

THE REPERTOIRES OF RELATEDNESS: UNDERSTANDING THE PARENT-CHILD
RELATIONSHIPS OF YOUNG ADULTS WHO LIVE AT HOME

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ABSTRACT

Increasingly, Canadian young adults delay their moves from the family home or return to live with parents after a period away. Though research has identified some of the economic, developmental, cultural, and interpersonal factors related to this practice, virtually no researchers have interpreted the meanings and experiences of parent adult-child relationships in this context. The aim of this qualitative research was to examine how young adults living at home experience and construct their parent-child relationships. Data was collected through semi-structured and life history interviews with 15 Canadian young adults (ages 23 to 33). Drawing on phenomenological and hermeneutic traditions, meanings of experience were reconstructed by relating part-whole relationships at several levels: between textual segments and broader categories and themes; between individual participants and the sample as a whole; between the data and concepts borrowed from moral anthropology, moral philosophy, and cultural psychology; and between the current findings and the state of knowledge on coresidence. Findings describe how participants experience and construct their relationships to their parents through diverse “styles of relatedness”: caregiving and receiving, the transmission and reception of authority, tyranny and subjection, collective negotiation, caregiving within the family system, common household civility, and companionate friendship. Participants’ experiences within and across these styles of relatedness clustered into three worlds of the family: 1) A balanced and robust family world, 2) An imbalanced and delicate family world, and 3) A frozen family world. These worlds varied by their incorporation of diverse styles of relatedness, their depths of mutual understanding, and their balance of joint involvement (according to the young adults). Based on these findings, I draw four conclusions. First, I claim that coresiders’ experiences of the parent-child bond cannot be adequately represented by a single world of experience. Second, I argue that an eclectic repertoire of styles of relatedness supports young adults’ meaningful belonging in the parental home, fulfilling multiple functions that complement, supplement, and counterbalance one another. Third, I claim that to live a good life with their parents, coresident young adults require not only the abstract knowledge of styles of relatedness, but also the competence to discern when, where, and how these styles ought to be performed. Fourth, I show that young adults constitute themselves as capable persons by cultivating and performing a repertoire of styles of relatedness – ideally undertaking this work alongside their parents in a joint project of moral becoming (Mattingly, 2014; Ricoeur, 1990/1992).

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DEDICATION

This work is dedicated to the participants of this research. It has been a privilege exploring your experiences of vulnerability, comfort, joy, pain, confusion, irritation, love, and weirdness with your parents. Thank you for sharing your stories generously and with a spirit of self-discovery.

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CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

Each generation of family-watchers denies any historical memory, and casts its own version as a completely new development threatening the stability of mythical “traditional” families as never before. Anxious preoccupation with the condition and prospects of “the family,” therefore, is as persistent – and as infinite in form and nature – as are families themselves. Heading towards the twenty-first century, “the crisis in the family” continues to set off waves of public debate, media obsession, and mass anxiety. Most Canadians, meanwhile, continue to find some notion of family important to their own histories, and meaningful in their own lives. (Comacchio, 1999, p. 156)

The smoothly working family system is much more difficult to study than one that is in difficulties. (Laing, 1969, p. 14)

Over the past half century, it has become more common for young people to live with their parents. Like other markers that have traditionally signified adulthood (marrying, becoming financially independent, having children, and owning a home), residential independence is being achieved more gradually than in the post-World War II period, when these transitions occurred in a relatively predictable, homogeneous, and rapid succession (Boyd & Norris, 1999; Clark, 2007; Mintz, 2015; Mitchell, 2006a; Statistics Canada, 2011). In 1981, 27% of Canadians in their 20s were living at home; by 2011, this proportion had grown to 42%, and the proportion of those in their late 20s had more than doubled (Milan, 2016).¹ Popular press during the 2000s and 2010s reflected “considerable cultural ambivalence” about parental support to adult children (Mortimer, 2012, p. 29, citing Settersten, 2012) and coresidence was no exception (Mitchell & Lennox, 2020). In Canadian, British, and American outlets, journalists expressed sympathy for parents postponing their dreams of retirement (Braverman, 2016; Friedman, 2016), disapproval of young people and their failures to launch (Chasmar, 2016), and concern about institutional supports for young adults in a changing economic world (Zoratti, 2016). Others legitimized this situation as a valid economic choice (Baker, 2016; Harris, 2015; Rampell, 2016) or congratulated young people for resisting dominant social norms around successful parenting and adulthood, noting that how parents and children lived together was more relevant than whether or not they do so (Schuman, 2016). Interestingly, in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic – when levels of

¹ “Parents” refers to parents within an economic family (a family related to one another through blood, marriage, common-law, or foster relationship). Statistics Canada defines “living at home” as including persons who do not have a usual place of residence elsewhere in Canada. In addition, it includes students who temporarily live away from home part of the year.

coresidence climbed to their highest since the Great Depression (Fry et al., 2020) – the tone seems to have shifted and more nuanced depictions of the benefits, drawbacks, and challenges of coresidence have emerged, whether in relation to parents’ financial situations (Carosa, 2020; Knueven, 2021), parent-child interactions (Heath, 2021; Pinsker, 2020), or expectations regarding the life course (Butler, 2020; Holder, 2020). Increasingly, there is a sense that views of coresidence require a “rethink” (Butler, 2020) and living with one’s parents might have been “unjustifiably stigmatized” in the recent past (Pinsker, 2020). Together, national statistics and shifting public discourses indicate a need to understand contemporary coresident families.

In many ways, academic researchers have already responded to that need. Taking sociological, demographic, and economic approaches, researchers have examined rates of coresidence in relation to housing conditions, labor markets, welfare regimes, parent and child incomes, and family socio-economic status. Cultural norms have also been considered as influencing patterns of coresidence. A small but growing number of psychologists have begun to assess whether this living arrangement may relate to the psychosocial adjustment of youth. Family characteristics have also been examined in relation to coresidence. Despite these accounts, no research has examined in detail a key aspect of this phenomenon: how young adults construct their experiences of the parent-child relationship within the context of coresidence.

The purpose of this study was to use an interview-based approach to explore the experiences and meanings of parent-adult child relationships among young adults living at home. Drawing on a tradition of hermeneutic phenomenology, I sought to answer the question: “How do coresident young adults experience and construct their relations to their parents?” Implied within this question is at least three constitutive sub-questions: How do young adults living at home experience and construct *themselves* in relation to their parents? How do they perceive and describe their *parents* in relation to them? And how is the *bond* between themselves and their parents constituted? Complementing the tendency toward broad-scale, statistical analyses, my approach emphasized experiential, cultural, moral, and political interpretations of human experience and social practices.

This thesis proceeds as follows. I first review academic literature on the topic of coresidence, highlighting the contributions and limitations of current approaches. After synthesizing this literature, I introduce my research questions, overall theoretical orientation, and methodological approach. The three findings chapters each introduce new concepts that cover

narrower bands of social experience. These chapters make up the bulk of the thesis. The major sections of the thesis are each anchored in a figure of the parent – i.e., as a caregiver (Chapter 2), authority figure (Chapter 3), family member (Chapter 3, Section 1), roommate (Chapter 4, Section 2), and friend (Chapter 4, Section 3). Whereas the first two chapters depict asymmetrical modes of relatedness, the third implies symmetrical modes of relatedness. Note that although each chapter is organized around the representation of parents, I devote as much space to young adults’ depictions of their own aims and actions. This dual focus of description provides the basis for my conclusion, where I identify seven styles of relatedness and their unique contributions to family life. Examining participants’ experiences within and between these styles of relatedness, I identify three worlds of the family: 1) A balanced and robust family world, 2) An imbalanced and delicate family world, and 3) A frozen family world. These worlds vary by their incorporation of diverse styles of relatedness, their depths of mutual understanding, and their balance of joint involvement. Based on these findings, I draw four conclusions. First, I claim that coresiders’ experiences of the parent-child bond cannot be adequately represented by a single world of experience. Second, I argue that an eclectic repertoire of “styles of relatedness” supports young adults’ meaningful belonging in the parental home, fulfilling multiple functions that complement, supplement, and counterbalance one another. Third, I claim that to live a good life with their parents, coresident young adults require not only the abstract knowledge of styles of relatedness, but also the competence to discern when, where, and how these styles ought to be performed. Fourth, I demonstrate that young adults constitute themselves as capable persons by cultivating and performing a repertoire of styles of relatedness – ideally undertaking this work alongside their parents in a joint project of moral becoming (Mattingly, 2014; Ricoeur, 1990/1992). Whereas past depictions of coresidence have tended to draw on isolated features, materialist motivations, global measures of satisfaction, and sources of conflict that threaten the integrity of the individual, this thesis provides a contextualized unfolding of worlds, where coresidence is recognized for its bonding value, for the combinations of social features that underpin satisfaction, and for sources of conflict that threaten the integrity of the family by jeopardizing mutual understanding, disturbing equilibriums of involvement, and limiting styles of relatedness.

1.1 Literature Review

Drawing from the disciplines of economics, geography, demography, sociology, and psychology, this literature review examines five major questions that currently orient research on parental coresidence: 1) How have home-leaving trajectories changed over time? 2) Why are young adults living with their parents? 3) What are the developmental implications of parental coresidence? 4) What are the implications for adult children's well-being? and 5) What are the implications of coresidence for parent-child relationships?

1.1.1 Coresidence and Generational Interdependence in the Contemporary West

In both the United States and Canada, rates of coresidence have risen since the 1970s and 1980s. In 1981, 27% of Canadians in their 20s were living with their parents (Milan, 2016); in 2001, 30.6% of Canadians 20 to 34 were doing so; and by 2016, 34.7% of Canadians 20 to 34 were living at home (Statistics Canada, 2017c). In 2020, 52% of Americans 18 to 29 were living in their parents' homes – a rate that topped the previous peak recorded in 1940 (Fry et al., 2020). Coresidence tends to decline with age (Boyd, 2000; Iacovou, 2010). Swartz et al. (2011) found that half of the young adults in their early 20s were supported either financially or residentially, whereas for adults in their early 30s, that proportion diminished to only 10 to 15%. In sum, living at home extends well beyond age 18 for many North Americans, reflecting later ages of home-leaving as well as higher rates of returning home after an initial leave (Beaupré et al., 2008; Golscheider et al., 1999).

To put this trend into context, residential independence is just one of many traditional “milestones” of adulthood that are being delayed or achieved in a less linear fashion than in previous decades. Completing one's education, getting married, having children, purchasing a home, and becoming stably employed are all occurring at generally later ages (Clark, 2007; Mintz, 2015; Settersten & Ray, 2010). Given the expanding period between adolescence and the attainment of the many adulthood statuses, some academics have argued that this period should be recognized as a new stage in the life course – e.g., as “emerging adulthood” (Arnett, 2000, 2004). Others argue that by codifying the prolonged transition to adulthood as a normative “life stage”, academics risk normalizing the economic marginalization of youth, the burdens being shouldered by families, and the social inequalities reproduced when family support plays a greater role in the successful launches of children into adulthood (Bynner, 2005; Côté, 2014b).

While young adults' trajectories to adulthood have transformed, parenting discourses in Canada and the United States have increasingly emphasized high involvement with, and emotional investment in, children. Historians and social scientists have argued that "intensive mothering" or "concerted cultivation" of children has increased in recent decades, with childcare becoming an extremely deliberate effort, focused on children's developmental needs (Aurini et al., 2020; Butler, 2010; Hays, 1996; Clarke, 2010; Quirke, 2006). According to this perspective, parenting has become more "emotionally demanding, financially draining, [and] labor-consuming" (Hays, 1996). It is also more time-consuming, with rigid rules being viewed as inappropriate, reasoned negotiation with children increasingly exalted, and expectations to actively hone children's intellectual abilities through stimulating activities (Hays, 1996; Quirke, 2006).² Some authors have raised concerns that this model of parenting is often inaccessible to working-class parents, though it is positioned as universally appropriate and correct (Clarke, 2010). Quirke (2006) also suggests that such parenting practices may signify new means of transmitting social advantage.

With young people taking longer to acquire material independence, relationships between parents and their adult children have taken a new trajectory. Parents are parenting for longer, providing considerable housing, financial, and practical support to their children into their late 20s and even early 30s (Aquilino, 2006; Mitchell, 2006b; Schoeni & Ross, 2005). Parents are also living longer and experiencing a longer "empty nest" stage overall.³ As parents age, children become valuable supports. In fact, Canada's shifting demographics suggest that the informal care provided by adults to their elderly parents may become increasingly significant. As the Baby Boom generation enters old age, pressures on the health care system combined with lower rates of childbearing could render adult children a uniquely valuable source of informal care and support (Gee, 1990; Li & Wister, 2021; Mitchell, 2006c). In brief, the extended care provided by parents to their adult children may be reciprocated in a future where care is in short supply and

² Although parenting advice has likely always existed in some form, topics in parenting magazines appear to have shifted even in the last half century from fun activities, health, and tips for safety in the 1970s, to an increasing focus on instructions for promoting children's learning, through such means as reading, talking, and listening to music (Quirke, 2006).

³ For example, a woman born between 1951 and 1960 will share an empty home with her partner for roughly 24 years (Milan, 2000).

high demand.⁴ In sum, this brief historical review points to the persistent dynamism of the family as a “creative refiguring of nature” (Good, 1994, p. 183) and the shaping of life course models by historical constraints and options (Elder, 1994).

1.1.2 Explaining Coresidence: Economic Challenges, Institutional Contexts, and Ethnocultural Preferences

The early developmental theorist Erik Erikson was perhaps ahead of his time when he suggested that social organization and the psyche must be understood in relation to one another. As he wrote in *Identity: Youth and Crisis*: “We are in need, then, of concepts which throw light on the mutual complementation of ego synthesis and social organization, the cultivation of which on ever higher levels is the aim of all therapeutic endeavor, social and individual” (Erikson, 1968, p. 53). To highlight the mutual constitution of self and society, I acknowledge here the economic, institutional, and ethnocultural forces that shape coresidence.

Economic challenges and the delayed transition to adulthood. Many social scientists have argued that economic circumstances have elongated the transition to adulthood and postponed independent residence (Arnett, 2004; Bynner, 2005; Côté, 2014a; Furstenberg, 2016; Newman, 2012; West & Lewis, 2018). Briefly put, this view suggests that young people today quite often lack the resources to strike out on their own. In the face of expanding post-secondary education (Galarneau et al., 2013; Hertel & Pfeffer, 2016; Sironi & Furstenberg, 2012), delayed entries into full-time work (Clark, 2007), declining real wages and rates of employment (Furstenberg et al., 2005; Galarneau et al., 2013), increasing involuntary part-time work (Galarneau et al., 2013), and more expensive housing markets (Walks, 2014), young adults today are often being supported by their families as they find their way to financial independence.

In and across many contexts in North America and Europe, sociologists, economists, and demographers have examined the relationships between economic conditions and young adults’ living arrangements using large-scale surveys, involving thousands or even tens of thousands of respondents. Across the board, unemployment (and, less often, under-employment) has been correlated with parental coresidence and “boomeranging” back to the parental home (Arundel &

⁴ Some authors have challenged the alarmist discourse surrounding the aging Boomer generation and resultant pressures on informal care systems. For instance, Rosenthal (2000, as cited by Mitchell, 2006c) suggests that what is critical is for elderly parents to have at least one child to support them, which is still quite common. For her part, Gee (2002) suggests that alarmist discourses rely on many problematic assumptions, one of which is the homogenization of people on the basis of age in order to calculate dependency-ratios, which then lend legitimacy to perceived issues of “intergenerational equity.”

Ronald, 2016; Berngruber, 2021; Bilette et al., 2011; Engelhardt et al., 2016; Goldscheider & Goldscheider, 1999; Hardie & Seltzer, 2016; Kahn et al., 2013; Kaplan, 2012; Matsudaira, 2016; Milan, 2016; Mitchell et al., 2002; Mykyta & Pilkauskas, 2015; Sandberg-Thoma et al., 2015; van den Berg, 2021). Conversely, higher personal incomes have been related to a greater likelihood of leaving the home (Iacovou, 2010; Le Blanc & Wolff, 2006; Mitchell et al., 2004). Rental costs, house prices, and access to social and rental housing also predict probabilities of coresiding (Arundel & Ronald, 2016; Lee & Painter, 2013; Mandic, 2008; Matsudaira, 2016; Matthews-Hunter, 2020; Yelowitz, 2007). Complementing these analyses, qualitative and open-ended survey data surfacing from Canada, the United States, Australia, and the United Kingdom identify economic factors as young people's main reasons for delaying home-leaving and returning to the family home (Copp et al., 2015; Hill & Hirsch, 2019; Kins et al., 2013; Lewis & West, 2017; Mitchell, 2004a; Roberts et al., 2016; Sassler et al., 2008; Warner et al., 2012; White, 2002; Worth & Tomaszcyk, 2017). For example, Copp et al. (2015) found that "I wanted to save money" was the most common reason for living at home, endorsed by over 90% of their American participants who were remaining at home and over 70% of those who had returned home after a period away. Nevertheless, interpreting this finding is difficult, as participants may have been variously referring to building wealth, maintaining a standard of living, or avoiding financial hardship.

Family resources are another variable to consider, though their effects have been more challenging to untangle. Theoretically, parents with more resources are better able to transfer resources to children, enabling them to transition more easily into residential independence. In line with this view, American research highlights that high socio-economic status, when measured as one or both parents' highest level of education, predicts earlier ages of home-leaving (Goldscheider et al., 2014; Sironi et al., 2015; South & Lei, 2015) and lower rates of coresidence (Fingerman et al., 2015; Manzoni, 2016; Swartz et al., 2011; White & Rogers, 1997). Canadian research, on the other hand, has failed to evidence such a consistent trend (Krahn et al., 2018; Mitchell et al., 2002; Turcotte, 2006). In addition, both in Canada and the USA, the likelihood of returning home after an initial departure is not clearly tied to parental levels of education (Bilette et al., 2011; Goldscheider & Goldscheider, 1998; Goldscheider et al., 1999; Mitchell et al., 2000; Mitchell et al., 2004b; South & Lei, 2015). Measured as parental income, parental class background has also failed to show a clear-cut relationship to coresidence,

both in the United States (De Marco & Berzin, 2008; Schoeni & Ross, 2005; South & Lei, 2015; Swartz et al., 2011) and in Europe (Andersson, 2021). In Australia, the opposite pattern has even been found, with children from lower-income families being more likely to be fully independent (Cobb-Clark & Gørgens, 2014).

Clearly, this line of research requires further precision to untangle country-specific effects, differences between home-leaving and returning, and alternative measures of class background (i.e., parental income versus education). The material benefits of coresidence *across* social classes are also distinct. Middle-class families can deploy coresidence to “get ahead”: to promote wealth accumulation, the pursuit of higher education and other forms of human capital, and to gain access to homeownership (Newman, 2012; Worth, 2021). Within working-class families, coresidence is more likely occurring to help families “get by,” drawing on young adults’ financial and labor contributions and therefore permitting fewer opportunities for them to accumulate savings or gain a post-secondary education (Newman, 2012; Worth, 2021). Indeed, researchers are increasingly recognizing the economic contributions made by young adults to their households (especially among those whose incomes are higher than those of their family members, Iacovou & Davia, 2019; Medgyesi & Nagy, 2019; Napolitano, 2015). In summary, as family supports become increasingly relied upon in response to new economic challenges, youth who lack adequate family supports are increasingly at a disadvantage (Lewis & West, 2017).

Institutional supports. In examining such economic pressures, researchers have also considered the buffering effects of state supports. Sociologist Gøsta Esping-Andersen’s (1990; 1999) typology of European welfare regimes has had notable influence and has been adopted and adapted by many scholars of coresidence. Esping-Andersen’s theory suggests that welfare regimes – which characterize contexts of state support, family support, and social norms – impact life course challenges and opportunities, such as those related to independent residence. In line with the theory, rates of independent living are consistently highest in the “social democratic” or “Nordic” cluster of countries (Denmark, Finland, Sweden, and sometimes Norway, Iceland, and the Netherlands), where levels of state support are high and benefit individuals more often than families; rates of independent living are lowest in the Southern European cluster (Greece, Italy, Spain, Portugal, and sometimes Ireland), where state supports are weaker, and families shoulder more of the care for youth (Aassve et al., 2013; Arundel & Ronald, 2016; Iacovou, 2010; Lennartz, et al., 2015). As an example, Arundel and Ronald (2016)

found that in the Nordic countries roughly 80% of young adults (18 to 23) lived independently, whereas in Southern European countries roughly 40% did so.⁵

Through its inclusion of social norms, Esping-Anderson's welfare regime typology draws attention to the need to attend to sociocultural factors in predicting living arrangements. A recent study by van den Berg et al. (2021) provides further evidence that "doubling up" holds significance beyond its role as a survival or upward mobility strategy within a challenging economy. The authors compared 22 European countries to highlight the relative power of economic, institutional, and cultural explanations for ages of leaving home. Their economic model included measures of housing prices, measures related to Gross Domestic Product (GDP), youth unemployment rates, and general employment rates. Their institutional model included measures related to government safety nets (i.e., wages individuals receive when they are unemployed and percentage of social spending related to the GDP). Their cultural model included measures of parental responsibility, religiosity, and individualistic values. On their own, each of the three models predicted a high level of variability across the countries, with the economic model accounting for 41% of cross-national differences, the institutional model accounting for 45% of cross-national differences, and the cultural model accounting for 65% of cross-national differences. Crucially, when these models were combined into a holistic model, they were shown to be additive, in that this final model explained 80% of cross-national variations in home-leaving ages. In summary, this study, like others I will introduce shortly, highlights the insufficiency of economic explanations for coresidence. As van den Berg (2021) put it: "home leaving is not just the result of a rational decision-making process that depends on economic and institutional constraints and opportunities" (p. 14).

