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Generation Stuck at Home: The experiences and perceptions of young adults living with their parents in Ireland.

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Abstract

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Over the last few years, there has been a significant increase in the numbers of young adults living with their parents in Ireland, particularly within the 25-29 age bracket. From the life-course perspective, leaving home is considered an important marker in the transition to adulthood. However, like other milestones such as marriage and parenthood, leaving home is increasingly being delayed, especially in the Irish context. While there are many accounts of this delay in relation to increasing economic uncertainty, job insecurity, welfare state retrenchment, as well as the housing crisis in the Irish context, there is less attention paid to the day-to-day lives of the young adults experiencing the delay. Using theories of the life-course, individualisation, and risk society, this thesis examines the experiences and perceptions of young adults who continue to live with their parents through qualitative semi-structured interviews. The findings suggest that young adults are grateful to be able to remain in the parental home, and that there are many advantages, particularly in the context of the Irish housing market. However, there are also several constraints, and the young adults' experiences show that living at home can impact their independence, their relationships with parents, as well as the negotiation of adult status. The young adults also experienced a sense of pessimism in relation to their future housing trajectories, and a discrepancy between their housing expectations and the reality of the current housing market.

Keywords: Co-residence, home leaving, adulthood, life-course, precarity.

Popular Science Summary

In recent years, there has been a large increase in the number of young adults living with their parents in Ireland, especially those aged 25-29. Leaving the family home is traditionally seen as a key step towards adulthood, similar to the milestones of marriage and parenthood. However these milestones are now more delayed. Economic uncertainty, job insecurity and reduced welfare support are amongst reasons for this delay. Despite these factors being well-documented, less is known about the lives of young adults who live with their parents. This study explores the experiences and perceptions of young adults who continue to live with their parents through theories of the life-course, individualisation, and risk society. Using qualitative semi-structured interviews, the research reveals that many young adults appreciate the ability to live at home, particularly due to the housing crisis in Ireland, and that there are several benefits. These include financial benefits, the comfort and care provided at home, and the emotional and social support from parents, However, living with parents also presents challenges. It can affect the independence of young adults, their relationship with their parents, and whether they feel like adults or not. Many young adults feel pessimistic about their future housing prospects. There is also a large difference between their expectations and desire to leave home and the reality of the housing market.

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Chapter 1: Introduction

1.1 Background

In the last few years, the percentage of adults living with their parents in Ireland has significantly increased. In 2022, 89% of young adults between the ages of 20-24 and 68% between the ages of 25-29 were living with their parents (Eurostat, 2023). This is considerably higher than the EU averages; 74% of 20-24 year olds and 41% of 25-29 year olds lived with their parents (Eurostat, 2023). Furthermore, in 2019, only 45% of 25-29 year olds in Ireland lived with their parents, meaning there was a substantial increase of 23% in just three years, one of the largest increases within the EU (Eurostat, 2023). While a similar trend has been observed in other countries, mainly the UK, the US, and Australia, it is likely that the situation in Ireland has been exacerbated by the ongoing 'housing crisis'. Since the economic crash in 2007, the housing system in Ireland has transformed from that of a homeowner society to increased reliance on an unaffordable and insecure private rental sector (Byrne, 2020).

Leaving the parental home has traditionally been considered an adulthood transition marker within the life course perspective (Elder, 1985). However, as transition pathways become longer and more complex, many markers of adulthood such as marriage, parenthood, and leaving the parental home are postponed. These changes in the transition to adulthood may be understood through Arnett's (2004, 1997, 1998) concept of 'emerging adulthood', which advocates for a new period in the life course between adolescence and adulthood, with lengthy explorations of possibilities and autonomy. Individual conceptions of autonomy and internal markers of adulthood are emphasised. However, there are also numerous structural factors at play such as increasingly precarious trajectories, the decline of traditional social markers of adulthood, and the emphasis on personal choice within an increasingly volatile socio-economic system. These structural and economic shifts can be understood through the theories of 'risk society' and the individualisation process (Beck, 1992; Beck & Beck-Gernsheim, 2002; Giddens, 1999).

There is limited research on the impact of the delayed transition to independent housing on the lives of young adults. While there are benefits of remaining at home, mainly financial or related to comfort and care (Mitchell, 2004), there are also several challenges and constraints reflected in the literature. Living in the parental home can impact the independence and autonomy of

young adults, as well as the dynamics and functioning of the household (Burn & Szoeki, 2016). The parent-child relationship has the potential to be shaped by continued co-residence, but can also shape the experience of remaining at home for the young adult (Kins et al., 2014). Living at home can also affect young adults' construction of adult identity and status (Sassler et al., 2008).

This research was inspired by the extensive Irish media coverage which portrays young adults as 'failing to launch adult lives' (Johns, 2023), being 'stuck' living with parents (McMorrow, 2024), and as being 'locked out' of the housing market (Murray, 2023), as well as framing the housing crisis as one of the greatest challenges for young adults in Ireland. I was also motivated by my own experience of living in Sweden, a country with extremely low levels of parent-child co-residence, just 6.3% for 25-29 year olds in 2022 (Eurostat, 2023). Additionally, I was inspired by the first-hand experiences and stories from my peers in Dublin who remain in the parental home, even as they reach their mid-to-late twenties and engage in full-time employment. Despite the widespread media coverage, there is little academic research on the lives of the young adults who live with their parents in Ireland.

1.2 Research Issue

Housing is the defining issue facing Ireland, with 55% of Irish people listing it as their main concern, compared to an EU average of 10% (European Commission, 2023, p.18). Despite the widespread media coverage of young adults living with their parents, most academic research focuses on the housing market rather than the lives of those affected (Byrne, 2020, 2022; Norris, 2016a, 2016b; Waldron, 2021). This thesis seeks to fill the knowledge gap by bringing forward the perspectives of young adults who live with their parents through qualitative research.

1.3 Aims and Research Question

This study aims to highlight the experiences of living with parents for young adults in Ireland, as well as their perceptions and feelings the situation. The experiences, thoughts, and feelings of the young adults are in focus throughout. Therefore, the research question is: *how do young adults in Ireland experience and perceive living with their parents?*

The research question has two aims. The first is to examine what the young adults experience through living with their parents. The second aim is to explore how the young adults perceive and feel about their experience of living at home.

1.4 Contribution to Research

The ongoing housing crisis in Ireland and the resulting numbers of young adults living with their parents is of considerable concern for Irish society. There is limited research on the lives of young adults who remain in the parental home, and very little in the Irish context, despite the widespread and increasing nature of the trend. This thesis will contribute to the field of research on parental co-residence, and how it is experienced and viewed by the young adults themselves. The focus on Ireland, and Dublin in particular, highlights the perspectives of those whose decision (or lack thereof) to remain in the parental home is highly influenced by the unaffordable housing market.

1.5 Clarifications

While there are contested meanings, the term ‘young adults’ is used to refer those between the ages of 18 and 29 in this thesis. ‘Emerging adults’ is used when discussing the work of Arnett (2004, 1997, 1998), but ‘young adults’ is the main term employed. This study focuses on the 25-29 age group, and participants are also referred to as young adults. Similarly, the terms co-residence, parental co-residence, cohabitation, living at home, and living with parents are used interchangeably and refer to young adults who live with their parents. Furthermore, the word ‘parents’ is used throughout, yet it may refer to those who live with one or two parents.

1.6 Delimitations

This study is of qualitative nature and does not claim to be representative of the Irish population. The data comes from a limited number of young adults who live with their parents, yet it still provides insight into their experiences and perceptions. The study is also limited to the sample of participants aged 25-27 who live in Dublin and surrounding commuter towns. The use of Ireland in the thesis title and research question serves to contextualise the thesis and research problem. This thesis does not claim to represent young adults from other parts of

Ireland and young adults of other ages. However, many of the findings may still be relevant and applicable to other contexts.

1.7 Thesis Structure

Chapter one focused on introducing the topic and the research problem, as well as explaining the rationale for the study and its contribution to research. Chapter two deals with an overview of previous literature. Chapter three examines the theoretical framework which is used to understand the phenomenon of young adults living with their parents. Chapter four explores the methods of this research, including the methodological approach, sampling, data analysis, and ethical considerations. Chapter five presents the main findings of the data through three main themes. Chapter six comprises of the analysis and discussion of the findings outlined in the previous chapter, drawing on previous literature and theories, and examining the significance of the findings. Finally, chapter seven deals with the final summary and addresses the limitations, further research, and conclusion.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

2.1 Introduction

As this research examines the experiences of young adults living with their parents, it is necessary to understand the shift that has occurred in recent years in which adults are either remaining at home for longer or returning after a period of independent living. Much of the literature is based on theories of the transition to adulthood and 'emerging adulthood'. There is also evidence that the increase in continued parental co-residence is due to economic changes and the increasingly uncertain housing trajectories of young adults. This perspective is especially pertinent to the Irish context, where there has been a significant transformation in housing tenure in recent years, particularly since the Global Financial Crisis. The relationship between welfare regimes and housing systems is also explored. On an individual level, the personal experiences of young adults living with their parents is considered. The focus is on parent-child relations, independence and privacy, and adult identity. Finally, the consequences for young adults on a structural level is examined, such as potential effects on fertility patterns or wealth accumulation.

2.1 Staying at Home: An Increasing Trend

In many Western countries, young adults living with parents throughout their twenties has become a demographic phenomenon (Kins et al., 2014; Nave-Herz, 1997). There may be a diverse range of reasons for their residential status. Many suggest that financial reasons are the motive behind young adults remaining in the parental home or returning to it after a period of absence (Aassve et al., 2002; Da Vanzo & Goldscheider, 1990). Young adults spend longer in higher education which postpones financial independence, and therefore, the transition to residential independence (Settersten & Ray, 2010). Although it is now accepted to live independently, with friends, or co-habit with a partner in many societies, for some young adults, the cost-benefit of remaining in the parental home may be more favourable than leaving (Kins et al., 2014). The parental home may be a more attractive place to live as families' living conditions have improved and there are fewer children within the home than in the past (Kins et al., 2014). Mencarini et al. (2017) suggest that young adults in Italy, mainly men, choose to remain in the parental home because they benefit from the care of their parents. Young adults also have less conflict with their parents than previous generations and maintain good

relationships, which may contribute to remaining in the parental home for longer (Kins et al., 2014; Nave-Herz, 1997).

Parental co-residence may be more of a choice today than in the past, when in many societies it was expected to stay in the parental home until marriage (Nave-Herz, 1997). When Ireland was an overwhelmingly Catholic country, late home leaving with direct transitions from the family of origin to a family based on marriage and parenthood were the norm, with low cohabitation levels (Iacovou, 2002). Marriage is no longer a requirement to leave the family home in the United States and many European countries, with the exception of some Southern European countries such as Italy, where young adults continue to co-reside with their parents until marriage (Lanz & Tagliabue, 2007). However, romantic relationships play a large role in stimulating young adults to leave the parental home, with unmarried cohabitation being one of the most common living situations for young adults (Seiffge-Krenke, 2010). There are also varied reasons for returns to the parental home, or ‘boomerang moves’ (Arundel & Lennartz, 2017). ‘Turning points’ which create disruptions such as unemployment, partnership dissolution, or leaving education can trigger returns to the parental home (Seiffge-Krenke, 2010; Stone et al., 2013). According to Arundel and Lennartz (2017), a move to unemployment increases the propensity of returning home by over 50%. However, as argued by Arundel and Ronald (2016) and Arundel and Lennartz (2017), the structural determinants of many of these factors cannot be ignored, and that the residential status of young adults is fundamentally shaped by the economy, housing system, and welfare regime of the context. This is explored later in the chapter.

2.2 The Transition to Adulthood

Much of the research focused on prolonged parental co-residence is based on theories of the transition to adulthood and the concept of ‘emerging adulthood’. Many argue that the tendency of young adults to continue residing with parents is part of a broader trend in many Western societies where the path to adulthood is longer (Arnett, 2000; Kins et al., 2014). The transition to adulthood is considered a status passage in the life-course, and involves several role and status changes (Elder et al., 2003; Elder, 1985). Becoming an adult has usually been described through a series of events including entering the labour market, leaving the parental home, forming a relationship, and becoming a parent (Buchmann, 1989; Elder, 1985; Elder & Shanahan, 2006; Gauthier, 2007; Shanahan, 2000). The transition to adulthood can be viewed

as a “demographically dense life period when transition events accumulate and partially overlap” (Buchmann & Kriesi, 2011, p.482). The significance of the life-course perspective is explored in the following chapter.

Changes in the transition to adulthood in the US have been explored for several decades (Goldscheider & Goldscheider, 1999; Goldscheider & DaVanzo, 1985, 1989), and more recently in Europe. In most Western Countries, transition processes are increasingly prolonged, and traditional transition markers such as leaving the parental home, marriage, and parenthood have been postponed (Gauthier, 2007). However, there is significant heterogeneity across European countries (Buchmann & Kriesi, 2011). Buchmann and Kriesi (2011) suggest that despite postponement across Europe, there is no conformity or convergence and cross-national differences have remained relatively stable. Billari and Liefbroer (2010) show that the only homogeneity in pathways to adulthood across Europe is the idea that they are late, protracted, and complex. There may also be a de-standardisation in the transition to adulthood, which Brückner and Mayer (2005) argue involves increasingly smaller proportion of young adults experiencing transition events or specific sequences of events, the events occurring at more dispersed ages, and greater variation in duration (p.32). De-standardisation is most evident in relation to the processes of family formation as age variance rises and processes become more dissimilar (Elzinga & Liefbroer, 2007).

