Advancing Student Geographies: Habitus, Identities and
(Re)sensing of Place

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award of the degree of Doctor of Philosophy of the University of
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Abstract

A growing body of literature has emerged relating to the geographical mobility and dispersion of University students. This curiosity towards the movements of students originates from ongoing policy reforms in higher education, including the introduction of the post-1992 University, the Labour Government’s target to encourage 50 per cent of school leavers into higher education and the introduction and subsequent increases in tuition fees and neo-liberalisation of the sector. The restructuring outlined above has encouraged greater diversity in the types of students attending University and it is this diversity which this thesis was give attention to.

This thesis makes four novel contributions to these discussions of student geographies. First, it recognises the influence of the ‘pre-student’ habitus over the decision making process of prospective undergraduates and how this may inform their term-time accommodation trajectories. Second, it highlights the regular transformation of habitus during the degree pathway as students acquire and mobilise the different types of capital required to ‘fit in’ among their peers. Third, it examines notions of how students may [re]sense place as (a) those in more typical accommodation move between different residential locations and (b) those who are home-based re-interpret previously familiar spaces as students. Finally, this thesis identifies how ‘pseudo non-student’ social spaces may influence the identities of final year students, specifically through the gradual dispossession of acquaintances and belongings in preparation for becoming ‘post-students’. In identifying the experiential journey of undergraduates, this thesis synthesises habitus and sense of place which builds during the initial stages of the degree, then ebbs away as students prepare to graduate.
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Declaration

Whilst registered as a candidate for the above degree, I have not been registered for any other research award. The results and conclusions embodied in this thesis are the work of the named candidate and have not been submitted for any other academic award.

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Abbreviations

Buy to let................................................................. BTL
Computer aided qualitative data analysis software.... CAQDAS
Department for Innovation, Universities and Skills.... DUIS
Further education..................................................... FE
Higher education...................................................... HE
Higher Education Funding Council for England....... HEFCE
Higher education institution.................................... HEI
Higher Education Statistics Agency......................... HESA
Houses in multiple occupation............................... HMO
Local authority....................................................... LA
National Union of Students...................................... NUS
National Student Survey........................................... NSS
Purpose built student accommodation..................... PBSA
Universities and Colleges Admissions Service......... UCAS
University of Portsmouth Students’ Union.............. UPSU

The following abbreviations are used within the data analysis and denote the residential circumstances of the study participants:

Halls of residence..................................................... HR
Own Home.............................................................. OH
Rented Housing....................................................... RH
With Parents............................................................. WP
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Chapter One – Introduction

1.1 – Situating the Research Context

In recent years a growing body of literature has emerged relating to the geographical mobility (Gabriel, 2006; Duke-Williams, 2009; Holdsworth, 2009b; Brooks & Waters, 2009a; 2009b) and dispersion (Smith, 2002; 2005; Silver, 2004; Allinson, 2006; Hubbard, 2008; Fincher & Shaw, 2009; 2011) of University students. This ever increasing curiosity towards the movements of students has been born from ongoing policy reforms in higher education (HE), including the introduction of the post-1992 University, the Labour Government’s target to encourage 50 per cent of school leavers into HE (Munro et al., 2009) and the introduction and subsequent increases in tuition fees. These policy reforms have taken on extra significance with the repercussions of the Browne report in 2010 (Browne, 2010; HM Treasury, 2010) and the subsequent restructuring of HE fees and funding (Wakeling & Jeffries, 2012), which has seen a reconsideration of the nature of HE with an ushering in of increased neo-liberalisation of the sector (Walkerdine, 2011; Holloway & Jöns, 2012). Alongside this have been various changes in the types of students attending University. Since the Second World War, there has been a gradual ‘opening up’ of the HE sector to encourage more inclusiveness of other members of society, not just those who were privileged enough to do so (Brown, 1990). This, tied in with the restructuring outlined above, has constructed what has been described as the ‘new’ student (Leathwood & O’Connell, 2003), defined as first generation University attendees from working class or minority backgrounds, whose limited knowledge of the inner workings of HE mean they can often experience much greater difficulties in ‘fitting in’ at University (Bamber & Tett, 2000; Christie, 2007).

Linked to these notions of inclusiveness are policy concerns about increasing widening participation1 across the sector (Christie et al., 2005). Arguably one of the more prominent policy directives in recent years, widening participation policies initiated since the 1990s have facilitated greater opportunities for access to HE for those not previously considered eligible to go to University (Leathwood & O’Connell, 2003). Whilst this has been deemed a positive social and economic step by many, some believe

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1 The Higher Education Funding Council for England (HEFCE) (2008) defines widening participation as the promotion and provision of opportunities “to participate successfully in higher education to everyone who can benefit from it”.
that increased access has diluted HE and paved the way for a cohort of students unaware and unprepared for student life (Archer & Hutchings, 2000). Similarly, others argue that students may be let down by widening participation policies, either missing out on opportunities (Harrison, 2011) or by not being given adequate support once they commence University (Reay et al., 2009). Widening participation has ultimately become an umbrella term which encompasses a variety of processes including: an overall increase in the volume of students participating in HE (Macdonald & Stratta, 2001); fair access to local institutions (Holdsworth, 2009b) and increased opportunities for students from backgrounds without any traditional association with HE (Leathwood & O’Connell, 2003). Crucially, these processes have been widely supported by successive Governments and policy makers who have made widening participation targets mandatory for Universities (Cabinet Office, 2012). This has become particularly pertinent as the current coalition Government is moving toward a system where Universities may gain additional funding for increasing widening participation, or face threats of funding reductions if widening participation targets are not met (Cochrane & Williams, 2013).

Importantly, there exists a distinct geography which cuts through these policy debates of widening participation, particularly relating to the potential for students to access HE and the uneven geographies which this can create (see Holdsworth, 2009b; Mangan et al., 2010; Gibbons & Vignoles, 2012). More recently, students have become popularly referred to in the UK by the dichotomous terms ‘traditional’ and ‘non-traditional’ which have been useful in discussing how students experience University with regard to their mobility (Patiniotis & Holdsworth, 2005), their capacity to learn (Maguire et al., 2001; Reay et al., 2010), their propensity for involvement in student-centric activities (Chatterton, 1999) and their employment potential once they have graduated (Rothwell et al., 2008). Hence widening participation and the introduction of the ‘new student’ has encouraged a much greater social and geographical diversity within the student body than in previous decades, although it is widely recognised that this diversity is more visible in newer institutions, such as ‘post-1992’ Universities, than in more elite institutions. Nevertheless, while widening participation initiatives have promoted diversity within HE it has been made clear by many that successful transitions through University are likely to be influenced by the previous identities of students, either through their parents (Patiniotis & Holdsworth, 2005; Crozier et al., 2008) or spouses
What is less clear however is the ways in which these dispositions go about affecting how students with differing backgrounds form their attachments to their University locations? How they use spaces day to day? What determines whether a place becomes reviled or revered? And, how students use these place-based experiences as tools for moving on into their non-students lives upon graduation.

1.2 – Research Questions

It is not uncommon within debates concerning the experiences of tertiary level students for the experiences of students to be overlooked in favour of other, more prominent voices, such as: landlords (Munro & Livingston, 2011); local business owners (Chatterton & Hollands, 2003); letting agents and council workers (Allinson, 2006); University staff (Chatterton, 2000) and non-student local residents (Hubbard, 2008). The neglected student voice has therefore become one of the fundamental drivers behind this research. The broad aim of this research is to critically examine the diverse ways in which University students establish and maintain [or adapt] their identities and sense of place throughout the duration of their degree. In order to achieve this, this research will develop a rationale for discussing students according to their residential circumstances. This will recognise the heterogeneity of students and how such contrasts may contribute to wider debates of the geographies of students. This is particularly important to this research as it establishes whether such heterogeneity can be responsible for [un]successful interactions and experiences whilst at University. These diverse experiences are investigated throughout the entire HE pathway in order to consider fully how the respondents may have adapted and modified their identities and ‘sense of place’ throughout their time as students. This includes the preconceptions of ‘pre-students’ and how they go about operationalising their knowledge of HE; how first year students use their changing social identities as tools for learning to ‘become’ University students; how these social identities gradually contribute to the formation of a ‘sense of place’ for second and third year students and then how they then manage their identities as they prepare to leave University upon completion of their studies. As will be made clearer in Chapters Two and Three, capturing and unpacking the diversity among student groups in how they experience ‘being’ a student can be problematic,

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2 For notable exceptions see Kenyon (1997; 2000); Holdsworth (2006; 2009a); Christie (2007).
particularly as many students approach University from a multitude of directions\textsuperscript{3}. Therefore, this research will discuss students in relation to their residential circumstances in order to provide an alternative way of discussing student heterogeneity which compliments previous social, cultural and economic characteristics (see Read \textit{et al.}, 2003; Reay \textit{et al.}, 2010). This will allow for a more rounded discussion as residential circumstances provide a good measure of capturing how students might infer their student experience throughout the HE pathway as well as proving a spatial element to this transition by grounding their experiences in the setting of a term-time location. Moreover, this research will provide Universities and other stakeholders with a better understanding of how their undergraduates go about interpreting their University environment and how these interpretations might impact upon successful trajectories through HE. This will be achieved through the following four research questions:

1. How do the residential locations of students influence their choices, mobilities and experiences of University?

2. How might a student’s residential location influence the formation of their ‘student identities’ during the initial stages of their degree?

3. Do the residential locations of students influence how they might establish their ‘sense of place’ in the city?

4. How do students in subsequent years manage their student identities as they prepare to complete their degrees?

The rest of this section will outline these questions in greater detail and will consider their position within the literature.

\textbf{Question 1: How do the residential locations of students influence their choices, mobilities and experiences of University?}

Question one puts students’ residential circumstances into context through an examination of the methods which have previously been used to classify students, paying particular attention to the dualistic terms which label students as being from ‘traditional’ or ‘non-traditional’ backgrounds (Patinitos & Holdsworth, 2005; Holdsworth, 2009b). There exists an extensive corpus of literature pertaining to this

\textsuperscript{3} Holton and Riley (2013) suggest that other alternative ways of gaining qualifications through distance learning (Dibaise, 2000), degree courses through further education (FE) colleges (Matthews, 2012) or through on-the-job training schemes add even more diffuse interpretations of approaching University.
phenomenon which has sought to critically discuss how students experience their transition into HE, questioning specifically the notion that all students follow a linear transition through University (see Ball et al., 2002; Patiniotis & Holdsworth, 2005; Reay et al., 2010; Leese, 2010; Mangan et al., 2010; Kettley & Whitehead, 2011). However, as was alluded to earlier, there is far more complexity involved in the student experience than can be derived from just employing the terms ‘traditional’ and ‘non-traditional’. In problematising these monolithic terms this question proposes that a student’s residential circumstances be incorporated into these debates in order to enable a more critical discussion of this complex demographic. Essentially, this is about establishing a profile for each accommodation type and highlighting the key characteristics of the ‘type’ of student most likely to belong to each group. In doing so this will establish a more detailed understanding of how a ‘pre-student’ habitus might affect the mechanisms which are put in place to assist students in their transitions into and through University in order to identify whether or not there may be a link between HE aspirations and the types of accommodation students come to reside in. This adds to Hinton (2011) and Taulke-Johnson (2010b) who both discuss the influence of ‘home’ and/or perceived social and cultural preferences by grounding aspirations into the spatial setting of term-time accommodation. As Epstein et al. (2003) argue: “University choice ‘is more than simply an “academic” question’” (cited by Taulke-Johnson, 2010b, p. 247), meaning an interrogation of students preconceptions of HE may add depth and understanding to their current experiences of University life. This is achieved by highlighting the differences in the ways in which students identify their prior knowledge of University life and the role of others in informing choices; the desire to be included in traditional ‘student experiences’ and how the propinquity of University to home impacts upon their decisions.

**Question 2: How might a student’s residential location influence the formation of their ‘student identity’ during the initial stages of their degree?**

Question two explores how students begin to establish their ‘student identities’ and is broadly concerned with how residential circumstances influence this during the initial stages of the degree. Broadly speaking, this question adds a spatial element to discussions of first year transitions by questioning the influence accommodation may have upon the formation of their identities and their initial experiences of ‘being’, or
‘becoming’ students. Evidence suggests that the period of the first year differs across the student cohort and can trigger a myriad of emotional responses which contribute to an [un]successful transition through the rest of their time at University, such as: insecurities regarding fitting in amongst unfamiliar peer groups (Christie et al., 2008; Palmer et al., 2009; Chow & Healey, 2008; Andersson et al., 2012) or confidence concerning engagement with academic and non-academic practices (Maguire et al., 2001; Jary & Lebeau, 2009; Pampaka et al., 2011) meaning students rarely begin to establish their student identities in a linear fashion. Wilcox et al. (2005) argue that unsuccessful living experiences can contribute towards a discontinuation of studies among young students, particularly if there is an over-reliance upon their student friendship groupings, however, their research stops short of questioning why this may be occurring. This question therefore builds upon Wilcox et al.’s claims by highlighting how certain types of accommodation encourage an intense involvement with student-centric activities while others may serve to create barriers, both socially and spatially from more typical student behaviours (Christie et al., 2002; Hubbard, 2009). However, there is more to this than being disadvantaged and in many cases those who are not interested in typically student-centric social activities are likely to have considered this long before the commencement of the degree.

**Question 3: Do the residential locations of students influence how they might establish their ‘sense of place’ in the city?**

Question three moves on to discuss how the students begin to reinterpret or ‘re-sense’ place as they progress through their degrees. This can be experienced in two ways: first for those living in non-student accommodation with some knowledge of the city, experiencing the city as a student may challenge their conceptualisation of these spaces, particularly their attachment to place, and can contribute to a destabilisation of their original ‘sense of place’. This adds to Holdsworth’s (2009a) suggestions that locally based students can struggle to position their student and non-student identities while at University. Seeing the places which they may have previously used prior to becoming students being used by other ‘non-local’ students can occasionally be seen as wrong or different, while in other ways, ‘new’ places have become accessible which they may not necessarily have had contact with previously. This is particularly important from a policy perspective as many strategies have been implemented to recognise and deal with
issues, such as homesickness, bullying, substance abuse or mental illness (see Wilcox et al., 2005; Taulke-Johnson, 2010b). However these strategies can often be inadvertently directed towards students living in term-time accommodation, through halls, the Students’ Union or University societies, meaning students living outside of student accommodation may slip through the net with regard to pastoral care from the University as they may not utilise many of these service provisions which might bring them into contact with people who can help them (Scott et al., 1996; Wilcox et al., 2005). Therefore, opening up these notions of place identification and ‘sense of place’ with locally based students may assist in recognising the kinds of issues these students may face, outside of their academic work. Second, this ‘re-sensing of place’ can be experienced intensely by students living in typical student accommodation, particularly as they may begin to change their social and domestic habits as they move between residences (see Smith & Holt, 2007). Their experiences of the city can change radically, particularly between halls and rented housing, as the physical move from one location to another creates opportunities for the students to gain new interactions with different places.

**Question 4: How do students in subsequent years manage their student identities as they prepare to complete their degrees?**

Finally, question four focuses upon the latter stages of the student experience and highlights how the final year students use transitional or what may be termed as ‘pseudo non-student’ spaces in order to “unlearn the rules of the student game” (Chatterton, 1999, p. 122). This suggests that students in more typical accommodation may begin to seek out social spaces within which to hone and personalise their identities which differ to the more student-centric activities they performed in their first year (see Hollands, 1995; Chatterton & Hollands, 2003). As well as un-learning these ‘rules’, this may also be an indicator of students learning how to ‘become’ non-students, particularly as they may begin to dispossess belongings in the home or start to drift away from friends and acquaintances made while at University. In some ways this can be thought of as preparing the students for the inevitability of leaving University, particularly in negotiating the complexities of re-placing their student identities into a post-student environment (see Gabriel, 2006; Easthope & Gabriel, 2008). This aspect of the research therefore enables discussion as to whether the student experience is still as important to
students by identifying what might be the key drivers for the consumption of space and place by students. Essentially, this focuses upon what encourages students to favour some enterprises or locations over others, raising the question, for all of this attention on the movements and agency of students, what is in it for the University and the wider community?

1.3 – The Case Study

Across the social sciences there is a burgeoning recognition that the role of the research location is significant in the type of knowledge that is produced (Anderson, 2004). However, as Jones et al. (2008) suggest, there have been limited attempts to “link what people say with where they say it” (p. 2). Numerous examples exist of how place can influence or direct research findings (see Fielding & Cisneros-Puebla, 2009; Evans & Jones, 2011; Housley & Smith, 2010). For instance, within a study by Reed (2002) of the ways in which professional tour guides interpret a city, London is discussed not simply as a vehicle for these people’s everyday lives, but as an actual ‘independent being’ acting separately from its inhabitants. Hence, as Anderson and Jones (2009) suggest, rather than being passed over as a passive component of research, the location it is conducted in should remain central to the design, ensuring the data remains in and of the research location itself.

As spatial entities, University locations vary greatly in scale, density and form, making comparative studies problematic. As Reay et al. (2010) suggest, different institutions may exert differing levels of influence over how their students perceive their own and others’ social and learner identities. Clayton et al. (2009) and Crozier et al. (2008) concur with this, adding that Universities are also likely to attract very different demographic groups in terms of social class, wealth, age, ethnicity and qualifications. As Chatterton (1999; 2000) posits, University locations create particular contexts for student life which are invariably unique to that institution and will be replicated through the relationships which are forged with non-student populations. From a geographical perspective there exists a great deal of heterogeneity in the physical position and layout of University campuses which may be likely to influence the ways in which they are perceived by students and non-students alike. Broadly speaking, more traditional campus based institutions are often set away from an urban centre meaning students have less interaction with non-student communities (Chatterton, 2000), while those
universities located within city centres mean that ‘student populations’ become much more visible during term-time (Wattis, 2013). Either way, whilst there are similarities and differences in the ways in which student cohorts experience their University towns and cities, the location itself will undoubtedly contribute to how these experiences are understood. Studies of the experiences of HE students have been conducted at various destinations for different reasons. In a study of the tensions between local and non-local students, Holdsworth (2009a) utilises the powerful image of civic identity in Liverpool to demonstrate the problems faced by home-based students in identifying themselves as ‘local’ and ‘student’. Similarly, Christie (2007; 2009) and Christie et al. (2005) compare the socio-spatial positioning of the four Universities of Edinburgh to illustrate the diverse mobilities of University students. In both of these cases, and others, the proximity of the University campus to accommodation, night-life and civic services, among other things, is seen to contribute to either intensifying or suppressing ‘town’ and ‘gown’ issues (Chatterton, 2000; Allinson, 2006) and/or the student cohorts’ University experiences.

As a University location, the city of Portsmouth is, of course, not exceptional, however it does exhibit some interesting and distinctive characteristics which may serve to shape the ways in which the student cohort might experience it. The UK’s only island city, Portsmouth covers approximately forty square kilometres and has a population of 197,614 with a population density of, on average, 5000 people per square kilometre, making it the UK’s most densely populated city by area outside of London (Portsmouth City Council, 2012). Portsmouth has a large youth population with 33.6 per cent of the city’s population being under the age of 25. This is three per cent higher than the national average of 30.7 per cent and clearly reflects Portsmouth’s large student population (Portsmouth City Council, 2012). To contextualise this, using data gleaned from the 2011 UK Census (Office of National Statistics (ONS), 2013), Figure 1.1 and Table 1.1 illustrate the density of young adults aged between 18 and 21 per ward within the Local authority (LA) of Portsmouth, the age range most likely to represent the more typical student cohort. This reveals the highest density of young adults living in the Central Southsea ward (27 per cent) with this density decreasing to between 10 and 24 per cent in the south western wards and between 5 and 9 per cent across the rest of the LA, with the exception of the Hilsea, Drayton and Farlington, Nelson and Baffins wards which each contain fewer than 5 per cent of young adults. Figure 1.2 and Table 1.2
Figure 1.1: Distribution of young adults in Portsmouth by ward (source: 2011 UK Census data, ONS, 2013).

Figure 1.2: Distribution of students in Portsmouth by ward (source: author’s survey data).
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ward</th>
<th>Population of ward (n)</th>
<th>Population aged 18-21 (n)</th>
<th>Population aged 18-21 (%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
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<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>205,056</td>
<td>20,558</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Central Southsea</td>
<td>16,660</td>
<td>4504</td>
<td>27.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>St. Thomas</td>
<td>16,634</td>
<td>3348</td>
<td>20.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Charles Dickens</td>
<td>18,642</td>
<td>2847</td>
<td>15.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>St. Jude</td>
<td>12,679</td>
<td>1355</td>
<td>10.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Milton</td>
<td>14,111</td>
<td>1324</td>
<td>9.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fratton</td>
<td>15,314</td>
<td>1319</td>
<td>8.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eastney</td>
<td>13,591</td>
<td>984</td>
<td>7.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Paulsgrove</td>
<td>14,010</td>
<td>775</td>
<td>5.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Copnor</td>
<td>13,608</td>
<td>704</td>
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<td>13,830</td>
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<td>Baffins</td>
<td>15,121</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nelson</td>
<td>14,250</td>
<td>689</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hilsea</td>
<td>13,552</td>
<td>647</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Drayton and Farlington</td>
<td>13,054</td>
<td>610</td>
<td>4.6</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Table 1.1: Distribution of young adults in Portsmouth by ward (source: 2011 UK Census data, ONS, 2013).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ward</th>
<th>Population aged 18-21 (n)</th>
<th>Population aged 18-21 (%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>1147&lt;sup&gt;a&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Central Southsea</td>
<td>326</td>
<td>28.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>St. Thomas</td>
<td>204</td>
<td>17.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Charles Dickens</td>
<td>145</td>
<td>12.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Milton</td>
<td>73</td>
<td>6.3</td>
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<tr>
<td>St. Jude</td>
<td>67</td>
<td>5.8</td>
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<tr>
<td>Fratton</td>
<td>58</td>
<td>5.0</td>
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<tr>
<td>Eastney</td>
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<tr>
<td>Baffins</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>0.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Drayton and Farlington</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>0.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cosham</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>0.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Copnor</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>0.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nelson</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>0.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hilsea</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>0.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Paulsgrove</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>0.2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<sup>a</sup> – 159 respondents living outside of the Portsmouth LA

Table 1.2: Distribution of students in Portsmouth by ward (source: author’s survey data).
explain these distributions further, showing the residency of full-time undergraduates within the city. As in Figure 1.1, Central Southsea contains the highest concentration of students (28.4%), and while this density is not matched by any other ward, the neighbouring wards do contain significantly more students than those to the north of the LA. This is unsurprising as the majority of University buildings and halls of residences are situated in the Charles Dickens and St. Thomas wards, confirming a preference for residing close the place of study.

The University of Portsmouth gained its University status as part of the Further and Higher Education Act of 1992. As of 2011-12 it has 22,709 students, constituting approximately eleven percent of the city’s population. The University comprises ten halls of residence (see Figure 1.3): five in the Guildhall area of the city centre (Bateson Hall, Harry Law Hall, Margaret Rule Hall, Trafalgar Hall and James Watson Hall), two in the Southsea area (Rees Hall and Burrell House), adjacent to the seafront and three in the Langstone student village (Langstone Flats, Trust Hall and QEQM Hall), approximately two and a half miles from the city centre (see Figure 1.4). This accommodation offers 3,211 rooms, capable of accommodating seventy five per cent of the first year cohort (University of Portsmouth, 2011), meaning the vast majority of students live either in privately rented accommodation within the city; with parents partners or others; or

This is comprised of: 18,878 (83 per cent) full time students and 3,831 (17 per cent) part time students. In terms of degree level, 18,889 (83 per cent) are studying as undergraduates and 3,217 (17 per cent) are postgraduates (University of Portsmouth, 2012a).

Figure 1.3: James Watson halls of residence in Guildhall Walk (source: author’s photograph)
Figure 1.4: Distribution of student accommodation in Portsmouth (Source: author’s survey data)
commute in from neighbouring cities and counties. The University of Portsmouth have proposed to expand their accommodation portfolio through the development of a 33-storey accommodation block to be built adjacent to the Guildhall, capable of housing up to 600 students\textsuperscript{5}. In addition, Mercantile House, currently a teaching and office facility adjacent to the Students’ Union, is set to be converted into accommodation for up to 200 students. This project is set for completion in time for the 2014 intake of students (The Galleon, 2012c).

The majority of second and third year students currently reside in privately rented accommodation situated mostly in the Central Southsea area of the city, approximately a half an hour walk away from the University campus (see Figure 1.4). Much of this accommodation is comprised of Victorian terraced housing stock which has been converted from single family dwellings into houses in multiple occupation (HMO) (see Figure 1.5). These types of properties typically cater for between three and five sharers and rents range from £70 to £80 per week excluding bills (University of Portsmouth, 2012b). Much of the housing in this part of Portsmouth is densely packed leading to occasional tensions between student and non-student neighbours (The Galleon, 2011). As a means of alleviating some of these tensions, legislation was passed in October 2012 to limit the spread of HMO in the Southsea area of the city if it were to exceed ten per cent within any 50 mile radius (The Galleon, 2012b).

With regard to social activities, much of the more typically student-centric bars and nightclubs are situated in three areas of the city: Guildhall Walk, Gunwharf Quays and the vicinity of Albert Road in Southsea (see Figure 1.6). The nightspots most favoured by first year undergraduates are clustered around the Guildhall halls and attract students with cheap entry and drinks deals throughout the week. The most popular of these nightclubs are Liquid & Envy, situated on the edge of Commercial Road, and Babylon\textsuperscript{6} located adjacent to Guildhall Walk. Liquid & Envy offers a student night on a Thursday and regularly hosts special guests and sets from resident DJs. Babylon is a ‘Nineties’ themed bar which holds a student night on a Tuesday and another in conjunction with the University of Portsmouth Students’ Union (UPSU) and Eskimo 11 on a Wednesday. University of Portsmouth students also regularly use some of the more high-end venues within Gunwharf Quays, a large retail, leisure and apartment complex to the west of the

\textsuperscript{5} At the time of writing this thesis, these plans have been delayed until 2016 (The Galleon, 2012a).
\textsuperscript{6} Babylon has been renamed Popworld as of January 2013.
Figure 1.5: Examples of ‘typical’ terraced student HMO in Southsea (source: author’s photographs)
Figure 1.6: Location of popular student nightspots in Portsmouth (Source: author’s interview responses).
island. Gunwharf Quays contains two of the clubs most popular with undergraduates, Tiger Tiger and Highlight. Tiger Tiger is an entertaining and dining chain based in eight UK cities, including Portsmouth. While it is not exclusively a student venue Tiger Tiger does hold a student night on a Monday. Like Liquid & Envy, Tiger Tiger attracts students through celebrity appearances and guest DJs. Many of the venues most popular with students have their student nights endorsed by two nightclub promoters, Rough Hill and Eskimo 11. The presence of these promoters within the city is clear, particularly of Portsmouth based Eskimo 11 who supports the student night at Tiger Tiger and the UPSU official ‘Purple Wednesdays’ student nights, and each employ targeted marketing campaigns in order to publicise their events, either through flyers, advertising or via social media (see Figure 1.7). The other popular venue in Gunwharf Quays, Highlight, is favoured mainly by University sports societies but also has a student night on a Friday. The third location for night-time socialising is the vicinity of Albert Road in Southsea adjacent to much of the privately rented student housing. These pubs and bars, while not strictly student venues, are favoured mainly by second and

Figure 1.6: Eskimo 11 publicity posters on the side of The Astoria night club (formerly Pure) on Guildhall Walk (source: author's photograph)

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7 Highlight has ceased trading as of autumn 2012.
third years and are construed as some of the more bohemian venues in the city, comprising various venues for live music and comedy nights, international restaurants and Shisha bars (see Figure 1.8).

Figure 1.8: The Lounge Nightclub in Southsea (source: author’s photograph)

1.4 – Summary

Relating the geographical morphology of Portsmouth to the context of the research therefore suggests that these numerous and mixed locations may be ideal for developing understandings of the heterogeneity of identities and connections with place. This is particularly so as the students involved are likely to have very different and adaptive relationships with their term-time University location as they move through their degrees. What is important to recognise is how these students draw comparisons between different locations in Portsmouth; how changes in accommodation may influence their perceptions of locations; how they adapt their identities as they move between year groups; and how these changes might influence their social activities. While the above has outlined how the composition of the city and the relationships between University buildings, accommodation and social, leisure and retail spaces, may
be unique to Portsmouth, it is also important to recognise that Portsmouth is not alone in managing the requirements of its student population. The majority of UK University towns and cities have the same *types* of requirements as the ones outlined in this chapter, just at different scales. This means that while there may be a great deal of heterogeneity between Universities, there are certain themes, such as accommodation issues, student consumption habits and relationships between ‘town’ and ‘gown’ which are likely to be replicable across all institutions.
Chapter Two – Literature Review

This chapter will offer a critique of the literature pertaining to the geographies of HE students in order to establish a firm grounding for the empirical analysis of this thesis. As this chapter will demonstrate, discussions of the geographies of students include the [im]mobilities of tertiary level students; their experiences of term-time space and place; their interactions with [non]student communities and their interpretations of [non]student homes and will draw upon theories and concepts which cut across multiple subsections of the social sciences. The remainder of this chapter will explore some of the contrasting ways in which these processes are recognised within the nexus of ‘student geographies’ (after Smith, 2009) which will, in turn develop a clear rationale with which to address the research questions. Section 2.1 will explore the choices, mobilities and pre-student experiences of prospective learners and will highlight the diversity which exists among the student body in the ways in which they approach University. Section 2.2 will focus upon the impact and influence students have upon local communities, paying particular attention to the process of ‘studentification’, the proliferation of student-centric social spaces and the often tense relationships between ‘town’ and ‘gown’. Section 2.3 will discuss these processes further through the lens of the ‘home’ and will examine the ways in which HE students go about establishing home in their term-time accommodation through processes of domesticity and the negotiation of house rules and behaviours. Finally, section 2.4 will explore how students go about making connections and establishing friendship groups. In doing so, this section will go on to discuss how these relationships may be [re]negotiated once the students graduate and return to their non-student lives.

2.1 – Choices, Mobilities and Pre-student Experiences

It has been broadly argued that widening participation policies initiated since the 1990s have facilitated greater opportunities for access to HE for those not previously considered eligible to go to University (Leathwood & O’Connell, 2003). Whilst this has been deemed a positive social and economic step by many, some believe that increased access has diluted HE and paved the way for a group of students unaware and unprepared for student life (Archer & Hutchings, 2000). There exists an extensive corpus of literature pertaining to this phenomenon which has sought to critically discuss how students experience their transition into HE, questioning specifically the notion that
all students follow a linear pathway through University (Patiniotis & Holdsworth, 2005; Reay *et al.*, 2010; Leese, 2010; Mangan *et al.*, 2010). In making sense of this non-linearity, HE students are therefore often labelled within this literature as being from either ‘traditional’ or ‘non-traditional’ backgrounds. Traditional students are often characterised as following an ‘expected’ pathway through HE and having a family history of tertiary level education (Patiniotis & Holdsworth, 2005). As Read *et al.* (2003) suggest:

“Academic culture and socially dominant discourses of academic life present the middle-class student as the ‘norm’, and students from such backgrounds do not often question their right to ‘belong’ in such an environment” (p. 263).

Universities too can be complicit in this normalisation, particularly within publicity such as prospectus’ which: “subtly enforce the conception of ‘normal’ University students as heterosexual, and also young, unmarried and living on site” (Read *et al.*, 2003, p. 262). It is argued that prior knowledge of the workings of University life arms traditional students with the correct tools with which to make a successful transition through HE (Reay, 2004). Patiniotis and Holdsworth (2005) and Christie (2007; 2009) go on to suggest that this type of student will often have a prior knowledge of HE through familial connections and are more likely to wish to leave home for University, casting them as ‘non-local students’ (Holdsworth, 2009a). Crozier *et al.* (2008) add to this by suggesting that students from traditional backgrounds often understand the importance of picking up on the career enhancing, non-academic opportunities, such as internships, sports or societies, made available to them.

On the opposite side of this dualism sits the more ‘non-traditional’ student who follows a less typical transition through University than their more traditional counterparts. This corpus of literature recognises the changes in social mobility among learners, specifically the integration of working class students within middle class locations (see Archer *et al.*, 2007; Hollingworth & Williams, 2009; Lehman, 2009; Reay, 2001; Tett, 2004; Hutchings & Archer, 2001; Patiniotis & Holdsworth, 2005). A common thread which runs through this literature is the notion that, despite their original social background, the action of going to University sets into motion the journey to ‘becoming’ middle-class for young adults. Reay (2001) argues that whilst widening participation has made HE more inclusive, there still exists a deep stratification between
those who belong and those who do not, suggesting that: “the English educational system is still prey, in the twenty-first century, [...] to being organised along lines of social class” (p. 343). Christie et al. (2005) go on to suggest that, in reality, the concept of widening participation presents a dichotomy. Whilst it aims to be inclusive of students, irrespective of social class, ethnicity, age and gender, non-traditional students are expected to make drastic changes to their identity and values in order to conform or ‘fit in’ amongst a largely traditional cohort. As Thomas (2002) suggests, non-traditional students are, in many ways, constructed in direct opposition to the image of the traditional student:

“Non-traditional students are positioned as somehow deficient, or as ‘second-class students’, whether through a lack of understanding of the University system, lack of preparedness for academic study, or unwillingness to adopt a student identity” (p. 246).

The facets of non-traditional students are therefore interchangeable; no one aspect is more prominent than another. However, this interchangability means that non-traditional students can be ‘doubly othered’ within traditional institutions as their difference makes them stand out (Reay et al., 2002). These social divisions can be seen through the views of working-class non-participants in HE (see also: Archer & Hutchings, 2000; Archer et al., 2007; Hollingworth & Williams, 2009). Common to much of this work is the notion that while many working-class students may understand the benefits HE can provide for improving social mobility, this can be largely outweighed by an alternative suite of risks and fears about debt, uncertainty and a loss of their ‘working-class’ identity. Lehman (2009) and Reay et al. (2009) offer an alternative viewpoint to these notions of risk, suggesting that the working-class identity might in itself be inherently useful in managing a change in social mobility. Lehman (2009) suggests that whilst the students within his study had articulated an aspiration to become middle-class through the attainment of a degree, their working-class identities gave them a moral advantage over their peers through academic achievement, maturity, responsibility and real-life experiences. Reay et al. (2010) add that, paradoxically, this can manifest itself early on during compulsory education where bright students may feel like “fish out of water” (p. 117) in state education, whilst their working-class identities can again mark them out as different once they commence HE. What ties these themes together is Reay et al.’s (2009) suggestion that working-class students must enable a
separation between their ‘learner’ and ‘social’ habitus in order to facilitate a successful transition into and through HE. However, in a study of youth mobility, Thomson and Taylor (2005) caution against turning these distinctions into typologies in case they serve to further homogenise working-class students. Therefore, while it may be useful to categorise in order to draw comparisons, it is still vitally important to recognise (and extol) the fact that heterogeneity exists within the student body.

Tied into these debates relating to the backgrounds of prospective students are further discussions concerned with the mobility of tertiary level students. Within the UK, many studies of mobility in the context of HE have been centred upon the in-migration and out-migration of students between regional areas (Duke-Williams, 2009; Holdsworth, 2009b) with a particular focus upon the attraction of the escalator regions of the south (Fielding, 1992). In the majority of cases, such mobility between regions can be uneven, with trends for students moving between neighbouring regions, and elevated numbers of students from London and the South East relocating to elite higher education institutions (HEIs) across the country (Higher Education Statistics Agency (HESA), 2011; see also: Mangan et al., 2010). Holdsworth (2009b) argues however that discussions of the regional and local mobility patterns of students can be overlooked by the meta-narratives of international and national student mobility. This research provides an opportunity to address Holdworth’s concerns by focusing attention on the small-scale (and every day) mobility decisions made by students. Specifically, this will highlight how such ‘local’ mobility contributes to students’ interpretations of their term-time location, and how a strong relationship with their University location may help overcome periods of homesickness (Scopelitti & Tiberio, 2010) or, at worst, discontinuation of study (Wilcox et al., 2005).

Continuing this theme of discussing the migration patterns of HE students highlights greater complexity than simply assessing movements from home to University and back again. There is a burgeoning body of research which places emphasis on the more qualitative aspects to this mobility, separating it into two types: the aspirations, motivations and/or decisions for leaving home (Hinton, 2011; Cairns & Smyth, 2009; Cairns, 2008; 2009), or choosing Universities within a close proximity to home (Holdsworth, 2009b; Christie, 2007; 2009; Patiniotis & Holdsworth, 2005). Hopkins (2006) and Hinton (2011) discuss the HE aspirations of prospective undergraduates.
Hinton in particular points to the influence of ‘homeland’ in shaping these decisions for her young Welsh respondents, suggesting that her interviewees sought to retain: “the ontological security of a Welsh ‘home’ during the transition to the unknown and unfamiliar world of HE” (p. 32). Hinton’s notions of enabling supportive transitions are shared by Cairns and Smyth (2011) in a study of undergraduates in Northern Ireland. Their findings, however, focus less on attachments to the place itself and instead conflate the importance of familial support in their future mobility decisions. In this sense, an inclination to be mobile is motivated by prior knowledge of geographical mobility, either through parents or peer groups. Brooks (2002) offers an alternative to this, suggesting that some of the prospective students within her study adopted a strategy of ‘starting over’ prior to commencing University, where they strived to sever existing bonds with their original peer group in order to forge new connections once they had begun University. Therefore, unlike Hinton’s discussions of prospective students trying hard to maintain tight connections with their roots, some of the participants in Brooks’ study showed signs of being far more pragmatic about their decisions. Their transitional identities evoked a degree of liminality where the process of “waiting for the future to arrive” (Brooks, 2002, p. 462) indicates that they may have had far less attachment to their non-student pasts.

The familial influences mentioned by Hinton (2011) and Cairns and Smyth (2011) are also key in understanding the motivations for leaving home for non-traditional students. Patiniotis and Holdsworth (2005), for example, suggest that parental knowledge of HE has a causal link to whether or not students may be likely to leave home to go to University by suggesting that those with a familial knowledge of HE are far likelier to have a successful transition into and through HE than those who are approaching HE for the first time (see also: Holdsworth, 2006; 2009b). That is, of course, not to say that non-traditional students will automatically stay at home during their studies. There is ample evidence to show that many of these students do indeed make the transition from home to University (see Leathwood & O’Connell, 2003; Crozier et al., 2008; Palmer et al., 2009; Clayton et al., 2009; Taulke-Johnson, 2010b). What these studies are trying to explain, however, is that it is the lack of understanding of the institutional processes attached to HE which can make the transition through University difficult. Crozier et al. (2008) point to the knowledge of the ‘rules of the game’ which many traditional students possess whilst at University. These can include the strategic roles and activities
which can be vital in enhancing future employment profiles which, in many cases can be transmitted from parent to child. Those without such knowledge can therefore experience emotional difficulties when attempting to ‘fit in’ among their new peer group (Christie, 2009; Clayton, et al., 2009), resulting in a withdrawal from social activities carried out on campus outside of lectures and tutorials (Leese, 2010). Incorporating the notions of liminality mentioned earlier by Brooks (2002) can begin to make sense of why this process can become complex for non-traditional students. Through a focus on the initial point of entry into University, Palmer et al. (2009) suggest that the period between home and University constitutes an ‘in-between-ness’ or ‘betwixt space’, a fragile and emotional space where transitional students are learning to ‘become’ their future selves. What is key to this however, is that movement through these spaces is not unilateral but instead involves a constellation of actors (friends, family, tutors, employers, University managers etc.) all of whom are attempting, often in contrasting ways, to facilitate a smooth transition. What is less clear however is whether those students from non-traditional backgrounds who make the decision to move away to University struggle with establishing their student identities away from their non-student peer groups. A more detailed understanding of these processes may begin to offer some insight into why those without prior knowledge of the inner-workings of the HE machine may falter during their initial transition into HE and how this might become exacerbated during subsequent years.

While the previous sections have been concerned with the physical transitions of traditional and non-traditional students going to University, it is a student’s immobility which comes into question when regarding those who choose to remain in the family home during their studies. Crucially, however, within the literature immobility is viewed, not necessarily as a state of being, but rather as a mooring (Urry, 2003) or place of storage (Adey, 2010). Importantly, Adey (2006) argues that “there is never any absolute immobility, but only mobilities which we mistake for immobility” (p. 83). This means that processes, people or places can be in a state of relative immobility where a person’s (or object’s) lack of mobility is judged in relation to another’s mobility. Adey (2006) uses the site of the aeroplane flight as an example of this relationship, where the immobility of the passenger, seated and contained for the duration of the flight, can be discussed in relation to the mobility of the aircraft itself. Therefore, as Adey (2006) argues: “it is the differences in mobility which creates relative immobility” (p. 84).
Importantly, in the context of human interactions, Hannam et al. (2006) point out that mobilities can be highly influenced by power, meaning access to (and to a certain extent egress from) places can be experienced unevenly, increasing mobility for some groups as well as embedding immobility for others.

When relating this to the immobility of students, the symbolic attraction of the family home and the inability (or unwillingness) to ‘fit in’ amongst a student community appear to be the two more prominent lines of enquiry (see Crozier et al., 2008; Clayton et al., 2009; Reay et al., 2010). Hence, it has been assumed within much of this literature that the immobility of students living with their parents or in their own homes sits in direct contrast to the more popular discourses of transitions through mobility mentioned earlier in this chapter. This is pertinent as the UK student experience of living away from home has, for many, become a defining feature of attending University particularly as “being a student is emblematic for not being from around here” (Holdsworth, 2009a, p. 227). It is here, through the work of Christie (2007; 2009) and Holdsworth (2006; 2009a; 2009b) where some of the reasons why some students choose to stay at home during their studies have begun to emerge. Christie (2007) transcends the more typical motives of financial constraints (Callender & Jackson, 2005; 2008) or the influence of parents (Pugsley, 1998) as being the main causal factors in students choosing to remain in the family home by suggesting that retaining strong connections to a local network of friends and family holds equal importance. In recognising these alternative strategies, Christie (2007) demonstrates how these students can easily adopt multiple identities which enable them to move freely between home and University. In extending Christie’s arguments, Holdsworth (2006) questions whether home-based learners’ student identities may be challenged when they attempt to ‘fit in’ at University and whether or not those who elect to stay at home ‘miss out’ on the University experience. Holdsworth argues that there are no right or wrong ways of going to University, suggesting that, in some ways, staying at home can assist in accumulating the social capital required by the student to maintain strong local networks which may help them once they have graduated. Importantly, both Christie’s and Holdsworth’s studies state the significance of the individual student’s agency in making these decisions. For many of the students within their studies, their decisions not to try to fit in or participate in student-centric social activities was a conscious one.
and was decided upon early on (see also: Patiniotis & Holdsworth, 2005). In response to this, Clayton et al. (2009) go on to suggest that:

“[Living at home] illustrates both a ‘poverty of connections’ in terms of social networks beyond the local area, which limits individuals to place-based relationships, and the need amongst some students for a sense of everyday social stability and continuity in a period of personal rapid change and wider socio-economic instability” (p. 162).

This implies that ‘home-based’ students may employ a particular ‘stay-at-home’ strategy in order to minimise the risks associated with going to University. This enables strong connections with both the material and symbolic places associated with their neighbourhoods and communities and may provide an anchor during studies. What is not immediately clear from the literature however is how residential circumstances affect the student experience (Brennan & Osbourne, 2008). ‘Locally based’ students are not a homogenous group and often have diverse and complex social, cultural and economic reasons for living at home whilst studying. Remaining in the familial home to maintain connections with an established social sphere is very different to living at home to care for a family member or retain a job. Equally, whilst living in halls of residence or rented term-time accommodation may be considered an ephemeral part of the life-stage for many students, this may also be experienced differently, by different students at different stages of the degree.

This degree of agency would appear to sit in contrast to studies by Crozier et al. (2008) and Reay et al. (2010) who suggest that students who do not leave home to go to University have somewhat disadvantaged experiences in relation to their more mobile equivalents. The motivations for immobility within these studies appear to hinge upon social class, with those working class students being most likely to remain at home during their degrees. An earlier study by Reay (2002; 2003) of the experiences of working-class women attending an Access course at a London FE college highlights a geographical context to these notions of immobility. Broadly speaking, they suggest that the domestic circumstances of students may limit their choice of HEI to one within their local area. However, this may not necessarily be an equitable process as, for the women within their study, their geographical location (London) means that they have a greater opportunity to choose between a range of HEIs to select one which best suits their requirements. What can be drawn from this is that the prospective students within such
locations may be able to make more informed choices as to the pathways they wish to take, choosing either to remain within their comfort zone or select HEIs which may challenge their identities. Embarking upon a course of HE also makes it possible for adult learners to become more reflexive about their ‘old’ identities (see Baxter & Britton, 2001; Reay, 2003; Osbourne et al., 2004). As Beck (1992) suggests, education may be capable of making people upwardly mobile in that it acts as a buffer against becoming downwardly mobile. However, many adult learners can feel restricted by their immobility (Reay, 2003). Whilst the experiences they gain through HE may expose greater access to new opportunities and, ultimately, a change to their social identities, mature students are often tied to their geographical location by family circumstances, meaning they cannot always take full advantage of such prospects (see Tett, 2004; Stone, 2008).

As well as being geographically constrained in their HE decisions, Crozier et al. (2008) also point out that many of the students within their study who remained at home during their studies spoke of University being only a single component of their lives. Clayton et al. (2009) add to this by suggesting that these processes of withdrawal from the student community can become exacerbated by a lack of knowledge of the benefits of HE beyond the degree. Alongside this, Christie et al. (2005) suggest that home-based students can become characterised as ‘day students’, often by their own design, which essentially marks them out as ‘doing’ their course rather than ‘being’ a student (see also: Christie, 2009). While some of this work ponders the agency of home-based students in making their decisions to remain at home during their studies, there exists an undercurrent of disadvantage to these choices, particularly regarding how these students might experience ‘being’ a student once at University. As Holdsworth (2009a) claims, “local knowledge is not necessarily valid in the student community” (p. 235), suggesting that more traditional students may be likely to focus upon specific student-centric infrastructure and be less interested in non-student based cultural activities. What is lacking here is a discussion of how home-based students might build their propinquity to home and University into being beneficial to their prospective student experience rather than focusing upon how their immobility may disadvantage their prospects. As was suggested by Christie et al. (2005), not all non-traditional students follow the same pathways of being disadvantaged by their immobility, meaning
attention must be given to how these students express their agency in their educational and/or social decisions.

2.2 – Studentification, Student-centric Social Spaces and ‘Town’ and ‘Gown’

In recent years, researchers have begun to show an interest in the effect of increasing numbers of students upon cities (Smith, 2002; 2005; Allinson, 2006; Munro et al., 2009; Russo & Tatjer, 2007; Munro & Livingston, 2011; Kenna, 2011; Sage et al., 2011), particularly considering as many as 46 per cent of students live in privately rented HMO, an increase of 10 per cent since 1997 (Hubbard, 2009). This need for student bed space within University towns and cities coincided with the property boom of the late 1990s and the unprecedented surge in the buy-to-let (BTL) market until the mid 2000s (Sprigings, 2008; Gibb & Nuygaard, 2010; Smith, 2011; Couch & Cocks, 2013). As Sprigings suggests, BTLs increased from 44,400 in 1999 to 330,000 in 2006 making up 3.5 per cent of total mortgages in 1999 and 28.5 per cent in 2006 respectively. In exploring the concurrence of rapidly increasing student numbers and the BTL market the term ‘studentification’ (Smith, 2002; 2005) was coined to encapsulate the growing concentrations, or ‘student ghettos’ or ‘enclaves’ (Rugg et al., 2002), which emerged around University campuses. As a process, studentification has become one of the more prominent themes within debates surrounding the geographies of students. It has encapsulated both the mobility and dispersion of UK tertiary students as well as becoming a neat buzzword amongst the popular press for the causes of neighbourhood decline and social polarisation (The Economist, 2004). This sharp increase in University attendees which the UK has experienced over the previous two decades has inspired significant debate within geography as well as across the social sciences prompting Smith (2009) to ask:

“To what degree do rising clusters of student populations mediate wider unfolding societal trends, such as population transience and mobility and social segregation?” (p. 1795).