Ethnocultural variations. As introduced by these multifaceted models of coresidence, cultural norms around family and the life course inform home-leaving and returning trajectories. Researchers have explored patterns of coresidence behaviors in Canada (including home-leaving,

⁵ Interestingly, Newman (2012) argues in her qualitative sociological research that although independence is preferred by many European youth, young people from social democratic countries (those who receive the most government support) sometimes feel disconnected from their parents, whom they do not rely on for support. In a review of Newman's book by Frances Goldscheider (an early investigator of young adults' living arrangements), Newman is criticized for effectively applauding coresidence for generating close bonds between family members as a result of economic dependence; as Goldscheider (2012) writes, "I doubt that she would make the same argument for the warmth-generating effects of financial dependence for traditional married women" (p. 822).

coresidence, and home-returning) across various ethnocultural variables.⁶ This research has been conducted by sociologists and demographers and has typically utilized large-scale survey data interpreted through statistical analysis.

Three main findings have consistently emerged over time. First, coresidence is most common among minorities in Canada, including visible minorities (Milan, 2016), individuals who do not report a Canadian or Western European ethnic identity (Boyd, 2000; Gee et al., 2003; Jeong et al., 2014; Mitchell, 2004a),⁷ and individuals whose mother tongue is neither English nor French (Bilette et al., 2011; Milan, 2016; Mitchell et al., 2002). In the most recent analyses, authors have reported higher rates of coresidence (and later ages of home-leaving) among Chinese, Iranian/Persian, South Asian, East Asian, Southeast Asian, Caribbean or Latin/South American, and Southern European youth in Canada (Jeong et al., 2014; Milan, 2016; Mitchell et al., 2020; Statistics Canada, 2019a). Second, coresidence is more common among immigrant than non-immigrant young adults (Beaupré & Le Bourdais, 2001; Milan, 2016; Zhao et al., 1995).⁸ Third, coresidence is more common among religious individuals compared to non-religious individuals (Boyd, 2000; Milan, 2016; Mitchell et al., 2002, 2004). As some authors suggest, these findings underscore the heterogeneity in the trend of increasing parental coresidence and challenge simplistic versions of individualization and modernization theories, which claim that the life course is becoming more individualized and the family less significant to life course transitions (Gee et al., 2003; Mitchell, 2006a).

Findings relating home-returning and ethnocultural factors are not as common as those related to rates of coresidence; however, they too reveal interesting variations. Despite their tendency to leave home earlier, Canadians with British and (to a lesser extent) Southern European ethnocultural backgrounds are more likely to boomerang home, to stay out of the home for shorter periods, and to return more times compared to Asian young adults, who return less often, take longer to return, and return fewer times overall (Gee et al., 2003; Mitchell, 2004a). A second curious finding concerns language and home-returning. In Canada, English speakers –

⁶ Unlike other sub-topics related to coresidence, the subject of ethnocultural variation has received a fair amount of attention in Canada, chiefly driven by the work of Ellen Gee and Barbara Mitchell in the 1990s and 2000s. For this reason, I devote this sub-section to evidence drawn from Canadian contexts.

⁷ In this sub-section, ethnic group refers to self-reported identification with an ethnic group, where participants would be asked a question such as “To which ethnic group do you most closely identify?” (Mitchell, 2004a, p. 118).

⁸ Interestingly, Jeong et al. (2014) points out that the effect of immigration on coresidence varies across generations. Whereas immigrants are less likely to live with their parents – and more likely to live with other relatives – children and second-generation young adults are more likely to live with their parents.

though they are no more likely to coreside with their parents than French speakers (Mitchell et al., 2002) – are more likely to return home than French or other language speakers (Mitchell et al., 2000). Observing such differences in home-returning, researchers have suggested that they may reveal underlying variations in conceptions of life course transitions – or “social timetables” (Hagestad & Neugarten, 1985, p. 35) – such that some groups may have more rigid expectations when it comes to the transition to independent residence, while others may have more flexible or permissive expectations, allowing for reversals to occur (Gee et al., 2003; Mitchell et al., 2000). These variable constructions of the life course have yet to be investigated in Canada.

Indeed, although coresidence behaviors have been patterned across ethnocultural identities, the specific norms, values, attitudes, and experiences that may underlie these patterns have yet to be examined in depth. What we currently know is based on the thematic analyses of open-ended survey questions about individuals’ reasons for leaving, staying, or returning to the family home. For instance, in a study by Mitchell (2004b), British Canadians were most likely to report leaving home for independence, whereas Chinese Canadians were most likely to leave to attend school, and Indian Canadians were most likely to leave in order to get married. Ethnic differences in reasons for staying or returning home have also been identified. Gee et al. (2003) found that European Canadians were more likely than Asian Canadians to state that they were living at home (or had returned home) for financial reasons. Indian Canadians, meanwhile, were most likely to state that they were living at home because of tradition and family closeness. These studies, like the next two, uniquely revealed variation in the meanings of leaving home, rather than only variations in behaviors across cultural groups.

Uniquely, Mitchell (2004b) and Mitchell and Lovegreen (2009) conducted mixed-method studies to explore how family involvement in the home-leaving process varied across ethnic groups. Drawing on both survey and interview methods, Mitchell and Lovegreen (2009) found that Indo Canadian parents were more likely than Chinese, Southern European, and British Canadian parents to experience symptoms of Empty Nest Syndrome, which the authors define as “experiences of depression and emotional distress when children leave home” (p. 1651). In some cases, it appeared that these feelings were especially difficult when a son moving out was constructed as a social norm violation. For her part, Mitchell (2004b) examined the degree to which young people involved their parents in their decisions to leave home. She found that Indo Canadians were most likely to report a high degree of parental involvement in the decision to

leave home compared to Chinese, British, and Southern European Canadians. Interestingly, participants within these ethnic groups constructed the influence of parents on home-leaving differently: British Canadians were most likely to state that conflict at home was the source of their parents' influence; Chinese Canadians were most likely to speak of their parents' influence in terms of supporting their educational trajectories; Southern European Canadians were most likely to construct parental influence as related to conflict or supporting their education; and finally, Indo Canadians were most likely to discuss influence in terms of their parents' arranging their marriage. Unfortunately, the nature, sources, involved parties, and outcomes of "home conflict" were not explored in this paper, nor were young adults' judgments of their parents' involvement.

While sparse, some research has hinted beyond patterning expectations, behaviors, and explanations for coresidence and home-leaving. Cultural meaning-making also involves evaluations. Home-leaving transitions can be judged culturally as too early, too late, or too temporary. In a related way, coresidence with parents as an adult may be assessed as more or less legitimate in different cultural contexts. Researchers in Canada and Britain have reported young adults of South or East Asian origin viewing coresidence as an unproblematic, unremarkable living arrangement or even a preferred living arrangement (Roberts et al., 2016; Tomaszczyk & Worth, 2018). Such legitimacy may be the primary "reason" for living at home for some, whereas for others, it may be combined with financial motivations (Tomaszczyk & Worth, 2018). By contrast, recent qualitative research from the United States highlights that returning to the parental home continues to hold "cultural stigma" for young adults, and is seen as "a mark of failure, a source of embarrassment and shame" (Abetz & Romo, 2021, p. 5). As a response, young adults who return home confront a need to communicate to others that their choice is "a savvy, wise, and worthy investment in their future" (Abetz & Romo, 2021, p. 5). Indirectly supporting the claim that coresidence continues to be viewed as indicative of failure, a string of studies dating back 20 years show that majorities of American participants endorse residential independence as a criterion for achieving adulthood (Arnett, 1997, 1998, 2001, 2003; Nelson, 2003). Likewise, Mitchell and Lennox (2020) recently reported that Canadian mainstream news media continue to depict coresidence as legitimate only in cases where it is viewed as a temporary step precipitated by financial motivations and circumstances.

Clearly, home-leaving and returning patterns vary between ethnocultural groups – not only internationally, but also within Canada. Preliminary research also indicates that the patterns, meanings, evaluations, and even feelings (Mitchell & Lovegreen, 2009) of home-leaving vary cross-culturally. Given the cultural psychology creed that “individuals and traditions, psyches and cultures, make each other up” (Shweder, 1991b, p. 2), further investigations into the intersections of culture and psychology could prove instructive in providing clues about how researchers, therapists, or the public should think about (and treat) young adults who live with their parents.

1.1.3 Relating Coresidence to Young Adult Development and Well-being

Although a fair number of economists, demographers, and sociologists have examined the topic of parental coresidence, psychological perspectives are rarer in the literature. This is surprising, given that a) popular concerns around this topic often focus on young people’s development, b) developmental literature has shown residential independence to be a commonly endorsed marker of adulthood, and c) many traditional psychological theories emphasize independence from one’s parents as a key developmental task. In this section, I first discuss some of the origins of these traditional psychological theories, moving then to a discussion of empirical findings and conclusions relating living arrangements to psychosocial development.

Theories relating parent-child relations to development. At the turn of the 20th century, the early developmental psychologist Stanley Hall proposed “adolescence” as a unique stage in the life course. Taking a biologically deterministic perspective, he argued that conflict with parents was inevitable in the transition to adulthood. His views continue to live on in popular discourses of teenager “storm and stress.” More recently, this turbulent stage is no longer conceptualized as a biologically-driven and universal period; rather it is recognized as one possible outcome of combined biological, environmental, and self-regulatory influences (Arnett, 1999; Hollenstein & Lougheed, 2013).

Moving into the mid- and late- 20th century, many neo-analytic theories of development also emphasized separation from parents.⁹ Integrating biological, social, and psychological dimensions, Erik Erikson’s (1963) theory of ego development departed from Freud’s psycho-

⁹ Many texts distinguish between “psychoanalytic” and “neo-analytic” theorists (with Erikson belonging to the latter). Though both theoretical camps emphasize the importance of early childhood experiences and psychological conflicts in the development of personality, neo-analytic approaches are distinguished by their focus on ego processes (rather than id processes) and by their subordination of the role of sex.

sexual or “libido” theory to explore the underpinnings of healthy development as opposed to pathology. Erikson suggested that parents’ relations with the child contributed to the child’s development from the toddler years to adolescence. A child’s development was framed as reliant on parents granting them the freedom to develop autonomy, initiative, mastery, sense of competence, and commitments to a career and ideology (Erikson, 1963, 1968).

Though Erikson’s ideas have garnered broad appeal and are still commonly invoked in article introductions, James Marcia’s identity status model has dominated the empirical examination of developmental identity processes. Building on Erikson’s description of the adolescent identity crisis, Marcia (1966) identified a typology of identity statuses that combined individual’s experiences of identity crisis and commitment. Each of these types incorporated healthy and unhealthy psychological aspects and each was possible at various stages of life (a deviation from Erikson’s progressive and cumulative model). Among the four statuses – foreclosure, moratorium, identity achievement, and diffusion – the foreclosure status typically occurs prior to the other identity statuses and involves accepting parental values (or other authority figures’ values) without question. Individuals with this status are threatened by situations where parental values are “non-functional” or beliefs are not confirmed by experience (Marcia, 1966, p. 552). In line with the predictions of this theory – and acknowledging that variations of it have emerged (cf., Ciecuch & Topolewska, 2017; Schwartz et al., 2013) – empirical research in Western nations has indicated that commitment-making generally increases over young or emerging adulthood (Kroger et al., 2010; Luyckx et al., 2008) and that identity commitment is correlated with psychological adjustment (Bernard, 1981; Luyckx et al., 2006; Meeus et al., 2005; Ryeng et al., 2013; Waterman, 2007). Still, researchers have found mixed evidence for the connection between separation and identity commitment. For example, some research has found links between parents’ psychological control and emerging adults’ identity statuses (Luyckx et al., 2007) and some researchers have found no relation between identity status and functional, attitudinal, or emotional independence from parents (Meeus et al., 2005).

It should be noted that many of the authors who draw from Marcia’s model operate within the global framework of emerging adulthood: a life course stage conceptualized by Jeffrey Arnett in the late 1990s and early 2000s. Informed by Marcia and Erikson’s work, the emerging adulthood theory focuses on changes to “love, work, and worldviews” between the

stages of adolescence and adulthood (Arnett, 2004, p. 140).¹⁰ Parent-child relationships are not central to the five main features of emerging adulthood (i.e., identity exploration, instability, self-focus, feeling in-between, and multiple possibilities), though Arnett does hint at some of the ways parent-child relations are significant to this stage of life. First, he suggests that reduced parental monitoring may facilitate exploration of new activities, which is one of the key features of emerging adulthood (Arnett, 2000, pp. 474-5). Second, Arnett (2004) suggests that each of the cornerstones of becoming an adult (taking responsibility for oneself, making independent decisions, and becoming financially independent) “has connotations of independence specifically *from parents*” (p. 49).¹¹ Finally, Arnett (2004, p. 55) addresses the question of whether a person living at home can “be an emerging adult.” His answer is that while “It is certainly true that if you live at home, you are more dependent on your parents than you would be if you had moved out” it is nevertheless possible for such a person in to fit the five exploratory criteria of emerging adulthood. Overall, emerging adulthood theory itself offers few specifics for explaining or understanding parents’ roles in their children’s successful navigation into adulthood. Rather, it serves more as an orienting framework for researchers studying post-adolescent development.

Shifting away from Erikson’s continuing influence, the object relations school (and, notably, the work of Margaret Mahler and Peter Blos) has also left its mark on developmental theories of adolescence and early adulthood. It is within this tradition that the concept of “separation-individuation” emerged, describing how infants define boundaries between themselves and their caregivers to develop their individuality (Mahler, 1968; Mahler et al., 1975). Originally characterizing relational development within the first few years of life, the

¹⁰ Both sociologists and psychologists have challenged the presumed status of emerging adulthood as a theory (Côté, 2014b; Hendry & Kloep, 2007a, 2007b). These authors’ misgivings center on emerging adulthood’s lack of explanatory mechanisms and processes of development and, by virtue of that, its limited predictive or explanatory power. As Hendry and Kloep (2007b) write: “Age does not explain development. ‘Emerging adulthood’ is just a label that clusters together a large group of individuals who behave in a certain way, yet they do not behave in that way because they are emerging adults” (p. 83).

¹¹ This somewhat ambiguous perspective is spelled out in slightly more detail by Arnett’s colleague and collaborator, Jennifer Lynn Tanner. Tanner has proposed a relational process of “recentering” that she argues constitutes the key developmental task of emerging adulthood. Drawing from a developmental systems approach, theories of ego development, and the concept of second separation-individuation, she affirms “the centrality of parent-child relations as the most proximal and instrumental shaping force on individual development” (p. 27). Tanner suggests that through a three-stage process, there occurs a “shift in power, agency, responsibility, and dependence” whereby young people’s behavior moves from being other-regulated (especially by parents), to being in preparation for self-governance, to being self-regulated. Tanner’s (2006) concept has gained some recognition in empirical studies relating early adult development to parent-child relations, however, it largely synthesizes previous conceptual work as opposed proposing new ideas about parent-child relations and development from adolescence to adulthood.

concept was later applied to adolescence by Blos (1967), who suggested that development into autonomy was defined by adolescents' dissociation from their parents. In these psychoanalytic terms, autonomy was understood as a "radical and conflictual *detachment* or disengagement from earlier infantile representations of parents. Therefore, autonomy or separation [was] viewed as the opposite of, or a move away from, *connectedness* or relatedness to parents" (Beyers et al., 2003, p. 351).

More recently, researchers have attempted to parse out concepts of autonomy and separation with greater precision. In the first place, theorists have proposed that rather than defining autonomy as separation (a definition that points to the absence of something – a negative conception), it would be better understood as "agency," "competence," "self-governance," or "self-directed behavior," a definition that points to the presence of something – a positive conception (Beyers et al., 2003). Second, researchers have attempted to distinguish between forms of separation or detachment, since these multidimensional constructs have often led to confusing findings in the literature (Beyers et al., 2003). Distinctions have been proposed between unhealthy detachment (characterized by coolness, rejection, open confrontation) and healthy separation (characterized by de-idealization of parents, individualized sense of self, and non-dependence on parents). While most research in this vein addresses adolescents, its theoretical challenges and innovations suggest that in studying young adults, nuance is required in interpreting connections between power dynamics and connectedness of parents and children. Increasingly, psychologists in family, cultural and developmental fields are showing that agency – operationalized as independent decision-making and sense of control over events – is not dependent on separation or detachment from parents (Kagitcibasi, 2017; Lamborn & Groh, 2009).¹²

Empirical research examining living arrangements and developmental measures.

So, what has empirical research directly suggested about separation from parents (via living arrangement) and development? This topic has been examined by psychologists mainly in Europe (Belgium, Germany, Slovenia, Italy, Portugal) and, to a lesser extent, in the United States. In exceptional cases, sociologists have also examined young adults' senses of autonomy

¹² The crux of the conceptual and psychometric issue is summed up by Kagitcibasi (2017) who writes that "many individualism/independent self scales tap autonomy but also separateness, and collectivism/interdependent self scales tap relatedness but also lack of autonomy" (p. 830).

and adult identity within shared living arrangements (see Sassler et al., 2008; White, 2002). Certainly, some research indicates an association between residing with one's parents and developmental measures. In comparisons with young adults who live independently, individuals who coreside with their parents have been found to report lower levels of functional and financial independence (Mendonça & Fontaine, 2013), greater fears of disappointing parents (Kavčič & Zupančič, 2019), lower self-reliance (Zupančič et al., 2014), feeling less like an adult (Kins & Beyers, 2010), feeling less capable of taking care of a family (Kins & Beyers, 2010; Zupančič et al., 2014), and a longer expected transition to adulthood (Dubas & Petersen, 1996). Examining parenting styles that can stifle development, reports show coresidence to be associated with higher levels of intrusive parenting (Kavčič & Zupančič, 2019), higher levels of parental monitoring (Fozio-Thielk, 2015), and greater psychological maladjustment in relation to helicopter parenting (Hong & Cui, 2020). In addition, Jonkmann et al. (2014) found that compared to individuals who move in with partners or roommates, young people who stayed with their parents after high school developed less openness and agreeableness. In brief, these results seem to show a relationship between development and living arrangement, though causal directions are unknown.

To make sense of these findings, researchers commonly draw on theoretical assumptions about the differences between coresidence and independent residence of young adults. First, they claim that compared to children who have moved out, coresiding children have fewer adult responsibilities (e.g., for making decisions and caring for themselves) and this limits opportunities for establishing healthy independence from parents (Dubas & Peterson, 1996; Hong & Cui, 2020; Mendonça & Fontaine, 2013). Second, there is the claim that when children remain in the home, parents often fail to acknowledge that the child has entered a new stage of life and therefore continue treating their adult children like young children (Kins & Beyers, 2010). Third, researchers state that because the child is more accessible due to shared living arrangements, this permits parents greater ability to monitor their children and intrude on their lives (Hong & Cui, 2020). Fourth, researchers suggest that living with roommates (compared to living with parents) may constitute a relatively unstructured environment that creates more opportunities for personality change, whereas living with parents may be more attractive to individuals who find the “well known and familiar environment of the parental home” appealing

(Jonkmann et al., 2014, p. 692). Finally, it may be that when young adults co-reside with parents, they continue their child-like behaviors. As asserted by Kins and Beyers (2010):

young people themselves who are coresiding with their parents often continue to behave in immature and dependent ways, mostly out of habit and not willing to take full responsibility for themselves. (p. 748)

Importantly, these presumptions tend not to be supported by empirical evidence or careful theorizing.

Whereas the previous studies have supported linkages between living arrangements and developmental psychology, there is also evidence that fails to support such relations. Studies have found no relation between living arrangements and individual differences in emotional autonomy (Fozio-Thielk, 2015) or pathological separation-individuation from parents (Kins et al., 2011; Mendonça & Fontaine, 2013). Similarly, work by Zupančič and colleagues (2012) found only marginally significant differences in markers of individuation (i.e., needs for connectedness, fears of withdrawal, needs for closeness, and relational ambivalence) between coresiding and independently residing youth. The achievement of a range of developmental tasks during adolescence also does not predict ages of home-leaving (Seiffge-Krenke, 2010).¹³ Adding more confusion, findings have occasionally reversed expectations about the developmental implications of living arrangements, where, relative to peers who had moved in with roommates, coresident youth were more likely to identify as adults (Reitzle, 2007) and indicated higher levels of conscientiousness (Jonkmann et al., 2014). In qualitative research complementing these survey studies, Kins et al. (2013) argued that all their participants (whether coresiding with parents or living independently) engaged in a process of redefining their relationship with their parents, and that independent residents were no further along in this process than those who lived at home. Reflecting on the above findings, researchers have suggested that it may be possible for young adults to learn and adapt along with their parents (Fozio-Thielk, 2015), to refrain from excessive reactions to parents (Mendonça & Fontaine, 2013), to access privacy in the home (Zupančič et al., 2012), and to engage in an intrapsychic process of separation-individuation while sharing a home with their parents (Kins et al., 2011). In brief, these researchers suggest

¹³ The tasks were based on Havighurst's (1953) typology of tasks, including "(i) peer group integration, (ii) acceptance of physical maturity, (iii) establishment of an autonomous identity, (iv) independence from parents, (v) preparation of future family life, (vi) sociopolitical awareness, (vii) preparation for an occupation, (viii) having a romantic relationship, and (ix) development of close friendships" (Seiffge-Krenke, 2010, pp. 502-503).

that direct relationships between living arrangements and developmental measures may not be evident because they fail to capture interpersonal and intrapsychic processes that inform the development of maturity. As put by Kins and colleagues (2011): “Although physical distancing from the family by moving out of the parental home may be an outward manifestation of the inner process of separation, it is not the core element of this process” (p. 660).