2.2.1 Emerging Adulthood

As a result of changing transition pathways and the delay of taking on traditionally adult roles such as a stable job, marriage, and parenthood, the idea of ‘emerging adulthood’ developed. The period from the ages of 18 to 29 has been conceptualised as ‘emerging adulthood’ by Arnett (1997, 2000, 2001, 2015). According to Arnett (1997, 2015), this period is viewed as being highly unsettled and unstructured, with less importance placed on traditional markers of adulthood, but rather on individuals’ conception of autonomy. Emerging adulthood is a time of lengthy explorations of identity, career possibilities, love, and lifestyle (Arnett, 2000). In the emerging adulthood theory, it is such individualistic factors drive the delay in the transition to residential independence (Arnett, 2000; 2004). Kins and Beyers (2010) and Kins et al. (2014) also suggest that it is this delaying of adult commitments by ‘emerging adults’ which leads to prolonged residence in the family home.

However, there is criticism of this representation of the transition to adulthood for its focus on free choice, rather than structural forces (Bynner, 2005; Côté & Bynner, 2008). Côté and Bynner (2008) argue that emerging adulthood is better explained through the changing economic conditions which contribute to increasingly precarious trajectories, through the decline of social markers traditionally associated with adulthood, and the individualisation process. Bynner (2005) reasons that structural forces fundamentally shape identities and roles in response to modern conditions, rather than merely influencing and constraining goals as suggested by Arnett. Similarly, young adults are developing complex alternative pathways to adulthood as a result of widespread financial insecurity (Blatterer, 2007). The concept of emerging adulthood overlooks the social, institutional and cultural contexts which shape adulthood transitions, as well as the significant cross-national variations (Arundel & Ronald, 2016). Arundel and Ronald (2016) suggest that housing pathways, due to structural and economic shifts, and how they relate to conceptions of dependence and independence in the transition to adulthood, are particularly absent from emerging adulthood. The structural determinants of housing pathways are discussed in the subsequent section.

While the majority of work on the transition to adulthood recognises leaving the parental home as an important event or transition marker, Arundel & Ronald (2016) contend that many, including Buchmann and Kriesi (2011), fail to fully acknowledge the significance of housing. They argue not only does independent housing have a central role as a marker of adulthood, but housing is also highly intertwined with other transition markers such as family formation. Normalised routes into adulthood are linked with the movement through different types of housing. In many contexts, the achievement of homeownership is “synonymous with the full realization of independent status” (Arundel & Ronald, 2016, p.887). This may be particularly true in Ireland, which for many years was considered a ‘homeowner society’ where homeownership was an achievable dream across all social classes (Norris, 2016b). Moreover, the increase in young adults living with their parents has coincided with the change in housing tenure and the housing crisis. Kins and Beyers (2010) also suggest that independent living is associated with accelerated achievement of certain criteria for adulthood, while parental co-residence can stunt this process. This is explored further in this chapter through the discussion on adult identity.

2.3 Structural Determinants of the Transition to Adulthood and Housing

2.3.1 Economic Influences

Longstanding academic literature suggests there is a relationship between economic conditions and remaining in the parental home. Goldscheider and DaVanzo (1985, 1989) show that in the US, both young adults' and parents' economic resources influence the residential status of young adults. The working lives of young adults in many countries are becoming more precarious as permanent full time jobs are replaced by contract or temporary opportunities (Brückner & Mayer, 2005). They are faced with ongoing economic stagnation in many contexts, as well as instability and uncertainty (Beck, 1992; Beck & Beck-Gernsheim, 2002; Mary, 2014). Co-residence may be a coping strategy in tough economic times (Hall, 2016). Stone et al. (2013) show that returning home after education is becoming the norm due to the increasingly unpredictable labour market. While there is heterogeneity within Europe, Martínez Mazza (2020) finds that across many European countries, increasing unemployment rates at the time of graduation leads to a higher probability of living with parents, as well as lowering the probability of renting and homeownership, with lasting effects on personal earnings. Lower wages as well as higher rents are also associated with increased co-residence (Hughes, 2003). Srinivas (2019) shows that rents have outstripped the incomes of young adults and that the increasing unaffordability of renting is a significant factor in the rising numbers of young adults living with parents. Acolin et al. (2024) also find that housing affordability is associated with the increase in parental co-residence. The combination of economic uncertainty, precarious and unstable labour markets, and increasing housing costs may all contribute to the increase in young adults living at home.

2.3.2 Welfare Regimes

Arundel and Ronald (2016) highlight structural factors which influence semi-dependent housing (parental co-residence or shared living) and act on top of individual factors, such as economic resources or sharing for social reasons. The rigidity and liquidity of housing is critical in mediating transitions to independent adulthood and is linked to the broader socio-structural determinant of welfare regimes (Arundel & Ronald, 2016; Hoekstra, 2003; Mulder & Billari, 2010).

Welfare regimes, as devised by Esping-Andersen (1990; 2006) can be used to understand the variation in adult transitions across Europe, as they have important effects on opportunities and constraints within the life-course, as well as the normative expectations of pathways to adulthood (Buchmann & Kriesi, 2011; Vogel, 2002). Arundel and Lennartz (2017) suggest that welfare regimes play an important role in the housing careers of young adults, particularly in relation to managing interruptions that occur on the path to residential independence. Welfare regimes also reflect the levels of state support, or lack thereof, that mitigate economic setbacks and enable the economic stability needed to access independent housing (Arundel & Lennartz, 2017; Arundel & Ronald, 2016). Additionally, the socio-cultural expectations related to housing transitions are strongly linked to welfare regimes. The welfare regimes contexts also have the ability to frame expectations of continued parental co-residence or early independence through the levels of state support, or in its absence, family support (Matznetter & Mundt, 2012).

The four main welfare regimes describe differences in the role of the market, the level of state support, and the extent to which the family is a provider of welfare (Esping-Andersen, 1990). Countries with a social democratic regime provide high levels of state support (e.g. Sweden), while market reliance is strong in liberal regimes (e.g. United Kingdom). There is a strong reliance on the family in Southern European regimes (e.g. Italy), while in conservative regimes, there may be a greater mix of influences on housing pathways (e.g. Germany). Ireland is considered to have a liberal welfare regime (with some conservative features). Welfare regime typologies are useful in examining the differences in the institutional and socio-cultural contexts which influence the housing transitions of young adults, despite their limitations (Arundel & Lennartz, 2017; Arundel & Ronald, 2016). Arundel and Ronald (2016) show that the liberal welfare regime, using the UK for data, promotes the highest rates of semi-dependent housing among young adults. This suggests that regimes with low state support, unstable job opportunities, and a less familial-orientation increase the likelihood of semi-dependent housing, whereas in social democratic countries, there is stronger state support and lower rates of semi-dependent housing. On the other hand, southern European countries have high rates of parental co-residence, displaying the importance of family or kinship networks (Arundel & Ronald, 2016).

Due to increasing welfare state retrenchment in many countries, it is possible that the residential independence of young adults will become more unstable, even in contexts with a

high value on autonomy and where social policy has traditionally supported the independent transition to adulthood (Arundel & Lennartz, 2017). This may lead to the growing role of intergenerational support and a ‘re-familisation’ of welfare. This may be the case in Ireland, as large numbers of young adults remain at home for prolonged periods. While welfare regime typologies provide a useful framework to understand the differing trends in the transition to adulthood across Europe and the housing trajectories of young adults, they have been criticised for not fully incorporating housing, resulting in the need to examine the particularities of housing systems themselves (Hoekstra, 2003).

2.4 The Housing System in Ireland

2.4.1 The Decline of Homeownership and the Growth of Private Renting

Ireland’s housing system has undergone a significant change in recent years. For many decades, Ireland was considered one of the traditional “homeowner societies”, along with the UK and the US. However, a remarkable consequence of the global financial crisis has been the transformation in housing tenure in such countries (Byrne, 2020; Kemp, 2015). Ireland has shifted from having one of the highest rates of homeownership in the developed world in the latter half of the 20th century (Norris, 2016a) to increased reliance on a financialised private rental sector, with increasing housing unaffordability and insecurity, and an increase in homelessness (Lima et al., 2023) and young adults living with their parents (Disch & Slaymaker, 2023).

When the global financial crisis emerged in 2007 and the Celtic Tiger era of economic prosperity ended, Ireland’s economy experienced one of the strongest contractions in the developed world, which accentuated the shift from homeownership to the private rental sector (Norris, 2016a; Waldron, 2021). While the building of new houses declined dramatically, population growth remained strong, resulting in increasing house price inflation. This, along with the stricter mortgage rules, pushed some middle-income households into the growing private rental sector (Byrne, 2020; Waldron, 2021). Government housing policy also facilitated the growth of renting through rent subsidies, rather than directly providing social housing (Hearne, 2017; Waldron, 2021). While rents fell in the immediate aftermath of the 2008 crash, they began to rise rapidly in 2013 (Lima et al., 2023). Between 2010 and 2023, rents increased by over 100% (Eurostat, 2024). Byrne (2020) describes Ireland as having “one of the most

poorly regulated rental sectors in Western Europe in terms of rent setting and security of tenure” (p.750).

2.4.2 From Generation Rent to Generation Stuck at Home?

As homeownership levels decline in countries such as Ireland in the aftermath of the global financial crisis, a new ‘Generation Rent’ has emerged (Hoolachan et al., 2017; McKee et al., 2020; Waldron, 2021, 2022). ‘Generation Rent’ refers to young adults who increasingly rely on the private rental sector for longer periods because they are unable to access homeownership or social housing (Hoolachan et al., 2017). Waldron (2022) shows that young renters face significant vulnerabilities due to the market-led and poorly regulated rental sector. The high rents cause a significant financial burden, the quality of accommodation is poor, and leases are insecure. These negative experiences have significant impacts for renters, creating anxiety and feelings of no control, which is detrimental to comfort, security, and quality of life (Waldron, 2022). Waldron (2022) argues that Ireland’s market-led rental sector has led to a “systemic crisis of affordability and security, with a host of individual casualties and damaging societal consequences.” (p.141).

The rental sector in Ireland is associated with precarity. Waldron (2021) found that 78% of renting households experience housing precarity, and 7% of those experience high levels of precarity. Significantly high levels of precarity are found among unemployed and low-to-middle income households and lone parent households. Low-income groups experience this shift in housing tenure most acutely, and the difficulties faced are further compounded by welfare reform and changing labour markets (McKee et al., 2020; Waldron, 2021). However, Bobek et al. (2021) show that young professionals and middle-class workers are also increasingly experiencing difficulties in renting due to unaffordability, as well as being excluded from homeownership. They find that the housing paths of young adults are no longer linear, with upward housing ladders being replaced by moves in many directions, such as moving into the private rental sector, and then returning to the parental home. While Ireland’s rental sector traditionally provided short-term options for students, lone parents, low-income households, and immigrants (Galligan, 2005), it is increasingly providing for a greater variety of households (Waldron, 2021). The largest group of renters is no longer the under 30 age group, but instead the key age of family formation (30-44 years), increasing 191% between 2006 and 2016 (Waldron, 2021). Furthermore, the numbers of renters under 30 have expanded

by just 26% in the same period (Waldron, 2021). This suggests there are increasing numbers of young adults remaining in or returning to the parental home for longer periods.

The affordability and availability of housing both to buy and rent may significantly impact the formation of new households, which is becoming one of Ireland's biggest challenges (Disch & Slaymaker, 2023, p.54). Between 2014 and 2022, the numbers of 25-34 year olds remaining in the family home doubled (Eurostat, 2023). Ireland has an extremely low share of single adult households under the age of 40 compared to other European countries (Disch & Slaymaker, 2023, p.54). According to Disch and Slaymaker (2023), who compared fifteen European countries, despite Ireland having the fourth highest homeownership rate for households over 40 years, it has only the tenth highest rate for households under 40 (p.54). While Ireland is not unique in experiencing falling homeownership rates, it has one of the largest gaps in ownership rates between younger and older generations (Disch & Slaymaker, 2023). Thus, it is becoming increasingly difficult for young adults in Ireland to access independent housing, through either homeownership or private renting, leading to increasing numbers remaining in the family home. This may have a number of consequences, both on a personal and societal level, which is subsequently explored.

2.5 The Lives of Young Adults who Live with Parents

While there is increasing focus on uncertain housing trajectories, there is limited research on how the lives of young adults are affected by continued co-habitation with parents, particularly qualitative research. Much of the literature focuses on the North American context in prior decades (Hartung & Sweeney, 1991; Mitchell et al., 2004; Sassler et al., 2008; White & Rogers, 1997). Many researchers focus on young adults who have returned to the family home after finishing higher education or due another 'turning point' such as unemployment or relationship dissolution (Stone et al., 2013). Other research does not distinguish between young adults who have never left home and those who have returned (Burn & Szoeki, 2016). Amongst returners, Lewis et al. (2016) suggest that there may be both positive and negative feelings associated with the move.

2.5.1 The Benefits of Living with Parents

The limited literature suggests that there are several advantages for young adults who co-reside with parents. Financial support is a key benefit of living at home for young adults, as well as the comforts of the family home (Hartung & Sweeney, 1991; Mitchell, 2004). Some adult children, especially sons, value the domestic benefits of living at home, particularly the work done by mothers such as cooking, cleaning, and laundry (Mencarini et al., 2017; Mitchell, 2004). Lewis et al. (2016) found that some adults are content to return to many aspects of their adolescent lives when they ‘boomerang’ home. Some enjoy being treated like children and relying on their parents to cook meals or being told what household chores to do. Additionally, some are satisfied with the comfort of the family home compared to previous university accommodation (Lewis et al., 2016). There are also benefits in terms of familial relationships and the social and emotional support provided by parents (Mitchell, 2004). Mitchell et al. (2004) found that higher quality relationships with parents were associated with staying in the parental home longer, as well as boomeranging back at a faster rate. Family solidarity may also be high in households where young adults co-reside with parents (Szydlik, 2012). Leopold (2012) shows that young adults who left home earlier receive more financial support from parents, while those who left later received more of their parents’ time and support. Delaying home leaving is associated with increased relationship solidarity in later life, with those who left later living closer to home and having more frequent contact with parents later on (Leopold, 2012). Despite the various benefits associated with remaining in parental home, there are also numerous difficulties faced by young adults, which are subsequently discussed.

