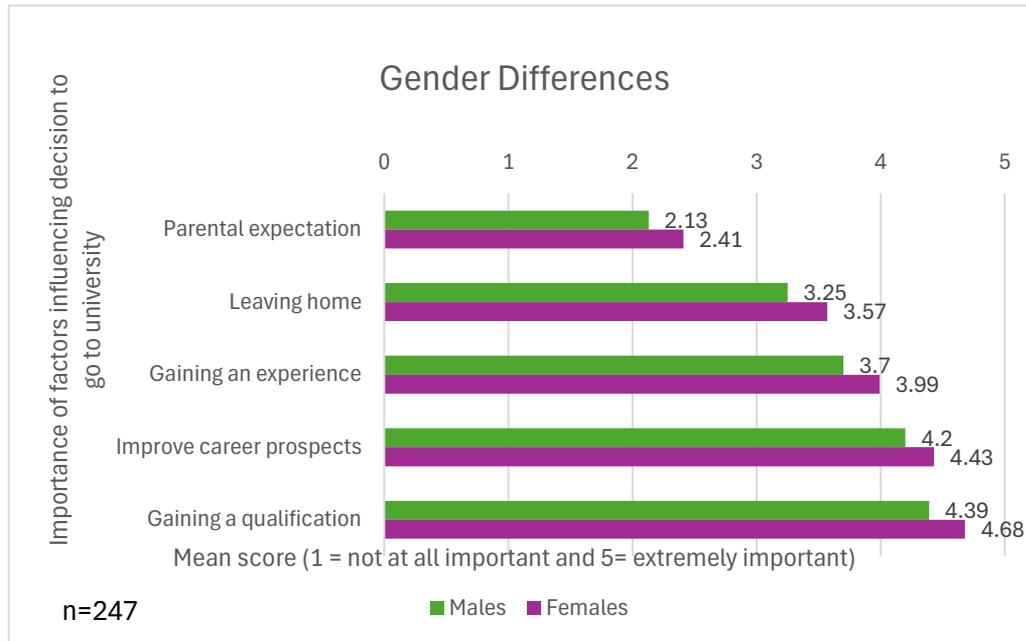


Figure 19.2 Gender differences relating to the importance of factors influencing decision to go to university

Females scored all reasons for deciding to go to university higher than males (significance difference) apart from parental expectation where there was no statistically significant difference.

T-Test and Explanation of Reasons for Deciding to attend University and Gender

Leaving home - The mean score of leaving home for males ($M=3.25$, $sd=1.079$) was statistically significantly different ($t=-2.094$, $df=245$, one-sided $p=0.22$) from that of females ($M=3.57$, $sd=1.109$). Due to the variances for the two groups being equal (Levene Test: 0.494) the output line for equal variances was used.

Gaining an experience - The mean score of gaining an experience for males ($M=3.70$, $sd=0.977$) was statistically significantly different ($t=-2.094$, $df=245$, one-sided $p=0.019$) from that of females ($M=3.99$, $sd=0.988$). Due to the

variances for the two groups being equal (Levene Test: 0.996) the output line for equal variances was used.

Improve career prospects - The mean score of gaining an experience for males (M=4.20, sd= 0.935) was statistically significantly different ($t=-2.220$, $df=245$, one-sided $p=0.014$) from that of females (M=4.43, sd=0.664). Due to the variances for the two groups being equal (Levene Test: 0.078) the output line for equal variances was used.

Gaining a qualification - The mean score of gaining a qualification for males (M=4.39, sd= 0.765) was statistically significantly different ($t=-2.903$, $df=97.690$, one-sided $p=0.002$) from that of females (M=4.68, sd=0.525). Due to the variances for the two groups being significantly unequal (Levene Test: <0.001) the output line for unequal variances was used.

Parental expectation – The mean score of parental expectation for males and females was not statistically significantly different (one-sided $p=0.033$).

T-Test

Group Statistics

	Are you? - Selected Choice	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
How important were each of the following when deciding to go to university in the first place? - Gaining an experience	Male	71	3.70	.977	.116
	Female	176	3.99	.988	.075
How important were each of the following when deciding to go to university in the first place? - Leaving home	Male	71	3.25	1.079	.128
	Female	176	3.57	1.109	.084
How important were each of the following when deciding to go to university in the first place? - Gaining a qualification	Male	71	4.39	.765	.091
	Female	176	4.68	.525	.040
How important were each of the following when deciding to go to university in the first place? - Parental expectation	Male	71	2.13	1.095	.130
	Female	175	2.41	1.062	.080
How important were each of the following when deciding to go to university in the first place? - Improve career prospects	Male	71	4.20	.935	.111
	Female	176	4.43	.664	.050

Independent Samples Test

		Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		t-test for Equality of Means							
		F	Sig.	t	df	Significance		Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
						One-Sided p	Two-Sided p			Lower	Upper
How important were each of the following when deciding to go to university in the first place? - Gaining an experience	Equal variances assumed	.000	.996	-2.094	245	.019	.037	-.290	.139	-.563	-.017
	Equal variances not assumed			-2.105	130.852	.019	.037	-.290	.138	-.563	-.017
How important were each of the following when deciding to go to university in the first place? - Leaving home	Equal variances assumed	.469	.494	-2.034	245	.022	.043	-.315	.155	-.619	-.010
	Equal variances not assumed			-2.058	132.764	.021	.042	-.315	.153	-.617	-.012
How important were each of the following when deciding to go to university in the first place? - Gaining a qualification	Equal variances assumed	20.460	<.001	-3.390	245	<.001	<.001	-.287	.085	-.454	-.120
	Equal variances not assumed			-2.903	97.690	.002	.005	-.287	.099	-.484	-.091
How important were each of the following when deciding to go to university in the first place? - Parental expectation	Equal variances assumed	.023	.880	-1.850	244	.033	.065	-.279	.151	-.576	.018
	Equal variances not assumed			-1.827	126.261	.035	.070	-.279	.153	-.581	.023
How important were each of the following when deciding to go to university in the first place? - Improve career prospects	Equal variances assumed	3.130	.078	-2.220	245	.014	.027	-.235	.106	-.443	-.026
	Equal variances not assumed			-1.927	99.717	.028	.057	-.235	.122	-.476	.007