Qualitative research supports these theoretical interpretations that center the “how” of parent-child dynamics in place of the “where” of living situation alone. For example, qualitative evidence from Aleni Sestito and Sica (2014) shows that when parents do not adapt to their children’s changing roles, their adult children do not engage in as mature identity processes. Similarly, Newman’s (2012) study of coresidence found that in the most adaptive American households, young adults were able to establish “in-house adulthood” through “delicate – and ongoing – negotiations over personal privacy, autonomy, and the extent to which the returnee should contribute earnings to the household” (p. 78). Indeed, several studies have shown that financial contributions to the household inform young adults’ senses of maturity and entitlement to adult rights (Abetz & Romo, 2021; Warner et al., 2017; White, 2002). Positioning a move back home (or an extended stay) as a savvy financial choice also supports young adults’ feelings of maturity (Abetz & Romo, 2021; Sassler et al., 2008). Access to privacy and freedom from parental control are also important for developing the child’s sense of independence (Kins et al., 2013; Mann-Feder, 2014; Newman, 2012; Sassler et al., 2008; White, 2002). Negotiating with parents to establish or firm up boundaries and expectations can reinforce coresident children’s sense of adult identity (Abetz & Romo, 2021; Sassler et al., 2008). Finally, Sassler et al. (2008) noted that the development of close relationships with family also promoted a sense of maturity; as they said, young adults’ “ability to get along with, and enjoy, their family” and global improvements to their parent-child bonds constituted a source of “pride” (p. 691).

Coresidence may not necessarily imply a failure at development, but given its status as a normative marker of adulthood in the West, it is plausible that living at home might impair a sense of well-being. As alluded to earlier, evidence from surveys, interviews, and content analysis of news media confirm that residential independence continues to be a prominent marker of adulthood in Canada and the United States (Abetz & Romo, 2021; Arnett, 1997, 1998, 2001, 2003; Mitchell & Lennox, 2020; Nelson, 2003). The illegitimacy of living with one’s parents is also reaffirmed in studies where participants attest to their living situation as a

temporary rather than permanent one (Hill & Hirsch, 2019; Kins et al., 2013; Lewis & West, 2017; Mann-Feder, 2014; Sassler et al., 2008; Warner et al., 2012; West & Lewis, 2018). The question then must be asked: what are the wellness implications of being (or feeling) “off-time” when it comes to residential transitions?

Early research on this question appeared to support the view that violations of this age-graded transition would be associated with impairments to well-being (Ward & Spitze, 1992). Within a sample of in a sample of mainly white, middle and upper middle-class individuals, Dubas and Petersen (1996) found that young adults living in the same household as their parents had the highest levels of depressed affect, compared to young adults living within a one-hour drive of parents, in the same state as parents, in another part of the country or outside the country. Importantly, a prior history of depressive episodes did not increase likelihood of remaining in the parental home during young adulthood, suggesting that aspects of the family environment had a causal role. While research on this topic is still somewhat limited, studies since that time have produced a mixed picture. In line with Dubas and Peterson’s (1996) early study, other researchers have found that, compared to their independently residing peers, coresiding young adults have lower levels of life satisfaction (Nikolaev, 2015) and higher levels of depression (Culatta & Clay-Warner, 2021).¹⁴ These studies would appear to validate the notion that being “off-time” could cause “feelings of shame, problems with self-esteem, and ultimately dissatisfaction with life” (Nikolaev, 2015, p. 12). Still, other research has failed to find direct associations between young adults’ living arrangements and anxiety (McMillin, 2017), daily mood (Fingerman et al., 2017), life satisfaction (Smorti et al., 2020), or subjective well-being (Kins et al., 2009). Both Kins et al. (2009) and McMillin (2017) suggest that objective markers of adulthood (like independent residence) may be less important than self-perceptions and motivations regarding the so-called “failure” to achieve such markers. In addition, Smorti et al. (2020) – who conducted their research with Italian young adults – highlight that cultural norms must be considered; given that the Italian culture largely promotes interdependence and intergenerational living, it is perhaps not surprising that variations of independence showed no

¹⁴ Note that the general conclusions of this paper negated that a failure to meet objective role markers of adulthood is linked to psychological distress. Instead, anxiety and depression were most consistently related to participants’ perceptions of falling behind peer, parental, and societal expectations about reaching adulthood markers. Living at home was the only objective marker of adulthood showing a connection to psychological distress. No interpretation of this exceptional finding was offered.

relation to life satisfaction in their study. I would note, too, that some research finds that coresidence (in combination with other forms of parental support) is associated with relatively high levels of well-being among young adults (Fingerman et al., 2012a). For example, Watson et al. (2016) found that students who lived at home and had a personally-desirable level of financial and instrumental support had the lowest levels of depressed moods and highest levels of life satisfaction. By contrast, those who lived away from home and felt a lack of parental support had greater levels of depressed mood, more financial strain, and lower life satisfaction. The authors interpret these findings as reflecting a potential protective advantage of parenting support, at least within a student population.

As anticipated by these conclusions – and similar to the state of knowledge concerning developmental outcomes and living arrangements – it may be that the mixed picture researchers have is due to underlying mechanisms and processes more powerful than the living situation itself. Motivations for living at home, differences between returning and staying home, and cultural norms all appear to factor into the well-being of young adults who coreside. Concerning the first of these, Copp et al. (2015) found higher levels of depressive symptoms for young adults who had returned home compared those who were living independently and compared to those who had never left. Though this effect persisted even when prior depressive symptoms were included in the model, it held only for young adults who were experiencing employment problems. Thus, the authors proposed that examining young adults' reasons for living at home, as well as distinguishing between returning and home-staying, were crucial measures for understanding the complex relationship between psychological well-being and coresidence. Supporting the first of these arguments, Kins et al. (2009) found that the relationship between living arrangement and subjective well-being was indirect and dependent on the young adult's satisfaction with their living arrangement, suggesting that the quality of the living arrangement – and its ability to fulfill personal needs and values – matters more than the living situation itself. Supporting the second of these arguments, Caputo et al. (2018) found that returning to the parental home was associated with an increase in depressive symptoms, whereas stably residing in the parental home was not. Showing that personal needs and values are shaped by cultural norms, Nauck and Ren's (2021) recent cross-national comparisons between Japan, Germany, the United States, and China showed high levels of variation in subjective well-being related to a number of different living situations. For example, solo living was associated with below-

average ratings of well-being among Chinese and Japanese participants, whereas it was associated with above-average levels of well-being among American and German participants.

Altogether, the psychological literature brings more confusion than clarity to the developmental and wellness implications of parental coresidence. The state of knowledge on coresidence is currently difficult to interpret based on its mixed findings; inconsistent and changing constructs of autonomy, agency, and maturity; ambiguity of causal direction; and fragmented nature (i.e., seldom connecting findings or concepts from cultural, developmental, family, and health fields of psychology). Whereas the economic, institutional, and ethnocultural literature is better able to ground causal claims in temporal precedence (e.g., being an immigrant occurs prior to living in the parental home), the developmental literature cannot often do the same, especially since longitudinal designs have been few. It also seems plausible that psychological characteristics associated with coresidence depend on the nature of family relations within the home and the ways these and other dimensions of home life – life projects, struggles, needs, processes of exchange, and ideological values – are interpreted and evaluated. Though perspectives relating psychological factors, family relations, and social constructions are virtually non-existent, qualities of coresident families have received attention as a topic of their own.

1.1.4 Relating Coresidence to Family Characteristics, Processes, and Well-being

The relations between family characteristics and coresidence have received a fair amount of interest in the study of coresidence. It seems that from the late 1980s until the early 2000s, this topic was especially popular both in Canada and the United States.¹⁵ In this section, I summarize empirical research regarding specific family characteristics of coresiding families, incorporating research and theory from the field of intergenerational relationships to bring greater interpretive depth to each of these topics. The field of intergenerational relationships brings together scholars from disciplines of family studies, human development, psychology, sociology, and gerontology, however, many of its core constructs are borrowed from social psychology (Bengtson & Roberts, 1991). I will begin with structural characteristics of coresiding families.

¹⁵ This may have been spurred in part by broader discourses about the “decline” or “breakdown” of the family during that time (Bengtson, 2001; Mitchell et al., 2002). Such moralizing discourses sprung up in response to increasing divorce rates, the proliferation of family forms, and the purported loss of function of the family.

Structural characteristics. Family structures have been related to different home-leaving, returning, and coresidence patterns. Sociologists and demographers have found that, compared to young adults with fewer siblings, young adults with a greater number of siblings are more likely to move out earlier, stay out longer, and not return (Beaupré et al., 2006; Gillespie et al., 2020; Mitchell, 1994; Mitchell et al., 2000, 2002, 2004). However, the dynamics of the “crowded nest” are not entirely clear-cut: some studies have observed that young adults with more siblings have higher odds of returning to the family home (Bilette et al., 2011; South & Lei, 2015) and other studies have shown no relationship between the number of siblings and young adult living arrangements (Seiffge-Krenke, 2010; Swartz et al., 2011). In the broader literature on siblings and parent-child relationships in adulthood, young adults with more siblings tend to have less personal contact with their parents and less instrumental help from their parents (Lye, 1996). Some argue that parents’ resources (time, attention, finances) are limited, and that competition between siblings results in each receiving less (Sage & Johnson, 2012). A smaller pooler of resources available might explain why individuals with more siblings may be less compelled to live at home.

Besides the number of children, the intactness of families has also been examined in relation to coresidence. Compared to young adults who grow up with intact (non-divorced) families, young adults who grow up in stepfamilies are more likely to leave home earlier (Aquilino, 1991; Beaupré et al., 2006; Goldscheider & Goldscheider, 1998; Mitchell et al., 1989; Sandberg-Thoma et al., 2015) and less likely to coreside with their parents (Mitchell et al., 2004; Seltzer et al., 2013; Turcotte, 2006). In contrast to these fairly consistent findings, findings on the relation between growing up in a stepfamily and home-returning have been mixed (Beaupré, et al., 2008; Bilette et al., 2011; Gee et al., 1995; Goldscheider & Goldscheider, 1998; Mitchell et al., 2000). Though the underlying reasons for differences between intact and non-intact families have not been explored in detail, there is reason to expect that conflict may be involved. Aquilino and Supple (1991) found that mothers within stepfamilies with coresident children reported more open disagreements and open hostility than mothers within intact families with coresident children. This would also align with Mitchell’s (2004b) research showing that participants from stepfamilies were more likely to report that their parents had a great deal of influence on their decision to leave home, often due to the presence of conflict. Seeming to fit with the trends of coresiders, in the general population, adults raised with divorced parents have less contact and

lower quality relationships with parents than individuals who were raised in intact families (Aquilino, 2006; Lye, 1996).¹⁶

Partnership also plays a major role in relation to living arrangements. Studies from North America and Europe consistently show that coresidence is less likely when young adults are in a stable romantic partnership, cohabiting, or married (Hardie & Seltzer, 2016; Kins & Beyers, 2010; Mitchell et al., 2002; Seiffge-Krenke, 2010; South & Lei, 2015; Swartz et al., 2011). Likewise, boomeranging back home is less likely among people in stable unions (Bilette et al., 2011; South & Lei, 2015) as well as among people who leave home to get married or live with a partner (as opposed to other reasons, such as school or employment; Beaupré et al., 2008). Milan (2016) notes that in Canada in 2011, 96% of young adults who coresided with their parents were unaccompanied, with no spouse, partner, or child with them, and indeed, parenthood typically predicts independent residence in young adults (Kins & Beyers, 2010; Sandberg-Thoma et al., 2015; South & Lei, 2015). Though longitudinal relationships have not been directly investigated, the historical decrease in the married proportion of the Canadian population – as well as increasing ages of marriage over time – are likely associated with the trend of increasing coresidence (Milan, 2013).

Stable partnership and parenthood are associated with more stable and independent living situations; likewise, during troubled, transitional, or unstable times, the family home often functions as a safety net. We have seen how unemployment predicts coresidence and home-returning, but partnership dissolution is also strongly associated with a return to the parental home (Kins et al., 2013; Sandberg-Thoma et al., 2015; South & Lei, 2015; Stone et al., 2014). During these times, the parental home may be a valuable place of shelter, but also a “a place of sanctuary and protection” (Aeby & Heath, 2019, p. 1388). In Canada, it is also common for students to inhabit the parental home. Whereas 57% of Canadian students in their 20s live with their parents, only 33% of non-students do so (Milan, 2016). These findings are consistent with research in the general population, where parents give more practical and material support to

¹⁶ Turcotte (2006) raises the point that “Many divorced and separated parents might live separately from their adult children not necessarily because the children have left home to live on their own, but simply because they were living with the other parent (the mother, in most cases)” (p. 5). This explanation could apply in cases where the parent or household is the subject of study (as in many Statistics Canada studies), however, in cases where the individual young adult is the subject of study, such an explanation does not suffice (the pool of total statistical events does not change due to a greater number of households). Since studies of both kinds have found greater instances of coresidence among children born into stepfamilies, Turcotte’s explanation does not explain all variance.

adult children who are underemployed (Fingerman et al., 2009), unmarried (Fingerman et al., 2010; Rossi & Rossi, 1990), and enrolled in school (Fingerman et al., 2009). Overall, these findings support the contingency theory of support provision, which suggests that parents and children provide support to one another in response to their needs (Birditt & Fingerman, 2013).

Emotional and relational qualities. When it comes to the emotional and support-related qualities of coresiding parents and children, five key themes emerge. First, North American families – both parents and coresident children – generally report positive experiences with shared living arrangements (Aquilino & Supple, 1991; Casares & White, 2018; Fingerman et al., 2017; Mitchell, 1998; Mitchell, 2004a; Parker et al., 2012; Sassler et al., 2008; Worth & Tomaszczyk, 2017). These results are fitting with the generally positive evaluations of intergenerational relationships found in the literature (Umberson, 1992), especially from the parents' perspective (Aquilino, 1999). Quantitative research identifies that key variables predicting parents' satisfaction with a shared living arrangement are shared activities, companionship, and child's helpfulness with household tasks; by contrast, open hostility and open disagreements predict lower degrees of satisfaction (Aquilino & Supple, 1991; Mitchell, 1998). Qualitative research also affirms that parents express satisfaction with the living arrangement when their child is working towards independence, when clear and firm boundaries exist, and when parents and children can share experiences together (Casares & White, 2018; Descartes, 2006; Hill & Hirsch, 2019). For unknown reasons, researchers have been less focused on identifying young adults' criteria for satisfying shared living environments, tending to focus instead on their rationales for living at home, sources of conflict, and experiences that promote or diminish feelings of adulthood. Considering young adults' views about the causal role of coresidence on their parent-child relationship, a Pew study from 2011 found that a quarter of their American participants felt that this living situation had been bad for their relationship; 48% felt it had not made a difference; and 24% said it had been good for their relationship (Parker, 2012). Interestingly, the younger participants in this study were most likely to report a favorable impact of the living arrangement on their relationship, suggesting either an age-based norm or, potentially, greater acceptance and adaptability in navigating this living arrangement among younger cohorts.

So, parents and adult children often report satisfaction with this relationship, but is it because families who coreside are those with a history of better relations? This question

constitutes a second theme concerning emotional and relational qualities. Though one might intuit that positive parent-child relations during the child's adolescence would predict coresidence in young adulthood, the evidence is mixed. Some studies show an effect of earlier parent-child relationship quality on likelihood of coresidence, with more supportive or warmer prior relationships predicting longer stays in the home or a higher probability of coresidence (Akin et al., 2020; Goldscheider et al., 2014; Michell et al., 2002, 2004; Seiffge-Krenke, 2010). However, others have found no such effect (Ward & Spitze, 2007; White & Rogers, 1997) or have found the opposite effect (Gillespie, 2020). These variations could be due, in part, to the variety of measures used to gauge participants' evaluations of their parent-child relationships (e.g., emotional closeness, perceived support, frequency of disagreements, levels of happiness). It could also be due to how these measures interact with either retrospective or prospective reports (whether reports are retrospective or prospective does not, in and of itself, explain the differences). In the general population, research has found that the degree of affection within a parent-child relationship and importance of that relationship predict the provision of emotional and practical support from middle-aged adults to their grown children (Fingerman et al., 2010).

As a popular topic in studies of intergenerational relationships, the relations of support between coresident children and their parents has been a third significant theme in the literature. Beyond accessing shelter in the parents' home – typically without paying rent (Lewis & West, 2017; Milan, 2016) – young adults frequently benefit from practical support, especially concerning domestic chores (Abetz & Romo, 2021; Fingerman et al., 2017; Kins et al., 2013; Mann-Feder et al., 2014; Mencarini, 2017; Newman, 2012; Roberts et al., 2016; Sassler et al., 2008; Tomaszczyk & Worth, 2018). Less commonly, coresident young adults have been reported to receive financial support (Lewis & West, 2017; Mann-Feder et al., 2014), emotional support during acute moments of distress (Aeby & Heath, 2019), and guidance around important decisions (Kins et al., 2013; Newman, 2012; Strom & Strom, 2005). Typically, emphasis on the positive functions of coresidence revolves around its economic value (which parents recognize and approve); however, some research also hints that coresidence can provide opportunities for companionship between parents and adult children who live together (Abetz & Romo, 2021; Arnett, 2006; Mitchell 1998, 2004; Mitchell & Lovegreen, 2009; Strom & Strom, 2005; West & Lewis, 2018).

Overall, coresident children report exchanging more help with parents (both in giving and receiving) than independently living adult children (Aquilino, 1997; Fingerman et al., 2017; White & Rogers, 1997). While support typically favors young adult children who live with their parents – and the same is true in the general population (Birditt & Fingerman, 2013; Cooney & Dykstra, 2013) – at least a subset of coresiding young adults report “mutually-supportive” relationships with parents, where an “ethic of mutual reliance” (Tomasczcyk & Worth, 2018, p. 3) orients family members to reciprocate domestic and caregiving forms of labor (Dehn, 2017; Aleni Sestito & Sica, 2014; Warner et al., 2017). Among families with relatively fewer economic resources, children are more likely to contribute financially (Napolitano, 2015; Whitehead, 2018), particularly when their incomes exceed those of other family members (Iacovou & Davia, 2019; Medgyesi & Nagy, 2019). Interestingly, longitudinal research has found that those who leave the home at older ages are more likely to provide practical help to aging parents than siblings who left at an average age, even after controlling for geographical distance (Leopold, 2012). This finding can be interpreted from the perspective of social exchange theory as a form of delayed exchange (where parents are motivated to support their adult children so that they receive support in old age) or equity theory (where, in Western nations, norms around giving and receiving trigger a feeling of guilt or dependency when one is the recipient of unbalanced support; Cooney & Dykstra, 2013). Support for both models has been found in literature on the general population (Silverstein et al., 2012).

Although reciprocity may be present in a subset of families, support typically flows downward from parents to young adults when they live together.¹⁷ Supporting this claim, a Statistics Canada study by Milan (2016) found that 24% of young adults (20 to 29) were working full-year, full-time, yet 90% of young adults living at home “had no financial responsibility for household payments” (p. 9). Qualitative studies also tend to show that a minority of young adults who live at home pay rent (Casares & White, 2018; Lewis & West, 2017; Sassler et al., 2008). At times, parents have reported displeasure with the distribution of financial and labor contributions in the home (Newman, 2012). Indeed, in an interview study of Canadian parents,

¹⁷ This is also true in of non-coresiding parents and young adults: in the West, support typically flows from parents to adult children (Birditt & Fingerman, 2013; Cooney & Dykstra, 2013). Financial support from parents to adult children is fairly common in non-coresiding families. For example, Padilla-Walker et al. (2012) found that nearly 58% of parents of American undergraduate students (mean age of 19) reported paying most or all of their children's housing expenses. Similarly, a poll by Royal Bank of Canada (2019) showed that 65% of Canadian parents had helped children with living expenses after the age of 18.

two-thirds reported occasional feelings that their boomerang child was taking advantage of them (Mitchell, 1998). More recently, Warner et al. (2017) highlighted that even when parents felt their boomerang child was not contributing enough, they were often reluctant to voice their displeasure and, as a result, would take on the extra burdens themselves. In other qualitative research, young adults have reportedly been denied opportunities to contribute financially to the household (Sassler et al., 2008), underscoring that mutual understanding and accommodation in the division of housework can be violated both by parents or adult children.