2.5.2 The Parent-Child Relationship and the Struggle for Independence

The parent-child relationship is a central aspect of living at home for young adults. While parents provide support to adult children as described above, there is also the possibility for conflict and struggle. Young adults may feel like they are treated as children rather than adults by their parents, and find it difficult to be themselves (Lewis et al., 2016). Similarly, Sassler et al. (2008) suggest that young adults may struggle to have their decisions and opinions respected by their parents, which can lead to conflict within the home. As previously mentioned, young adults may return to dynamics established in childhood, and parents may foster such patterns in an effort to keep them in a childlike, dependent state (Sassler et al., 2008). According to Sassler et al. (2008), behavioural rules and guidelines set by parents can result in resentment from young adults. Parents may try to exert control over decisions relating to jobs, money, and

social lives, despite resistance. Women in particular may be subject to restrictions of their autonomy, and monitoring of their whereabouts and social and romantic lives (Sassler et al., 2008; South & Lei, 2015). Using longitudinal data from Germany, Seiffge-Krenke (2010) shows that young adults who still live in the parental home at age 25 have lower romantic activity than those who have left. Conflict may also arise over household tasks such as cooking and cleaning, as well as the standard to which it is done (Sassler et al., 2008). Young adults can feel a lack of independence and autonomy, yet also acknowledge that remaining at home comes with rules and the need to show consideration for others (Kins et al., 2014; Sassler et al., 2008). Furthermore, clashes and conflicts between young adults and their parents are associated with negative feelings about living in the parental home (Lewis et al., 2016; Sassler et al., 2008). Lewis et al. (2016) show that a closer, more egalitarian relationship where there is equal exchange between parent and child leads to more positive feelings about co-residence. Buhl and Lanz (2007) suggest that compared to young adults who live in the parental home, those who live independently have both better well-being and better relationships with their parents. While leaving home may decrease interaction between parents and children, and decrease dependence on parents, respect between parents and adult children increases (White & Rogers, 1997). Therefore, despite the support and closeness that co-residence may bring to a parent-child relationship, there is also a potential for conflict, as young adults attempt to forge their own lives through independence and autonomous decision-making.

2.5.3 Adult Identity while Living at Home

Many of the factors described above such as the parent-child relationship and the need for independence while living at home can affect how young adults negotiate their identity and status as adults. Although leaving the parental home has long been considered a marker in the transition to adulthood as previously discussed, Arnett (1997, 2001) suggests that young people are increasingly likely to rely on internal markers. Through a questionnaire conducted in the US, Arnett (2001) shows that while 61% of those aged 20-29 believe that leaving the parental home is necessary for the adulthood, there were other individual factors that were viewed as being more important (p.137). These included accepting responsibility for the consequences of your actions, deciding on beliefs and values independent of parents, establishing an equal relationship with parents, and being financially independent (Arnett, 2001, p.137). The development of an adult identity may be based on these individual markers rather than objective transitions, and may also be gradual (Arnett, 2001). Furthermore, Mary (2014) argues

that while adult status is still associated with achieving demographic markers and a stationary social position, young adults increasingly identify with more individual markers of responsibility and maturity. There may also be a discrepancy between societal expectations of transition patterns and young adults perception of their own adult status (Mary, 2014).

Many of Arnett's findings are echoed by the likes of Kins et al. (2014), Lewis et al. (2016), and Sassler et al (2008). According to Sassler et al. (2008), those who engaged in actions such as contributing to the household financially, developing more equal relationships with parents, or making independent decisions, were able to strengthen their adult status, both in terms of their own view of themselves and in the view of their parents. The acknowledgement and acceptance of adult status by their parents is a critical step in the maturation process of young adults (Aquilino, 2006). However, achieving such independence and autonomy, as well as a parent-child relationship of equal status, may be difficult for some young adults who live with their parents (Lewis et al., 2016; Sassler et al., 2008). Thus, leaving home may still be an important milestone in the development of adult identity. However, Kins et al. (2014) found that the same parent-child dynamics and the struggle for a relationship of equal status was present for both young adults who lived at home and those who lived independently. Therefore, while leaving home may promote the achievement of adulthood because of the act itself, or through other indicators such as independent decision-making and financial independence, the navigation and development of the parent-child relationship may be a longer process.

2.5.4 Living with Parents in Ireland

Research on the experience of living with parents is scarce in the Irish context, despite the increasing trend and widespread media coverage. Van Lanen (2022) examines the effect of austerity on the 'home-making' of disadvantaged 18-25 year olds who are eager but unable to leave the parental home. They must adapt their home-making as well as their housing expectations in the context of austerity, as they are unable to achieve the expectations based on the past, mainly the ideal of homeownership (van Lanen, 2022). The only other research in the Irish context is from a survey conducted by the Central Statistics Office (CSO) in 2021. Much of this reflects the literature explored throughout this chapter. According to the CSO (2021), 57% of respondents enjoyed living with a parent, yet 88% would prefer to move out. 52% felt that their parents would not treat them as an adult until they move out, and 70% believed that they did not have enough independence while living at home, such as having friends over or

choosing meals (CSO, 2021). Furthermore, the survey results showed that women are more likely to report not having enough independence (73% compared to 67% of men), not having enough privacy (76% compared to 67%), and that their parents will not treat them like an adult until they move out (58% compared to 46%) (CSO, 2021). Male respondents are more likely to enjoy living with their parents (61%) compared to female respondents (54%) (CSO, 2021). The most common disagreements within the household related to sharing household chores (60%). Disagreements over using shared household facilities such as the bathroom or cooking area (49%) were also relatively common, as were disagreements over making excess noise (48%), and having people over to visit (38%) (CSO, 2021). These findings reflect much of the research on the experiences of young adults living with their parents in other countries. However, there is no qualitative research exploring this in the Irish context.

2.6 Societal Consequences of Extended Parent-Child Co-Residence

2.6.1 Family Formation and Fertility Rates

One of Ireland's biggest challenges relates to the formation of new households (Disch & Slaymaker, 2023) and the transition from co-residence with parents to independent living is vital to this. While existing literature does not link remaining in the parental home to fertility rates, there is evidence that access to housing, and homeownership in particular, may affect fertility rates. In the US, Dettling and Kearney (2014) find that increasing house prices have a negative price effect on fertility rates. Significantly, they also show that changes in house prices have a larger effect on birth rates than changes in unemployment rates. Similarly Malmberg (2012) found that housing market conditions can be equally as important as earnings on fertility rates.

Using Esping-Andersen's (1990, 2006) welfare regimes, Mulder and Billari (2010) suggest that there are different homeownership regimes based on access to mortgages and the share of homeownership. They argue that there is a link between homeownership regimes and low fertility at the macro-level, and countries with the lowest fertility rates have difficult access to mortgages, yet high levels of homeownership. Individuals rely on family help, savings or inheritance to become homeowners. This is relevant in the Irish context, as homeownership in Ireland is no longer an achievable goal for many due to increasing house price inflation combined with stricter post-crash mortgage lending (Waldron, 2021). In the face of these

barriers, many may rely on family help to buy a home. Furthermore, renting has also become increasingly unaffordable, leading to difficulties in the formation of new households (Disch & Slaymaker, 2023). While it cannot be suggested based on the existing research that remaining in the parental home for extended periods affects childbearing, there is a relationship between access to housing and fertility rates.

2.6.2 Asset-Based Welfare and Inter-Generational Inequalities

Over recent decades, the concept of an ‘asset-based’ welfare system has become increasingly dominant in debates on the restructuring of welfare states (Watson, 2009). An asset-based approach to welfare relies on the individual accepting greater responsibility for their welfare by investing in property assets which change in value over time, rather than relying on social transfers from the state (Doling & Ronald, 2010). These assets, in theory, can be used later to supplement welfare needs when income is reduced, and as financial security in old age. Although unevenly distributed, housing is an important source of individual and national wealth, and the most widely held asset (McKee, 2012). As mentioned earlier in this chapter, changing welfare regimes within economic and social processes are inextricably linked to housing systems and markets. Despite its centrality to the security of future welfare, young adults are being increasingly excluded from accessing homeownership (Beer et al., 2011; Doling & Ronald, 2010; Waldron, 2021). As argued by McKee (2012), the critical problem of this asset-based welfare system relates to the implications for younger generations who experience barriers to homeownership and achieve it later in their housing careers. If they have no housing wealth, how are their futures secure in the face of further welfare state retrenchment?

McKee (2012) suggests that the phenomenon of Generation Rent (and arguably those who remain in the parental home) is more than a housing problem, but it displays the fundamental inter-generational inequalities, of which housing wealth is the most visible manifestation. While McKee refers to the UK, this is also extremely relevant to Irish context. Despite the barriers to both renting and homeownership faced by young adults, remaining in the parental home may allow for the accumulation of personal wealth, while maintaining high living standards, as suggested by Tomaszczyk and Worth (2020). Living at home may be a strategy that has emerged in the face of economic and housing insecurity. It allows young adults to save for the future and achieve homeownership, which is necessary to secure future welfare under

the asset-based system. Nonetheless, younger generations may be in danger of experiencing lower living standards than the generation before them (McKee, 2012). Therefore, the exclusion of young people from independent housing is a key public-policy issue.

2.7 Conclusion

As discussed throughout this chapter, there may be varying reasons for continued parental co-residence, yet evidence suggests that the most significant factor is unaffordability and the growing disparity between wages and housing costs. In the Irish context, it is evident that there are increasing numbers of young adults remaining at home due to the ongoing housing crisis. While there is a large amount of literature on why young adults are increasingly remaining in or returning to the family home, particularly quantitative research, there is less focus on how it is experienced on an everyday personal level by the young adults themselves.

As described above, the unaffordability of housing in Ireland suggests that the numbers of young adults living with their parents is likely to remain or increase in the near future. Despite the extensive media coverage on the issue, there is a need to examine the experiences of the young adults in an empirical way. This thesis seeks to examine how the lives of young adults in Ireland are being affected by the continued co-residence with their parents in light of the current housing crisis, as well as how they perceive and feel about the situation.

Chapter 3: Theoretical Framework

3.1 Introduction

The trend of young adults remaining in the parental home for longer periods can be understood through the changing transition to adulthood within the life-course perspective, as well as through the emergence of a ‘risk society’ and the process of individualisation. Similarly, theories on social generations are also relevant. These theories are examined, as well as how they can be used to explore the phenomenon of young adults living with their parents, and their experiences and perceptions.

3.2 The Life-Course Perspective

The life-course perspective is a theoretical framework which examines how the lives of individuals unfold over time within social, cultural, and historical contexts (Elder, 1998; Elder et al., 2003). There are five main principles associated with the life-course perspective which can provide guidance for the study of human lives: lifespan development, agency, time and place, timing, and linked lives (Elder et al., 2003).

The first principle relates to life span development and the idea that ageing and human development are lifelong processes. Through the study of lives over large periods of time, the interplay between individual development and social change can be examined (Elder et al., 2003, p.11). The second principle concerns agency and how individuals construct their own life-course through their actions and choices within the constraints and opportunities of social and historical circumstances. The choices made within the limitations of the context have important consequences for future trajectories (Elder et al., 2003, p.11). The third principle relates to time and place, and how the life-course of individuals is shaped by the historical places and contexts they experience in their lifetime. Both individuals and birth cohorts are highly influenced by historical contexts. For example, men born between 1915 and 1925 in Germany were almost universally involved in the armed forces (Elder et al., 2003, p.12). The fourth principle involves timing and how the developmental consequences of life transitions and events are contingent on when they occur within a person’s lifetime. The same transitions or events can affect individual differently depending on when they occur within the life-course. For example becoming a parent at a very young age affects the individual differently than becoming a parent at an older age. (Elder et al., 2003, p.12). The fifth principle relates to linked

lives. Lives are lived interdependently and socio-historical influences are expressed through a network of shared relationships. Larger social changes can affect individuals and their interpersonal relationship on a more micro level (Elder et al., 2003, p.13).

These five principles promote the awareness of larger social contexts and the timing of events and role changes, as well as recognising individual agency and choice. They also emphasise that the lives of individuals cannot be accurately represented when removed from relationships with others. These principles promote a holistic understanding of lives over time and within changing social contexts (Elder et al., 2003).

3.2.1 The Life-course Perspective and Housing Transitions

The life-course perspective is useful in examining the housing transitions of young adults, particularly leaving the parental home or returning to it. Several of the guiding principles outlined above are relevant. The principle of agency relates to young adults and their choice in remaining in the parental home. While young adults may choose to remain in the parental home longer, their agency is limited by the social and economic context, and in the case of Ireland, unaffordable rents. The choices made have consequences for future trajectories. Similarly, the principle of time and place is relevant as young adults are influenced by their historical context. The lives of young adults today may be shaped by the housing crisis, just as young adults were shaped by economic prosperity and widespread homeownership during the Celtic Tiger. The principle of timing is also applicable to this study as the consequences of leaving home may be contingent upon when it occurs. For example, earlier residential independence is associated with increased financial support from parents (Leopold, 2012). The final principle of linked lives is also important. Young adults remaining at home for longer periods may have consequences for their relationships with their parents, as well consequences for the lives of their parents. Similarly, peers and other relationships may be affected. For example, young adults aged 25 who live in the parental home have less romantic activity than those who left home at an earlier age (Seiffge-Krenke, 2010).