In response to Smith’s plea, rather than being confined to the campus, students permeate the areas in which they reside during term time. This can create a noticeable demographic shift during these periods as large numbers of students move in and out of their term-time location. Hence Smith’s term, ‘studentification’, has given geographers
and social commentators alike a foundation with which to explain this changing, urban demographic.

The first step in developing an understanding of the impact of student concentrations upon University towns and cities is to recognise the intricate dynamics of the student community. Kenyon (1997; 2000) begins by illustrating the importance students place upon community as a social grouping. However, within Kenyon’s work, community is focused upon the neighbourhood and not the wider ‘sense of community’ the city has to offer students. In this form, a student community is a spatial and geographical location where students can both interact and establish student identities. Importantly however, these student communities often operate separately from the indigenous population (Kenyon, 1997; Chatterton’s, 1999), making these separations (their negative connotations in particular) the main focus for much of the literature regarding student communities, specifically within the studentification debate (Smith, 2008; 2009; Hubbard, 2008; 2009; Sage et al., 2011). In these cases, students are depicted as projecting a ‘monoculture’ upon their host communities (Allinson, 2006) which can, in turn, initiate the displacement and social segregation of local residents (Hubbard, 2008). The increasing concentration of privately rented student accommodation has therefore become one of the most noticeable geographies of contemporary University towns and cities (Smith, 2002; 2005; Sage et al., 2012).

In a study of studentification in a small Spanish city, Garmendia et al. (2011) present an alternative slant to these concentrations, suggesting that the effects of studentification can become intensified when applying them to flat sharing. They use the term ‘vertical studentification’ as a way of demonstrating how the clustering of students in apartment blocks can instigate similar frictions to those mentioned earlier in ‘horizontal housing’. However, the nature of these blocks often shields these impacts, meaning policy implications, including distribution limits, segregations and/or strategic building design, can become less clear (see also: Omar et al., 2011 and Ford & Vaughn, 2011). In order to move these debates forward there may be some value in identifying whether there are differences between how students living in more typical student accommodation experience their term-time University location. While there is considerable debate as to the visibility of student HMO in University locations there may also be something here about how different types of accommodation inform different behaviours and
experiences and that these might not necessarily be ‘right’ for all students. Andersson et al. (2012) hint at how accommodation such as halls of residences can become sites of marginalisation due to the high numbers of disparate occupants. However, the heterogeneity among students suggested earlier indicate that this may be more complex than simply students marginalising others, particularly if there are disparities between the types of accommodation chosen by ‘Freshers’\(^8\). With this in mind, it may be useful to make linkages between residential location and the types of social activities students are participating in.

In addition to these notions of clustering of students, their *seasonality* means they are often associated with a host of antisocial behaviour issues including noise, litter and abuse. For example, a large student presence is thought to attract crime into a neighbourhood as students are perceived to be popular targets of burglary (Hubbard, 2008). In addition, Munro and Livingston (2011) identified that studentified neighbourhoods can also become popular with LAs for the relocation of other, seemingly problem, ‘non-traditional’ households, including, among others, the housing benefit market, slum rentals and asylum seekers (see Rugg & Rhodes, 2008). These factors and more, including parking issues and the neglect of properties by landlords, can be detrimental towards the aesthetic image of a neighbourhood and affect house prices. Studentification can also contribute towards demographic imbalances within local neighbourhoods, homogenising services and facilities such as student-centric retail outlets, resulting in the potential for subsequent closures of local schools and health centres as the traditional local residents become displaced (Allinson, 2006). It is however, important to recognise that these negative issues are not the sole responsibility of students. While students may be the visible actors in these processes, HEIs, LAs, letting agents and landlords also play significant roles in the impacts of studentification (Hubbard, 2008; Smith & Holt, 2007; Smith, 2005; 2008; Sage et al., 2011).

In response to these negative connotations, there is plenty of evidence to suggest that studentification can bring a wealth of associated benefits to neighbourhoods. It would be unhelpful to assume that badly behaved students existed in the majority, hence it is important to resist negatively stereotyping students as increasing numbers are becoming involved in local community projects which go some way in restoring harmony between

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\(^8\) ‘Fresher’ or ‘freshman’ derives from the British or American term for a first year University student.
‘town’ and ‘gown’ (see Universities UK, 2005; 2008; National Union of Students (NUS), 2007; Holdsworth & Quinn, 2010; 2012; Universities UK/NUS/GuildHE, 2010; Holdsworth, 2010). There is increasing recognition that a student presence within local communities can help revitalise tired or undesirable neighbourhoods and lead to improvements to infrastructure, such as public transport links (see Universities UK, 2005). As Chatterton (1999) and Chatterton and Hollands (2003) point out, this has led to complex forms of commodification within University towns and cities where students are increasingly viewed as powerful commodifiers, or ‘apprentice gentrifiers’ (Smith & Holt, 2007). Chatterton and Hollands refer to this as ‘studentland’ where the ‘student pound’ draws businesses and services into neighbourhoods which would otherwise not have come. However, while there may be secondary benefits to non-student residents, studentified spaces are ultimately for the benefit of the student in order to assist them with developing their ‘University experience’ (Kenyon, 1997).

Where the above examples highlight the impacts of students in residential neighbourhoods, it is important to recognise that students are not confined simply to the areas in which they live. A student presence can be visible across the towns and cities which host them (Chatterton, 2000). This means that during term-time University locations can quickly morph from heterogeneous places which serve a wide-ranging community to places which exclusively target students with student-centric shops and services and seasonal night-time activities (Chatterton, 1999, Chatterton & Hollands, 2003; Munro & Livingston, 2011; Watiss, 2013). While Munro and Livingston (2011) argue that many University towns and cities express concern over their increasing student populations and the influence this has over the provision of shops and services, others report on the lengths that some local businesses will go to in attracting the student cohort, often at the expense of the local community (Chatterton, 1999; Chatterton & Hollands, 2002; 2003; Allinson, 2006). This means that student spaces can eventually represent a ‘divided city’ (Chatterton, 1999) in that the resultant separations of students away from the rest of the city can result in the resentment and conflict mentioned earlier from local, non-students. What could be explored further is how students manage everyday place-making activities within the wider community, be it through night-time socialising, shopping or the journey between the campus and home. Chatterton (2010) has hinted at this by suggesting that corridors are forming between student accommodation, the University campus and the city centre creating a ‘student
urban service sector’. Such spaces are the product of both corporate and independent companies and are designed to draw students into the University experience thus strengthening their attachment to the student community.

In addition to these notions of commodification, Holt and Griffin (2005) suggest that students quickly learn to appropriate certain environments, such as night-time social spaces, as their own and can develop their own tactics for excluding non-students through their attendance of student-only nights. Their research infers that students, and to a certain extent non-students, can employ territorialised behaviour as a way of marking out identity and differentiating themselves from other groups, essentially demarcating space for their exclusive use. As Holligan and Deuchar (2009) suggest:

“Territorialities represent the struggles of young people for the resources that social capital offers for identity maintenance, personal well-being and safety” (p. 743).

In Holt and Griffin’s (2005) research this process was identified by labelling our spaces and their spaces which suggest a clear distinction between student and non-student spaces. Naturally, University students are far from the dominant group within University towns and cities (in Portsmouth for example, undergraduate students constitute eleven per cent of the overall population), but their seasonality can be enough to give them a visible presence within the city during term time. Added to this is an often disposable income from student loans and a desire to consume student activities en masse which means that non-students can often be excluded from socialising in certain clubs and bars mid-week.

In furthering this discussion, it is important to recognise that these behaviours are mostly liminal in that they are subject to change as a student progresses through their degree pathway. As Chow and Healey (2008) suggest, the process of establishing place attachment for first year undergraduates is often experienced intensely, particularly during the initial weeks of the first year. This assists in explaining why students may appear as passive consumers in their first year. As Anderson (2010) suggests, young people can be characterised as ‘in-between’, in that they exist on the margin of youth and adulthood. Their position between these conventional categories marks them out as “liminal beings” (p. 133) as their past is essentially suspended whilst their future adult potential is yet to be realised (see also: Turner, 1969).Going to University then
constitutes an ideal opportunity to break from this marginal state, particularly as prior to this most young people are thought to be socially and spatially separated from the trappings of adulthood (Valentine, 2001). At this point of entry into University, students are often introduced to typically ‘adult’ behaviours, such as unsupervised night-time socialising, over which they have a great deal of control in how they wish to experience these behaviours. So far these debates of self-segregation have, outside of Chatterton’s (1999) definitions, been couched in discourses of negativity and disadvantage, with students cast as the perpetrators of the types of community polarisation outlined in this section. In advancing these claims it may be useful to invert these discourses and in turn explore how these behaviours might actually benefit students and potentially non-students by association.

2.3 – Heterogeneous Accommodation, Home-making and Domesticity in the ‘Student Home’

The previous section spoke of the ways which the locations in which students resided during term-time may influence their behaviours. In order to deepen this argument it is important to recognise the role of the home in these processes, specifically how students develop domesticity and home-making within their term-time accommodation. Whilst the above sections have revealed a wealth of discussions of the trajectories of those UK students who elect to move away from home for study and into University provided or privately rented term-time accommodation, little has been discussed as to how students make, organise and perform ‘space’ and ‘place’ within their term-time accommodation. It is, of course, important to discuss the meta-narratives of student mobility and transience in order to assess the wider social, cultural and economic impacts of student concentrations. However, much can be drawn from focusing upon the micro-geographies of students within their accommodation, particularly as the multiple accommodation changes students often make during their degree are likely to influence other aspects of their student experience. As this chapter has suggested, the student experience has changed immeasurably over recent decades, with young adults approaching their term-time living arrangements in a multitude of ways. Rather than following the very common ‘home to halls to second year house’ pattern which has pervaded the ‘housing biographies’ (Rugg et al., 2004) of UK HE students for many years (Silver, 2006; Smith & Holt, 2007), other living arrangements, such as living at
home for extended periods, are also being factored into students’ accommodation choices (Hubbard, 2009). This raises questions as to how students negotiate the transition between ‘homes’; what types of markers students use in order to ‘make’ or ‘experience’ place; and how students learn and perform mundane domestic behaviours within often shared environments. Crucially, problems with living arrangements (halls, rented housing or living at home) are thought to be one of the fundamental drivers for disruptions to study for undergraduates (Wilcox et al., 2005). Discussing the dynamics of student households will therefore be useful in informing Universities of the complexities of student housing, particularly when things go wrong in what are essentially ‘hidden’ environments. Encouraging some sort of dialogue between students and Universities may be important as institutional support networks are often bypassed by students in favour of student/familial support (Wilcox et al., 2005), meaning Universities may not necessarily be aware of a problem until the student withdraws.

In preparing a foundation for understanding the complexities of how students view, enact and reproduce domesticity within their term-time accommodation it is first necessary to outline conceptually, what is meant by ‘home’. The definition of the term ‘home’ is highly ambiguous and is often used to evoke an emotional response. It has been widely recognised that the home is imbued with meanings connected to identity, belonging and lived experience (Blunt, 2005; Blunt & Varley, 2004; Valentine, 2001; Walsh, 2006). The home is a place in which a variety of social and spatial practices are carried out, from belonging, closeness and desire, to isolation, brutality and fear (Blunt, 2005), all of which are highly influential in establishing a ‘sense of place’ within the home. Hence, as Holdsworth and Morgan (2005) imply, the term ‘home’, particularly within the English language, has highly elastic geographical connotations, conflating and constricting between ‘household’, ‘social grouping’, ‘neighbourhood’, ‘community’, ‘city’, ‘nation’ and beyond. However, in reducing home to ‘the place where one lives’, its existence as both a material space and a place of meaning hints at the delicate interplay between ‘house’ and ‘home’. As Valentine (2001) suggests: “our homes – perhaps more than any other geographical locations – have strong claims to our time, resources and emotions” (p. 71). Home therefore requires a vested interest or sense of belonging in order to transform it from being simply a house or property into a place of meaning (Saunders, 1989).
Valentine (2001) points to the moral economy of the home, itself a key area of debate, as a way of identifying some of the methods used in order to make home. The home is a powerful site of consumption which acts as a crossover point for products to move from the public to the private sphere. In this sense, products become domesticated or drawn into the everyday cycle of the household. As Saunders (1989) suggests, the home is simultaneously “an object of consumption [and] the container within which much consumption takes place” (p. 177). However, Saunders adds a caveat to this, stating that homes are uniquely diverse, adding: “the meaning and experience of the home is likely to vary within households, between households and between areas” (p.178, emphasis in original). The moral economy of the household can therefore be a powerful educational tool for young adults in learning domestic habits when they eventually leave the family home. Their memories and lived experiences of home travel with them yet it is up to them to decide whether to adhere to or rebel against them.

In considering accommodation choices for first year students, Christie et al. (2002) suggest that both students and parents appear very keen to secure available places in halls, particularly as a period in University managed accommodation often represents a more sheltered transition away from home. As Morgan and McDowell (1979) and Silver (2004) point out, halls of residence can assist with socialising students, creating an inclusive and culturally likeminded community which, to a certain degree, aims at redressing the inequalities of students’ home lives. There are, of course, contrasting opinions to these arguments. Amole (2009), Thomsen (2007) and Fincher and Shaw (2009) all stress the importance of the “morphological configuration” (Amole, 2009, p. 77) of halls in improving students’ satisfaction with their accommodation. Amole in particular points to a specific layout, high density and high levels of social interaction as being most popular among his Nigerian respondents, whereas Thomsen (2007) highlights the functionality of halls, particularly in their colour schemes, can make them unappealing and un-homely for her Norwegian participants. Whilst there is scant discussion regarding this initial transitory stage, a much larger corpus of literature exists concerning the accommodation choices of students moving into rented housing, from both academic (Ford et al., 2002; Rugg & Rhodes, 2008; Calvert, 2010; Couch & Cocks, 2013) and policy (National HMO Lobby, 2008; Savills Research, 2009; 2012; Communities and Local Government, 2010) perspectives. Rugg et al. (2000; 2002) argue that students constitute a ‘niche market’ within their University location. They
propose that students are advantaged by their flexibility in their living arrangements suggesting that the only provisos are that the property is furnished and can be shared by two or more students. However, Rugg et al. (2004) later became slightly more critical of this lifestyle choice of residing in the rental sector, stressing that those students living in rented housing are far less likely to be able to gain access to pastoral care from a private landlord than the support which they may have received in halls.

In moving on from these discussions of rented student housing, there is an emerging literature which extols the virtues of ‘purpose built student accommodation’ (PBSA) in offering an alleviation of some of the negative outcomes of studentification within University cities (see Hubbard, 2009; Chatterton, 2010; Kenna, 2011; Stevenson & Askham, 2012; Sage et al., 2013). From this burgeoning debate comes a suggestion that accommodation preferences are beginning to change for undergraduate students beyond their first year, with increased numbers seeking alternative living arrangements to the classic shared student house (Hubbard, 2009; Stevenson & Askham, 2012). As Chatterton (2010) suggests, Universities are becoming increasingly entrepreneurial and businesslike with their accommodation, picking up on emerging trends that students no longer want to ‘slum it’ in poor quality housing (see also: Nido, 2008; UNITE, n.d.). Kenna (2011) argues that, within the context of Cork in Ireland, increased numbers of PBSA\(^9\) has significantly reduced the negative impacts of studentification within the city. However, this reduction comes at a cost, with an intensification of the polarisation between students and non-students, particularly as those living in these PBSA are seemingly uninterested in participating in local community activities. For these authors, PBSA has potential to become the preferred choice for students, particularly as students increasingly insist upon on facilities such as high-speed broadband and en-suite bathrooms as standard. However, Hubbard (2009) adds a caveat to this by suggesting that, according to UNITE, most students do not factor cost into making their decision to move, their desire to live within a ‘student community’ is much stronger, suggesting that students may be far likelier to want to live in shared rented housing in order to be among their peer group. This raises the question of whether student accommodation is a ‘home’ or simply a place to sleep or store belongings, like a hotel. Certainly this may be true of halls of residences and the more recent PBSA outlined above. However, it may

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\(^9\) Cork has thirty halls of residence, serving the 19,269 students of University College Cork and 12,000 students of the Cork Institute of Technology (Kenna, 2011).
be useful to investigate whether students invest more time and energy into ‘home-making’ once they move into rented housing, or if they simply replicate the same behaviours as in halls. This is particularly important as this first step away from parents may, in part, start to shape how they view their future housing trajectories (see Kenyon & Heath, 2001).

For many young adults about to embark on a journey into HE and away from the parental home, term-time accommodation can take on powerful meanings (Hinton, 2011). Lahelma and Gordon (2003) suggest that the role of the home comes under a great deal of scrutiny in the decision making process and is not a flippant or casual choice:

“Home is a space that consists of physical places, social practices, and mental meanings for young people. All the aspects are evoked when they plan or dream about moving away from their parental home” (p. 377).

The transition into student accommodation is therefore constructed in relation to that of the familial home meaning the prospective student will have to negotiate their pre-existing identities, routines and behaviours within an often shared environment (Lahelma & Gordon, 2003; 2008). However, Kenyon (1999) has argued that to make sense of these meanings, they must be put into some sort of context. Those students who have moved away from the family home are in transition. They will negotiate their experiences of home between the family home, their student accommodation and an imagined future ‘adult’ home. Kenyon divides these aspects of home into four categories, personal, temporal, social and physical, which are summarised in Table 2.1. What Kenyon concludes is that the transition from the family home to term-time accommodation and beyond is not a linear process. Comparisons will be continually drawn with the family home until the student has begun to establish some form of place attachment or “experience-in-place” (Chow & Healey, 2008, p. 368). However, these comparisons are unique to the individual. Kenyon’s research implies that the elements of home described below are interchangeable and cross between the parental home, term-time accommodation and the future home. Whilst some students miss the comforts of the family home others crave the independence associated with rented accommodation. As students frequently move between their accommodation and the parental home during vacations and often make annual housing changes, these elements will also be renegotiated to correspond with that specific time and space. Therefore,
experiences of the family home and the student home will inform how young adults wish to experience future homes, yet it is unclear as to whether these desires ever become realities.

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Table 2.1: The elements of home (after Kenyon, 1999, p. 87).

Taulke-Johnson’s (2010b) study of the mobility decisions of gay male students provides an example of this uniqueness. Whilst some of his respondents expressed anxiety at leaving behind communities where their sexuality was accepted, others relished the opportunity to leave what they perceived as marginalised ‘home’ communities to seek a more heterogeneous environment at University. Their choices are informed directly by their identities and how they perceive their identities to ‘fit’ within their term-time accommodation. Therefore, the elastic spatial and social aspects of the home, mentioned earlier by Blunt (2005) are writ large when discussing the complex transitions made by students between homes. Hence interrogating the term-time residential experiences of students may begin to predict their long-term effects on accommodation choices. What is central here is that these students are learning in their own ways how to gain autonomy, establish networks and participate, albeit temporarily in most cases, in the housing market (Calvert, 2010). However, it is vital to be clear that, in the main, these processes are not serendipitous. They constitute part of a structured passage for students through their time spent at University (Rugg, et al., 2004). Therefore, as Kenyon and Heath (2001) suggest, the experiences, both positive and negative of living in student accommodation means that young adults can begin to choose how they wish to live in their future ‘adult’ accommodation choices. They can make these distinctions based upon real lived experiences. In contrast to these notions of homemaking is an embryonic recognition that the increasing costs and pressures of HE have led to an increase in
homelessness among young undergraduates. As Paden (2012) argues, these students can be invisible to staff and other students, either through a lack of awareness of the problem or through their own non-disclosure. Along with highlighting a darker side to University life, what Paden’s (2012) work achieves is to reinforce the need to recognise the heterogeneity within the student cohort, particularly as some underlying issues may not be immediately visible to University staff, policy makers, peer groups or researchers.

In returning to the notions of homemaking, what is missing from many of these accounts is any real indication of how undergraduates go about negotiating domesticity within their shared term-time households. There is plenty to suggest that students transfer learned behaviours from the familial home into their accommodation (see also: Lahelma & Gordon, 2008), such as domestic tasks or food habits. In a study of Danish undergraduates’ food behaviours, Blichfeldt and Gram (2013) suggest that students are: “not starting out in a vacuum, but are entangled in their parents’ food practices” (p. 287). Similarly, Kenyon (1999) points to the ways in which students are likely to transfer the domestic norms, behaviours and consumption practices learned within the family home into their student accommodation. However, this can become prohibitively difficult due to different food preferences, varied timetables or a lack of household commitment which can turn shared domestic spaces, such as the kitchen or living room into ‘24-hour spaces’ (Clear et al., 2013). Kenyon (1999) and Kenyon and Heath (2001) suggest that cohabitation presents an important stage in the development of a young adult’s identity. Managing money and time, making informed decisions and learning from mistakes are all key lessons which are learned within term-time accommodation (Kenyon, 1999). However, one of the more significant, and under-researched aspects of this cohabitation is how students establish and negotiate house rules within their accommodation. As Blunt (2005) has stressed, the meanings behind home are deeply personal and individual. Therefore the combination of several different versions of home within a single property can become problematic. Kenyon and Heath (2001) hint at the potential for conflict and tension between housemates over housework, personal hygiene, noise and thoughtlessness. It would however, be naive to assume that this can be simply reduced to laziness. Instead it is important to return back to theorisations of the family home in order to establish where a young adult’s vision of homemaking stems from. What this suggests is that students may want the best of both worlds, the
autonomy of independent living with the security of an interdependent household. However what is less clear is whether a balance can be reached between the two within student accommodation, one which facilitates harmonious living, or whether groups of disparate individuals with contrasting values and opinions simply act as a catalyst for conflict and argument.

Kenyon (1999) suggests that the connection between housemates can, in many ways, create bonds akin to those of a surrogate family, with which even the closest friends from back home cannot compete. Living together within a shared house means that roles, such as pseudo-parent/child positions are assumed and performed within the home between housemates, either harmoniously or in conflict, which they must negotiate on a daily basis. It is this shared experience or solidarity amongst housemates which keeps these bonds tight (Smith & Holt, 2007), particularly within accommodation deemed inferior to that of the family home. The design and layout of student accommodation, in particular privately rented housing can however, make it difficult to interact with other housemates. Kenyon (1999) points out that a lack of communal space means that most activities have to be carried out within the confines of the bedroom, including eating, studying and socialising with friends outside of the household, which is not always an ideal situation. Hence, a student household can be a property containing several disconnected individuals rather than a place where identities interact with one another. However, there is little which suggests that these behaviours are adapted and/or transferred back into the family home upon completion of studies. Greater interrogation may begin to reveal the dynamics of the ‘student home’, particularly in relation to some of the gendered or hierarchical power relations mentioned previously.

2.4 – Making Connections and Managing Friendships

This final section essentially draws together many of the previous themes of sharing and socialising, viewing them through the lens of friendship and social connections. Much of the literature which focuses upon the ways in which young adults manage their connections as part of their plans to go to University is centred primarily upon how students determine their connections according to institutional or subject hierarchies (see Ball et al., 2000; Brooks, 2002; 2003a; 2003b) or how students might establish connections within their shared accommodation (Hubbard, 2009; Christie et al., 2002;
Andersson et al., 2012) What is less clear is how these students manage their friendships outside of these learning or residential environments. This is pertinent as Brooks (2007) suggests: “friends and peers play a crucial role in informing young people’s sense of their own position within a ‘hierarchy of students’” (p. 695). Chow and Healey (2008) suggest that establishing friendships during first year can be a complex process with the participants in their study reporting being both daunted and exhilarated by the prospect of meeting new people (see also: Scanlon et al., 2007). Christie et al. (2002) add that the capacity to make friends is also linked to where these students live, with those residing in halls being perceived to have a greater advantage over those living in rented housing or with their parents. While Smith and Holt (2007) suggest that University managed spaces usually enable plentiful opportunities to forge connections with a large “pool of peers” (p. 151). In contrast, Andersson et al. (2012) and Taulke-Johnson (2010a) both argue that University halls may be far from being places which facilitate the sharing of experiences, cultures or backgrounds. Instead, their research reveals that these spaces can often heighten segregations, particularly as many of those residing in halls appear to make a conscious effort to establish connections with those most like them, which ultimately serves to exclude those who do not necessarily ‘fit in’ with the more typical cohort.

The above discussions of friendships have been concerned with establishing bonds with a physical place. However, in recent years, for many young people these relationships have taken on more virtual identities through the development of social networking sites such as Facebook and Twitter. These technologies have opened up new student spaces and offer exciting avenues for geographical inquiry. There has been relatively little discussion of the influence social networking technologies may have over the sensing of place for young people. As Madge et al. (2009) suggest, sites such as Facebook act as platforms where students discuss and organise their University lives. Social networks are frequently used to discuss coursework, assessment results, organise nights out, publicise protests and maintain contact with (non)student friends both during term time and vacation periods. Therefore, this virtual space has become a powerful setting for students to interact. Such social networking may endow students with what Ellison et al. (2007) characterise as ‘maintained’ social capital that “enable individuals to keep in touch with a social network after physically disconnecting from it” (p. 1146). Whilst this concurs with Madge et al.’s (2009) claims that Facebook is used to retain
connections with family and friends at home, their study also revealed that over half (55 per cent) of their survey respondents chose to join Facebook prior to starting at University specifically to make new connections and friends. As Ribchester et al. (2012) suggest, at the point of pre-induction, social networks can represent comfortable, transitional spaces which are capable of being recognisable spaces which can dispel the anxieties of University life. What this hints at is the emergence of decentralised, disembodied virtual places where students multiple and/or partial identities can converge and overlap.

While these discussions of managing friendships have been concerned with the initial stages of the degree, there exists a small body of literature which highlights how these relationships are managed upon the completion of studies (Sassler et al., 2008; Gabriel, 2006). For many students, returning to the family home is the most obvious, and practical, choice once studies are completed and has been termed the ‘feathered nest hypothesis’ (Mulder & Clarke, 2002) or the ‘boomerang effect’ (Molgat, 2002) where students return to what they perceive as a more comfortable home. Morgan and Holdsworth (2005) go on to suggest that the process of leaving and returning home for undergraduate students assists in modifying the expectations of ‘residential autonomy’ in young adults, particularly as their housing trajectories are unlikely to place them immediately in the housing market once they have graduated (Rugg et al., 2004; Calvert, 2010). Many of these studies however appear to overlook the reality that students often attend University as much to gain an experience as attaining an education. With that in mind it would be unreasonable to expect students to remain in a location where much of the reason for being there has evaporated. What is of greater interest is how those who return to their home communities deal with expressing their newly acquired identities and its associated trappings within the family home and amongst non-student friends. Gabriel (2006) draws attention to the difficulties some students face when attempting to re-establish friendships with home-based, or non-student friends, suggesting that some students may feel the new experiences they have gained at University have meant they identify less with friends at home who may have followed a different pathway into paid employment. Conversely, the same friends can manifest resentment towards those who have experienced time away from the family home. Similarly, Easthope and Gabriel (2008) discuss how family members can be suspicious of their child’s mobility prospects, particularly if they themselves had
experienced immobility suggesting that parents may project their own fears onto their children, potentially steering them away from what they perceive to be risky ventures. In offering some solutions to these issues Iyer et al., (2009) argue that to make the transition from one social group to another, for example from University to employment, it may be important to relinquish old identities in order to fully ingratiate within a new group. In contrast, Gabriel (2006) suggests that students cope with readjustment through a complex process of managing, sharing, re-inventing and dissolving connections with peers. Importantly, while these debates highlight how students living away from home negotiate their student identities when they move back with their parents, there is very little discussion of how students living with parents or in their own homes manage their identities upon completion of their degrees. As Baxter and Britton (2001) suggest, this process of negotiating old and new identities commences early on, particularly for older students and can disrupt former relationships with friends and family. Scott et al. (1998) add that, among their mature female participant group were feelings that their identities had changed for the worse since they had attended University. This suggests that struggling to balance student and non-student lives may impact upon how mature learners motivate themselves to commence, continue with and complete their studies. As these respondents indicated, any altruism they had felt prior to their degrees had been replaced with feelings of self-preservation, particularly if their support networks (family, University or otherwise) had broken down. However, while Christie et al. (2005) suggest that adult learners may be “[…] in but not of the University” (p. 17, emphasis added) is it fair to assume that they simply fall back into their old identities or could it be that their student experiences might inform future changes to their lifestyles?

In drawing these concepts together, it is therefore important to consider the link between the actual experiences felt by students within a student community and their future accommodation choices once their studies are completed. As was mentioned earlier, a student’s identity is extremely flexible and will adapt both as the student matures and as they become more confident about their surroundings. This highly individualised process suggests that it may be rare for students to follow the linear pathway once traditionally taken through University meaning there are now many more avenues of research potential for investigating student transitions, particularly with regard to how students engage within the wider community. It is important to recognise the distinct
gap within the literature between making and managing friendships and negotiating a student identity when moving back home with parents. Unpacking this gap will be useful in generating understandings of how this can often be a complex process for University students.

2.5 – Discussion

In summary, this chapter has sought to draw together discussions of the geographies of students in order to establish a clear rationale with which to situate this research. In doing so this chapter has highlighted many of the contrasting processes which comprise the ‘student experience’ and the ways in which these processes can become intertwined as students make their transitions through University. In discussing the choices, mobilities and preconceived experiences of prospective students this chapter has identified differences in the ways in which students approach University which extend the more typical dualisms of ‘traditional’ and ‘non-traditional’ students. While there may be different motivations for attending University for students who elect to leave or remain at home during term-time, particularly as those leaving home expect to have a more ‘typical’ student experience than their contemporaries who are immobile (Holdsworth, 2006), there may be more heterogeneity to these experiences. As was discussed earlier, some non-traditional students may choose to follow the more typical route through University by living in student accommodation during term-time. However, what has not been fully acknowledged is whether or not these students experience difficulties when attempting to establish their identities in an unfamiliar setting, particularly if they lack any prior knowledge of how to make best use of the ‘rules of the game’ (Crozier et al., 2008) which facilitate a smoother transition through their education. Alongside these notions of the student experience, more can be said about how students living in their term-time location which transcends notions of being disadvantaged through their immobility. As Christie et al. (2005) suggest, there is much heterogeneity among non-traditional students giving ample opportunity to discuss whether locally based students may be able to profit from their local knowledge and whether this may act a valuable tool with which to introduce them into the more traditional student cohort.

Likewise, this chapter has highlighted how, through processes such as studentification and self-segregation, students have become powerful commodities within University
locations, influencing the distribution and type of social spaces most suited to their tastes. However, it has been recognised here that many of these discussions of the ‘exclusive geographies’ formed by students can be couched within negative rhetoric which depict student behaviours as hedonistic and at odds with the non-student community. Inverting these claims may add to these debates by suggesting that the more typical behaviours exhibited by students may assist in the formation of their identities and instruct them how to interact with other students. It may also be important to question the extent to which student-centric spaces benefit solely students or whether other social groupings within University locations are also advantaged, either through the implementation of health or leisure facilities or through night-time social activities, particularly if cities become reliant upon the revenue from their seasonal student communities.

With regard to residential preferences, the literature, notes how choosing housemates and accommodation year on year can be a complex process, chiefly due to the multiple residential opportunities which are available to undergraduates. This complicates discussions of homemaking and domesticity as each of these residential pathways presents different rules and may assist or hinder the potential for students to carry out the activities they associate with ‘being’ students. Alongside this are notions of how behaviours learned in the family home can be transmitted into shared student accommodation, particularly if these behaviours may be incongruent to others’ behaviours within the household. What remains unclear is whether conflicts within the home stem from such differences or whether tensions between housemates may become exacerbated by gendered or other hierarchical power relations. There is also little to suggest whether domesticity is transferred back into the familial home upon completion of the degree. This brings into question whether or not students are using their term-time accommodation as a platform with which to learn to become adults or simply as a place with which to situate their liminal student identities before they return to the family home. Linked with this are notions of how students go about establishing connections and friendships with other students. As with the discussions of accommodation, conceptualising friendship among this young cohort can be complicated as friendships are often informed by previous social relationships and positive experiences during the initial stages of the transition into University. While much of the literature discusses friendships in the context of accommodation or learning
environments, little has been said as to the influence of student-centric social spaces upon the implementation of social interactions. This presents an opportunity to investigate whether student-centric social spaces are merely vehicles to instigate temporary social acquaintances or whether they represent ‘safe places’ where students can test and nurture more meaningful relationships.
Chapter Three – Theoretical Framework

As an extension to the literature review carried out in Chapter Two, this chapter will draw attention to the theoretical framework which underpins the thesis. This framework has been couched within the concepts of ‘habitus’ and ‘place’ in order to provide a deeper understanding of how students develop both their ‘student’ identities and their attachment to, or ‘sense of’ place. As theoretical frameworks, both habitus and place are broad and, as will become apparent later in this chapter, not necessarily universally believed to be complimentary concepts. However, both have strong and historical connections to geographical enquiry and this chapter will seek to recognise these associations and how linking these concepts together will be the most appropriate way of exploring the transformations of identity and place attachment experienced by the cohort of students under study.

3.1 – Habitus, Field and Capital

Pierre Bourdieu’s theory of habitus can be broadly defined as: “[…] a set of acquired characteristics which are the product of social conditioning […] totally or partially common to people of similar social conditioning” (2005, p. 45). Habitus essentially relates to the subliminal transmission of values between parent and child which in turn defines the child’s attitude towards different capitals, experiences of education and structuring of social practices (Bourdieu, 1977; 1984). As Bourdieu posits:

“The structures constitutive of a particular type or environment produce habitus, systems of durable, transposable dispositions, structured structures predisposed to function as structuring structures, that is, as principles of the generation and structuring of practices and representations” (1977, p. 72, emphasis in original).

Crossley (2001) substantiates this claim by suggesting that habitus can be thought of as a ‘moving equilibrium’ where the actions of groups or individuals are affected by habits, which in turn have an influence over the creation and adjustment of habits. That said, habitus is not fixed and can be altered by either experience or education, meaning people behave in accordance with their position (capital) and personal background (habitus) (Bourdieu, 2005). However, it is crucial to understand that habitus is concerned with a propensity towards certain dispositions rather than a compulsion (Lee, 1997). Thomas (2002) stresses the term disposition be used, arguing that, as well as
norms and values, habitus “is embedded within everyday actions, much of which is subconscious” (p. 430) meaning habitus is embodied rather than cognitively understood (Bourdieu, 1977; Bridge, 2003; Dovey, 2005). Friedmann (2005) and Waterson (2005) both agree that habitus should be viewed as a dynamic rather than static phenomenon. As Holdsworth and Morgan (2005) point out, “habitus is a product of history” (p. 126) where past experiences influence the characteristics of an individual’s dispositions, meaning practices will be carried out in accordance to these dispositions consistently over time. It is precisely this which, Holdsworth and Morgan argue, makes habitus a dynamic and reflexive conceptual tool. Lee (1997) goes on to suggest that habitus can be viewed as a ‘perception-enabling prism’ (see Lee, 1993): “a conceptual lens through which particular understandings or interpretations of the social world are generated and as such invite particular forms of response or action to the social world” (p. 133). In implementing Bourdieu’s conceptual framework Reay (2004) critiques the use of habitus in social research that does not realise its theoretical potential. She outlines four aspects which distinguish habitus, outlined in Table 3.1. These themes highlight how, for Reay, habitus can be thought of as a deep, complex matrix of dispositions which are

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**The embodied habitus:** This demonstrates the reciprocal exchanges which occur between bodies in the social world. Thus habitus can be assumed to be embodied through a variety of actions which move beyond simply the perceptions of the mind.

**Habitus and agency:** Habitus allows individuals to apply agency to instigate change and [re]action. However, whilst agency is discussed here, there are certain predisposed processes which promote certain types of behaviours in individuals, particularly in the ways in which they relate to the social world. Importantly, Bourdieu discusses the vagueness of habitus rather than the expectation on people who ‘behave like us’. Habitus is therefore not rigid and replicable but individual and unpredictable.

**Habitus as a compilation of collective and individual trajectories:** Bourdieu recognises habitus as a multi-layered concept with a complex, interwoven history of experiences which encompass both an individual’s social position and that of their familial background, thus habitus is highly individualised and is founded upon the complex relationships with other habitus.

**Habitus as a complex interplay between past and present:** Habitus is an iterative process where past experiences are reshaped and restructured by external encounters (schooling and the workplace are examples of this social conditioning). Reay points out that there may be two distinct outcomes of this: either that the habitus is reproduced through encounters with complimentary fields or that the habitus can be transformed through contact with a dissimilar field.

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Table 3.1 Four themes of Habitus (after Reay, 2004, pp. 432-435)
shaped, either through opportunities or constraints, by external, environmental forces. Importantly, for Bourdieu’s theoretical construct to work successfully, capital and field must also be introduced. Bourdieu (1984) uses the formula: “[(habitus) (capital)] + field = practice” (p. 101) to make this relationship between habitus and field more explicit. Hence, as Crossley (2001) points out, habitus and field operate in a cyclical manner, influencing and being influenced by one another.

In defining Bourdieu’s notion of field, Bourdieu and Wacquant (1992) suggest that fields provide the setting in which agents and their social positions are located. Fields can exist as Universities, social situations and educational disciplines and rely on the appropriation of capital. Savage et al. (2005) add that: “fields define hierarchical spaces of social and spatial positions, specifying the stakes involved in such positions” (p. 9). Hence capital can only be mobilised successfully when in relation to a corresponding field. As such, Bourdieu’s theories have often been used within research into HE as they offer a simple way of distinguishing between different types of students. They also makes sense of the ways in which students adapt to their surroundings as they enter, traverse and leave University, particularly as students rarely do so uniformly (Holdsworth, 2006). Bourdieu often relates notions of ‘game theory’ to his conceptualisations and this is evident in the context of field, as outlined by Crozier et al. (2008):

“Bourdieu likens the field to a game with rules and competition. Not everyone has equal knowledge of the rules. Some have ‘trump cards’ and different amounts and quality of ‘capital’ with which to play. They also have differing dispositions – habitus – to operationalise these. Hence, there are power dynamics and contestation within all fields” (p.168).

Therefore, as Holdsworth (2006) suggests, for those that do not fully understand the rules, the game will be somewhat alien and will take considerable time and effort to come to terms with. Oliver and O’Reilly (2010) go on to suggest that fields are social spaces where objective power relations are imposed upon on all those who enter it and which cannot be reduced to “the intentions of the individual agents or even to the direct interactions among the agents” (Bourdieu, 1985, p. 724). Importantly, Oliver and O’Reilly (2010) point out that vital to the rules of a field “is that one’s past is ostensibly irrelevant” (p. 51) and that instead, the types of capital individuals bring with them, or
they can acquire in the new location, become the useful resources with which to play the

One of the key components of habitus and field is the negotiation and transference of
capital (economic, cultural, social and symbolic) between fields. Capitals exist as
resources which enable users to influence their power, status, taste and knowledge
within particular fields (Dovey, 2005; Hillier & Rooksby, 2005). In the context of HE
research, cultural capital would appear to be of most importance, particularly as its
acquisition and transference is closely related to notions of class, taste and education
(Dovey, 2005). Waters (2006) suggests that cultural capital exists in three states:

“[that which is] ‘institutionalised’ by the academic qualification,
‘embodied’ in the attributes and characteristics of the person, and
‘objectified’ in material artefacts” (p. 180).

It is widely recognised that cultural capital is a product of the middle classes, or at least
of becoming middle class (Reay et al., 2009). As Bourdieu (1990) suggests, those of the
middle classes “move in their world as a fish in water” (p. 108) due to ‘class wisdom’
(Ball et al., 2002), meaning their transitions through institutions, such as school or
University, are usually met without disruption or anxiety as they are well aware of the
mechanics of such institutions (see Reay et al., 2010; Leese, 2010; Mangan et al.,
2010). However, while opportunities may arise through access to cultural capital, those
who have limited access to the ‘right types’ of cultural capital necessary to make a
successful transition through University (primarily working class, first-time University
attendees) are likely to be disadvantaged in their attempts (Patiniotis & Holdsworth,
2005; Reay, 2001; Read et al., 2003). Noble and Davies (2009) suggest that this may
occur for four reasons: (1) self elimination, by which individuals instinctively recognise
that they do not ‘fit in’ within HE; (2) over-selection, where students fail to secure a
place or discontinue early on due to insufficient knowledge or guidance; (3) relegation,
through ill-informed choices or the misinterpretation of important information, or (4)
direct selection, where students can be over-looked by biased institutions. Leese (2010)
reacts to these notions of disadvantage, arguing that Universities may need to alter their
perceptions of students with seemingly insufficient cultural capital in order to provide
adequate support as they make their transitions through HE. This is particularly
pertinent as the Government’s drive to encourage high achivers from less advantaged
backgrounds into elite Universities may be likely to emphasise their seemingly incongruous cultural capital (Mangan et al., 2010).

Much of the literature pertaining to the influence of cultural capital on the trajectory of young adults discusses the vital role familial and institutional habitus plays in successful (and equally, disadvantaged) transitions through HE. Reay (1998) suggests that habitus “invokes understandings of identity premised on familial legacy and early childhood socialisation” (p. 521). Within the context of the family, habitus is the interplay between past experiences and dispositions learned and replicated elsewhere (Holdsworth & Morgan, 2005; Pimlott-Wilson, 2011). As Reay (2004) points out, individuals are both in and of their familial habitus, where the individual is influenced by: “the whole collective history of family and class that the individual is a member of” (p. 434). Holdsworth and Morgan (2005) go on to argue that due to complex moral social relations between family members, the young are generally considered to be the outcome of the production of cultural capital, rather than being active agents. This is most noticeable in discussions of HE where, in its crudest sense, information of the mechanisms of University are transferred from parent from child (see Patiniotis & Holdsworth, 2005). As Atkinson (2011) suggests, familial habitus has the capability to differentiate whether certain prospects (such as HE) are “an impossible, a possible or an entirely natural future” (p. 334) for young adults.

As well as transferring cultural capital, these notions of familial habitus are also linked to economic capital, where those who can afford it, send their children to feeder institutions which facilitate a smooth transition into HE (Reay, 1998; Ball et al., 2002; Noble & Davies, 2009). However, Reay cautions that this may not be a clear cut process, particularly as economic and cultural capital can be fragmented as they are inevitably accessed differently by individuals from different backgrounds. Atkinson (2011) argues that this may come down to the dominance of parents, with those most likely to intervene steering their children into educational pathways which best prepare them for adult life. Pimlott-Wilson (2011) suggests that, in this sense, habitus can be assumed to be fairly predictable, particularly as the habitus of the parent is often replicated by the child, not necessarily in a deterministic way, but through common sense, meaning children are highly likely to aspire to be what their parents are. Alternatively, Reay (1998) argues that working-class dispositions and anxieties
regarding HE can also be replicated and transferred. Students who may have embarked on a degree with the ‘wrong type’ of cultural capital may transfer their anxieties regarding fitting in onto their children. This becomes particularly pronounced for those who might “lack the ‘self-certainty’ of [a new found] middle-class habitus” (p. 523). Pimlott-Wilson (2011) does however suggest that habitus “simultaneously predisposes people towards certain ways of behaving whilst enabling individuals to draw on alternative courses of action” (p. 113), meaning individuals are still capable of mobilising their capital and transforming their habitus (see also: Reay, 2004).

Bourdieu and Wacquant (1992) suggest that, while habitus is rooted in childhood experiences it is capable of undergoing immense change, transforming and adapting with subsequent new interactions and experiences. Pimlott-Wilson (2011) adds that social interactions external to the family (such as school etc.) are also capable of transforming the habitus, suggesting that a child’s aspirations can be influenced by the various forces with which they encounter. In the context of HE, institutional habitus is overtly linked to notions of class, gender and ethnicity and can be recognised as a primary location through which social class is maintained and reproduced (Reay, 1998; Thomas, 2002). As Reay et al. (2010) explain:

“All Universities and colleges [...] have identifiable institutional habituses in which their organisational culture and ethos is linked to wider socio-economic and educational cultures through processes in which Universities and the different student constituencies they recruit mutually shape and reshape each other” (p. 111).

From this, Holdsworth (2006) explains how HEIs reinforce particular representations of cultural capital, which in turn attract (or conversely repel) specific types of students. Reay (2001) endorses this claim, suggesting that those with the ‘wrong’ form of cultural capital invariably stand out within HEIs. Therefore, the practices of certain HEIs are influential in shaping both the institution itself and the students within it, particularly if they are perceived to be rigid and/or biased toward certain social groups (Leese, 2010). However, Reay et al.’s (2010) earlier comments complicate this notion of social and cultural inequalities by suggesting that Universities are heterogeneous entities. Each exert different and unique ‘institutional influences’ upon their student cohort which, in turn, inform the ways in which they are viewed (or view themselves) in the context of their institutional identities.
Utilising habitus and capital does not, of course, come without its limitations. Bourdieu’s conceptualisations should be approached critically, particularly as it would be impossible to assume that his notions of habitus and capital would fit neatly into any given piece of research. Therefore, while these notions have been widely embraced within HE research, its users have identified where some of its shortcomings may lie. Reay (2004) posits that: “habitus is primarily a method for analysing the dominance of dominant groups in society and the domination of subordinate groups” (p. 436), meaning power must be recognised when attempting to differentiate between those who are socially advantaged or disadvantaged. Therefore, habitus alone cannot explain why certain non-traditional students may have a successful transition through University and vice versa without recognising the diverse power relations which exist within the student cohort. Holdsworth (2006) suggests that Bourdieu’s notions of habitus being fixed and generational may not necessarily sit well with the view that students factor “choice, risk and reflexivity” (Holdsworth, 2006, p. 499) into their decisions. However Lee (1997) disputes this, suggesting that habitus should not be viewed as static as it is under a constant state of modification. Holdsworth (2006) goes on to argue that Bourdieu’s conceptualisations may be lacking when investigating transitional groups. This is particularly so within HE research where the transitions taken by students from home to University are very often non-linear and can be quite messy. Holdsworth warns that the notion of sharing types of dispositions may not necessarily always take people’s individualised behaviours into account. Patiniotis and Holdsworth (2005) add to this by suggesting that habitus may present a:

“[...] self-fulfilling prophecy. Students with the ‘wrong’ type of cultural capital are disadvantaged in either getting into HE in the first place, or in making the most of HE and feel out of place once they get to University” (p. 84).

In this sense, Bourdieu’s theories may be accused of being overly deterministic in their focus upon the influence of pre-learned dispositions upon future social endeavours (Holdsworth & Morgan, 2007), although Reay (2004) and Fuchs (2003) would argue that Bourdieu explicitly set out to transcend dualisms such as structure-agency or objective-subjective. However, in countering these notions of determinism, Pimlott-Wilson (2011) argues that, rather than being destined to follow in their parents’ footsteps, dispositions can often be employed by children out of ‘common sense’, with
certain actions being the most obvious or practical things to do. Likewise, Crossley (2001) points out that, in an historical and ontological sense, while habitus may be shaped by objective structures, these structures have previously been influenced by subjective structures, highlighting how habitus undergoes regular adaptation.