In 2019, a British study by Hill and Hirsch (2019) examined how shared living arrangements affected parents' and adult children's household costs and standards of living; their results underlined the circumstantial nature of exchange relationships. Focus group participants were asked what might be a typical and acceptable expectation for adult children's board payments to parents. No consensus on this question could be obtained and the researchers concluded that generalizing was impossible

because the amount that the young adult contributes to household costs is affected both by the financial circumstances and the attitudes and feelings of those involved.

Determining such a contribution was not seen as either a commercial transaction or something that can be calculated by some formula for what is 'fair', but rather are influenced by the extent to which parents desire and are able to help their children, and whether they see this as a means of pursuing a shared goal. (p. iii)

This finding contextualizes previous findings showing a diversity of support exchange systems, meanings, and values within coresiding families. According to these authors, judgment regarding the "fairness" of exchange cannot occur in an abstract fashion; rather, it must take into account the specific, practical, and local situations of parents and young adults.

Conflict constitutes a fourth theme connected to the emotional and relational qualities of coresident families. The key sources of conflict identified in the literature concern the division of labor and financial contributions (Newman, 2012; Sassler et al., 2008; Warner et al., 2017; White, 2002) and the child's access to autonomy and privacy (Dehn, 2017; Hall & Zygmunt, 2021; Henriques et al., 2016; Hill & Hirsch, 2019; Mann-Feder et al., 2014; Napolitano, 2015; Newman, 2012; Sassler et al., 2008; Strom & Strom 2005; White, 2002). In rare instances, studies point to tension arising from parents' "out of touch" judgments about coresidence (Abetz & Romo, 2021), worries about the parents' welfare when they (the young adult) move out

(Mann-Feder et al., 2014), and difficulties convincing parents not to worry about them (Dehn, 2017). Compared to living independently, living at home has been associated with more conflict between parents and children (Aquilino, 1997). However, longitudinal work by Ward and Spitze (2007) found this was only true for older children (22 years or older) and not younger children. More recent work by Fingerman et al. (2017) showed no differences between coresiding and noncoresiding young adults in terms of parents getting on their nerves or causing them irritation. Some studies also point to greater disagreements between parents when they reside with an adult child (Turcotte, 2006; Ward & Spitze, 2007), but without global decreases to marital relationship quality overall (Ward & Spitze, 2007). Alternatively, a study by Mitchell and Gee (1996) found worse marital quality only if the adult child had returned to the parental home multiple times. Given the changing status of coresidence, spill-over into the parental relationship may be less common today than in prior decades. Suggesting that coresidence is gaining normative status in the United States, Davis et al. (2018) found that in 2008, this living arrangement was linked to lower marital quality for parents, whereas in 2013 this was only the case if the child was suffering from problems related to health, addiction, finances, or the law. Researchers have found that adult children's status transitions are related to the degree of conflict they experience with parents: relationships are judged less conflictual when coresident children are enrolled in school, employed, and/or financially independent versus when they do not occupy those statuses (Aquilino & Supple, 1991; Descartes, 2006; Lewis & West, 2017; Newman, 2012; Ward & Spitze, 2007).

The relation between high levels of support and conflict brings us to the fifth theme on the emotional qualities of coresident families: ambivalence. Several qualitative studies report coresident young adults' ambivalent feelings about their relationships and living arrangements, especially in terms of negotiating their simultaneous desires to depend on, and be autonomous from, their parents (Henriques et al., 2016; Kins et al., 2013; Mann-Feder et al., 2014; White, 2002). Given that ambivalent relationships have been associated with more depressive symptoms in parents and adult children (Fingerman et al., 2008), this may be concerning. Still, the "risk" of ambivalence may be no greater among coresiding youth than independently-living youth; Fingerman et al. (2017) investigated this question specifically, finding no significant differences between the two groups and underscoring coresiding young adults' more positive than negative experiences of coresidence.

Beyond the question of whether coresidential young adults experience more ambivalence than others, there is the question of how researchers should evaluate ambivalence. Though the notion of ambivalence has gained traction in studies of parent-child relationships, and has been observed in many studies, researchers appear to disagree as to its status in social relationships. A number of researchers have suggested that ambivalence may have detrimental effects, as it has been associated with psychological distress (Fingerman et al., 2008; Kiecolt et al., 2011; Suitor et al., 2011). Other researchers have suggested that experiences of ambivalence may have a more neutral character, perhaps being a necessary and normal part of intergenerational relations. For example, Lüscher and Pillemer (1998) have argued that competing norms may be functional and normal in some family interactions, but that they may “become problematic in situations that involve chronic stress” (p. 419). Reflecting on earlier conceptions of sociological ambivalence, role conflict, and role distance, Coser (1966) suggests that if development or social mobility involves the continuous change of roles, then contradictory expectations (and therefore sociological ambivalence) during periods of role change will be a normal aspect of human experience over the lifespan, and that such situations may even be viewed positively, as opportunities for “socially creative behavior” (p. 187). Overall, these sources indicate that the significance of ambivalence – at least in the field of intergenerational relationships – is still being debated. Accordingly, a phenomenologically-geared examination of ambivalence may contribute to its theorization. Moreover, it may be valuable to examine whether ambivalence underpins detrimental or constructive social processes within the family.

Family processes. Though researchers have reported on various qualities of the relationships of intergenerational households, and pointed to some sources of tension, how family members manage or resolve these feelings or tensions interpersonally has seldom been discussed. A handful of papers serve as exceptions to this rule. Most commonly, researchers identify overt negotiation used by parents and adult children to manage their relationships (where, most often, the conflicts being referred to concern autonomy, privacy, and household division of labor). Casares and White (2018) interviewed American parents of boomerang children and found all couples reported having “rules for appropriate and expected behavior” in the home (p. 234). Despite this, studies of Australian and British families suggest variation in how overtly or tacitly families communicate their expectations for financial and housework contributions (Warner et al., 2017; West et al., 2017). In some families, parents struggle to voice

their desires for children's financial or labor contributions, resulting in feelings of frustration related to increased workloads or the sense of being too permissive (Warner, 2017; West et al., 2017). American young adults returning to the parental home have reported difficulty opposing parents' views once in the family home, seeing it as preferable to negotiate key issues prior to moving in (Abetz & Romo, 2021).

Henriques et al. (2016) extend these studies by examining how Brazilian young adults affirm their status in the household while negotiating their departure (drawing inspiration from Foucault and Simmel). Whereas the former studies focus squarely on negotiation and bartering, Henriques et al. (2016) underscore how social status and social bonds are mediated through other symbolic processes. They identify three strategies used by young adults to affirm their status and maintain family bonds. First, the researchers discuss how participants often break the implicit or formal rules of the home, effectively resisting their subordinate statuses. As examples, participants would intentionally limit conversation (breaking a norm of sociability); occupy parents' territories in the home, such as a father's chair (transgressing symbolic spatial boundaries); or violate a norm of co-operation, such as moving one's laundry load to free up space for others. Second, specific forms of communication were used by young adults to simultaneously express feelings about the relationship and prevent open conflict. Specifically, the authors refer to coresident young adults using playfulness, irony, humor, and joking to relate to their parents, indirectly communicating challenging or tense issues without allowing them to become uncomfortable, explicit confrontations. The third and final strategy outlined in this paper involved a sort of detachment between public and private self in order to avoid explicit confrontation. In this case, a participant described feeling irritated with her mother, who would continue to repeat herself if her daughter disagreed with her; by pretending to agree with her mother (rather than continue to disagree), the daughter avoided confrontation. Altogether Henriques and colleagues' (2016) work added considerably to a social, symbolic, and communicative portrait of parent-child relationships within a shared living arrangement.

While the concept of "love" virtually never figures into academic discussions of coresidence, Tomaszcyk and Worth (2018) offer as a general observation that familial love also holds a great deal of power for making coresidence a tolerable and even positive living arrangement for young adults and their parents. Uniquely, they offered that within their interviews with Canadian young adults,

most respondents reported having positive and mutually supportive relationships with their parents. While tensions did run high on occasion, love and support diminished the negative side effects of conflicting personalities and behaviours. (p. 21)

This brief remark inspires many questions: how is it that love and support hold this capacity? How does this power manifest in the everyday lives of coresiding young adults and their parents? In other words, how do young adults perceive themselves as having a loving bond, such that they can draw on this knowledge when they experience strain, irritation, frustration, and conflict in their parent-child bond? Moreover, are there different forms of intimacy that exist between parents and coresident children, and what are their unique functions? Researchers have sometimes alluded to the “companionship” possible between parents and adult children who live together (Abetz & Romo, 2021; Arnett, 2006; Mitchell 1998, 2004; Mitchell & Lovegreen, 2009; Strom & Strom, 2005; West & Lewis, 2018); could it be that this form of love also contributes to the development, maintenance, and flourishing of parent-child bonds, or, minimally, to a constructive “diminishment” of negative feelings?

As a whole, the findings on the characteristics and processes of parental coresidence point to the diversity of dimensions through which families can be understood. Whereas more has been worked out about the structural properties of coresident families, relatively less is known about the emotional qualities or processes involved in these relationships. Notably, there is much to be learned about how families adapt and reinvent themselves in daily life and over time.

1.1.5 Global Synthesis and Critique

To return to the questions I initially posed, coresidence is occurring for a number of reasons. Globalization has shifted transitions to secure and stable work, and economic circumstances (such as unemployment, expensive housing markets, and inaccessible rental markets) persist as reasons to double up. The buffering effects of state supports also play a part: coresidence is more common where families are charged with the care of youth, where there are strong obligations toward one’s family, and where fewer supports are granted to individuals. Beyond the individualistic or family-centered social norms witnessed at the national level, there are also social and cultural norms operating within Canada, such that visible minorities, linguistic minorities, immigrants, and religious individuals are more likely to coreside. Preliminary

research hints at a plurality of cultural understandings of living with one's parents and moving out, which may have a role in home-leaving and returning behaviors.

The relations between coresidence and young adult development are only beginning to be studied. Although traditional theories have often emphasized separation and distinction from parents in the process of identity development, empirical research and modern adaptations of these theories suggest that autonomy should not be understood only in terms of separation from one's parents (at least, not in any simple way). Researchers working with identity status and autonomy theories have approached these challenges head on, but have focused most often on adolescent populations. Meanwhile, the emerging adulthood framework has served more as an over-arching framework than a precise theory relating parent-child relations and development. Certainly, the mixed empirical findings relating developmental variables to living arrangements seem to demonstrate a complex relationship – one that frequently divorced from the practical settings of everyday life, which might otherwise lend them intelligibility.

The relations between coresidence and family characteristics demonstrate the plurality of dimensions that can be examined within the family. It seems that parental coresidence is more common in some families than others (intact families with fewer siblings), though it is unclear whether families who perceive their relations positively are more likely to double up. We have seen that most families are satisfied with this arrangement, but that this is partially conditional upon young adults making progress toward adult statuses. Frequent exchanges of support and care for aging parents may be judged as beneficial outcomes of coresidence, though ambivalence toward exchange and conflict may also be present. How conflict, ambivalence, and support are negotiated and managed within coresident families remains largely unclear.

Both quantitative methods and qualitative methods have revealed unique dimensions of this contemporary family institution. The strengths of surveys and psychological scales have been in identifying historical changes in living arrangements, characteristics of coresident young adults, differences between them and their independently-living counterparts, and regional or institutional forces that underlie broad patterns. The power of qualitative designs has been complementary, exploring some of the meanings that relate to behavioral patterns as well as young adults' experiences of their contradictory statuses as children and adults.

Despite these accounts, no research has examined in detail a key aspect of this phenomenon: the stakes of the parent-child relationship according to young adults who live with

their parents. Instead, most of the current research has imposed a framework that defines the status of this living arrangement from the outside, whether in terms of economic precarity, government support, transmission of privilege, psychosocial adjustment, self-definition as an adult, psychological well-being, rates of conflict, or degrees of support exchange. Identifying particular sources of conflict or rates of conflict cannot tell us how that conflict is embodied in emotions, or how it is interpreted within particular systems of family rules, duties, expectations, and obligations. Nor can the frequency of exchange grant insight into the moral and ideological foundations that inform the giving and receiving that occurs within the family. More generally, links between the personal and the collective have tended to be neglected or simplified. For instance, although some researchers have identified young adults' mixed feelings about their ambiguous or conflicting statuses within the home, none have broadened the picture to explore how these young adults relate such feelings to dominant discourses about adulthood or development. Further, the topic of intimacy has received scant attention. Measures of closeness, consensus, frequency of contact, or frequency of shared activities lend little intelligibility to the emotional bonds that young adults have with their parents. What young adults disclose to their parents, what they hide from them, and what they feel as a result of mutual recognition (or its absence) are topics that could grant researchers more insight into the nature of this contemporary family institution. In addition, young adults' conceptions of their parent-child relationship as a developing project may be integral to their moral evaluations of it. Just as these relationships ought to be contextualized within autobiographical time, they also ought to be contextualized within the everyday environment of the home and configuration of social contexts wherein the young adult shapes their identity (e.g., in their extended families, occupations, and friendships outside of the family). Altogether, these gaps point to a limited understanding of the moral, experiential, and cultural dimensions of coresident families today in the West.

1.2 Research Questions

Given these gaps, my guiding research question will be: "How do coresident young adults experience and construct their relations to their parents?" Implied within this question is at least three constitutive elements: How do young adults living at home experience and construct *themselves* in relation to their parents? How do they perceive and describe their *parents* in relation to them? And how is the *bond* between themselves and their parents constituted, from their perspective? A consideration of the *relation* between self and other preserves the spirit of

phenomenological traditions of research, where consciousness is never solitary but always exists in relation to an object, world, other people, etc. – i.e., as a “being-in-the-world” (Good, 1994; van Manen, 2014/2016; Ricoeur, 2004/2005). Meanwhile, my emphasis on what is *between* self and other finds its inspiration in hermeneutic traditions of research (Crotty, 1998, Ricoeur, 1986/2008; 1990/1992; Zimmerman, 2015). That is, people who care about each other can be said to “recognize each other by recognizing themselves in models of identification that can be held in common” (Ricoeur, 1990/1992, p. 278). As argued by Ricoeur (1986/2008), hermeneutic and phenomenological traditions find in each other mutual belonging: reflexive consciousness requires historical categories, language, and images to represent and critique itself, and historical categories, language, and images are formed within human consciousness (as well as being shared and negotiated between people who have reflexive consciousness). I elaborate on more specific interpretations of these traditions and their implications below, both through my overarching theoretical framework and the methodology that follows it.

1.3 Theoretical Model

In this section I acknowledge my participation within a history of ideas and intellectual traditions. I outline key concepts that, like a “horizon” (Gadamer, 1976), define but also limit the boundaries of my knowledge. The basis of my theoretical framework is the anthropologist Arthur Kleinman’s (1999) theory of moral experience, which identifies and synthesizes key elements from phenomenological and critical traditions. To bring additional precision to the moral, intersubjective, and processual dimensions identified by Kleinman, I also draw on the work of anthropologist Cheryl Mattingly (2014), moral and political philosopher Hannah Arendt (1961, 1963, 1971), socio-narratologist Arthur Frank (2010), cultural anthropologist Victor Turner (1969), and moral, political, anthropological, and hermeneutic philosopher Paul Ricoeur (2004/2005). Whereas this section provides an overview of key assumptions guiding my global approach to the topic, each findings chapter contains a more focused framework of interpretation, capable of drawing out more refined implications of the data.

Integrating cultural, political, and social dimensions of human engagement in the world, Arthur Kleinman has pointed to five essential features of experience, each with implications for the study of experience. First of all, experience is “subjectively felt” (Kleinman, 1999). In contrast to reality, which can be understood as “what is really out there,” experience is how that reality presents itself to consciousness (Bruner, 1986, p. 6). In line with this, my research

inquires not into the reality of young adults' social engagement with their parents, but rather into how young adults experience and construct their relations to their parents. In phenomenological terms, where experience implies "being" in the world, subjectivity implies an experience of self that exists in relation to others; so, how do young adults experience and construct their "selves" in relation to the selves of their parents – selves who can never be fully knowable to them? (Ricoeur, 1986/2008; Throop, 2014; van Manen, 2014/2016).

From Kleinman's perspective, to understand experience also implies understanding it as it occurs in local worlds. In short, experience takes place within the particular settings of everyday life (Kleinman, 1999). Thus, to understand how young adults relate with their parents, I focus on the family home as a site of interactions, relations of power, and distinct practices and understandings (Kleinman, 1999). Rather than framing topics of conflict, support, and intimacy in universal and standardized terms, I explore the distinct and practical contexts where these social processes are played out, locating them in (as examples) arguments about loading the dishwasher, rules about bedroom privacy, patterns of behavior when parents leave town, and everyday greetings or topics of conversation that generate confidence or insecurity in the bond. In sum, my work highlights the significance of a "number of moments of everyday life" (Mattingly, 2014, xvii) and aligns with the ethnographer's role of studying "the lived flow of interpersonal experience in an intensely particular local world" (Kleinman, 1995, p. 53).

As the term implies, moral experience assumes that being in the world does not occur neutrally or impartially; instead, people's experiences are infused with morality (Kleinman, 1999). Experience is moral in the sense that it holds significance and is oriented to the good; people concern themselves with the good and right and ways to achieve it, actively caring about self, others, practices, possessions, stories, places, and events that matter deeply to them. On one hand, deliberating and acting to achieve the good can be thought of as occurring within the particulars of everyday life and particular commitments that people hold (Mattingly, 2014). This conception of ethics can be termed virtue ethics or teleological ethics and it suggests that the good is defined by what permits a worthwhile, good, flourishing, or happy life (Mattingly, 2014). Moral experience also implies people's concern with adhering to (or resisting) normative and abstract rules about what is good, right, or "should" be. From this deontological view (whose key figure is Kant), "morality is defined by the obligation to respect the norm" (p. 170), where the norm is both constricting (in terms of limiting possibilities for action) and enlarging (in terms of

extending justice beyond face-to-face or interpersonal encounters; Ricoeur 1990/1992). In line with a dual consideration of ethics in terms of an aim for a good life and in terms of social rules and conventions, I explored whether (and how) young adults' relational experiences oscillated between the ethics of interpersonal solicitude and universalism.

As has been alluded to, what matters most personally “interpenetrates” with what matters most socially; in that sense, moral experience is intersubjective (Kleinman, 1999). From this social constructionist perspective, culture acts as a major constitutive force that organizes our experiences, orients our actions, and constructs our subjectivity (D’Andrade, 1984; Geertz, 1973). Nevertheless, subjectivity is idiosyncratic: first, because it originates from a unique combination of shared templates (Crotty, 1998; Kleinman, 1999); second, because webs of significance (or “webs of meaning”) are not closed and fixed systems, but rather dynamic structures where new meanings constantly emerge from the clashes between tradition and new life circumstances (Bruner, 1986; Daniel, 1984; Ricoeur, 1986/2008; Turner, 1986). This assumption entails an approach to young adults' family-related concepts, stories, values, and actions not as stagnant and passively inherited tradition, but as part of an active network of meanings that are learned, enacted, and negotiated in everyday life activities and interactions with other members of a moral community (D’Andrade, 1984; Geertz, 1973; Kleinman, 1995, 1999; Shweder, 1991b). What ideas and ideologies of family or development are reproduced, resisted, combined, or reinvented by young adults in their depictions of their parent-child relationships? How do young people draw on – and think about – dominant narratives of adulthood, development, and parent-child relations? Which stories create dangers or opportunities (Arendt, 1971; Frank, 2010) for moral action or thought? In drawing attention to these topics, I hoped to highlight how culture is enacted, contested, and changed through personal and interpersonal processes in everyday life. Rather than viewing culture as deterministic, stable, and fixed, I approached culture as “something of an irregular, rickety, and indefinite whole” (Geertz, 2000, p. 255).

Kleinman (1999) also highlights the political dimension of experience, in that the meaning of a person's experience is “closely connected with political and economic processes and changes in relation to them” (p. 361). More precisely, my interest in power lies in interpreting how sociocultural models (and their expression and contestation in everyday social life) generate political effects. Three forms of power here can be considered: empowerment,

power in common, and domination. There is empowerment: the power to act, to do, to take effect in the world (Ricoeur, 1990/1992; Wolf, 1999). This is the “capacity possessed by an agent to constitute himself or herself as the author of action” (Ricoeur, 1990/1992, p. 220). As a corollary, the incapacity to act (or disempowerment) defines experiences of suffering (Ricoeur, 1992/2013). As a second form of power, power in common is defined as a capacity to take actions that permit a community to live well together (Ricoeur, 1990/1992). For example, stories, rituals, play, gift-giving, caregiving, and dialogue can affiliate people, joining them in purpose and action and even supporting each one’s capacity to flourish alongside each another (Frank, 2010; Mattingly, 2014; Sherman, 1987; Thomas, 1987; Throop, 2014; Turner, 1969, 1974, 1982). Power in common must be distinguished from domination (or “power over”). Whereas the former implies the joint and mutual actions of community members, the latter highlights relations of “dissymmetry,” where a person’s actions connect to the passivity of others, diminishing their own powers-to-act (Ricoeur, 1990/1992). The nature and intensity of relations of domination can range from gentle forms of influence, to coercive forms of control, to the annihilation of self and self-esteem through violence (Kleinman, 1995; Ricoeur, 1990/1992). My inquiry raises questions about the potential for diverse forms of power to be required and permitted by coresidence.