Independent Samples Effect Sizes					
		Standardizer ^a	Point Estimate	95% Confidence Interval	
				Lower	Upper
How important were each of the following when deciding to go to university in the first place? - Gaining an experience	Cohen's d	.985	-.294	-.571	-.017
	Hedges' correction	.988	-.294	-.569	-.017
	Glass's delta	.988	-.293	-.570	-.016
How important were each of the following when deciding to go to university in the first place? - Leaving home	Cohen's d	1.100	-.286	-.562	-.009
	Hedges' correction	1.104	-.285	-.561	-.009
	Glass's delta	1.109	-.284	-.561	-.006
How important were each of the following when deciding to go to university in the first place? - Gaining a qualification	Cohen's d	.603	-.477	-.755	-.197
	Hedges' correction	.605	-.475	-.753	-.197
	Glass's delta	.525	-.548	-.829	-.266
How important were each of the following when deciding to go to university in the first place? - Parental expectation	Cohen's d	1.071	-.260	-.537	.017
	Hedges' correction	1.075	-.260	-.535	.017
	Glass's delta	1.062	-.263	-.539	.015
How important were each of the following when deciding to go to university in the first place? - Improve career prospects	Cohen's d	.752	-.312	-.589	-.035
	Hedges' correction	.754	-.311	-.587	-.035
	Glass's delta	.664	-.353	-.631	-.075

a. The denominator used in estimating the effect sizes.
 Cohen's d uses the pooled standard deviation.
 Hedges' correction uses the pooled standard deviation, plus a correction factor.
 Glass's delta uses the sample standard deviation of the control group.

Table 19.1 T-Test of Reasons for Deciding to attend University and Gender

Student Background Differences

An independent Samples T-Test was conducted to explore whether respondents receiving free school meals, the 16-19 bursary, the EMA, parents attended University and the maximum maintenance loan differed significantly in their reasons for attending university compared with those who did not. For all these attributes there was a significant difference in relation to 'parental expectation' and 'gaining an experience' for students who received the maximum maintenance loan.

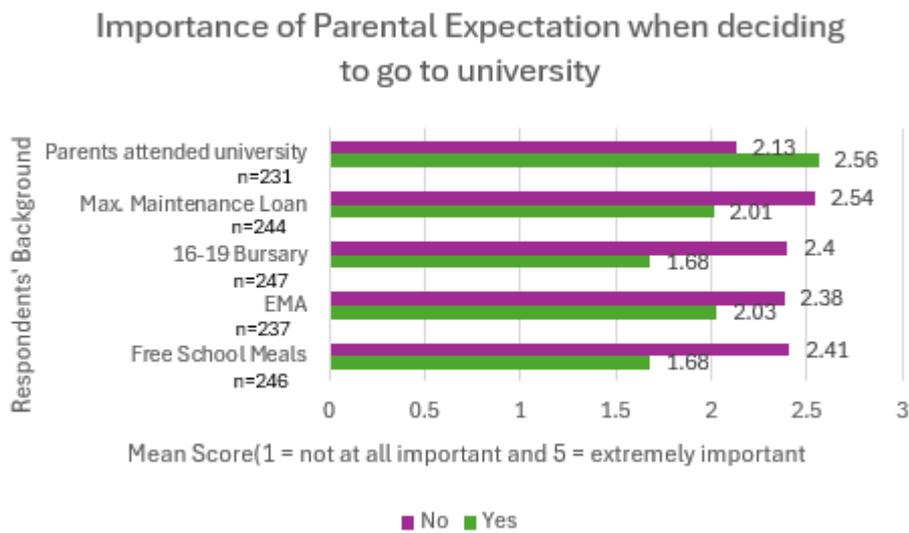


Figure 19.3 Impact of student background on importance of parental expectation when deciding to go to university.

Receiving free school meals, the EMA, the 16-19 Bursary, full maintenance loan and parents not attending university are all indicators of educational disadvantage or non-traditional students. The findings (significance difference) suggest 'parental expectation' to attend university is lower for students from these more educationally disadvantaged families.

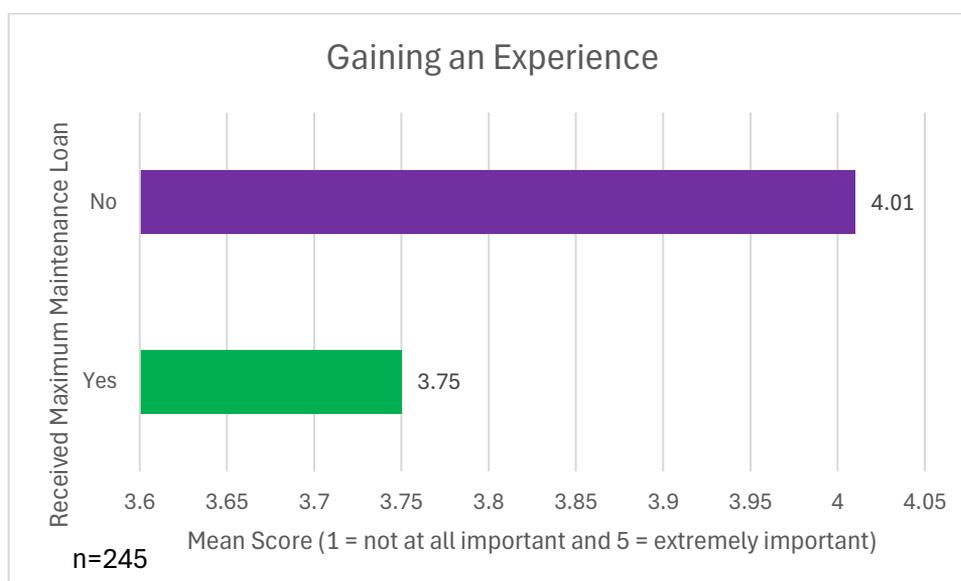


Figure 19.4 Impact of whether students received the maximum maintenance loan on importance of gaining an experience when deciding to go to university.

Figure 19.4 shows students from wealthier families i.e. were not awarded the maximum maintenance loan were more likely to regard 'gaining an experience' as important when deciding to go to university than those from less wealthy families (significance difference).

T-Test and Explanation for parental expectation and student background

Parents Attended University - The mean score of 'parental expectation' for respondents with parents who attended university (M=2.56, sd= 0.975) was statistically significantly different ($t=-3.241$, $df=249$, one-sided $p<0.001$) from those who's parents had not attended university (M=2.13, sd=0.131). Due to the variances for the two groups being equal (Levene Test: 0.030) the output line for equal variances was used.