Alongside these theorisations of habitus and cultural capital are notions of social capital. Broadly speaking, social capital recognises the importance of social networks upon social well-being and the subsequent enhancement which can be achieved through collaborative action. However, social capital is a collective rather than individual resource meaning “if you leave the group you lose the capital” (Dovey, 2005, pp. 286-287). Social capital has become a highly theorised and contested concept in recent years, leading to Bourdieu, Coleman and Putnam offering three separate and contrasting conceptualisations. Bourdieu (1986) discusses the formations and [re]distribution of social capital in relation to other forms of capital (cultural, economic and symbolic) and how actors respond actively, mobilising capital in order to maintain positions within certain fields (see Holt, 2008; Sutherland & Burton, 2011). Coleman (1988) suggests that social capital comprises a constellation of entities which (1) consist of social structures and (2) facilitate actions among the actors within the network. However, DeFilippis (2001) argues that, for Coleman, social capital is purely functional, it is “not a mechanism, a thing, or an outcome, but simultaneously any or all of them” (p. 784), meaning social capital provides the motivations for actions. Putnam’s (1993; 2000) theorisations recognise the value of combining “reciprocity with networks of cooperative action” (Das, 2004, p. 30) in order to generate public good. In contrast to Coleman, Putnam argues that social capital is a resource which people either possess or fail to possess (DeFilippes, 2001). Hence Putnam’s social capital had become widely accepted within Government, development and social policy sectors because of its “emphasis on civil engagement and regional economic growth” (Sutherland & Burton, 2011, p. 240). Putnam separates social capital into bridging and bonding capital thus developing a rationale for why social groups behave in the way they do. Broadly defined, bonding capital denotes exclusivity, galvanises group identity and promotes solidarity, whilst bridging capital creates ‘weak ties’ which facilitates broad, flexible identities (Putnam, 2000). Put simply, bonding capital allows groups or individuals to ‘get by’ and bridging social capital is useful in ‘getting ahead’ (de Souza-Briggs, 1998). However, it is important to be clear that these definitions are in the extreme:
“Bonding and bridging are not ‘either-or’ categories into which social networks can be neatly divided, but ‘more or less’ dimensions along which we can compare different forms of social capital” (Putman, 2000, p. 23).

What is important here is that there are distinctions between these two forms of social capital. Bonding capital does not necessarily denote a particular class, so will operate in exactly the same manner in a polo club as it does in a youth street gang (see Holligan & Deuchar, 2009; MacDonald et al., 2005; MacDonald, 2008). Bridging capital on the other hand can be understood as existing within middle-class networks which enables individuals to take the necessary steps for education, employment and promotion.

While a great deal of social research has sought to incorporate Putnam’s theorisations of social capital, there is a growing body of literature which contests its use, branding it an outmoded and flawed concept (see Das, 2004; DeFilippis, 2001; Mohan et al., 2005; Holt, 2008). In critiquing Putnam’s seemingly over-optimistic conceptualisations, Radcliffe (2004) suggests that social capital is often attributed to broader social processes but says very little about the relations of the types of people who interact with one another, particularly regarding the differences in power which exist between groups. Holt (2008) goes on to argue that Putnam has been accused of not critically engaging with space, treating “spaces as static, pre-existing, and ‘given!”’ (p. 230), rather than as places which are ‘becoming’. DeFilippis (2001) questions the scales at which Putnam measures social capital, particularly whether a community can be capable of possessing social capital in the same way an institution or individual can. Das (2004) argues that other social, cultural or political measures may be far more adequate for indicating social inequalities than social capital, questioning the point of utilising it at all:

“The only thing that social capital in my view does is that it is an umbrella concept that brings different social practices together (reciprocity, associational life, trust, and so on). It does indeed thus become a chaotic concept in the critical realist sense” (p. 42).

That said, this thesis agrees with Mohan et al. (2005) who stop short of ‘disinvesting’ in social capital altogether, suggesting it has uses but must be applied critically and with caution. Within the context of this study, social capital will be a useful measure of the
flexible relationships which exist between students and will assist in making sense of how students manage their trajectory into and through University.

Key to this thesis is Holt’s (2008) more contemporary, and inherently geographical, theoretical model of ‘embodied social capital’. A thorough reworking of social capital theory, embodied social capital seeks to reconceptualise social capital in order to provide an insight into the “(re)production of inequalities and advantage through everyday sociability within a variety of social networks” (p. 228) (see also: Sutherland & Burton, 2011). Through synthesising Bourdieu’s framework for social capital with Butler’s (1999) theorisations of performativity, Holt seeks to revitalise social capital, particularly in light of the negative criticisms it has received through the accounts of Putnam. In incorporating the theorisations of Butler, Holt highlights the dynamic potential of embodied identities, suggesting that:

“Performativity theories illuminate that the agent does not precede the ‘doing’ of the performative act or event. Rather, the actor ‘becomes’ through the event, while simultaneously drawing upon and reproducing a historical consolidation of previous (gendered) acts” (p. 237).

Holt uses the example of a child with mind and body differences as a way of explaining this (see Holt (2010) for a practical application of embodied social capital). In this sense, those with mind or body differences who accept their position as ‘disabled’ can begin to incorporate some negative aspects of the dominant discourses associated with disability into their general ‘sense of self’, such as dependency. This may not always be the case but may become incorporated into their ‘sense of self’ if perpetuated, subsequently influencing their social position in other social situations (see also: Worth, 2012). Holt posits two potential socio-spatial outcomes of applying embodied social capital. First is the recognition that capitals are acquired through the performances of our everyday lives and not simply generated in a vacuum. Second is the notion that embodied social capital may be more suited to discussing the transformative potential of dispositions than Bourdieu’s habitus, particularly in those instances where transformations occur unconsciously and, “at least briefly, disrupt the appearance that identity categories are natural or given” (p. 239). Therefore, as Antoninetti and Garrett (2012) suggest, embodied social capital provides a linkage between the subjective and the socio-spatial, giving a more accurate interpretation of processes such as aging,
particularly with regard to the diminished functionality of the built environment for the elderly.

While Holt’s reading of social capital applies directly to the embodied identities of disabled children there is scope here to utilise these more critical theorisations to discuss the ways in which University students adapt and manipulate their identities as they progress through HE. First is the idea that access to social capital may have some influence over the residential behaviours of students. Applying Holt’s (2008) suggestion that access to social capital may not necessarily be achieved equally by individuals to students, highlights how different term-time residential circumstances may produce social capital which may not be complimentary for those sharing a household (be it fellow students, family members or other non-students). The intense social environments of halls of residence and privately rented student accommodation could be thought of as the settings most likely for the successful transference of seemingly ‘legitimate’ social capital among HE students. This may be due to the likelihood that students have entered these fields of activity specifically to take part in student-centric activities, both academic and social. Viewing students’ residential behaviours through the lens of social capital may also assist in developing a more nuanced understanding of how those living away from student-centric environments, in their own homes or with their parents, may struggle to ‘fit in’ while at University, particularly if their position as immobile becomes incorporated into their overall sense of self. This may either be self-motivated, where students actively choose to discount themselves from student activities, or inhibited by the realisation that their social capital may not necessarily be congruent with that of their more traditional peers. Either way, what is significant here is the ways in which students acquire and operationalise their social capital may be an important component in understanding how students develop and manage their student identities as they make their transition through University.

3.2 – Place

While the previous section explored the role of habitus and capital in shaping identity and informing the experiences of students as they make their way through University, this next section will ground these transitory experiences by discussing the influence place and a ‘sense of place’ may have over these experiences, and in doing so will synthesise the concepts which underpin notions of place. Cresswell (2006) talks of place
being the sedentary equivalent to mobility. Within humanistic geography, for example, it is presumed that the fixed and rooted existence of place is threatened by mobility. Tuan (1977) argues that the stillness of place is vitally important in the process of forging attachment to place. Hence, Cresswell (2006) proposes that place is central to many discussions of geographical theory suggesting that:

“A place is a centre of meaning – we become attached to it, we fight over it and exclude people from it – we experience it” (p. 3).

Agnew (1987) offers three definitions of place: (1) as a movable location on the earth’s surface; (2) as a locale with fixed ‘things’ and concrete rules of behaviour; and (3) ‘a sense of place’ or the emotional attachment to a place. However, more than this, place permeates all aspects of our societies and language (Cresswell, 2004). Place is discussed at a variety of spatial scales, from nations and borders (Tuan, 2004) and ‘homeland’ (Sarup, 1994); communities (both physical (Castells, 1996) and virtual (Kitchin, 1998)); homes (Blunt & Varley, 2004); rooms (Bennett, 2006); and bodies (Craddock, 1999). Scored through all of this is the notion that place can be defined as somewhere to belong. Groups or individuals seek an arrangement of belonging which supports safety, identity expression and familiarity within place (Panelli, 2008). Inclusion within such groups is done so through the process of collective practices and discourses (Antonsich, 2008). Conversely, place has also historically been used to displace through processes of exclusion and difference (Sibley, 1995) which cast those who do not belong as ‘out of place’ (Cresswell, 1996). These multiple [and often contrasting] meanings of place can make place a ‘slippery concept’ (Lee, 1997), particularly as such meanings greatly influence how people perceive certain places (Holloway & Hubbard, 2001). Sack (2003) goes on to discuss the power of place, suggesting that places are part of a system which is reliant upon other places. In attempting to make sense of these multiple meanings of place, Crang (1998) turns to phenomenology and the work of Heidegger in particular to assist with the question ‘can places be experienced differently by different people?’ Crang posits that a phenomenological approach would suggest there can only be one authentic relationship to place. Anything else is either inauthentic or imperfect. He goes on to suggest that Heidegger characterises other relationships to place as being ascribed to das man (‘the mob’ or ‘the crowd’). However, Crang (1998) warns that this creates serious value judgements which must be considered in phenomenological research: “knowledge is emplaced, it starts from, and is based around places as centres
of our ‘care’ about the world” (p. 110). Seamon (1979) employs a more holistic approach to making sense of the complex relationships between people and places. Seamon’s ‘triad of environmental experience’ (see Figure 3.1) therefore acts as a ‘working relationship’ between movement, rest and encounter. In explaining this triad Holloway and Hubbard (2001) suggest that movement is concerned with day-to-day bodily movements through space; rest focuses upon the attachment to place; and encounter explores how individuals perceive their everyday places. Importantly, they stress that the main focus here is upon how the body understands its environment, as opposed to how the mind consciously interprets interactions and experiences. Seamon (1979) conceptualises these movements as like ‘place-ballets’ where people’s choreographed movements, movements made automatically without thinking, interact with one another in dynamic ways. In drawing on the work of Jacobs (1961) Seamon explains how these place-ballets become part of our everyday lives, particularly through unconscious interactions in the street.

![Figure 3.1: Triad of Environmental Experience (after Seamon, 1979, p. 132).](image)

Whilst the previous section discussed the meta-narratives associated with place, there is a significant body of literature pertaining to what constitutes appropriate places for people to belong. This is relevant to this research because students often employ various tactics in order to fit in among their new student friends (Holdsworth, 2006); retain connections with non-students (Christie, 2007); or distance themselves away from non-student residents (Chatterton, 1999) while at University. These processes of inclusion and exclusion will be therefore be important in understanding how and why students develop their identities as they make their transitions through University and how this affects their relationship with their term-time location, strengthening or weakening it.
Cresswell (1996; 1999) talks of the power of dominant groups in characterising the weaker members of society as ‘other’ which essentially casts them as being ‘out of place’ because their norms and values do not correspond to those of the dominant group. Sibley (1995) goes on to explain how these processes create ‘geographies of exclusion’, where those who do not belong are labelled ‘others’. The ‘other’ is viewed as ‘imperfect’ and as a threat to the dominant society, which itself is depicted as pure or complete (Sibley, 1995). These ‘others’ can include: racial, ethnic and sexual minorities and those with physical and mental disabilities, as well as dissident groups such as the homeless, street prostitutes and drug addicts (Sibley, 1995; Hubbard, 1998; Cresswell, 1999). As Mitchell (2000) suggests, dominant groups therefore produce their identities with place in two ways, either in line with what these places represent to them, or in relation to who or what they are not. Sibley (1995) uses object relations theory to define these exclusions. This basically means that groups or individuals form positive identities through a process of excluding those different to themselves. Mitchell (2000) explains that such exclusions and inclusions are reflected in the construction of the right to classify particular places as home with groups or individuals attacking what are considered threats to the purity of the land, ultimately leading to the installation of physical, psychological and social boundaries to keep the ‘other’ from polluting a place (Sibley, 1995).

Place plays a pervasive, yet understated role in research into the geographies of students, however as an explicit conceptual tool, place has often been overlooked in favour of studies of mobility, transition and identity. Chatterton (1999) discusses the ‘exclusive geographies’ established by students in their term-time University location. However, in this sense, rather than being the victims of exclusionary processes, students can be seen to actively ‘self-segregate’ themselves away from the non-student community. Chatterton suggests that students use these self-exclusionary processes both as a defence tactic against the perceived threat of hostility from the local community, as well as a way of enacting their specific, ‘student’ identities (see also: Chatterton & Hollands, 2002; 2003). Holdsworth (2009a) complicates these notions of exclusions through an examination of the differing experiences of local and non-local students within a single location and how this can create and manifest tensions between the two. Drawing on Barth’s (1969) theorisations of ethnic groups and boundaries, Holdsworth suggests that students can become both ‘in place’ and ‘out of place’ within their home
and University locations. Those who have left home are ‘in place’ within the expected environment of a student community, yet gradually become ‘out of place’ when they revisit the family home as the bonds they have with friends slowly erode (see also: Gabriel, 2006; Easthope & Gabriel, 2008). Conversely, whilst those who stay at home remain ‘in place’ within their local networks, they can be ‘out of place’ at University as they do not have an easily identifiable position within the student community. Importantly, Holdsworth points out that added complications can exist for locally based students as they attempt to negotiate a pathway between their student and non-student identities. These students can therefore become ‘doubly othered’ both within their local communities and the student community if their fail to manage their ‘outsider’ status correctly (see also: Christie, 2007). This research will seek to extend these conceptualisations by investigating how students living in different residential circumstances might negotiate their transitions through University in contrasting ways and with different agendas which move beyond such simple dichotomies as ‘fitting in’ and not ‘fitting in’.

While the above literature discusses the agency of students in determining their position within their University location, there is a significant argument to suggest that exclusionary processes, as outlined earlier by Sibley (1995) and Cresswell (1996), exist when examining the micro-geographies of the student community. These notions of being ‘out of place’ within term-time spaces have been framed within the context of gender; race, religion and ethnicity; sexuality; and disability. Much of the literature surrounding the gendered experiences of HE students is concerned with the dichotomous relationships between masculine and feminine identities. As Britton and Baxter (1999) suggest: “Men and women tell different stories, which not only reflect differences in their life experiences but also different understandings of the self”. (p. 192). Whilst these processes do not necessarily exclude men or women from places per se, Tett (2000) goes on to stress that these experiences are socially constructed, in that participants often make assumptions regarding their gendered responsibilities and the appropriate spaces where particular activities should be performed, such as the home, the lecture theatre or the work place (see also: Baxter & Britton, 2001; Leathwood, 2006).
In contrast to these gendered experiences of place, discussions of exclusion and segregation become more visible when accounting for race, ethnicity or religion. Hopkins (2010) draws attention to the critical geographies of University campuses and the experiences of students within them. He unpacks the complex, and seemingly contradictory, narratives of a group of Muslim students who place University campuses as being both “tolerant and diverse and as discriminatory and exclusionary” (p. 157) in order to draw attention to how University campuses can be contested spaces for marginalised groups with regard to power and activism. In exploring this marginalisation further, Woldoff et al. (2011) outline that social and cultural divides can also exist within the undergraduate Black community in the USA, particularly between local and non-local students. They point to contrasts in the ways in which these student groups perceive each other, through integration with the White student community or differences between rural and urban identities, and how these perceptions may not compliment their experiences of place. In keeping with this theme of marginalisation, Sharma and Guest (2013) suggest that University can create a degree of fragility for religious identities, particularly for those who struggle to fit in with their non-religious peers. For these students, the prospect of being alienated at University can mean they become estranged from their faith, at least for the duration of their degree.

Following on from these examples of the social tensions which can exist in University spaces, tensions regarding ‘gay spaces’ can become one of the more visible (and seemingly accepted) forms of marginalisation within the HE setting. As Taulke-Johnson (2010a) suggests, for young gay students, going to University can be characterised as being pivotal in their ‘coming out’ biographies, particularly as for some, the decision to move away from home was potentially spurred on by a desire to escape the unfamiliarity of their home community, a place which may harbour marginalisation and threat. For these students, the University location is perceived as a place where they can be both accepted and less conspicuous whilst adapting to surroundings which fosters their identity. This can however become destabilised if their gay identities are not welcomed by housemates or course friends (Epstein et al., 2003). As Taulke-Johnson (2010b) argues, University spaces, such as halls of residence, can be constructed in accordance with discourses of heteronormativity, where heterosexual housemates exert their power by spatialising where homosexuality may be acceptable (i.e. the private room) or unacceptable (i.e. the communal areas) within the household.
Alternatively, whilst the perceptions of marginalisation and exclusion in the above accounts are fairly explicit, there exist incongruities between the conspicuousness of physical and neurological disabilities among students in University spaces. Those with physical disabilities may find the morphology of the University challenging and inaccessible, leading to a sense of marginalisation (Holloway, 2001). Conversely, those with neurological disabilities may find that the difficulties they experience in engaging in some of the more typical student activities may not necessarily be as immediately visible to other students, singling them out as being different to the rest of the student cohort (Madriaga, 2010). As Madriaga’s findings suggest, many of her respondents (students with Asperger Syndrome) applied similar tactics of self-segregation to those discussed by Chatterton (1999), however, this was not self-segregation from non-students but from other students, particularly as they envisaged difficulties with ‘fitting in’ among a cohort which may not understand or tolerate their disability. This inevitably casts certain mainstream student-centric social spaces as off limits to these students, shrinking their social sphere and the places in which they can happily interact with other students.

3.3 – ‘Sense of Place’

Whilst the previous section was concerned with the broader conceptualisations of place, it is important to recognise that a more personal and individualised ‘sense of place’ also exists here, one which relies on intimate and emotional connections with place (Holloway & Hubbard, 2001). As Pretty et al. (2003) suggest: “location itself is not enough to create a sense of place. It emerges from involvement between people, and between people and place” (p. 274). Anderson (2010) uses the example of his backyard during his youth to illustrate how a ‘sense of place’ is born from an increased depth of knowledge and association with a location, which in turn gives meaning to abstract space. Anderson points out that this allows him to “trace myself into my backyard and my backyard into myself” (p. 120), meaning, over time, traces of significant places contribute to what becomes an overall literal sense of a geographical location, be it through sight, smells, sounds, textures etc. In extending the earlier notions of sense of place being individualised, Carter et al. (2007) comment on how a sense of place can also be shared by a community, creating what Relph (2002) terms as ‘territories of meaning’. Using the context of a rural Australian community, Carter et al. suggest that a
‘sense of place’ is achieved through a degree of stability and embeddedness within a location where people, practices and place become intertwined. These authors do however, recognise the fluidity of a sense of place, specifically how this can become disrupted by changes to landscapes or communities and have outlined how processes, such as building developments can generate resistance through fear that a community’s particular image of ‘their’ place might be jeopardised. In contrast, Howley et al. (1996) and Pretty et al. (2003) both argue that a disrupted sense of place can also act as a catalyst for mobility for young adults, either into HE or employment, and can be exacerbated if they become disenfranchised with their local rural communities. As Gustafson (2001) suggests, this is particularly pertinent as a positive relationship with place may be fundamental for successful transitions for those who may be temporarily mobile. In advancing these notions of student mobility, this research will incorporate discussions of place attachment and ‘sense of place’ into debates of the ‘geographies of students’ in order to gain a clearer understanding of how relationships with place, both positive and negative may contribute towards a smoother transition through University.

As an alternative to these notions of institutions and communities forging a sense of place through collaboration, Fincher et al.’s. (2009) study of international student experiences in Melbourne, Australia, explores how the morphology of the student halls of residence can contribute to a diminished sense of place for young international students:

“There are no outside gardens available for socialising — the buildings’ footprints on the available land usually exclude this. As well, there is little private socialising space within the small apartments. These features of purpose-built student housing in the study area foster little connection with people or sites within or outside the buildings. They encourage students living in the buildings to seek entertainment outside, in the tight, nervous friendship groups formed through meeting at international student orientation sessions or through transnational links, reinforced within these buildings through occasional meetings in the hallways” (p. 116).

According to Fincher and Shaw (2009), these living spaces mentioned above have been designed with Asian students in mind, with developers stereotyping Asian students greatly through the assumptions that they are work focused and favour a high-rise living culture, characteristics Fincher and Shaw’s participants are keen to dispel. As Fincher
and Shaw (2007) go on to suggest, these institutionalised spaces therefore serve to manifest and replicate mono-cultural social networks among international students and greatly diminish the potential to forge meaningful connections both with, and outside of these spaces. Fincher and Shaw’s case could of course be construed as an example of how immobility may become a product of unsuccessful mobility decisions where international students can feel (temporarily) ‘out of place’ within the context of their new learning and social environments (see also: Waters & Leung, 2013). Nevertheless, research by Collins (2010) suggests that international students (in Collins’ case South Korean students residing in New Zealand) build upon the legacy of the Korean immigrant areas of cities in order to quickly establish their sense of place, socialising in spaces which connect with their cultural heritage. However, while there are plenty of discussions of how international students attempt to make connections with their term-time locations, little is known as to how students who move nationally, regionally or locally go about forming any kind of attachment with University spaces beyond that of their accommodation or teaching environments. This highlights the potential for more open discussions of how UK tertiary level students establish their sense of place in their term-time location and how this may be adapted, disrupted or even eradicated as they make their transitions through their degrees.

While the above examples have outlined the scales at which a sense of place can be experienced, Hay (1998) goes on to suggest that there exists a temporality to this process which is linked to residential status (see Table 3.2). Those with a limited connection with a location (e.g. tourists or transients) will have a weaker sense of place than those with an ancestral connection to a location. Why Hay’s conceptualisation of sense of place is important is because he recognises that weak ties exist for people who move through places. Whilst it is necessary to focus upon the deep rooted connections with place, the superficial, partial or personal connections can also reveal a burgeoning sense of place for those who may have attachments in other locations. While Hay’s model focused upon the temporality of place as an indicator of the intensity of a sense of place, Twigger-Ross and Uzzell (1996) offer an alternative method which draws in identity, suggesting a linkage between place attachment and a positive evaluation of identity in that place. The characteristics outlined by Twigger-Ross and Uzzell identify the varying degrees of attachment to place (both positive and negative) which can exist
Connection to place | Group(s)  
--- | ---  
**Superficial** | Tourists, transients  
**Partial** | Holiday home owners, children  
**Personal** | New residents without roots in the place, foreign immigrants (but not transients)  
**Ancestral** | Residents with roots  
**Cultural** | Indigenous residents with both roots in the place and spiritual ties (e.g. a tribal sense of place)

Table 3.2: ‘Senses of place’ by development (after Hay, 1998, p. 9).

among long-term residents and concur with Hay’s (1998) proposal of the intricacies of a sense of place by suggesting that these characteristics can denote a particularly individualised identification with place. Therefore, while the previous examples suggest that there may be little in the way of literature which discusses ‘sense of place’ in the context of University students, Hay’s and Twigger-Ross and Uzzell’s notions of the varying degrees of intensity of a sense of place offer a way in for further research into how undergraduate students make sense of their term-time locations. In particular, this will assist in developing an understanding as to how those students living in student accommodation develop [re]interpret the city as they move between residences. Likewise, understanding how place attachment increases over time may expose how students relate this to their evolving identities, particularly as their knowledge of the geography of the city improves. In contrast, notions of a ‘sense of place’ may also be extended to incorporate the experiences of those local students who already have a great deal of history and knowledge of the city in order to understand whether viewing the city through the lens of being a student might challenge their established conceptions of the city.

**3.4 – Linking ‘Place’ and ‘Habitus’ in Geographical Enquiry?**

It is important however, to recognise that, while notions of habitus and place have been implemented individually with great success within geographical enquiry, linking these conceptual frameworks comes with a suite of risks which cannot be approached uncritically. Most importantly, Bridge (2003) suggests that Bourdieu has been routinely criticised by geographers for his paucity of any direct reference to space and place within his theories of habitus and capital (see also: Hillier & Rooksby, 2005). Others
have also criticised the uneven utilisation of Bourdieu’s theories within geography with greater application in social and cultural geographies than other sub-disciplines (Painter, 2002; Cresswell, 2002). Entrikin (2001) argues that, for Bourdieu “[...] place has no theoretical import [...] and space lies inert except for the significance it gains through the materialisations of social distinctions” (p. 695), which may explain why many geographical interpretations of habitus may be construed as merely gestural.

In developing a geographical context for Bourdieu’s theories Casey (2001a) discusses the benefits of making linkages between habitus and place, proposing that: “habitus [be thought of as] a middle term between place and self – and, in particular, between lived place and the geographical self” (p. 686). Casey argues that while Bourdieu does not discuss place explicitly, it nonetheless exists pervasively within his theories of practice, particularly with regard to the places in which habitus is [re]enacted. Therefore, as Easthope (2004) suggests: “[...] habitus is intrinsically connected to the concept of ‘rootedness’: being at home in a particular place in an unselfconscious way” (p. 133). Casey (2001b) contests Bourdieu’s (1977) claims that habitus is unconscious and has “little to do with lived experience” (Easthope, 2004, p. 133), suggesting instead that habitus is tied to action, meaning: “the activation of habitus expresses an intentional and invested commitment to the place-world” (Casey, 2001b, p. 412, emphasis in original). Casey argues that this term ‘place-world’ be constitutive of a “world that is not only perceived or conceived but actively lived” (p. 413), highlighting the importance of recognising the social, historical and spatial processes which comprise people’s experiences. Allen and Hollingworth (2013) add that there is an inherent geography to habitus where individuals seek connections with others who share both dispositions and a sense of belonging to a particular place, meaning a person’s social dispositions and the spatial location become intertwined.

Casey’s theorisations have however, been subject to a degree of criticism. Entrikin (2001) in particular critiques Casey’s claims, suggesting his linkages between habitus and place may have overlooked some important geographical processes. For Entrikin, Casey’s [over]emphasis on the relationship between place and the embodied self stretches Bourdieu’s concepts further than they should naturally go. Entrikin points specifically to how emphasising the self may in fact diminish the role which habitus plays in these processes, thus weakening “its theoretical meaning and explanatory
power to the intentional agent and to specific place” (p. 696). Casey (2001c) replies with a coherent justification for his theorisations, suggesting that habitus, in fact, mediates between place and ‘the body’ in that the dispositions associated with the body, the ways in which bodies move through space, are essential in how place becomes experienced. Nevertheless, Casey’s theorisations have been adopted and extended by others, including Easthope (2004) who identifies a connection between habitus and a ‘sense of place’. Easthope argues that habitus is consciously experienced and that these experiences are linked to specific places, meaning interactions with places can be determined by the restrictions which are imposed by habitus (see also: Hillier & Rookby, 2005). In advancing these theorisations, this thesis will seek to identify the important role place plays in developing habitus and capital. Rather than making an explicit link between the two concepts, this research will highlight how place and habitus may instead compliment and inform one another. The transitory nature of the undergraduate degree will act as an ideal conduit for understanding these processes for two reasons: first, in identifying how the [pre]student habitus may inform students’ initial ‘sensing of place’ as they join and subsequently engage with University life and second how this evolving sense of place contributes towards a gradual honing and re-appropriation of social and cultural capital as students become more familiar with and connected to their term-time location.

3.5 – Summary

In summary, this chapter has outlined the complex ways in which habitus and place are situated in the wider nexus of critical thought and the practical implications for incorporating such conceptualisations into the research design. Habitus has already been proven as a useful conceptual tool for discussing the transitions of students, particularly in highlighting many of the social inequalities which may arise, such as the role of familial an institutional habitus in engendering [in]equitable access to HE. However, while this chapter has discussed the generational capacity for the transmission of the ‘right types’ of cultural and social capital required to make successful transitions into HE, this by no means suggests that these transitions are prefigured for prospective students. As Chapter Five will reveal, this transference may be augmented by other actors, outside of the familial or institutional realms, which may give non-traditional students some degree of preparation prior to commencing University. Likewise, as the
subsequent chapters will demonstrate, incorporating Holt’s (2008) notions of embodied social capital will add a more critical depth to notions of identity by suggesting that, while student identities may be construed as malleable and influenced by their changing residential and/or social behaviours, for some students, their immobility may become incorporated into their sense of self, thus affecting their social position within the student cohort. In addition to this are discussions of whether this is all about disadvantage or whether some students may simply be channelling their social capital into other, non-student experiences.

Moreover, incorporating notions of place and sense of place adds another, less widely explored, argument to discussions of HE student transitions by highlighting the complex role place plays in how students experience ‘being’ at University. In its broadest sense, place is often observed by its potential for being exclusive, with students seemingly ‘self-segregating’ away from non-students (Chatterton, 1999). Others have deepened this argument by suggesting that similar tensions can exist between local and non-local students, with those who have left home to go to University thought of as being ‘in-place’ as they have followed the expected pathway through HE. What this thesis will seek to identify is whether these tensions between student groups may be further exacerbated by social or cultural differences, particularly in social or residential situations which are likely to comprise a diverse student demographic. This is particularly pertinent when students are attempting to establish a ‘sense of place’ within their term-time location. As Pretty et al. (2003) suggested, a sense of place requires an emotional connection with place, hence this may be complex for students to establish, particularly if they have had an unsuccessful transition into HE. This may impact upon how they interpret their University location and may lead to a disengagement from University life. Importantly, incorporating and layering notions of habitus and place will highlight how together, both processes may be subject to reinvention and transformation during each stage of the transition through University. In addition, this research will emphasise the complex relationships which exist between place and habitus, particularly in how each are developed during the initial stages of the degree, how events such as accommodation changes or evolving social groupings may influence a [re]negotiation of habitus and place, and finally how habitus and place are managed as students prepare to leave at the end of their degrees.
Chapter Four – Methodology and Methods

The cultural turn within the social sciences has had a profound effect upon the ways in which geographical research is conducted, analysed and disseminated (Atkinson et al., 2005; Oakes & Price, 2008; Mitchell, 2000). In geography, the cultural turn introduced a raft of methodological opportunities into the discipline from the methods used to collect data (participant interviewing and observation, focus groups and ethnography), innovative methods of analysis (discourse, conversation and textual analysis, semiotics, and action research) and new conceptual frameworks (non-representational theory, actor-network theory, grounded theory). Accompanying these developments has been recognition that these methodological techniques have the capacity to give a voice to the often marginalised ‘other’ in society (Philo, 1992; Sibley, 1995; Cresswell, 1996; Valentine, 2001), meaning geographers must think critically about the effect of research upon the researched. This has challenged the perceived objectivity which exists in social research by introducing themes of positionality, reflexivity, subjectivity and the situation of knowledge within research (McDowell, 1992; England, 1994; Rose, 1997; Herod, 1999). Whilst these techniques have clearly benefitted the discipline by opening up the prospect for a broader range of research opportunities, some have criticised the cultural turn for its:

“ [...] emphasis on ‘sexy’ philosophical, linguistic and theoretical issues rather than on practical social research; the retreat from detailed, rigorous empirical work; the intellectual bias against policy studies; and the lack of political commitment” (Martin, 2001, p. 189).

Despite this concern that some cultural research can be viewed as narcissistic and lacking in relevance, it is important to recognise that without it there would be: “a gaping void in how we both know, and intervene in, the world” (Anderson & Smith, 2002, p. 7). Nevertheless, while the arguments here may imply that extreme differences exist within social research methodologies, as this thesis will demonstrate, what these arguments suggest more clearly is that social research is not a straightforward and uncritical process. Hence this research takes the view that methodological techniques must be approached with careful consideration as to how they are likely to impact upon the research participants, the researcher and the quality of the data collected.
The remainder of this methodological chapter will be divided into four sections. Section 4.1 will introduce the rationale for employing a mixed methods approach to collect data. Section 4.2 will outline phase one of the research process: the web-based survey. It will provide a response summary of the types of students who responded to the survey as well as explaining the methods used for the multinomial logistic regression analysis to be employed in Chapter Five. Section 4.3 introduces the second, qualitative phase of the research, discussing the ‘walking’ interviews, research diary and self-directed photography elements of the data collection. This section will also reflect the positionality of the researcher within this qualitative stage of the research. As with section 4.2, this section will provide a response summary for the walking interviews as well as outlining the coding scheme and emergent themes which have informed Chapters Six to Eight.

4.1 – The Mixed Methods Approach

A mixed methods approach was employed for this research as it “helps answer questions that cannot be answered by qualitative or quantitative approaches alone” (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2007, p. 9). It has been argued that mixed methods designs have the potential to increase accuracy and improve confidence in research findings (Alexander et al., 2008) or act simply as a form of triangulation (Silverman, 2010). Some nevertheless argue that qualitative and quantitative methods exist as separate paradigms and that combining them constitutes an ‘incompatibility thesis’ (Robson, 2011) because each paradigm is studying particular phenomena in a way which approaches theory from opposing conceptual fields. For example, quantitative methods can be viewed as mechanistic and non-judgemental whereas qualitative applications are based upon in-depth enquiry (Robson, 2011). Needless to say, much contemporary discussion refutes these claims, suggesting that debates surrounding the exclusivity of research methodologies and methods are outmoded and that the methods of qualitative and quantitative data collection and dissemination are intrinsically linked (Howe, 1988; Mertens & Hesse-Biber, 2012). Therefore as Robson (2011) and Alise and Teddlie (2010) suggest, whilst the monolithic paradigms of positivist and interpretivist approaches are undeniably incompatible, more recent post-positivist approaches allow researchers to make more informed choices as to the methodologies they use and the methods they employ (see also: Maxwell (2010) for an empirical example). It was
exactly this opportunity to ‘muddy the methodological waters’ which made employing a mixed methods approach so attractive within this research project, particularly as it allowed for greater possibilities for moving between the meta-experiences of the participants at a University-wide scale right down to the micro-scale of an individual student’s everyday life.

In accordance with Denscombe (2008) the following characteristics were implemented to this research in order to ensure a successful mixed methods design: (1) common sense should be applied as the philosophical underpinning for research to either challenge or harmonise research; (2) both quantitative and qualitative methods should be used within the same research project and that the relationship between these methods be explained clearly, and finally; (3) the research design must clearly indicate the development and precedence that is given to each of the qualitative and quantitative elements of data collection and analysis. Therefore, as Robson (2011) and Bryman (2012) argue, mixed methods research designs benefit from being comprehensive and offsetting weaknesses as well as illustrating complexities and explaining findings. Alongside this, a mixed methods approach also widens the scope of questions that can be explored without the threat of being superficial. This is particularly pertinent for situations when factors need to be controlled for and qualitative investigation may not be substantial enough on its own (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2007). However, Robson (2011) cautions that such designs have their limitations as it is difficult to judge whether anything has been gained from combining methods. Therefore being explicit about why a method has been implemented and keeping research questions at the forefront of the study are key for a successful mixed methods approach.

A mixed methods approach was vital to this research project as it enabled a far greater understanding of the phenomena under enquiry than simply applying a single method. Using only a quantitative or qualitative approach would have exposed either the broad analytical themes of the survey results or the rich detail of the interviewing without being able to consider how these processes influence each other. Within this project qualitative and quantitative data are used to different effects in order to maximise the potential for explaining each research question fully. The ways in which qualitative and quantitative methods have been employed in the research design for each research
question are outlined in Table 4.1, whilst the actual methods employed will be explained in greater detail over sections 4.2 and 4.3.

**Question 1: How do the residential circumstances of students influence their choices, mobilities and experiences?**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Quantitative data:</th>
<th>The survey data will be statistically modelled to establish a typology of students by their residential circumstances.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Qualitative data:</td>
<td>Excerpts from the open-ended questions in the surveys will be used to contextualise these models to prevent the results from becoming too descriptive.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Question 2: How might a student's residential circumstances influence the formation of their 'student identity' during the initial stages of their degree?**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Quantitative data:</th>
<th>The respondents’ term-time postcodes will be used to generate maps which illustrate the distributions of student accommodation in and around Portsmouth.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Qualitative data:</td>
<td>The interview data will be used to add richer context to these maps and to test geographical theory.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Question 3: Do the residential circumstances of students influence how they might establish their ‘sense of place’ in the city?**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Quantitative data:</th>
<th>The respondents’ term-time postcodes will be used to generate maps which illustrate the density of rented student accommodation in Portsmouth.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Qualitative data:</td>
<td>The interview responses will be used to develop theoretical understanding of how the students negotiate their ‘sense of place’ within the city. The participants' photographs will also be used to contextualise these claims by adding a visual interpretation to the analysis.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Question 4: How do students in subsequent years manage their student identities as they prepare to complete their degrees?**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Quantitative data:</th>
<th>The respondents’ term-time postcodes will be used to generate maps which illustrate the distributions of student accommodation in relation to their preferred social spaces.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Qualitative data:</td>
<td>The interview data will be used to add richer context to the analysis and to test geographical theory.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 4.1: The application of quantitative and qualitative data to the research questions using a mixed methods approach
4.2 – Phase One: Collection of Quantitative Data

4.2a – Web-based Survey

The first part of the research was conducted via a web-based survey designed to recognise the broader trends of mobility, movement and experiences among the student population of Portsmouth. Whilst existing official statistical data regarding the applications and first destinations of University students is available through a number of agencies including: the Universities and Colleges Admissions Service (UCAS); the Higher Education Statistics Agency (HESA) and the Higher Education Funding Council for England (HEFCE), these data sources can be limited in their ability to explore the specific issues within the research questions of this thesis. Although these data are useful in predicting trends of student mobility, either at the point of entry into HE or the subsequent destination of employment for graduates, they are unable to unpack the reasons for this mobility, or give any indication of how residential circumstances may influence these movements. Questionnaires have a long legacy within social research methods and are vital where primary data is required in generating generalised themes, opinions and behaviours of a population (Parfitt, 2005; Cloke *et al.*, 2004). They measure the distribution of distinguishing features within or between groups of people and offer the potential for explanations of relationships. Secor (2010) goes on to add that unlike other social research methods such as interviewing and ethnography, questionnaires do not provide room for unstructured or spontaneous discussion or for any unplanned, supplementary explanation. They are bound within the structure of their questioning and therefore must be designed carefully in order to maximise their potential as a research tool.

For the purpose of this research the internet was employed as a tool for both the design and distribution of the survey using the popular web-based service Survey Monkey. There are of course a myriad of other techniques available to administer a questionnaire, including, amongst others, postal and telephone surveys or face-to-face techniques conducted at the respondent’s home or in a public space (see Kitchin & Tate, 2000; McLafferty, 2003). The use of the internet in disseminating surveys has become increasingly prevalent in social contemporary research methods designs particularly through email distribution or the use of web-based servers (May, 2011; Bryman, 2012).

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10 Visit www.surveymonkey.com for a full range of the features available through Survey Monkey.
Web-based designs have many advantages over email surveys, both in their stylistic appearance and the pathways in which respondents are encouraged to follow through the questions. Madge and O’Connor (2004; 2006) also suggest that web-based surveys are valuable for targeting the right audience and reaching potentially hidden social groups. Researchers such as Robson (2011) have been slightly critical of this method of distribution, arguing that still only two-thirds of UK households have internet access, meaning access to web-based surveys is limited. However, inequitable access was not an issue within this study as the respondents within the research group are all issued with a University email address and have access to the internet throughout the University campus.

Outlining the design and structure of the survey itself, the survey was separated into four streams to ensure that the residential characteristics of the students were focused upon (for an example of the survey see Appendix I). From the beginning of the research design it was clear that the residential circumstances of the students would become the dependent variable with which to test other independent variables against. ‘Where do you live during term time?’ was a mandatory question within the survey and the respondents were asked to select one of the four options discussed earlier which subdivide the existing terms ‘local’ and ‘non-local’ and include the more traditional pathways of ‘living in halls’ and ‘living in rented accommodation’ and the less traditional arrangements of ‘living with parents’ and ‘living in own home’ (see Figure 4.1). The remaining questions within each stream were designed to work loosely around the research questions and were tailored to suit each accommodation stream. The main topics which were focused upon in the survey were: accommodation, education and employment background and social activities. In accordance with Secor (2010) the survey maintained a range of question styles, some closed and some open, in order to maintain variety and to prevent the respondents from giving impassive responses. The use of a web-based method meant that the respondents were automatically directed to the correct set of questions rather than having to follow instructions to determine their route through the questionnaire. This assisted in maintaining a logical flow for respondents through the survey. Whilst there were different streams of questions, the more general questions were kept identical within each stream in order to create a reliable and consistent survey (Sapsford, 2007). The more specific questions relating to residential circumstances were then tailored specifically to relate to each individual.
Concerning sample size, a non-probability sampling technique was deemed to be the most appropriate approach for this research as the research does not intend to make generalisable claims beyond the sample of participants. Non-probability sampling was also suitable as it was unclear as to the variation in the extent of the population of students in each of the residential streams and where these populations would be at their densest (Denscombe, 2003). Respondents were approached via email asking them to follow a link embedded within the email (see Appendix II). This email was distributed by departmental managers within the University (see Appendix III) through prior consultation with each of the heads of departments individually (see Appendix IV). Other methods of delivery were discussed, including using social networking websites such as Facebook or Twitter or by displaying the link on one of the University’s student forums. The aforementioned method of distributing the survey to students via University departments was decided upon as the other examples have a potentially limited reach and may not be deemed appropriate forms of media with which to capture data from students. Selwyn, (2009) and Baran (2010) both caution against interfering with what are essentially student-to-student interfaces such as Facebook. Madge et al. (2009) argue that caution must be taken when “moving into a social networking space that students clearly feel is ‘theirs’ for social rather than academic purposes” (p. 152). Distributing the link via an in-house email also determined exactly who receives the questionnaire and therefore enabled a more reliable set of responses. In all, twenty one of the twenty five departments within the University of Portsmouth agreed to take part in the study. The other four departments were non-responsive, although none explicitly stated that they did not wish to be involved. To ensure the anonymity of the respondents
was protected, the students within the survey were not asked what degree pathway they were studying for, meaning the range of responses from each of the departments cannot accurately be determined. Utilising this sampling framework inevitably involved some problems, particularly as respondents were unable to be contacted either personally or be distributed to as a whole cohort, instead relying on the consideration of gatekeepers to dispense the survey on behalf of the researcher. With this in mind the data within the responses was regularly and carefully monitored as they were returned to ensure that the results were corresponding in some way with the patterns of the University of Portsmouth’s demographic data (see Table 4.2).

### 4.2b Response Summary of Web-based Survey

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Survey results (n=1147)</th>
<th>University of Portsmouth (n=18,878)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Gender:</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>456</td>
<td>55%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>689</td>
<td>45%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(missing)</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Age:</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21 or under</td>
<td>897</td>
<td>85%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>22 or above</td>
<td>250</td>
<td>15%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Year of study:</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1(^{st}) Year</td>
<td>406</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2(^{nd}) Year</td>
<td>366</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3(^{rd}) Year</td>
<td>362</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(missing)</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>1.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Nationality:</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UK</td>
<td>994</td>
<td>87%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EU</td>
<td>67</td>
<td>6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non EU</td>
<td>79</td>
<td>13%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(missing)</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Ethnicity:</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>White</td>
<td>946</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-white</td>
<td>158</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(missing)</td>
<td>43</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Residential type:</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Halls of residence</td>
<td>204</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rented student property</td>
<td>687</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>With parents</td>
<td>125</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Own home</td>
<td>131</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Parent with a degree:</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>408</td>
<td>36%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>740</td>
<td>64%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(missing)</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Straight to University:</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>767</td>
<td>67%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>337</td>
<td>29%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(missing)</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>4%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

\(a\) – source: University of Portsmouth (2012a) \(b\) – Stated as ‘21 or over’ \(c\) – UK and EU students combined

Table 4.2: Demographic profile of web-based survey respondents (source: survey data).
In all, 1147 valid responses were collected from the web-based survey representing approximately six per cent of the total full-time undergraduate student cohort within the University of Portsmouth for the 2011/2012 (University of Portsmouth, 2012a) intake. Investigating the demographic variability within the response rate revealed that the respondents varied slightly by gender with 60 per cent of respondents being female and 39.5 per cent male. These figures do however differ slightly to those reported by the University of Portsmouth which suggest that 45 per cent of students are female and 55 per cent male (University of Portsmouth, 2012a). Unsurprisingly there were a far greater percentage of respondents aged 21 or under (78 per cent) as opposed to those over 22 years of age (22 per cent). Year of study proved to demonstrate a more even representation of students within the survey with 35 per cent of responses from first year students; 32 per cent from second year students and 31.5 per cent from third year students. This might suggest that within this doctoral research, discussing students in terms of their year of study may be of more use statistically than considering their age, particularly as under 21 year olds feature prominently across each year group. In terms of nationality the results show that 86 per cent of students are British citizens with 13 per cent from overseas (‘overseas’ comprises six per cent from the European Union (EU) and seven per cent from outside of the EU). These figures are not quite consistent with those for the University of Portsmouth as a whole which reports having 87 per cent of students from the UK and EU and 13 per cent from outside of the EU (University of Portsmouth, 2012a). When asked to outline their residential circumstances 60 per cent stated that they lived in a privately rented ‘student’ property whilst 18 per cent said that they lived in halls of residence. Finally, those that stated that they lived either in their own home or with their parents counted for 11.5 and 10.5 per cent each respectively.

In keeping with this representation of a ‘young’ student cohort, 67 per cent of respondents stated that they went straight to University from school or college whilst 64 per cent stated that they were the first in their immediate family to attend University, not untypical for post-1992 institutions like the University of Portsmouth (Patiniotis & Holdsworth, 2005). In summary, these results reveal that the respondents from this survey are represented as being predominantly young, British and mainly residing in student accommodation, specifically privately rented accommodation. However, these results also suggest that year of study are represented fairly evenly within the survey.
4.2c: Methods for Multinomial Logistic Regression Analysis

In order to establish a profile for each ‘accommodation type’, a multinomial logistic regression technique was applied here. This technique is useful as it highlights the key characteristics of the ‘type’ of student most likely to belong to each group. The two models compiled were built around the accommodation streams which were used as part of the web-based survey (see section 4.2a). Model One identifies the characteristics of students living in more typical accommodation (specifically halls of residence and rented housing) while Model Two identifies the characteristics of students living in non-typical accommodation and includes students living with parents or in their own homes. Multinomial logistic regression is an alternative version of logistic regression where the dependent variable is a nominal variable of two or more categories (Field, 2009; Acton & Miller, 2009; Tarling, 2009). In multinomial logistic regression, the odds or probability that a particular category of dependent variables will occur is predicted based on a given set of characteristics (Acton & Miller, 2009). In other words this technique assesses how well a set of independent variables predict or explain the dependent variable. It does this by examining the ‘goodness of fit’ of the model which in turn indicates the relative importance of each of the variables and/or any interactions between them (Pallant, 2009). In order to create a successful model, multinomial logistic regression requires careful consideration of the sample size with Starkweather and Moske (n.d.) recommending a minimum of ten cases per independent variable.

4.3 – Phase Two: Collection of Qualitative Data

4.3a – ‘Walking Interviews’, Research Diary and Self-directed Photography

After the survey was completed and the data analysed a second set of data were collected using qualitative interviews with respondents assembled from the survey. Semi-structured qualitative interview techniques have been widely used within social research and are often a successful means of data collection which can uncover the delicate, and sometimes hidden, beliefs and practices of social groupings (Cloke et al., 2004; Valentine, 2005; Davies & Dwyer, 2007; 2008). Valentine (2005) goes on to argue that whilst interview techniques should be people oriented, they should consist of a dialogue between researcher and participant and should allow the participant to
discuss their lives and experiences in their own words. Therefore as Miller and Glassner (2011) succinctly summarise:

“[...] interviews reveal evidence of the nature of the phenomena under investigation, including the contexts and situations in which it emerges, as well as insights into the cultural frames people use to make sense of their experiences and their social worlds” (p. 131).