1.4 Methodology

Following the research questions and theoretical model discussed above, my methodological approach emphasized experiential, cultural, moral, and political interpretations of human experience and social practices, allowing me to provide a detailed and contextualized account of coresident young adults and their families.

1.4.1 Frame of Reference

Research context

Participants were recruited from Saskatoon, Saskatchewan – a mid-sized city in the Canadian Prairie region with a population of approximately 295,000 across the Census Metropolitan Area (Statistics Canada, 2017b). Saskatoon is the largest city in the province and one of the fastest growing cities in Canada (Statistics Canada, 2017a). It also has one of the youngest populations in the country, with a median age of 34.9 years (Statistics Canada, 2017a). Many young people come to Saskatoon from elsewhere in the province for post-secondary education. Notably, the University of Saskatchewan in Saskatoon is the province’s largest

university, with over 25,000 students, one-third of whom come from rural parts of the province and 15% of whom are international students (University of Saskatchewan, 2019). The immigrant population in Saskatoon sits at 16% – a proportion considerably smaller than that of Vancouver (41%) or Toronto (46%), cities that have been coresidence research sites in the past (Mitchell, 2004a; Statistics Canada, 2019b; Worth, 2021). Home ownership is common in Saskatoon, with 67% of homes being owned and 33% being rented (Statistics Canada, 2017b). Its housing affordability is considered “seriously unaffordable” according to its 2018 median multiple of 4.26 (the median multiple is the ratio of the median house price by the median annual before-tax income, and a score of 3.0 and under is considered affordable, City of Saskatoon, 2019). To put this into Canadian context, Saskatoon is less expensive than Vancouver (with a median multiple of 17.3) or Toronto (at 7.5) but more expensive than the cities of Edmonton, Ottawa, and Winnipeg, which each hold scores between 3.1 and 4 (CTV News, 2017).

Despite Saskatoon’s young population, high rate of growth, and housing unaffordability, most young people in the city do not live with their parents; in fact, Saskatoon holds one of the lowest rates of parental coresidence in the nation, with 28% of people in their 20s living at home compared to the national average of 42% (Milan, 2016). This may be related to the smaller population of immigrants, the status of the city as a hub for rural students, and the strength of the oil and gas sector. Importantly, resource extraction provides unique opportunities for younger and less-educated men to earn full-time work and higher wages compared to other, non-oil producing provinces, though the province has also seen more extreme wage fluctuations over time (Fortin & Lemieux, 2015; Galarneau et al., 2013; Morissette et al., 2015). Overall, Saskatoon was selected as a contrast to previous work done in larger, more expensive cities in Canada where coresidence might be accepted as the norm.

Participants

Fifteen participants were recruited for this study. This number was determined to be appropriate given the time restraints of the project and the fine-grained nature of analysis in the phenomenological and hermeneutic phenomenological tradition (Creswell, 1998; van Manen, 2014/2016). “Living at home” was operationalized as living in the same household with at least one parent for more than four months. This standard had been used in past studies and eliminated short-term stays, such as over the summer months (Gee et al., 2003; Mitchell et al., 2002; Warner et al., 2012). Originally, I targeted an age range from 25 to 35 years old based on three

considerations: gaps in the academic literature (older young adults and non-students being relatively under-studied), an interest in how people perceive being “off-time” (since in Canada, many changes of social position occur close to age 30, including marriage, first child, and home-ownership), and an interest in the population experiencing the greatest historical increases in coresidence (i.e., 25 to 30-year-olds). When two individuals (ages 23 and 24) expressed interest in participating, I included them because recruitment was slow-going and the deviation from the original age range was minor. In keeping with the literature, I was open to a definition of “parenthood” that included biological, step, adoptive, or foster parents. No exclusion criteria were made based on gender identity, religion, ethnic identity, occupational status, family status, parental status, or home-returned versus home-stayer. See Table 1 for participant characteristics, Table 2 for a summary of participant demographic characteristics, and Table 3 for a summary of parent socioeconomic characteristics. All participants were either living in Saskatoon (14) or living in a nearby town and commuting to Saskatoon for school (1).

Table 1

Table of Participant Characteristics

Name	Gender	Age	Family type	Self-identified Ethnic Identity	Employment	Educational status	Home-leaving background
Lois	Woman	30	Single parent (mother)	Caucasian	Full-time	part-time	Stayer
Amber	Woman	24	Intact	Caucasian	Full-time	non-student	Returner
Kristine	Woman	25	Intact	Caucasian	Full-time	part-time	Stayer
Grey	Woman	33	Step	Métis	Full-time	non-student	Returner
Walter	Man	25	Step	Caucasian	Part-time	full-time	Returner
Keith	Man	25	Intact	Caucasian	Part-time	full-time	Stayer
Sylvia	Woman	26	Intact	Caucasian	Part-time	full-time	Stayer
Iris	Woman	30	Single parent (mother)	Caucasian	Part-time	full-time	Returner
Ria	Woman	23	Step	South Asian Canadian	Unemployed	full-time	Stayer
Nina	Woman	33	Intact	Caucasian	Part-time	full-time	Returner

Jane	Woman	25	Intact	Yoruba	Part-time	full-time	Returner
Adison	Woman	30	Intact	Caucasian	Unemployed	full-time	Returner
Molly	Woman	23	Intact	Chinese Canadian	Full-time	non-student (intern)	Stayer
Vincent	Man	27	Single parent (mother)	Caucasian	Unemployed	full-time	Returner
Laura	Woman	25	Intact	Caucasian	Full-time	full-time	Stayer

*Names have been changed to protect participants' identities.

Table 2

Summary of Participant Demographics

Characteristic	Number of participants
Age	
23 to 28	10
28 to 33	5
Gender	
Woman	12
Man	3
Family type	
Intact	9
Step (includes cohabiting)	3
Single parent	3
Ethnicity	
Caucasian	11
Métis	1
South Asian Canadian	1
Chinese Canadian	1
Yoruba	1
Employment	
Full-time	6
Part-time	6
Unemployed	3
Educational status	
Full-time	10
Part-time	2
Non-students	3
Home-leaving background	
Stayers	7
Returners	8
Parental home	
Rented	1

Owned	14
Siblings - total (living at home)	
0 (0)	2
1 (0)	6
2 (0)	2
1 (1)	4
2 (1)	1
Personal income over past 12 months	
Less than \$15,000	8
\$20,000 - \$65,000	6
More than \$90,000	1

Table 3

Summary of Parent Demographics

Characteristic	Number of parents*
Gender	
Women	15
Men	12
Mother's highest level of education	
High school or less	4
College diploma or certificate	6
Bachelor's degree	3
Master's or Ph.D.	2
Father or mother's partner's highest level of education	
High school or less	5
College diploma or certificate	3
Bachelor's degree	3
Master's or Ph.D.	1
Total combined incomes of parents over past 12 months*	
Unknown	4
\$35,000-65,000	3
\$80,000-\$150,000	3
Self-identified middle class	2
More than \$225,000	3

*Includes mothers' partners, does not include non-residential fathers

Recruitment

Recruitment occurred in Saskatoon through purposive sampling, word of mouth, snowball sampling, and unsuccessful organizational recruitment. Advertisements for the study (Appendix A) were posted in February 2017 and July 2017 in local businesses and community centers to invite individuals living with their parents to contact me for information about the study. In addition, I repeatedly posted digital versions of the recruitment advertisement on Kijiji,

Craigslist and on a local Facebook renters' group between February 2017 and July 2017. The advertisement explained the nature of the study, the interview process, time requirements, the honorarium, and how to get in contact with the researcher. Participants recruited through advertisements were also asked to forward my contact information to any person they thought would be interested in participating in the study (snowball sampling). I used these methods purposefully during the initial four months of fieldwork to reach people who were not university students—a population that tends to be easier to reach and over-represented in academic literature on young adults (Rosenbaum et al., 2015). When responses dropped off in June of 2017, I advertised the study on the university bulletin and sent letters for organizational recruitment to two housing non-profits, four colleges or training institutes, and one newcomer organization (see Appendix K). Finally, several people became aware of my study through word of mouth, with information being passed on through family, friends, colleagues, or by myself (in the case of the participant who saw me postering downtown on a cold February afternoon). By September 2017, I had recruited 17 participants: five through community posters or online advertisements, two through snowball sampling, four by word of mouth, and six through the university bulletin. In the end, I completed data collection with 15 participants, as two participants completed either one or two interviews, but then became unreachable by phone and/or email. I withdrew these participants from the study and destroyed their data.

Interviewing, Consent, and Debriefing

Interviewing, consent, and debriefing processes proceeded in the following manner. First, a screening interview (Appendix B) was conducted over the phone or by email with each potential participant to see if they met the inclusion criteria for the study. If the participant passed screening, I sent them the letter of invitation over email or explained the study in detail over the phone (Appendix C). If the participant did not pass screening, I thanked them for contacting me and explained to them that I was unable to include them in my research project. If the individual was interested in participating, arrangements were made to meet for the first interview. If they used email, I also sent them the consent form (Appendix D) to review before we met in person. At the first interview, I verbally outlined the consent form to every potential participant, then gave them a chance to ask questions. After this, I asked the person to sign the consent form. Subsequently, a copy of this form was given to participants for their own records. Three interviews took place (the details of which I will provide below). At the end of the third

interview, I thanked participants for their participation, gave them a debriefing form (Appendix J), explained how their interviews connected to my study objectives, and asked if they had any questions. If the participant wanted to receive a copy of the dissertation, I put their pseudonym on a list and assured them that they could receive an email or hard copy when the project was complete. The debriefing form also included my contact information in case they wanted to follow up at any point.

Interviews were transcribed by professional transcriptionists who had signed a confidential transcription form (Appendix I). Guidelines for transcription notation were provided to transcriptionists to ensure a degree of consistency between the transcripts (Appendix M). These were adaptations of guidelines given by Poland (1995) and Markee (2015). Some examples of transcript notation are included below to support the reader’s interpretation of the text. For a comprehensive key of transcript notation, refer to Appendix M.

Table 4

Key for Common Transcription Notation

Notation	Meaning
KM:	Kathrina speaking
A: (first initial of pseudonym)	Participant speaking
word <u>underlined</u>	Emphasis/stress on this word
...	Indicates a pause of <u>under</u> two seconds ¹⁸
(2.5)	A pause of two or more seconds; indicate roughly how many seconds inside the brackets
KM: [Okay]	Speech enclosed within square brackets
P: [I wouldn’t say huge] but	indicates overlapping speech between two people
He really loved (doing that?).	Parenthesized words are possible hearings.
And I don’t know if that was his (???)	??? in parenthesis indicates the words are unintelligible.
No::!	Colons indicate prolongation of the immediate prior sound.
I was like, “Wha:::t?”	The length of the row of colons indicates the length of prolongation.

¹⁸ Note that this transcript notion (“...”) is distinct from ellipses (“...”). The latter is conventional punctuation that signals the omission of words, phrases, or sections of a quoted passage.

((laughs)) ((coughs)) ((sighs))

Verbal description of actions, including non-verbal actions

After each transcript was completed by the transcriptionist, I read through it and listened along to the corresponding audio file to correct errors, identify inaudible words, and insert missing content. I also removed or replaced identifying information, such as participants' names, locations, family members' names, workplaces, occupations, etc. Deidentified transcripts were sent to participants over email if they wished to obtain them: five of the participants opted to receive their transcript and review it; two of the participants opted to receive the transcript but did not want to review it; and eight participants wanted to neither receive their transcript, nor review it. Upon receiving their transcripts, the five participants who wanted to review and/or revise them were given two weeks to do so. At the point of sending the transcripts, I once again explained that they had two weeks to complete this process, after which I would use the transcripts as they were. Ultimately, just one participant made changes to their transcripts (and approved them over email) and one participant approved the transcripts as-is over email. In other words, few participants engaged in the transcript review process. This low rate of participation may reflect a number of factors: 1) the number and duration of the interviews and anticipated time requirement to read over them, 2) the relatively non-sensitive nature of the topic, or 3) a general trust in the research process (by contrast, this may not be the case for groups with histories of maltreatment by researchers). Finally, as reported by Thomas (2017), response rates to these kinds of checks are often low: while very few published manuscripts even report them in the first place, the ones he was able to find reported rates ranging from 15% to 40%.

1.4.2 Data Gathering and Instruments

Each participant was interviewed individually in a room on campus or in a public place of their choosing (usually a coffee shop). The first meeting involved a life-history interview (Appendix E), where participants were asked to describe their relationships with their parents from their youth until present and looking ahead to the future. This interview took an unstructured approach, such that participants were free to identify significant aspects of their current family relationships and meaningfully relate them to the remembered past and anticipated future (Bruner, 1986). My role in this interview was ask the initial question, then to use probes to stimulate participants to tell me more – for instance, through silence, echoing their words, asking

them to tell me more, or phased assertions (Bernard, 2006, pp. 217-223).¹⁹ An unstructured approach is highly useful for developing a contextualized understanding of participants' relational experiences (Maxwell, 2009). In Geertz' (1974) words, open-ended questions allow participants to draw on experience-near concepts: concepts the participant "might himself naturally and effortlessly use to define what he or his fellows see, feel, think, imagine, and so on" (Geertz, 1974, p. 28). The second instrument also drew on open-ended questions, but took the form of a semi-structured interview (Appendix F), meaning that it followed a more standardized series of topics, ensuring comparability between participants (Maxwell, 2009).²⁰ These interviews also provided opportunities to clarify follow-up questions stemming from the life-history interview. For most participants (11 of 15), the semi-structured interview took place over two meetings. For four participants, a third meeting time was added with the participant's consent, either because of scheduling constraints or because the participant went into a high level of detail.²¹ Interviews were spaced anywhere from a few days to a few weeks apart to allow myself and the participants' reflection between them and to accommodate participants' schedules; the median number of days between interviews was 8.5 days. At the third or fourth interview, participants filled out a brief socio-demographic questionnaire (Appendix G). Socio-economic, employment, gender, and age data were gathered to describe the sample of participants and explore potential patterns in the data by social indices. Interview lengths ranged from 48 minutes to nearly 3 hours, with a median length of 93 minutes.

A fieldwork diary was kept for the purpose of reflexivity. Following each interview, I took notes about the interview context, initial rapport-building, interviewing skills, participant expressivity and body language, and overall impressions about what was said. In addition, I kept this diary during initial stages of analysis, where the purpose was more focused on the significance of the data overall and managing the timing, sequence, and quality of the research.

¹⁹ Levy and Hollan (2014) succinctly describe the role of the interviewer in person-centered ethnography: "Our responsibility in this phase of listening is to (1) facilitate the friend's communication; and (2) try to fully understand what he or she is trying to communicate and express" (p. 326).

²⁰ Throughout the thesis, I acknowledge instances where comparability was limited for whatever reason – i.e., when topics were unintentionally missed, when standardized prompts were not used, when topics arose spontaneously, or when I added questions to the scripts after the first few interviews.

²¹ When it became clear that the interviews were occasionally exceeding the anticipated time frame, I revised my recruitment materials to indicate a wider time window (poster, screening interview, letter of invitation, and consent form) and submitted an ethics amendment to the Research Ethics Board. As I state below, my fieldwork diary was highly useful in helping me to identify, judge, and address discomfort that arose from requesting more time from participants than I had initially anticipated.

The diary was not used as data; rather, it was used as a tool to promote reflection on the research process. Outcomes of this process included: conversations with my supervisor concerning how to approach challenging and unexpected subjects, insights about my strengths and weaknesses as an interviewer, amendments to ethical forms and processes, interview questions added or modified, decisions to move forward with hiring transcriptionists, and starting points for articulating the significance of the data (often shared with my supervisor to generate new questions and analytic angles). As another component of my reflexivity, I listened to all recorded interviews, which supported my reflection on cases where I may have distorted, disrupted, or not picked up on what was said by participants (Levy & Hollan, 2014).²² For example, this allowed me to notice moments when I created confusion through double-barrelled questions (i.e., asking two questions at the same time), when I disrupted the expression of negative feelings by laughing out of discomfort, or when I brought an interpretive angle too early, potentially leading participants to a sort of answer that might not have encapsulated their lived experience (though, many times, participants also took these moments as opportunities to clarify their positions). These listening sessions also showed me my ability to know when to follow-up and ask clarifying questions. In the end, the diary provided me with an outlet for promoting my continual development as a researcher by triggering reflexivity about my aims, insecurities, capacities, and circumstances: as I wrote in June 2017, “I know that I got better at this over time, which matters, but I still have a long way to go.”

1.4.3 Analysis

Analysis proceeded through several steps, which generally – but not entirely – followed one another. Let me first describe these steps discretely.

Stanza Analysis: Developing “Units” of Text

Following the recommendations of Saldana (2009, p. 16), I inserted breaks within the transcripts where it appeared that the topic or subtopic changed. The purpose of this process was to distinguish segments of text that could be examined and potentially coded as a unit (or “stanza”). For the first 100 lines or so, these decisions felt more intuitive than logical. As I continued, I found that these shifts were patterned by linguistic expressions, narrative signposts,

²² As Levy and Hollan (2014) suggest, this can contribute to transformative moments: “In our experience in our own interviewing and in teaching interviewing, the (always embarrassing) awareness of these distorting responses and maneuvers may lead to significant self-corrections and learning” (p. 327).

voices, or conversational moments apparent through, as examples: the subject of the sentence (e.g., “my father” to “we” to “I”), the adjectives and actions describing the subject (e.g., “drinking” “drunk” “the alcoholic” to “on his third marriage” “reconnected with an old flame”), the era or episode being described (“when I was around,” changes from present to past verb tense), a question or topic introduced (“So when you have these suppers, do you guys chat?”) or re-introduced by the interviewer (“So you said that...”), or tone (e.g., factual to evaluative). This step was intended to facilitate coding and I remained open to re-merging sections and re-dividing of texts in all proceeding steps of analysis.

Coding: Creating an Index for Locating Data

For my purposes, coding involved labelling chunks of data (i.e., stanzas of text) to facilitate their retrieval (c.f., Saldana, 2009). In that sense, coding was not an end-goal but rather an intermediate step towards the development of themes (c.f., Braun & Clarke, 2006). To begin coding, I examined only two participants’ transcripts so that I could make multiple revisions to the classification, strengthening its logic and precision, without having to revisit all 15 participants’ data. The aim was to develop a strong classification system that could then be applied to the remaining 13 participants, requiring minor changes rather than total overhauls. As I read and re-read both transcripts, I created labels (“codes”) and assigned them to “stanzas” (or partial stanzas, or multiple stanzas). For example, one of the first codes I developed was “mother – personality,” which labeled a segment of text in which the participant described the qualities and characteristics of her mother. As I developed titles for codes, I kept in mind the goal to understand the experience of the parent-child relationship. I asked of the data, “What are they telling me, here, about their parent-child relationship?” Once I was satisfied with the level of parsimony and abstraction within the initial classification system, I moved on to code the rest of the transcripts.

Thematic Analysis: Aggregating Data to Higher-Order Categories

Initial codes closely reflected what was stated in the transcript; with time, I began creating more abstract prefixes that subsumed these codes into higher-order categories. Such iteration took place both during and after the trial coding of the first two transcripts. At this stage, my aim was to build towards an even more abstract level of data organization (working towards “categories” and “themes”). Hierarchical grouping was prompted by many scenarios. Initial grouping was usually prompted by a practical desire to situate codes closer together in a

code list to facilitate the retrieval of codes. When I found myself applying a handful of codes multiple times in a section of transcript, I would add either a number or a prefix in front of their original names, so that they would appear adjacent to one another on the list. As I gathered more data into these codes, I would add to or change the prefix to more accurately reflect the subsuming category. As an example, consider the development of these initial labels (first iteration) into a hierarchical classification system, where they are subsumed under higher-order categories and themes:

Table 5

Example of Iterative Analysis

First iteration	Second iteration	Third iteration	Fourth iteration	Fifth iteration
- Me and my parents are close	2. me and my parents are close	2. Closeness – me and my parents	LOVE	PARENTS AS CAREGIVERS
- My family is close-knit	2. My family is close-knit	2. Closeness – my family as a whole (nuclear)	2. Appreciation – I toward my parents	2. My parent: the caregiver: provides help
			2. Appreciation – my parents toward me	2. My parent: the caregiver: I feel gratitude for help
			2. Closeness – me and my parents	PARENTS AS FRIENDS
			2. Closeness – my family as a whole (nuclear)	3. My parent: the friend: similarity / relatability
			3. Association/identification with parents – shared activities	3. My parent: the friend: mutual support
			3. Association/identification with parents – shared	3. My parent: the friend: voluntary connection

As this example suggests, there was a progressive movement towards increased coherence, hierarchical organization, and precision over the course of analysis. In the first iteration, there is only a flat list of items (i.e., no hierarchy). In the second iteration, there is tentative grouping by number, but no named category. In the third iteration, there is a named category subsuming a flat list. In the fourth iteration, there is a named theme subsuming named categories subsuming a flat list. In the fifth iteration – which is now anticipating or even

involving some theoretical conceptualization – the theme [LOVE] has been divided into two sub-categories [the caregiver and the friend] and these categories have been located under a new theme [PARENTAL FIGURES].