Received Maximum Maintenance Loan - The mean score of 'parental expectation' for respondents who received the maximum maintenance loan at university (M=2.01, sd= 1.064) was statistically significantly different ($t=-3.661$, $df=242$, one-sided $p<0.001$) from those who did not receive the maximum maintenance loan (M=2.53, sd=1.067). Due to the variances for the two groups being equal (Levene Test: 0.820) the output line for equal variances was used.

Received 16-19 Bursary - The mean score of 'parental expectation' for respondents who received the 16-19 Bursary (M=1.68, sd= 0.946) was statistically significantly different ($t=-2.797$, $df=245$, one-sided $p=0.003$) from those who did not receive the 16-19 Bursary (M=2.40, sd=1.080). Due to the variances for the two groups being equal (Levene Test: 0.337) the output line for equal variances was used.

Received EMA - The mean score of 'parental expectation' for respondents who received the EMA (M=2.03, sd= 1.088) was statistically significantly different ($t=-1.924$, $df=245$, one-sided $p=0.028$) from those who did not receive the EMA (M=2.38, sd=1.066). Due to the variances for the two groups being equal (Levene Test: 0.952) the output line for equal variances was used.

Received Free School Meals - The mean score of 'parental expectation' for respondents who received free school meals (M=1.68, sd= 0.945) was statistically significantly different ($t=-3.236$, $df=244$, one-sided $p<0.001$) from those who did not receive free school meals (M=2.41, sd=1.077). Due to the variances for the two groups being equal (Levene Test: 0.391) the output line for equal variances was used.

T-Test

		Group Statistics				Independent Samples Test										
		Did one or both of your parents have a university degree? - Selected Choice	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean	Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		t-Test for Equality of Means							
							F	Sig.	t	df	Significance One-Sided p	Two-Sided p	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
															Lower	Upper
How important were each of the following when deciding to go to university in the first place? - Parental expectation	Yes		118	2.56	.957	.088	4.743	.030	3.241	249	<.001	.001	.432	.133	.169	.694
	No		133	2.13	1.131	.098										
How important were each of the following when deciding to go to university in the first place? - Parental expectation									3.274	248.453	<.001	.001	.432	.132	.172	.691

Table 19.2 T-Test of parental expectations and whether parents had attended university

T-Test

Group Statistics					
Please identify if any of the following applied to you (please tick all that apply) - At university you received the maximum maintenance loan					
		N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
How important were each of the following when deciding to go to university in the first place? - Parental expectation	Yes	92	2.01	1.064	.111
	No	152	2.53	1.067	.087

Independent Samples Test

		Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		t-test for Equality of Means							
		F	Sig.	t	df	Significance		Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
						One-Sided p	Two-Sided p			Lower	Upper
How important were each of the following when deciding to go to university in the first place? - Parental expectation	Equal variances assumed	.052	.820	-3.661	242	<.001	<.001	-.515	.141	-.793	-.238
	Equal variances not assumed			-3.664	192.527	<.001	<.001	-.515	.141	-.793	-.238

Table 19.3 T-Test of parental expectations and whether student received the maximum maintenance loan.

T-Test

Group Statistics					
Please identify if any of the following applied to you (please tick all that apply) - Before university you were in receipt of, or entitled to the 16-19 bursary					
		N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
How important were each of the following when deciding to go to university in the first place? - Parental expectation	Yes	19	1.68	.946	.217
	No	228	2.40	1.080	.072

Independent Samples Test

		Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		t-test for Equality of Means							
		F	Sig.	t	df	Significance		Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
						One-Sided p	Two-Sided p			Lower	Upper
How important were each of the following when deciding to go to university in the first place? - Parental expectation	Equal variances assumed	.927	.337	-2.797	245	.003	.006	-.715	.256	-1.218	-.211
	Equal variances not assumed			-3.129	22.101	.002	.005	-.715	.228	-1.189	-.241

Table 19.4 T-Test of parental expectations and whether student received the 16-19 bursary.

T-Test

Group Statistics

Please identify if any of the following applied to you (please tick all that apply) - Before university you were in receipt of, or entitled to, the Education Maintenance Allowance (EMA)

		N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
How important were each of the following when deciding to go to university in the first place? - Parental expectation	Yes	39	2.03	1.088	.174
	No	208	2.38	1.066	.074

Independent Samples Test

		Levene's Test for Equality of Variances				t-test for Equality of Means					
		F	Sig.	t	df	Significance		Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
						One-Sided p	Two-Sided p			Lower	Upper
How important were each of the following when deciding to go to university in the first place? - Parental expectation	Equal variances assumed	.004	.952	-1.924	245	.028	.056	-.359	.187	-.727	.009
	Equal variances not assumed			-1.897	52.601	.032	.063	-.359	.189	-.739	.021

Table 19.5 T-Test of parental expectations and whether student received the education maintenance allowance (EMA).

T-Test

Group Statistics

Please identify if any of the following applied to you (please tick all that apply) - Before university you were in receipt of, or entitled to free school meals

		N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
How important were each of the following when deciding to go to university in the first place? - Parental expectation	Yes	25	1.68	.945	.189
	No	221	2.41	1.077	.072

Independent Samples Test

		Levene's Test for Equality of Variances				t-test for Equality of Means					
		F	Sig.	t	df	Significance		Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
						One-Sided p	Two-Sided p			Lower	Upper
How important were each of the following when deciding to go to university in the first place? - Parental expectation	Equal variances assumed	.737	.391	-3.236	244	<.001	.001	-.727	.225	-1.170	-.285
	Equal variances not assumed			-3.592	31.499	<.001	.001	-.727	.202	-1.140	-.315

Table 19.6 T-Test of parental expectations and whether student received free school meals.

Gaining an Experience - The mean score of 'gaining an experience' for respondents who received the maximum maintenance loan at university (M=2.01, sd= 1.064) was statistically significantly different (t=-3.661, df=242, one-sided p=<0.001) from those who did not receive the maximum

maintenance loan ($M=2.53$, $sd=1.067$). Due to the variances for the two groups being equal (Levene Test: 0.391) the output line for equal variances was used.