In other words, interviews allow the researcher to uncover a particular ‘type’ of reality. We say ‘type’ as the knowledge gained through interviewing is subjective and open to interpretation meaning there is no such thing as a ‘pure’ interview (see Silverman, 2006). Therefore, whilst Valentine (2005) suggests that an open dialogue should be implemented between interviewer and interviewee, this dialogue must be taken into account as constructing “narrative versions of the social world” (Miller & Glassner, 2011, p. 132), the researcher is not exempt from his or her role in contributing to the results of the interview.

Conventional forms of participant interviewing have come under criticism of late for their conservative and often narrow range of skills (Thrift, 2000; Crang, 2005). As Latham (2003) suggests, “Pushed in the appropriate direction there is no reason why these methods cannot be made to dance a little” (p. 2000). Davies and Dwyer (2007) go on to point out that, “social science methodologies and forms of knowing [should] be characterised as much by openness, reflexivity and recursivity as by categorisation, conclusion and closure” (p. 258). What they are suggesting here is that rather than attempting to replicate the precision of quantification, the ‘messiness’ of qualitative methods should be embraced, as should the complex layering of the social world. Law (2004) suggests that “[...] the world is on the move and social science more or less reluctantly follows” (p. 3) which should awaken social scientists to the opportunity to think critically of the research methods we apply in order to make better sense of a changing social world.

With this in mind, across the social sciences there is recognition that place is becoming increasingly important in the research encounter (Casey, 2001a; Dwyer & Davies, 2010; Antonsich, 2010). There is a growing corpus of work pertaining to the value of place-based field research prompting researchers such as Evans and Jones (2011) to ask questions such as: “what is the relationship between what people say and where they
say it?” (p. 851). Anderson (2004) notes that qualitative researchers often hint at spatial contexts, although often accomplished implicitly, within research methodologies, with “researchers go[ing] out into the field to meet with groups under study” (2004, p. 225).

What recent research has begun to point to is the socio-spatial constructions of knowledge (Anderson, 2004; Riley, 2010). As Casey suggests:

“The relationship between self and place is not just one of reciprocal influence […] but also, more radically, of constitutive co-ingredience: each is essential to the being of the other. In effect, there is no place without self and no self without place” (2001a, p. 684).

What this highlights is the role of place in enhancing the elicitation of knowledge within the research encounter. Anderson (2004) goes on to recognise the value of elevating the geographical context of space and place above that of being an inert background. Place acts as a facilitator for actions whilst at the same time being a product of actions. These encounters have proved useful in producing knowledge, such as: life histories (Riley, 2010) and ‘everyday’ spaces (Kusenbach, 2003; Porter et al., 2010); the interpretation and ‘sensing’ of place (Reed, 2002) and the co-ingredience of people and place (Anderson, 2004).

One such aspect of this place-based research involves the ‘walking interview’. Various appellations of ‘walking interviews’ are referred to within the literature including: touring (Reed, 2002), ‘bimbling’ (Anderson, 2004) and ‘go-alongs’ (Kusenbach, 2003). Whilst each of these expressions differ in terms of scale, route determination and familiarity of research location they all share commonalities where participants are accompanied on (un)specified walks around a research location (see also: Riley, 2010; Housley & Smith, 2010; Evans & Jones, 2011; Jones et al., 2008). Both Anderson (2004) and Elwood and Martin (2000) suggest that this type of interview methodology goes a long way in revealing the spatial relations and meanings which constitute the ‘micro-geographies’ of place. Place plays a key role in influencing knowledge and eliciting information meaning places are not passive but are involved in action (Anderson, 2004; Anderson & Jones, 2009; Brown & Durrheim, 2009; Mendoza & Morén-Alegret, 2013). Therefore, as Reed (2002) explains, walking interviews embody “a ‘sensing of place’, [revealing] the manner in which a set of persons animate a city and imagine that the city animates them” (p. 129).
As Reed (2002) suggests, walking interviews allow participants to pause to ‘sense’ place and grasp the essence of place through imagination. They excavate knowledge and capture encounters ‘in the moment’ as well as developing richer understanding of identities, emotions and social relations which shape the nature of responses. Place-based encounters also begin to highlight demographic differences which may be obscured by conventional face-to-face meetings (Elwood & Martin, 2000). This can be achieved by encouraging participants to shape (or at least play a role in shaping) the direction of the interview (Riley, 2010). Walking interviews also make the general more specific and prompt the discussant to talk about places more than people. They prompt spontaneous discussions and act as ‘walking probes’, defined by de Leon and Cohen (2005) as narrated tours which stimulate responses (Evans & Jones, 2011). Being conducted ‘in place’ allows the focus of the interview to drift away from the person-to-person encounter to being in and of the place itself (Riley, 2010) going some way in eliminating some of the awkwardness of explaining place in conventional face to face interviews (Porter et al., 2010). Linking locations to narratives is therefore extremely useful in establishing how people respond to spaces. This means that this is less about individuals moving through the city but a “single interpretive community” (Reed, 2002, p. 128) experiencing a vision/version of the city. The walking interview is therefore a productive method of accessing a community’s ‘sense of place’ within an environment which can be vital in maintaining sustainable communities and neighbourhoods (Evans & Jones, 2011).

It is however important to recognise that cautions must be taken when carrying out such techniques. There is a need to question how place has become tied to action, particularly as different places elicit different responses (Anderson, 2004; Riley, 2010). Therefore place has a bearing over what information is revealed (Elwood & Martin, 2000). Kusenbach (2003) proposes that the researcher be required to take a more proactive role in developing and interpreting the actions of the participant and their surroundings concurring with Anderson’s (2004) claim that walking interviews constitute the dual participation of interviewer and interviewee. Interview sites are therefore closely linked to power (Elwood & Martin, 2000) meaning where participants situate themselves within the highly elastic power relations and meanings associated with place must be considered. It must also be kept in mind that this type of research encounter is not a ‘natural’ event. Acquiescence on the part of the participant may not always imply that
the research encounter is an entirely truthful experience, particularly if the process is considered an intrusion (Kusenbach, 2003). Finally, there are a myriad of other social, cultural and emotional factors which may influence the responses given during walking interviews. Reed’s (2002) participants in particular gave highly emotive and reflexive accounts of a now lost vision of London which they knew and cared a great deal about. It will be interesting to note whether the interview participants achieved this depth of connection with their more ephemeral term time location or whether they were less reflective over their experiences of place. Therefore, in order to set the correct tone for the walking interviews within this research, it was decided that there would be a need to question the degree to which the participants engaged and/or identified with a particular place (Elwood & Martin, 2000; Anderson & Jones, 2009).

In response to this notion of “emplacing the research encounter” (Riley, 2010, p. 653), thirty one walking interviews were conducted between January and May 2012 with full time undergraduate students from the University of Portsmouth. Each excursion lasted 1-1.5 hours and the participants were asked to choose two to three predetermined locations within the city which they visited regularly (see Figure 4.2). This included places where they socialised at night, went shopping, ate out, met with friends to study, as well as tourist spots or communal spaces, such as the seafront, Southsea Common or one of the local parks. This concurs with Elwood & Martin’s (2000) suggestion that the interview site should be more than just a place of convenience. The routes were kept fluid between locations in order to encourage participants to, as much as possible, take control of their journeys around the city to ensure it is about their experiences. This allows the researcher to visually interpret student spaces through direct experience as well as opening the potential for unexpected interactions with spaces.

Alongside these discussions of place-based research, it is important to acknowledge the ethical dilemmas associated with naming the research location, particularly as geography has of late experienced a ‘moral turn’ (McEwan & Goodman, 2010) which highlights a greater need towards engaging with ethical considerations. It was clear from the beginning of this research that, for this project to be a success, it was vital that Portsmouth was identified as the place in which the study was conducted, with particular attention being paid to how the geography of the city influenced the movements and ‘sensing of place’ for the participants. As was mentioned earlier in
Figure 4.2: Destinations chosen by candidates on the walking interviews (source: author’s interview data).
Chapter One, this research is both in and of Portsmouth and the uniqueness of this University city was paramount to the context of the analysis. However, while it is not necessarily rare within geographical enquiry to disclose a research location, doing so involves careful ethical considerations, particularly when choosing what to reveal and what to anonymise (Madge, 2007). Whilst anonymising the respondents’ names and identifying characteristics is commonplace within social research, less consideration has been given to whether or not a research location should also receive the same level of anonymity. Within the field of student geographies, the disclosure of research locations is crucial in understanding the complex relationships between students and their place of study. Non-disclosure may significantly weaken the impact of geographical enquiry, particularly in discussions of place where interview participants’ individual experiences are uniquely tied to their location. To overcome this, the participants were invited to review their interview transcripts and remove anything they felt unhappy with. Of the thirty one interviewees only one made any amendments. As part of the analysis, key identifying features, such as halls of residences, residential street names, course subjects and home towns were omitted. Other features, such as bars and clubs and generic locations in the city were included as they were necessary to the context of the study but were incorporated carefully in order to protect the identities of the participants.

In choosing a sampling technique for the qualitative interviews a non-probability approach was decided upon. This differs from probability sampling in that participants are not chosen at random, or according to some other known chance of selection, but are instead either hand-picked or selected by recommendation (Tansey, 2007). In the research here, the survey respondents were invited to nominate themselves as potential participants for the qualitative interviews. Willing candidates were asked to leave their contact email address if they were interested in continuing with the research. An invitation was emailed to these potential candidates which outlined in greater detail the aims and objectives of the project as well as what would be required of them if they chose to participate (see Appendix V). Participants were asked to complete a consent form on the day of the interview which was stored in a locked filing cabinet separate

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11 Holdsworth’s (2009a) study of how students in Liverpool manage their Scouse identities is a particularly strong example of the importance of identifying place in research.
from the transcripts, photographs and audio files (see Appendix VI). A quota sampling technique was implemented within this study in order to ensure that students from each of the residential categories were represented as evenly as possible. This information was used as the basis for selection. For those under-represented categories, in this case first year students living in halls of residence and local students living with their parents, a snowball sampling technique, where the researcher is introduced to a candidate through the recommendation of other candidates, was implemented. As Valentine (2005) suggests, this technique is useful in uncovering ‘hidden’ populations. However, as Secor (2010) warns, this type of sampling technique can lead to biased groups (and subsequently biased data), particularly if the research cohort all know each other. As a result, care was taken here to make each interview about ‘their’ experience, rather than drawing in responses from other encounters. The final few candidates were recruited via an advert posted on LookUP, the University’s online student news homepage (see Appendix VII).

As was suggested earlier, this research infers that residential status is a key influencing factor here in exploring how students experience place. The processes which occur in the home may have as much bearing over how they experience both their home and the wider community as the location in which they live. Therefore within this study, consideration was given to whether a student’s home life had any bearing over how they experienced other places. Alongside this interest in the influence of residential circumstances, this study is also concerned with the heterogeneity of the student cohort. However it must be clearly stated that this study has not set out explicitly to compare age, gender or ethnicity but is more keenly interested in indentifying the influence accommodation choice has over experiences within the city. Whilst careful attention was given to selecting students from across the cohort it was decided upon early on to omit part-time or postgraduate students from this study. Whilst their experiences would be worthy of further study, it was decided upon that their inclusion within this project would only add another dimension to what is already a complex and diverse grouping, and that their stories would warrant their own separate studies.

As part of the research process a research diary was kept to record some of the more pertinent points of the interview, not picked up through the audio recording. This worked in two ways. First it allowed for linkages and discrepancies to be made between
other participants but also it inspired critical and reflective thinking over the success of employing the walking interview method. Research diaries are of course widely used within social research methods and can be useful as a management tool as well as evaluating the quality and direction of the project (Valentine, 2005; Silverman, 2006; 2010; Robson, 2011). Problems, such as poor weather, new lines of enquiry or the participant’s engagement with the environment were detailed, ensuring they were addressed and overcome in subsequent interviews. Annotated maps were also compiled which acted as a visual aide-mémoire when reflecting back on each of the encounters. These maps contained noteworthy components of each of the routes taken and were annotated with the times of particularly significant moments of the encounters. These times corresponded with the audio files allowing key sections of the interviews to be revisited during the analysis. In this sense the diary became a valuable reflexive tool which meant that the success of each interview was being analysed and continually improved upon with each encounter thus preventing complacency and potentially missing valuable data. Engin (2011) argues that research diaries are more useful than being simply a depository for reflections and ideas. In addition “a research diary can be viewed as a scaffolding tool in the construction of both research knowledge and identity as a researcher” (p. 297). In supporting Engin’s claims, it was determined through this research that the implementation of a research diary greatly improved the quality of the data collection because it developed a more reflexive understanding of how the actions of the researcher can influence the findings of their research (see also: Knight, 2002).

In deciding upon the inclusion of self-directed photographs, it was initially proposed to culminate the walking interview with a brief discussion in the student’s homes so as to continue this theme of place-based interviewing. However, this was unsuccessful during the initial stages of the interview process as the participants felt self-conscious about discussing their housemates whilst they might be in earshot, leading to a concern that this might affect the quality of the data. As was made apparent during an interview in the kitchen of a third year participant who lived in a rented house in Portsmouth:

“Talking about home space whilst in the home did not really add anything to the interview and was very similar to talking about the same topics whilst walking. The conversation seemed to naturally steer towards this anyway during the walking interview and felt a little stilted when in the home, particularly when a housemate walked in to the kitchen whilst we were talking and he clearly felt embarrassed talking” (Research Diary).
To overcome this, the students were asked to provide photographs of their living spaces (bedroom, living room, kitchen etc.) for use in interpreting how they utilise their living spaces alongside their interview responses. No clues were given to the students as to what was to be included in these photographs, only that they were to take them from the doorway in order to get as much of the room into each photograph as possible. There exists a body of literature extolling the virtues of utilising photographs in social research (see Prosser & Schwartz, 1998; Rose, 2007), which suggests that their inclusion can add analytical potential and a deeper level of context. Rose (2007) does however argue that it is important to distinguish between images taken as part of the research project and ‘found images’, such as newspaper articles or family photographs (see Barrett & Barrington, 2005). The students were asked to supply these photographs prior to the interview and the content of the images were frequently referred to during the interviews. This was useful as it fitted with the inclusive themes of place-based interviews being beneficial in eliciting experiences to environments rather than simply gaining responses to questions (Housley & Smith, 2010). Therefore even though the researcher was not party to the taking of these images they were still able to be used as an interpretive (and to a certain extent comparative) tool as part of the interview process. Rose (2007) does however advise that caution be taken, particularly as medium such as photographs carry their own agency. As they have been produced by the participants themselves, it is difficult to assume that these are entirely ‘natural’ scenes and may have been staged in order to expose or hide particular details. Nevertheless, by utilising the photographs during the interview process much of this uncertainty was likely to be alleviated.

4.3b Positionality

Since the cultural turn in geography, feminists, queer theorists and critical geographers have sought to question the hegemonic status of objectivity in research. As England (1994) and McDowell (1992) argue, it is now almost impossible to consider the prospect of conducting value-free research within the social sciences without taking into account the social construction and situation of the production of knowledge. Geographers such as Rose (1997), England (1994), Herod (1999) and McDowell (1992) rightly argue for the consideration of the researcher’s position within the research process and concur with their claims that research is partial and situated within the
context of the participants and their location. Therefore, taking an individual’s position as researcher into account has been vital in ensuring reflexivity about how researchers’ values and experiences might influence both the way research is conducted and the type of knowledge that is produced. Herod (1999) states that in a traditional sense, positionality exists as dichotomous ‘insider/outsider’ roles with the researcher and research subject being positioned in either camp. Herod does however challenge this neat dualism by suggesting that the position of the researcher takes on many guises within a research situation, either sub or self-consciously morphing to suit the situation he or she is in. This suggests that position within research is non-linear, something which has definitely occurred within this research project.

My position as a student, albeit a postgraduate student, enables both insider and outsider knowledge of the student cohort. However this knowledge of being a student is particular to my own experiences. I embarked on my undergraduate degree at the University of Portsmouth in my thirties. Prior to becoming a student I trained as a hairdresser and worked at a high level within the industry, finally owning my own business. I own my own home, sixty miles away from Portsmouth so my engagement with the city and with student life was, by my own design, very limited. I am in a long-term relationship and have a strong set of friends based around where I live, many of whom I have known for a number of years. I have several creative hobbies, all of which are involved with my group of friends and none of which are ever carried out in Portsmouth. All of this paints a picture of who I am and how far removed my identity as a student is from the rest of my life. Whilst I have been an undergraduate student I cannot stake claim to understanding how many other students experience their University location. I therefore have found the position in which I am situated can be problematic. Whilst I quite clearly sit on the fringes of the traditional student cohort I have a closer understanding of the experiences of less traditional students, mature learners and those who commute some distance from Portsmouth to study. It is here where it was realised early on that caution needed to be taken in listening to the experiences of the participants rather than try to use assumed knowledge to interpret their experiences. But, in keeping with many cultural and critical studies, it is impossible to approach any research with complete impartiality (England, 1994).

12 The tense has been switched to the first person here in order to best convey the autobiographical tone of this research position.
Almost every qualitative researcher will conduct research with some form of bias and will infuse their research with their own personality. This is inevitable with any type of dialogical human-to-human interface. Therefore, as this short autobiography demonstrates, each of the participants has come to University with a history and that history undoubtedly plays some part in shaping, at least the initial stages of their experience (Rose, 1997). As Rose clearly states here in a critique of the position of the researcher from a feminist geographer’s perspective:

“Many feminist geographers argue that identities are extraordinarily complex, not only because gender, class, race and sexuality, to name just a few axes of social identity, mediate each other, but also because each of those elements is relational” (p. 314).

It is therefore the job of the researcher to interpret these experiences and present them in a way that does justice to both the data and to the participants, rather than simply fitting their responses to their own agenda.

So far this section has stressed the importance of considering how the social position of the researcher may affect a research situation, and how this has become a matter of course within research encounters. However, relating this to the theme of ‘emplacing methodologies’, which has run through this chapter, Anderson et al., (2010) postulate: “what significance and meaning does where the research takes places have for the knowledge produced?” (p. 595), and more importantly, at the macro and micro-level “how do [...] geographical influences help or obstruct the knowledge production process? (p. 595). Feminist geographers have long considered the power of place within research, often situating encounters in places such as the domestic setting of home. As Sin (2003) suggests, this constitutes an appropriate space to instigate a dialogue, there is a synergy between social and geographical dimensions which help neutralise “potentially obtrusive social positioning” (Anderson et al., 2010, p. 596). From past experiences of interviewing undergraduate students, it was quickly recognised that place matters greatly to the quality of knowledge that is produced. For a previous study, face-to-face interviews with students were conducted in an office in the department. Even though my social position was closer to theirs (I was also an undergraduate at the time) this formal setting had a significant impact upon the direction of the interview meaning it usually took a long time for the participants to relax into the flow of the dialogue. This was a significant driver in the decision to conduct these interviews in the field,
with the walking aspect of the interview very quickly eroding these barriers. Because the encounters were being conducted in their space (and to some extent my space also) the conversational aspect of the interview started almost immediately, even with the shier participants. Also, as Porter et al., (2010) point out, the action of walking and talking side-by-side broke the formality of interviewing, of having to play this self-conscious game of ‘question/response’, and replicated, as much as possible, a ‘natural’ conversation. Therefore, the participants, to a certain degree, seemed to ‘forget’ that this was a research encounter as they were discussing themes in an appropriate space.

4.3c – Response Summary of Walking Interviews

As was outlined earlier in this section, in all, thirty one walking interviews were conducted with students in three phases between January and June, 2012 with each excursion lasting between 1-1.5 hours. Breaking the data collection up into phases was useful as it granted achievable timeframes as well as providing opportunities to reflect back on the data collected in order to review the strengths and weaknesses of the technique. Table 4.3 confirms there is a fair representation between the year groups with around a third from each. The dataset does however lean towards being young, female, white and British with 65 per cent of participants being female and under twenty one years of age and 90 per cent being white and British. Whilst this does not by any means constitute an evenly represented dataset, the distribution here does compare almost identically with the results from the survey. There is a continuation here with the distribution of students from within each residential group with a definite leaning towards students living in more traditional student accommodation. As students rarely reside in the same accommodation year on year, their living arrangements have been divided by year group in order to recognise the heterogeneity of these transitions. This was particularly pertinent as it was felt that the student’s reflective accounts of their past accommodation held much resonance over their present experiences of living as a student. One problem that was encountered was a difficulty in making contact with many first year students living in halls of residence, with six of the first year students interviewed residing in privately rented accommodation. However, this perhaps says something about the types of people who take part in research, with those having more alternative experiences of the process of ‘being’ at University more inclined to want to discuss it.
It can of course be argued that the knowledge produced here is situated, and at the very least partial, and is not a reflection of the experiences of the student body as a whole. As Rose (1997) and McDowell (1992) have suggested, situatedness has become central within much qualitative research, specifically feminist methodologies, where: “the need to situate knowledge is based on the argument that the sort of knowledge made depends on who its makers are” (pp. 306-307). While situated and partial accounts have been

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13 All names have been anonymised.
desired within social research, there still remains the question of representativeness and generalisability, particularly when attempting to make tacit claims from small, locally produced knowledge. This becomes particularly problematic when attempting to relate the claims of a small sample of participants to the actions and behaviours of a much larger cohort (see Baxter & Eyles, 1997). Hence, while the robustness, or generalisability of this research cohort may be open to discussion due to its size, the responses given by these students may be representative of other ‘types’ of University students. Therefore, whilst the sample size is small it allows for deeper reflections of how the candidates verbally represent the formation of their identities than a larger study cohort might allow. As Christie (2007) argues:

“Good social science should be concerned with the importance of context, judgement, and practical knowledge in the analysis of case-study material, and not with the numbers in hand” (pp. 2449-2450).

Equally, as was discussed previously in Chapter One, there are broad differences in the composition of University locations which will undoubtedly influence how these locations are experienced by students. Therefore, in addressing this claim of situated knowledge, Housely and Smith (2011) suggest that situated accounts (as within this study) are “[…] tied to both the […] event and the space of their production and can thus be understood to be at least partially embedded in the setting itself” (p. 704). For that reason, rather than attempting to generalise these experiences, they are instead used to give an indication of what might be occurring within the student bodies of other HE institutions.

4.3d – Coding and Emergent Themes

As part of the qualitative aspect of the research ‘elements’ of a grounded theory approach were employed. Grounded theory is a technique where themes and hypotheses are taken from the field data in order to construct theories and concepts (Robson, 2011). Grounded theorists therefore start with the data and then tease out the theory through an iterative process of careful coding and sorting (Charmaz, 2006). This works in opposition to more conventional processes which maintain that a priori research should be conducted through structured evaluation in order to test or justify judgements. Glaser and Strauss (1967) are widely credited with introducing grounded theory in the 1960s which was quickly adopted by social scientists for its novel approach to generating
theory from data (Robson, 2011). This approach has not gone un-criticised with grounded theory being couched within many debates of the contrast between ‘science’ and ‘creativity’ within the social sciences (see Baxter & Eyles, 1997). Therefore, to reiterate, elements of this grounded theory approach were applied during the research methodology and analysis. By elements this means that the iterative, reflexive and conductive process of exploring and analysing evidence (after Knigge & Cope, 2006) have been used but, some general, pre-determined research questions were also discussed at the beginning of the project in order to develop the rationale for the data collection. This concurs with Robson’s (2011) claim that conducting a ‘pure’ grounded theory approach may not be entirely possible as a certain degree of preconception is inevitable at the beginning, particularly when finalising the research proposal. Consequently, it was decided early on not to fully embrace this methodology but instead use it to hone the research questions and to manage the initial stages of the analysis. This was beneficial as it allowed for greater control of the themes being generated. As for coding, Holton (2010) suggests that the data be ‘open coded’ through a general reading of the transcripts in order to establish the key themes and relationships within the data. Through subsequent readings the data was then ‘selectively coded’ in order to tease out the details and connect them to the theory. As Robson (2011) points out, this process was not necessarily always sequential. Regular revisits to the original open coding were necessary to cross check the strength of the core categories. This has been a particularly useful technique in ensuring there is an equal development of the theory between all four residential circumstances.

As was suggested earlier, the interviews were conducted in three phases, with around eight to ten participants in each phase. The interviews were transcribed promptly, within a few days of conducting them at most, and then coded in batches using the computer aided qualitative data analysis software (CAQDAS) package, Atlas.ti. A CAQDAS package was chosen over manual coding in order to assist with improving the management of the data whilst enabling a visual assessment of the direction the analysis was taking (Fielding & Cisneros-Puebla, 2009; Elwood, 2010; Kwan & Ding, 2008). Some might argue that such packages begin to transform qualitative data into pseudo-quantitative data by over-coding in the analysis (Fielding, 1993) but, as Robson (2011)

\[\text{footnote}{14} \text{However as Allan (2003) stresses, Glaser and Strauss’ emphasis that no pre-conceived ideas should be applied to grounded theory may have been misinterpreted and that “preconceived bias, dogma and mental baggage” (p. 8) which might influence or manipulate the interview process might actually have been closer to what they proposed.}\]
suggests, if used correctly CAQDAS packages can reduce the time taken in coding and accessing coded material as well providing a visual framework for displaying results.

Figure 4.3 indicates a diagrammatic representation of the results of the coding of the first phase of the interviews. This preliminary coding established five dominant themes:

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**The home (most diverse group)**
- Finding/ meeting prospective housemates
- Organising and sharing space – developing hierarchies and pseudo families
- Learning to live with others – naivety vs. experience (adapting when moving)
- Defining communal space and private space – elastic boundaries
- Homemaking – the household and the sanctuary

**Going out (most frequently discussed)**
- Student-centric spaces vs. authentic ‘Portsmouth’ spaces
- Knowledge – promoters and experimentation
- Transitional night spots
- Mixing with ‘locals’ – tension, class and othering
- University societies
- Non-student friends – managing friendships at a distance

**Everyday spaces (least diversity but discussed in depth)**
- Familiarity – similarities with home
- Expansion of space – transition and knowledge
- Managing everyday space – narrow geographies and insider knowledge

**Connections with space (most tricky to obtain)**
- Connection with the city and the University
- Independence and maturity
- Sense of place – familiarity, similarity and solidarity
- Sense of ‘becoming’ their future selves

**The University (quite thin and often in relation to other things)**
- Managing space and time
- Using University spaces – studying and socialising
- Preconceptions vs. reality

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Table 4.4: Making sense of the emergent themes from phase one of interviews (source: author’s interview data).

‘the home’, ‘going out’, ‘everyday spaces’, ‘connections with space’ and ‘the University’ (see Table 4.4 for more detailed explanation of these initial themes). The coding from the second phase of interviews began to refine these categories further and focus upon three overarching themes: the influence of ‘home’ on the use of the city, the complexity of defining student and non-student spaces and managing safety and perceived risk within the city. Using this iterative process of moving backwards and
Figure 4.3: Grouping codes into themes (source: author's interview data).
Figure 4.4: Word cloud showing the prominence and density of codes (source: Wordle – http://www.wordle.net/)
forwards between the data and research problems, the second, third and fourth research questions were finally established. The third and final phase of the interview process expanded on the theme of connections with the city originally highlighted during the first phase of interviewing. This began to encompass more of how the students had established their sense of place within the city during their time at University and revealed more of the importance the residential circumstances of the students was bearing over their term-time experiences. Finally, the ‘word cloud’ in Figure 4.4 provides a visual indication of the density of this coding and the prominence of certain themes which have emerged from the analysis.

4.4 – Summary

In summary this chapter has discussed in detail much of the methodological considerations which were faced within this research process. As is often stated, research is a non-linear process, it is iterative and reflexive meaning it requires the researcher to be critical of their design and flexible enough to make necessary changes, should problems arise. This can be applied specifically to three areas where this has been most effective. First, employing a mixed methods approach has been useful in striking a balance on dealing with the meta-narratives from the quantitative survey and carefully contextualising these with the finer micro-geographies contained within the qualitative interviews. This gave a richer understanding of how to best tackle the research questions over the coming chapters and how to maximise the use of the data contained within the research. Second, utilising a research diary within this project was also vital in ensuring critical thinking and remaining in touch with the research. This has provided plenty of reflection within this chapter, particularly with regard to the success of the qualitative methods and establishing a position as researcher. Finally, the implementation of creative coding and data analysis techniques has also assisted in enabling a visual interpretation of the transcribed data as well as allowing the analysis of the data to remain in place and more importantly retain the context of the interviews themselves.
Chapter Five – Putting Student’s Residential Circumstances in Context – The Influence of ‘Pre-student’ Habitus in Accommodation Choice

This chapter will examine the often contrasting ways in which prospective students approach HE by problematising the dualistic terms which label students as being either from ‘traditional’ or ‘non-traditional’ backgrounds. In doing so this chapter will propose that a student’s prospective residential circumstances be incorporated into these debates in order to enable a more critical discussion of this complex demographic. As the analysis will demonstrate, residential circumstances are a useful indicator of how students might make their transitions through University and can highlight difficulties in ‘fitting in’ among the cohort. Therefore, the addition of these models into debates on student experiences of HE will give universities and their associated service providers a clearer understanding of the expectations of their student cohort. Importantly these models highlight how undergraduates’ expectations of what ‘University life’ might provide them extend beyond teaching and learning to encompass other factors such as accommodation, facilities and social activities. This is timely as anecdotal evidence suggests that student satisfaction league tables, such as the National Student Survey (NSS), which embody the overall ‘student experience’ (teaching quality, support networks and more recently the quality of the Students’ Union) have become increasingly important indicators for prospective students’ (and parents’) institutional preferences15 (The Guardian, 2013a). The remaining sections of this chapter will focus on a quantitative analysis of the survey results and will be divided into five sections as follows. Section 5.1 will outline the dependent and independent variables chosen to be included within this chapter in order to examine the relationships between a student’s residential circumstances and their decisions to go to University. Section 5.2 will report the results of the descriptive statistics and offer a brief overview of the main characteristics of the students residing in each of the residential types. Section 5.3 will include the results of the multinomial logistic regression models which will examine the likelihood of students belonging to each of these residential types. Finally, section 5.4 will expand these results, discussing them in relation to the conceptualisations of habitus and capital and will focus specifically upon prior knowledge and the role of

15 The NSS reports that 66 per cent of out-going third year UK undergraduate students were happy with their Students’ Union in 2012, compared with 85 per cent being satisfied with their overall University experience (HEFCE, 2013).
others in informing choices, the student experience and the propinquity of University to home.

5.1 – Statistical Analysis

The overall aim of this quantitative approach is to explore the experiences of the student cohort within the study prior to commencing their degrees. The data has been taken from the web-based survey (outlined in more detail in Chapter Four) and the statistical approach, multinomial logistic regression, has been utilised to examine relationships between the categorical variables and develop a broad typology of the types of student most likely to reside in each of the residential categories by examining their characteristics. The remainder of this section will detail the dependent and independent variables used in the statistical models and give a rationale for their inclusion within the study.

5.1a – The Dependent Variables

In all, four variables were employed here to act as the dependent variables across two different multinomial logistic regression models. These variables were taken from a question within the survey asking “What type of property do you live in during term-time?” This was a mandatory question\textsuperscript{16} which contained four fields: halls of residence, rented ‘student’ house, with parents and own home. As Figure 5.1 illustrates, these variables deepen the more dichotomous typical/non-typical accommodation variables by revealing more delicate variations in the student cohort. These variables were used to set up two different multinomial models to investigate the factors associated with living in typical accommodation (halls of residence and rented student housing) or non-typical accommodation (living with parents or in their own home). In coding these variables for inclusion into the models (see Table 5.1), it is important to note that the last dependent variable category in Model 1 represents the combined total of the first two categories of Model 2. Likewise the last dependent variable of Model 2 represents the combined total of the first three categories of Model 1 (i.e. code 2 in the typical accommodation model (Model 1) is a combination of students living with parents and student living in their own home and vice versa). Code 2 therefore represents the reference category against which the other variables are compared.

\textsuperscript{16} Survey Monkey contains a function where respondents cannot continue with the questionnaire without the completion of certain questions marked with an *.
Figure 5.1: Students’ residential circumstances (source: author’s survey data).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Code</th>
<th>Label</th>
<th>Code</th>
<th>Label</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>(0)</td>
<td>Rented housing</td>
<td>(0)</td>
<td>Own home</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(1)</td>
<td>Halls</td>
<td>(1)</td>
<td>With parents</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(2)</td>
<td>Non-typical accommodation</td>
<td>(2)</td>
<td>Typical accommodation</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 5.1: Coding of the dependent variables (source: author’s survey data).

5.1b – The Independent Variables

Three sets of independent variables were identified as being useful to this study (see Table 5.2): the personal characteristics of traditional and non-traditional students (including demographic characteristics); the reasons for going to University; and the reasons for choosing the University of Portsmouth as a destination for study. While the variables have been divided into sets, the strategy for inclusion was an ‘all in’ rather than ‘stepwise’ procedure. This process identifies how each of the independent variables related to one another instead of identifying how each set of variables influenced the model. The first set of independent variables were chosen according to the main demographic characteristics of what could be termed as being from more traditional backgrounds’, as evidenced within the literature\(^\text{17}\) (Archer & Hutchings, 2000; Patiniotis & Holdsworth, 2005; Holdsworth, 2006; Christie, 2007). For example, Christie (2007) defines non-traditional students in direct contrast to those from a

\(^\text{17}\) This is consistent with the results from the survey which reports respondents as being predominantly 21 or under (78%), female (60%) and white (86%).
traditional background as being first generation University attendees who are from working class or minority backgrounds, whilst Reay (2004) and Leathwood and O’Connell (2003) also include having a gap between compulsory and tertiary education in these criteria. Whilst traditional students are thought to have a generational understanding of HE, non-traditional students are generally considered to exist in relation to the ‘typical student’ by having no familial history of HE and/or coming from a minority background. Commencing HE over the age of 21 and having a gap between finishing compulsory education and entering HE are also considered to be key characteristics of a non-traditional student (Read et al., 2003). These five attributes (age (over 21), gender (female), ethnicity (white), parent with degree, and straight to University) have therefore been tested against the dependent variables in order to verify associations within each of the models. In addition to this, year of study (year 1) was also added to the model in order to ascertain whether being a first year student had any bearing over the results. Whilst year of study is not thought to be related to any of the definitions of the terms ‘traditional/non-traditional’ students, the literature does suggest that there are particular trends for choosing specific types of accommodation among the year groups (Christie et al., 2002; Rugg et al., 2004; Smith & Holt, 2007; Hubbard, 2009). Table 5.3 corroborates this, by way of a simple crosstabulation of year of study against residential circumstances that, as expected, far more first year students are living in halls of residence compared to other year groups which have nominal amounts. Similarly for rented housing, far fewer first year students are residing than in years two or three. These trends for specific year groups occupying particular property types is however far less apparent for those living with parents or in their own homes where the students in the survey are distributed far more evenly across all three year

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18 The University of Portsmouth does not normally allocate halls accommodation to second and third year students (University of Portsmouth, 2012b).
It, groups. These trends may therefore suggest that the residential mobility which is clearly evident among the more typical student accommodation categories could be far less likely to occur for students among the study group who were living in non-typical student accommodation who appear more likely to remain in the same property throughout the duration of their degrees.

The remaining sets of independent variables were based around the expectations the students had of their degrees and how these expectations influenced their choice to attend the University of Portsmouth. There exists a substantial and varied corpus of literature which utilise questionnaires to illicit such information on a range of criteria, including: institutional preferences (Mangan, 2010); the role of parents, schools or individual agency in informing choices (Patiniotis & Holdsworth, 2005); pre-induction expectations (Leese, 2010) and the distance from home (Mulder & Clark, 2002; Gibbons & Vignoles, 2012). The variables used in the following sections are therefore a composite of much of this previous literature. The second set of independent variables highlight the reasons for attending University. The six independent variables were based upon the question “What made you decide to go to University?” with the responses being as follows: gaining an experience, leaving home, gaining a qualification, with decisions being made by parents, schools or themselves. The third set of independent variables investigates, more specifically, why the University of Portsmouth was chosen by the students within the survey and was based upon the question “What made

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year of study</th>
<th>Count</th>
<th>Residential circumstances</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1st year</td>
<td></td>
<td>Halls</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>195</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% within Residential circumstances</td>
<td>95.6%</td>
<td>18.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2nd year</td>
<td></td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% within Residential circumstances</td>
<td>1.0%</td>
<td>42.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3rd year</td>
<td></td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% within Residential circumstances</td>
<td>3.4%</td>
<td>38.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td></td>
<td>204</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% within Residential circumstances</td>
<td>100.0%</td>
<td>100.0%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* = missing data – 8 for ‘Rented House, 1 for ‘With Parents’ and 4 for ‘Own Home’.

Table 5.3: Crosstabulation of residential circumstances against year of study (source: author’s survey data).
you choose the University you are currently studying at?” These are outlined as follows: distance (close to home), the quality of the course, the reputation of the University and whether it had been recommended. These data will begin to emphasise the priorities of students within each group whilst offering an explanation of how these characteristics might shape their ‘student’ identity. Before modelling, the independent variables were tested for multicollinearity, the outcome of which was unproblematic (see Appendix VIII for a full outline of the multicollinearity test) meaning all of the independent variables can be included within the model.

5.2 –Descriptive Results

Figure 5.2 shows the percentage response to each of the questions used from the survey stratified by accommodation type. A brief overview reveals some distinct differences in the types of students living in typical or non-typical student accommodation. The four most prominent categories here expose the differences in age, whether to choose to study close to home, and the desire to leave home and/or gain a ‘student’ experience.

![Figure 5.2: Students living in typical or non-typical accommodation (source: author’s survey data).](image-url)
Within each of these categories it is clearly apparent that students will be likely to fall into either of the residential types, i.e. those living in typical student accommodation are more likely to be under 21 years of age, want to leave home and gain a student experience, yet less likely to want to study close to home than their counterparts in non-typical accommodation. However, whilst these relationships reveal some of the variation which exists between the types of residential categories, this broad approach misses some of the more delicate relationships which exist between the types of living arrangements of students. These relationships help to explain why students’ residential status is important in measuring how they experience their time at University. Table 5.4, for example shows that, while there may be differences between the types of students living in either typical or non-typical accommodation, more nuanced differences appear to be occurring within these categories as well. The results of Table 5.4 are discussed in greater detail throughout the remainder of this section.

Figure 5.3: Characteristics of traditional and non-traditional students (source: author’s survey data).

Figure 5.3 shows the percentage response to the personal (and demographic) characteristics of the study cohort. This suggests that both year of study and age would appear to be important in discussing the relationships between the residential groups. Likewise, those living in halls, rented housing and with parents are predominantly
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Row Percentages</th>
<th>Halls (n = 204)</th>
<th>Rented House (n = 687)</th>
<th>With Parents (n = 125)</th>
<th>Own Home (n = 131)</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Yes (%)</td>
<td>No (%)</td>
<td>Yes (%)</td>
<td>No (%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Year of study (yr 1)&lt;sup&gt;a&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
<td>195 (96)</td>
<td>9 (4)</td>
<td>127 (18)</td>
<td>552 (80)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age (under 21)</td>
<td>189 (93)</td>
<td>15 (7)</td>
<td>579 (84)</td>
<td>108 (16)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ethnicity (white)</td>
<td>173 (85)</td>
<td>31 (15)</td>
<td>556 (81)</td>
<td>131 (19)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gender (female)</td>
<td>120 (59)</td>
<td>84 (41)</td>
<td>289 (42)</td>
<td>398 (58)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parent with degree</td>
<td>81 (40)</td>
<td>123 (60)</td>
<td>252 (37)</td>
<td>435 (63)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Straight into HE&lt;sup&gt;b&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
<td>135 (66)</td>
<td>59 (29)</td>
<td>505 (74)</td>
<td>159 (23)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gain experience</td>
<td>149 (73)</td>
<td>55 (27)</td>
<td>445 (65)</td>
<td>243 (35)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Leave home</td>
<td>83 (41)</td>
<td>121 (59)</td>
<td>260 (38)</td>
<td>427 (62)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gain qualifications</td>
<td>186 (91)</td>
<td>18 (9)</td>
<td>611 (89)</td>
<td>76 (11)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parent decision</td>
<td>90 (44)</td>
<td>114 (56)</td>
<td>328 (48)</td>
<td>359 (52)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School decision</td>
<td>104 (51)</td>
<td>100 (49)</td>
<td>313 (46)</td>
<td>374 (54)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Own decision</td>
<td>115 (56)</td>
<td>89 (44)</td>
<td>389 (57)</td>
<td>298 (43)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Close to home</td>
<td>62 (30)</td>
<td>142 (70)</td>
<td>178 (26)</td>
<td>509 (74)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Quality of course</td>
<td>165 (81)</td>
<td>39 (19)</td>
<td>548 (80)</td>
<td>139 (20)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Recommended</td>
<td>40 (20)</td>
<td>164 (80)</td>
<td>91 (13)</td>
<td>596 (87)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reputation</td>
<td>99 (49)</td>
<td>105 (51)</td>
<td>243 (35)</td>
<td>445 (65)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<sup>a</sup> = missing data – 8 (2%) for ‘Rented House, 1 (1%) for ‘With Parents’ and 4 (3%) for ‘Own Home’.

<sup>b</sup> = missing data – 10 (5%) for ‘Halls’, 23 (3%) for ‘Rented House, 4 (3%) for ‘With Parents’ and 6 (5%) for ‘Own Home’.

Table 5.4: Independent variables for the reasons for going to University (source: author’s survey data).
young (21 years old or under), with over half of the responses confirming this. This contrasts greatly with those living in their own home where only a quarter of these respondents were reported as being 21 years old or under. The ethnic composition of students was consistent across all residential types, with around four fifths of students categorised as ‘white’\textsuperscript{19}. Likewise, when considering gender those living in rented housing are the only group to report having fewer females than males (42 per cent female), the rest of the residential categories have a higher percentage of females to males, particularly own home which reports over two thirds females. The final two variables give a greater indication of the differences between the residential types. Fewer than half of students across all four residential categories reported having a parent with a degree, although this becomes particularly pronounced when considering the with parents group, which reports fewer than a quarter of these students having a parent with a degree, more than ten per cent fewer than those in own home and sixteen per cent fewer than those in halls. This suggests that there are differences in the amount of knowledge the students within the study have regarding HE. Whilst Patiniotis and Holdsworth (2005) claim that not having a familial history of HE is symptomatic of being a non-traditional student, this data reveals that this may be more significant for those in the with parents category than those in own homes. This is particularly so as those in the latter category are characterised as being older than in the former. Similar patterns emerged within the final category, straight to University, with around three quarter of the students in rented housing or with parents reporting going straight to University from school or college. This was directly contrasted for those in the own home category which reports 75 per cent of these students having a gap of more than a year between compulsory and tertiary education.

When looking at the reasons for going to University stratified according to accommodation type, the results illustrated in Figure 5.4 demonstrate the contrasts which exist between typical and non-typical accommodation with a far greater proportion of students in halls and rented housing desiring a student experience than those living with parents or in their own homes. Similar patterns exist within the ‘leave

\textsuperscript{19} In the survey, ethnicity was divided into eleven categories. There were however too few respondents in each category for them to be counted as separate entities within the analysis technique: White British (86%); White Irish (1%); Mixed White and Black Caribbean (0.5%); Mixed White and Black African (0.1%); Mixed White and Asian (1%); Asian or Asian British Indian (2%); Asian or Asian British Pakistani (0.5%); Asian or Asian British Bangladeshi (0.5%); Black or Black British Caribbean (0.5%); Black or Black British African (2%); Chinese or other ethnic group (5%).
home’ category to the previous, however, whilst wanting to experience leaving home was less desirable across all residential categories, those in halls and rented housing appeared more likely to want to experiment with this. As expected, this desire to leave home was practically non-existent in the with parents and own home categories, with fewer than ten per cent of respondents in each. Likewise, as expected, the variable ‘gaining qualifications’ appears to be one of the most pronounced categories across all four of the residential categories with very few reporting the opposite and little distinction between the residential groups. For the three ‘decisions’ categories, almost identical percentages exist for the ‘own decision’ variables across each of the residential categories, with around half of all students reporting their individual agency as an influencing factor. For the ‘parental decision’ variable this is similar, with around half of the respondents living in halls or rented housing reporting this as an influencing factor, however this reduced to one third for those with parents and one fifth for those in their own home. These patterns are replicated when considering the influence of school in decision making, demonstrating that whilst there are differences in the ways which students in more typical or non-typical student accommodation are influenced in their

Figure 5.4: Reasons for going to University (source: author’s survey data).
approach to University, this becomes more pronounced for those in the *own home* category.

Figure 5.5 shows the percentage response of the reasons for choosing the University of Portsmouth. This reveals that the divide between *typical* and *non-typical* accommodation is probably at its most evident here, with those students in the *halls* and *rented housing* groups being less likely to want to choose to study close to home and those in the *with parents* or *own home* groups more likely to factor this into their decision to study at the University of Portsmouth. This factor becomes particularly pronounced in the *with parents* category, with over three quarters suggesting this was an important factor. Quality of course is reported as being important to students in all categories. However this becomes less influential for those in the *own home* category, in which these students are twenty per cent less likely than their equivalents in halls to choose to go to this University based upon the quality of the course. Both the ‘recommended’ and ‘reputation’ categories were reported as being of less importance for all groups, with fewer than fifty per cent across all four residential groups. This is particularly so of the *own home* category, which reports only seven per cent of these students being influenced by a recommendation to come to this University by a friend or other alumni. Similar patterns occur within the reputation category, except those in halls are evenly split. What Figure 5.5 also illustrates is the difference both between the *typical* and *non-typical* categories, as well as differences within these groups. Of the
four influencing factors, only being close to home appears to have any significant impact upon the decision making of students living in their own homes, whereas, for those living with parents, the quality of the course also becomes factored into this. It is also important to recognise that the similarities between the preferences of those in the halls and rented housing categories may be indicative of some of the students living in rented housing also living previously in halls (of the 552 second and third year students living in rented housing, 238 indicated that they had lived in halls in year one). With this in mind it could be inferred that there may be a greater chance of crossovers occurring between these residential categories than between the other, non-typical residential types.

5.3 – Results of the Multinomial Regression Model

As Chapter Four explained, a multinomial regression approach is useful to examine all of the dependent variables simultaneously (Appendix VIII contains a breakdown of the tests used to explore these models, the outcome of which was successful and significant). The approach allows us to investigate the influences of any one variable whilst controlling for the others. The results of the multinomial logistic regression models can be found in Tables 5.5 and 5.6 and are expressed as logits ($\beta$) which is the log-odds of the variable being in the category of interest. The logit values themselves are difficult to interpret but simply put, positive logged odds raise the odds of being in the category of interest, whilst negative logged odds will lower these odds (Acton & Miller, 2009). The next column (Exp($\beta$)) holds the odds ratios, which is basically an indicator of the change in odds from a unit change in the predictor (Field, 2009). The final two columns contain the 95 per cent Confidence Intervals around the odds ratio.