There are other important concepts within life-course theory that are applicable to this research including social pathways, trajectories, and transitions. Social pathways are the sequences of social positions within and between organisations, institutions, and phases of life (Elder et al., 2015, p.15). Social and historical forces often shape these pathways, and individuals create

their own life-course and trajectories from the institutionalised pathways and normative patterns. Elder et al., (2003) also suggest that trajectories are particularly important in the life-course, and that they are sequences of roles and experiences, and made up of transitions or role changes (p.8). Transitions also involve changes in identity or status, both socially and personally. These concepts are valuable when examining the transition of leaving the parental home, or indeed the absence of such transition, as is the case in this study. From the life-course perspective, the transition of leaving home may affect the status or identity of an individual, both in their perception of themselves and the perception others have of them. This is applicable to the perceived adult status of young adults, as previously explored. Furthermore, remaining in the parental home for an extended period of time shapes an individual's trajectory. This may also exemplify the growing variation in the trajectories of young adults. As Martínez Mazza (2020) shows, unemployment after graduation from university lowers the probability of renting and home ownership, as well as having lasting impacts on future earnings.

In sum, the life-course perspective provides a comprehensive framework to understand the lives of individuals and how they are shaped by social, cultural, and historical contexts over the lifetime. By considering the interplay of individual agency and structural constraints, as well as transitions and trajectories, this perspective offers insight into how living in the parental home may affect the experiences and pathways of young adults in Ireland.

3.3 Risk Society and Individualisation

One way of framing the changing nature of the transition to adulthood is within the context of larger shifts in society over the last number of decades and the emergence of an increasingly precarious and uncertain 'risk society' (Beck, 1992; Giddens, 1999). One of the most significant effects of social change which has occurred is the process of 'individualisation' (Beck & Beck-Gernsheim, 2002). Beck (1992) and Giddens (1999) argue that certainties which previously existed have been eroded by changes in economic and social structures. Such changing circumstances have led to increased individualisation, where people have more choices in shaping their life-course, yet also take on greater risks due to the more volatile socio-economic system (Beck, 1992). The process of individualisation is associated with the disintegration of the traditional structures of people's lives, where the "inherited recipes for living and role stereotypes fail to function. There is no historical models for the conduct of life" (Beck & Beck-Gernsheim, 2002, p.26). Much of what previous generations took for granted as

essential parts of the life-course are now uncertain, and outcomes are unpredictable. Individuals' ability to plan a relatively stable life trajectory has also dissipated (Blatterer, 2007). Autonomy and personal development are now dominant, and the individualisation of society means that the responsibility for success or failure is entirely on the individual (Beck & Beck-Gernsheim, 2002).

Furthermore, the increasing role of the free market as well as retrenchment of the welfare state has encouraged decision-making founded on individual interest, and as a consequence, individuals lead more precarious lives (Tomaszczyk & Worth, 2020). Paradoxically, while competitiveness drives the market and enables individual choice, it also constrains choice, particularly for individuals from low socio-economic backgrounds, which reproduces social inequalities (Cobb-Clark, 2008). In the past, individual risk was mitigated through stronger welfare states, permanent employment, and social institutions such as family and marriage, yet these certainties have unravelled and led to increased precarity in transition pathways (Beck, 1992, 2000). The routes into work, education, housing and family formation have been reshaped by such uncertainty (Beck & Beck-Gernsheim, 2002). Therefore, the process of individualisation and the risk society can be used to highlight the interplay between structural changes and individual autonomy in shaping the transition to adulthood, as well as housing transitions.

3.3.1 Risk Society and Housing Transitions

Arundel and Ronald (2016) suggest that there is little acknowledgement of the extent to which the dynamics of a 'risk society' and 'emerging adulthood' manifest in relation to housing, both through changing trajectories and the interrelatedness of housing with other important transition markers. The diversity and complexity of transitions are increasing with longer explorations of individual choice and autonomy (Arnett, 2006), but also with growing precarity (Arundel & Ronald, 2016; Beck, 2000). Arundel and Ronald (2016) also argue that the increasing neo-liberalisation and retrenchment of welfare states in many contexts, as well as the intensified individualisation of society, have led to a re-familisation of welfare, as individuals rely on family for housing support. Moreover, housing systems and norms are an important factor in the propensities for prolonged adolescence and singlehood, and the increasing complexity and length of transitions to adulthood. Arundel and Ronald (2016) call

for the integration of housing into the understanding of the transition to adulthood, as housing is strongly interrelated with other markers of adulthood, as well as life trajectories.

3.4 Inter-Generational Inequalities and a ‘Cleft Generational Habitus’

In addition to life-course theories and individualisation, the growing socio-economic inequalities and inter-generational inequalities, particularly in relation to housing, can be understood through Mannheim's (1952) theory of social generations. According to Mannheim (1952), a generation is a location defined by time and space within the historical process, where people share similar institutional and structural experiences at similar points in their life-course, particularly when they are young (p.289). A generation is also an actuality whereby the common social conditions can lead to the sharing of a similar worldview (Mannheim, 1952). Mannheim (1952) also acknowledges the heterogeneities within a generational and inter-generational differences through generational units, which are smaller groups in a generation stratified by several social structures such as class, race, and gender (p.304). There has been debate around Mannheim's theory, in that he is referring to cohorts rather than generations (Pilcher, 1994). However, Woodman and Wyn (2015), argue that a cohort refers to people who experience specific life events at the same time such as leaving school in the same year, while social generations are a group of people who share fundamental social conditions during their youth and young adulthood (p.57). Thus, a social generation is a more holistic concept which incorporates the subjective experience of historical structures, which influences the day-to-day lives of individuals and social change.

Woodman and Wyn (2015) employ Mannheim's (1952) theory of social generations, as well as Bourdieu's (1984) concept of habitus, and connect it to the risk society (Beck, 1992). Woodman and Wyn (2015) argue that a young person's habitus is shaped by their parents, and that structural conditions which contextualise the parents' and children's upbringings are considerably different due to the speed of social change. This can lead to the development a ‘cleft habitus’ for the child, where their worldviews are inconsistent with their material and social conditions (Woodman & Wyn, 2015, p.66). Using UK data on Baby Boomers and Millennials, Hoolachan and McKee (2019)'s findings support the emergence of a cleft generational habitus, as many Millennials experience disharmony between their expectations of obtaining stable employment and homeownership, and the reality of their experience. The concept of the cleft generational habitus may thus be relevant in understanding how young adults in Ireland perceive their own

housing situation within the current social conditions. It is particularly applicable as many young adults grew up during the Celtic Tiger era, a time of economic prosperity and high levels of homeownership, yet today they face a housing crisis, which undermines the ability to achieve independent housing in any form.

3.5 Conclusion

Leaving the parental home is a marker in the transition to adulthood which occurs within the life-course perspective. As described above, transitions have important consequences for trajectories and pathways, yet they are increasingly becoming more complex and uncertain. This can be understood in the context of individualisation and the risk society, where the previous certainties of independent housing during the transition to adulthood have been eroded and replaced with precarity and risk. Furthermore, the changing social conditions and emergence of intergenerational inequalities may create a cleft generational habitus for young adults, whose expectations are in conflict with their reality. Using of these theories, this thesis seeks to explore the increase in young adults living in the parental home, and how they experience and perceive this period.

Chapter 4: Methodology

4.1 Methodological Approach

A phenomenological approach was used to examine the experiences of young adults living with their parents. According to Creswell and Poth (2018), a phenomenological study refers to the common meaning shared by individuals based on their lived experience of a phenomenon (p.121). It rests on the philosophical assumptions that include the lived experiences of people, the idea that experiences are conscious, and descriptions of the essences of such experiences, rather than explanations or analyses (Creswell & Poth, 2018, p.121). The phenomenon explored in this study is the experience of living with parents as a young adult. As there are large numbers of young adults living with their parents in Ireland, I suggest that there may be a shared experience amongst them, thus a phenomenon. Through the research, I aimed to examine both “what” the individuals experienced and “how” they experienced it (Creswell & Poth, 2018, p.124). Through the idea of emergent design, I constantly reflected on my analytic approach to ensure it was most suited to the research.

4.2 Participant criteria

The first participation criterion was that the participant was currently living with their parents. The second participation criterion was that the participant was ages between 25 and 29. This age range was chosen as it is the group that has increased the most between 2019 and 2022 according to Eurostat (2023). Another reason is that many young adults in Ireland live with their parents while they attend university, and I wanted to focus on young adults who had finished education and were most likely in paid work while living with their parents.

4.3 Sampling

The first few interviews were accessed through convenience sampling. I contacted people I know but do not have a close relationship with who fitted the participant category. The rest of the participants were accessed through snowball sampling. Most participants knew many people who fit the criteria, so snowball sampling occurred quite easily. I employed what Small (2009) refers to as sequential interviewing. I attempted to interview people of different backgrounds, social classes, gender, and education levels.

4.3.1 Sample Characteristics

Eight women and four men were interviewed. The participants were between the ages of 25 and 27. Of the 12 participants interviewed, five had bachelor's degrees, four had master's degrees, and three had secondary-school level education, meaning those with higher education were slightly overrepresented. Of 25-34 year olds in Ireland, 61% have third-level qualifications (CSO, 2023). All participants were in full-time paid employment. Four participants had never lived outside of the parental home, while eight had lived independently for periods between several months and two and a half years. The most common reason for leaving the family home was to attend university or a university related exchange abroad. Two participants lived with single parents (both mothers) and the rest lived in two parent households. Eight participants had siblings also living in the household. One participant was a lone parent to a young child who lived with her and her family. All participants' homes were owner occupied except for one, which was rented by their parents. All participants came from white Irish working or middle-class backgrounds. While the sample is not representative of Irish society, the interviews still provided useful data.

4.4 Data Collection

Data was collected through semi-structured interviews. The interviews took place in cafés. A 'facesheet' of information was asked at the beginning of each interview to record important general information such as age, gender, education level, and occupation. This was necessary to contextualise the information provided by the participants (Bryman, 2012, p.473). An interview guide was developed with five important questions (see Appendix A). The questions were designed to ensure that all aspects of the research question were covered, as suggested by Rubin and Rubin (2012, p.129). Participants were asked about their household composition, their experiences of living with their parents, their reasons for living home and if and when they anticipate leaving home soon. The questions were open and broad to allow participants to discuss what was most important to them in their experience of living with their parents, as well as elicit both depth and detail. Follow up questions were also asked based on what each participant brought up. Follow up questions are essential for obtaining nuanced answers, as well as detail and depth (Rubin & Rubin, 2012, p.136). Similarly, probing questions were used in order to provide clarification on several topics discussed by the participants. The meanings most relevant to the research were clarified, as suggested by Brinkmann and Kvale (2015, p.159). Follow up questions and probes also communicated to the participants the subjects

which I was most interested in. However, participants were encouraged to discuss what they felt was most important to their experience of living at home. The interview questions were constantly reflected upon throughout the data gathering process and amended slightly after the first few interviews. The interviews lasted between 40 and 64 minutes and were audio recorded.

After each interview, a memo was written with initial thoughts and notes. Each interview was transcribed as soon as possible to allow me to examine the research further and to see if any patterns developed. From early on, there were many similarities in the information and experiences shared by the participants. Although some experiences and opinions varied, the same topics were raised by many participants, which demonstrated what was most important to them. While commonalities occurred early in the research, I continued to seek participants from different backgrounds to challenge the findings, as suggested by Small (2009). After completing twelve interviews, I believed that further interviews would not generate new information.

4.5 Ethical Considerations

Each participant was given an information sheet (see Appendix B) prior to the interview. This informed them about the nature and purpose of the research, what it would entail for them, confidentiality, the need for consent, and invited them to discuss any questions or concerns. Verbal consent was acquired from each participant and recorded at the beginning of the interview. Audio recordings of the interviews were stored on a protected flash drive and will be deleted upon completion of the study. All participants were given pseudonyms, and any identifying information, such as exact locations, was removed from the transcripts.

4.6 Data Analysis

The initial analysis began after conducting each interview through the writing of a field memo with early thoughts on the data. All interviews were transcribed shortly after being conducted. Notes were kept while transcribing each interview, as well as an analytic memo to keep track of initial thoughts about potential codes and themes (Rubin & Rubin, 2012, p.204). Codes were based on what was most important to the research question, as well as what came up repeatedly in many of the interviews (Rubin & Rubin, 2012, p.209). The field and analytic memos were useful in developing codes, as well as some of the previous literature.

For the first level of coding, the focus was on describing what was present in the data without interpretation. The data was coded multiple times in order to ensure nothing important was omitted, particularly after defining the codes and themes in the codebook to ensure that each concept was defined accurately (Rubin & Rubin, 2012, p.218). A codebook was developed with descriptions for each code (see Appendix C). In the second cycle of coding, the codes were categorised into sub-themes and three main themes. The reasons participants gave for living at home were also recorded using the codebook.

An inductive approach was used in the data analysis. This involves observing a number of examples with the intention of being able to say something general about the experience (Brinkmann & Kvale, 2015, p.224). As a phenomenological approach was used, I wanted to build knowledge on the experiences of young adults living with their parents and how they perceive it. In the analysis of the data, through the two levels of coding, I aimed to move from narrow units of analysis such as important statements, to broader units, and then onto themes. The themes aim to summarise two elements; ‘what’ the individuals experience and ‘how’ they experience it (Creswell & Poth, 2018, p.124).

4.7 Reflexivity

4.7.1 Limitations

While I attempted to interview a number of individuals from different backgrounds and use what Small (2009) refers to as sequential interviewing, it was difficult to create a truly diverse sample. All of the participants were from white Irish backgrounds, so some racial diversity would have been useful in order to be more representative of Irish society today, as well as including the experiences of those from different cultures or migrant backgrounds. The sample was also slightly unbalanced in relation to gender, with eight women and four men. I aimed to interview young adults between the ages of 25 and 29, but all participants were between 25 and 27. Older participants may have had different experiences.