College

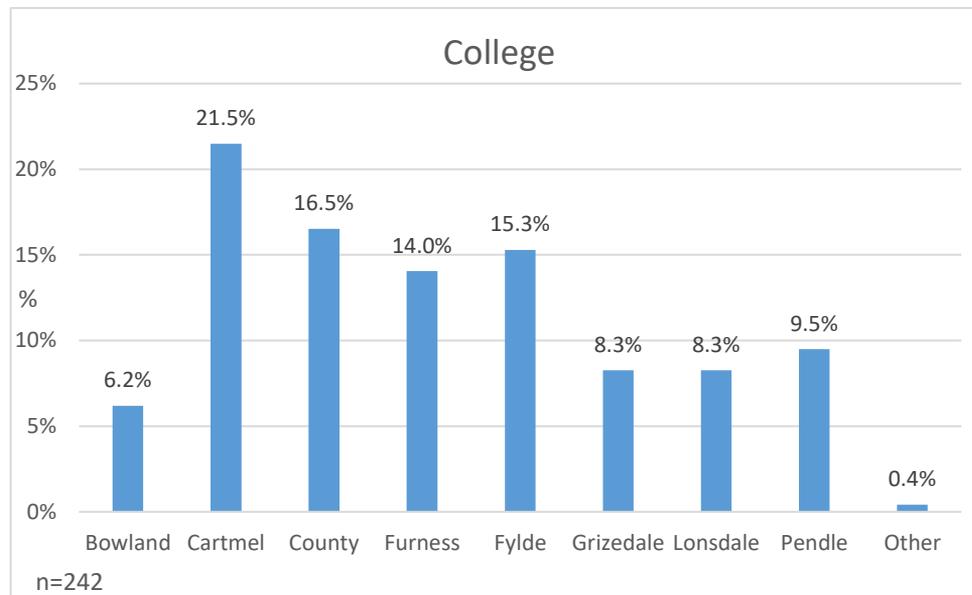


Figure 19.5 College Lived In

- 94.9% (242) of respondents lived in a college on campus. The remaining lived in their own home (1), parental home (2), private student hall (4), privately rented student house (4) and other (2) which included privately rented flat and college overspill accommodation at University of Cumbria. There were respondents from all undergraduate colleges on campus.

Chapter 20: Appendix Twelve

T-Test and explanation for satisfaction with first-year accommodation, whom they lived with in second year and POLAR4.

The mean score for satisfaction with first-year accommodation for those that lived in the second year with any of the people they shared with in their first-year ($M=4.24$, $sd= 0.861$) was statistically significantly different ($t=5.151$, $df=113.660$, one-sided $p=0001$) from that of students that did not live in the second year with any people they shared with in their first-year ($M=3.41$, $sd= 1.321$). Due to the variances for the two groups being unequal (Levene Test <0.001) the output line for unequal variances was used.

Group Statistics						
		Did you live in your second year with any of the people you shared with in your first year?	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Please state the extent to which you were happy with your first year accommodation/ living arrangements	Yes		169	4.24	.861	.066
	No		81	3.41	1.321	.147

Independent Samples Test											
		Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		t-test for Equality of Means							
		F	Sig.	t	df	One-Sided p	Two-Sided p	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
										Lower	Upper
Please state the extent to which you were happy with your first year accommodation/ living arrangements	Equal variances assumed	41.365	<.001	5.947	248	<.001	<.001	.829	.139	.555	1.104
	Equal variances not assumed			5.151	113.660	<.001	<.001	.829	.161	.510	1.148

Independent Samples Effect Sizes					
		Standardizer ^a	Point Estimate	95% Confidence Interval	
				Lower	Upper
Please state the extent to which you were happy with your first year accommodation/ living arrangements	Cohen's d	1.032	.804	.529	1.077
	Hedges' correction	1.035	.801	.527	1.074
	Glass's delta	1.321	.628	.344	.908

a. The denominator used in estimating the effect sizes.
Cohen's d uses the pooled standard deviation.
Hedges' correction uses the pooled standard deviation, plus a correction factor.
Glass's delta uses the sample standard deviation of the control group.

Table 20.1 T-Test and explanation for satisfaction with first-year accommodation and whom they lived with in second year

A Pearson Chi-Square test was conducted in SPSS to explore whether there were any significant differences in satisfaction with first-year accommodation between students from different POLAR4 quintiles. The number of cells with an expected count of less than 5 was lower than expected and therefore the results are insufficiently accurate. In addition, the p-value was larger than 0.05 and therefore there is insufficient evidence to conclude the variables are associated.

Chapter 21: Appendix Thirteen

Further Details on Experiences of shared living in first-year

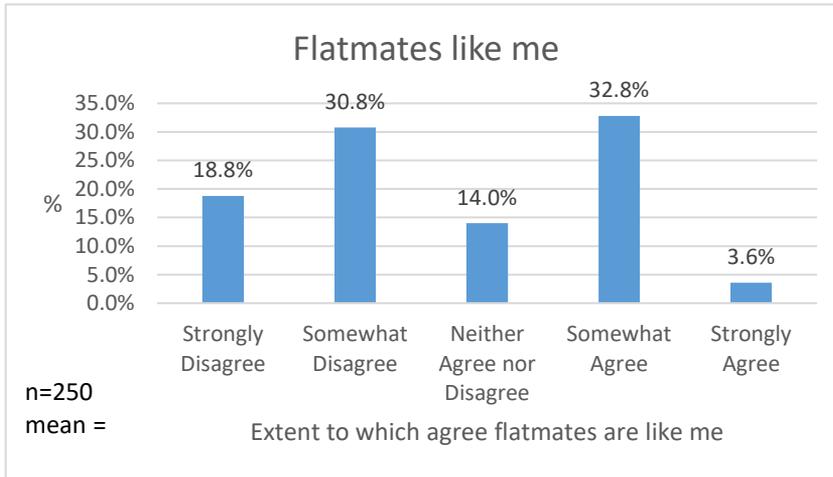


Figure 21.1 Extent to which respondents agreed 'flatmates are like me'