Table 5.5 reveals that those students within the sample who are first years are 28.55 times more likely to be living in halls than in non-typical accommodation. Alternatively, the odds of a student in the same year group living in rented housing are reduced to two fifths (0.41). This confirms the earlier suggestion that year of study is an important indicator of students being likely to live either in halls or rented housing. Those students who are 21 years old or younger are 1.96 times more likely to live in rented housing than those in the reference category, non-typical accommodation. Students who fall into the ethnic category ‘white’ are 2.34 times more likely to live in
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Halls</th>
<th>Rented property</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Typical accommodation</strong></td>
<td><strong>95% Confidence Interval</strong></td>
<td><strong>95% Confidence Interval</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>for Exp(β)</td>
<td>for Exp(β)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>B</strong></td>
<td><strong>Exp(β)</strong></td>
<td><strong>Lower</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Intercept</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age (under 21)</td>
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<td>1.97</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gender (female)</td>
<td>0.12</td>
<td>1.12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parent with degree</td>
<td>0.06</td>
<td>1.06</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Straight to University</td>
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<td><strong>0.47</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gain experience</td>
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<td><strong>3.98</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Leave home</td>
<td>2.01</td>
<td><strong>7.43</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gain qualifications</td>
<td>-0.54</td>
<td>0.58</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parent decision</td>
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<td>1.06</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School decision</td>
<td>0.35</td>
<td>1.42</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Own decision</td>
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<td>0.61</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Close to home</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

*a. The reference category is: non-typical. *p<0.0005   **p<0.05

Table 5.5: Multinomial regression results for students living in ‘typical’ accommodation (source: author’s survey data).
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Non-typical accommodation</th>
<th>With Parents</th>
<th>Own Home</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>B</td>
<td>Exp(β)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Intercept</td>
<td>-2.59</td>
<td>0.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Year of study (year 1)</td>
<td>-0.17</td>
<td>0.84</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age (under 21)</td>
<td>-0.21</td>
<td>0.81</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ethnicity (white)</td>
<td>0.03</td>
<td>1.04</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gender (female)</td>
<td>-0.12</td>
<td>0.88</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parent with degree</td>
<td>-0.25</td>
<td>0.78</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Straight to University</td>
<td>0.65</td>
<td>**1.92</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gain experience</td>
<td>-1.31</td>
<td>*0.27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Leave home</td>
<td>-3.89</td>
<td>*0.02</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gain qualifications</td>
<td>0.51</td>
<td>1.67</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parent decision</td>
<td>-0.30</td>
<td>0.74</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School decision</td>
<td>-0.17</td>
<td>0.85</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Own decision</td>
<td>0.47</td>
<td>1.59</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Close to home</td>
<td>2.22</td>
<td>*9.17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Quality of course</td>
<td>-0.15</td>
<td>0.86</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Recommended</td>
<td>0.02</td>
<td>1.03</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reputation</td>
<td>-0.01</td>
<td>0.99</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

a. The reference category is: typical. *p<0.0005     **p<0.05

Table 5.6: Multinomial regression results for students living in ‘typical’ accommodation (source: author’s survey data).
halls, however the odds decrease for students going straight to University from school or college to less than half (0.47) for the same residential situation. This is likely to be due to there being a greater proportion of students in the with parents category who have gone straight into University. As was highlighted in the descriptive results, the model also confirms similarities between both typical residential categories with regard to going to University in order to gain a student experience and leaving home, with these students being 3.98 times and 7.43 times more likely to be residing in halls and 2.93 times and 8.40 times more likely to be living in rented housing. Again, these similarities are likely to occur as 43 per cent of those second and third year students living in rented housing previously lived in halls. This was also apparent for those choosing the University of Portsmouth for its proximity to home, with an increase of one unit on the scale for this choice reducing the odds of being a student in both halls and rented housing to less than a fifth (0.16 and 0.17 respectively).

Table 5.6 reveals further relationships exist between the with parents and own home living arrangements in the non-typical accommodation category. The model confirms that age is a significant factor with the odds of a student being 21 years old or under living in their own home being reduced to less than a third (0.28), whilst the odds of a ‘white’ student living in the same residential circumstances would be reduced by three fifths to 0.41. However, female students are 1.98 times more likely to live in their own home than in the reference category, typical accommodation. As for going straight to University from school or college, these students were 1.92 times more likely to be living with parents than those in typical accommodation, however, this is contrasted as the odds of this type of student living in their own home is reduced by half (0.52). Likewise, the odds of a student having chosen the University of Portsmouth due to its reputation living in their own home are also reduced to less than a third (0.30). In direct contrast to those students living in halls or rented housing, the likelihood of a student wanting to leave home or gain a ‘student’ experience living in their own home is reduced to less than a third (0.30) and less than two fifths (0.41) respectively, whilst the odds of students from the same two categories living with parents is reduced considerably (0.02 and 0.27 respectively). This is reversed when considering the odds of students choosing the University of Portsmouth because it was close to home, with these students being 2.75 times more likely to be living in their own home and 9.17 times more likely to be living with parents.
5.4 – Discussion

In discussing the results of this analysis in greater detail it is clear that particular relationships exist between the different types of accommodation choices. The results clarify many of the overarching themes within the previous literature, including the general expectation for younger students to have entered University straight from school or college (Patiniotis & Holdsworth, 2005), as well as the suggestion that halls is almost entirely comprised of first year students, unsurprising as this is considered the primary accommodation choice among new undergraduates (Hubbard, 2009). However, a more critical interpretation of the analysis suggests that there may be more complexity to these relationships. This will be outlined in the remainder of this section which will focus on prior knowledge and the role of others in informing choices, the desire to be included in traditional ‘student experiences’ and the propinquity of University to home.

5.4a – Prior Knowledge and Influencing Factors

It has been strongly suggested within much of the literature that access to knowledge of the mechanics of HE is a key driver behind how students experience their time at University (Leese, 2010; Mangan et al., 2010; Murtagh, 2012), and that this access to knowledge can often be lacking for mature students (Reay, 2002; Tett, 2004; Christie et al., 2005) or those living with parents (Leathwood & O’Connell, 2003; Patiniotis & Holdsworth, 2005; Holdsworth, 2006; Abbott-Chapman, 2011). These notions of [in]equitable access to knowledge are clearly evident within the findings of this study which suggests that these respondents appear to place varying degrees of importance upon their decision-making factors, such as quality of course, recommendations or the reputation of the University. However, while much of the above literature focuses upon the dichotomous categories traditional and non-traditional students, discussing these pre-student experiences according to the residential circumstances of the students serves to problematise these pre-existing notions of [in]equitable access to knowledge of HE by exposing some of the heterogeneity within this student cohort. For example, those living in halls or with parents appear more likely to exhibit similar characteristics when choosing to go to University than those in their own homes. The contrasts between the two non-typical accommodation categories therefore highlight potential differences in the ways that students living with parents or in their own homes access University.
In examining these characteristics through the lens of cultural capital, it could be assumed that the respondents’ ‘pre-student’ habitus were playing a role in how this knowledge was being accessed. As Bourdieu (1986) suggests, families who have a history of HE transmit their knowledge of the ‘right’ types of cultural capital required to make a successful transition through University to their child (see also: Reay, 1998; Ball et al., 2002; Patiniotis & Holdsworth, 2005). As has already been explained, this was most pronounced among the students in the halls and rented housing categories with respondents demonstrating a more concentrated understanding of what they might achieve from attending University beyond that of the degree itself, namely a ‘student experience’ and the opportunity to spend a period of time away from the family home, than that their equivalents living in non-typical accommodation. However, as the results of the survey have demonstrated, there is an observable lack of prior familial or institutional knowledge among these respondents, most noticeably within the halls category which reports only 40 per cent of students having a parent with a degree and 51 per cent being influenced by their school or college to go to University. According to the literature, this would indicate that a significant number of University of Portsmouth students living in halls have accessed HE with insufficient levels of cultural capital to get by. This presents a problem, particularly as living in halls is perceived to represent the most conventional and expected route into University for young undergraduates (Christie et al., 2002; Rugg et al., 2004; Hubbard, 2009). While this is a fairly crude comparison it highlights the possibility that other factors are likely to be involved in making successful transitions into HE which might add to the familial and institutional influences. As Hopkins (2006) suggests, for many non-traditional students, their knowledge of the practicalities of University life (finances, debt, workload, accommodation, exams etc.) can be extremely fragmented, meaning they can often end up picking up information along the way.

The anomalies discussed above may therefore serve to complicate some of the more commonly accepted notions of familial and institutional habitus. It is generally acknowledged that a child’s habitus is the product of their parents’ cultural capital (Bourdieu, 1977; 1986; Holdsworth & Morgan, 2005; Pimlott-Wilson, 2011), particularly in the context of HE choices (Patiniotis & Holdsworth, 2005; Noble & Davies, 2009). However, the data from the respondents demonstrates how this might not be so straightforward. Of the three ‘decision-making’ categories offered to the
students (parental, school/college or own decision) a greater rate of responses in the ‘own decision’ category was reported across all four residential circumstances. This level of agency could be expected in the own home category, particularly as these students are predominantly older and have experienced a gap between compulsory and tertiary education. However, it might be assumed more likely that the students within the other residential categories would have suggested more parental or institutional influences, particularly as they are primarily younger and are applying straight to University from school or college. Instead many of these respondents showed signs of individual agency in their decision-making. This may be partially symptomatic of the increasing widening participation targets set by the Government (Cochrane & Williams, 2013) where Universities are being actively encouraged, through funding incentives, to draw in students from disadvantaged backgrounds. Consequently, greater numbers of young adults may be approaching HE from families (or schools) whose ‘education biographies’ mean they may be unable to give appropriate advice about making successful transitions into HE.

The findings of this thesis support this, suggesting, these behaviours, among a largely non-traditional cohort, could be assumed for three reasons, each of which may transcend the more typical familial or institutional influences and be born unconsciously from other sources, such as friends, media representations or general curiosity. Going to University might represent (1) a purely pragmatic understanding that gaining an academic qualification might enable them “to gain more opportunities later on in life” (Survey response – Male, Y1, Hall of Residence (HR)); (2) an unwritten or unconscious expectation that going to University “was the ‘next step’, it was the thing to do” (Survey response – Female, Y3, Rented Housing (RH)); or (3) an opportunity for respondents to “start to make my own decisions” (Survey response – Female, Y1, RH). The common thread which runs through each of these scenarios is that the respondents appear to have some knowledge of how the system operates outside of their school or family. This may of course be to do with the type of institution the University of Portsmouth is. With its status as a ‘post-1992’ HEI, the University occupies the upper-middle quartile (position 48) on The Guardian’s 2014 University Guide (The Guardian, 2013b) suggesting that it would be sensible to assume that the University of Portsmouth would attract prospective students from non-traditional backgrounds. Nevertheless, there is no denying that a level of agency has gone into these decisions, across all residential categories, which
has surpassed the familial or institutional knowledge which may be [un]available to the respondents. As Bourdieu (1986) suggests, academic qualifications imbue an individual with a level of legitimate ‘cultural competence’ which “produces a form of cultural capital which has a relative autonomy vis-à-vis its bearer and even vis-à-vis the cultural capital [s]he effectively possesses at a given moment in time” (Bourdieu, 1986, p. 248). With this in mind, it could be assumed that a proportion of the respondents had approached University with the intentions of gaining the requisite qualifications to allow them to make the transition into paid employment and independent living.

5.4b – The Student Experience

A clearer indication of the differences between the residential categories is whether applicants desire a student experience while at University. While both the quantitative and qualitative survey responses reveal complications among this cohort of students in accessing knowledge of HE, there are further complications for how students gain knowledge of experiences outside of learning. As the results of both the descriptive analysis and the regression models demonstrate, a clear differentiation can be made between those respondents who chose to go to University in order to experience ‘being’ a student (predominantly halls and rented housing) and those who did not (predominantly with parents and own home). The notion of gaining a ‘student experience’ has been researched extensively and has been largely defined by popular depictions of student life, including: in[ter]dependent living, often away from the family home (Kenyon, 1999; 2000; Christie et al., 2002; Chow & Healey, 2008), and experimentation with student-centric social and leisure activities (Chatterton, 1999; Chatterton & Hollands, 2002; 2003; Holdsworth, 2006; Wattis, 2013). Much of this literature points to a ‘student experience’ being largely taken for granted by those living in halls or rented housing, with students in these living circumstances being exposed to student-centric social activities, such as Freshers’ night clubs and bars, the Students’ Union, volunteering groups and University sports or academic societies, in many cases, well before they commence University (Chatterton, 1999). This is consistent with the results of the statistical models which suggest that students in more typical accommodation are almost four times likelier to factor social activities into their decisions than those living with parents or in their own homes. Importantly, information
regarding these activities is widely available to prospective students through University web-sites, open-days and social networks.

In furthering these discussions of the knowledge of social activities, it would appear that those students within the study living in more typical student accommodation are likely to have begun to mobilise their cultural and social capital prior to commencing their degrees. As Bourdieu (1986) and Holt (2008) suggest, social capital can be mobilised through access to compatible social networks. What these respondents were able to do was recognise the potential benefit utilising social capital might have on their student experience before starting University. As Bourdieu (1986) suggests, these transfers of social capital can often be taken-for-granted and are achieved through mutual recognition of ‘legitimate exchanges’ (such as occasions, places or practices) which attempt to be as homogenous as possible in order to bring their members closer together. What this implies for the respondents is better understandings of the likely conditions they may be investing their social capital in, in order for them to ensure they understand, and can maximise the potential for, the opportunities available to them. Importantly, this extends Brooks’ (2002) proposal that prospective students often base their future ‘educational destinations’ upon the collective interests of their friendship group by suggesting that social experiences may also be important in preparing students to go to University. This was evident in the survey with 71 per cent (n=144) of students living in halls citing ‘making friends’ as being a contributing factor in their choice of living in halls while 82 per cent (n=167) commented that they believed that a period living in halls would provide them with the ‘student experience’ they both expected and desired.

This becomes more complicated when taking into consideration the experiences of those living in non-typical accommodation. As Christie et al. (2005) suggest, students living with parents or in their own homes often take a pragmatic approach to University, meaning they are likely to be experiencing ‘doing’ a degree, rather than necessarily ‘being’ a student. Whilst this has been demonstrated in the study, what is of interest here is whether or not this process of ‘doing’ rather than ‘being’ is the same for both those with parents or in their own homes. As Christie (2007) suggests, for many students living in non-typical accommodation they inevitably seek a continuation of the same social, familial and/or employment patterns they had prior to University. This was
evident within the study with fewer students from non-typical accommodation desiring a ‘student experience’ than the students living in halls or rented houses. For a portion of these respondents, this can be explained by a desire to strengthen their pre-existing non-student social capital among their non-student friendship groups, for example 26 per cent (n=33) of those living with parents chose not to leave home in order to maintain long-term friendships. Whether these respondents are oblivious (or unwilling) to operationalise their social capital as ‘pre-students’ is unclear, nevertheless, what does emerge from these responses is that gaining a student experience is only a small factor of the reasons the students living in non-typical accommodation gave for going to University. Therefore gaining a student experience can often be disrupted by financial commitments or worries or caring responsibilities which can motivate these students to mobilise their social capital in more familiar social groups, thus preventing risks of failure and/or rejection. As Holdsworth (2006) suggests, by not having access to what could be considered an “‘authentic’ student experience” (p. 505), these students are very often cast as being disadvantaged. However, whilst it can be acknowledged that the respondents’ potential access to knowledge of student-centric social activities may be limited, this may not necessarily put them at as much of a disadvantage as Holdsworth (2006) and Christie (2007) might suggest. The social capital they gain through the connections they are maintaining outside of University may help to alleviate some of these disadvantages. Hence, as Thomas and Webber (2001) suggest, this is achieved through a complex interplay between family, other social interactions and social norms and behaviours which collectively, go on to affect how (and where) social capital is invested.

5.4c – The Propinquity of University to Home

One of the more obvious differences between the residential categories within the study is in the desire to leave home to go to University, with a clear distinction between the types of students who factored leaving home into their choice to go to University (halls and rented housing) and those who did not (with parents and own home). This is consistent with Holdsworth’s (2009b) claim that, in the UK context, there still exists a trend for ‘going away’ to University, with “being a ‘student’ [being] emblematic for ‘not being from around here’” (Holdsworth, 2009a, p. 227). However, the findings of the survey suggest that ‘leaving home’ is one of the least influential aspects between all
four residential types, with only 41 per cent of students in halls and 38 per cent of students in rented housing suggesting this was factored into their decision. This implies that, even though over two thirds (78 per cent) of the survey respondents had chosen to live in student accommodation during their degree, they had not consciously factored leaving home into their decision to go to University. There may, of course, be a simple explanation for this where the action of moving away from home for a period of time may simply be taken for granted for potential undergraduates (see Christie et al., 2002; Holdsworth, 2009b; Calvert, 2010). For some of the survey respondents, their prior understanding of the mechanics of University may highlight an expectation that going away to University is simply an inevitable part of the process.

For those living with parents, their choice to remain in the family home for the duration of their course was often a pragmatic one, as illustrated by some of the qualitative responses from the survey:

“Portsmouth University [sic] is not far from my parent’s home so I saw no point in leaving” (Survey response – Female, Y2, With Parents (WP)).

“Don’t live far enough away to move” (Survey response – Female, Y1, WP).

“It was easier to go to Portsmouth than to go to other Unis [sic]” (Survey response – Male, Y1, WP).

This adds to Hinton’s (2011) suggestions of how young people may shape their HE aspirations according to their ideologies of home by suggesting that those students living with parents may have been conscious of how University was likely to impact upon their home lives, rather than the other way around. This may go some way in confirming the earlier claims as to why some of those students in more typical student accommodation had not considered moving away a factor in their decision to go to University. Comparatively speaking, within the study, those students living in their own home would appear to fit closest to the literature’s definition of the ‘non-traditional student’, being comprised predominantly of mature learners and those experiencing a gap between compulsory and tertiary education (Leathwood & O’Connell, 2003; Christie, 2007). For these students, it would not be unusual to assume that they cite gaining a qualification as one of the primary factors in their criteria for attending University (see Christie et al., 2005). However, students from this residential category
exhibited very little propensity (in comparison to the other residential circumstances) to base their decisions upon what the University might have to offer them. This suggests that some of the students within this survey may have been experiencing spatial constraints over their choice of institution, which is particularly pertinent as Reay (2002; 2003) suggests that adult learners can feel restricted by their ‘immobility’. Whilst there may be an understanding that the experiences they might gain through HE may offer new opportunities and, ultimately, a change to their social identities, mature students, particularly those living in their own homes, are often tied to their geographical location by family or job commitments (see Baxter & Britton, 2001; Reay, 2003; Osbourne et al., 2004), meaning they may be unwilling (or unable) to take full advantage of such prospects.

This notion of factoring distance from home into the decision making process can be problematised further by assessing whether the students in the study had taken into consideration their propinquity to the University of Portsmouth when making their decisions. Gibbons and Vignoles (2012) suggest that for many home-based students, their living arrangements impact greatly upon their choice of institution, with a significant proportion of students choosing an institution close to home. Whilst there are consistencies within this data, being close to home was evidently the most significant driver for choosing the University of Portsmouth for students living in non-typical accommodation with those wanting to stay close to home being more than nine times more likely to be living with parents than those in rented accommodation and almost three times more likely to be in their own homes. This is supported by almost all of these students choosing to go to University because it allowed them to remain in the family home. Gibbons and Vignoles (2012) cite class and ethnicity as key components to this sensitivity of geographical distance, suggesting that this may explain why ethnic or poorer students may be over-represented within inner-city Universities. Among this research cohort however, ethnicity was skewed disproportionately towards ‘white’ students, with only minimal numbers of students representing other ethnic groups. Alternatively, the results from this research appear to demonstrate a closer leaning towards McClelland and Gandy’s (2011) suggestions that gender may have more of an influencing factor in choosing more ‘local’ institutions. Comparing these findings to the students within the typical student accommodation categories reveals that, while these students appear less likely to choose an institution based upon its proximity to home
(the odds of a student wanting to remain close to home would be living in either halls or rented housing is reduced to less than a third), there are still enough students in each of these categories to suggest that some have considered their distance between University and home. This could be for a number of reasons, one of which may be the potential to move between student accommodation and the family home with ease during term-time (see also: Calvert, 2010). This was expressed by one of the respondents within the survey who was living in rented housing:

“[University] was just far enough away for my independence, but not too far away so that I could get home easily should I need to” (Survey response – Male, Y3, RH).

Comments such as these were replicated throughout the sample and highlight why there must be a consideration that, whilst students may be mobile, their movements may also be limited to choosing institutions within their region, in particular, placing proximity to home as a potentially more important factor than the quality of degree or value of the institution itself.

5.5 – Summary

In summary, this chapter adds to discussions of ‘traditional’ and ‘non-traditional’ students by suggesting that residential locations be considered in order to recognise the differences between the ‘types’ of student who are likely to live in ‘student’ and ‘non-student’ accommodation whilst at University. This has been achieved by identifying three key processes:

The analysis of this data therefore reiterates the importance of recognising the heterogeneity of students. Examining behaviours from the perspective of their residential circumstances can usefully assist in unpacking the experiences of students, throughout the HE pathway, and exposes greater nuance between student behaviours. This is particularly useful when conducting research on those students living in non-typical accommodation, as the models shown here have revealed many contrasts between the types of behaviours demonstrated by students living with parents or in their own homes. When examining the reasons for going to University, differences were highlighted between how the students were approaching HE which is suggestive of them gathering knowledge of the mechanics of HE from sources outside of the more
traditional sites of the family or the school in order to accrue sufficient capital to make the initial transition into University. This chapter has also highlighted differences in how students desiring a student experience at University with clear distinctions between those living in *typical* and *non-typical* accommodation types. This draws attention to whether or not the students were capable of recognising the potential benefits associated with mobilising the ‘right’ types of social capital prior to commencing their degrees. Importantly, this chapter has shown that there is no neat fit for how students access this capital, particularly among those living in *non-typical* accommodation where those living in their *own homes* or *with parents* may have preconceived ideas as to whether or not they wish to be (or may feel capable of being) involved in student-centric social activities. In addition to this, while clear distinctions were apparent between the residential categories with regard to the desire to leave home to attend University, these processes appeared to be considered pragmatically, with a certain degree of inevitability about whether a student might leave home or remain in the family home rather than a conscious decision being made. Finally, in outlining the general characteristics of students according to their residential circumstances, these models are useful in developing our understanding of the micro-geographies of student accommodation as well as expanding our knowledge of how students establish their ‘sense of place’ in the wider community. Naturally, this quantitative approach was unable to determine whether other social or cultural predictors were directly involved in the decisions made by the respondents. However, what this chapter has achieved is a strong basis of pre-student conceptions of HE with which to compare students’ transitions at subsequent stages of their degrees. These themes will be examined in greater detail in Chapter Six through the qualitative responses provided by the walking interviews and will pick up on the point at which the participants entered University and began to establish their ‘student identities’.

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20 See Taulke-Johnson (2010b) for a discussion of young gay male HE choices.
Chapter Six – Establishing a Student Habitus – Learning the Rules of the ‘Student Game’

This chapter will expand on the notions of a ‘pre-student’ habitus discussed in the quantitative findings in Chapter Five by questioning whether a student’s residential circumstances can be influential in the formation of a student habitus during the first year of study. This qualitative approach focuses upon the first year experiences of the interview participants. A smooth transition during these first few months of the degree pathway is thought to be crucial for students, whether they choose to leave home or not and plays an important role in discussions of student retention and support networks (for notable examples see Wilcox et al., 2005; Gibney et al., 2011; Gale & Parker, 2012; Christie et al., 2008; Yau et al., 2012). While these accounts focus upon the role of Universities, tutors and families in maintaining these support networks, this chapter will highlight the importance of discussing of how students themselves use their evolving student identities as leverage to establish meaningful networks which might buffer against potential problems.

Crucial to this is the notion that student identities are not developed uniformly and this chapter will emphasise the heterogeneity which exists within this student cohort under study, focusing specifically upon the four residential groups established in Chapter Five. Using some of the more contemporary readings of social capital, this chapter will discuss how the differences between accommodation types may potentially affect the acquisition, utilisation and maintenance of capital, creating specific advantages and disadvantages for residents. Section 6.1 discusses the influence of social activities in the development and maintenance of the student habitus, highlighting how the intensity of these social situations can accelerate these processes. Section 6.2 highlights the spatial differences between the first year students in the study who were living in halls of residence and rented housing and how this impacts upon their ability to acquire and utilise their social capital. Finally, section 6.3 focuses upon those students living with parents or in their own homes in order to recognise the heterogeneity of these residential circumstances. This extends the literature of ‘home based’ learners by suggesting that the agency of the students in these living circumstances can be influential in the formation of more varied types of student habitus than of those in the more typical accommodation types.
6.1 – Student-centric Social Activities as a Means to Develop the Student Habitus

This chapter extends some of the ways in which the ‘pre-student’ habitus might influence knowledge of University life by discussing how the interview participants learned to mobilise their social capital within student-centric spaces. Chatterton (1999) and Chatterton and Hollands (2002; 2003) suggest that students can be guilty of using their student habitus as a tool with which to self-segregate themselves away from the non-student community enabling what they describe as ‘exclusive geographies’. As Chatterton explains: “City centres have become arenas within which distinct identities, especially at night, are expressed” (Chatterton, 1999, p. 131). This is espoused through specific popular culture infrastructure aimed directly at the student market such as student-only nights in pubs and clubs in the city, tiered entrance fees or targeted marketing strategies. Student spaces therefore represent the ‘divided city’ (Chatterton, 1999) in that students have separated themselves away from the rest of the city, resulting in resentment and conflict from local, non-students. This was evident in the locations many of the first year participants chose to visit on their walking interviews, with University spaces (e.g. the Library or the Students’ Union) or places popular with large student groups (e.g. Guildhall Walk and Gunwharf Quays) being chosen. Holt and Griffin (2005) suggest that students quickly learn to appropriate certain environments, in this case, night-time social spaces, as their own and have developed their own tactics for segregating from non-students through their attendance of student-only nights. Evidence of these notions of self-segregation and the appropriation of space are evident among the interview participants. Many of the participants who were living in student accommodation spoke of how they actively disengaged from the local population, predominantly in the spaces in which they socialised as well as outlining the structural processes put in place in order to maintain these divisions for them:

“We don’t ever go out on nights out that aren’t student orientated or things. It just feels like, obviously quite a lot of the city here is student based. I feel quite separate from the people who actually live here. I sometimes forget that there are people who live here, that it isn’t just a student city so yeah, it’s quite a separate thing” (Jenny, Y2, RH).

“I get the feeling that it’s a student city as such and there is a divide between the local population and the students” (Tim, Y2, RH).

“[...] you can spot a local a mile off, especially when they walk into the
Union. The staff will know and they’re like ‘quickly, get them out, they shouldn’t be in here’” (Liam, Y3, RH).

Similarities exist here with Oliver and O’Reilly’s (2010) study of the influence of British expatriate communities on the Spanish Costas. As they suggest, groups are capable of utilising their capital in order to appropriate spaces which are desirable to their particular lifestyles, meaning that *en masse*, the habitus of the visitor has the potential to begin to shape a habitat. Lefebvre (1991) adds that dominant groups may appropriate space by reconfiguring it according to their own values and ideas. In Holt and Griffin’s (2005) research this process was identified as labelling *our spaces* and *their* spaces, suggesting a clear distinction between student and non-student spaces, with students using territorialised behaviour to demarcate space for their exclusive use. Naturally, University students are far from the dominant group within University towns and cities (in Portsmouth, undergraduate students constitute eleven per cent of the overall population), but their seasonality and propensity for being concentrated within specific parts of the city, such as the Guildhall area and parts of Fratton and Southsea, can be enough to give them a visible presence during term time. Added to this, an often disposable income from student loans and a propensity to consume student activities in large groups has meant that non-students can often be excluded from socialising in certain clubs and bars mid-week.

Discussing the appropriation of space through the lens of social capital adds nuance to the above discussions by highlighting how the interviewees perceived exclusive student-centric activities as being essential in the development of their student identities, particularly as the acquisition of social capital through social activities may hold a great deal of potential in easing the transition through University. One of the final year participants believed that going out regularly was essential in developing her friendship group, suggesting: “it was important to be involved in those mainstream events in the first few weeks to make that happen” (Tori, Y3, Own Home (OH)). Student-centric spaces provide ideal locations within which social connections can be made and crucially, the process of which can be greatly accelerated, often due to the high concentrations of members within these groups:

“With all of the events, everyone is going to them and if you don’t, you feel left out, so there is that socialising aspect but it’s just the thing that you do. I mean if someone doesn’t go clubbing you think ‘oh, they’re a bit
weird”’ (Lisa, Y3, RH).

“You sort of feel like part of the crowd, you feel like you belong there” (David, Y1, HR).

“On a student night it feels really nice if you go somewhere with a group of about ten people and [everyone] will find a friend and […] they’ll all bring them back to the bigger group and we’ll all talk and start dancing” (Rory, Y1, RH).

These comments suggest that outside of student accommodation, student-centric social spaces are one of the primary locations with which to develop a student habitus through the forging of friendship groups and experimentation with social activities. The spaces in which these students are socialising, as well as their accommodation and study spaces, provide the building blocks with which to develop their identities and cement their status within the student community. As Holt (2008) suggests:

“Individuals who have access to particular social networks will be able to mobilise [their] social capital, transforming it into different types of capital [thus] maintaining their advantages within particular ‘fields’ of activity” (p. 231).

In this instance, spaces within the term-time University location (Freshers’ bars and clubs, halls of residence, lecture theatres etc.) act as the ‘fields’ in question, through which certain dispositions are learned. These assist participants in understanding the rules associated with such spaces through the habitual experiences of them (Chatterton, 1999). This is corroborated by David, a first year student living in halls of residence who suggests that:

“[Living in halls] seemed more like the straightforward option. It seemed like it would be good experience to get the whole halls of residence experience. I knew I would end up living in private rented accommodation in the second and third year anyway so I may as well take the opportunity while I could” (David, Y1, HR).

As David’s comment suggests, halls of residence provided a platform for him to begin to learn how to ‘become’ a student.

In taking forward Holt’s (2008) suggestions, the development of these students’ identities are informed in part by the participants learning to acquire and mobilise their capital in order to strengthen their student habitus. This is particularly so as Holt
suggests that the ability to utilise social capital greatly increases the opportunities for group members to be in a position to access to the ‘right’ types of cultural capital required for the development of habitus. These participants are therefore exhibiting awareness that being part of these intense social networks greatly enhances their opportunities of making connections with people like them. Nevertheless, while the participants suggested that the intensity of their social experiences meant that their identities had undergone fairly radical changes during the initial period of their degrees, it is important to recognise that these changes did not occur instantaneously or unconsciously. As Reay (2004) suggests, individuals exhibit a certain degree of agency which predisposes them to particular ways of behaving in certain situations. This is so when individuals come into contact with unfamiliar environments which may potentially disrupt their understanding of their habitus, as discussed by Jenny and Ruth, both students who had lived in halls in year one, in relation to their experiences of going out in the first few weeks of term:

“I remember when I had my first night out in halls and it was just this massive group of people chanting about getting drunk and I was like ‘I’ve never done this before’ and it seemed really alien. And obviously if you’ve joined a sports team in first year you’re expected to go through initiations, especially some of the big clubs, and that really encourages drinking. If you’re not seen drinking then you’re not a valid member of the group” (Jenny, Y2, RH).

“I was already a few years older than my fellow roomies [sic] but yeah, I mean I noticed that if you didn’t go out in the first couple of weeks every night, people stopped asking you and then you were just by yourself. So I forced myself a few times to go out when I wasn’t particularly in the mood and I found the biggest issue was, because I was older I’d already gone around with a cone on my head, I’d already discovered Jagerbombs, I was re-living their new alcohol experiences and I was like ‘I’ve done that’” (Ruth, Y3, WP).

The social activities mentioned here are obviously not solely student activities but youth activities in general, however in focusing on the influence of social capital upon the development of the participants’ identities, these students may be employing their prior, or even imagined, understandings of what these specific social fields might offer them in order to gain the ‘right’ experiences associated with their interpretation of being a student. As Chatterton (1999) suggests, many students from more traditional
backgrounds are aware of the rituals and dispositions associated with student social spaces prior to commencing their degrees and Jenny’s and Ruth’s comments certainly corroborate this. However what is revealing about their experiences are that they both came to the same conclusions, that being immersed in the student drinking culture was an important part of their identity formation, but from quite different angles. While Jenny articulates that she expected these types of behaviours at University, an undercurrent of trepidation ultimately exists in her account of getting involved in such hedonistic activities. Ruth conversely appears to express that while she was not necessarily keen on the idea of going out with her much younger flatmates, like Jenny she recognised that investing in these types of social and cultural capital were crucial in ensuring a successful transition into the initial stages of ‘becoming’ a student. This substantiates Reay’s (2004) suggestions that habitus is a multi-layered concept based upon interactions between the past and the present. Habitus is not static but “permeable and responsive” (p. 434) meaning it can be transformed through contact with unfamiliar fields, such as the move to University in Jenny’s case, or become layered through experience, as in Ruth’s account of drawing on experiences and dispositions from her past in order to get along in the student community. Access to spaces where these activities take place can be fundamental to the development and transference of social and cultural capital for these young adults. Therefore, these seemingly exclusive student-centric spaces carry associations with the development of institutionalised cultural capital, seen elsewhere in other types of members’ only clubs (see Holt, 2008), where inclusion can provide access to the social capital required to ‘get on’ at University. Ruth’s example in particular demonstrates the potential for non-traditional students to draw on other elements of their ‘pre-student’ habitus in order to mobilise social capital. This is particularly important as Bourdieu (1986) suggests that social groups are capable of transforming or adapting contingent behaviours to maximise durable relationships between members. Therefore Ruth’s ‘alcohol experiences’ may have equipped her with enough social capital to make that initial step into the more typical student-centric social spheres.

6.2 – Spatial Barriers – the Influence of Accommodation in the Distribution of Social Capital

While the formation of the student habitus may appear fairly explicit, less obvious differences exist between those first year participants who had lived in halls or in rented
housing during year one, which adds complexity to these discussions. Both the survey and interview responses highlight spatial differences between the two groups. The distance between home, campus and social life can be far greater for those living in rented housing than for those in halls and may have an experiential impact upon the formation of their student habitus. It is widely recognised that halls of residence is a crucial location in the initiation, development and maintenance of the student identity for those who reside in them (Chatterton, 1999; Christie et al., 2002; Smith & Holt, 2007; Hubbard, 2009). As the participants mentioned in section 5.1, the intensity of this environment means that members are more likely to gain access to similar types of cultural capital. This can then be translated into the types of social capital necessary to facilitate a smoother transition through the initial year of University. The interviewees’ responses suggest that capital can take the form of popular student-centric activities such as clubbing or through University promoted sport or leisure societies, and the close proximity of halls to these spaces can be conducive of the establishment of a strong student habitus.

For the first year participants living in rented housing, these living circumstances were described, almost universally, as being inadequate spaces within which to gain an immersive ‘student experience’. Figure 6.1 highlights the distances some of these students were living from both the campus and the more typical Freshers’ bars and clubs (approximately 1.54km, with 0.41km being closest and 2.25km being furthest). In contrast, five of the University of Portsmouth’s eight halls of residence are situated adjacent to these Fresher’s venues, meaning students in halls are likely to have greater opportunities to access these facilities. Living in rented housing in year one was often the result of missing out on securing a place in halls, particularly as some of the participants living in rented housing spoke of being too late in applying for either their course or their accommodation. These students were often characterised as being disadvantaged by their peers, as many of the incentives of going out (discounted rates, free entry etc.) are aimed primarily at those in halls:

“I know full well that my friends that were stuck in houses in their first year felt very left out socially, by the Uni [sic] especially because we

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21 121 (30 per cent) of the 406 first year students within the survey, and ten of the interview participants reported living in rented accommodation within Portsmouth in their first year.

22 The University of Portsmouth currently has sufficient University managed bed space for approximately 75 per cent of first year students (University of Portsmouth, 2011)
Figure 6.1: Location of student social spaces in relation to residential circumstances of first year undergraduates (source: author’s survey data).
would have reps and stuff coming to our doors, encouraging us to go out and letting us in on the student nights and they just had none of that” (Emma, Y3, RH).

Likewise, those first years living in rented accommodation themselves identified their accommodation as being a contributing factor to why they may have felt left out of social events or had to limit their frequency of going out, particularly as this often involved factoring in costs of taxis or whether they could stay in friend’s rooms:

“I definitely felt like I missed out on the whole halls experience, meeting new people, having loads of people on your floor. There was just the five of us and that was kind of it at the start so I definitely feel I missed out there” (Claire, Y2, RH).

“I think because halls is so big. […] Like when I go to my friend’s house I’ll speak to those people in that block and other people in other blocks. Like compared to living in my house, the girls, they have their friends so when I socialise with them I feel really sort of out of place so definitely, I feel disadvantaged” (Adele, Y1, RH).

“Missing out on halls has had a very negative impact on my first year of University” (Survey response – Female, Y1, RH).

“Living out of halls I find the social life slower and harder to develop. Makes me wish I applied to halls. The freedom is better but I lack social connections” (Survey response – Male, Y1, RH).

What these comments imply is that the first year participants living in rented housing recognised that the types of capital they had access to, despite being complimentary to the overall sense of ‘becoming a student’ (see Chatterton, 1999; Chatterton & Hollands, 2003), were perhaps incongruent with that of their peers in halls. There is very little evidence which considers how first year students living in rented housing might experience their term-time accommodation (for a notable example see Christie et al., 2002). For many of the participants here, the predominantly second and third year social spaces in Southsea were not necessarily appropriate spaces in which to establish their student identity, particularly as year one may not be the most suitable ‘time’ in which to experience spaces or activities which are directed at a different audience. Adele, for example, chose the halls where her friends lived as a destination on her walking interview, and discussing her experiences in this location made it clear, through her improved eye contact and body language, that the halls environment was somewhere
she felt relaxed. As Holt (2008) suggests, those who are moving in fields which they are unaccustomed to can struggle with interpreting the capital they are presented with. While cultural differences may be present in student accommodation, the first years within this study living in rented housing were not necessarily living with other first year students meaning the social and cultural capital they were exposed to was not always appropriate to the rest of the household. This became apparent when problems occurred:

“The house I lived in in [sic] first year was on one of those ‘find a house’ days and I don’t really feel like you get to know someone that well in half a day. There was like two distinct groups in our house in the first year and then you could almost see how that became three by the end of the year. […] We never socialised, no-one ever did anything so the house was a state. […] We got back from Christmas and it was all a bit messy and not too good. There were huge heated debates […] it was the first time we’d all lived away so we were all a bit new to it and didn’t understand it too well” (Tori, Y3, OH).

Andersson et al. (2012) discuss how University social spaces can become sites of marginalisation if certain groups are prevented from participating in student activities. They employ Massey’s (2005) concept of ‘throwntogetherness’, “the chance that space may set us down next to the unexpected neighbour” (p. 151), to explain how the heterogeneity of student life can be less than harmonious. In this sense, certain mainstream student nights can be seen to reinforce many of the uncivilised discourses associated with student behaviour, which emphasise “hedonistic pleasure-seeking, drinking and sex/coupling” (Hubbard, 2013, p. 267). Like the issues mentioned earlier regarding potential for tension between students and non-students, this creates issues of position and privilege which favour the dominant social group, often white, middle-class, heterosexual and secular, defined by Andersson et al. (2012) as ‘campus insiders’, with more marginal groups positioned as ‘other’. This is alluded to by Tim, a second year student reflecting back on his experiences as a first year living in halls:

“I don’t mean to sound harsh but if you don’t make the effort in halls in the first few weeks then people think that you’re the sort of person who wants to keep themselves to themselves, they assume that about you so there is that pressure to socialise in the first few weeks of Uni [sic]” (Tim, Y2, RH).
While Tim’s quote is focused primarily upon students in halls, this pressure to ‘play the game’ was noticeable across many other of the participants’ experiences. What these students’ experiences highlight is how significant the expectation can be for undergraduate students to conform to the drinking culture which is so heavily promoted to them during Freshers’ Week. Whilst there is a vast amount of heterogeneity in the types of students who go to University, the activities they participate in can be homogenous and characterised by the stereotypical student behaviours mentioned earlier by Hubbard (2013). Ultimately, periods such as Freshers’ Week present specific windows of opportunity for acquiring social capital quickly meaning non-participation in these events can amplify a student’s ‘difference’, subsequently marking them out as ‘other’ within the student community, and potentially impacting upon their future social endeavours.

In viewing these incongruities through the lens of social capital, Bourdieu (1986) suggests that not all members of a group will have equal understanding of how to utilise the capital made available to them. There is no guarantee that investments in social capital will make a return as participants within the network may fail to recognise the value of mobilising their social relations. Moreover, the capital held within such networks may not necessarily be accessed equally by all participants. This was evident in Tori’s example, in which her household quickly became fractured as her housemates realised that the capital they had joined University with was incongruous to that of their peers. They subsequently had to look outside of their accommodation to seek more meaningful social capital as individuals. This adds to Andersson et al.’s (2012) claims that first year students in halls can experience difficulties in dealing with the heterogeneity of their living arrangements. This can become exacerbated for those first years living in rented housing as the “throwntogetherness” Massey (2005) talks of is likely to be experienced on a more micro scale and within an environment that students may not typically associate with being first year spaces.

Nevertheless, while accounts of disadvantage among this cohort were plenty, some felt that the positive experiences they were gaining living in rented accommodation in year one outweighed the hindrances in their social lives. Both Rory and Dan spoke of how they believed that living in a rented house in year one had provided them with an alternative set of tools with which to make a smooth transition from year one to year
two. In Rory’s case, he felt that experiencing the less student-centric aspects of the city early on gave him a clearer understanding of what the city might offer him beyond University, while Dan spoke of gaining more autonomy in the household than his friends in halls:

“I think that the people who live in halls right now are going to have a massive shock when they move in second year. I come from a very small village and when I came here. I was very closed minded which is just something I was brought up with. I walked down the road the first couple of days and I saw homeless people and people with face tattoos and I saw people drinking out of a can at nine o’clock in the morning and I thought ‘wow, this is such a different world to where I come from’” (Rory, Y1, RH).

Mark: “Do you feel then that you may be slightly disadvantaged than your other student friends?”

Dan: “No, no, absolutely not, no. It’s a great house, big, cheap and great location, I love it, I wouldn’t swap it for anything. […] Physically, I’m more in control of the house than in halls of residence, and it feels a bit more homely as well” (Dan, Y1, RH).

As both of these comments suggest, living in a rented house may have given them a head start over the other first year students within the study group who had lived in halls and contrast with Adele’s and Claire’s earlier negative experiences. These comments suggest that residing in a student house was associated with more ‘mature’ activities than halls, such as having direct contact with landlords, dealing with non-student neighbours or having to make responsible decisions like budgeting for bills or arranging refuse collections. There may, of course, be a semblance of luck involved here, both Rory and Dan spoke of having very good relationships with their housemates, a seemingly rare occurrence among this cohort, and in Rory’s case had made sure to get involved in both academic and social extracurricular activities. Their level of involvement suggests they accumulated a substantial amount of social and cultural capital meaning their understanding of how to ‘get along’ at University is more acute than some of the other participants. Rory and Dan are not alone in this, the majority of interviewees in the same living circumstances expressed ways of combating their disadvantage. Paul, Peter and Millie spoke of using University societies as a way of expanding their social spheres, while Adele, Tori and Claire all mentioned that they made conscious efforts to meet new people on nights out in order to establish a more
varied friendship group. This suggests that this cohort of students are capable of mobilising specific, yet tailored coping strategies in order to minimise risk and maximise their potential to gain social capital.

These accounts extend some of the previous theorisations of student behaviours which suggest differences between traditional and non-traditional habitus (Chatterton, 1999; Patiniotis and Holdsworth, 2005; Holdsworth, 2006) by suggesting that the participants are exhibiting some form of agency in the ways in which they acquire and utilise their capital. As Sutherland and Burton (2011) argue, social capital does not form uniformly across any given group. Capital can be developed by individual members of a group rather than by the whole group itself meaning members can develop certain tactics to ensure they transcend any negative dispositions of the rest of the group, as in the experiences of Dan and Rory. In promoting this notion of the agency of group members, Reay (2004) suggests that, rather than being predictable, habitus can be vague. Members may not necessarily behave in ways that are expected of them, as demonstrated by these accounts from first year students living in rented housing:

“I live in a house this year and it’s great. […] The main socialising days are Mondays, Wednesdays and Fridays. Wednesdays we always have it at our house, a massive party at our house which is fine because you know everyone is very social so that’s sorted” (Rory, Y1, RH).

“I’m really more of a restaurant slash pub person than nightclubs, I’m kind of sick of them and I do try to go with them to pubs and things but if they say anything about Liquid or Tiger Tiger then I just say I’m going to do work tonight” (Peter, Y1, RH).

“I’ve been to some of the pubs on Albert Road which are predominantly for second and third years because most of the housing is on the back of Fawcett Road and places like that. I’ve been to quite a few of the pubs there and just by looking I would say I was more of a pub person than a club person […]. Some of the first years that I know are literally out every night clubbing. I’ve been told by several older students “oh, why aren’t you going out every night and getting absolutely hammered?” well I don’t want to, I want to pass my first year with good marks” (Millie, Y1, RH).

Habitus is therefore not rigid and replicable but individual and unpredictable, as reflected in the accounts of the interview participants. While there must be a group from which to draw social capital from (Bourdieu, 1986), this can be achieved in a variety of
ways depending upon the potential for members to access it. For some of the first year participants, living in rented housing meant that complications arose when attempting to negotiate which might be the appropriate types of capital they should be accessing at their stage of the student experience. In other situations, the residential circumstances of this student cohort presented fewer challenges to the development of capital, particularly if they were adept at finding varying ways of overcoming these discrepancies.

6.3 – Developing Habitus in Non-typical Student Accommodation – a Complicated Process?

While residing in halls in year one is likely to be more appropriate for the development of the ‘right’ types of social and cultural capital, it would be sensible to assume that the alternative, living with parents or in own homes, are likely to be less appropriate sites for the formation of the student habitus. But how apparent these distinctions between right and wrong spaces are, and what degree of variation exists between the two types of accommodation remains unclear. In answering these questions, much of the literature points to home-based students as being less likely to want to be involved in more typical student-centric social activities (Chatterton, 1999; Holdsworth, 2006; Crozier et al., 2008; Clayton et al., 2009). Holdsworth (2006) and Crozier et al. (2008) argue that those not taking the traditional route through HE (i.e. not living in student accommodation) may intentionally eschew campus-based social relations as a way of avoiding feeling ‘left out’. Chatterton (1999) cites the multiple roles which non-traditional students often perform (student, work colleague, parent, spouse, partner, homemaker, carer etc.) as a driver of this, while Clayton et al. (2009) suggest an unwillingness to undergo a re-definition of their (non-student) identities as being significant. The findings from this study however, reveal that these processes may not necessarily be applicable to all home-based students. A significant proportion of the participants living with parents or in their own homes spoke of wanting to undertake some sort of new experiences in their first year of University, through identification with the student cohort, educational attainment or learning to become independent. Whatever the experience, many of these students appeared to recognise the likelihood that gaining new experiences is directly linked to ‘being’ or ‘becoming’ a University student, implying that University may be a vitally important life-stage for all those who attend and can have lasting effects.
As Christie (2009) suggests, there are nevertheless differences between ‘being’ a student and ‘doing’ a degree and this research relates this directly to the residential circumstances of the students within the study. Within the context of the participants, those living in their own homes appear less likely to be interested in embodying a student habitus outside that of being a learner than those living with parents, who demonstrate a greater propensity in acquiring some form of student habitus (albeit a carefully considered one which included specific characteristics rather than being all encompassing like those living in halls). Anecdotally, the differences here are likely to be due to the participants living in their own homes being older (the interview participants’ ages range between 26 and 42 years old) than their equivalents living with their parents. This suggests they may be less likely to be interested in utilising the same social and cultural capital as their peers. Likewise, those living with parents are closer in age to those living in more typical student accommodation and therefore may be more likely to wish to invest in more youth-centric activities.

Importantly, unlike their equivalents living with parents or in student accommodation, those participants living in their own homes spoke of how their well established [non-student] identities were incompatible with their perceptions of ‘being’ a student, usually associating this with approaches to learning or through night-time social activities:

“I don’t really consider myself a student. I don’t know, maybe if I stayed here for longer, maybe I would. I think that because maybe at the moment there are so many different things that I do, I don’t know that one is more important than the other” (Jane, Y3, OH).