4.7.2 Self-Reflection

This research was inspired by my own experience of briefly living with my parents as an adult, the experiences of my peers in Ireland who continue to live with their parents, as well as the extensive media coverage of the issue. Rather than bracketing my experience and previous knowledge, I have tried to use it to gain a deeper understanding of the topic. My own experience was useful during the interviews, as I was able to share some of my own experiences in an effort to make the participants more comfortable in being open about theirs, particularly in relation to difficult or intimate topics such as finances or romantic lives. As suggested by Aspers and Corte (2019), it is also difficult to fully bracket our knowledge of previous literature and theory.

Chapter 5: Findings

5.1 Introduction

Three main themes emerged from the research. The first theme relates to the parent-child relationship, its importance to the young adults, and how co-residence impacts the dynamic. The second theme refers to the negotiation of adulthood. The participants were in a process of negotiating their status as adults both with themselves and others, and their residential status was highly embedded in this. The final theme relates to future housing trajectories. The young adults were eager yet unable to leave the parental home due to the current housing market. The majority of participants believed they could not afford to leave the parental home, or it was financially responsible to do so. This is contextually important when considering themes which emerged throughout.

5.2 Reasons for Parental Co-Residence

When asked about their reasons for living in the parental home, all participants in the study described both the unaffordability and inaccessibility of the private rental sector. All but one participant would have preferred to move out of the family home. Participants frequently expressed that they felt they did not have a choice.

“I don’t think it was even a decision really, I don’t think I can decide to move out...I wouldn’t be able to afford to move out, especially in Dublin. The prices are crazy...even the competition for rented accommodation, there’s no houses there.” (Anna, female, 25)

When probed, several participants said that they may be able to rent in some capacity, most likely shared accommodation such as a room in a house. Despite this, the majority expressed that they would not be in a comfortable financial position if they did so, and that their lifestyle and spending on other things would be affected. The undesirable conditions in rented accommodation were also a factor.

“I know that in theory I could afford to move out, but then what about everything else like savings, having a social life, going on holidays and that kind of stuff. I could afford it but there wouldn’t be much left...and I’d possibly end up in a really shitty place.” (Eve, female, 25)

5.3 The Parent Child Relationship

The relationship between the young adults and their parents was raised in several different ways. Many participants described the importance of their parents and reported a close relationship. Many were grateful for their parents, their good relationship, as well as the ability to remain in the parental home. However, there was also a strong need for independence from parents. Some described the conflicts and dynamics that have either continued from their childhood or emerged as they have gotten older.

5.3.1 Importance

Most of the participants had a good relationship with their parents in general. This was important to the young adults, particularly as they lived together. Some were grateful for ‘extra’ time spent with their parents by living together for longer than anticipated.

“When I'm older and my parents aren't around anymore, I'll be grateful that I stayed living with them and maintained a good relationship with them for a long period of time. I feel like I've gotten to know them as people rather than just parents.” (James, male, 25)

“I get on well with my parents, I know I'm lucky in that sense. They're very supportive of me... We try to make the best of the situation.” (Daniel, male, 27)

Many of the participants enjoyed the company of their parents and felt that they had a lot of support from them. James suggests that being close to his family is a beneficial aspect of living in the family home.

“I don't want to make it seem like it's awful because again, there are benefits to it. Family is very important, and I think maintaining that relationship is great.” (James, male, 25)

“Me and my mam are really close, were like friends really...It’s nice to have her around to chat to, we both love to rant after work and hear all the drama...I’d definitely miss that if I moved out.” (Rebecca, female, 25)

Despite the good relationships described, some believed that living together had a negative effect on the parent-child dynamic. Many of the young adults suggested that some of the conflict experienced would not occur if they lived independently.

“It would be nicer to have your parent’s company when you don't live with them. When you see them all the time you get sick of them...you get on each other's nerves.” (Claire, female, 25)

“Sometimes it is a bit much living together. If we have an argument, we have to get over it really quickly...I think we argue more because we’re in such close proximity all the time, it can be hard on both of us. We’re both trying to live our own lives but we’re on top of each other.” (Orla, female, 27)

Some of the participants who had previously lived independently believed that their relationship with their parents was better when they lived separately. When Eve lived independently, she spent less time with her parents, but when she saw them, it was quality time and she enjoyed it more.

“I had a different relationship with them when I did live outside of the family home. Because you don’t see each other every day, maybe you put in more effort.” (Eve, female, 25)

Similarly, some of the participants believed their relationship with their parents had improved upon their return to the family home.

“I used to fight a lot with my mam...but after I moved out for a while...I realised how much she does for me, and I definitely appreciate her more. I think I had to move out to realise that. We get on better now, maybe because I’m older or because I know I’ll be living here for a while.” (Laura, female, 27)

“I get on better with them now since I moved back home. I think they know that I’m independent and I can look after myself, so they leave me to it a bit more.” (Daniel, male, 27)

5.3.2 Independence

The majority of young adults described a strong need for independence from their parents. This was most often expressed through the need for choices, freedom, and privacy. Many female participants often had their whereabouts monitored in some way by their parents. Anna describes being asked questions before she left home to participate in the interview.

“Leaving the house today, I was asked a hundred questions like ‘where are you going? Who are you going with?...Will you be back for dinner?’ I definitely don’t have freedom...it’s hard living at home because you’re under constant supervision really.” (Anna, female, 25)

Many of the female participants felt this supervision particularly when going out at night and had to update their parents on how and when they would be getting home. However, despite the annoyance it often caused, many believed that such questioning and monitoring by their parents came from a good place and a desire to ensure they were safe. Therefore, the ‘supervision’ was in some way accepted by the young adults, out of care for their parents, and as a natural consequence of living together.

“It comes from a good place, but there’s always “how are you getting home?”. That’s the question I always get when I’m going out...I know its more to keep me safe, but it does kind of give the feeling that I have to let them know my every move.” (Georgia, female, 25)

Similarly, many participants felt that they had a lack of privacy while living at home. Some single young adults in particular found it hard to keep some aspects of their life from their parents, such as their social and romantic lives.

“When I come home my mam will be asking me about what I was doing...I know it’s just because she cares and she’s interested, but it’s hard to have any kind of private life

at all. If I try to be vague or not tell her she'll assume I was on a date or something and start asking questions or teasing me being like 'who is he?'" (Megan, female, 27)

"My dating life is non-existent and living at home plays a big role...I didn't want to tell them because it was just a first date...the stress of having to make up a story, and then I feel bad about lying...and because you're living in such close proximity...they'd be making jokes about it." (Anna, female, 25)

Some participants had to get permission from their parents for certain things, particularly when inviting friends over. The young adults were also limited by the rules their parents implemented. Anna describes how she would not be allowed to have a romantic partner stay the night.

"I've been warned multiple times about that. My mam always says the house is her house and you have to respect that." (Anna, female, 25)

"If I want to have friends over...my house is open plan, so we can't even sit in one room and my parents can sit in another room. I have to ask..." "is it okay if I have friends over?" It feels like your back in school and asking permission." (Eve, female, 25)

These rules and limitations made the young adults feel that they were still treated as a child by their parents.

"I still have a sister in school, so I'm nearly seen like I'm still in school as well...Yesterday my (other) sister went out, she's 23. She came home at 3am and my mam went down and gave out to (scolded) her because she didn't send a text saying that she was staying out. So, freedom is definitely not there...I'm not completely free." (Anna, female 25)

"My mam is always asking me what I've eaten...or she gives me a look if she finds out I've been to McDonalds or something. She means well but I feel like I'm being babied, like what I eat is being monitored." (Cian, male, 25)

Furthermore, many participants desired greater freedom from their parents and the ability to make their own decisions. Claire describes how she is bound to the choices and schedule of her parents and the household in many ways.

“Things are on other people's schedules and stuff like that...when you're at home, you are kind of stuck with whatever they want to do, and I think things are less in your control...There's less chance to make my own choices and things like that, basic things like when you want to do laundry or whatever, or choosing how much you tell your parents.” (Claire, female, 25)

For most participants, these constraints made the parent-child relationship difficult to navigate. Although many were grateful for the ability to remain in the parental home and emphasised the good relationship with their parents, there was a desire for increased independence and separation from them. The parent-child relationship is also important in their construction of adult identity, which is subsequently discussed.

5.4 The Negotiation of Adulthood

The participants appeared to be in a process of negotiating their status as adults and their living situation is highly entrenched in this. The negotiation of their status as adults is also implicit in many of the interactions mentioned previously as the young adults strive for greater independence from their parents.

5.4.1 Negotiating Adulthood with Others

For all of the participants, living at home raised the issue of their parents perceiving them as a child or an adult, or something in between. While many were attempting to forge relationships with their parents on a more equal and ‘adult’ basis, some parents continued to perceive and treat them as children, as evident in the interactions outlined above. Despite wanting adult status in the eyes of their parents, many suggested this was hampered by their continued co-residence. Numerous participants believed they were viewed as and treated like children by their parents.

“It’s kind of infantilising because no matter what, your parents are going to treat you like you’re their child, because you are their child, even though you’re a grown adult.”
(James, male, 25)

Not only did the young adults struggle to gain status as an adult in the eyes of their parents, but some participants described how living at home led them to believe that others did not view them as ‘real’ adults. For some, it was a source of shame or embarrassment.

“Sometimes I do feel a bit ashamed to say I live with my parents.” (Conor, male, 26)

“I have a lot of co-workers that are older, maybe 40 or 50...they’re more established in their lives...trying to have conversations with them about their houses and children...I feel like I’m still a child living with my parents. I think it is a bit embarrassing in that scenario.” (James, male, 25)

However, participants took comfort in the fact that they are not alone in their situation, and that many of their friends also live at home. This also enabled the young adults to talk about their experiences, and not to feel different from their peers.

“There’s lots of people in the same situation...it makes me feel less guilty and less childlike to be living at home because a lot of people are in the same boat.” (James, male, 25)

“I think I would feel worse if I was the only one out of my friends still living at home and I wasn’t able to move out...in my main friend group, there’s only one person I know who rents...You can talk about it with them and they know you’re not being unreasonable, and they have a lot of the same experiences and the same issues going on with their parents and family.” (Eve, female, 25)

Furthermore, while there was embarrassment, some believed that the widespread nature of the housing crisis led others to understand their situation more and to pass less judgement.

“I think because most people know how expensive it is to rent or buy, they wouldn’t really judge you. Even older people sometimes tell me I’m smart to stay at home to save

money...I have friends who are from the countryside so they have to rent in Dublin and they always say how lucky I am that I can live at home...they would choose to if they could.” (Megan, female, 27)

Eve suggests that because the housing situation is so difficult for many in Ireland, moving out is no longer viewed as a requirement in achieving adult status.

“I feel like it’s not an expectation now that you’re this age, so you need to move out to become an adult or move up in your adult life.” (Eve, female, 25)

5.4.2 Negotiating Adulthood with Themselves

While the opinions of their parents and others were important, the young adults were also in a process of negotiating adulthood with themselves. Some participants felt that they were on the path to adulthood or had achieved adulthood, while others felt that were not ‘fully’ adult in some ways. For the majority of participants, living at home hindered their perception of themselves as adults, and they believed the transition marker of leaving home was still an important milestone.

“Because I still live at home, I feel like a child...I haven’t left my childhood bedroom...so I just don’t feel like an adult.” (Anna, female, 25)

“I think I would feel like a proper adult if I lived on my own...it’s a big step.” (Megan, female, 27)

There was also a sense of being ‘stuck’ in a sort of continued childhood or adolescent state due to being in the family home.

“I think we all feel a bit stuck in a way...Stuck with our parents and stuck in our childhood bedrooms.” (Conor, male, 26)

“I find that especially with my parents and my siblings, we kind of revert to a younger, more immature version of ourselves...when I’m with my friends, or out in public, or in

the workplace, I think I'm a very different person, and maybe that's the kind of adult that I wish I could be everywhere." (James, male, 25)

All participants except one were eager to move out. Many believed that leaving home is required to obtain adult status, and that it is a necessary part of adulthood. Claire describes how she thinks moving out is an important milestone.

"I think you reach an age where it's too long in your parents' house, and you need to escape and do your own thing... You'd be more like responsible for yourself, and I think that's like a big thing... you just need that step of growing up I guess." (Claire, female, 25)

The participants described how roles are important in their perception of themselves as adults, and many of these roles require living independently. Participants expressed that they had not gotten a chance to do things independently while living at home.

"I still feel like a teenager who's just pretending to get around. All of the stuff you learn living by yourself, I know I still need to get a grasp on" (James, male, 25)

"I don't get to do things on my own... at the end of the day my mam and dad are in charge of the house, they do most of it. I don't even know how you pay bills." (Cian, male, 25)

Those who felt more like adults attributed it to the independence and responsibility they had achieved despite living in the family home. The responsibilities of doing household work such as cooking dinner, as well as contributing to the household financially appeared to have a positive effect on the participants' sense of adult identity. However, some believed that they would not achieve full adult status while living at home.

"I do feel like an adult. I think it's because I do have a level of responsibilities at home, and I have my own job, so I'm out of the house a lot... I've had to start paying rent... I suppose that became kind of an adult thing, like you're an adult now, you're in a full-time job, you're going to have to start contributing to the house" (Eve, female, 25)

“I feel like I do have a lot of independence, because my mam works 12-hour shifts, I’m in the house on my own, so I have to be independent, doing washing, cooking, cleaning, and doing the shopping.” (Rebecca, female, 25)

“I think I’m as much of an adult as I can be at home.” (Daniel, male, 27)

5.5 Future Housing Trajectories

The largest theme which emerged from the research, and which most participants seemed most eager to talk about, was related to their future housing trajectories. Participants discussed their past and present expectations in terms of their ability to leave the family home. Many compared the timeline of their housing career to that of their parents. When asked about their future outlook, the majority of participants expressed frustration at the current housing market and conveyed a sense of hopelessness. A small minority of participants appeared hopeful about their future and ability to achieve independent housing.