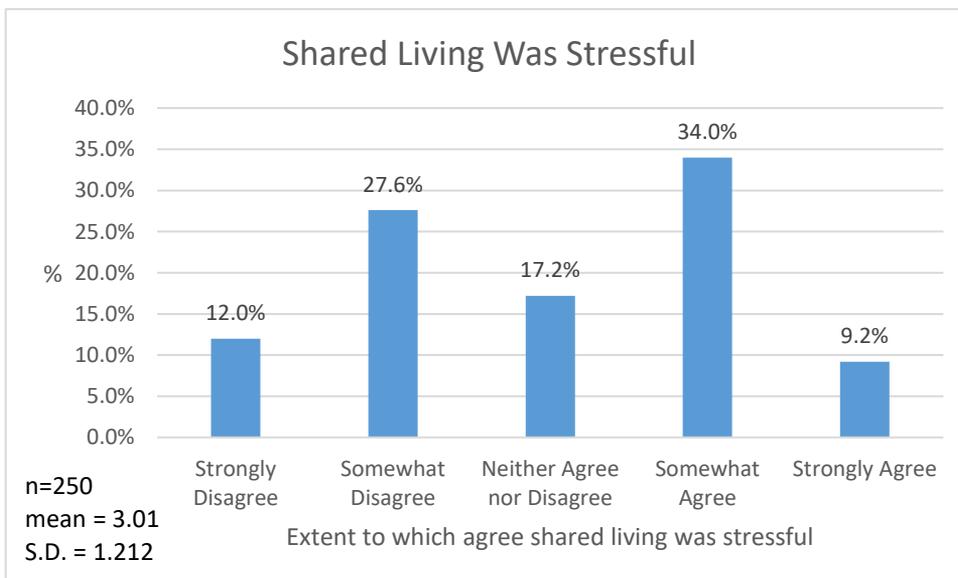


Figure 21.2 Extent to which respondents agreed 'shared living was stressful'

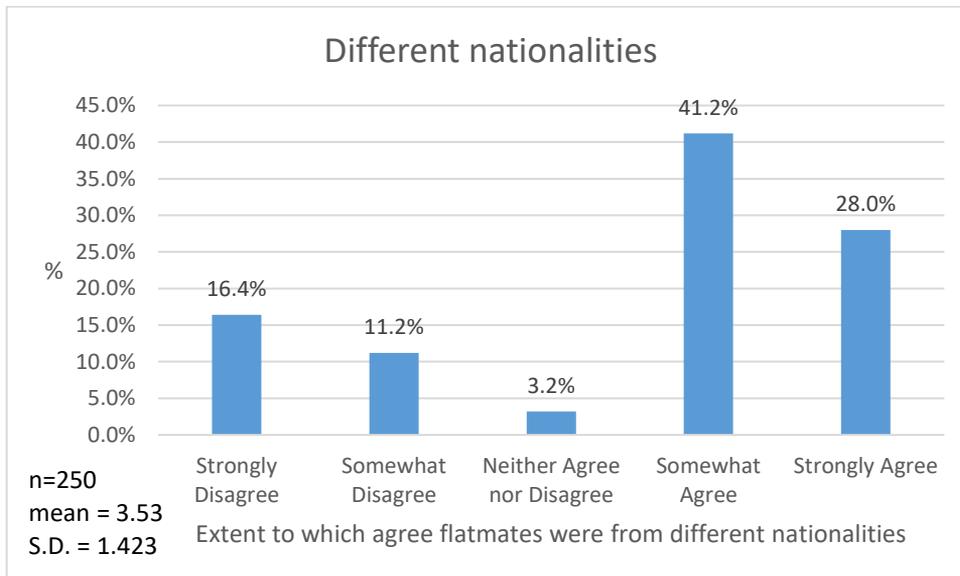


Figure 21.3 Extent to which respondents agreed flatmates were different nationalities