Though I set out to develop codes close to the data in my first rounds of analysis, I ended up creating a mix of codes that had various degrees of abstraction: moderate/useful level of abstraction, too narrowly defined (proliferating the number of codes) and too broadly or abstractly defined (lumping together distinct meanings). Throughout the coding process (beyond the initial two-participant stage), I merged/collapsed (“lumped”) and separated (“splintered”) codes to arrive at useful level of abstraction for each (Saldana, 2009). For me, a useful level of abstraction was one that would facilitate further analysis and writing. I would imagine how I might use a given code in future steps, then decide how to proceed based on my plans for writing (a plan that itself took shape as I progressed in the coding). In the process of making decisions about lumping and splintering, I considered how significant the data appeared to be, and whether it would benefit me to have a more distilled analysis of the categories I saw.

This process of moving between the raw data and its abstraction into codes, categories and themes was one that drew its inspiration from Geertz’ (1973) notion of analysis as a process of developing “a stratified hierarchy of meaningful structures” (p. 7). As he notes:

Analysis, then, is sorting out the structures of signification – what Ryle called established codes, a somewhat misleading expression, for it makes the enterprise sound too much like that of the cipher clerk when it is much more like that of the literary critic – and determining their social ground and import. (p. 9)

In terms of outlining practical steps for achieving this, I drew on the advice of Saldana (2009) regarding coding processes and Braun and Clarke (2006) regarding thematic analysis. Rather than fixating on my ability to replicate exact formulations of analysis steps or types, I took to heart the key principles both conveyed, permitting myself to exercise my own creativity and intuition as I went. Atlas.ti software proved to be highly useful in organizing data, especially given the high volume that was collected.

Comparative Analysis: Identifying Variations Across Participants

Whereas the prior step established the organization of topics as a whole, individual and comparative levels of analysis were required to identify the distribution of themes and categories across participants. To do this, I developed templates with a simple and short list of high-level

questions that I would “ask” of each participant’s data (e.g., “Does the participant feel their parent worries or feels protective of them?” “In which contexts?” “Do they feel that their parents are confident in them?” “In which contexts?”). I would then write answers to these questions for each participant, integrating evidence for the answers by inserting quotations, paraphrases of data, and interpretations of these quotations or paraphrases (i.e., what they implied, which even at this point was sometimes informed by a concept or theory). After completing these templates for each participant, I created summaries of variations, similarities, and missing cases across the entire sample.

Conceptual Analysis

Throughout the steps of thematic analysis, comparative analysis, and even writing, I consciously used concepts drawn from fields of philosophy, anthropology, cultural psychology, and family studies to illuminate the significance of the data. This step can be referred to as “deep structure” analysis (Rothe, 2000). Since themes do not exist in isolation (i.e., abstracted from social and historical ideas) conceptual structures can be usefully deployed to interrelate themes and examine their significance from new angles (Ricoeur, 1986/2001). In other words, I engaged “experience-near” concepts (those a person might use in everyday life) in dialogue with “experience-distant” concepts to highlight the ethical, political, and social implications of participants’ discourses (Geertz, 1974). Whereas my foundational assumptions about moral experience were retained throughout the research process – from developing questions, to writing interview scripts, to analysis and writing – I enriched my theoretical framework with other concepts in dialogue with emergent patterns in the data, always with the aim of “expand[ing] the listener's openness to how much the story is saying” (Frank, 2010, p. 88).

Dialogue with the Literature

One could consider the dialogue with the literature as a final stage of analysis, in that the implications of research findings are made meaningful in relation to the knowledge that already exists on a given subject.

Analysis as Non-Linear and Collaborative

Although there was a general movement from the “first” to the “last” stage of analysis, it cannot be said that steps of analysis occurred in an entirely linear and discrete manner. For example, during the initial coding stage, I may have spent 90% of my time labeling segments of text and 10% of my time considering conceptual interpretations or contrasts between

participants. After comparisons between participants had been completed on a given theme, I sometimes found a concept that would allow me to characterize their distinctions with more precision, which meant returning to the comparative analysis to sharpen it. Even in the final months of writing, I occasionally (though rarely) created a new “code” to pull together data for analysis. Indeed, a more flexible conceptualization of the analysis would be as an ongoing engagement within the hermeneutic circle, which involves three loops: 1) relating parts of the data to the data as a whole, 2) relating the global organization of the data to my horizons (my research aims and theoretical framework), and 3) relating my findings to the state of knowledge on the topic (i.e., the conflict of interpretations; Ricoeur, 1986/2008).

Finally, I would be remiss if I did not mention that the organization and interpretation of data was discussed in an ongoing manner with my supervisor throughout the thesis project. Through these dialogues, I sharpened my transversal and horizontal classifications of data, clarified ambiguities, checked the plausibility of interpretations, explored counterarguments, engaged with new questions, and identified compelling implications for my work.

1.4.4 Evaluative Criteria

When it comes to evaluating qualitative research, dozens of frameworks have been offered to guide reviewers, examiners, and researchers. Despite the lack of consensus and confusing array of idiosyncratic terms (even within the interpretivist/social constructionist paradigm), I believe that trying to establish meaningful guidelines is a worthwhile practice, not only for thinking critically about my own research design, but also for improving dialogue and understanding between researchers who adopt different epistemologies or approaches.²³

Drawing from discussions about interpretive and social constructionist approaches, and specifically from Tracy’s (2010) “big-tent” criteria of excellent qualitative research, I used the following eight criteria to pursue quality throughout the dissertation project. First, is this a worthy topic? Is it relevant or interesting for personal, theoretical, or social reasons (Tracy, 2010)? Second, do the elements of the study design cohere meaningfully? In other words, is there logical congruency between the research questions, epistemology, techniques of data

²³ The readers may be familiar with some of the evaluative standards that often reflect a post-positivist epistemology within the qualitative literature. Many of these emerged from an attempt to create parallel criteria out of conventional and objectivist standards for scientific research. So, for instance, internal validity became credibility; external validity became transferability; reliability became dependability; and objectivity became confirmability (Morrow, 2005). Although these criteria are suitable for those assuming a post-positivist view of knowledge, they present several logical inconsistencies to those who assume a social constructionist approach, including myself.

collection, methods of data analysis, and description of the findings (Crotty, 1998; Tracy, 2010; Whittemore et al., 2001)? Third, does the study present rich rigor? Acquiring adequate data, using multiple data sources, and interpreting using a multifaceted and sensitive theoretical framework are valuable steps for drawing nuanced and complex portraits of lived experience and social practices (Morrow, 2005; Tracy, 2010; Whittemore et al., 2001). Fourth, how credible, plausible, and persuasive is the text? Does the author draw an imaginable portrait by using concrete details and quotations? Does the author logically relate parts of the texts to their wholes, for instance, relating codes, categories, and themes? Does the author relate the global patterns of themes and narratives within the data to her conceptual horizons (Geertz, 1973; Morrow, 2005; Ricoeur, 1986/2008; Tracy, 2010; Whittemore et al., 2001)? Does the author include the voices of many participants or only a limited subset? In other words, does the text incorporate multivocality (Morrow, 2005; Tracy, 2010; Whittemore et al., 2001)? Fifth, does the study incorporate self-reflexivity, transparency, and sincerity? Have efforts been made to consider alternative interpretations of the data, for instance, through self-critique or collaboration with the supervisor? Has the researcher adequately described how she carried out the steps of the research? Are the findings described with humility (Tracy, 2010)? Sixth, does the text resonate with the reader? Does it possess aesthetic or artistic merit (Tracy, 2010; Whittemore et al., 2001)? Does it affect the audience, conjure empathy in them, transform them, or call on them to shift their interpretations (Frank, 2010; Ricoeur, 1986/2008; Tracy, 2010)? Sixth, does the study make a significant contribution, in terms of problematizing or advancing theory, encouraging further research on the topic, solving a problem, establishing new methods of inquiry, or empowering people to see the world in a new way (Tracy, 2010)? Finally, is the research ethical, in terms of conforming to research board standards, negotiating moral dilemmas in the field, treating participants respectfully, and presenting a fair depiction (Tracy, 2010)?

1.5 Conclusion: Searching for the Features of Meaningful Belonging

In a well-cited paper titled “On a new schedule: Transition to adulthood and family change” Frank Furstenberg (2010) noted the rise in rates of coresidence and indications of closeness between parents and coresidence children, remarking that despite these observations, Few studies, however, have examined the texture of family life when young adults reside in the natal household. For example, what kinds of rules, routines, and understandings emerge regarding household obligations, expenses, and the comings and goings of young

adults and other family members? . . . What happens inside families on a day-by-day basis when young adults co-reside with their parents remains a largely unexplored topic . . . What is lacking is good qualitative evidence on how parents and young adults work things out. (p. 74)

In what follows, I offer my own response to this call. Researchers of coresidence have long recognized the economic and cultural forces compelling young adults to live with their parents; here I identify the specific emotional, social, and institutional features that permit the parental home to be experienced as a viable and worthwhile living arrangement. Put otherwise, this thesis takes stock of the historical representations and practices that constitute the parental home as a place of meaningful unbelonging (Veyne, 2010).

CHAPTER 2: PARENTS AS CAREGIVERS

I find nothing so costly as that which is given me, for then my will is mortgaged by a title of gratitude. I'd rather buy a [royal] office than be given one, for buying it, I just give money. In the other case, I give myself. (Montaigne, as cited in Ricoeur, 2004/2005, p. 283)

For some, caring for a loved one is simply part and parcel of a given relationship; they resist the title of caregiver, because it seems to negate the other relationships they hold: "I don't look at myself as a caregiver; I am a husband in love with his wife." (Senor, 2001, p. 77, as cited in Dobbins, 2007, p. 190)

Or again: the gratifying Mother shows me the Mirror, the Image, and says to me: "That's you." But the silent Mother does not tell me what I am: I am no longer established, I drift painfully, without existence. (Barthes, 1977/2001, p. 168)

What does caregiving look like for parents of young adult children today? What should it look like? What distinguishes beneficial support from detrimental support, the good gift from the poisoned gift? These questions are at the core of public and academic debates surrounding the family today, where concerns of over-parenting abound. As researchers consider what counts as smothering versus loving (Nelson et al., 2015), whether "more is more" or "more is less" when it comes to financial support (Hamilton, 2013), and whether coresidence stagnates the development of an adult identity (Kins & Beyers, 2010), an opportunity has opened for more contextual, meaning-centered research on the caregiving practices of parents toward young adult children. Specifically, there is a need to understand how a parent's care – or lack of care – is experienced and responded to by young adults.

In this chapter, I take as a point of departure the characterization of parents as caregivers in order to examine in more detail the value and significance of parental care, as it is constructed by young adult children living at home.²⁴ Supporting this objective are many questions: what forms of caring practices are present in the lives of young adults living with their parents? How is the care of parents understood and evaluated? How is support morally deliberated on, for instance with respect to the intent of the support, parents' resources, or with respect to parents'

²⁴ To be concise, I will use the term "parents" to refer to participants' residential mothers, fathers, stepfathers, and (in one case) a mother's boyfriend. Although I will use this shorthand, I will highlight variations across different types of family members. As I have stated in the methodology, I will not be looking in-depth at relationships with non-residential parents, since this would widen the research scope considerably.

duties as parents? How do young adults' perceptions of parental support connect with their senses of dignity and self-esteem? Are there certain caregiving forms that are conceived of as over-bearing and others that are not? How do young adults make sense of overbearing or neglectful parenting? Overall, how do young adults' reflections on these topics paint a landscape of varied caring practices, values, and experiences?

To inform my analysis of caregiving and receiving, I have drawn on concepts of caregiving and gift-giving informed by phenomenological and moral traditions within anthropology and philosophy. In the tradition of the ethics of care within philosophy, caregiving can be defined as a practice of “attending to and meeting the needs of the particular others for whom we take responsibility” (Held, 2006, p. 10). Writing as a psychiatrist, medical anthropologist, and primary caregiver to his wife with Alzheimer's, Arthur Kleinman (2009) similarly defines caregiving as an activity of protecting the “vulnerable and dependent” through practices of “empathic imagination, responsibility, witnessing, and solidarity” (p. 293). In both conceptualizations, caregiving practices involve a minimum of three elements. First, caregiving involves a sense of responsibility towards another person – not only another person, but a particular other person with whom one is in a caring relation (Held, 2006). In that sense, caregiving practices support the well-being not only of the other person, but also of the caregiver and the bond itself. Second, caregiving involves a sensitivity to the needs of another person. As highlighted by the anthropologist Cheryl Mattingly (2014), providing care requires identifying and ascertaining courses of action that are worthwhile and good – processes of deliberation that require what Aristotle termed “practical wisdom”: a consideration for the particulars of everyday life and personal commitments. Finally, caregiving involves carrying out actions that aim at desirable individual and collective ends (or “goods”), but do not guarantee them (Mattingly, 2014). In sum, as young adults consider their parents' roles as caregivers, they may consider what is at stake for their parents by virtue of being parents, the necessity of adapting caring practices in relation to particular circumstances, and the uncertainty and improvisation involved in caring (including the distinction between one's intended aims and the outcomes of actions carried out in pursuit of those aims).

While these definitions of caregiving bring into focus the roles, bonds, functions, and aims of caregivers, a broader framework is needed to highlight the phenomenological experience of caregiving and receiving as a social system. As Kleinman (2015) highlights, caregiving is not

unidirectional and can be understood “in an anthropological sense, as a gift exchange” (p. 240). Caregiving actions of recognizing and reducing suffering are met by reciprocity in a care-receiver’s “acknowledging, affirming, and responding” to the caregiver in a way that affirms the giver’s humanity (p. 240). Yet – in keeping with Mattingly’s (2014) emphasis on the “radical uncertainty” of action (p. 16) – we know that gift-giving can go wrong in many ways. Givers may provide and be disappointed when their gift is squandered, when it is not reciprocated, when it is returned too quickly or too slowly, or when the value of the return gift pales in comparison to that of the initial gift (Godbout, 1992/1998; Ricoeur, 2004/2005). And receivers may suspect egoistic motivations behind the gift, may feel burdened by an obligation to return a gift, or may experience a gift as unwanted charity (Godbout, 1992/1998; Ricoeur, 2004/2005). So how might a person distinguish between gift-giving systems that work and those that do not work? This is where the philosopher Paul Ricoeur (2004/2005) makes a compelling contribution. Ricoeur explores precisely “the division between good and bad reciprocity” (p. 243) by highlighting the “phenomenology of the intentions” (p. 242) involved at each of three stages of gift exchange: 1) to give, 2) to receive, and 3) to give in return. To begin with, Ricoeur (2004/2005) stresses that a true gift is given without any expectation of return. Here, he relates this motivation to the biblical concept of “agape”: a charitable, generous, “super-abundant” form of love that seeks nothing in return. From this perspective, not all caregiving could be considered gift-giving, since caregiving is not always defined by disinterest and generosity. Ricoeur identifies receiving as the second part of the gift-giving structure. According to him, receiving is “the pivotal category, in that the way in which the gift is accepted determines the way in which the person who receives the gift will feel obliged to give something in return” (p. 243). At the heart of a “good receiving” is gratitude (Ricoeur, 2004/2005, p. 243): the recognition of the quality of relation represented by the initial gift. In the words of Anspach, a grateful receiving means “to recognize the *relation* for which the initial gift is only a vehicle” (p. 59, as cited by Ricoeur, 2004/2005). As opposed to reinforcing an “autonomous circularity” of reciprocity (p. 219), a grateful sentiment upon receiving a gift confirms the asymmetry between the giver and receiver (Ricoeur, 2004/2005).

To bring further distinction to caregiving as a form of gift-giving, consider the contrasts between gift-giving and marketplace exchange. Principal among these is the notion of inexactitude that characterizes the relation between the initial gift and the gift in return. Marketplace exchange generally involves immediate and exact exchange, where equivalence

between what is given and what is received is the highest ideal (Godbout, 1992/1998; Ricoeur, 2004/2005). By contrast, in the gift-giving system, what is returned in gratitude has an inexact relationship to what has been given, and in two senses. First, it is inexact in that the timing of reciprocation is not a central concern – a feature that is related to the disinterestedness that is critical to the gift as a gift (Ricoeur, 2004/2005). Second, the relation is inexact in that the market values of each gift are “incommensurable,” constituting the priceless (“without-price” or “sans-prix”) nature of the gift exchange (Ricoeur, 2004/2005, p. 243). Similarly, Kleinman (2009) hints at this inexact and free nature of reciprocity from a care-receiver to a care-giver, stating that “The reciprocity at the heart of care can be immediate, delayed, or never fulfilled” (p. 241). Of course, elements of marketplace and gift-giving systems can be creatively combined, whether in small trinkets that accompany sales, objects given to assure trust for repayment on a loan, or courtesies paid in addition to money in a transaction (Davis, as cited by Ricoeur, 2004/2005).

In the context of young adults living with their parents, these dimensions of gift-giving inspire many questions about how care is given and received: how do young adults perceive the intentions behind caregiving? What do they feel in receiving parental care (security, indebtedness, obligation, guilt, control)? In cases where insufficient care is provided or communicated, what do they experience? Do young adults give back to their parents or intend to do so in the future? What motivates a desire to return care to their parents? How are young adults able to exercise agency while they occupy roles as gift-receivers?

In this chapter, I demonstrate coresident young adults’ construction of their parents as caregivers, highlighting how parental expressions of concern, loving gestures, and practical help function to support a process of mutual recognition that nourishes young adults’ capacities to act in the world (Ricoeur, 1992/2013). I show how participants generally accepted and appreciated their parents’ caring initiatives, whether in looking out for them, offering help, or communicating their approval and affection. While each of these caregiving functions emphasized parents’ actions and expressions, participants also underscored their own agency in their responses to their parents’ vulnerability, in their recognition and gratitude for their parents’ diverse forms of care, and in their commitments to honor the spirit of the gift by giving back to their parents and transmitting forward the care that they received. In sum, this chapter challenges readers to refrain from conflating material dependence with passivity or disempowerment; at least, at the micro-level of the family, the everyday experiences of young adults suggest that they impute moral

agency to themselves (Ricoeur, 1986/2008), even within the most one-sided and asymmetrical relations of economic exchange.

2.1 Parents' Expressions of Concern and Protectiveness

Virtually all the young adults' parents—14 of 15 mothers, 9 of 10 fathers, and 2 of 3 step-fathers or mothers' partners—were described by their children as expressing some form of protectiveness or concern about their well-being. Here, I use “protectiveness” and “concern” to indicate one outward sign of “attending to” another person's vulnerability (Held, 2006), which may or may not be warranted and may or may not be expressed in a way that practically supports the well-being of the person in question. While protectiveness or concern could hypothetically motivate many of the care practices described in this chapter, here, I pay particular attention to the ways that it surfaced in ritualized reminders, requests, and expressions concerning the child's financial, psychological, interpersonal, and bodily well-being. Overall, this section points to participants' tendencies to view such actions as benevolent gestures expressing parents' enduring roles as parents and the permanence of the bond between themselves and the child. This was the dominant pattern that surfaced, but participants also described experiences wherein the parental concern became overly repetitive or insistent and therefore irritating. Beyond this, the experiences of Lois (in relation to her mother), Keith (in relation to his father), and Walter (in relation to his mother's boyfriend) highlight scenarios where the absence of protective gestures underlined three unique circumstances and moral evaluations, with Lois feeling deprived of maternal attention, Walter appearing not to consider this an important facet of his relationship to his mother's boyfriend, and Keith indicating that this role fell to his mother with his father counter-balancing in other ways. All in all, this section points to the value of examining expressions of protectiveness in terms of their contextual significance, where moral evaluations of such actions are informed by the child's confidence in themselves, their perceptions of their parents' confidence in them, their recognition of their parents' vulnerabilities, and the degree of intrusiveness caused by the expression of concern itself.

2.1.1 Ritualized Reminders and Requests Concerning the Child's Well-being

At the outset, I defined caregiving as involving a relationship of responsibility between one person and another. Such responsibility was visible to participants in their parents' routine verbal reminders and requests. First, nine participants referred to parental reminders intended to assure their (the child's) well-being. Many of these reminders related to safety, for example,

reminders to drive carefully if the roads were icy (Kristine), to refrain from drinking and driving (Grey, Adison, Laura, Kristine), to call for a ride if they needed one (Kristine, Molly), or to come home at a reasonable time, whether out of a concern for personal danger or general wellness (Amber, Jane, Ria). As one example, Adison described,

it's like, "If there's drinking and you're driving, no drinking." I'm I'm like, "I know::::::::::w. Like I'm 30. I'm aware." And I'll say that and my dad's like, "I know, but just in case!" And I'm like, "In case I forget in like the ten seconds I walk to my car?"

Parents also showed their concern for the child by making hints about the importance of managing their finances (Adison, Kristine, and Jane) or meeting financial deadlines (Sylvia). For instance, Sylvia emulated her father's recapitulation of his reminders about staying on top of her finances:

"You gotta do this," ((rrr)), "oh, have you done this?" And it's never like, like a mean one, its just kinda like in passing like, "Oh, oh do you remember this that I asked you about?" And I'm like "Ok! Yes I know!"