5.5.1 Housing Expectations: Past and Present

Most of the young adults interviewed did not expect to be living with their parents into their mid-twenties. While it is common to live with your parents during university in Ireland, particularly in Dublin, participants expected to move out when they had a full-time job and were more financially stable. However, this was not the case.

“I thought that by 25 I would be in my own place...just moving out with a couple of friends and sharing a place, something like that...I would have thought I’d have done that by now.” (James, male, 25)

“I always knew that you’d have to have a decent amount of money to buy a house, but I expected that you could move out, and rent and save, and still have house at the end of the day.” (Eve, female, 25)

“I genuinely thought I would have been moved out years now, or at least have had the option to move out. If I didn’t live abroad, I’d probably have never moved out.” (Cian, male, 25)

Several participants described how their expectations of leaving home and independent housing were set by what their parents had achieved. Some of the young adults were at a similar age to their parents when they bought their first home. Comparing their own housing situation to their parents' caused frustration. Many also believed that their generation have less opportunities to attain independent housing than their parents' generation.

“It does make you feel like you don't have the opportunities that the previous generation had, and it just feels like it's going to get worse.” (James, male, 25)

“My parents bought their first house when they were my age now, and they just had normal jobs...my dad didn't even go to college. My mam didn't work when we were kids...and they could still afford the mortgage.” (Conor, male, 26)

“House viewings are crazy, there's 60 people viewing a house and they're getting overbid...prices are crazy...We definitely don't have the same opportunities in terms of housing. They (parents) bought the house when they were 27, I'm 27 in two years and I wouldn't even have enough money to pay rent, let alone get a mortgage.” (Anna, female, 25)

The participants expressed concerns about their financial ability to move out, as well as concerns about the precarity and insecurity of the private rental sector.

“It's very hard to see a future where I move out without having to spend so much money on rent, and possibly living in shitty conditions, and the landlord being able to put up the rent whenever they want, or just deciding they want to sell the house and getting evicted.” (Eve, female, 25)

“I've like been prepared to move out mentally for a long time, but... it feels financially irresponsible to do it.” (Claire, female, 25)

Furthermore, many believed they could not rent and save at the same time. Some appeared apprehensive to move out because it would hinder their ability to save, and there were concerns

about moving back into the parental home in order to save to buy a house. In Conor's case, he already had.

“We were paying €1600 a month for a one-bedroom apartment...we like added up what we had spent in rent and bills, and it was over €20,000 which we could have saved if we lived at home, so we decided to go back to living at home...we're saving like mad, and we've said in two years we'll start looking for somewhere to buy.” (Conor, male, 26)

“My reason for staying at home is to save money for a mortgage someday...because most people my age...have no kind of long-term savings or a down payment for a mortgage...and a lot end up moving back in with their parents when they're older, when they decide they want to buy a house.” (Claire, female, 25)

“There's nothing worse than living away from home and then being forced to move back.” (Georgia, female, 25)

5.5.2 Future Outlook

For most participants, there was a shared sense of frustration and hopelessness when thinking about their future housing trajectories. This feeling appeared to have a far greater effect on the young adults than any of the day-to-day conflicts associated with living at home. The expectations that they had growing up, particularly based on their parents' lives as outlined above, further compounded the frustration they experienced. Some participants were angered by their inability to afford independent housing despite having a degree and a 'good' job. Anna expresses her frustration at doing everything that was expected of her, yet she is unable to live independently.

“I have worked my ass off for five years, I have a Masters, I have a job now...I've done everything right, I've ticked all the boxes, I've done what people told me to do...it's like get a job, get your degree, get a house, settle down and have a family.” (Anna, female, 25)

“I thought I’ll go to college, and after college, I’ll move out and live my own life, I’ll have a job and I’ll be an adult then. But the lines are so blurred now, because I’m living at home, I don’t feel like an adult...it just doesn’t seem like a given anymore, it seems like something you really have to fight for.” (James, male, 25)

“It doesn’t make sense that someone can be in a full-time job and earn decent money and not be able to afford at least to rent, never mind buy a house” (Eve, female, 25)

There was a prevalent sense of hopelessness expressed from the participants. Concerns about their future housing prospects appeared to be a great cause of anxiety and worry.

“I do worry about the future a lot...sometimes I wonder what we are even working towards. By the time you have money saved, the rents have gone up another €200, or the house prices have gone up like another €50,000. It’s like the goalposts are just being moved further and further away all the time, and we’re just stuck in the same place.” (Conor, male, 25)

“It is quite a hopeless situation...It gives me quite a lot of anxiety about what’s to come.” (Eve, female, 25)

“I don’t see myself renting or buying anytime soon...it’s kind of hard to come to terms with. I feel like there’s nothing else I can do.” (Megan, female, 27)

Many participants worried about ever being able to afford to move out and felt that the future was bleak. For some, the prospect seemed impossible at times.

“The future is bleak. It does upset me... I just don’t feel like there’s ever going to be a time where I will get there. At this moment in time, it seems impossible to get a house...like the most bizarre thing in the world, if you were to tell me I’d have a house in five years, I’d probably laugh at you. It’s not possible.” (Anna, female, 25)

“I don’t know how I’d be able to afford a house, especially by myself...I do think it affects how I see the future.” (Eve, female, 25)

Only few of the young adults were more hopeful about their future and believed that they would be able to leave the family home soon.

“Hopefully within the next year I’ll be able to move out.” (Georgia, female, 25)

Living at home also affected the lives of the participants beyond everyday conflicts. Some believed that their ability to find a partner was hindered by living at home as they struggled to navigate a private dating life, as previously discussed. Those with a partner found that being in relationship while living in the parental home was difficult, mainly due to lack of privacy, but also because of the inability to cohabit.

“I want to start my own life with my girlfriend, and to think that my parents had that at my age, it just makes me a bit sad...or jealous even.” (Conor, male, 26)

“I just want to be able to live with my boyfriend for a while to see how it goes, without spending so much on rent.” (Laura, female, 27)

Eve sums up how she believes living at home can affect the creation of a partnership, as well as its future path.

“I think if your dating life is impacted by the fact you live at home, or if you’re like three years into a relationship and you’re still living at home...what do you do? If you can’t afford to move out, that’s going to hinder your relationship as well, because I think you’re never going to really know someone until you live with them. And then...are you going to have kids if you live at home? That’s putting it on your parents too.” (Eve, female, 25)

Furthermore, due to the delay in cohabitation, some participants describe how other milestones such as marriage and parenthood are postponed. Conor discusses how he is not engaged yet due to the housing situation, as well as delaying parenthood.

“I think it’s a bit sad really...if rent was cheaper and we could live together and save, I think we would be engaged and thinking about getting married, but the priority is saving so we can buy a house just to live together...Ideally, we’d want to be trying for a baby

in the next year, that's what we planned for...but we just can't because we're living with our parents.” (Conor, male, 26)

Several participants also discussed emigration as a consequence of the housing crisis. Some considered emigrating, to Australia in particular, and many had friends who had already moved abroad. One participant, James, was planning to move abroad later in the year, and while housing affordability was not the main factor in his decision to emigrate, it does allow him to leave the family home for the first time.

“I currently plan to move abroad within the next year, and experience living outside of the home for the first time. But for me to justify moving out, it would have to be abroad...for the cost to be reasonable.” (James, male, 25)

5.6 Conclusion

The findings show that cohabitation with parents affects the lives of young adults in several ways. While the importance of family and maintaining a good parent-child relationship was emphasised, the young adults had to navigate the complex dynamic that emerged as they became adults and remained at home. There was a strong need for independence, privacy, and autonomous decision-making. The parent-child relationship also impacted how the participants negotiated their status as adults. For many, their sense of adulthood depended on their residential status, or how much independence they could achieve while living at home. The frustration and worry that the young adults experienced in relation to their housing trajectories were perhaps the most dominant findings. There were discrepancies between housing expectations and reality, and significant concerns about the ability to leave the parental home. For many, the future was bleak and hopeless. The inability to achieve independent housing also affected the attainment of other milestones, mainly cohabitation with a partner and parenthood. The implications of these findings are subsequently discussed.

Chapter 6: Analysis

6.1 Introduction

This chapter examines the findings which were discussed in the previous chapter, as well as exploring the significance and implications of them. The young adults in this study appear to be in contention with several aspects of parental co-residence: they must engage in an often-undesirable parent-child dynamic, cope with the constraints of living at home, negotiate their status as adults both with themselves and others, and they must manage their hopes and expectations of their future housing careers within the Irish housing context. The research question *How do young adults in Ireland experience and perceive living with their parents?* is also addressed throughout.

6.2 The Reasons for Remaining at Home

All of the young adults in this study cited the unaffordable rental market as the reason that they were still living with their parents. Contrary to Arnett (2000)'s conception of emerging adulthood as a period of exploration of possibilities and free-choice, the young adults in this study were highly constrained to living at home by the Irish housing market. Unlike some previous research (Seiffge-Krenke, 2010; Stone et al., 2013), many of the young adults had never left the parental home, and apart from returning after finishing education, the only 'turning point' experienced was the increasing unaffordability of rents. Most of the participants believed they did not have a choice, and that living at home was their only option. Yet, the extent of the choice is difficult to conclude, as some participants could not afford to leave home at all, particularly those who did not attend university and worked in low-paid jobs, while others admitted they could, but they believed it would be financially irresponsible. This relates to the findings of McKee et al. (2020) and Waldron (2021), who show that low-income groups experience shifts in housing tenure most severely. The degree of choice that the young adults had in remaining at home is discussed further in the limitations.

Although it is clear that the cost-benefit of remaining in the family home is more favourable than renting for many young adults, as suggested by Kins et al. (2014), all but one of the participants were eager to leave the family home. This corresponds to the findings of the CSO's (2021) survey which showed that 88% of adults living with their parents in Ireland would prefer to move out. The unaffordability of the housing market is the main barrier to leaving home,

which supports previous literature that suggests that the increase in young adults remaining in the parental home is due to increasing housing costs (Acolin et al., 2024; CSO, 2021; Hughes, 2003; Srinivas, 2019). While Lewis et al. (2016) suggest that many of the negative feelings about returning home are associated with unemployment or low-paid jobs, this is not the case for the majority of the young adults in this research. The negative feeling experienced by the participants was related to the inability to move out, despite the fact that they held full-time 'good' jobs. Similarly, those with low-paid jobs did not associate their negative feelings with their employment but rather the housing market in general. Therefore, for the young adults in this sample, living in the parental home was conditioned by a structural factor over which they had no control – the housing market, both the private rental sector and homeownership (Arundel & Ronald, 2016; Côté & Bynner, 2008).

6.3 The Benefits of Living with Parents

The findings show that there are several benefits of living at home experienced by the young adults, and most are consistent with the literature. The largest benefit was financial, as remaining at home meant that they did not have to engage in the unaffordable rental sector. The young adults were grateful for the ability to live at home in the face of the housing market. While all the young adults contributed financially to their household, most described it as being substantially less than the price of private rented accommodation. They also benefitted financially in other ways, such as their parents paying for some necessities like food, but the young adults were not financially dependent on their parents apart from housing support, contrary to the findings of Lewis et al. (2016). Living at home enabled the young adults to save, as well as have a more comfortable lifestyle and greater disposable income to spend on things like travel and socialising.

There were also other benefits to living with parents for the young adults. These benefits primarily related to the comfort and care of the family home, consistent with the findings of Lewis et al. (2016) and Mitchell (2004). Participants enjoyed several comforts such as having their meals cooked and their laundry done for them, as well as not having to worry about bills or deal with landlords. Mencarini et al. (2017) suggest that men in particular benefit from the care of their parents, mothers especially, who make their lives easier. Similarly, the CSO's (2021) survey shows that men are more likely to enjoy living at home than women. However, there were no immediately obvious gendered differences in this study, with both male and

female participants describing similar benefits in terms of comfort and household tasks. This is contrary to Sassler et al. (2008), who found that female young adults perform more household labour than males. However, there were more females than males in the sample.

As well as providing financial support in the form of housing, and care and comfort to the young adults, parents also provided support to the young adults. Many received social and emotional support from their parents, which they appreciated, and they maintained good, close relationships. These findings are in line with literature, that higher quality parent-child relationships are associated with staying in the family home longer, and that family solidarity is high in households where adult children co-reside longer (Mitchell et al., 2004; Szydluk, 2012). This is discussed further in the section on the parent-child dynamic. From the benefits described by the young adults, as well as the unaffordable rental sector, it is clear that the cost-benefit of living at home is more favourable than leaving (Kins et al., 2014). Nonetheless, there are also several disadvantages associated with remaining in the parental home, which are subsequently be explored.

6.4 The Constraints of the Parental Home

The findings suggest that the constraints associated with living in the parental home are central to experience of the young adults. While the young adults in this study acknowledged that living with their parents had several benefits, they also showed that there were many difficulties and negative aspects. The biggest constraint felt was in relation to the independence and autonomy of the young adults. For most, their independence was limited in some way by their continued residence at home. There was a strong need for independence from their parents despite the good relationships they maintained, and the independence they had was largely dictated by the parent-child dynamic, which is explored in the subsequent section.