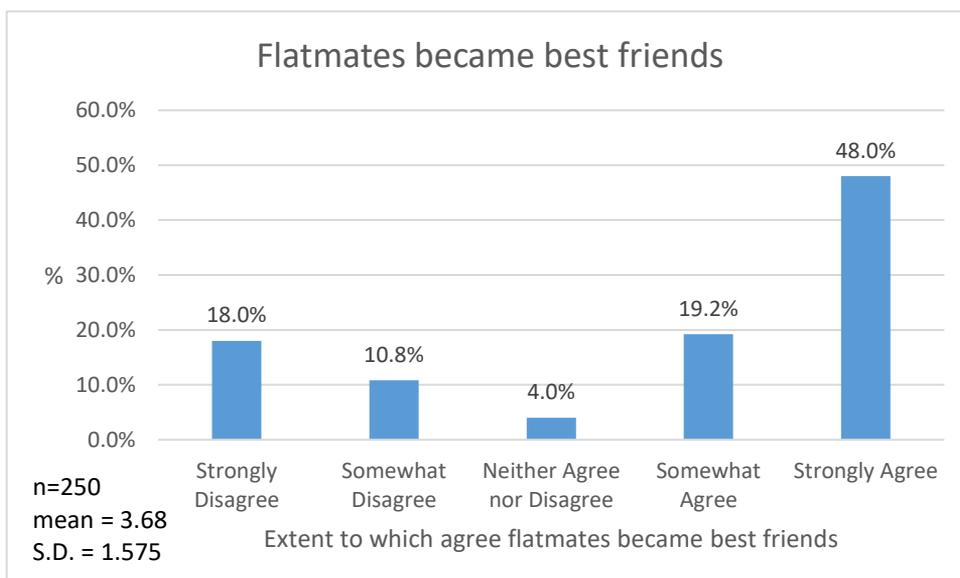


Figure 21.4 Extent to which respondents agreed flatmates became best friends

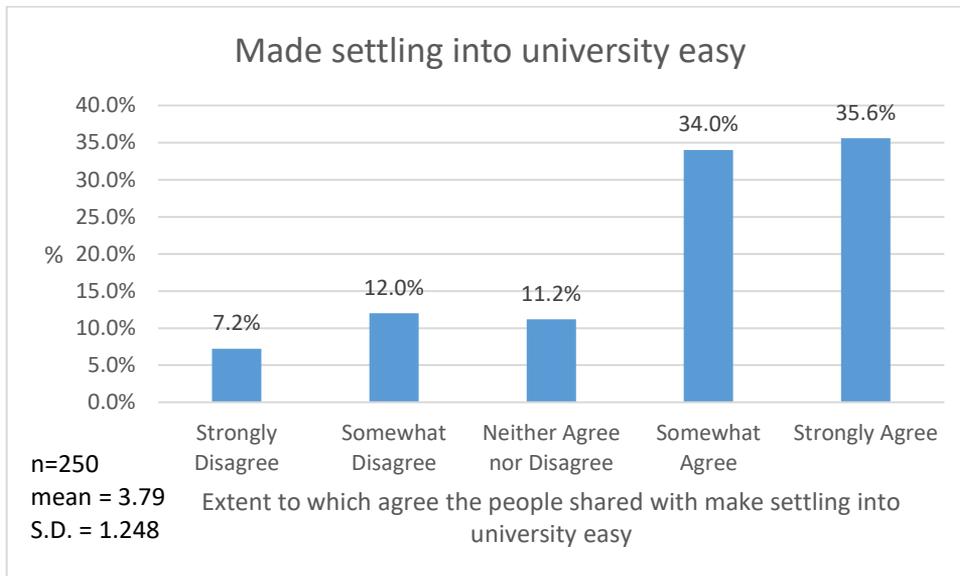


Figure 21.5 Extent to which respondents agreed the people shared with made settling into university easy

Chapter 22: Appendix Fourteen

T-Test of Experiences of Shared Living in First-year and Ethnicity (recoded to White and BAME/Other) and Gender

Ethnicity

Group Statistics					
	Recode Ethnicity	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Thinking about the people you shared with in your first year please state the extent to which you agree or disagree with the following statements - My flatmates were like me	White	224	2.75	1.230	.082
	BAME (other)	18	2.28	.895	.211
Thinking about the people you shared with in your first year please state the extent to which you agree or disagree with the following statements - The people I shared with made settling into university easy	White	224	3.82	1.247	.083
	BAME (other)	18	3.56	1.097	.258
Thinking about the people you shared with in your first year please state the extent to which you agree or disagree with the following statements - Living in shared accommodation was stressful	White	224	2.99	1.209	.081
	BAME (other)	18	3.17	1.200	.283
Thinking about the people you shared with in your first year please state the extent to which you agree or disagree with the following statements - Some of the people I shared with became my best friends	White	224	3.77	1.547	.103
	BAME (other)	18	2.89	1.711	.403
Thinking about the people you shared with in your first year please state the extent to which you agree or disagree with the following statements - My flatmates were from different nationalities	White	224	3.53	1.433	.096
	BAME (other)	18	3.61	1.378	.325

Independent Samples Test											
		Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		t-test for Equality of Means							
		F	Sig.	t	df	Significance		Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
						One-Sided p	Two-Sided p			Lower	Upper
Thinking about the people you shared with in your first year please state the extent to which you agree or disagree with the following statements - My flatmates were like me	Equal variances assumed	10.152	.002	1.609	240	.054	.109	.477	.296	-.107	1.060
	Equal variances not assumed			2.106	22.517	.023	.047	.477	.226	.008	.945
Thinking about the people you shared with in your first year please state the extent to which you agree or disagree with the following statements - The people I shared with made settling into university easy	Equal variances assumed	.422	.516	.877	240	.191	.381	.266	.303	-.331	.863
	Equal variances not assumed			.979	20.700	.169	.339	.266	.272	-.299	.831
Thinking about the people you shared with in your first year please state the extent to which you agree or disagree with the following statements - Living in shared accommodation was stressful	Equal variances assumed	.060	.806	-.593	240	.277	.554	-.176	.296	-.759	.408
	Equal variances not assumed			-.597	19.874	.279	.557	-.176	.294	-.790	.438
Thinking about the people you shared with in your first year please state the extent to which you agree or disagree with the following statements - Some of the people I shared with became my best friends	Equal variances assumed	.498	.481	2.301	240	.011	.022	.879	.382	.126	1.632
	Equal variances not assumed			2.111	19.301	.024	.048	.879	.416	.008	1.750
Thinking about the people you shared with in your first year please state the extent to which you agree or disagree with the following statements - My flatmates were from different nationalities	Equal variances assumed	.295	.587	-.241	240	.405	.810	-.084	.350	-.774	.605
	Equal variances not assumed			-.249	20.071	.403	.806	-.084	.339	-.790	.622

Table 22.1 T-Test of Experiences of Shared Living in First-year and Ethnicity (recoded to White and BAME/Other)

Flatmates were like me - The mean score for 'my flatmates were like me' for white students (M=2.75, sd= 1.230) was statistically significantly different (t=2.106, df=22.517, one-sided p=0.023) from that of BAME/other students (M=2.28, sd= 0.895). Due to the variances for the two groups being unequal (Levine Test 0.002) the output line for unequal variances was used.

The people I shared with became my best friends - The mean score for 'the people I shared with became my best friends' for white students (M=3.77, sd= 1.547) was statistically significantly different (t=2.301, df=240, one-sided p=0.011) from that of BAME/other students (M=2.89, sd= 1.711). Due to the variances for the two groups being equal (Levine Test 0.481) the output line for equal variances was used.

Gender

Group Statistics					
	Are you? - Selected Choice	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Thinking about the people you shared with in your first year please state the extent to which you agree or disagree with the following statements - My flatmates were like me	Male	71	2.85	1.191	.141
	Female	171	2.68	1.220	.093
Thinking about the people you shared with in your first year please state the extent to which you agree or disagree with the following statements - The people I shared with made settling into university easy	Male	71	4.03	1.000	.119
	Female	171	3.72	1.307	.100
Thinking about the people you shared with in your first year please state the extent to which you agree or disagree with the following statements - Living in shared accommodation was stressful	Male	71	2.83	1.183	.140
	Female	171	3.06	1.221	.093
Thinking about the people you shared with in your first year please state the extent to which you agree or disagree with the following statements - Some of the people I shared with became my best friends	Male	71	3.82	1.457	.173
	Female	171	3.67	1.620	.124
Thinking about the people you shared with in your first year please state the extent to which you agree or disagree with the following statements - My flatmates were from different nationalities	Male	71	3.34	1.530	.182
	Female	171	3.63	1.372	.105