Some participants also pointed to parents' subtle expressions of concern about their and/or their siblings' job and career decisions (Amber, Iris, Ria, Nina, and Walter). A few participants (Sylvia, Amber, and Kristine) identified occasions when their fathers would repeatedly prompt them about maintaining their vehicles, with Amber reporting her dad's questions: "my dad will make sure to be like, 'Did you change the oil?' 'Did you clean your car?' 'Do you need to vacuum?' That's one thing they'll bother me about ((laughs)) for some reason." Verbal encouragements for participants to care for their mental or physical health were also described, for instance, with parents telling them to take care of themselves (Grey) or not over-work themselves (Laura, Molly). As Laura said, "They're just like, 'oh! Don't stress yourself out!' Like, 'have a balance!' I'm like, 'yeah, I probably have too much of a balance already.'" Finally, Nina pointed to her mother signalling concern about Nina's romantic life:

she always asks like "are you lonely? Or do you need-" like she- always comes down to the basement, she'll make comments like that. Or – they had their 40th anniversary last weekend at the lake and she was like, ((soft, tender voice)) "you'll meet that person, or maybe you've met him already." ((Laughs)) I was like, "oh my god."

In a related set of practices, parents appeared to express a relation of responsibility through requests to know children's whereabouts (as was described by 12 of 15 participants). If

these participants were going to be out late, were going to sleep elsewhere for the night, or were going away for the weekend, they would inform their parents to give them peace of mind. As examples, Molly said that “it’s nice to give them a head’s up,” while Jane remarked that “I go out whenever I want, I just let them know that I’m going to this place.” Note that these cases were distinct from instances where participants notified their parents of their whereabouts out of logistical necessity (e.g., scheduling childcare) or consideration for parents’ time and energy (e.g., telling them they would not be home for dinner so they would not prepare food for them).

All participants who experienced parents’ reminders and requests about their status cited instances where these expressions could be accepted and even valued. Indeed, this was the dominant way participants described these types of interactions. They explained these reactions by referring to their parents’ benevolent intentions, the stereotyped and routine nature of these remarks, and their global senses of having their parents’ esteem and trust.

Concerning the first of these references, reminders, requests, and nagging about the child’s status were often viewed as issuing from the parent’s enduring care about the child – but care that was interpreted more as a sense of responsibility than by a practical responsibility for the child’s well-being. As many of the above quotations already suggest, participants did not generally perceive themselves as requiring the kinds of reminders and suggestions that parents were providing. In addition, a lack of parental follow-up suggested that their parents also were not intending to undertake major initiatives to protect young adult children. For example, Amber stated of her parents that “they’ll make random comments like ‘don’t be that late,’ and it’s just like ‘kay, you don’t actually mean that’ ((laughs)).” Similarly, Laura pointed to the unnecessary but consistent pattern of being reminded not to drink and drive: “they’ll still – my mom will be like ‘Don’t drink and drive’ like, I’ve never but, okay. Like, thanks for keeping reminding me.” As is the case in this quotation, the characterization of these remarks as repetitive and stereotypical lends support to the view that they held more of a ritualistic function than a behavioural modification function. They may have affirmed the caring relation between the parent and the child – constituting an “expressive action” (Leach, 1976) – or voiced a wish or prayer for the child’s safety, reducing a minor level of anxiety through mediation with divine forces (Maisonneuve, 1988).

Providing assurance to their parents was also described most often as a return gesture of care rather than an act of obedience in response to parental needs for control and monitoring. As

Amber said, “there’s no expectations but it’s definitely like I’ll tell them where I’m going and they’ll feel okay about that.” Similarly, Ria pointed out that her mother was not “strict and bossy” but that her mother “cares a lot” and that she (her mother) would feel a sense of responsibility towards her for her entire life: “parents are supposed to protect their child, right? And my mom always tells me that a child is a child to his or her parents no matter how grown up the child is.” As others described, staying in communication was intended to give their parents peace of mind: “So she knows I’m not dead in the ditch” (Walter), “to let my mom sleep” (Molly) or so “she [won’t] wake up to siren and be like, “oh my God, you’re dead!” (Laura).

Supporting the notion that giving parents information could be self-affirming (as opposed to fragilizing of their identities), three participants pointed out that they often requested the same thing from their parents. Potentially, in these cases, such mutual monitoring was related less to the parent-child role dynamics and more to a generalized attentiveness and care towards one another. Sylvia, who also liked to know what her parents were up to, said that “it’s just kind of to keep everybody in the loop so nobody’s worried about somebody else.” Likewise, Molly explained that “I think just like, knowing that they’re okay, like... it kind of like – I feel like that relieves some stress. Like, making sure they’re okay and... they know that I’m okay. Just – it was just such a comfort thing.” In line with the concept of caregiving outlined in the beginning of the chapter, participants’ responses frequently showed their capacities to care for their parents in return by responding in a validating and humanizing manner (Kleinman, 2009). In these scenarios, receiving reminders and requests did not stimulate conflict over autonomy; rather, they created an opportunity to offer care in response.

As a third point for considering the benign nature of parents’ expressions of protectiveness, participants generally confirmed that their parents – at a global level – were confident in their abilities to care for themselves. Indeed, all participants except Lois explicitly attested to this, stating that their parents were aware of their skills, achievements, ambitions, and qualities of character, which appeared to counter-balance actions that otherwise may have led to feelings of powerlessness. Echoing other participants, Laura simply described that “they see my work ethic,” while Amber stated that “they see me as this person like doing things.” In addition to statements about parents observing their efforts, comments were made that parents realized that they had “matured more” (Walter). These remarks signified correspondence between their self-understanding and their parents’ understandings of them; they and their parents held a

shared construction of the young adult as capable, mature, and driven, and as pursuing worthwhile goals, like going to school, getting a job, regaining emotional stability, or caring for a child. For four participants, this mutual depiction was also reinforced through comparisons between themselves and their less stable, conscientious, or driven siblings. These young adults discursively distanced themselves from siblings – “a recovering alcoholic” (Walter), “a job hopper” (Iris), “a slob” (Kristine), or a “lazy” brother (Amber). As Walter summed up, “I have like a path of what I want to do. Like with Evan [my brother], she [my mom] has no idea what’s going to happen with him.” By way of contrast, participants felt their parents were assured in their capacities to take responsibility. Overall, then, it is possible that within this environment of shared confidence, reminders, warnings, and calls for reassurance were not perceived as threats to autonomy and could even confirm the presence of mutual care within the family.

2.1.2 Protectiveness as Irritating

As a variation on the response pattern described above, seven young adults (in relation to nine parents) did say they occasionally got annoyed with their parents’ expressions of concern. Reports from these participants were also included in the above description, meaning that, at times, their parents’ protective actions were quite acceptable to them, and at other times, they became irritating. What separated these moments from the previous ones was the excessive nature of their communication, which in a fairly minor way, indicated a misrecognition of the child. Irritation occurred when questions or nagging were so incessant that the interaction began to interfere with participants’ expectations for common privacy, respect, or reason. As an example, Adison described how when leaving the house, she sometimes was subject to a barrage of questions:

I mean sometimes it’s a little shitty when you’re like... like, “where are you going? What are you doing? How long will you be?” And it’s like, “I don’t really have an answer for all of those questions,” but I mean, I get it. To a certain extent.

In the previous pattern, participants discerned their parents’ desires to look out for them, and in return, responded in a way that reaffirmed the caring bond. By contrast, in these situations, the violation of their privacy or disruption of routine provoked a sense of being misrecognized.

Indeed, at one point Adison stated that during these moments of persistent interrogation:

sometimes they forget that you’re an adult and talk to you like you’re 16. And you’re like, “Okay.” If I leave the house, “Where you going? Who you going with? When are

you gonna be back? What are you doing?” It’s like...if I leave my house that I live in, no one asks those questions, you know. I don’t have to really answer to anybody, you know. Even still, Adison’s framing of her parents’ actions as forgetful implies that while this experience can be irritating, it is ultimately something that she forgives her parents for, and it will not compromise their bond. As another example, Nina portrayed her mother’s curiosity escalating into invasiveness:

Yeah, so she’s like very much like the, ((higher tone of voice)) “Oh where are you going? What are you wearing? What’s going on? Who are you on the phone with?” Then like I can’t like she’s always – I – I live in the basement so she’s like the one who’s always coming down the stairs and like looking in my room. And I’m like, “Mom! I’m getting changed!” Like “I’m naked!” Like I cannot get away from her.

While Nina found her mother very “snoopy” she nevertheless described her in the same breath as being the “nurturing mother,” seeming to pardon her mother’s meddling ways.

Other participants also pointed out that responding to their parents’ needs for reassurance could be burdensome. Similar to the previous examples, when parents’ questions or concerns were taken to an excess, participants became frustrated with their inability to convince their parents of their capacities to care for themselves. Trying to convince their parents of their own competence could be tiring. Still, as with the previous examples, this burdensome work was not something that caused immense suffering or threatened the bond; it was simply frustrating in that participants preferred that their parents could accept their read of the story more readily, rather than requiring so much interpretive interrogation to be carried out. In relation her mother, Molly described how “I just feel like, it’s hard to convince her that I’m okay.” She went on to explain how moving out would likely relieve her of some of the “stress” of monitoring and responding to her parents’ emotions:

if I wasn’t at home, like I wouldn’t have to re-not re –it’s not like I have to report to them, but just like, making sure that they’re at ease can sometimes be like, I don’t know, like a burden maybe? Like, just worrying about... what they might worry about.

Whereas Molly spoke in vague terms about counteracting her mother’s concern, Walter and Ria discussed difficulties convincing their parents that their work and career decisions were sound. Walter explained his mom’s idiomatic reminders about the importance of financial security and his difficulty conveying to her that his future field would provide financial security:

she says, “you know, I know that money doesn’t necessarily buy happiness, but it sure as hell makes it a lot easier to find it.” So she’s always saying that. So she doesn't want me to be like, poor and broke. And like, I keep telling her like, “the job I want to go into isn't going to make me poor and broke. Like the [institution] pays a good amount of money.” So like, I don’t understand what her issue is. But I guess because I’m not going to be making like, hundreds of thousands of dollars a year, it’s an issue.

Although Walter remarked that he did not understand his mother’s “issue,” he went on to say that with his brother struggling with mental health issues, his mom may be relying on him to take care of her when she gets older. By considering the fears behind her words and separating those from his own capacities as a person, Walter seems to be able both to brush off these comments and retain confidence in his chosen career path.

Likewise, when Ria discussed her parents’ concerns, her conviction in her life choices wobbled but ultimately stuck. At the point of our first interview, Ria had been working a part-time job in the service industry since high school. She wanted to quit and work in a different field, but her parents were discouraging it:

I keep telling them like if I have a bad experience because of quitting this job, then it will like – I will be responsible for that. Like at least let me struggle and let me learn something from that. But my parents are more like – they are like “no,” something. Cause I feel like they are more protective and in the way of becoming more protective they unintentionally end up forcing their decisions on me.

By our third interview, however, Ria had quit her job and was feeling “relieved” by this decision. It was unclear whether she had convinced her parents to permit her to quit, or whether she had done so on her own, but what was evident was her joy in having stuck to her conviction and pursued what she wanted. Like Molly and Walter, Ria listened to her parents’ concerns with compassion, but did not interpret them as a reflection of her capacity or potential as an individual. All three of these participants affirmed their will in a way that was highly empowering, confirming to themselves their capacity to make their own decisions, project themselves into a desirable future, and claim esteem for themselves. The empowering quality of their discourses distinguished their situations from that of Keith, where parental protectiveness exacerbated a sense of self-doubt.

2.1.3 Protectiveness Triggering Self-Doubt

Whereas the previous eight participants spoke about being irritated with their parents' protective ways, Keith experienced a unique sense of distress in relation to his mother's protectiveness concerning his career track. In the previous cases, participants retained their self-confidence despite their parents' worries. By contrast, Keith appeared to have a more challenging time shrugging off his mother's signals of concern. Shifting between the recent past, present, and future, he told me about his experience choosing a major, and how it prompted different responses from each of his parents:

I wanted to get a [social sciences] degree when I first started university, then I switched to [humanities subject], and she seemed almost upset about it, but wouldn't really say why. And my dad was excited that I picked something. She didn't seem very. Same when I decided I wanted to go to [country]. My dad was kind of...excited that I had found something that I wanted to do. My mom didn't seem so. But I don't know what she wants from me. So it's kind of hard to know.

KM: ...So you're kind of picking up on vibes or moods, but –

K: Yea:h, she seem- I don't know. It's hard because it's exciting for me when I decide on something, and then it kind of waters it down. She'll never say what – I don't know, she'll just give off a vibe, but never really talk to me about it.

...

KM: Do you have any theories about what it is that she wants you to do that you -

K: I don't know, she might want something that's more stable job-wise.

Keith connected the judgment about choosing a major (past) and going abroad after graduation (future) to other judgment he had encountered. Specifically, he commented that he had often been called on by others to justify the value of his degree. As he stated, "Whenever you tell someone you're getting a humanities degree it's, 'oh! What are you going to do with that?' 'I don't know. Something someday probably, maybe, I hope.'" Likewise, he perceived that at a societal level, a humanities degree did not lend the same "adulthood" significance as credentials leading directly to specific sort of jobs. He pointed out the contrast: "It's like, 'when I'm done, I'm going to be a doctor.' I don't know what I'm going to be when I'm done getting [discipline], cause you don't just work at the [discipline] store." Overall, Keith's vulnerable tone suggested that, at present, he was unable to narrativize his experience into a story that even he found acceptable or legitimate. Simply put, he too was questioning his own path, which may have

contributed to the distress he felt when his mother did not express overt support for it. With his interviews taking place one to two months before the end of his final term of his undergraduate degree, he felt lost thinking about what life would be after graduation:

K: I don't know, it gets kind of stressful to think about when you're also trying to do ((sighs)), finals and papers and all that shit.

KM: What stresses you out about it?

K: Uh, that I'm basically done my degree and I don't know what I'm doing with it. I'd hate to see it be a total waste of my time. I don't think it will be, but I don't have any – I don't know how to use it.

Clearly, Keith's perception of his mother's doubt was not isolated or trivial; a distressing sense of disempowerment was evident in his questioning of himself and in his inability to project himself into a desirable future (Ricoeur, 1992/2013).

Like patterns we have witnessed throughout this section, Keith nevertheless tried to make sense of his mother's worry by connecting it to a broader framework of interpretation. To understand his mother's judgments about his career path in contrast to his father's full support, he traces these valuations back to each of their career trajectories: "He hopped around jobs a lot after school, whereas my mom sort of – well she switched locations, but she stayed more or less at the same place. So I don't know, maybe he gets hopping around a little more." Though he did not state it, Keith seemed to be caught identifying with two professional narratives pushing him in radically opposite directions: one (his father's) where the future was open and adaptive (but uncertain) and another where the future promised security, but also without the opportunities for spontaneous action. Whereas his actions emulate those narrativized in his father's story, the cautionary, protective, and conservative narratives he picks up from his mother and certain peers weigh heavily on him. It is no wonder that he felt ambivalence as he looked ahead, given the uncertain nature of his path, his mother's silent disapproval, the invalidation of his path by others, and his own view that without a clear path to a career, a university degree was not indicative of maturity.

2.1.4 Non-Protective and Indifferent Parents

There were two cases in which young adults made no mention of a parent expressing a protective character. In the first case, it seemed that Keith's "goofy" father complemented his mother as the central worrier in the family. In the second case, Walter perceived a distance

between himself and his mother's boyfriend of five years, often framing their relationship as one between acquaintances rather than between a caregiver and child. Given their courteous but distant relationship, expressions of concern may have been subtle or non-existent.

Whereas Keith and Walter made no mention of these parents' protective roles, Lois stressed her mother's indifference towards her. Like others, she did let her mom know where she was so her mother would not have to "make a missing person's report" if she did not show up for a few days, but this was the extent of concern that Lois saw in her mother. Lois hinted that she had felt such a lack of concern dating back to when she was in high school and her mother left her to determine the time she came home and how she would spend her money. Whereas Lois saw that other children's parents showed more concern, Lois collapsed past and present experiences into one, saying that:

It's just feeling like no one really is there for you. Like I said, it's not like I did anything dangerous or needed the cops to show up or what not, but at the same time it's like, well... I don't really feel like I have a support from my family as friends might.

Beyond this, her reluctance to tell her mother about her clinical depression (since she felt her mother would not "believe" her) and her sense that her mom would "not be sad" if she moved out, suggest Lois feels neglected by her mother. Potentially, a word of concern or cautionary reminder might have been appreciated as a symbol of "maternal watchfulness" (Badinter, 1981).

2.1.5 Synthesis

Overall, this section reveals how parents continue to be constructed as protective by their children, even as they enter and move through adulthood. Thirteen of the fifteen participants experienced forms of protection and worry that were largely experienced as acceptable and even endearing, though at times prompting irritation. Meanwhile, Keith sense of self-doubt was compounded by his mother's unstated worries and Lois indicated a long-standing sense of maternal disinterest that colored her present bond with her mother. As observed by researchers of socialization, parental protectiveness is often activated when children are sick, hurt, in danger, or upset (Grusec, 2010). The topics participants described certainly fit these classifications, with the addition of financial and occupational stresses. However, unlike the practical forms of protectiveness referenced by socialization researchers, expressions of concern that were referenced by participants more often seemed to hold a symbolic function, acting as prayers to ward off danger more than as techniques for controlling the child or their environment. In this

way, participants were often capable of interpreting their parents' assuring cautions and requests as forgivable and even valuable. Certainly, in some cases, these ritualized actions perhaps crossed over into a more intrusive classification, such as when parents persisted with them to the point of disrupting the child's everyday activities or flows of experience. However, even in these cases, most participants were able to contextualize their parents' actions and move on without lingering resentment. By thinking about their parents' positions as caregivers (and themselves as objects of their parents' concern) participants saved their parents from condemnation, protected themselves from doubt about their capacities, and reaffirmed a common framework of identification that bonded themselves to their parents (i.e., as people who care about one another). From a more expansive view, we also saw participants speak to the importance of parents' confidence in them. This faith – children's belief that their parents believed in them – grounded their self-confidence, such that minor nagging, requests, or cautions could be taken lightly rather than being dwelled upon as corroborating evidence of their incompetence.

2.2 Parents' Expressions of Love and Emotional Support

I shift focus here to participants' interpretations of their parents' expressions of love and affection, which could be distinguished from expressions provoked by worry or concern described above. To frame this inquiry, I draw on Ricoeur's (2004/2005) claim that self-recognition requires the help of others. While self-recognition "passes through others" (p. 75) in a multitude of ways, for now, I focus on love as one of the channels. As I indicated at the outset of this chapter, agape stands as a form of "love characterized by superabundance" (Ricoeur, 2004/2005, p. 251). This kind of love stands as a declaration of praise – a "strong evaluation" of the person who is loved (Taylor, as cited by Ricoeur, 2004/2005, p. 222). In that sense, we can say that in experiencing love, we experience recognition by others. Through meetings and partings, confidence in the loving bond between two people develops; this in turn promotes each person's confidence in themselves, increasing their capacity to be alone (Ricoeur, 2004/2005). As put by Ricoeur (2004/2005), mutual recognition through agape involves a

dialectic between binding and unbinding . . . The unbinding speaks of the suffering of absence and distance, the test of disillusionment; the binding speaks of the strength of spirit that is embodied in the capacity to be alone. But it is confidence in the permanence of a reciprocal solicitude that makes such unbinding a salutary tribulation. (p. 190)

In the context of the parent-child relationship, confidence in the bond increases over time as the child matures (Ricoeur, 2004/2005). Still, all people are vulnerable to losing confidence in their social bonds, which means that faith in these bonds must be continually nourished (Imber-Black, 2002; Maisonneuve, 1988; Ricoeur, 2004/2005). Note, too, that the capacity to be alone is distinct from a preference to be alone. To make living alone the pinnacle of maturity would surely be to deny nearly all human beings their status as adults, given that nearly all people live their lives within communities, not outside of them.

As we will see, nearly all participants (14/15) indicated their confidence in their parents' love for them, which was supported by routine expressions of affection, encouragement, and interest. Less frequently, parents' love was experienced in their care for participants during distressing moments. Some participants also preferred not to receive therapeutic emotional support from their parents (i.e., during stressful moments) or neutrally accepted its absence. Across these varied forms, five participants felt a gap between the type of affection they wanted from their parent(s) and that which they received. Whereas in four of these cases, this gap did not trigger a global lack of confidence in the bond, in the case of Lois, it did appear to do so.

2.2.1 Everyday Reminders of Love

Every participant but Lois acknowledged how their parent(s) made them feel loved and valued in some way or other. Note that in this section, I am referring to descriptions of parents specifically and uniquely conveying affection toward participants. Reciprocal exchanges of care were also described, with some being related to a sense of companionship with their parents and others related to a sense of affiliation within the family itself. These forms of reciprocated care are discussed in Chapter 3 (sections 1 and 3).