The young adults struggled with wanting more freedom and independence, yet also enjoying the care provided to them by their parents, as mentioned above. This corresponds to the CSO's (2021) survey which shows that 70% of adults living at home felt they did not have enough independence. In this study, there was a desire for greater choice and independent decision making, usually relating to day-to-day issues. The young adults were often tied to the schedule of their parents such as when they had dinner, and they couldn't make their own decisions. However, many of the young adults accepted that they would not have complete independence

while living at home and suggested that their parents had the right to remain in charge, which relates to the findings of Kins et al. (2014). For some, it did not make sense to prepare their own meals when a parent was doing it anyway, or they did not want to interfere in their mother's system of doing laundry for example. While this may be viewed as the avoidance of responsibility and independence, this may be how some of the young adults contend and cope with the constraints of the family home and avoid conflict. The two participants who lived with one parent appeared to have significantly more independence and responsibility than most of the young adults who lived with two parents. However, due to the small sample, it is difficult to make inferences based on this.

The social lives of the young adults also appeared to be impacted. Because they were co-residing with their parents, and often siblings, most could not invite friends over without permission or advance notice. The CSO (2021) showed that disagreements occurred over this issue. Some young adults felt that having friends over was an inconvenience or annoyance to their household, so they were reluctant to do so. This hindered their feelings of autonomy and independence. It emerged that there was a lack of space to socialise apart from third spaces like cafés, restaurants, or bars, because most of the young adults' friends also lived with parents. However, like previously mentioned, many of the young adults accepted this constraint as part of living at home.

The young adults also could not fully engage in several of Arnett (2000)'s ideas on the exploration of identity or love while living in the parental home. Many found it difficult to date and find partners, suggesting that living at home has an impact on romantic activity, as shown by Seiffge-Krenke (2010). While there were no explicit discussions of the monitoring of female's romantic lives, as suggested by Sassler et al. (2008), many participants, both male and female, struggled to maintain a private dating life while living in such close proximity to their parents. Several young adults described lying to their parents about being with a romantic partner, which often made them feel uncomfortable or guilty. They found it hard to get to know someone in a private yet comfortable environment, as they did not want to bring dates home before the relationship became serious. Partners were not permitted to stay the night by some parents. Several participants directly ascribed their lack of a partner to their living situation, suggesting that the impact is large and acutely felt. Similarly, remaining in the parental home may negatively affect established long-term relationships. Consistent with the findings of Seiffge-Krenke (2010), those in romantic relationships were highly motivated to leave the

parental home and co-habit. However, the rental market prevents this, leading to negative feelings about the future and the future of their relationship.

Female participants described having their whereabouts monitored by their parents, similar to the findings of Sassler et al. (2008). This supervision was felt most when being out at night, as the participants had to inform their parents of where they were, and how and when they were getting home. Similarly, participants described being questioned about where they were, as some parents would assume they were being dishonest about their social or romantic lives. While felt to differing degrees, all female participants described experiencing such monitoring to some extent. Despite the annoyance and the lack of privacy they felt, the participants believed that their parents merely wanted to keep them safe, and this was largely accepted as another consequence of remaining at home (Kins et al., 2014). However, male participants did not experience such inquiries or monitoring from their parents, and they appeared to have more freedom in their social and romantic lives. Female participants also shied away from ‘going out’ or partying ‘too much’, because they believed their parents would pass judgement, yet such concerns were not raised by the male participants. This is consistent with the literature, which suggests that the behaviour of young females living with their parents is more likely to be monitored and observed (Sassler et al., 2008; South & Lei, 2015). This also indicates that there are differences in the experiences of living with parents for young men and women.

6.5 Young Adults and the Parent-Child Dynamic

The parent-child relationship is a central aspect of the experience of living at home as an adult. The dynamic is essential in many ways for determining the experience of the young adult, the degree of independence they have, and the constraints they may feel (Kins et al., 2014; Sassler et al., 2008). Most of the young adults reported a good relationship with their parents, despite the conflicts that arise at times. Maintaining a close relationship was important to the participants, and they were keen to emphasise this. This relates to previous research which suggests that young adults who live at home longer have higher quality relationships with their parents and higher family solidarity (Mitchell et al., 2004; Szydlik, 2012). However, the possibility that those who do not enjoy good relationships with their parents may move out earlier as a result cannot be overlooked. Nonetheless, there was a sense of solidarity described between most the young adults and their parents, and they believed they were sympathetic towards their situation and need to remain in the family home.

The young adults who had previously moved out of home suggested that they had better relationships with their parents when they lived separately. Others who had never left the family home also believed that their relationship might improve if they did not co-reside. This relates to Buhl and Lanz (2007), who suggest that young adults who live independently have better relationships with their parents, as well as better well-being. For the majority of the young adults, the idea that their relationship would improve upon home leaving was based on the notion that their parents would view them and treat them more as equal adults. The young adults who had previously left home suggested that this transition caused their parents to realise that they were independent adults and start treating them as such. This contradicts the findings of Kins et al. (2014) who argue that those living independently also struggle to navigate and develop a relationship of equal status with their parents.

The parent-child relationship is intrinsically linked to how young adults experience living at home. The degree to which the young adults felt that they had enough independence was heavily dictated by the dynamic between them and their parents. Those that were treated more like adults had more independence and freedom to be themselves, while those who felt that they were treated like a child had less independence and less of an ability to make their own decisions and choices. This is similar to the findings of Lewis et al. (2016) and Sassler et al. (2008), who show that many young adults are not treated as adults in the parental home, and their opinions and choices are not respected or given much weight. Consistent with Lewis et al. (2016), those whose independence was more limited and those who were treated as a child by their parents had more negative feelings associated with co-residence than those who had greater freedom and were treated more as an adult. Therefore, the parent-child relationship is central to the experience of residing in the parental home and can define satisfaction with the living situation. It is also an important aspect in how young adults construct their adult identity, which is subsequently explored.

6.6 The Negotiation of Adulthood while Living at Home

The findings of this study show that parental co-residence is highly linked to the process of negotiating adult status for young adults, both with themselves and others. There were mixed views, with a small number of the participants feeling that they had achieved adult status or were on the path to it, while the others felt that living with their parents significantly hindered

their perception of themselves as “fully” adult. From the life-course perspective, transitions involve role and identity changes, and leaving the parental home is part of attaining adult status (Elder et al., 2003).

The young adults relied on many internal markers of adulthood such as autonomous decision making, maturity, or taking responsibility for their actions, as suggested by Arnett (2001) and Mary (2014). Those who felt that they had achieved the criteria for adulthood mainly attributed to factors such as making independent decisions, contributing to the household financially and having more equal relationships with parents. These aspects strengthened their view of themselves as ‘real’ adults, as well as the view of their parents (Sassler et al., 2008). The way in which the young adults perceived themselves as adults was also largely shaped by their parents’ view and treatment of them. As previously mentioned, there were many ways in which the young adults were made to feel more like children than adults by their parents. The acceptance of adult status by parents is critical in the sense of adulthood for young adults (Aquilino, 2006). Furthermore, as stated previously, many of the individual markers of adulthood are difficult to achieve while living with parents due to the constraints on autonomy and independence. Thus, remaining at home, particularly when there is little opportunity to move out, can impact the negotiation of adult status. The role and status changes associated with the transition of leaving home are important to young adults in their attainment of adulthood, which is consistent with the life-course perspective (Elder et al., 2015; Elder, 1985). The contention of adulthood is an integral part of young adults’ experience of living with parents.

6.7 Independent Housing: An Enduring Adult Transition Marker

Leaving home was still viewed as important in the transition to adulthood by the young adults in this study. Despite the diverse paths of transitions to adulthood today, it appears that the traditional marker of independent residential status is significant for young adults, both in their own construction of adult identity, and how they believe others view them. Young adults are facing a widening discrepancy between current patterns of transition, their perception of adulthood, and societal expectations, as suggested by Mary (2014). While the young adults suggested that many are sympathetic and understanding of them living home because of the widespread nature of the housing crisis, the young adults themselves appear to be struggling

with their own transition path, particularly in the face of the uncertainty of the future (Beck, 1992).

Independent living is one of the classic markers of adulthood along with family and work. These objective markers are no longer fixed in time like they used to be, marriage is delayed and work has become more unstable and precarious (Blatterer, 2007). Remaining in the family home for longer is becoming increasingly common, yet as suggested by Blatterer (2007), the normative vision of adulthood has been retained to some extent. This is despite the increasingly non-linear attainment of these classic markers and the fragmentation of the life-course. While some suggest that the conceptualisation of adulthood is changing and that individual criteria are becoming more prevalent (Arnett, 2001; Mary, 2014), the young adults in this study still view leaving home as a central benchmark of adulthood. As mentioned above, the few young adults in this study who did feel that they have attained adult status despite remaining in the parental home attributed it mainly to a sense of responsibility. While the young adults value internal markers of independence and responsibility, they also emphasise that living independently makes it easier to achieve these. Therefore, despite the increase in internal markers, leaving home may still be a necessary milestone for the realisation of adulthood in today's society.

For the young adults living at home, their freedom and choices were highly limited by forces beyond their control. These findings are consistent with the idea that structural forces have a larger impact on the transition to adulthood than Arnett's model of free choice (Bynner, 2005; Côté & Bynner, 2008). Young adults remaining in the parental home for longer may be better explained through increasingly precarious trajectories as a result of economic conditions and the contraction of the welfare state, as well as changing pathways into work, education, housing and family formation (Beck, 1992; Beck & Beck-Gernsheim, 2002). This is evident in this study, as most of the young adults had high levels of education and 'good' jobs, yet they were forced to remain living with their parents due to the unaffordability of the housing market, both in terms of the ability to rent or buy. While there are more possibilities for things like education, travel, and exploration, there are less opportunities in terms of stable work and housing, and the general predictability and security of the life-course (Beck & Beck-Gernsheim, 2002). The findings of this study also suggest a re-familialisation of welfare (Arundel & Lennartz, 2017), as intergenerational support in the form of housing is increasingly necessary. The trend towards

re-familialisation and reliance on parents for support reflects the societal transformation of increased individualised risk and uncertainty (Beck, 1992).

6.8 Precarious Future Housing Trajectories

The largest theme which emerged from the research related to how the young adults perceived their future housing trajectories. While they had to contend with several difficult aspects of co-residence, what appeared to trouble them most was the uncertainty of their future residential status. For some, issues like the day-to-day conflicts with parents or their lack of independence paled in comparison to the frustration they felt at their current situation and their anxiety about the future. For others, the conflicts and lack of independence were heightened because of the uncertainty of when leaving home would occur. In general, the young adults were not optimistic about leaving home in the near future, which was difficult to cope with and accept. This relates to the pessimism amongst young people (Mary, 2014) due to the uncertainty and insecurity caused by socio-economic conditions (Beck, 1992; Beck & Beck-Gernsheim, 2002; Giddens, 1999). Young adults appear to have more choices in shaping their lives, but they also take on greater risks, as manifested in the housing situation (Beck, 1992). Furthermore, this contrasts with the expectations that the young adults had for their futures. Expectations were mostly based on the lives of their parents, and there was disappointment that the housing opportunities available to their parents are not available today. The participants were at a similar age to that of their parents when they purchased their first or even second home, and for some, this was achieved on a single income with no university level education. This discrepancy between the lives of their parents and their own lives creates a feeling of frustration and disillusionment. This reflects the findings of van Lanen (2022), who suggests that the housing expectations amongst disadvantaged youth which have persisted from the past ideals of the Celtic Tiger must be altered in the face of economic change. However, the findings of this study show that highly educated middle-class young adults must also contend with a discrepancy between their expectations and what is achievable. The feeling of disillusionment created is also linked to Woodman and Wyn (2015)'s idea of a 'cleft habitus'. The young adults in this study may have a 'cleft generational habitus' as their expectations of housing and security are incompatible with the current housing market and social conditions.

Young adults in the Irish context appear to be in some way 'opting out' of the overpriced rental market by remaining at home. The participants were highly aware of the precarious nature of

renting, and knew that their quality of life would be affected due to the high costs, insecurity, and poor-quality of housing (Waldron, 2022). Many believed that engaging in the rental sector would impede their ability to save for a mortgage in the future. Several participants were actively saving for a mortgage, believing that purchasing a home was the only sustainable way of achieving independent housing. Furthermore, the young adults were very aware of the difficulties of purchasing a house in today's market. Increasing interest rates and house price inflation contributed to the anxieties that many of the young adults felt around their future housing trajectories. This sense of hopelessness illustrates the precarious and uncertain future that the young adults believe they will face (Beck, 1992; Beck & Beck-Gernsheim, 2002; Blatterer, 2007).

Despite the negative feelings and pessimism, remaining at home may allow for the accumulation of personal wealth while also maintaining high living standards and a middle-class lifestyle, as suggested by Tomaszczyk and Worth (2020). Living at home may be a resulting strategy of economic and housing insecurity, by allowing the young adults to disengage from the rental sector and enabling them to save for the future (Hall, 2016; Tomaszczyk & Worth, 2020). This is particularly evident amongst those who decided to live at home to save to purchase a home. However, all the young adults in this study cited saving as one of the main benefits of living with their parents. This indicates that living at home to accumulate personal wealth may be a coping strategy that has developed as a result of the housing market. This is particularly important in the context of the asset-based welfare system. As discussed by McKee (2012), there are severe implications of this asset-based system for younger generations who are increasingly excluded from homeownership, and risk having lower living standards than their parents had. Even if young adults succeed in accumulating wealth to purchase a home by living with parents for an extended period, they are still delayed in achieving independent housing and homeownership, and they must also contend with negative experiences associated with living at home, as detailed in this study.

Despite the large financial benefits of remaining at home, the feelings of hopelessness amongst the young adults cannot be disregarded. The disillusionment felt by the young adults led to many considering emigrating to a country with more affordable housing, and one participant was planning to leave later this year. Furthermore, some believed that the inability to leave home and begin their own independent life affected their ability to obtain other markers in the transition to adulthood. This relates to concepts of the life-course perspective, which suggests

that the timing of transitions is important, and that transitions have large implications for future trajectories (Elder et al., 2015). Several participants believed that they would have children later in life as a result of their perceived uncertain housing futures. Others suggested that cohabitation with a partner or marriage was delayed. Therefore, despite financial benefits of remaining in the parental home, young adults' transition pathways are affected, by delaying their attainment of other milestones within the life-course.