Independent Samples Test											
		Levene's Test for Equality of Variances				t-test for Equality of Means					
		F	Sig.	t	df	Significance		Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
						One-Sided p	Two-Sided p			Lower	Upper
Thinking about the people you shared with in your first year please state the extent to which you agree or disagree with the following statements - My flatmates were like me	Equal variances assumed	1.409	.236	.940	240	.174	.348	.161	.171	-.176	.498
	Equal variances not assumed			.950	133.800	.172	.344	.161	.169	-.174	.496
Thinking about the people you shared with in your first year please state the extent to which you agree or disagree with the following statements - The people I shared with made settling into university easy	Equal variances assumed	14.316	<.001	1.785	240	.038	.076	.309	.173	-.032	.650
	Equal variances not assumed			1.991	169.520	.024	.048	.309	.155	.003	.615
Thinking about the people you shared with in your first year please state the extent to which you agree or disagree with the following statements - Living in shared accommodation was stressful	Equal variances assumed	.109	.741	-1.332	240	.092	.184	-.227	.171	-.564	.109
	Equal variances not assumed			-1.349	134.750	.090	.180	-.227	.169	-.561	.106
Thinking about the people you shared with in your first year please state the extent to which you agree or disagree with the following statements - Some of the people I shared with became my best friends	Equal variances assumed	4.408	.037	.676	240	.250	.500	.150	.222	-.288	.588
	Equal variances not assumed			.706	144.584	.241	.481	.150	.213	-.270	.571
Thinking about the people you shared with in your first year please state the extent to which you agree or disagree with the following statements - My flatmates were from different nationalities	Equal variances assumed	4.506	.035	-1.435	240	.076	.153	-.288	.200	-.683	.107
	Equal variances not assumed			-1.372	119.079	.086	.173	-.288	.210	-.703	.128

Table 22.2 T-Test of Experiences of Shared Living in First-year and gender.

The mean score for the people I shared with made settling into university easy for males ($M=4.03$, $sd= 1.000$) was statistically significantly different ($t=1.991$, $df=169.520$, one-sided $p=0.024$) from that of females ($M=3.72$, $sd= 1.307$). Due to the variances for the two groups being unequal (Levine Test <0.001) the output line for unequal variances was used.

Chapter 23: Appendix Fifteen

T-Test for whom they lived with in second year and experiences of shared living in first-year

	Did you live in your second year with any of the people you shared with in your first year?	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Thinking about the people you shared with in your first year please state the extent to which you agree or disagree with the following statements - My flatmates were like me	Yes	169	2.98	1.207	.093
	No	81	2.16	1.006	.112
Thinking about the people you shared with in your first year please state the extent to which you agree or disagree with the following statements - The people I shared with made settling into university easy	Yes	169	4.14	1.017	.078
	No	81	3.06	1.372	.152
Thinking about the people you shared with in your first year please state the extent to which you agree or disagree with the following statements - Living in shared accommodation was stressful	Yes	169	2.83	1.190	.092
	No	81	3.38	1.179	.131
Thinking about the people you shared with in your first year please state the extent to which you agree or disagree with the following statements - Some of the people I shared with became my best friends	Yes	169	4.18	1.288	.099
	No	81	2.65	1.629	.181
Thinking about the people you shared with in your first year please state the extent to which you agree or disagree with the following statements - My flatmates were from different nationalities	Yes	169	3.42	1.433	.110
	No	81	3.77	1.381	.153

		Independent Samples Test									
		Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		t-test for Equality of Means							
		F	Sig.	t	df	Significance		Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
						One-Sided p	Two-Sided p			Lower	Upper
Thinking about the people you shared with in your first year please state the extent to which you agree or disagree with the following statements - My flatmates were like me	Equal variances assumed	12.168	<.001	5.305	248	<.001	<.001	.822	.155	.517	1.127
	Equal variances not assumed			5.655	186.371	<.001	<.001	.822	.145	.535	1.108
Thinking about the people you shared with in your first year please state the extent to which you agree or disagree with the following statements - The people I shared with made settling into university easy	Equal variances assumed	20.586	<.001	6.949	248	<.001	<.001	1.074	.155	.770	1.379
	Equal variances not assumed			6.268	123.600	<.001	<.001	1.074	.171	.735	1.414
Thinking about the people you shared with in your first year please state the extent to which you agree or disagree with the following statements - Living in shared accommodation was stressful	Equal variances assumed	.204	.652	-3.457	248	<.001	<.001	-.554	.160	-.870	-.238
	Equal variances not assumed			-3.469	159.211	<.001	<.001	-.554	.160	-.870	-.239
Thinking about the people you shared with in your first year please state the extent to which you agree or disagree with the following statements - Some of the people I shared with became my best friends	Equal variances assumed	25.424	<.001	8.010	248	<.001	<.001	1.523	.190	1.149	1.898
	Equal variances not assumed			7.382	129.572	<.001	<.001	1.523	.206	1.115	1.931
Thinking about the people you shared with in your first year please state the extent to which you agree or disagree with the following statements - My flatmates were from different nationalities	Equal variances assumed	3.314	.070	-1.804	248	.036	.072	-.345	.191	-.722	.032
	Equal variances not assumed			-1.828	163.236	.035	.069	-.345	.189	-.718	.028

Table 23.1 T-Test for whom they lived with in second year and experiences of shared living in first-year

My flatmates were like me - The mean score for ‘my flatmates were like me’ for those students that lived with students in the second year they shared with in the first-year (M=2.98, sd= 1.207) was statistically significantly different (t=5.655, df=186.371, one-sided p=<0.001) from those that did not live with people they shared with in the first-year (M=2.16, sd= 1.006). Due to the variances for the two groups being unequal (Levine Test <0.001) the output line for unequal variances was used. Those students that stated their flatmates were like them were more likely to share with them in the second year.

The people I shared with made settling into university easy - The mean score for ‘the people I shared with made settling into university easy’ for those students that lived with students in the second year they shared with in the first-year (M=4.14, sd= 1.017) was statistically significantly different (t=6.268, df=123.600, one-sided p=<0.001) from those that did not live with people they shared with in the first-year (M=3.06, sd= 1.372). Due to the variances for the

two groups being unequal (Levine Test <0.001) the output line for unequal variances was used. Those students that stated 'the people they shared with in first-year made settling into university easy' were more likely to share with them in the second year.

Living in shared accommodation was stressful - The mean score for 'Living in shared accommodation was stressful' for those students that lived with students in the second year they shared with in the first-year ($M=2.83$, $sd=1.190$) was statistically significantly different ($t=-3.457$, $df=248$, one-sided $p=<0.001$) from those that did not live with people they shared with in the first-year ($M=3.38$, $sd=1.179$). Due to the variances for the two groups being equal (Levine Test 0.652) the output line for equal variances was used. Those students that stated 'Living in shared accommodation was stressful' were less likely to share with them in the second year.