“I have no thoughts that these friendships will go outside. I don’t socialise with them. They have asked me a couple of times but they are just being polite. They don’t really want to go out with me and I don’t really want to go out with them, but they’re funny and they remind me of being nineteen” (Sarah, Y2, OH).

As Christie (2009) explains, those who approach University this way are less likely to want to change their identities or adapt in any way to the normative behaviours which are often synonymous with students, considering themselves to be ‘day students’ (Christie et al., 2005). For those interview participants who were living in their own homes, their student habitus was formed primarily around lectures and rarely moved out of these confines. This was apparent during the walking interviews where all of these
participants made distinctions between the learning environments they chose to visit and the social spaces, which were inevitably far removed from the more student-centric ones and demonstrated that, to a certain extent, student spaces may not necessarily be relaxing environments for such students:

“Sarah visibly relaxed at Canoe Lake. She stopped looking at me and instead looked across the water. This is a space where she regularly comes with her children and meets friends. She will spend prolonged periods in this location and carefully detailed each of the activities she would do. This did not occur in any of the other locations we went to” (Research Diary).

In many ways these students showed little or no interest in acquiring the cultural capital associated with University life, instead preferring to settle for the capital they felt was requisite for them to successfully learn their chosen subject. This was probably due to the two types of capital they were dealing with were either in conflict or simply not being compatible with one another. As an aside to this, non-student identities could be fruitful among these participants, who spoke of becoming quite adept at importing some of the skills they had gained prior to University into their learner identities. Moreover, these students preferred not to be labelled as ‘students’, favouring instead the term ‘learner’ or an amalgamation of their other non-student identities (spouse, parent, colleague etc.). Reay (2002) suggests that this may be an indication that these students may feel that because they are not immersing themselves in the student culture they are somewhat ‘in-authentic’ students or ‘imposters’.

In contrast to the experiences of students living in their own homes, the participants who were living with parents exhibited far more complex ways of managing their student habitus than any of the other residential circumstances. Holdsworth (2006) suggests that some students living with their parents may choose to distance themselves away from the more traditional student cohort, preferring instead to retain close connections with their pre-student social groupings. This was evident within the walking interviews with all of the participants choosing at least one location which provided a connection with their pre-student selves. This acts as a coping mechanism for those students who have entered University without the right type of cultural capital and enables them a smoother transition through University. These students can often fail to recognise the benefits of accessing the institutional capital provided by the
University, particularly through extracurricular activities and societies, favouring instead to enact separate lives away from the mainstream student community, with many considering their home and University spheres to be almost completely separate, as demonstrated in the following response to a question taken from the survey asking why students living with their parents did not socialise with student friends outside of lectures:

“Don’t see the point in coming over from Gosport when I can socialise at home” (Survey response – Male, Y3, WP).

“Because I don’t have or want any [student friends]” (Survey response – Male, Y1, WP).

“I have my own friends from outside of University” (Survey response – Female, Y3, WP).

Importantly, this can lead to these students feeling alienated making them more likely to retreat away from the student-centric activities back to the comfort of their non-student peer group where their capital is legitimised (Patiniotis & Holdsworth, 2005; Holdsworth, 2006; Clayton et al., 2009). In extending this, the participants showed signs of being keen, not just to retain a non-student identity, but to protect it from their more typical peer group. Carl, Maya and Nina all commented that they would think twice before introducing their University friends into their home-based social group and used this physical distance as a barrier with which to shield their home lives. They reported keeping friendship groups separate, either due to bad past experiences or through a recognition that particular aspects of their non-student identities may be construed as different to that of their more traditional peers, making it rare for them to invite student friends to socialise in their home towns (only two of the participants living with parents reported living on the island itself, while the other six were living a commutable distance away, the furthest being up to twelve miles (see Figure 6.2)). Although it was not mentioned directly in the interviews, Carl, Greg and Helen all alluded to how age may factor in this distancing from the more traditional cohort, particularly as these younger students living with their parents spoke of feeling uncomfortable at the thought of acquaintances met at University gaining access to their non-student social spheres. These participants cited the ephemeral nature of these friendships as a driving factor, suggesting these interactions would be deemed inappropriate, particularly in the family home, and were maintained out of respect of
Figure 6.2: Location of University of Portsmouth students living with parents or in their own homes (source: author’s survey data).
parents and siblings:

“I’m sure they’re nice people and if I were to bring them back to my house they’d be very respectful of it I’d imagine, but I do feel more of a co-sharer of the house now, not just a child in it so I don’t feel it would be really appropriate to bring University people back to that because I feel that maybe wouldn’t be right for my parents. They probably wouldn’t be comfortable with that so I wouldn’t do it” (Carl, Y1, WP).

For many of the participants, the commencement of their degrees coincided with a change to their social position within the household. As Carl points out, he feels more responsible for the goings on within the family home. Carl’s account extends Christie’s (2007) suggestions that students living with their parents often retreat into the sanctity of their non-student peer group in order to maintain connections with their more familiar identity. While Christie’s participants felt more able to choose which group of friends (student or non-student) to socialise with, the agency Carl and others exert demonstrates how some of the participants felt it necessary to go a stage further and actively exclude their student friends from their non-student social lives. Importantly, when asked whether student friends were ever included in non-student social activities, their responses were often articulated in ways which suggested that the home environment might be less favourable to students:

“I haven’t really, I mean it’s difficult to get to have a pint with me anyway. I’ve been for a few pints in Gunwharf but any of the other places I go are probably too far to walk for them. It’s a bit more difficult” (Greg, Y2, WP).

“I mainly socialise in an area which would mean that students would have to drive it obviously then puts them at a disadvantage. They would have to not have a drink, and drive which, for them is probably quite a long way and an area that they don’t know” (Nina, Y2, WP).

“Well there’s nothing in North End [laughs]. But for me I don’t mind being a bit further out because I can easily get a taxi or walk” (Cleo, Y1, WP).

“I’ve never invited them back to my house because I think they’d rather be at theirs where they can just be themselves. […] It’s not very exciting. I think they want to stay in the city where things are more obviously happening” (Helen, Y2, WP).
Ultimately these coping mechanisms appear to enable the characteristics of each of their identities to remain stable and uncomplicated without interference from outside their social group. This may also demonstrate how these home-based students are denying their student friends access to their social groupings by closing off networks to protect the group from unwelcome access.

What is important here is that this may have some effect upon how the home-based participants view their social lives. Some suggest that their more ‘adult’ position within the family home makes them more mature than the more typical cohort. Others echo Carl’s suggestion that they feel they owe a duty of care to their families not to burden them with the problems associated with student social activities, keeping that side of their identities distinct from their parents. Helen also talks of how she erected barriers because of bad past experiences of combining student and non-student friends:

“I have introduced them to one friend from home and it is strange when you combine the two because they’re talking about two very different worlds and there was almost a bit of a divide because they kept talking about University and I had to keep encouraging them to talk about other things because of my friend who didn’t go to University” (Helen, Y2, WP).

The majority of the students living with parents therefore expressed a stronger attachment to their home locations than the student spaces in Portsmouth:

“Evening for me is back in [home town] rather than here [in Portsmouth]. I do have rare nights out here but they’re not with Uni [sic] people so I don’t really associate that the same” (Nina, Y2, WP).

This is unsurprising as place often acts as an anchor of shared experiences between individuals or groups (Crang, 1998). This takes time to establish, meaning increased involvement with a location creates a stronger sense of place as individuals or groups contribute to and benefit from it (Anderson, 2010). These students who live with their parents have invested a considerable amount of time into developing their non-student identities through deep-rooted connections with their ‘home’ location. However, as Helen’s comments in particular suggest, translating these identities into their student friendship groups can become complicated as the ephemeral connections made at University may not necessarily sit well against the more long-term connections with home-based friends.
This notion of maintaining multiple identities may be construed as an example of how students living with their parents can become constrained by their embodied social capital during their degree. Holt (2008) suggests that an individual’s identity is inherently bound within the socio-spatial contexts in which they live their lives (in the case of these students, being subjectified as immobile by remaining in the family home). As Holt suggests: “An individual’s previous social encounters are embodied and influence their future social performances” (p. 238). This means that identity is not fixed but constantly viewed in relation to the norms of others. Therefore: “Norms of identity performance are central to the processes by which a person is subjectified” (p. 238). To put this into practice, Helen speaks here of how her University peer group has few expectations of her to get involved in student-centric activities because she lives at home:

“I think it’s easier when you live at home because if you don’t want to do certain things then people don’t expect you to. I think they view me not quite as a ‘student’ student but as a, kind of ‘ah, no, I’m at home, I don’t really want to go out late’, things like that. If I had moved out I would definitely be feeling a lot more pressured to do what everyone else was doing, whereas I’ve got the excuse that I’ve got the rest of my life to be doing as well” (Helen, Y2, WP).

Hence, Helen’s assumed position of being immobile may have become incorporated into her sense of self and if perpetuated may influence her social position in other social situations. As Holt suggests, it is the reciprocal nature of such relationships, in this case Helen’s distancing from her peer group and their acceptance of this distancing, which allows these norms to be conveyed.

There are of course inevitably going to be some students living away from the more traditional cohort who do desire some degree of engagement with the traditional cohort. Yet this can provide its own set of problems, particularly if the students happen to read the signs wrongly from their more traditional peers. Eve, a second year student living in her own home with her husband and young son reflects upon her experiences with a University sports society:

“I wouldn’t say they were hugely welcoming, I think they tried. I found it difficult personally to integrate into a new group. It’s something I find difficult to do anyway so it was hard to join in. Plus having a child at home, other than this one girl who also had a child at home, nobody else
had kids so it was really hard to grasp that I had to go home and that I had these outside commitments that weren’t Uni [sic] based” (Eve, Y2, OH).

While Eve reports no instances of receiving unkindness from her peers, her account is tinged with a realisation that the social capital she was attempting to utilise was incongruent with that of the younger student cohort. Eve’s position as a wife and mother living away from the centre of the student community meant that she was unable to transform her capital into anything which might benefit her integration within the group. This situation was repeated in almost all accounts from the older students living in their own homes, both from the interview participants as well as from the survey responses below:

“I have never got to know them well enough to socialise with them, perhaps because I am a mature student and most are very much younger” (Survey response – Female, Y3, OH).

“As a mature student it is hard to fit in with younger students” (Survey response – Male, Y3, OH).

“I do not have any [student friends]. I do not even know any of them as I am a returning student and have not studied with them before and no-one really speaks to me” (Survey response – Female, Y3, OH).

These accounts, particularly Eve’s, reiterate that living in student accommodation adjacent to the campus is a formidable driver in developing and maintaining a student habitus. For those living with their parents, and to a greater extent those older students in their own homes, their limited ability to access the right types of social and cultural capital diminishes their opportunities to fit in with the rest of the cohort. Holdsworth (2006) suggests that this creates a ‘disrupted’ habitus, where the dispositions of local students are not easily recognised by either the more traditional student cohort or their non-student friends. However, in the case of the older participants here this could be thought of as being closer to an ‘inhibited’ habitus where they might be prevented from utilising the capital they have legitimately acquired. There is a recognition that they are unlikely to fit in without impacting upon their already established home lives meaning participation in student-centric activities, such as excessive night-time socialising, can

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23 63 per cent of the survey respondents living in their own homes reported having no contact with other students outside of lectures.
be viewed as uncharacteristic and/or detrimental to the lifestyle they hold outside of University.

While the students in the study living in their own homes reported feeling left out of student activities, many of those living with parents spoke of how their living circumstances gave them the agency to move between their student and non-student friendship groups:

“I’ve made some brilliant friends. In the first year I probably had to work ten times harder than everybody else to make friends because I didn’t have those immediate housemates or hall friends but now I’ve got friends from first year who are friends for life now. I’ve probably got less Uni [sic] friends but then I don’t think that matters too much because I joined a society, I joined the [activity] society and things like that” (Dawn, Y3, WP).

“Because I go to church and most of my church friends go to Uni [sic] it hasn’t been difficult at all and my cousins they are almost my age so I can hang out with their friends as well. It’s no big deal. […] We get to do quite a lot of things together in church and as students so it’s made things a lot easier. […] I can choose my friends a bit more wisely rather than being with people and doing things that I really don’t want to do” (Cleo, Y1, WP).

Dawn’s and Cleo’s responses extend claims that home-based students are unlikely to take up University societies or understand the potential benefits they might hold (Crozier et al., 2008; Clayton et al., 2009), or that students living with their parents might lack the commitment to regularly keep up with societies (Holdsworth, 2006). As the participants’ comments suggest, in certain circumstances, they demonstrated enthusiasm for being involved in societies and understood the benefit they can bring to their future careers. These participants also expressed an awareness of the importance of establishing a strong student peer group while at University and often had a substantial network of student friends living in more traditional term-time accommodation. However, as Carl suggests below, these connections may be more carefully considered and motivated by a desire to ‘get on’ at University rather than having the fully immersive experience practised by their more typical peers:

“I wanted to take advantage of the opportunities that were offered at Uni [sic], not necessarily all the drinking and clubbing and stuff […] but
different activities that the University offers. I haven’t seen many first years who have come here for the social side, it’s just sort of me and I find that interesting” (Carl, Y1, WP).

In returning to the questions posited at the beginning of this section, the above examples have highlighted that there may be distinctions between what might be construed ‘right’ or ‘wrong’ spaces within which to form a student habitus. There is a great deal of variation between the types of students within each residential type, with some who want to experience ‘being’ a student and other who do not. However it is the ability or desire to access and transform capital which differentiates them, with students living in their own homes appearing far less able to become immersed in the student community than their equivalents living with parents who appear able to switch between the two.

6.4 – Discussion

This chapter has demonstrated how the students within this study have begun to make sense of the capital they acquired during the initial stages of their degrees, transforming it into the type of habitus which might enable a smoother transition through University. This was achieved by identifying four processes:

- While the students within this study acknowledged the transformative potential of University life, there was a great deal of heterogeneity in the ways in which the students interpreted their capital. Some were keen to express their cultural capital in the many student-centric social spaces in the city, using this as a tool in order to expand their friendship groups, while others sought to acquire the necessary capital associated with being a successful learner.

- Crucially, this chapter has identified the role of accommodation type in this process, outlining some of the potential pitfalls which may exist and the tactics many of the participants used to overcome them. Those living in more typical student accommodation were thought to be in right environment to acquire the types of cultural capital needed to develop a student identity.

- Halls of residence were universally recognised as the site most appropriate for accessing the ‘right’ types of capital for first year students, and this diminished for those first years living in rented housing, with several accounts suggesting that their accommodation was detrimental to their experience of being a student.
This diversity was equally apparent in the experiences of the students living in non-student accommodation, albeit in a slightly subtler, more nuanced way. Importantly, there may be more to this than simply the agency of the participants in deciding whether to participate or not. While the students living with their parents demonstrated a capability to form the type of student habitus which allowed them to move between their student and non-student peer groups, some of those living in their own homes felt they were restricted from utilising the capital required to be involved with student activities.

This analysis has revealed an important consideration for future discussions of student identities by suggesting that compatibility issues exist in the development of the student habitus which might prevent, or discourage, some individuals from having the same student experience as that of their peers. Whilst there were clear differences between the ages of the students living in typical or non-typical accommodation, particularly between those living with parents or in their own homes, there were also obvious distinctions between the types of students who wished to be involved in the student community and those who did not. Students may not necessarily be inclined to socialise in the environment closest to them, as was the case for many of the first year students living in rented houses. It is just this type of disparity which makes certain student groups feel excluded from the more mainstream student activities and may contribute to a general dissatisfaction with their student experience.

While it may be impossible for some students to have the same student experience (e.g. through family commitments, distance between home and University etc.), that is not to say that they may not wish to share some of the same experiences as their more traditional peers. This chapter has identified the different, and occasionally unexpected, social and academic motivations of students. Crucially, this extends discussions of first year experiences by suggesting that some students (in the context of this study primarily students in their own homes) may not necessarily be shirking student-centric activities due to their preferences. In addition other social, cultural or institutional processes may contribute to preventing these students from being included in the more ‘typical’ student experience, which in turn may inhibit the acquisition and subsequent re-distribution of student-centric social capital. In other words, failed attempts at ‘fitting in’ among student peers may force such students back into their non-student social group.
Chapter Seven – Re-interpreting Places – Establishing a ‘Sense of Place’ in the ‘Student Home’ and the ‘Student City’

This chapter builds upon notions of the evolving student habitus through a discussion of how the interview participants re-interpreted their term-time location as they moved from first to second year and how this affected their ‘sense of place’ within the city. While Chapter Six highlighted the heterogeneity of the student cohort, this chapter explores how this heterogeneous student group learns to [re]negotiate or [re]interpret the rules and dispositions learned in year one. Chatterton (1999) and Hollands (1995) talk of students “un-learning the rules of the student game” (p. 122) in years two and three, where the action of moving from the intensity of halls into the more autonomy of rented housing represents a distinct shift in how students experience their term-time location (see also: Smith & Holt, 2007). This contributes to discussions of the geographies of students by drawing attention to the tactics students might implement in order to establish a ‘sense of place’ either in their homes or in the wider communities.

While considerable attention has been given to how tertiary students manage their transitions through University, little is understood about how they establish any type of attachment to their term-time University location. This is important as students generally expect University spaces to provide comparable safety, security and identity to home (Chow & Healey, 2008) in order to minimise homesickness (Scopelitti & Tiberio, 2010) or disruption to studies (Wilcox et al., 2005). However, while Chow and Healey (2008) tackle the complex process of establishing place attachment during the initial period of transition into the first year of study, there is very little indication as to how processes, such as accommodation change or adjustments to social and/or friendship groups might instigate subsequent adaptations to sense of place as undergraduates make their move from being Freshers into subsequent year groups. This is particularly pertinent as positive relationships with place may be fundamental for successful transitions for those who are [temporarily] mobile (Gustafson, 2001).

In advancing these notions of student mobility, this chapter will incorporate discussions of place attachment and ‘sense of place’ into debates of the geographies of students in order to gain a clearer understanding of how positive relationships with place may go some way in facilitating a smoother transition through University. Section 7.1 outlines how the move from halls into shared rented housing might transform the habitus and
how this relates to a burgeoning ‘sense of place’ in term-time accommodation. Section 7.2 addresses how this ‘sensing of place’ extends beyond the home into the wider community and highlights how such changing geographies mean that the participants are regularly re-interpreting their term-time location. Finally, section 7.3 switches the focus from the more typical cohort to consider how the home-based participants who already have a detailed knowledge of the city re-negotiate or ‘re-sense’ place when they become undergraduate students, focusing specifically upon how they share their experiences and knowledges with their more typical peer group.

7.1 – The Move from Halls to Rented Housing: the Transformed Habitus and a ‘Sense of Place’

An emerging theme in the research was of the complex ways in which the participants negotiated their living space through their interdependence with other student housemates or non-student cohabitants. Note that the term interdependence rather than independence is employed here as the majority of interviewees felt they were seeking cohabitation rather than the complete autonomy of living alone (Lahelma & Gordon, 2003; 2008). Detailed UK-centric research into the interactions between students within term-time accommodation is limited (see Kenyon, 1999; Christie et al., 2002; Taulke-Johnson, 2010a for notable exceptions). Instead, much of the research into student housing focuses upon accommodation preferences (Hubbard, 2009; Rugg, et al., 2002; 2004; Smith & Holt, 2007) and the wider tensions between student and non-student neighbours (Kenyon, 1997; 2000; Allinson, 2006; Hubbard, 2008). Therefore, recognising how students live together is valuable because it provides an indication of the messiness of cohabitation, through interaction with housemates and the transference of disparate identities from one home to another. Moreover, this exposes how the micro-territorialisations within the home might contribute towards housemates integrating with, or withdrawing from such shared social environments.

7.1a – Negotiating House Rules and the Transformed Habitus

Lahelma and Gordon (2003) suggest that young adults are likely to transfer the domestic norms, behaviours and consumption practices learned within the family home into their future homes. In other words, there is a likelihood that they may ‘remake’ home according to their own particular ideology. Chapters Five and Six revealed how
the pre-student habitus can be highly influential in the ways in which young adults approach their University identities. The more typical Freshers’ locations of halls and the Students’ Union played a critical role in the development and nurturing of the more formative student habitus for many of the young participants, particularly in developing initial forms of cultural and social capital. However, Ruth, a third year student who initially lived in halls and then a rented house in second year suggests that this becomes more complex once she had moved away from halls:

“[…] you move into the real world of student housing and you have to work out bills and not leaving lights on and cleaning and it’s just the environment changes completely” (Ruth, Y3, WP).

For many of the participants, the move from halls into second and third year accommodation constituted a new phase in their identity development. Leaving behind the more homogenous activities of first year appeared to be vital in establishing their layered or cumulative future identities. As Kenyon (1999) and Kenyon and Heath (2001) suggest, cohabitation at this point presents an important stage in the development of these young adults’ identities. Managing money and time, making informed decisions and learning from mistakes are all key lessons which are learned within term-time accommodation. However, one of the more significant, and under-researched aspects of this cohabitation is how students interpret each other’s identities and how, seemingly incongruous habitus can become enmeshed within the confines of shared student lodgings. Within this study, this was most evident in the negotiation of house rules:

“In general, me and [my fiancé] tend to take quite a lead role, organising the housework and things like making sure we all share in buying washing up liquid and toilet rolls and I’m the one who has the record of who has bought what and how much we have spent. We organise the paying of the bills and set up the internet contract and [housemate] is happy to let us do it as long as she knows what’s going on. We also have a joint account and [other housemate’s] quite happy for us to say ‘put a hundred and fifty pounds in the joint account’ and he’ll do it and leave it at that, he’s not too fussed about the ins and outs of where the money’s going and things” (Kay, Y2, RH).

“I’d say [we are] sort of like a family, I mean one of the girls sees me as a sort of older brother and I call here my sister and stuff, we have close bonds so it’s almost like a family, one authority figure in the house and
then everyone falls in behind that [...] so it’s very much like a family where you’ve got interconnecting relationships with a male sort of leader of the house (Tim, Y2, RH).

Whilst Kay admits to acting as a kind of matriarch within her shared household through the instigation of the joint bank account that a family member had suggested creating, Tim’s example demonstrates that other roles may be performed in the household, apart from that of the leader. Both of these examples extend Kenyon’s (1999) suggestion that connections between housemates can, in many ways create a ‘quasi-family unit’ by suggesting that housemates may adopt specific, gendered roles within their accommodation. These findings suggest that living within a shared house may mean that roles, such as pseudo-parent/child positions can be assumed and performed within the home. As Smith and Holt (2007) suggest, these shared experiences can contribute towards a tight, collective household. Particularly in accommodation which may be deemed inferior to that of the family home, where there is less concern over damage caused through house parties or other behaviours. This notion of expressing pseudo-parental characteristics suggests that the participants were drawing upon their childhood experiences of home-life, particularly how rules were negotiated between family members. However other examples within the data suggest that this may not necessarily be a straightforward, linear process. Parallels may be drawn here with Pimlott-Wilson’s (2011) study of the impact family habitus has upon the employment aspirations of children. Within the context of the family, Pimlott-Wilson (2011) suggests that the habitus of parents is often replicated by children, not necessarily in a deterministic way, but through common sense, suggesting that their aspirations may mimic the dispositions of their parents. Hence, in this sense, the habitus of children can therefore be construed as being fairly predictable. For these second and third year students, their frequent accommodation changes may begin to complicate and reshape the habitus learned from their parents as they start adding other layers of experiences they have learned from other households. As Pimlott-Wilson argues, social interactions external to the family (school, HE etc.) are capable of transforming the habitus, suggesting that a child’s aspirations can be influenced by the various forces with which they encounter. Within the context of the interview responses, this was evident in several of the students discussing how the changes they had made to their behaviour in the home were influenced by prior experiences of living with other students:
“I’m more of the housewife of the house which, I dunno [sic], I don’t like being a housewife but someone needs to take the role I think. I’m the one who buys the soap and the sponges and says things to people about the washing up and things. […] I naturally assumed it because it’s a similar role as I had previously so it was quite easy just to go into that role with people” (Lisa, Y3, RH).

Alternatively, Ben spoke of how the domestic behaviours he learned in halls became influential in giving him a potential role in his future household:

Ben: “I think we’ve already agreed upon who’s doing the cooking and who’s doing the cleaning already”.

Mark: “Who is doing that then”?

Ben: “I’m doing the cleaning [laughs], they don’t want me anywhere near food I think [laughs]” (Ben, Y1, HR).

As Ben’s comments imply, these notions of [re]negotiating roles in the household can become significant at the point at which the students consider choosing accommodation and housemates for the following year. Christie et al. (2002) and Kenyon and Heath (2001) suggest that students may make compromises over where they might live each year in order to ensure they live with their friends. This is particularly so as the transition from family home, to halls, to a shared rented house is often viewed as the more typical housing trajectory for University students (Hubbard, 2009; Smith & Holt, 2007). Importantly, this literature can neglect to discuss the agency of sharers in making informed decisions, often suggesting that students can be passive in their choices. This was addressed by the interview participants who suggested the importance of ensuring that potential housemates’ traits would be compatible with their own dispositions:

“You spend time in their houses and get to know them a bit better. I’m conscious that I’m looking around to see whether they keep their kitchen tidy or if they have a tidy room and you just judge people unconsciously on that, whether they’re going to fit into the household and things. [...] I would say definitely that I would judge somebody before offering them somewhere to live” (Tim, Y2, RH).

“Three of us lived in halls together and […] we stuck together, we’ve got the same experiences, we lived in the same halls. Two other friends were living with another couple of guys, they were looking for someone to live with. We spent a few nights out together, went out for dinner with each other to see how it stood with each other and that’s how it worked and we
“all got a house together and stayed together this year” (Liam, Y3, RH).

These remarks are examples of how some of the students were basing their decisions upon (among other things) their own reflective experiences of living with other students. Rather than relying upon the serendipity of encountering new housemates through living in halls or house-hunting events, Tim and Liam essentially ‘sounded out’ their potential housemates. This suggests a more delicate interplay between the compromises they are prepared to make within the household and the expectations they may have of other housemates which fit their habitus.

Along with the more stereotypical roles which some participants adopted in their accommodation, gendered differences were also alluded to occasionally which often highlighted certain hierarchies or displays of power within the home:

“Because we had three girls and four guys so obviously the guys had the majority ‘that’s clean for me’, ‘no, it’s not clean at all’, you have to be efficient. When we got those inspections they would just take their things, their dirty dishes, put them in their rooms and lock them up and once the inspector had gone they’d take them back out and put them back in the kitchen and that was horrible” (Farah, Y3, RH).

“We ended up with the upstairs being the women’s area and the downstairs being the guys because we had two bedrooms upstairs and two bedrooms downstairs. […] We didn’t have a TV room so we had TVs in our rooms so that was good, it wasn’t like a forced area that we had to meet because, just imaging that “the Man United game’s on”, “no, Emmerdale’s on” [laughs], it would be so awkward. […] It was like boom, you’ve got the girls and the boys, it wasn’t as friendly and relaxed as I’d hoped” (Ruth, Y3, WP).

Comparisons can be drawn here with notions of ‘quasi-family relations’, or ‘false kinship’ termed by Cox and Narula (2003) to describe the unequal relationships between live-in domestic workers and employers in the home. This was particularly apparent among the participants in the unique geographies this forms in home-spaces where households can be divided up (physically and socially) creating barriers between cohabitants. While Cox and Narula’s work focuses mainly upon the impact of interactions between employer and employee, their findings relate closely to how the student households established hierarchical (and occasionally gendered) divisions within their accommodation. Economic transactions between employer and employee
obviously do not exist within rented student accommodation, however similarities may be present in the mutual emotional transactions between those living within a household. The respondents here had established hierarchies within their accommodation which were subject to [re]negotiation between housemates but, as Paul and Jenny, both second years who had joined existing households of students who had lived together in year one, suggest, this can create uneven households where relationships between some housemates can be ‘quasi-familial’ while others are kept very distanced:

“\textit{I know that the three guys had lived together last year. [...] It sort of feels like I’m sort of just the add-on. They’re really close and I’m their mate but not really as close as that}” (Paul, Y2, RH).

“They were friends to start with [...] we’re all very different, I mean they’re very similar and I’m not very much like them but I just thought we’d all just get on throughout the year and it would be alright. We had planned to live together next year as well but then once this all started happening I just made other arrangements to get out” (Jenny, Y2, RH).

Central to both these participants’ housing experiences were discussions of conflict and marginalisation which resulted in both of them being ostracised, or ‘othered’ by their housemates. Some similarities can be drawn between these responses and the experiences of the first year students living in rented housing discussed in Chapter Six. However, where Chapter Six outlined how living in rented housing in year one was incongruent to the acquisition of the ‘right’ types of social capital required to get by in the more typical Freshers’ social spaces, Paul and Jenny were residing in accommodation deemed most appropriate to their second and third year student habitus. Therefore, those who join existing households may find that the habitus shared between long-term housemates is impenetrable, leading to a certain degree of segregation and ‘outsider’ feeling within the shared house. Dovey (2005) argues that: “Trust, solidarity, community and class are all forms of social capital while fear, alienation and isolation indicate its absence” (p. 287). For these respondents, rather than being unable to interpret social capital, they may be denied access to the social capital of the household.

7.1b – Establishing a ‘Sense of Place’ in Student Accommodation

As well as learning to negotiate potentially conflicting identities within shared spaces, other enquiries centred upon how the participants began to construct a temporary ‘sense
of place’ within their term-time accommodation. There is a paucity of academic evidence of the importance of the home in the forming of place and a ‘sense of place’, particularly with regard to how the home can be a space with which to make place (see Gorman-Murray, 2007; 2008; Bennett, 2006 for notable exceptions). This section presents an opportunity to address this by accounting for the creative ways in which students use their possessions to establish their sense of place. This highlights the importance of appropriating home-space for young people in transition. Holdsworth and Morgan (2005) argue that this process of appropriation begins within the family home and extends to term-time accommodation and is developed through the organisation of possessions and a (relative) freedom of access to the home. This means that young adults can begin to make decisions regarding how to organise home-space in their own way. Therefore, private spaces, such as bedrooms, become extensions of their personalities and take on meaning rather than simply being rooms for sleeping. It could be argued that the transitory nature of students make them incapable of establishing a meaningful sense of place or belonging to their term-time location, particularly as belonging can be viewed as something which requires time and effort to achieve, being earned rather than simply being given immediate access to (see Probyn, 1996). However, as Mee (2009) states:

“Belonging is [...] relational: it develops through interactions between individuals and groups as they negotiate what belongs and what does not belong” (p. 844).

Therefore, students who have left home to go to University may be living intensely. Regular movement between familial and University locations and repeated accommodation changes which bring them into contact with new parts of the city mean their sensing of place may be speeded up. For many of these students living in rented housing, they will undoubtedly have already acquired certain elements of belonging through developing networks in halls in first year. The interview responses suggest that this became more complex as the students attempted to transfer some of the identity markers they established en masse in halls into the smaller confines of their shared houses. Hay (1998) suggests that those who make regular or prolonged visits to a location can be viewed as exhibiting characteristics of a partial or a very embryonic personal sense of place (partial in that their sense of place is developing, but still weak and personal in that there is some form of commitment to making connections with
place). As Hay suggests, these characteristics differ to those with a long-term sense of place through the ways in which space becomes appropriated. While those with a partial or personal attachment to a location may appear to invest time and effort into maximising their sense of place in an area, they may not necessarily have any desire to make permanent roots there. Relating this to the experiences of the interview participants, Gustafson (2001) suggests that those who are mobile may be just as likely to wish to replicate the connections they had with previous locations (being neighbourly or part of the local community etc.) when they move into a new area. Some of the students spoke of how, developing a sense of place within their term-time location provided them with a secure anchor with which to depend upon as they travelled back and forth between home and University, providing a locus for preferred social activities or a repository for good memories:

“[When I go home] I see the family which is always good but after about a day or two I’m bored and want to get back here. […] I guess it [Portsmouth] is a pretty lively place, there’s always something going on. It’s an attractive place, especially around Rees Hall and Southsea Common. I like walking down by the beach, it’s good for a jog. It’s a nice environment I guess” (Ben, Y1, HR).

“Now this is my second home. I could live anywhere really but Albert Road is really closer to my heart. I’ve lived here for two years, I’ve [met] some good people, my neighbours are lovely. […] The longer you stay in a place, the more memories you create and the more memories you have in a place the more it will be associated with good memories, good people, good company. I think if I had lived in [hall] for three years I would have thought that that was the place to be. But when I moved out I found that this place was much closer to my own heart” (Farah, Y3, RH).

Butcher (2010) stresses that a sense of place can be particularly important for those in a state of flux as the stability gained from re-placing home assists in the attachment to new and unfamiliar locations. Therefore, as Walsh (2006) argues, it is vital to recognise the relationships between how people make sense of their everyday experiences and where these experiences take place.

Kenyon (1999) suggests that students living in shared housing often use their belongings to place a veneer of homeliness upon their term-time accommodation. These elements are usually portable (posters, photographs, toys, souvenirs etc.) which can be easily taken from one home to another, as opposed to furniture which would be difficult
to move between short-term properties. What is important is that these belongings often carry deep meanings and memories. As Gorman-Murray (2008) suggests:

“[…] the accumulation and arrangement of meaningful material possessions in domestic space can (re)juvinate different parts of self” (p. 298).

In contrast to the compact and solitary confines of halls, those in rented housing appear to have more freedom to extend and develop this veneer of homeliness and independence through the organisation of personal belongings, furniture and soft furnishings:

“In halls it was about as making it as homely as possible I think and in second and third year it was more about making it mine” (Emma, Y3, RH).

As Emma’s comment suggests, whilst the room in halls represented a space within which the spatial confines bore similarities with the bedroom in the family home, this could be more to do with how rented housing offers greater opportunity to acquire more belongings which may also spread from the bedroom into the communal rooms, fostering a stronger sense of place within this temporary dwelling.

For many of the interview participants, photographs in particular were highly significant tools in creating a sense of place and maintaining continuity within an unfamiliar setting:

“I brought photographs up from home in frames and put them around my room. And bedding was so important, having something colourful because the Uni [sic] rooms are so plain, just like having your own stuff in there from your room gives it your own sense of style. It makes it a lot more homely and putting up fairy lights and stuff” (Emma, Y3, RH).

“Pictures of my friends, posters. I have a little notice board of things which I remind myself on. I tried to cover the bare walls because I don’t like the clean, bare walls” (Claire, Y2, RH).

“I’ve got lots of photographs and postcards. My family and friends they usually send postcards to this address […] and when I was little there were these poems or stories which my mum bought for me or she gave me on my birthday or things like that, I have them as well just to remind me of home” (Farah, Y3, RH).
Photographs are dual-purpose in that they act as both a memory-prop (Walsh, 2006; Tinkler, 2008) or two-dimensional window between the viewer and the subject of the photograph (Rose, 2003) and act as a reminder of home in the way in which they are displayed (Walsh, 2006). Mnemonic objects therefore act as transportable forms of connection with family and friends whilst away for extended periods. This can however become a complicated process, particularly as many of the interviewees who lived in student accommodation felt they were restricted in how they could personalise their rooms:

“We weren’t allowed to put things up on the walls I think, so I didn’t put posters up or anything. I brought photographs up from home in frames and put them around my room” (Jenny, Y2, RH).

“My walls are covered in photos. Well actually, not all of them because my landlord told me to take some of them down, he said that blue tack leaves a stain and that he’d only just painted this room” (Rory, Y1, RH).

This highlights how the students became more creative with how they displayed their belongings, either utilising pin-boards or photo frames, or their own soft furnishings like bedding or cushions (see Figure 7.1). Slater (1995) suggests the importance of displaying objects such as photographs, using the term ‘pinboard’ as a metaphor for how the often haphazard arrangement of photographs thrusts images into the present rather than filing them away in albums which consign them to history. This act of exhibition gives an object its significance and highlights how meaningful objects are a key device in the construction of place and identity. In many cases these place-making activities are performed unconsciously and as a way of establishing a sense of identity with the home. This transference of memories of home into term-time accommodation concurs with Blunt and Varley’s (2004) suggestion that the home is a deeply personal and individual expression of the self. If, as Tinkler (2008) suggests: “belonging is performed through the use of photographs” (p. 261) then they also have a temporal and spatial role as: “young people use photographs to determine who they are or have been” meaning “the photograph is approached as a transparent record of the self” (p. 259). However, the participants’ experiences advance these claims by suggesting that while belongings assisted in supporting the participants as they worked through each stage of their transition through University, their belongings became more than just providing connections with home. Their cumulative memories made during University often
superseded their old identities, particularly if they were considered to be ‘childish’ or ‘unfashionable’. Therefore, it is important to recognise the significance of shorter term histories in place-making in the home, particularly for those in transition.

Gendered patterns emerged for those living in student accommodation in how belongings were accumulated and displayed, with more female than male students putting energy into displaying possessions in their rooms:

“[...] you walked into my males friend’s room and it was like there’s the computer and that was it, I was like ‘where are all your photos? Where are your cuddly toys? Where’s your stuff?’ There was nothing there, whereas with mine it was everywhere” (Ruth, Y3, WP).

Studies by Rose (2003; 2004) on family photography and Tinkler (2008) on the photographic practices of young children suggest that, whilst males may assume the role of photographer, females adopt the role of framing, organising and displaying photographs. Tinkler (2008) suggests that teenage girls, more than boys, use photographs as a way of maintaining friendships through displaying photographs of
friends in their bedrooms. David’s and Emma’s bedrooms (Figures 7.2 and 7.3) are good examples of the gendering of private space among the interviewees. The participants appear to follow closely these gendered norms, suggesting that the need to personalise space may be diminished for male students, particularly with regard to replicating aspects of the family home. Nevertheless, whilst homeliness may not be a key priority for these students, both David and Ben felt that their rooms were private spaces where they could afford time away from flatmates suggesting there is at least some kind of connection with this type of accommodation for male students.

Along with photographs, the interviewees spoke of how other, often ephemeral objects, such as concert tickets, flyers or letters were important in cementing their sense of place within their term-time accommodation, with many of the students suggesting these took prominence within their rooms:

“Some of the things I have are like the odd flyer and handouts you get [...] and gig tickets from when I’ve been out in Portsmouth. [...] I look at them quite regularly, especially now as I’m coming to the end of Uni [sic] so I’m reflecting back on the process. [...] It’s nice to have things that remind me of specific points during that time” (Lisa, Y3, RH).

“I kind of made it my own. I’ve got pictures around the house and my bits and bobs. I bought a cushion in first year which is on my bed and now has become like my seat. Yeah, it’s like me all over. I’ve got my scented candles, I like them, especially when I’m trying to work. I’ve got one for sleep and one for work. I’ve got my stereo which I play my own music on. Your room is yours, even if it’s empty it’s got your stuff in it so it’s yours” (Carrie, Y3, RH).

This adds to discussions of homemaking for those in transition by highlighting how the value of personal effects can extend into the objects bought for, and displayed within the home. The consumption and materiality of products beyond their point of purchase is an important component in the creation of a sense of place (Morgan & Pritchard, 2005; Peters, 2011). Objects consequently gain meaning through their use in everyday life (Gorman-Murray, 2007; 2008). Morgan and Pritchard (2005), for example, point to how souvenirs collected on foreign travels can act as powerful emotive markers, capable of eliciting potent memories of place. As both Lisa’s and Carrie’s examples demonstrate, these ephemeral objects act as reflexive representations of their ‘student
Figure 7.2: Gendered spaces - David’s ‘depersonalised’ room in halls (source: participant’s photograph).

Figure 7.3: Gendered spaces - an ordered sense of belonging in Emma’s bedroom (source: participant’s photograph).
identity’. For Lisa, objects associated with specific activities or times spent with friends hold special significance, while for Carrie the objects she has purchased during her time living in Portsmouth have taken on added emotional value as they become associated with particular tasks or activities. Hence, ephemeral objects can operate in the same way as photographs in that they trigger emotional responses. Importantly, whilst this type of semi-permanent personalising may be about creating a sense of belonging, this may also extend to maintaining particular ‘home-based’ practices and activities in the student home:

“*A couple of weeks in I went home and decided to bring my guitar home because I really missed it, I wasn’t going to bring it down because I couldn’t fit it in the car [...] but I don’t think I would have survived University without it*” (Erin, Y1, RH).

“I use it [bedroom] as a sort of mini music studio. [...] I’ve got my piano up as well which is quite helpful. [...] I brought my piano down this year so I can actually practice with music. Because I find it hard to find an equal amount of time for coursework, incorporating music into my time can be quite difficult. But I never feel like it’s a chore” (Paul, Y2, RH).

Erin only realised the importance of having music in her life whilst she was at University once she had left home, while Paul felt it was important to have his piano close to hand in order to spend time away from his degree subject (see Figure 7.4). Butcher’s (2010) work on the re-placing of home for transnational migrants provides a useful mechanism with which to tie these concepts of home together, particularly in the suggestion that cultural continuity may involve maintaining attachments to ‘bits’ of multiple homes. As Butcher suggests:

“Home is [...] more than a material object; it consists of imagination, routinised everyday practices, relationship networks, and representation imbued with personal and social meaning, cultural ideals and values” (pp. 24-25).

Home therefore becomes a confluence of the multiple components of these interview participants’ lives, creating what Gorman-Murray (2007) terms as a ‘holistic’ identity. However, these students’ multi-faceted identities may also complicate relationships with home-spaces. The evidence suggested that the participants’ identities were clearly place specific and cumulative, meaning the belongings they accrued are not simply random collections of objects but a carefully orchestrated selection of identity markers
which reference different aspects of their lives. This adds to discussions of residential mobility by questioning where and when such objects come into a person’s life. Items brought from the family home are likely to suggest a connection to a past identity, whilst objects collected whilst at University may be signifiers of an adapted, or altogether new ‘student’ identity and are likely to be incompatible with their identities at home. Nevertheless, such mimetic objects become intertwined, assisting in the re-framing of identities in the context of the home. This extends Gorman-Murray (2008) by suggesting that, while the home can assist in re-framing identities, these processes are intensified in student houses as bedrooms take on multiple uses. This is evident in the photograph of Paul’s bedroom in Figure 7.4 in which this single space acts as a place to sleep, study, play music, eat and socialise.

7.2 – Re-interpreting the ‘Student’ City

These notions of establishing a sense of place at University also extend beyond the home into how the participants re-interpreted the wider networks of the city as they moved between year groups. Importantly, such re-interpretations appeared to coincide...
with accommodation changes. This was evident during the walking interviews in which those second and third year participants living in rented accommodation appeared far surer of their journeys around the city than their younger counterparts in halls and were more likely to choose locations within Southsea, such as Albert Road, Palmerston Road and Southsea Common to visit and talk about. As Ruth’s comments demonstrate, the students’ sense of place can be strengthened by experimenting with social activities which broaden their friendships groups:

“When I left halls and went into the house I was taken out of this immediate environment and I was shoved down towards Albert Road and Elm Grove. You go out drinking and you’re like ‘oh, no-one’s dressed like a Smurf? Everyone’s dressed normally, there’s no Barbie dolls’. ‘This is pretty cool, there’s a live band in this pub, we can just go in without getting charged, just chillin [sic]’. It was like a whole new nice side instead of getting launched into it, ‘come here, free pint, free pint’, it was lovely. You had the Wedgewood Rooms, you got your bands in there, the local pubs are full of cool people and you get to know them. I worked in a couple of the pubs down there. [...] Just by leaving the halls triangle you were put into a world where you had much more of a mature way of drinking and socialising, it was much better” (Ruth, Y3, WP).

Ruth’s account illustrates how the move from halls into rented accommodation can prompt a re-interpretation of the wider networks of the city, particularly as it opens up new and alternative spaces they may not have been previously aware of in halls (see Figure 7.5). This suggests that the immersive Freshers experience, desired so badly by many of the first year students in Chapter Six, may be rejected once halls were left. Focusing on the role of residential location in influencing behavioural changes extends Chatterton’s (1999) notion of the process of ‘un-learning’ Freshers behaviours in subsequent years. While this was indicative of their growing sense of independence, these students were also exhibiting signs of learning ‘new’ behaviours in which the social identities created in first year went on to inform new social practices in subsequent years. As Holt (2008) suggests:

“Embodied social capital [...] emphasises how the process of becoming an embodied individual is inherently bound up with the socio-spatial contexts within which people’s lives are lived, and their social networks and relationships [meaning] an individual’s previous social encounters are embodied and influence their future social performances” (p. 238).
Figure 7.5: Re-interpreting the ‘student’ city – alternative social spaces on Albert Road. The Wedgewood Rooms (above) and independent shops (below) (source: author’s photographs).
Hence, where the participants spoke of year one providing a platform for them to learn to become students, subsequent years allowed them to relax into being students. Thus the haphazard attempts at acquiring social capital these students experienced in first year gave way to more strategic endeavours which were expressed through more varied social activities and a shift in how these second and third year students interpreted their student identities. New processes, such as more interdependent living arrangements, greater workloads and a change of social activities away from the more mainstream Freshers’ night-spots appear fundamental in ‘re-positioning’ the identities of these students, creating identities which can often be contrary to their former selves. Kay’s comment below demonstrates how students may begin to link these second and third year spaces with feelings of maturation and sophistication:

“There is a difference between the way I use the city from the first year to the second year. Part of that is because I don’t go out as much as I used to. My fiancé and I stay in and do things, whereas when I was on my own I’d have to go out and see someone even if that was out of the flat and into the bar at [Hall]” (Kay, Y2, RH).

Both Kay’s and Ruth’s earlier comments recognise that the distinctions between first and second year spaces may be important in informing social practices for students in transition. The autonomy afforded by studentified spaces may therefore constitute a new social field for these students which hold a different set of rules, resources and stakes to those in halls. This provides a link between the transformations of the ‘student habitus’ between first and second year and this change in field. As Savage et al. (2005) argue: “people are comfortable when there is a correspondence between habitus and field” (p. 9) suggesting that the habitus developed in first year is unlikely to accord with this new social field. This was discussed by Liam in relation to his evolving social identity:

“In the first year we socialised with people in our halls and in the second we socialised with the people we were living with. [My] identity definitely evolved there because we knew we were going to be socialising with the people we would be spending the next two years of our lives with” (Liam, Y3, RH).

This suggests that the participants were using this transition between year groups as a way of legitimising the honing and restructuring of their identities, suggesting a change in spatial contexts, from halls into rented accommodation, is a key driver in nurturing a student identity which is separate to the ones they formed in their first year.
These new spaces are also suggestive of a strengthening of a sense of place for this group of young adults. This was evident during the walking interviews where many of the participants spoke of how their attachment to certain places had developed or altered over time. Easthope (2004) suggests that: “[…] we feel at home in the places in which our habitus has developed” (p. 134), suggesting that the ongoing transformations to the participants’ identities were indicative of a strengthening of place attachment and a certain increase in confidence and safety:

“We’re much more confident in that sense. We’ll find our way home no matter what, that kind of thing. You’re more confident walking around the city so you’re more willing to go to newer places I suppose” (Tim, Y2, RH).

Importantly, the density of rented student properties within the Southsea area of the city may have contributed to this increased sense of collective well-being among the participants. Lisa’s account of living previously in a student house in Milton, a suburb of Portsmouth towards the east of the island less popular with second and third year students, highlights how a desire to live near other students was important:

“[…] there were families either side so we didn’t really have a proper student lifestyle. I mean coming back, being loud early in the morning, wasn’t really appreciated. We got the student bus which was fine. Weekends when the student bus wasn’t running was a bit isolating” (Lisa, Y3, RH).