6.9 Implications for Policy

The findings of this study have important consequences for the life-course and trajectories of young adults. As the instability of residential independence is increasing for young adults in Ireland, they are increasingly relying on their family for housing support. This is consistent with the findings of Arundel and Lennartz (2017), who suggest that the re-familialisation of welfare and increasing intergenerational support may be a consequence of welfare state retrenchment and insecure housing trajectories. While strong familial support and remaining in the parental home until marriage is common in some Southern European countries, this may be becoming more common in Ireland, as well as other liberal welfare regime countries such as the UK and US. Furthermore, the ability of young adults to secure their futures in terms of homeownership under the asset-based welfare system, particularly in the context of increasing welfare retrenchment, is of significant concern. As suggested by Disch and Slaymaker (2023), the formation of new households is becoming increasingly difficult and is one of Ireland's greatest challenges today. There may also be further consequences of this, such as an impact on fertility rates. Therefore, policy may be necessary to reduce the unaffordability and insecurity of the rental sector, as well as the strict mortgage lending rules.

6.10 Conclusion

This study strengthens the assertion, primarily from the media, that young adults in Ireland are increasingly remaining in the parental home due to the unaffordability of the housing market, both in terms of renting and homeownership. There are both positive and negative aspects of the experience of co-residence for young adults. The young adults are grateful for the ability to remain at home as well as enjoying the comforts of it, yet they are eager but unable to leave home. The experience of living at home is heavily influenced by the parent-child dynamic and the extent of the independence afforded to the young adults. The transition of leaving home,

underpinned by the life-course perspective, remains important to young adults, particularly in their negotiation of adulthood, along with individual markers. Finally, living at home in the context of housing unaffordability and insecurity, created a strong feeling of pessimism and hopelessness for the young adults, particularly in relation to their perceived future housing trajectories. The discrepancy between expectations and the reality of the current social and economic conditions dominated the young adults' experiences of living with their parents.

Chapter 7: Final Summary and Conclusion

7.1 Final summary

Given the increasing numbers of young adults living with their parents in Ireland, this thesis aimed to examine both their experiences and perceptions. The findings suggest that the unaffordability of the housing market is the reason that young adults are continuing to live at home, despite engaging in full-time work and having “good” jobs. Middle-class young professionals are increasingly excluded from both the rental market and homeownership, and thus many live with their parents. There are both positive and negative experiences associated with remaining at home. While young adults enjoy financial benefits, the care and comfort of the family home, and support from their parents, there are also numerous constraints experienced. Young adults struggle with the lack of independence and autonomy, while remaining grateful for the opportunity to remain at home. Experiences may be different for women, who appear to have less freedom and their actions monitored by parents. The parent-child relationship is central in determining the experience of living with parents, as it has the ability to impact the young adults’ level of independence, the dynamics within the home, as well as the young adults’ perception of themselves as adults. Despite research suggesting that the attainment of adult status is increasingly being associated with individual markers such as responsibility, this study finds that leaving the parental home remains an important adult transition marker within the life-course in the view of the young adults themselves.

The most dominant finding of this research relates to the pessimism experienced by young adults in relation to their housing futures. In the context of high rents, house price inflation, and strict mortgage lending rules, the ability to achieve independent housing is severely limited for young adults. The certainties which previously existed have been eroded through the emergence of a risk society. There is evidence of a ‘cleft generational habitus’, as there is a mismatch between the expectations of young adults in terms of their ability to achieve homeownership, or even rented accommodation, with the current social conditions and housing market. This may have important societal consequences, particularly within asset-based welfare systems, as younger generations may struggle to secure their future welfare if excluded from homeownership. Furthermore, there may be evidence of a re-familialisation of welfare, as young adults are increasingly relying on family for support in the form of housing.

7.2 Limitations

There are several limitations regarding the findings of this study. The first limitation concerns generalisability. Despite similarities across other countries, those with liberal welfare regimes in particular, the nature of the housing market in Ireland is highly specific and the participants remained in the parental home due to such market conditions. Their experience of living with their parents was contextualised by this. Therefore, caution must be used when generalising such findings, as there may be different results in other contexts. Furthermore, another limitation concerning generalisability relates to the homogeneity of the sample. All participants were from white Irish backgrounds and lived in working or middle-class areas of Dublin and surrounding commuter towns, and most had university level education. There were also more female participants, and while there were no large, gendered differences apparent in this study, apart from women having their whereabouts monitored, a more balanced sample may be useful. Despite the common experiences shared, further research with a more diverse sample with participants from across Ireland may capture a wider range of experiences.

Another limitation relates to the participants' ability to afford independent housing. The study relied on the participants' word that the rental market was unaffordable for them, and their income was not measured or compared to any affordability index. It was difficult to discern in some cases what the young adults meant by independent housing being unaffordable, as when probed, some admitted they could move out in some capacity (e.g. a room in a shared house) but their finances and ability to save would be severely impacted. Others, particularly those without university education and who worked in low-paid jobs, were clearer in their articulation of being entirely unable to move out. Further studies could benefit from measuring the income of young adults and housing affordability, which may be helpful in understanding the economic circumstances of young adults and their associated housing choices, or lack thereof.

A final limitation concerns the negotiation of adult status for the participants. While most believed that leaving home is a necessary step in adulthood, and that their adult status is hampered by remaining in the family home, it cannot be assumed that the young adults' perception of their adult status would be different if they lived independently. Kins et al. (2014) suggest that young adults living independently also struggle in their negotiation of adulthood with themselves and others. Therefore, research comparing the perceived adult status of young

adults living at home versus independently may be useful to understand the full extent that living at home affects adult identity.

7.3 Further Research

While this research contributes to the understanding of the experiences and perceptions of young adults living with their parents, there are several suggestions for further research. As mentioned previously, a larger sample with participants from across Ireland would be useful. It is possible that young adults from Dublin tend to live with their parents for longer, as they are often not required to move for university or work. Further research could explore the experiences of young adults who are from other parts of Ireland and leave home at an earlier age versus those who are from Dublin and potentially stay in the parental home longer. Future research could also benefit from the measurement of housing affordability for young adults, particularly in relation to their choice or lack thereof in remaining at home. This may also provide data on living with parents as a coping strategy in the face of unaffordable housing, particularly for the middle-class who may want to accumulate personal wealth, while maintaining their living standards and a comfortable lifestyle. Furthermore, future research could examine the effects of increasing numbers living at home on family formation and fertility rates.

7.4 Conclusion

In the context of increasing rates of parent-child co-residence in Ireland and elsewhere, this study aimed to contribute to the knowledge of the experiences and perceptions of young adults living with their parents. Living at home can impact the lives of young adults in many ways. While there are benefits, mainly financial, as well as care and support from parents, there may also be several negative experiences. Young adults may struggle with the parent-child dynamic, and desire greater independence than their parents afford them. Similarly, parents play a large role in the negotiation of adult status for young adults. Despite research suggesting that adulthood may be increasingly based on individual markers, the young adults in this study still consider leaving the parental home necessary in the attainment of adult status. Furthermore, any positive experiences appeared to be outweighed by the pessimism felt in relation to their future housing trajectories. The young adults experienced both disappointment and anxiety in relation to the current housing market and their ability to achieve independent housing. This

may have several consequences for the wellbeing of young adults, their future under an asset-based welfare system, as well as for the formation of new households on a societal level. To conclude, while there are many positive and negative experiences, the structural forces which impede the path to independent housing and the pessimism associated with it, appear to dominate the experience of living with parents.

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Appendices

Appendix A: Interview Guide

1. Welcome participant and thank them for agreeing to participate in the research.
2. Ensure that they understand the research and what they are consenting to.
3. Start audio recording.
4. Obtain verbal consent from participant.
5. Ask for and record name, gender, age, education level, and occupation of the participant.
6. Begin asking the following interview questions.
 1. Could you tell me about where you live and who you live with?
 - a. Have you ever lived outside the family home? When? Why?
 - b. If yes, why did you return?
 2. How did you come to the decision to live with your parents?
 - a. Would you prefer to move out?
 3. What is it like to live with your parents?
 - a. Are there things you like/dislike? (Shared spaces, chores, support, finances)
 - b. Do you think living at home impacts your life in any way (positive or negative)?
 - c. How is your relationship with your parents?
 4. Do you anticipate leaving home in the near future?
 - a. What are the barriers to leaving home?
 - b. How does the future make you feel?
 5. How does it feel to live with your parents as an adult?
 - a. Did you expect to be living at home at this age?
 - b. How does it make you feel?
7. Ask the participant if there is anything else that they would like to add.
8. Thank the participant for their time and end recording.
9. Write memo with immediate thoughts.

Appendix B: Information for Participants

Master's thesis study about the experience of young adults living with their parents in Ireland.

Thank you considering participating in an interview for this study. Before you decide whether or not to continue and take part, you need to understand why the research is being done and what it involves for you. Please take your time to read the following information carefully. You may ask questions if anything is not clear or if you would like more information on anything.

Who I am and what this study is about.

My name is Eilidh Dunlop, and I am a student at Lund University in Sweden. I am conducting this study for my thesis as part of my Masters in Welfare Policies and Management. I hope to interview 10-12 different people. The study aims to examine why young adults in Ireland are increasingly remaining in the parental home, and in what ways this affects their lives.

What will taking part involve?

Taking part will involve discussing your own experience of living with your parents. The interview will last approximately 45 minutes to 1 hour. Topics that will be discussed may relate to your reasons for living with your parents, things you like and dislike about it, if and how it affects your life in other ways. The interview will be recorded and transcribed. I will ask that you understand the nature of the interview and ask for verbal consent at the beginning of the interview. The information gathered during the interview will be used as data in the thesis.

Do you have to take part?

Taking part is completely voluntary. You have the right to refuse to participate, refuse any question that you do not want to answer, and the right to withdraw completely.

Why have I been asked to take part?

You have been asked to take part as you fulfil the participant criteria of a 25–29-year-old who is living with their parents in Ireland.

What are the risks and benefits of taking part?

The research aims to contribute to a better understanding of the experience of the increasing number of young adults living with their parents in Ireland. By taking part in this research, you

can have your experience heard. All written accounts of your information will be anonymised. If any questions arise that you feel uncomfortable discussing, you do not have to answer them. You can withdraw consent at any point in the interview and any information you have provided will not be used. You are welcome to discuss any concerns you have.

Will taking part be confidential?

Taking part is completely confidential. All written data will be completely anonymised. You will be given a pseudonym (a fake name) and the location where you live will be general (i.e. South Dublin). Any identifying information will be anonymised or not used as part of the data.

How will your information be used and stored?

The interview will be audio recorded. The audio recordings will be stored safely on a protected USB drive and will be deleted once the thesis has been submitted and receives a passing grade. Only I will have access to the audio recordings. All written data will be anonymised and non-identifiable.

What will happen to the findings of this study?

This research is intended to be used as part of the thesis requirement of the master's Programme in Welfare Policies and Management. It will not be used for any other reason. If you wish, you may receive a copy of the thesis upon its completion.

Who should you contact for further information?

You may contact myself or my supervisor with the below information for further information at any stage, or to discuss any concerns.

Eilidh Dunlop

Master's student in Welfare Policies and Management

Email address

Dalia Abdelhady

Thesis supervisor

Associate professor in Sociology

Email address

Appendix C: Codebook

Theme	Sub-theme	Code	Explanation	
The Parent Child Relationship	Independence	Treated as child	Participants feel that they are treated like a child or teenager by parents	
		Conflict	Conflict with parents over boundaries/independence	
		Whereabouts	Parents asking where they are going or where they are	
		Permission	Having to ask permission to do certain things	
		Directions	Being told what to do by parents	
		Forbidden	Certain things being forbidden in parental home	
		Privacy	Parents knowing too much about their lives or being intrusive	
	Importance	Close relationship	Good, close relationship between parents and child	
		Beneficial	Living with parents has benefitted relationship	
		Negative	Living with parents has had negative impact on relationship	
		Better away	There was a better relationship between parent and child when they lived away from home	
		Gratitude	Feeling grateful for time spent with parents while living together	
	The Negotiation of Adulthood	With themselves	Desire to move out	Viewing moving out as a necessary step into adulthood
			Feel like child	The participant feels like a child while living at home.
Adult roles			The participant describes roles and responsibilities that are typical of adults that they cannot have living at home	
Decision making			The desire for independent decision-making	
Adult status attained			Feels like an adult while living at home	
Adult status unattained			Does not feel like an adult while living at home	
With others		Parents view	Whether parents treat/view them as an adult	
		Embarrassment	Feeling embarrassment or shame for living at home around others	
		Comfort	Feeling comfort from others/peers who also live at home/knowing it is common	

Future Trajectories	Expectations	Ability	Concerns about the ability to leave the family home in near future
		Past Expectations	Believing that they would have moved out by this age
		Parents life	Discussion of their parents housing history in comparison to their own
	Future outlook	Hopelessness	Feeling hopeless at prospect of moving out/future housing career
		Frustration	Expression of frustration at current housing situation
		Content	Express of satisfaction while living at home
		Bleak	Discussions of future as bleak
		Hopeful	Discussions of future as hopeful
		Negative current relationships	Living at home having negative impact on current romantic relationship
		Negative dating	Living at home has a negative effect on dating/ability to find a partner
		Emigration	Consideration of emigration due to housing situation and/or other factors
Milestones	Living with parents is affecting/delaying other milestones such as co-habitation, marriage, parenthood		
Reason for living at home	Unaffordability	The unaffordability of housing market	
	Mortgage	In order to save for a mortgage	
	Other reasons	Other reasons for living at home that are not financial	