Some of the people I shared with became my best friends - The mean score for 'some of the people I shared with became my best friends' for those students that lived with students in the second year they shared with in the first-year ($M=4.18$, $sd=1.288$) was statistically significantly different ($t=7.382$, $df=129.572$, one-sided $p=<0.001$) from those that did not live with people they shared with in the first-year ($M=2.65$, $sd=1.629$). Due to the variances for the two groups being unequal (Levine test <0.001) the output line for unequal variances was used. Those students that stated 'some of the people they shared with became best friends' were more likely to share with them in the second year.

Chapter 24: Appendix Sixteen

T-Test for contacts for finding a job with various classification questions.

	P value
• Receipt of, or entitled to the 16/19 bursary	0.285
• Receipt of, or entitled to the EMA	0.781
• Received maximum maintenance loan	0.804
• Gender	0.330
• Year started UG degree 2006-11 or 2012 onwards	0.957
• Faculty	0.588
• Type of school attended (recoded)	0.241
• Free school meals	0.278
• Disability	0.008*
(Those who said they had a disability whilst studying at Lancaster University were more likely to have secured a job, internship or work experience through a contact).	
• Reason for going to university -gaining an experience	0.388
• Reason for going to university – leaving home	0.140
• Reason for going to university – gaining a qualification	0.594
• Reason for going to university – parental expectation	0.023*
(Those who said parental expectation was important when applying to university were less likely to have secured a job, internship of work experience through a contact).	
• Reason for going to university – improve career prospects	0.431
• Parents attended university	0.448
• First-year accommodation	0.515
• First-year accommodation (recoded college and others)	0.683
• College lived in during first-year	0.398
• Number lived with in first-year	0.188
• Degree classification	0.381
• Number keep in touch with	0.152

Red denotes probably not a valid test

* ($p < 0.05$, we can say that there is a statistically significant relationship between the two variables.)

A Pearson Chi-Square test was conducted in SPSS to explore whether there were any significant differences in securing a job through a contact between students from different POLAR4 quintiles. The p-value was larger than 0.05 and therefore there is insufficient evidence to conclude the variables are associated.

Chapter 25: Appendix Seventeen

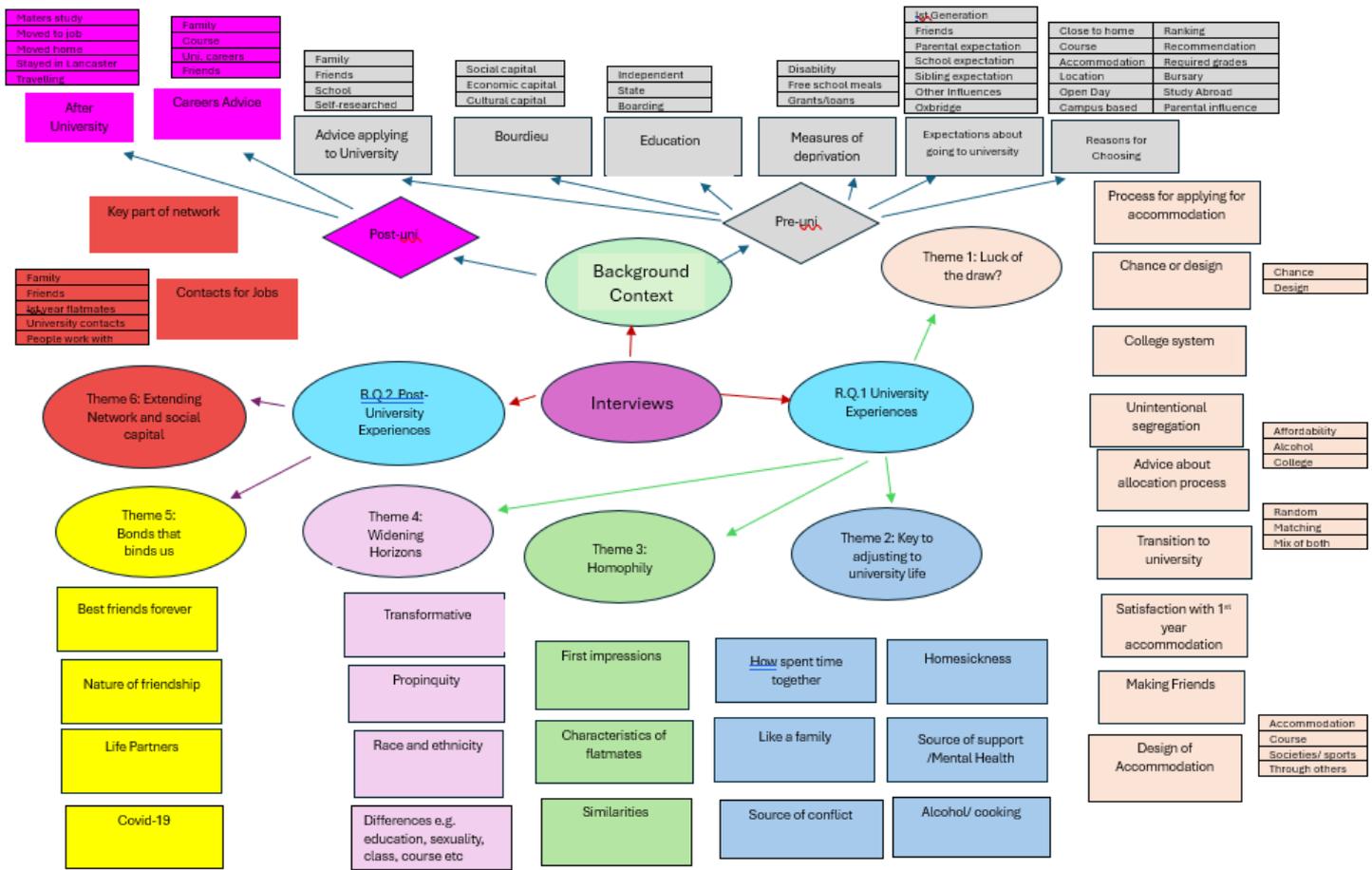


Figure 25.1 Analysis of Interviews: Mapping of Codes and Themes

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