Such desire for propinquity to other students may be fuelled in part by studentification within the city, for example, Portsmouth City Council (PCC) (2012) suggest that on one 100m stretch of Telephone Road, 63 per cent of properties are considered to be HMO and 55 per cent on a similar stretch of Margate Road. The results of the survey echo these residential patterns, with a significant proportion of student properties being situated in the same Central Southsea area of the city (see Figure 7.6). Moreover, this nearness to other students plays another role in developing a sense of place among the participants, which could be viewed as a hangover from the intensity of halls. As Pretty et al. (2003) suggest: “[…] place identity develops from acts of locating oneself within environmental contexts throughout daily routines as well as during exceptional circumstances” (p. 275). This implies that a sense of place can manifest through [extra]ordinary transformations of habitus. Hence, whilst accommodation changes
Figure 7.6: Concentration of student rental properties in Central Southsea (Source: author’s survey data).
constitute major events in the formation of a student’s identity, the subsequent, habitual everyday routines which are a product of these moves also hold considerable value in maintaining this sense of place within a community, as suggest here by Cresswell (2004):

“Most places are more often the product of everyday practices. Places are never finished but produced through the reiteration of practices – the repetition of seemingly mundane activities on a daily basis” (p. 82).

For the second and third year participants, the routines they establish within their residential student location, be it through shopping, leisure or social activities, visiting friends or simply walking to the campus, mean that these places become imbued with individualised meaning and symbolism.

In drawing on theory from environmental psychology, Twigger-Ross and Uzzell (1996) suggest that place attachment can be linked to, amongst other things, distinctiveness where linkages with an environment develop a stronger sense of place. This distinctiveness comes from the specific type of relationship an individual has with their environment (for example, being ‘country-folk’ or ‘city-dwellers’). This notion of distinctiveness is consistent with the opinions of many of the participants who believed that they lived specifically in a ‘student’ city. These students are essentially defining themselves as having an attachment to the student spaces in Portsmouth by contrasting their behaviours against ‘non-students’. Therefore, as Twigger-Ross and Uzzell (1996) suggest, place identification can work in similar ways to social categorisations such as class, gender and age. Importantly, this notion of place identification appeared to be more keenly felt by the interview participants in their second or third year of study:

“I didn’t even know half of Southsea existed until we moved into the house and looked around the area. I was in a year one bubble, if you could call it that, when you go from your halls to your Uni [sic] and back to your halls, to the pub and then back to your halls again. [Living in Southsea] has widened who I spend my time with, the parties that I go to and the people that I meet more in Southsea, who are second and third years” (Tim, Y2, RH).

“I’ve found so many other places this year that I didn’t even know existed so having to walk from my house I’ve been able to find different routes and things which has been more interesting this year. […] I definitely didn’t go to any of them last year, and now they’re like some of my
As these comments suggest, these participants are defining their current interpretation of the city as being much broader and complex than that of the spaces they were attached to in first year. Their narrow ‘geography’ of Portsmouth in year one, meant they existed in a “year one bubble” (Tim, Y2, RH) suggesting their connections to the city were very localised and specifically based around typical first year spaces (halls, campus buildings and Freshers’ nightspots). This was reflected in both Tim’s and Jenny’s interviews in which they took short cuts through residential areas between locations rather than following the main thoroughfares in the city. Hence, these responses clearly identify the influence moving from halls into rented accommodation may have upon cultivating social identities, both in expanding knowledge of the city, beyond that of the University spaces, and developing friendship groups. As the switch from halls to rented accommodation has a profound influence over identification with place, so does the adoption of social activities constitute a shift in how the city is interpreted by students in subsequent years. The participants’ comments suggest that, whilst there are many formal ‘University managed’ spaces in Portsmouth (societies, bars, pubs and clubs) which influence the ways in which they utilise the city, they considered their increased independence to be critical in opening up or closing off networks within Portsmouth as they progress through their degree. Therefore, in extending this notion of place attachment through distinctiveness, Tim’s and Jenny’s accounts suggest that, as well as defining themselves in contrast to non-students, second and third year students can also be capable of drawing distinctions between other students. This suggests more nuanced forms of identity markers may exist within the student community, which extend beyond the broader terms ‘student’ and ‘non-student’ by recognising difference within the student cohort itself.

7.3 – ‘Re-sensing Place’ in the ‘Student City’ for Home-based Students

While accommodation change may not have factored in the transformation of habitus for home-based students, evidence among these participants suggests this may have occurred as they were re-imagining their non-student spaces as students. For some, their prior knowledge of Portsmouth meant that they began to ‘sense’ the city in different ways, meaning their new ‘student’ identities were potentially challenging their status as pre-existing residents. For those living with parents (who were mainly younger) their
attachment to the city was often linked to childhood (see also: Matthews, 1992; Matthews & Limb, 1999). This means the spaces within which they grew up were now being used differently and with different people, many of whom having little idea of the significance these places might hold. This was alluded to by Carl and Jane during their walking interviews:

“[Southsea Common] is somewhere I used to come to when I was younger, my parents would bring us down here as children and now when I come down here more recently as an adult, being a student here at University, I sort of look at things differently. I look at places and buildings that I remember as a child and they look different. I suppose when you’re a child you don’t look critically at stuff, you tend to just look at buildings and at places and maybe now I see them in a bigger scheme of things, understand them in time, how things have changed in Portsmouth. I’ve found myself having memories from when I was a child but being able to understand them on a different level now that I’m older” (Carl, Y1, WP).

“When I used to go out before I was married – that sounds like I don’t go out at all now – you knew the pubs that you went to and you knew the night clubs. When I used to go night clubbing, there used to be one on the Guildhall Square and then the rest of them were down Southsea. So that’s why I don’t always connect students coming here [Gunwharf Quays] for their night clubs” (Jane, Y3, OH).

Whilst Carl has become more aware of his surroundings and has begun to re-interpret the spaces he used as a child, this also became enmeshed with a sense of maturation, where using such spaces differently reinforces his independence from his parents. Alternatively, Jane’s experiences of the shifting uses of places suggest an understanding of an affinity for a city now gone. Her experiences of socialising in Portsmouth are embedded in her personal history, as many of the social spaces which she formerly used have either gone or moved to other parts of the city. As Carter et al. (2007) suggest: “It is not possible to achieve a fixed or essentialised sense of place because ‘meanings’ are not static in time or space” (p. 757). What this layering of knowledge suggests is that these participants may be experiencing disruptions to their sense of place, where familiar spaces take on new meanings or uses which contrast with their previous perceptions of place. As Hay (1998) suggests, those who have grown up in an area are likely to exude a more intense ancestral sense of place than those with more ephemeral attachments. This was demonstrated in how Carl and Jane used their reflections in order
to justify using the spaces they were using now as students. However, while those participants with a longer history of Portsmouth may have a stronger sense of place within the city than their peers in student accommodation, their transitions through University do not become any less complex for it and can, as demonstrated here, be disrupted by it.

Conversely, some of the participants suggested difficulties in relating their experiences of the city to their student peer group. While Hay (1998) talks of those who are raised in an area having a greater sense of being ‘insiders’, Holdsworth (2009a) suggests, home-based students may have a crisis of identity when attempting to negotiate this insider knowledge. This was noticeable during Maya’s and Helen’s interviews when they spoke of some of the often flippant but derisory comments made about Portsmouth by their non-local student friends:

“You do feel a bit vulnerable because this is somewhere that you feel is quite personal, it’s like “this is a really huge part of my life, I hope you like it, even though you’re not saying that you like it” (Helen, Y2, WP).

“I still feel protective over it [Portsmouth], I mean if someone slags it off I think ‘hang on, this is where I live’” (Maya, Y3, WP).

As these comments suggest, concerns can arise over the places they have a deep connection with being misinterpreted or challenged by their new student friends. Early on in her interview Helen became quite defensive over the city and how it was used (or not used) by other students. She spoke of a friend who had taken her parents to Old Portsmouth but had missed out all of the features, leading Helen to mention “did she actually go to Old Portsmouth?” Helen suggested feeling like her non-local student friends were disrespecting her space. This became apparent when she spoke of introducing friends to the City Museum. She was concerned that they might not have experienced this place in quite the way she had. Therefore, as Helen’s examples imply, local students’ status as ‘local’ may subsequently be undervalued as it does not neatly fit with the expectations of their non-local friends. They may feel unable to extract any useful capital from the places they are connected to, meaning their hybridised identities may not sit easily with the dichotomous position of being a ‘student’ or a ‘non-student’.

In contrast, while some of the home-based participants felt vulnerable by expressing their experiences, others, particularly those living with parents, spoke of utilising their
local knowledge as a form of capital with which to gain the social capital necessary to get on at University:

“A lot of people spoke to me about their ideas when we had to submit our drafts for dissertations, someone was doing something on Gunwharf and they spoke to me quite a lot about that. [We had] two group projects which were walking tours of Portsmouth and my groups were quite happy that I ended up in their group because I wasn’t looking at buildings for the first time. I had more information there so I think they benefitted quite well from that” (Nina, Y2, WP).

“They’re always asking about places to go for dinner and stuff, where’s best, if they need directions to places I’ll help them out with that sort of thing, they’ll rely on me for directions and stuff” (Maya, Y3, WP).

“Tiger’s student night is on a Monday but on a Thursday they’d all go to Liquid and I despise that. In second year I recommended we go to Tiger on a Thursday night because that’s when I go and it’s my favourite night and they’ve started doing that now and they’re more welcoming to it. At first they were like ‘why would we do that?’ It just mixes it up a little, although it’s the same place there’s a lot of different people for the University people because obviously there are a lot of the home people that go on a Thursday” (Dawn, Y3, WP).

This concurs with Sutherland and Burton (2011) who suggest that the exchange of capital can secure stronger social positions. As the responses suggest, utilising local knowledge as a device to access social capital may provide status for home-based students among their peer groups, particularly as elicitation of such knowledge often resulted in the participants being introduced into social networks with more typical students. This contrasts with Holdsworth’s (2009a) claim that “local knowledge is not necessarily valid in the student community” (p. 235). As Holdsworth states, non-local students are likely to be focused upon specific student-centric infrastructure and less interested in non-student based cultural activities. However, the participants appeared to overcome this by being strategic about how they expressed their local knowledge, ensuring they tailored their advice to suit the interests of their non-local peers. This corresponds with the earlier claims of the fragility of utilising local knowledge as capital, meaning the extent to which it was used was considered carefully by the participants. Alternatively, while some suggested that their past experiences and prior knowledge enabled them to acquire legitimate social capital, there was also some
recognition that this knowledge could create barriers to their student social spheres, preventing them from engaging with this new version of the ‘student city’ which was presented to them:

“I think sometimes [my local knowledge] works as a bit of a barrier because it’s very different, like my friends would sometimes say about when they’d leave somewhere really late at night and go home to Fratton at two or three AM and I’d be like ‘oh my god, what are you doing?’ and they think that because it’s where they’ve lived they see it being very safe, and it probably is safe, but you get these notions when you’ve lived somewhere of where’s safe and where isn’t. They haven’t said it’s quite annoying but I think when they mention somewhere nice I’ll be like ‘yeah, I’ve been there, I’ve done that’ and I have to remember that this is a new city to them and to let them talk about it” (Helen, Y2, WP).

“I’ve been to pubs in Fratton and Somerstown and some in North End but they’re not student places. [...] I like to get a mixture of Portsmouth. Most people want to go to Commercial Road or Gunwharf but I want to go to other places. [...] I’ve been for a few pints in Gunwharf but any of the other places I go are probably too far to walk for them. It’s a bit more difficult” (Greg, Y2, WP).

Returning to Holdsworth (2009a), this is an example of how some home-based students, particularly those living with parents in close proximity to the city, go about reconciling their dual ‘student/local’ identities. Chapter Six detailed the complex ways in which home-based students negotiate ‘fitting in’ among a more traditional peer group, yet in the context of expressing local knowledge, Helen’s comment suggests that she can be as guilty of making assumptions based upon her knowledge of an area (i.e. whether they may be rough areas or unfashionable places etc.) without considering the interpretations of her more traditional student peer group. Greg, on the other hand, demonstrates how his local identity would appear to position him both as ‘insider’ and ‘outsider’ (Holdsworth, 2009a), particularly as the locations he prefers to socialise are outside of the scope of his more traditional peers.

In addition to these notions of re-interpreting places, some of the home-based participants spoke of feeling confused by their friends’ readings of the city, suggesting that some now felt ‘out of place’ within Portsmouth. These feelings of ‘dis-placement’ from their home city seemed to emerge some time after the initial commencement of
HE. As Maya’s comments reveal below, for some, their ancestral sense of the city meant it became almost invisible to them:

“We went up to Copnor the other day for some dinner and they were like ‘oh, wow, we haven’t seen this place’ and they were quite shocked looking around and stuff whereas I couldn’t see what the fascination was with the place, it just looked like any other road in Portsmouth whereas to them they were like ‘this is a nice part, I’ve never been to this part’, they really do seem to notice it whereas I’m like ‘oh, this is just like the end of the beach’, I find it quite strange” (Maya, Y3, WP).

Maya’s apparent cynicism toward her home environment appears to contrast with much of the literature which link place-attachment with an increased desirability towards a location (Reed, 2002; Twigger-Ross & Uzzell, 1996; Hernandez et al., 2007). What Maya may be experiencing here is the reverse of how her more traditional student friends were viewing the city. This suggests that memories or sense of place may be more easily re-written for the ephemeral undergraduate, particularly as they are less likely to have layered histories with their term-time location. Consequently, her interpretation of the city as being commonplace may be a product of her extensive understanding of it through family knowledge which has led to her defining spaces in a particular way. The meaning and symbolism attached place have normalised them, emphasising how Maya interprets her ‘sense of place’ within the city differently to her friends. There were contrasts in the familiarity of Maya’s experiences and the novelty of her friends’ unfamiliarity with Copnor and Maya appears unable to recognise this.

Blokland’s (2009) research on how gentrification can impact upon long term residents’ capacity for place-making can help shed some light on this. Blokland suggests that place-making is achieved in two ways. First, through the creation of mimetic symbolic representations which seek to include or exclude participants, and second, through the uneven distribution of symbolic use and actual use. This means that those who use spaces most intensely may not necessarily have established much place attachment, and vice versa. In relating this to the participants’ responses, the latter part of Blokland’s concept would appear to fit the home-based interviewees’ experiences. Their re-interpretation of place does not mean that they will automatically feel included in student life, principally as these spaces may be recast in opposition to their original sense of place. Hence interpreting the city can be complex for home-based students, as
highlighted by Dawn, a third year living outside of Portsmouth with her parents, as we passed through Southsea Common:

“I would never have come to Southsea with my parents, we would always have gone to Hayling or the Witterings. [...] I obviously know the housing aspect of Southsea and Fratton more now. Where my friends live I had no idea it was so studenty [sic], no idea whatsoever, obviously I can negotiate my way around the main Fawcett Road area. I think I’ve gone to Commercial Road less since coming to Uni [sic]. I think because I’m here for Uni [sic] and I also work in Gunwharf I just don’t want to spend any more time, I’d rather go to [West Sussex town] shopping, somewhere else” (Dawn, Y3, WP).

Dawn’s response suggests the delicacy of her layering of past and present experiences in order to construct an overarching ‘sense of place’ within the city (Hall et al., 1999). This is particularly evident in how she discusses the ordering of places, suggesting certain locations may not necessarily hold precedence forever and can be superseded by other places which are more relevant to informing her current sense of self.

7.4 – Discussion

This chapter has examined the ways in which the move from first to second year prompted a re-interpretation of the participants’ term-time location. In moving beyond discussions of the extraordinary, this research has enabled greater insight into the everyday behaviours and dispositions of this student cohort and how these practices go about informing their ‘sense of place’ within their accommodation and the wider networks in the city. It has found that:

- Uneven power relations exist within student accommodation with ‘quasi-familial’ relations creating hierarchies in households.
- Students’ belongings, particularly ephemeral items, are important in establishing a sense of place within term-time accommodation and contribute to the framing of ‘holistic’ identities.
- For those moving from first to second year, their re-interpretation and broadened geographical knowledge of their term-time location are correlated with the move from halls to rented housing and can be linked to increased feelings of maturation.
Home-based students may experience a complex ‘re-sensing’ of place while at University. Some easily capitalise on their prior knowledge while others struggle to make sense of it all.

This adds to previous discussions of place by suggesting that a strengthened sense of place usefully assists in the acquisition and utilisation of legitimate social capital. As Chapter Six revealed, this was often achieved haphazardly in year one as the participants were unaware at this point how they fitted in within the wider networks of the city. As they moved into subsequent years and made successive accommodation changes this became more strategic through the repetition of everyday routines. This highlights the importance of recognising mobility in discussions of sense of place. While undergraduates may not be able to stake a claim for having a deep connection with their University location, their temporary ‘term-time’ sense of place may just be enough to settle them in, provide a sense of security, and allow them to begin to establish more meaningful networks.

Focusing upon the confines of the rented student house highlighted the ways in which the interview participants might [re]negotiate place. While the participants’ habitus may adapt with each accommodation change, these adaptations may be influenced by the dynamics of the household which can both include and exclude members from the social capital available to them. The ‘quasi-familial relations’ which exist within student accommodation highlight how inclusions and exclusions can be hierarchical and can create social and spatial divisions within households. This extends to the mechanisms these students employed in order to make place within their term-time accommodation, specifically in the ways in which they personalised their bedrooms and referenced their home, or ‘pre-student’ lives. This was important among the participants as it allowed them to take ownership of their temporary lodgings, particularly as these spaces were punctuated by extended periods of living back in the family home. However, while accommodation functioned as a platform with which to display multiple identities, there is more here than simply providing connections with home. Students’ experiences are cumulative, in that they incorporate memories made while at University alongside their more long-term memories of home. This suggests the importance of recognising shorter term histories in place-making in the home, particularly for those in transition.
Finally, in switching the focus onto the experiences of the home-based participants, this chapter has highlighted the complex ways in which those who already have (an often detailed) prior knowledge of the city may ‘re-negotiate’ or ‘re-sense’ place when they become students. For some, this conflicted greatly with their identities as places which they felt connected to were used differently by their new student friends, while others used their knowledge of the city as a way of acquiring the social capital needed to be accepted in the student community. Either way, it was clear that these students’ sense of place had become complicated by their being students and in some circumstances meant that they had to re-order the places which had meaning to them according to their new student identities. This type of knowledge is valuable to both Universities and local communities as very little is known about how students operate away from the confines of the campus. This may provide an opportunity for future discussions as to how home-based students’ experiences might influence local economies both during and outside of term-time. In Chapter Eight, these notions of ‘re-sensing place’ will be developed further to explore how the participants made sense of their imminent departure from University and what kind of impact this might have upon their identities and sense of place within the city.
Chapter Eight – [Re]negotiating the Transformed Habitus – ‘Pseudo Non-student’ Spaces and Processes of Dispossession

Through an examination of overtly student-centric social spaces (such as the Students’ Union and other bars and clubs aimed primarily at Freshers) Chapters Six and Seven have discussed how nightlife is an important catalyst for forming bonds and attachments to other students in the early stages of the degree. This chapter extends this by examining how students’ tastes for social activities may start to evolve beyond these spaces over the duration of the degree and how this may further transform the ‘student habitus’. What this offers is an understanding of how the participants began to explore the non-student elements of the city during the latter part of their time at University and will discuss how these alternative spaces might be important to these students in informing their future identities as graduates. This will be achieved by considering how undergraduates might differentiate between student and non-student spaces, how the students negotiate risk as they attempt to access spaces which may be incongruent to their social capital and how these activities can begin to prepare them to become graduates.

In framing this element of the research, a report by ‘Centre for Cities’ into the relationships between Universities and local economies suggests that students account for approximately ten per cent of a University location’s economic activity (Swinney, 2010). Whilst much of this stems from productivity, skills and innovation, the city as a space for consumption, specifically through night-time socialising by students, also plays a significant role in stimulating economic growth. For example, the Student Income and Expenditure Survey (Department for Innovation, Universities and Skills (DfIUS), 2009) estimated that ‘Entertainment’ made up eighteen per cent of a full time undergraduate’s average annual spend in 2007/08. This comprised £483 (57 per cent) on alcohol consumed outside of the house, £158 (18 per cent) on sports, hobbies, clubs and societies, £101 (12 per cent) on entrance fees to nightclubs and £107 (13 per cent) on alcohol consumed at home. Whilst these findings may be dated, they still highlight that the significant amounts of money students outlay on entertainment suggests that social activities play an important role for students in forming place attachment through interactions with their term-time University location.
The remainder of this chapter will be divided into two sections. Section 8.1 extends the notions of students “unlearning the rules of the student game” (Chatterton, 1999, p. 122) in subsequent years (as discussed in Chapter Seven) by examining why preferences for social activities might change for second and third year students and what impact this might have upon the ways in which they access and utilise their social capital. Section 8.2 extends this by exploring the ways in which the participants began to dispossess their friendship groups and belongings during the latter stages of their degrees. This can be an indicator of students learning how to ‘become’ non-students, and in some ways can be thought of preparing the students for the inevitability of leaving University, particularly in negotiating the complexities of re-placing their student identities into a post-student environment. There exists a distinct gap in the literature on the process between making friends whilst at University (Brooks, 2007) and re-negotiating these relationships upon completion of the degree (Gabriel, 2006; Easthope & Gabriel, 2008) and this section will focus specifically upon the point between these processes in order to make sense of why these transitions might be complex for the third year participants.

8.1 – ‘Pseudo Non-student’ Spaces

In investigating this potential change in social activities among the second and third year participants it is important to revisit Chatterton’s (1999) notions of students “unlearn[ing] the rules of the student game” (p. 122) once they left first year. This was discussed during almost all of the interviews in which the participants suggested that during years two and three, they began to seek out alternative, non-student spaces within which to hone and personalise their identities beyond that of the more traditional student-centric spaces:

“We don’t go [to Liquid] anymore because that’s more of a first year club. We went there a couple of times in the second year but [...] you just want to give that one a rest and leave it to first year memories”

(Liam, Y3, RH).

This action of establishing a ‘sense of place’ within the city can be extended by suggesting that these alternative social environments are representative of what may be termed ‘pseudo non-student’ spaces, defined as spaces in which students can socialise inconspicuously among non-students (see Figure 8.2 for examples):
Figure 8.1: ‘Pseudo non-student’ spaces – Little Johnny Russell’s (above) and The Registry (below) (source: author’s photographs).
“My fiancé’s friend plays in a band so we’ll go to places when they’re playing, lots of open mike nights and we find new places doing that and they’re often less typically studenty [sic] pubs” (Kay, Y2, RH).

“Tomorrow I’m going to The Barn [underground music venue], I’ve never heard of where that is but we’ll find out when we get there, which is a bit better because we don’t know what the night is going to be like” (Tim, Y2, RH).

Hollands (1995) suggests that second and third year students: “start to explore city life more in terms of their musical tastes, peer group interests and youth cultural identity” (p. 31) and in doing so, seek spaces which cater for their needs, often away from the more traditional student nights, as evidenced here:

“[Little Johnny Russell’s on Albert Road] is somewhere that I like for different reasons. It’s nice to come here during the day for a drink and their Sunday roasts are quite good. But also on the nights out, they have like acoustic nights with local bands and they’ll have like general DJ nights and pub nights. […] The people who go there are usually quite indie or alternative people, there are a lot of locals [but] I think there is still that kind of student thing of being alternative there” (Lisa, Y3, RH).

“[…] over there [Students’ Union] you’ve got the ‘University of Portsmouth’ in big black letters and you’ve got the ‘Union’ written there and everyone naturally associates the Union with students. I’d say the Registry [pub opposite] is a little less obvious, fewer people know about it and what goes on there. […] I mean the Union have got people who work for them who are out on the streets giving out leaflets for the Union whereas with the Registry that doesn’t happen. It’s just there and it’s mainly by word of mouth really” (Paul, Y2, RH).

These accounts demonstrate how ‘pseudo non-student’ spaces may be important in transgressing the traditional student/non-student binary which defines previous accounts of ‘students’ versus ‘locals’ debates (see Chatterton, 1999, Chatterton & Hollands 2003, Holt & Griffin 2005, Wattis 2013). ‘Pseudo non-student’ spaces exist as locations where students can experiment with non-student activities whilst remaining within the safety net of the student cohort. Interestingly, the findings from this thesis suggest a discrepancy in where these social spaces may be located. Figure 8.3 reveals overlaps between these locations in Portsmouth, suggesting ‘pseudo non-student’ spaces may exist adjacent to more typically student-centric social spaces. This contrasts with Chatterton’s (1999) research location in Bristol in which the student and non-student
Figure 8.2: 'Pseudo non-student' spaces in relation to mainstream student spaces in Portsmouth (source: author's survey data).
zones appeared to be separate. This implies that ‘pseudo non-student’ spaces need not be located far away from the traditional student social spaces, as what characterises them as ‘pseudo non-student’ is that they provide a social stimulus which suits the tastes of the student, rather than necessitating a need to ‘fit in’ with the more mainstream activities.

Importantly, those participants who sought out such locations exhibited little interest in making any connections with the non-students who frequented these spaces:

Mark: “Do you ever mix with non-students in these areas?”
Lisa: “No, not really. I don’t really know any non-student people in Portsmouth. […] I have met some locals but no, they haven’t become friends” (Lisa, Y3, RH).

“My housemate, her boyfriend isn’t a student. He lives in Portsmouth and he’s got his group of friends so I go along with her for moral support and whatever. So I do have a small, like group of acquaintances who are non-students but I wouldn’t really class them as friends. We do go out occasionally or go to house parties but I wouldn’t opt to go out with them, if I wasn’t invited by my housemate” (Claire, Y2, RH).

As these comments suggest, for many of the participants, inclusion within these spaces is not necessarily the same as integrating with the local community. Instead, this is more about utilising specific elements of these spaces with which to establish a more nuanced sense of place. Whilst this may be consistent with Chatterton’s (1999) and Hollands’ (1995) suggestions that students ‘un-learn’ previously learned rules as they move between year groups, the following interview responses suggest that these students may in fact be learning the rules to a different game altogether, one which allows them to renegotiate their former first year identities by contrasting them against the ones they are beginning to form as second and third year students. The following passages illustrate this switch from the more homogenous first year social spaces over to these ‘pseudo non-student’ spaces and highlight quite how keen some can be to reject their past identities. This also demonstrates the flexible and ephemeral nature of the student identity:

“I think it’s easy to be in a student bubble. It definitely was last year, only talking to students, only doing student things and it’s quite nice to know the city beyond that, a typical student life is actually quite limited
with the things you do” (Kay, Y2, RH).

“I think it is nice being in a local place rather than just being in a place which is exclusively for students. I like having a mix of people, I might start chatting to someone. It’s nice to chat to someone who isn’t a student sometimes” (Lisa, Y3, RH).

What these comments hint at is that as many of the students progress through their degree pathway they gradually develop a stronger sense of who they want to be as individuals rather than simply following the herd as when they were Freshers. This also indicates how these students may be maturing as adults. It would be naive to assume that these types of behaviour are unique to students, young people adapt and develop their social tastes whether they are students or not. What is of importance here is that, for many of these young adults, they are living away from home, often for the first time and are developing their tastes away from their established peer group and in locations, often incongruent to their non-student homes. Therefore, as the above comments suggest, the move from halls into rented accommodation may signal a period of reflecting back upon their first year identities which coincides with referencing the behaviours of those living and socialising away from Freshers’ bars and clubs in order to gradually hone their identities as they mature.

While fewer students may be utilising these ‘pseudo non-student’ spaces than those using first year venues, those that do so in smaller, tighter friendship groups than they were in first year:

“I’m much more confident to go out in smaller groups than I was, I always looked to the larger groups to see what I was doing, but now I’ll arrange things” (Tim, Y2, RH).

This contrasts with the first year experiences discussed in Chapter Six which suggested that first year students are more likely to socialise in larger groups in order to maximise the potential for accessing compatible social capital. For the participants in their second and third years, access to social capital in these ‘pseudo non-student’ spaces, while restricted, is certainly not off-limits. However, members of these more niche groupings must have a clear understanding of the dynamics of the group in order for them to be able to make use of this capital successfully. In order to develop this notion of honing individualised identities further, Shucksmith (2000) and Raffo and Reeves (2000) go on to discuss the role of individualised social capital and how likely it might be that
individual agency may be present in the acquisition and subsequent distribution of capital. While neither of these authors discusses social capital in relation to University students, Shucksmith’s (2000) work examines social capital in a rural context, while Raffo and Reeves (2000) discuss youth in relation to social exclusion and disadvantage, their applications of this theory are useful to the wider nexus of discussions of social capital. Applying notions of individualised social capital to ‘pseudo non-student’ spaces extends earlier discussions of the influence of residential status upon how social capital may be drawn from the main student cohort. As Sutherland and Burton (2011) suggest, social capital can form irregularly across social groupings and can be developed at different rates by individual members of a group. Shucksmith (2000) talks specifically about the ways in which individuals may struggle to negotiate capitals in particular fields of activity, suggesting that these capitals present “both the objects and means of their struggle” (p. 214). How groups are socially constructed will inevitably suggest losses and gains of the different capitals for these individuals. This was evident in the participants’ accounts of becoming tired of socialising in the same student-centric spaces:

“I began to find out about these different places. I didn’t know about them in the first place and I didn’t really go looking for them. […] Part way through the first year the repetition got a bit, probably more so for my boyfriend than me, he’s into more the drum and bass stuff than the more mainstream stuff so he was like ‘this is rubbish, I hate that and we hear it every night when we go out’, so I guess we started getting a bit less enthusiastic about the whole Tiger, Liquid, Highlight and limited how much we went there […] and we used these other smaller areas which were cheaper because you didn’t have to pay entrance fees or queue as much” (Tori, Y3, OH).

“My first year, when I look back on it, I can’t remember half of it. […] I had Uni [sic] three days a week, Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday so I had a four day weekend. […] But then it just kind of became boring after a while. It was the same routine. Wednesday it was Tiger, Thursday was Liquid Envy and Friday was Club Eight, every week. And I would miss a couple of weeks and they’d be like ‘yeah, we’re going to Tiger’ and I was like ‘but you went there last week? What’s changed in the last seven days? You’re going to hear the same music. You’re going to get drunk the same way and you’ll spend exactly the same money’ and they were like ‘yeah, but that’s the whole point’ and I was like ‘noooo [sic], I’m not interested, it’s a bit boring’” (Carrie, Y3, RH).
As they became bored of socialising in these student-centric spaces, Carrie and Tori began to draw less and less on the social capital associated with first year activities. Tori in particular spoke of how she and her boyfriend actively sought out alternative spaces which were more suitable to their evolving social tastes. Raffo and Reeves (2000) do however caution that these choices cannot be limitless and can be “constrained by [individuals’] practical knowledge and understanding of what is possible” (p. 149) which implies that the “actions and choices made by […] young people are not completely open and free” (p. 149). Therefore, they propose two ways in which taking an individualised approach can be useful in discussing the role of social capital. First, an individual’s socioeconomic environment can be influential in the type of social capital available to them and second, individual behaviours can be generated which can be incongruent to those of the more dominant social group. This recognises how some of the participants were capable of using their agency to manipulate their transitional pathway, particularly if they were able to draw upon the social capital of their student household in order to move into more alternative social networks. Typically, the participants discussed these individualised behaviours in relation to their social activities:

“There are some students who never come to Albert Road but there are quite a few things there for students, I mean there are the pubs, there are the second hand book shops, there’s Wedgewood Rooms where lots of gigs happen. It sounds stupid but there’s more like an underground student atmosphere rather than the more mainstream clubbing” (Lisa, Y3, RH).

“I found that the clubs didn’t expand my experience of Portsmouth. What did that was the summer months and someone saying ‘oh, let’s go and have a barbeque [on] the common?’ and I was like ‘wow that’s brilliant, we can have barbeques, oh, look there’s the beach and there’s the Sea Life centre’ so you just sort of worked yourself along, and with every attraction you saw there was another like ‘there’s a tank, there’s a museum’. [...] All of it has been self motivated, finding out about things or friends telling me ‘did you know we’ve got a butterfly house?’ ‘oh my god’, I go there quite a lot, it’s brilliant, I love it” (Ruth, Y3, WP).

As these examples demonstrate, the move from more traditional student-centric activities to ‘pseudo non-student’ spaces (in this sense the neighbourhood adjacent to Lisa’s accommodation and the tourist facilities on the seafront for Ruth) were the
product of these students’ dynamic agency and self motivation to break out from the homogenised student social spaces, rather than any kind of evolution of the dispositions of the student cohort as a group. It is also important to recognise that both of these students admitted to belonging to social groupings which were responsive to these types of behavioural changes suggesting that, while their involvement within the traditional student cohort was slightly different to many of the more typical participants, they were still relating their behaviours to that of their groups of friends. Therefore, these students may be drawing social capital from a seemingly niche but undoubtedly omnipotent group, external to the student social sphere and within which they can access capital which they believe is compatible with their transformed habitus. However, Shucksmith (2000) warns that while individualised social capital can provide individuals with more control over their social connections it can also serve to create barriers against outsiders and restrict freedom of others gaining access to social capital. What this means for the interview participants who felt they were overwhelmed by the more typical student-centric activities is that they may simply be replicating the same processes, just under the guise of a different social sphere. This was most keenly felt by those who had lived in rented housing in their first year. Of the four second and third years who had followed this accommodation pathway, Carrie, Tori and Paul all outlined how their dislike of student-centric venues informed their choices of social activities in subsequent years.

Finally, there is evidence to suggest that utilising ‘pseudo non-student’ spaces may also provide the ideal settings for these participants to begin to prepare themselves for becoming ‘non-students’. This was alluded to in Tori’s interview as we approached Hong Kong Charlie’s, a vodka bar on Palmerston Road in Southsea:

“That is more of a nice place, they don’t judge you at all, there’s no like bouncer type thing at all here. They’ve got nice little sofas. It’s much more how I would have described my social life to have been before Uni [sic] I’d say. Like when I’d go out with the girls from home we’d all sit there and order some drinks and have them while we could talk rather than going out clubbing” (Tori, Y3, OH).

Tori’s comment adds to these notions of non-conformity by implying that now she is in her third year of study, she may be beginning to detach herself almost completely from the student cohort. Whilst this is consistent with the notions of transforming social
identities mentioned earlier, she talks specifically of participating in more ‘niche’ activities, reminiscent of her non-student home-life. This extends Molgat’s (2002) notion of a ‘boomerang effect’, where students return to the family home upon completion of their studies, by being suggestive of a ‘social boomerang’, where the imminent culmination of her degree appears to be turning her focus away from the student cohort and back towards the familiar, non-student activities associated with home. Tori’s experiences may therefore indicate how some of these third year interviewees may be drawing upon their ‘pre-student’ cultural and social capital, by choosing social activities which bore similarities to the ones they performed at home in order to commence this process. Hence, while Chow and Healey (2008) spoke of how first year students establish their individual identities through the safety of their collective identities (see Chapter Seven), the evidence here suggests that these homogenised identities may in fact obstruct them as they prepare to leave University.

8.2 – Learning to Become ‘Non-students’: Managing Friendship Groups and Dispossessing Belongings

While the use of ‘pseudo non-student’ spaces may be indicative of the second and third year participants breaking away from the more mainstream student activities, this can also be an indicator of students learning how to become ‘non-students’, particularly as they may begin to dispossess belongings in the home or start to drift away from friends and acquaintances made at University. In some ways this can be thought of as preparing the students for the inevitability of leaving University, particularly in negotiating the complexities of re-placing their student identities into a post-student environment.

8.2a – Managing Outgoing Friendships

There is a paucity of evidence of how students negotiate friendships and acquaintances beyond the commencement of the degree (Brooks, 2007; Chow & Healey, 2008) and before the completion of studies (Gabriel, 2006; Easthope & Gabriel, 2008). This section looks at the period between these two points in order to make sense of why these transitions might be complex. Brooks (2007) identifies two aspects of friendships in non-academic situations. First is how friendships can provide emotional support which promotes a sense of general encouragement among the peer group and second (and crucial to this chapter) is the power of friendships for stimulating social learning. This is particularly important as it improves confidence in identity and promotes
cultural tolerance, particularly in minority interests. What Brooks’ study does not suggest however is whether these bonds remain strong throughout the duration of degree. The majority of the final year students interviewed for this study spoke of beginning to think pragmatically about how they might manage their friendship groups once they had left University:

“I will keep in contact with one or two of them but not all of them. I think because everyone goes back to their home town. I’m really good friends with one other girl but she lives in [South West city] so it’s a bit like I’ll see you when I see you” (Carrie, Y3, RH).

“Some people have quite good friends at home than they do at Uni [sic] maybe so when they go back home they might forget about their student life. With me, I’ll try and make an effort even though it might not be particularly easy to visit people. One of my best friends is from [Northern city] so that’s quite far away. But yeah, I think I’ll try and make an effort to keep in contact” (Lisa, Y3, RH).

These responses highlight how the students can be quite aware of the liminality of their University experiences and the collection of acquaintances they have collected upon the way. This extends Brooks’ (2002) study of the stability of friendship groups among sixth-formers as they prepare to go to University. As Brooks suggests, her prospective student participants interpreted the stability of their friendship groups in line with their own transitory experiences, evaluating their present relationships against the prospect of having (potentially better) interactions at University. The third year responses from this study are clearly congruent with Brooks’ findings, suggesting that these transitional identities do not necessarily stop once students attend University, but continue right the way through and crucially, may be influential in how friendships are managed during the final months of the degree. This is evident in Ruth’s account in which she talks of how she began to dispossess herself of her University acquaintances she made when she was living in student accommodation:

“I’m only in contact with two people now from University [...] I definitely spend more time with my friends back home [...] it is one thing that I’ve noticed that everything changes all the time, University people are just coming and going, people are changing courses and changing living arrangements and you have to say to yourself, how much do you want this person in your life?” (Ruth, Y3, WP).
Ruth’s comment suggests that she is detaching herself almost completely from the student cohort and in doing so may be preparing to leave her University life, and perhaps her student identity, behind once she completes her degree. This serves to remind us that students exist in a state of spatial and social transition where their identities are subject to constant alteration. Dawn’s example below extends this by suggesting that the habitus she has formed during the latter stages of her time as a student may appear to have shaped her cultural identity beyond that of being a student:

“I hear that’s the next step up when clubbing is over and you want to go pubbing [sic]. Occasionally we will and that’s fun but maybe this summer could be the turning point because it is after Uni [sic]” (Dawn, Y3, WP).

Dawn’s comment suggests she is well aware of the changing nature of her identity and that the period ‘student’ encapsulates just one component of this. This suggests that the final year constitutes an overlapping of student and post-student identities, where the behaviours learned in first and second year adapt to such a point that they no longer fit within their student identities. With this in mind, the majority of the third year students here stated that whilst they had established some form of ‘sense of place’ within Portsmouth during their degree, this did not necessarily result in a desire to remain in the city post-graduation:

“I love being in Portsmouth but I don’t think that I could live here not as a student, but I would like to come back here and visit. It will always be somewhere I’ll have great memories of, it would be a shame to let that go” (Emma, Y3, RH).

“I’m not going to be coming back to Portsmouth for a long period of time. I might come back for a day trip but I’m not going to be coming down for like months on end. […] Once I leave Portsmouth I’m only going to be coming back here for graduation or maybe if I want to go into town or Gunwharf and get some stuff or meet up with some friends when they get back from their placement years” (Carrie, Y3, RH).

These comments are therefore contrary to anecdotal evidence which implies a potential trend for graduates remaining in their University location after they complete their degrees (The Telegraph, 2011). Tellingly, none of the final year participants living in student accommodation reported a desire to remain in Portsmouth after graduation. In addition to Emma and Carrie’s comments, Liam, Ruth and Tori all spoke of how, for them, their University experiences and identities were couched in a specific space and
time. Emma’s comment in particular suggests that, without the trappings of being a student, Portsmouth would no longer make sense as a place for her to live. Clearly this research cannot speculate upon whether or not this transition was achieved successfully, but what can be said with confidence is that the participants agreed that they had exhausted their ‘student identities’ and were ready to take the next step into becoming non-students. This was encapsulated in these comments below:

‘There are a few friends that I will keep in contact with, not as many as there are now. [...] We always say that when we’ve finished we’ll meet up once a year and we’ll invite each other to each other’s weddings and stupid things like that. We’ve spent three years together, hopefully three of the best years of our lives so far and we need to keep that bond there and in a sense it won’t be the same as now but we’ll try and keep it going’ (Liam, Y3, RH).

“[My friend] was saying that if she got married then I should attend and I was like ‘we’ll see’ (laughs). We will keep in touch, they are part of my close knit friends so, with Facebook and Skype you can keep in touch with them through things like that” (Farah, Y3, RH).

As these comments imply, for many of these students, their ‘sense of place’ within the city is deemed an ephemeral one which will be consigned to memories of much cherished (or disliked, or ambivalent) period of their lives. While they may attempt to maintain their friendship groups, there is a realisation that they will have to [re]negotiate these relationships again as their identities change yet again once they become ‘non-students’.

8.2b – Dispossessing Belongings from the ‘Student’ Home

This notion of dispossession also contains a material element in the way that all of the third year interviewees living in rented accommodation discussed how they were dealing with their belongings in their final year. As has been mentioned throughout this analysis, students living in typical student accommodation are undergoing some form of transition through their housing, much like their educational or social transitions. Rugg et al. (2004) and Ford et al. (2002) point to these transitions being part of the ‘housing biographies’ of young adults where students often experience a “supervised leaving of the parental home and a ‘sheltered’ spell in the private rented sector” (Rugg et al., 2004, p. 22) before either returning to the family home or moving on into other living
arrangements (see also: Mulder & Clarke, 2002; Goldscheider & Goldscheider, 1998). There is however, very little to suggest how this might extend to experiences of homemaking. As Liam’s quote demonstrates, final year students are likely to realise that this type of shared living is time-bound, and will end once they move back with their parents after graduation (Molgat, 2002; Gabriel, 2006):

“We’re only going to be here for ten months so I’m very conscious that this is not a permanent house. Last year we were still trying keep living our first year whereas now we’ve calmed down. Last year I used to have my climbing t-shirts all up on the wall and I was reminiscing of first year whereas this year I didn’t want to feel like I was reminiscing so much. This year is so different to last year being involved in [society], I didn’t want to be looking back, I wanted a fresh start, to have fresh memories distinct from first and second year. It was nice having pictures up but I felt I was constantly looking back whereas this year I want to be looking forward. […] I think I will still have pictures up of my whole experience collectively but not in the sense of wallowing in it and having a shrine to my Uni [sic] years” (Liam, Y3, RH).

Liam’s comments suggest that his connections with his rented accommodation may have diminished over time. As he states, his decision not to continue the ritual of displaying objects is born, not from any kind of maturity but from the desire to preserve memories of particular times. Research into the domesticity of a British expatriate living in Dubai by Walsh (2006) may be useful here in offering insight into what prompts third year students to start depersonalising their student accommodation. Walsh describes how her research subject went through a process of pragmatically sorting and discarding her personal effects. This involved ‘dispossessing’ her home and distilling her life down to a few highly significant mnemonic objects prior to leaving home, even though she was aware that this was not a permanent move. Walsh suggests that this:

“[…] compulsive emptying of her home becomes a constitutive act, helping to create the self; in this case, a self who is able to create home in mobility without the use of domestic props” (Walsh, 2006, p. 272).

As Marcoux (2001) suggests, for some, mobility is akin to ‘lightness’ or a way of freeing themselves from the shackles of materiality. Walsh’s research subject is therefore able to pare down the objects required to ‘make place’ both in Dubai and back home in Britain in order to fit the context in which her mobile life is presently in. While this process of ‘de-cluttering’ was prompted by the move from the UK to Dubai and
was aimed at reducing the feeling of being overwhelmed by belongings, this was clearly evident among the interview participants (albeit in the opposite direction, from University accommodation to home), many of whom had resigned themselves to an extensive clear out before they moved back home:

“The clutter I’ve collected over the years, please don’t start, I think I’m going to have the biggest clear out in order to go back home. I think I’m going to have to throw like eighty per cent away because I know that there is no value to any of these things back home. I’ve got in the back of my mind that they’ll come in useful and they’ll come in handy but I know realistically that they won’t. But I still think ‘yeah, I’m gonna [sic] need that witches outfit I wore Halloween 2007’ because I’m gonna [sic] go out trick or treating” (Carrie, Y3, RH).

This adds to Kenyon’s (1999) suggestion that students often perceive themselves as moving between three accommodation states: the parental home, term-time accommodation and an imaginary ‘future’ home. While Kenyon suggests that these spaces represent a transitory and reflective (albeit messy) process of learning how to create ‘home’, the examples from this study suggest how term-time accommodation might be more than simply a ‘stepping stone’ between the other two states. As Carrie’s comments suggest, most realise that the identities which have been established over the duration of the degree may not necessarily ‘fit’ once they return home. This was made clear when Carrie stated: “there is no value to any of these things back home”, suggesting that the belongings she had accrued whilst at University in order to ‘make place’ were fit for purpose and that their relocation to another residential place might be inappropriate. These examples of dispossessing the student home might therefore indicate how the participants’ relationships towards their family home and term-time accommodation begin to change toward the end of the degree, subsequently extending the discussions of managing friendship groups by completing the picture of the liminality of the student experience.

8.2c – Home-based Students Feeling Left Behind

For many of those students living in non-typical accommodation, these processes of managing friendships during the final months of University became more complex, particularly as many of the participants believed the prospect of graduation would draw their student identities to a close:
“I suppose you revert back to what you were like in first year. Instead of making new friends you’ve got to maintain those friends. I think you have to work hard to visit people in their own home towns. […] I mean there are obviously going to be some people that I’m never going to see or speak to again but when I get a job there will be other new people there” (Dawn, Y3, WP).

“It’s hard. […] I do have that barrier there that says ‘I don’t want to get too involved’, you know, ‘in fifteen months time, you’re all going to disappear and I’m not’” (Eve, Y2, OH).

“[After I moved back home] the guy I met, we did meet up, probably once a week for a pint and stuff but nowhere near as much as when we lived together. It was nice to think that you could come home and there was all this ‘I’ll make dinner for you guys tonight’, instead it’s like, you meet up in the pub and its like ‘so...how’s things?’ You lose a connection with them on a level somehow” (Ruth, Y3, WP).

While these comments highlight the inevitability of losing contact with student friends, their coping mechanisms are quite different. Dawn is clearly quite reflective about her friendship group, being positive about retaining contacts but thinking realistically that many of her acquaintances are likely to drop away. Conversely, Eve and Ruth are pushing their student friends away in preparation for leaving. For them it is the belief that they will be left behind as their peer group leaves, and the barriers they have erected appear to protect them against this. This may have something to do with how the habitus of home-based participants may have transformed differently and at different rates as they made their transition through their degrees. As was stated in Chapter Six, a great deal of diversity exists in how a student habitus is established by home-based students in their first year. This was apparent in the ability to access the ‘right’ types of cultural and social capital to get by at University, with some participants actively rejecting their student identities while others were prevented from fully engaging with the more typical student cohort. These examples extend this by demonstrating how these patterns may to follow the participants’ transitions through their experiences of University. Eve’s consideration of her future ‘post’ student self reveals a greater awareness that her immobility as a home-based student is likely to affect her student identity. While her more typical peers might be able to forget about their student identities once they have returned to the family home, Eve’s experiences indicate that this may be difficult to achieve for home-based students as they have to,
yet again, *re-learn* how to use the city. This highlights the importance of place in these discussions as the home-based participants’ notions of being ‘in place’ while at University can become disrupted as they prepare to become ‘non-students’. Therefore, those third year students who are immobile may face a challenge in re-negotiating their student habitus, particularly as Savage *et al.* (2005) suggest, when disruption exists between habitus and field (in this case leaving University) most people seek to move to alleviate the problem.

Conversely, for other students living in their own homes, their identities as University students were viewed as being only temporary and as only one component part of their identities which has little effect over how they perform in their home lives:

“For me, the only thing that will change is that I won’t be going to University. But I’ll still be doing my jobs, I’ll still be going home every night, I’ll still be doing my hobbies” (Jane, Y3, OH).

“I will let go of it easily but it has been a positive experience. Some people could find it harder than I would, losing all their friends and not being living here whereas I’m going to still be living here so it’s not going to have a huge impact on me” (Adam, Y3, OH).

This extends Christie *et al.*’s (2005) suggestion that adult learners may be “[...] in but not of the University” (p. 17, emphasis added), particularly as many of these students have worked hard at keeping their student and non-student identities separate during their studies (see Chapter Six). In many ways, the habitus and capital acquired during University may be incongruous once outside of the realm of HE. Baxter and Britton (2001) have examined these changes from the point of entry into HE, and suggest that many adult learners risk slipping into the trap of a ‘divided habitus’, where often conflicting student and non-student identities can become difficult to manage. However, as the comments above suggests, this may be less problematic for the older home-based participants as they prepare to leave University. They appear more aware that their student identities are likely to become redundant once the reality of their home lives (work, family, homemaking etc.) resume once more. The lack of interest in investing in social capital during University, as discussed in Chapter Six, would therefore now appear to be acting as a buffer for these students in managing their exits from student life.
Discussing these transitions from the perspective of those living with parents tells a different story. Several of the participants spoke of how they felt they had ‘outgrown’ the city. This may indicate that the completion of their studies signified an ideal opportunity to leave home, either to seek employment or postgraduate study elsewhere:

Dawn: “I’ve been coming here [Guildhall and Liquid] since I was seventeen and I hate it now, it’s horrible. Trust me, don’t go there, definitely not there”.

Mark: “Is the fact that a place like Liquid is young?”

Dawn: “Oh yeah, they’re really annoying as well, but I’m only saying that because I’m older. Probably older people thought that about me when I was eighteen. I don’t feel bad about saying that at all, whiny little young people experimenting and I’m like no, save the bother” (Dawn, Y3, WP).

“I feel like I have outgrown the city, I don’t want to stay here much longer because I’ve had all my life and University here whereas most other people have lived in one other place by now, I feel a bit behind on that I guess” (Maya, Y3, WP).

Maya’s experiences suggest that, while she may not necessarily have followed the same accommodation pathway as her more typical student friends, the completion of the degree may act as a catalyst for leaving home and experiencing some of the elements of independent living already accomplished by her peers in rented housing (see Kenyon, 1999).

8.3 – Discussion

This chapter has extended the notions of renegotiating place between years one and two which were discussed in Chapter Seven by focusing upon the ways in which the study group used their transformed ‘student habitus’ to move beyond the more typical student-centric social spaces within Portsmouth. In doing so this chapter has highlighted two key features of this renegotiation:

- Students in their second and third year of study are likely to favour ‘pseudo non-student’ social spaces which encourage them to hone and personalise their identities.
Students gradually dispossess their friends and belongings during the final year of study in order to prepare them to become non-students again.

While this new found predilection for ‘pseudo non-student’ spaces would appear to be a result of Chatterton’s (1999) notions of students “unlearning the rules of the student game” (p. 122), further enquiry suggests that these changes may also be based upon something more than simply a desire to move away from the more typical Freshers’ bars and clubs. As the evidence shows, using such spaces may also be indicative of a ‘social boomerang’, in which the participants were reverting back to their old pre-student identities in preparation for the inevitability of leaving University. Pseudo non-student spaces may therefore provide training grounds within which to learn and practice how to become ‘non-students’. As Tori’s comments at the end of section 8.2 suggest, some of these third year interviewees were drawing on their pre-student cultural and social capital, choosing social activities which bore similarities to the ones they performed at home in order to commence this process. Alongside these notions of ‘moving on’, this chapter has also explored the ways in which the participants began to dispossess their friendship groups and belongings during the latter stages of their degrees in order to learn how to ‘become’ non-students. In many ways, this was a tactic used both to prepare the students for the inevitability of leaving University as well as providing damage limitation against dissolving relationships. Hence, for those living in rented housing, the move from University to the parental home was perceived to be a simple, almost linear transition, particularly as this was timed with a physical out-migration from their accommodation. Conversely for those living with parents or in their own homes, this transition presents many more challenges, specifically to how these students negotiate their ‘sense of place’ within, what is shortly to become a ‘non-student’ environment to them. This demonstrates that the participants’ perceptions of re-placing their student identities into a post-student environment appear as varied and complex as the processes which influenced their decisions to commence their initial transitions into University.

This notion of a ‘social boomerang’ highlights the difficulties out-going students may face in negotiating the complexities of re-placing their student identities into a post-student environment. This emphasises the liminality of the student experience by identifying what might be the key drivers for the consumption of space and place by
students. This is important because it reveals the alternative to the immersive, student-centric socialising carried out in first year. While these activities were usually performed in University endorsed spaces, these 'pseudo non-student' spaces exist beyond the responsibility of the University. This means that Universities have little control over the safety and security of the students which use them. This presents Universities with the challenge of extending their endorsements out to some of the non-student enterprises within the city. While the participants’ experiences have shown a propensity for moving away from University managed nightspots, at the same time they also do not wish to immerse themselves fully into the non-student nightlife. Hence, establishing a happy medium of a subtle University presence within popular alternative night-spots may assist in addressing such issues.
Chapter Nine – Conclusions

In conclusion, this research is couched within the wider nexus of ‘student geographies’ (after Smith, 2009), and provides a contribution to [and interpretation of] debates on student [im]mobility, studentification and University/community partnerships through a [re]interpretation of the complex relationship between habitus and place. In doing so, four key contributions have been identified:

- The influence of the ‘pre-student’ habitus over the decision making process of prospective undergraduates.
- The regular transformation of habitus during the degree pathway as students acquire and mobilise the different types of capital required to ‘fit in’ among their peers.
- The [re]sensing of place as (a) students in more typical accommodation move between different residential circumstances and (b) home-based students re-interpret previously familiar spaces as students.
- The influence of ‘pseudo non-student’ spaces and the gradual dispossession of acquaintances and belongings in preparation for becoming ‘post-students’.

In problematising the terms ‘traditional’ and ‘non-traditional’, Chapter Five revealed contrasts in how a ‘pre-student’ habitus might affect the mechanisms put in place to assist students’ transitions into and through University. This reiterates the importance of recognising the heterogeneity of students. Examining behaviours from the perspective of residential circumstances assists in unpacking the experiences of students, throughout the HE pathway, and exposes greater nuance between student behaviours. Moreover, a clear link is established here between the HE aspirations of the research cohort and the different types of accommodation they resided in once they were at University. As was alluded to at the beginning of this thesis, there is more to HE aspirations than simply academic attainment (Epstein et al., 2003) and this research demonstrates this by considering how students might build concerns regarding propinquity to home, or what types of experiences they may gain when they commence their degrees into their decisions. Hence, identifying how these preconceptions may influence the HE pathway adds depth and understanding to current considerations of [preconceived] student life.
(Hopkins, 2006; Taulke-Johnson, 2010b; Hinton, 2011). Crucially, this recognises the diverse range of sources from which students might draw their knowledge of HE from. While it is generally accepted that traditional students are more likely to draw upon their familial and/or institutional knowledge when preparing to make HE decisions (Patiniotis & Holdsworth, 2005), this research suggests that some students, non-traditional or traditional, may acquire knowledge from other sources outside of these expected realms. This is important as it suggests that the higher value some students may place on alternative sources of information (web forums, friends’ recommendations, media representations etc.) highlights the significance of anecdotal knowledge for young adults’ aspirations. Therefore, these findings may have implications for how Universities might think about positioning themselves in relation to the recruitment of new students in the future.

In Chapters Six to Eight these preconceptions were extended through examinations of how the participants began to establish and manage their ‘student identities’ as they worked through their degrees. This research makes several contributions which highlight the regular and rapid transformative potential of habitus. While theorisations of habitus have been regularly imported into research on HE students, rarely does such research consider the transformative capabilities of the ‘student habitus’. Table 9.1 summarises these transformations by highlighting the ways in which the participants’ student habitus began to establish, take hold and then gradually diminish over the duration of their degrees. These transformations were the product of different types of social and cultural capital being mobilised at different stages of the degree and highlights the non-linearity of University transitions. Consequently the habitus did not provide a constant for the students but instead was subject to various (and conflicting) push and pull factors which conflated or suppressed its influence. Hence, researching students throughout their transition is useful in that it moves beyond the fixed, generational and deterministic characteristics of habitus by highlighting its potential for subjectivity. While habitus may be accused of constantly looking backwards in reference to pre-learned dispositions, Table 9.1 demonstrates how these participants adapted and transformed their habitus in spite of their previous social endeavours, particularly as they moved between the year groups.

These findings extend previous discussions of first year transitions by questioning the
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Period</th>
<th>Habitus</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Pre-student</td>
<td>• Limited understanding of how to ‘be’ a student.</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Use of social networks to begin to establish contacts.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>First year</td>
<td>• Begin to learn the ‘rules of the game’ of being a student.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Friendship groups start narrow, often confined to housemates and/or course mates.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Student identity is fragile and investments in social and cultural capital can be problematic as members do not often understand how to utilise them effectively.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Second year</td>
<td>• The ‘student habitus’ becomes clearer.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Networks become tighter meaning investments in social and cultural capital yield a far greater return.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Settling into a house leads to a gradual honing of friendship groups.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Friendships are made beyond the home and the course through extended social networks which compliment evolving identities.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Third year</td>
<td>• The inevitability of ‘leaving’ becomes clear as students begin to think about what graduation might bring.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• Recognition of becoming post or non students.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• Superficial networks are broken.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• Students become more reflective over their experiences.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• The ‘student habitus’ is challenged when considering the move back home.</td>
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Table 9.1: The development of habitus over the duration of the degree (source: author’s survey and interview data).

Influence of accommodation upon the formation of identities and the initial experiences of ‘being’, or ‘becoming’ students. Importantly, this identifies how year one can differ greatly across the student cohort and can trigger different emotional responses. While there were distinctions between how the more mobile and home-based students’ residential circumstances influenced their interpretations of the city, more nuanced differences also existed within these accommodation types. This was identifiable among those first years that were living in rented housing, away from the more typical halls environment. For these students, their experiences of being ‘Freshers’ differed greatly to their peers and appeared to colour their experiences of University thereafter. Incorporating Holt’s (2008) ‘embodied social capital’ adds to these notions by exposing how, for those who may appear to ‘miss out’ on the more typical student activities, their ‘immobile’ or ‘non-student’ identities may become embodied or part of their ‘sense of self’. Importantly, this highlights how residential circumstances can contribute greatly towards [un]successful transitions through the rest of the degree pathway and extends
previous claims that this can contribute towards a discontinuation of studies (Wilcox et al., 2005), by questioning why this may be occurring.

Alongside this, Chapter Seven extends the discussions of first year transitions by indentifying how the participants’ experiences transformed as they moved from first into second year. For those living in more typical accommodation, identity changes appeared to coincide with a change in residence, usually from halls to rented housing. This gave them greater opportunities for social interactions with other students outside of the intensity of halls. In extending notions of cohabitation, while Kenyon and Heath (2001) suggest this is an important part of identity formation, a significant theme emerging from the interviews was how aspects of cohabitation were used to interpret each others’ identity.

Moreover, this extends previous discussions of familial and institutional habitus by suggesting that these participants quickly suppressed their familial habitus during term-time in favour of adopting more complimentary ‘student’ dispositions as they chased the requisite social capital needed to ‘fit in’ among their peers group. The most likely periods with which to observe such transformations of the student habitus were during accommodation changes where individual identities were reconsidered as the students living in shared accommodation began to make sense of each other’s identities and how this may create a ‘household habitus’. This knowledge contributes to theories of the home by highlighting the complexities of shared living experiences, specifically how previous household experiences can be imported into a shared property. While it was apparent that the ‘quasi-family’ roles the participants adopted within households were often learned from parental dispositions, these behaviours were usually surpassed fairly quickly, being honed to fit within their shared households. Hence, while students may reflect upon their familial habitus to inform domestic behaviours in their term-time accommodation, there may also be an element of commonsense involved, in which adopting such domestic roles is thought to be the ‘right’ thing to do. This flexible habitus is therefore important for young adults in transition as it enables them to manipulate their identities to ‘fit in’ with the accepted norms and behaviours of what is a disparate social group. While second and third year students may be aware of how their transformed student identities should fit together, that is not to say that all student housing is harmonious. On the contrary, the ‘quasi-familial relations’ discussed in
Chapter Seven demonstrated how tensions can become amplified between housemates over domestic responsibilities, noise and lack of respect for personal space, particularly in households with established hierarchies which may not compliment all sharers habituses. In conflict households, the social capital which has been accumulated may not necessarily be valid for all housemates. Often those who join existing shared houses can feel left out of social situations, be given menial chores to carry out or at worst, be bullied by other housemates. This adds to previous examples of the complexity of accessing and operationalising social capital for young adults, and recognises that this is an issue which can be experienced by all students, being just as likely to occur for those more traditional students as it is for those with little or no prior understanding of the HE process.

In addition to these notions of transformed habitus, Chapter Seven identified how the transition through University can contribute towards a [re]sensing of place for undergraduates, specifically how, seemingly [in]congruous behaviours and/or routines can become enmeshed within the confines of shared student lodgings. This research suggests that students represent an ideal demographic with which to discuss the evolution of ‘sense of place’ in that they have converged on a single location (a University town or city), for a primary goal (to gain a qualification). The experiences of the interview participants extend theorisations of sense of place by reinforcing the potential for a meaningful sense of place to evolve quickly. Table 9.2 demonstrates how these interpretations of their University location are achieved intensely in year one and then adapt and broaden over the course of the degree. However, as this research has shown, many have approached this from different social backgrounds, meaning interpretations of place can be flexible and contrasting. This diversity is exposed in the students’ different residential circumstances and goes some way in problematising who may be termed ‘local’ or ‘non-local’, particularly as some of the participants had prior knowledge of the city yet lived a commutable distance away from it.

Investigating students’ sense of place adds to discussions of student geographies by exposing students’ motivations for integrating within their relative student communities. Having a stronger sense of place within the city ensures that accessing and utilising social capital becomes more strategic, meaning students become more confident with
Period | Sense of place
---|---
**Pre-student** | ‘Pre-student’ ‘sense of place’ largely incompatible for home-based learners.
- Socialising predominantly in student-centric spaces (Students’ Union, Freshers’ bars and clubs etc.).
**First year** | Social activities carried out in large groups with weak ties between members.
- Limited sense of wider city networks for those in halls as residing, studying and socialising are carried out in confined areas.
- Place-making within the home becomes more important.
- Knowledge of the city beyond the University expands.
- Start to feel more at home in University location.
**Second year** | Social preferences adapt as knowledge increases of alternative student or non-student social spaces.
- Established ‘sense of place’ can be disrupted for home-based students if other students use familiar spaces differently.
**Third year** | Subsequent moves make expressing place-making within the home less important, meaning symbolic objects stop being displayed.
- Increased use of ‘pseudo non-student’ spaces over student-centric ones.
- Gradual process of dispossessing, both in the home and the friendship group.

Table 9.2: The development of a sense of place over the duration of the degree (source: author’s survey and interview data).

their surroundings, resulting in a greater potential for ‘fitting in’ among peers. Among the participants this became strengthened through the repetition of everyday routines. For those living in halls or rented housing this was evidenced through the habitualised behaviours of moving between home, lectures and social activities where the familiarity of utilising the practical elements of the city (supermarkets, University buildings, local pubs etc.). Establishing a sense of place within the city through mundane routines gave the participants better opportunities to acquire and employ the social capital most appropriate to ‘fit in’ among their peers, thus legitimising their experiences of ‘being’ University students in Portsmouth. This research supports Gustafson’s (2001) call to recognise the importance of mobility in discussions of sense of place. Naturally, the liminality of the student experience suggests that students may be incapable [or unwilling] to form any meaningful attachments to their term-time location, particularly outside of the expected realms of the campus and/or student-centric social activities. However, the evidence here argues that such mono-cultural spaces are essential for mobile individuals (not just students, but other transnational or expatriate migrants), as they provide security and continuity for those who may have multiple homes.
Furthermore, establishing a term-time sense of place assists in creating appropriate spaces within which to learn how to become successful students. This highlights the temporality of a sense of place, where investments are made explicitly [and intentionally], for a specific reason and for a pre-determined period of time, before being consigned to memory once the students have returned home.

In addition to these notions of mobility, this research highlights implications for sense of place when pre-existing places are re-interpreted or ‘re-sensed’. The empirical evidence suggests that the action of attending a ‘local’ University may cause home-based students to experience disruptions to their ‘long-term’ sense of place. Place can be intricately layered for home-based students, meaning spaces may be used in ways which challenge their perceptions. This re-sensing of place was mostly experienced by the students living with parents who felt that their contrasting friendship groups meant they often occupied the margins between being ‘students’ and ‘non-students’, experiencing places inconsistently or at times deemed inappropriate for their identities. Although these disruptions to sense of place may only be temporary, their impacts may have long-term implications after the completion of the degree. This complicates notions of sense of place by suggesting that while mobile students may couch their sense of place within the timeframe of the degree, home-based students may become more aware of their immobility when considering their ‘post-student’ selves. Their sense of place in the city may not naturally transpose back onto their non-student lives. Hence, this notion of ‘re-sensing’ place adds to previous claims that sense of place can be adaptive and strengthen over time by suggesting that key events, like going to University, have the potential to disrupt it by re-casting once familiar places or activities as new or different which may also potentially disrupt their status as pre-existing residents.

One of the key theoretical contributions of this thesis is in developing notions of sense of place in the home environment. Term-time accommodation is an important site for establishing a temporary ‘sense of place’ for students and this sense of place is honed and developed as they make subsequent moves each year. While place-making was rarely expressed by those in halls, it was the move into shared rented housing which allowed them to relax into their identities and their accommodation began to resemble an extension of themselves. Where halls represented conformity and consistency, many
of the participants spoke of how rented accommodation became ‘their’ space, space within which to make place. Importantly, this allowed them to make decisions away from parental or institutional influences. Focusing on these micro-environments revealed how student accommodation was more than simply a depository for all of their ‘stuff’ during term-time, instead becoming a place in which many regularly and consciously called ‘home’. These periodical movements between home and University during the academic year add to theorisations of the home by demonstrating how temporary accommodation can provide an anchor for young adults during a process of transition. For these students, establishing a sense of place through accommodation was essential in limiting homesickness and in ensuring that there was something more to come back to each term, outside of lectures.

Importantly, the temporality of rented accommodation meant that sensing place within the student home was mostly established through the organisation of material possessions, specifically ephemeral items such as flyers, concert tickets or photographs. It was the display of cherished objects carrying significant meaning which were most likely to provide linkages between the sanctity of the home and the wider sensing of place within the city. These linkages connected friends with places where certain activities were enjoyed. This extends Walsh’s (2006) suggestion that mnemonic objects provide a consistent and portable window between viewer and subject. While this was essential in supporting the participants as they worked through each stage of their transition through University, the display of belongings quickly became more than just providing connections with home. Their experiences were cumulative, in that they were also drawing on memories made while at University. Therefore, such interim experiences often wrote the participants’ pre-student identities out of their accommodation, particularly if they considered them to be ‘childish’ or ‘unfashionable’. In this sense it is important to recognise the significance of shorter-term histories in place-making in the home, particularly for those in transition.

Finally, Chapter Eight focused on those participants in the middle to latter part of their degree and revealed that their identities and attachment to their term-time location had continued to adapt throughout their degree. Importantly this suggests that the participants’ identities and student habitus were still subject to change, even for those preparing to graduate. Importantly, these students were using transitional or ‘pseudo
non-student’ spaces in order to ‘unlearn’ the behaviours they had learned in previous years. These ‘pseudo non-student’ spaces were ideal for learning to hone and personalise identities away from the more student-centric activities they performed in their first year (see Hollands, 1995). Moreover, they provided an opportunity to learn and practice how to ‘become’ non-students, particularly as many spoke of dispossessing belongings and acquaintances made while at University. Crucially, this extends Gabriel (2006) and Easthope and Gabriel (2008) who discuss the difficulties of re-placing student identities into post-student environments. ‘Pseudo non-student’ spaces may act as a ‘social boomerang’ for those drawing to the end of their transition, in which they choose to reference their old ‘pre-student’ identities in preparation for the inevitability of leaving University. This highlights the liminality of the student experience by identifying different drivers for the consumption of space and place by students according to their year of study.

In drawing all of these threads together, Figure 9.1 illustrates how the experiential journey the students have taken as they made their transitions through University can be represented, not as a line but as a curve. The majority of participants, including those with prior knowledge of HE, commenced their journeys with little or limited understandings of how they might actually traverse them. This was expressed during the initial stages of the degree through the intense use of student-centric social activities within tightly knit groups and moving in geographically narrow spaces. These experiences grew in strength as the students gained knowledge of the ‘student game’ (Chatterton, 1999) and then gradually dissipated as they prepared to exit University. Importantly, this curve suggests a relationship between habitus and place where ‘sense of place’ develops alongside habitus and becomes consigned to memory as the students consider their lives as non-student graduates. In this sense, habitus and place can be seen as complimentary forces for the successful transitions of undergraduate students as they provide supportive mechanisms which assist in developing social networks and alleviate the difficulties of leaving once the degree is completed. From a theoretical perspective, the reflective nature of habitus appears to be crucial to the evolution of sense of place for those in transition, mobile or otherwise. The transformations of habitus intensify, and give clarity to, relationships with place, while the strengthening of a sense of place provides continuity, allowing students to hone their habitus according to their acquired tastes.
Figure 9.1: Experiential curve illustrating the development of 'habitus' and 'place' over the duration of a degree pathway (source: author’s survey and interview data)
To conclude, this thesis has critically examined the diverse ways in which University students establish and maintain their identities and sense of place throughout the duration of their degree. In doing so, this research has developed a rationale for discussing students according to their residential circumstances in order to recognise their heterogeneity and examine how such diversity contributes to wider debates of the geographies of students. Fundamentally, this research provides Universities [and others] with a more detailed understanding of how their undergraduates might interpret their University experience and how these interpretations might subsequently impact upon successful trajectories through HE. Finally, this research also contributes to wider theoretical debates on habitus, capital and sense of place by exposing the adaptive and transformative potential of student experiences.
References:


Adey, P. (2006). If Mobility is Everything Then it is Nothing: Towards a Relational Politics of (Im)mobilities. *Mobilities, 1*(1), 75-94.


Bridge, G. (2003). Pierre Bourdieu. In P. Hubbard, R. Kitchin, and G. Valentine (Eds.), *Key Thinkers on Space and Place* (pp. 59-64) London: SAGE.


Maxwell, J. A. (2010). Using Numbers in Qualitative Research. *Qualitative Inquiry, 16*(6), 475-482


http://neighbourhood.statistics.gov.uk/dissemination/LeadTableView.do?a=7&b=6275202&c=Portsmouth&d=13&e=13&g=6401143&i=1001x1003x1004&m=0&r=1&s=1368096278134&enc=1&dsFamilyId=2545.


## Welcome to the project

Dear Participant,

This survey is part of a research programme I am undertaking as part of my PhD within the Department of Geography at the University of Portsmouth.

The broad aim of this research is to gain a better understanding of the relationship between students and their home, university and community environments.

Please attempt to answer all of the questions in the survey. This should only take a maximum of ten minutes.

**IF YOU COMPLETE THIS SURVEY BEFORE FRIDAY 25TH NOVEMBER, YOU WILL HAVE THE OPPORTUNITY TO BE ENTERED INTO A FREE PRIZE DRAW TO WIN A £50 iTUNES GIFT VOUCHER.** Entry details are provided at the end of the survey.

Information collected from this survey will be treated as confidential and anonymous. No names are required to be entered and locations within the results will be referred to in general terms. If you require any further information regarding the project and your involvement then please contact me on the email address below.

Thank you for your time.

Mark Holton

mark.holton@port.ac.uk

## Consent form

1. I agree to the previous terms and conditions and consent to taking part in this survey and that I am a current student enrolled on a full time undergraduate course at the University of Portsmouth
   - Yes
   - No
6. Do you use the communal areas in your property to socialise with housemates?  

7. If yes, what activities do you carry out in communal areas? (choose as many as you like)  
   - [ ] Network TV  
   - [ ] Study  
   - [ ] Cook  
   - [ ] Have friends over  
   - [ ] Other (please specify)  

8. Who organises the chores within the household?  

9. Rate the quality of your term time accommodation?  

10. Do you have sufficient space to study at home? (reading, computer access, space to work)  

11. If no to question 10, where do you go to study? (choose as many as you like)  
   - [ ] Local library  
   - [ ] Coffee shop  
   - [ ] University library  
   - [ ] Family/friends home  
   - [ ] Other (please specify)  

12. Please rate the following statements:  
   - [ ] Strongly agree  
   - [ ] Agree  
   - [ ] Neither  
   - [ ] Disagree  
   - [ ] Strongly disagree  

   - [ ] I get on with the students I share with  
   - [ ] I have enough private space in my accommodation  
   - [ ] I feel safe in my accommodation  
   - [ ] I use the communal spaces in my accommodation (e.g. living room)  
   - [ ] I socialise with the students I share my accommodation with  
   - [ ] I would choose to live with the same students next year  

13. How does term time accommodation compare to your permanent/parental home in terms of:  
   - [ ] Much better  
   - [ ] Better  
   - [ ] About the same  
   - [ ] Unchanged  
   - [ ] Worse  
   - [ ] Much worse  

   - [ ] Comfort  
   - [ ] Availability  
   - [ ] Safety and security  
   - [ ] Social life  

   Any further comments?
Residential status (b)

1. How many people do you live with in your term time accommodation? (If you live alone please indicate with '0')
   - Number of tenents
   - Number of mates

2. Please give details of how you came to know these people:

3. Which rooms does your student property have? (Choose from the list)
   - Living room
   - Bedroom
   - Kitchen
   - Dining room
   - Bathroom
   - En-suite bedroom
   - Conservatory
   - Garage
   - Other (please specify):

4. Have you had any disputes with non-student neighbours?

5. If yes to question 4, what was it about?
   - Other (please specify):

6. Do you use the communal areas within your property to socialise with housemates?

7. If yes, what activities do you carry out in communal areas? (Choose as many as you like)
   - Watch TV
   - Study
   - Cook
   - Have friends over
   - Other (please specify):

8. Who organises the chores within the household?
   - Other (please specify):

9. Who organises the finances within the household?

10. Do you have sufficient space to study at home? (Reading, computer access, space to work)

11. If no to question 11, where do you go to study? (Choose as many as you like)
   - Local library
   - Coffee shop
   - University library
   - Friend or family house
   - Other (please specify):

12. Please rate your term time accommodation in terms of:
   - Cleanliness
   - Maintenance
   - Safety and security
   - Social life
   - Other (please specify):

13. How does your term time accommodation compare to your permanent/parental home in terms of:
   - Much better
   - Better
   - About the same
   - Underwhelmed
   - Worse
   - Much worse

Any further comments?

Any further comments?
14. Please rate the following statements:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strongly</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Neither</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Strongly</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. I get on with the students I share with</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. I have enough private space in my accommodation</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. I feel safe in my accommodation</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. I use the communal space in my accommodation (e.g. living room)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. I socialise with the students I share my accommodation with</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. I would chose to live with the same students next year</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Any further comments:

---

**Residential status (c)**

1. Who lives in your household?
   - Mother
   - Guardian
   - Brother
   - Sister
   - Other (please specify):

2. Do you have your own private bedroom?

3. If no to question 2 then who do you share with?

4. What made you decide to live at home whilst studying at university?
   (choose as many as you like)
   - Maintain long-term friendships
   - Caring for family members
   - Not ready to leave home yet
   - Cannot afford to leave home yet
   - Job commitments
   - Influenced by parents
   - Other (please specify):

5. Have you lived away from the family home before?

6. If yes, then please give details of where you were living.

---

A
7. Please indicate who regularly carries out the following activities.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Activity</th>
<th>Always Do</th>
<th>My Parents Always Do</th>
<th>We Share It</th>
<th>Someone Else Does It (please specify)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Cooking</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Household (your home)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Housework - general</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Laundry</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Food Shopping</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Paying bills</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Any additional details?

8. Do you have sufficient space to study at home? (reading, computer access, space to work)

9. If no to question 8, where do you go to study? (choose as many as you like)

- Local library
- Coffee shop
- University library
- Internet cafe/house

Other (please specify)

10. What mode of transport do you mostly use to get to university?

Other (please specify)
7. What made you choose the university you are currently studying at? (choose as many as you like)

☐ The course
☐ Distance from home
☐ Reputation of university
☐ Fee structure
☐ Not far away from home

Other please specify:

Employment status

1. Do you have a job during term time?

2. If yes to question 1, what type of work do you do?

Other please specify:

3. Do you have a job during vacations?

4. If yes to question 3, what type of work do you do?

Other please specify:

5. How many hours do you work per week?

6. What is your job title?

7. Does the work you currently do relate in any way to the course you are doing?

8. If yes to question 7, how does your job relate to your course?
Social activities within the term time location

1. What types of social activities do you regularly do? (regularly means at least once a week) (choose as many as you like)
   - University society
   - Cultural events
   - Theatre/cinema
   - Shopping
   - Eating out
   - Sport (play)
   - Music events
   - Other (please specify)

2. Where do you carry these activities out?
   - University society
   - Cultural events
   - Theatre/cinema
   - Socialising
   - Eating out
   - Sport (play)
   - Music events
   - Other (please specify)

3. Please state again where you live during term time.

Social activities within the term time location (a)

1. Which of these activities have you only started doing since you came to university? (choose as many as you like)
   - Cultural events
   - Theatre/cinema
   - Shopping
   - Eating out
   - Sport (play)
   - Music events
   - Other (please specify)

2. Why were you not doing these activities before you came to university?

3. What social activities have you stopped doing since you came to university?
   - Cultural events
   - Theatre/cinema
   - Shopping
   - Eating out
   - Sport (play)
   - Music events
   - Other (please specify)

4. If you socialise with non-students, how and where did you meet?

5. Where do you socialise with friends? (choose as many as you like)
   - At home (university)
   - Students union
   - Accommodation
   - Other venues
   - Other (please specify)

6. When you go back home for vacations, how do you fit back in with non-student friends?

7. Can you say why the above may have happened?
8. Do you go home during term time? (not including vacation periods)

9. If yes to question 9, how often do you go home?

Other (please specify)

10. Why do you go home during term time?

11. If no to question 8, why do you not return home during term time?

Social activities within the term time location (b)

1. Who do you socialise with in the evenings? (choose as many as you like)
   - Family
   - Friends
   - Partner
   - Other (please specify)

2. Where do you socialise with friends? (choose as many as you like)
   - At home
   - Students Union
   - Other places
   - Local social
   - Other (please specify)

3. Do you socialise with your student friends in the evening?

4. If yes to question 3, how do you get home in the evening? (choose as many as you like)
   - Walk
   - Other/own cycle
   - Lift with friends
   - Taxi
   - Parents
   - Stay at hostels
   - Other (please specify)

5. If no to question 3, why do you not socialise with your student friends?
Contact details

Thank you for participating in this piece of research.

As part of this ongoing project you are also invited to participate in an in-depth interview with myself, designed to add more depth to the broader results of the survey. This will consist of two interviews, one conducted within your home and the other whilst walking around in Portsmouth.

More detailed information will be made available upon request as well as information regarding how to participate. I can be contacted via my email: mark.holtong@port.ac.uk.

*1. If you are interested in participating in the interview stage then please check "YES" below.

☐ Yes please make sure you have inserted your email address in the box below.
☐ No

Please check "YES" in the following section if you wish to be entered into the £25 iTunes voucher prize draw. The winner, chosen at random, will be notified by email on December 14th 2011. Only one entry per person and no cash alternative can be substituted for the prize.

*2. I wish to be entered into the free prize draw.

☐ Yes (please make sure you have inserted your email address in the box below).
☐ No

3. Please insert your UNIVERSITY email address in the box below.

(This information will only be used to contact the winner of the prize draw. If those interested in taking part in an interview, please DO NOT give your name.)
Appendix II – Email Inviting Respondents to Take Part in the Web-based Survey:

Dear student,

I am currently researching towards a PhD within the Department of Geography, here at the University of Portsmouth (supervised by Dr. Carol Ekinsmyth and Dr. Liz Twigg). As part of my research I am conducting an online, web-based survey with all full time undergraduate students within the University of Portsmouth. The objective of this survey is to begin to establish how students use space and place within their term time university location.

If you would like to take part in this short survey, please follow the link below:

https://www.surveymonkey.com/s/thestudentcitysurvey

If you complete this survey before Friday 25th November you will have the opportunity to be entered into a free prize draw to win a £50 iTunes voucher.

If you would like to know more about this research and your involvement then please email me directly at

PLEASE DO NOT REPLY TO THIS EMAIL.

Thank you for your time,

Mark Holton

Department of Geography

http://webmail.port.ac.uk/gw/webacc?UserContext=t?casa5929a1dd7ff81344bb4c1d5f51... 01/12/2011
Appendix III – Email to Departmental Managers:

"Students and the 'Student City' Survey
From: Mark Holton
To: [Redacted]
Date: Thursday - 13 October, 2011 3:11 PM
Subject: "Students and the 'Student City' Survey"

Dear [Redacted],
Further from my conversation with [Redacted] please could you distribute this email to the undergraduate students within your department.
Thank you and best wishes,
Mark Holton
Department of Geography

Dear student,
I am currently researching towards a PhD within the Department of Geography, here at the University of Portsmouth (supervised by Dr. Carol Ekinsmyth and Dr. Liz Twigg). As part of my research I am conducting an online, web-based survey with all full time undergraduate students within the University of Portsmouth. The objective of this survey is to begin to establish how students use space and place within their term time university location.

If you would like to take part in this short survey, please follow the link below:

https://www.surveymonkey.com/s/thestudentcitysurvey

If you complete this survey before Friday 25th November you will have the opportunity to be entered into a free prize draw to win a £50 i-Tunes voucher.
If you would like to know more about this research and your involvement then please email me directly at

[Redacted]

PLEASE DO NOT REPLY TO THIS EMAIL.
Thank you for your time,
Mark Holton
Department of Geography

https://webmail.port.ac.uk/gw/webact?User_contena=7ccaza.5929a1d6d8134d8b4c1d6d51..._01/12/2011

xiii
Appendix IV – Email to Heads of Department Requesting Assistance with Contacting Students:

A request for assistance from the department of Geography

From: Mark Holton
To: [Redacted]
Date: Monday - 10 October, 2011 11:10 AM
Subject: A request for assistance from the department of Geography

Dear [Redacted],

I am currently researching towards a PhD within the Department of Geography, here at the University of Portsmouth (supervised by Dr. Carol Ekinsmyth and Dr. Liz Twigg). As part of my research I intend to conduct an online, web-based survey with all full time undergraduate students within the University of Portsmouth. The objective of this survey is to begin to establish how students consume space and place within their term time university location.

I am writing to seek your permission for me to contact your departmental manager and ask if they may distribute the web-link to the survey amongst the undergraduate cohort within your department. As a way of enticing responses I am also offering each participant the opportunity to be entered into a prize draw to win a £50 i-Tunes voucher.

I have gained approval from the ethics committee and sought advice from the University’s Internal Communications Manager [Redacted] on the University’s position on allowing me to contact students via e-mail and I have been advised that this is an appropriate mode of access.

If you would like to confirm any of these details further then please contact one of my supervisors on 023 9284 2504 who will gladly answer any queries.

Thank you for your time and I look forward to hearing from you.

Mark Holton
Department of Geography

https://webmail.port.ac.uk/gw/webacc?User_context=f7eaa29a10dd81344b64c1d6f51... 01/12/2011
Appendix V – Invitation Letter for Prospective Interview Participants:

Dear student,

Thank you for taking the time to complete a survey for me recently. I am writing to you as you identified yourself as possibly being available for an interview for the next stage of my research for my PhD project.

I would be most grateful if you could confirm whether or not you are still interested in carrying on with this process. Here is a brief outline of what will be expected of you, if you do wish to continue:

The first part of the interview will consist of an interview conducted on foot around the city centre of Portsmouth. I will ask you to select two destinations within the city where you socialise regularly (this can include places where you go out at night, go shopping, eat out, meet friends to study or places of special interest such as the seafront, Southsea Common or one of the parks). We will spend approximately 45 minutes to an hour walking between these places and discussing why you socialise in these spaces and more generally how you have engaged with the city, including University spaces, during your time at University. I will record the interviews throughout and use a GPS device (like satellite navigation) to record waypoints so I can pinpoint the journey on a map. I will also bring a camera so we can take photographs of specific places or features. Please note that these interviews will only be conducted between the hours of 10am and 3pm Monday to Friday.

The second part of the interview will be conducted at the Department of Geography in Buckingham building, either immediately before or after the walking aspect to discuss how you interpret the private and communal spaces within your home. In order to do this I will require you to send me photographs of the spaces in your student home (kitchen, living room, dining room, bedroom etc) which I will print and we can use them as a way of discussing your relationship with where you live. This part will take approximately 15 to 30 minutes and will be audio recorded.

Again, thank you for your participation and I look forward to hearing from you.

Best wishes,

Mark Holton
PhD Student
Department of Geography
Buckingham Building
University of Portsmouth

http://www.port.ac.uk/departments/academic/geography/staff/title,119686,en.html
Appendix VI – Consent Form for Interview Participants:

Consent Form

Dear participant,

Thank you for taking the time to contribute to this research project. This study is aimed at recognising how residentially dispersed students consume space and place within their term time university location.

This interview will be recorded and transcribed with names, places and street names altered or omitted so as to maintain complete confidentiality.

The research project itself will be available for viewing upon completion by request from the University of Portsmouth library after the autumn of 2013.

Thank you once again for contributing to this project.

Mark Holton

Please complete the following details in case I need to contact you after the interview for minor information.

Name:
Age:
Subject:
Year of study:
Telephone number:
Email address:

The above details will kept in strictest confidence and separate from any transcriptions. Any direct quotes will be identified within the study under a pseudonym.

I agree to the data I contribute being retained for future, REC approved, research:

I agree to the use of photographic evidence being used within the research project:

..............................................  .................................................................
Interviewer signature/date  Participant signature/date
Appendix VII – LookUP Advert for Interview Participants:

Paid participants required for a geography research study

Research study: Experiences of students living with their parents
Researcher: Mark Holton, Department of Geography
Time requirement: 60 minutes

- Are you a full-time University of Portsmouth UG student who lives at home with your parents here in Portsmouth?

Researchers at the Department of Geography are looking at how the residential circumstances of undergraduate students influence their experience of their home and social lives.

The study will involve going on a walking interview around the city to discuss the participants’ interactions with the city, and you will receive £5 as a thank you for your help.

This study is focused primarily at students living with their parents. However, all willing participants will be considered.

Contact

For further information on participating, please contact: [Contact information]

University of Portsmouth in the news

Find out where the University has been mentioned in the local and national press. [MORE]

News in brief

Tweeting from the North Pole
November 17:

Two polar explorers are due to visit the Department of Sport and Exercise Science this week. Alex Hibbert and Justin Miller are about to embark on The Dark Ice Project. They will be testing equipment in the cold chamber, including an iPhone in a protective case that they will use as a camera, to check email, and to tweet.

Professor Tipton wins best paper
October 30:

Professor Mike Tipton is today being presented with a prize for best research paper in the journal, Institute of Health Promotion and Education, at the House of Commons. He was the UK member of the international taskforce which put together guidelines in response to 3,000 people dying from immersion-related incidents each day, the second most common cause of accidental death in most countries of the world.
Appendix VIII – Confirmation Tests for Multinomial Logistic Regression:

Multicollinearity:

Before modelling, the independent variables were tested for multicollinearity. One of the assumptions of regression modelling is that the independent variables should not be strongly related to each other ((Pallant, 2009). Field (2009) goes on to point out that if two variables are perfectly correlated (a correlation of 1) then the values for \( b \) would become interchangeable for each variable and it would be difficult to discern their relative associations with the dependent variable. In order to test for multicollinearity, Acton and Miller (2009) recommend running a tolerance and Variable Inflation Factor (VIF) collinearity diagnostics test. If the ‘Tolerance’ value is greater than .4 and the ‘VIF’ value is less than 10 then there is little chance of multicollinearity and important variables are unlikely to be found non-significant. This testing was undertaken in SPSS, with nothing problematic being reported, as outlined in table i, meaning all of the independent variables can be included within the model.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>Tolerance</th>
<th>VIF</th>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>Tolerance</th>
<th>VIF</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Year of study</td>
<td>.811</td>
<td>1.233</td>
<td>Recommended</td>
<td>.916</td>
<td>1.091</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age</td>
<td>.894</td>
<td>1.118</td>
<td>Reputation</td>
<td>.818</td>
<td>1.222</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ethnicity</td>
<td>.960</td>
<td>1.041</td>
<td>Gain experience</td>
<td>.881</td>
<td>1.136</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gender</td>
<td>.939</td>
<td>1.065</td>
<td>Leave home</td>
<td>.938</td>
<td>1.066</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parent with degree</td>
<td>.889</td>
<td>1.124</td>
<td>Own decision</td>
<td>.692</td>
<td>1.445</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Straight to university</td>
<td>.905</td>
<td>1.105</td>
<td>Parent decision</td>
<td>.911</td>
<td>1.098</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Close to home</td>
<td>.902</td>
<td>1.108</td>
<td>School decision</td>
<td>.663</td>
<td>1.509</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Quality of course</td>
<td>.971</td>
<td>1.030</td>
<td>Gain qualifications</td>
<td>.899</td>
<td>1.112</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table i: Collinearity statistics for the independent variables.

In interpreting the results for Models One and Two, the ‘Model Fitting Information’ (Table ii) suggests that both of the final models produce a significant overall fit to the data (\( p = .000 \) tested against a chi-squared distribution). With all independent variables fitted, the ‘Pseudo R-square’ equivalents (Table iii) suggest that the amount of variance explained by model One ranges from 37.5 per cent (Mc Fadden) to 58.9 per cent (Nagelkerke) while the amount of variance explained by model Two ranges from 27.1 per cent (Cox and Snell) to 40.1 per cent (Nagelkerke). The ‘Likelihood Ratio Tests’
(Table iv) indicate that for Model One, six independent variables have a significant \( p \) value, *year of study, age, straight to university, gain experience, leave home* and *close to university*, meaning they will have a significant effect somewhere within the model upon the odds of living in halls or in rented accommodation. Likewise, for Model Two, six independent variables have a significant \( p \) value, *age, straight to university, gain experience, leave home, close to home* and *reputation*, suggesting they will exert some significant effect within the non-typical accommodation model upon the odds of living with parents or in their own home. The final important tables to look at are the classification tables (Tables v and vi). As Acton and Miller (2009) suggest, in order to identify the numbers correctly predicted to be in the same category as they actually are, the table should be read on the diagonal from upper left to lower right. The model has classified 76.9 per cent as correct for Model One and 85.8 per cent correct for Model Two and has correctly attributed all of the respondents to the most common category in both models (*rented housing* for Model 1 and *typical accommodation* for Model 2). Whilst this not ideal, Acton and Miller (2009) argue that this is better than the model producing a random distribution, where a quarter each of correct classifications would be generated.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Model One</th>
<th></th>
<th>Model Two</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Typical accommodation</td>
<td></td>
<td>Non-typical accommodation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-2 Log Likelihood</td>
<td></td>
<td>-2 Log Likelihood</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Intercept Only</td>
<td>1756.456</td>
<td>1098.860</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Final</td>
<td>1078.521</td>
<td><strong>677.935</strong></td>
<td>781.979</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**\( p<0.0005 \) *\( p<0.05 \)**

Table ii: Model Fitting Information for models predicting the personal characteristics of students according to their residential circumstances

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Model One</th>
<th></th>
<th>Model Two</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Typical accommodation</td>
<td></td>
<td>Non-typical accommodation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cox and Snell</td>
<td>.492</td>
<td></td>
<td>.271</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nagelkerke</td>
<td>.589</td>
<td></td>
<td>.401</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>McFadden</td>
<td>.375</td>
<td></td>
<td>.281</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table iii: Pseudo R-Square values and Chi-Square for models predicting the personal characteristics of students according to their residential circumstances
Table iv: -2 Log Likelihood Ratio Tests for models predicting the personal characteristics of students according to their residential circumstances

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Model One Typical accommodation -2 log likelihood</th>
<th>chi-square</th>
<th>Model Two Non-typical accommodation -2 log likelihood</th>
<th>chi-square</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Intercept</td>
<td>1078.521</td>
<td></td>
<td>781.979</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Year of Study (yr 1)</td>
<td><strong>1468.603</strong></td>
<td><strong>390.082</strong></td>
<td>783.756</td>
<td>1.777</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age (under 21)</td>
<td>1084.559</td>
<td>*6.038</td>
<td>794.309</td>
<td><strong>12.331</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ethnicity (white)</td>
<td>1083.931</td>
<td>5.410</td>
<td>787.618</td>
<td>5.639</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gender (female)</td>
<td>1081.409</td>
<td>2.888</td>
<td>786.826</td>
<td>4.848</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parent with degree</td>
<td>1079.106</td>
<td>.585</td>
<td>786.833</td>
<td>4.855</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Straight to university</td>
<td>1086.280</td>
<td>*7.759</td>
<td>792.392</td>
<td><strong>10.413</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gain experience</td>
<td>1108.406</td>
<td><strong>29.885</strong></td>
<td>812.734</td>
<td><strong>30.756</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Leave home</td>
<td>1128.540</td>
<td><strong>50.019</strong></td>
<td>843.661</td>
<td><strong>61.683</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Qualifications</td>
<td>1080.073</td>
<td>1.552</td>
<td>783.764</td>
<td>1.785</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parent decision</td>
<td>1083.805</td>
<td>5.284</td>
<td>784.756</td>
<td>2.777</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School decision</td>
<td>1083.014</td>
<td>4.493</td>
<td>784.545</td>
<td>2.566</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Own decision</td>
<td>1082.322</td>
<td>3.801</td>
<td>785.668</td>
<td>3.690</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Close to home</td>
<td>1156.459</td>
<td><strong>77.938</strong></td>
<td>867.873</td>
<td><strong>85.894</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Quality of course</td>
<td>1079.701</td>
<td>1.180</td>
<td>782.864</td>
<td>.885</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Recommended</td>
<td>1081.360</td>
<td>2.839</td>
<td>781.988</td>
<td>.009</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reputation</td>
<td>1081.552</td>
<td>3.032</td>
<td>792.852</td>
<td><strong>10.873</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**p<0.0005 *p<0.05

Table iv: -2 Log Likelihood Ratio Tests for models predicting the personal characteristics of students according to their residential circumstances

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Observed</th>
<th>Predicted</th>
<th>Rented</th>
<th>Hall</th>
<th>Non-typical</th>
<th>Percent Correct</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Rented</td>
<td></td>
<td>535</td>
<td>76</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>83.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hall</td>
<td></td>
<td>22</td>
<td>161</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>84.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-typical</td>
<td></td>
<td>79</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>74</td>
<td>43.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Overall Percentage</td>
<td></td>
<td>63.5%</td>
<td>25.4%</td>
<td>11.1%</td>
<td>76.9%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table v: Classification table for Model One predicting the personal characteristics of students living in typical accommodation

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Observed</th>
<th>Predicted</th>
<th>Own home with parents</th>
<th>Typical</th>
<th>Percent Correct</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Own home</td>
<td></td>
<td>9</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>with parents</td>
<td></td>
<td>2</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>70</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Typical</td>
<td></td>
<td>3</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>809</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Overall Percentage</td>
<td></td>
<td>1.4%</td>
<td>7.0%</td>
<td>91.6%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table vi: Classification table for Model Two predicting the personal characteristics of students living in non-typical accommodation