Expressions of love took place through a variety of channels. Many participants observed these in their parents noticing their absence, asking about work or school, or asking them how their day was going (8/15 participants). Often depicted as banal and ordinary, such gestures were nevertheless understood as valuable for the relationship, reminding young adults that they mattered to their parents. Kristine, for example, was the first in her family to be attending university and appreciated her parents' supportive gestures, saying "I'm like, 'hey dad, I got a 70 on my assignment.' He's like, 'o:oh! Right on, that's awesome!' Once in a while my mom will be like, 'oh, how is school going?' I'm like, 'good, it's alright.'" Warm greetings and goodbyes (mentioned by Amber, Nina, Keith, Kristine, and Vincent) also reinforced a sense of being cared

about by their parents. Nina, for instance, pointed to her mother's repetitive indications of love, finding them over-the-top and humorous, but also a part of her nurturing nature:

N: My mom texts and snaps me. Like I see her all day! All night! And then she texts and snaps me goodnight. Or like she'll send a snap like, "Goodnight Nina and Ethan. Love you guys!" And it's like I saw you two minutes ago and she sends me a Snapchat of it.

KM: Wait, she always does that?!

N: Oh yeah, every night.

KM: ((Laughs))

N: She's so funny! ((Laughs))

Connected to Ricoeur's (2004/2005) observation of love as involving a dialectic between binding and unbinding, sociologist Erving Goffman (1967) argued that greetings affirm a relationship's permanence (or even compensate for the harm of absence) and farewells indicate a promise about the future of the relationship (and even anticipate the harm of separation). This seems to be what is at play in Nina's comment, where her mother's communication of affection is more than what Nina herself might require (but it is nevertheless something she accepts as a loving gesture). Supporting this view that greetings and goodbyes are informed by a sense of the distance and duration of separation, Grey said that in living with her mother, care communicated through physical affection was not as necessary compared to when they were living separately:

before we lived together, I would only see them when we visited each other, so then we would always hug hello and goodbye. But as far as – no, not really. Um, yeah, no. Now that we are together all the time, there's no need.

Other routine reminders of parents' love included terms of endearment, such as "sweetheart" and "honey" (Kristine), side-by-side naps (Ria), and even the mere presence of a parent, as was emphasized by Grey:

it's just her presence. I don't know what it is. Because we'll just go upstairs or she'll come downstairs, and we won't have any kind of important conversation, we'll like – she'll bring Natasha some bread – I can't eat gluten, so she can't bring me bread, but you know. And that's the extent of it. Like "how was your day? How was your day?" And then you just feel better. I don't know what it is.

Proud remarks about the child in conversations with friends or acquaintances were also interpreted as symbols of approval by Nina and Laura.²⁵ Nina, for example, pointed out that when she knew her dad had been gushing about her, it made her “feel good and loved.” Likewise, Laura spoke about her mom’s joy making connections between her children and “anyone literally between the ages of sixteen and forty, if you’re from Saskatoon, ‘Oh, do you know my kids?’ . . . it’s funny, like, she’s all – she’s very like, proud and likes to chat.” Finally, references were made to parents as generally “caring,” “sweet,” “soft,” “nurturing,” “comforting,” and “supportive” (9/15 participants), implying enduring capacities in communicating their love.

2.2.2 Emotional Support in Moments of Distress

Expressions of love and support also came through during times of distress. In these moments, parents helped participants to feel heard and understood, whether by listening to them, responding to their needs, or assuring them of their support. Eleven participants spoke about at least one of their parents providing comfort when they faced challenges in school, work, or romance (in total, this comprised 18 of the 27 parent-child pairs). For instance, Adison noted that her father had “held me when I’ve cried” after a break-up and Ria’s mom had helped her manage when work and stress became “too hard for me to balance.” For eight participants, a parent’s listening ear was appreciated when they were frustrated. Walter explained that this role was distinct from doling out guidance: “more like, just somebody to listen. Like yeah, she doesn’t really – I’m old enough to solve my own problems, so it’s just like I need to vent basically.” Laura made a similar observation with respect to her mother: “if it pertained to something specific, I’d usually go to the person who might be able to help me out the most and that sense? But . . . I’m sure like, if I was upset about something, like, just in general, I’d talk to her about it.” Some participants (Sylvia, Molly, Laura, and Grey) also identified appreciation for their parents’ care when ill, with Grey bringing details underscoring her mother’s responsiveness:

it’s not like I was like, “mom, do you have any medicine?” I just like, coughed or whatever and she’s like, “oh, here’s this, this, and this and I made you soup!” I don’t know, it’s just, she’s very nurturing. I think she’s just a caretaker. Yeah. But then she still

²⁵ This is not to say that parents’ pride always was interpreted as caring. Indeed, as I will briefly discuss in Chapter 4, two participants spoke about their estranged fathers publicly communicating esteem for the child but failing to show that esteem in their actions (i.e., by offering their love, guidance, or support generously).

finds time for herself. Like I don't feel like she's...sacrificing anything. It's just this very natural lovingness.

Once again, the “works of love” (Ricoeur, 2004/2005, p. 221) indicated above suggest an uncalculated benevolence attributed to many parents. Returning to the concept of care from the beginning of the chapter, Grey (like the majority of participants in this study) interprets her parent possessing qualities of “sympathy, empathy, sensitivity and responsiveness” essential to caregiving (Held, 2006, p. 10).

If it seems as though Grey was especially articulate about her mother's care, it is likely because this virtue was the primary reason Grey decided to move in with her. Roughly a year and a half before interviewing, Grey was struggling in a bad work environment and dealing with a drawn-out legal battle with an ex-partner who owed her money. She began to think about being near her mother, and “it started off as just like, a comforting thought,” and “then I think I was thinking it and saying it so much that Natasha sort of was like, ‘well yeah, let's just do it then.’” She called her mom, transferred to a new office, and she and her partner Natasha moved into her mother and step-father's house. Although Grey was feeling much better than before, she did not feel “fully back” to her former self and she was still benefitting from her mother's presence. In summary, check-ins, greetings, pet names, touches, chats, and physical presence assured the young adults of their parents' esteem and love.

Negative experiences of receiving emotional support were rare in the transcripts, but two darker sides of emotional attachment did emerge, described by three participants. First, Nina suggested that a parent's comforting role could be taken for granted. She explained that she had on occasion gone too far in demanding her mother's listening ear when she was upset:

N: It's kinda bad on me sometimes though. Like I can really kind of take advantage of it sometimes when I'm – like say I'm just having a horrr:::ible day, she's kind of like my safe space where I can just be like, “Blah blah blah blah blah blah.” And then afterwards I feel kinda bad.

KM: What do you feel bad about though?

N: That I've like vented all this stuff on her and that she's probably already had a really tough day at work. And probably picked up Ethan from daycare and had to deal with a five-year-old for a few hours. So and then I come home and I'm like, “La la la la la!” ((Laughs)) It's kind of...poor mommy ((laughs)).

Nina's remarks remind us of Kleinman's (2009) view that the care-receiver can provide caregivers with compassionate responses to their generosity. From Nina's perspective, it would not be wrong to vent to a parent, but it would be wrong to do so without consideration for the other's emotional life. In brief, Nina indicates a reciprocation of care towards her mother through her desire to accept care in a manner that recognizes her mother as a vulnerable human who, like herself, carries her own stresses and concerns in everyday life (Kleinman, 2009). While Nina might still struggle against this habit, her self-reflexivity offers some relief from her remorse about the lack of mutuality in some conversation. Through such moral evaluation, she reaffirms a commitment to being a more caring daughter and person.

The second dark side of parent's love was brought up by Jane, Kristine, and Grey, and concerned the vulnerability of losing their attachments. Both Kristine and Jane considered how they would fare after moving out of the parental home. Kristine explained of her home "it's my comfort zone and...it's what I've known for the last twenty-five years." In thinking about moving out, she wondered if she would feel like she was missing out on family activities, if she would feel lonely, or if she would find it too quiet. For her part, Jane questioned whether she would be prepared to "start my own world" and move out permanently (as opposed to temporarily, which she had done during her undergraduate degree): "Like if I eventually move out of their house, will I be so homesick that I won't be able to cope? That kind of thing." Both had plans to move out when they finished their schooling, but neither had a strong desire to live alone. Indeed, along with Ria and Molly, these participants confirmed their preference to live with others, whether because it made them feel safer (Kristine, Molly), because they were "family-oriented" people (Ria, Molly), or because it was less "sad" (Kristine) or "lonely" (Jane) compared to living alone. Understanding this general preference to live with others supports an interpretation that Kristine and Jane's doubts may issue more from uncertainty about finding a living arrangement that serves their aims and fulfills their emotional needs, as opposed to a fear of becoming separated from their parents.

Like Jane and Kristine, Grey also brought up change, but in relation to the loss of a parent. Initially defining what a parent was, she remarked that "being around both of them [her parents] just makes me feel like, calm and at peace and safe." I asked her what it was like to have that, and she replied:

G: It's neat to have people that can do that for you. But it's also scary, because then you just love them and you care for them so much and you know it.

KM: Yeah, and there's some danger involved?

G: Well like, what if? What if my mom – well like, my mom got hit by a car. And she didn't get hurt – it was like, it was going very slow and it just kind of like, knocked her over. But like, when she called me and she was so sad, and she was like, "I just got hit by a car." Oh my gosh, I just – it was the worst feeling.

Grey conveys not just that the loss of her parents' comfort would be devastating; her love for her parents (the providers of that love) would make losing them very painful. To summarize, a parent's love, affection, and attention produced positive experiences for young adults, but Grey, Jane, Kristine and Nina observed that such attachment implied emotional pain during those sequences of unbinding that were inevitable in life (Ricoeur, 2004/2005)

There were ten parents who were not described as being habitually involved in comforting young adults when they were feeling out of sorts. In five of these parent-child pairs, participants appeared to prefer to keep some distance between themselves and the parent in question. Reflecting this sentiment, Walter underscored a sense that such separation was normal and appropriate between him and his mother's boyfriend, stating that "it's not like I'm calling him dad. It would be fucking weird if I was." It is possible that this disposition was related to the fact that Walter had only known Ron as an adult and had not developed a strong emotional attachment to him (at least, not one that was as essential as that between him and his mother). Vincent's case was similar in the sense that having some emotional distance from his mother aligned with his preferences, since he found that his mom tended to over-react when he came to her with problems. He commented that, consequently, they did not exchange "kinda the emotional or like you know mother-son things or mother-child things that you're supposed to be talking about." He did, however, go to his older sister when he wanted someone to help him work through problems, since in his view, she was "more rational and calm ((laughs))." In two cases, it was not possible to discern any kind of evaluation from the participant about a lack of emotional support during troubled times. Laura said she talked more with her mom about her everyday ups and downs, whereas she and her dad related more in terms of their shared hobbies and interests. In her case, there was no judgment levelled at her father for playing this role; it appeared that her two parents simply divided different types of caregiving labor between them.

Finally, there was Keith, whose case was more ambiguous than the others. Keith preferred to keep his negative emotions to himself and said that “I don’t really talk to them if I have...school trouble or – if I’m...fighting with like a friend or my girlfriend, I don’t really talk to them about that.” In summary, participants did not always desire their parents’ support in validating or regulating their negative emotions, whether because they lacked the foundation for that kind of exchange, because another parent or sibling was already fulfilling that function, or because the young adult generally preferred to keep those experiences to themselves.

2.2.3 Challenges in the Communication of Parental Love and Affection

In 21 of the 27 parent-child relationships, it was evident that young adults received the types and levels of affection they desired. Not every parent was described as communicating every form of care, but as long as there was the kind of reassurance, acceptance, and support that young adults were seeking, this did not appear to be a problem. Distinct from these situations, in six parent-child dyads, the young adult expressed some lack of emotional support from their parent(s). Each of these participants hoped to close a gap between their relationship expectations and experiences, but with variations in whether they were taking action toward that aim (or felt it possible or necessary to do so).

Generally speaking, each of these participants had difficulty decoding their parents’ feelings of affection. Ria described a “gap” between her and her step-dad: a kind of guardedness between them that blocked him from expressing tenderness towards her. As she interpreted it, “it [is] more formal like there is a lack of emotional bonding. I would say. Like even if there is like he doesn’t show, so I don’t know.” Like Ria’s situation, Amber’s interactions with her parents also tended to be somewhat stiff, without many inquiries into how she was truly doing or what she was feeling. Multiple times, Amber referred to this dynamic as “weird” and “strange,” since she felt that most families had more open and intimate ways of relating with one another. Meanwhile, Keith had picked up on silent judgment from his mother related to his educational trajectory, which colored his sense of a secure relationship. He remarked that he wished his mother would just come out and state her concerns, because he did not know if or how he was letting her down (though he had his suspicions). Finally, Lois showed the greatest degree of strain caused by her parent’s lack of affective communication. With her mother only communicating to her over instant messaging and only about household tasks, Lois revealed a feeling of neglect. She described: “she doesn’t go out of her way to talk- talk to me. Or if she

does, it's over Facebook messenger and it's because the dogs ran out of food ((laughs)).” Overall, a parent's ambiguous or limited displays of affection appeared to diminish participants' evaluations of their relationships.

In addition to such challenges of affective communication, three participants felt that their parent(s) lacked an understanding of important dimensions of their lives. Though it would be unrealistic for parents to grasp all aspects of a child's life, what was crucial here was that from participants' views, parents were unfamiliar with their central life projects – activities that provided them with a positive sense of self. For example, Amber and Nina expressed disappointment that their parents knew so little about their programs of study. Nina described:

It's weird. My dad stopped talking to me about that kinda thing. Like he used to all the time ask me questions and...um, we were having family dinner like a while ago and he's like, “What's your thesis on?” And I was like, “You don't know what my thesis is?” ((Scoffs)) Like what? ((Laughs)).

While we cannot know whether her dad's obliviousness was feigned, real, or somehow exaggerated, Nina's reaction signalled that her dad's ignorance was hurtful. In a similar vein, Lois felt her mother did not appreciate the time and effort she invested in her craftwork – her primary hobby, an activity into which she invested “time and effort and blood, sweat and tears,” and a passion that connected her to others (through online forums and gifting her crafts). Recalling what she saw as a dismissive “that's nice” response to one of her pieces, Lois remarked: “I don't think she realizes all that's gone into it, and how proud of it I am.” Like Nina, Lois felt that she and her mom used “to talk quite a lot,” which added a dimension of grief to their changing experiences of the bond. In summary, these participants expected their parents to indicate their love and affection by showing interest in their most valued activities.

Whereas most participants wished for more overt shows of affection, Lois uniquely described experiences of being denied this form of love. Lois repeatedly mentioned her mother's last-minute invitations to family dinners, her shutting Lois out of important family conversations, and her mocking of Lois to family members and colleagues. Many affirmations of love and esteem mentioned by other participants were reversed in Lois' discourse. Other participants expressed how they were made to feel valued through their parents' inquiries about their lives; Lois described herself as the initiator of all conversations with her mother responding to her questions in the “fewest amount of words possible.” Other participants portrayed their parents'

presence as warm and reassuring; Lois stated she felt as though a “black cloud” hung over the home. Most extremely, Lois conveyed stories of being publicly ridiculed by her mother for shaving her legs as an adolescent, being incompetent in the kitchen, being clumsy, or being the “black sheep” in the family. Importantly, these stories were not told within a comedic genre, where the emotional weight of conflict might be lifted by acceptance within the extraordinary space of laughter (Ricoeur, 1990/1992). Instead, these stories were told with a tragic tone, where conflict was framed as irreconciled and even as “spiraling downward” (Frank, 2010, p. 143). In sum, Lois suffered from a perceived denial of regard from her mother – an experience of “un-belonging” encapsulated by her statement that “it’s been so long since... I felt... I dunno. Felt like I belonged there ((laughs)).” Her experiences affirm Ricoeur’s (2004/2005) view of humiliation as a form of disregard that opposes love as a form of recognition. In his words,

Humiliation, experienced as the withdrawal or refusal of such approbation, touches everyone at the prejudicial level of his or her “being-with” others. The individual feels looked down on from above, even taken as insignificant. Deprived of approbation, the person is as if nonexistent. (p. 191)

Further implications of this condition can be drawn out by considering Ricoeur’s (1992/2013) concept of the “tormentor.” As he outlines, the tormentor is someone who robs another person’s self esteem. In some cases, the construction of another person as a tormentor may be justified, but in other cases, that depiction can be a form of delirium or passion that takes on a life of its own, creating self-induced suffering. Ricoeur (1992/2013) states that when a complaint of suffering becomes passionate – that is, when the complaint involves an investment in an absolute – it becomes pathological. From a similar standpoint, Frank (2010) argues that stories become dangerous when they reduce complexity, and he identifies several characteristics of less-dangerous stories, including

openness to more stories; depiction of characters who acknowledge mistakes and work to set things right; making heroes of characters who cooperate; and giving antagonists names, faces, and purposes that cannot be immediately dismissed. Less-dangerous stories make the world and actions *more* complicated. (p. 159)

Without knowing her mother’s side of the story, Lois’ interpretation leaves few traces of motivations, identities, or actions that might stimulate the restoration of their bond.

In each of the six parent-child relationships I have outlined, the child hoped for a warmer bond in the future. Participants wished parents would be more supportive, whether in terms of giving them more attention (Lois), approval (Nina), clear direction (Keith), emotional connection (Ria), or emotional disclosure (Amber). However, there were differences in how participants were contending with these desires.

Both Lois and Keith were reluctant to confront their mothers, since they preferred to avoid the negative feelings that they anticipated would surface as a result. Keith remarked that he would “just get upset” if he brought up his mother’s ostensibly judgmental silence about his career track. For her part, Lois was considering signing up for counselling to address her difficult relationship with her mom, but was not sure whether she actually wanted to deal with it: “I just keep putting it off because I- I know what’s – it’s probably just gonna be like, ‘Oh, well you need to talk to her.’ ((laughs)) Well I know that! I just don’t want to.” In sum, Lois and Keith wanted more confidence in their relationships with their mothers, but were uncomfortable with the thought of initiating change through confrontation, which they expected would result in a reprimand or overt conflict. Rather than risking these negative outcomes, they committed to a careful and conservative approach – one that implied a kind of discomfort that was more manageable (they imagined) than an overt breach or expression of conflict.

A different orientation was described by Nina and Amber. Both had some faith that future conditions would improve the parent-child bond without active intervention. Amber hoped that when she moved out, her relationship with her parents would naturally become more communicative and open. She explained that when she had moved out previously for six months, she and her parents had begun to share more with one another, as if by magic: “I would go and like go to the house and actually sit down and chat with them- that was the only time that we did, but when we’re living together, we don’t do that! It’s so weird.” Amber also claimed that emotional disconnection was normal in her family, but when her parents’ friends or her boyfriend came over, the family became more expressive. These pieces of information suggest that within the household, family roles were rigid, but that outside of it (or when its boundaries were crossed by others) a space of possibility opened for family roles to change or expand. For her part, Nina expected that she and her father would become closer when she had finished graduate school:

I think once I finish and move out and get like a little bit more established that things will improve with my dad. I think right now he just wants to kinda keep his distance and not have it like be really weird. So I see our relationship growing and like getting – improving. And us getting closer, especially if I finish school. I feel ((laughs)) I feel like—I know it like sounds kinda conditional on his part, but I think that’s like really important to him. And right now he’s just like, “Let her work through all her stuff.”

A person might read this scenario as indicating the father’s control over Nina through the withholding of love; however, Nina herself anticipates and rejects such an interpretation. Instead, she projects a coinciding of her desires and her father’s desires for her. Until then, she affirms that she will retain a sensitivity to her father’s concerns while straying true to herself and her life plans.

Unlike the previous four participants, Ria felt she was taking direct action to address the emotional distance in her relationship with her stepfather. After taking courses in psychology, she felt more attuned to the challenges her stepfather encountered in joining the family (ten years ago) after she and her mother had been a close-knit, two-person unit for 14 years. Equipped with this broader framework for interpretation, she was trying to open up to her stepdad at the time of interviewing: “since I understand that probably he would be like, he would feel awkward too, so like I try to initiate any kind of conversation, I try to break that ice.” For Ria, remedying her bond with her stepfather was uniquely served by her new and useful conceptual framework for thinking about social relationships. In a way, Ria’s situation opposes that of Lois: whereas Lois suffered from a limited interpretation of her mother-child bond, Ria acquired a wealth of new narrative resources from the psychological field that stimulated moral deliberation and action, empowering her in her bond with her stepdad.

2.2.4 Synthesis

As this section has shown, a variety of parental actions supported participants’ recognition of themselves as worthy of love and esteem. Nearly all participants (14/15) were able to interpret themselves this way by observing their parents’ inquiries about their lives, greetings, terms of endearment, affectionate touches, physical presence, and compassion in times of illness or distress. Such practices were described as informing and transforming participants’ phenomenological experience, whether in terms of restoring relationships between the self and body (e.g., helping them to recover from illness or injury and legitimizing their suffering),

between themselves and their parents (i.e., confirming and strengthening their attachment to one another), or between themselves and broader institutions and social worlds (i.e., witnessing their stresses and successes about their work lives, social lives, etc.). In affirming and restoring such relations between self and world, diverse expressions of care could be read as empowering. Although three participants did reflect on the emotional toll of separation from parents, their remarks did not appear to imply an incapacity to be alone, but rather appeared to indicate a preference to live with others and a practical understanding that the dialectic of binding and unbinding within close ties has an emotional toll (Ricoeur, 2004/2005).

Contrasting with popular concerns about the over-abundance of parental emotional support offered to young adults, the most negative experiences recounted here centered on a perceived insufficiency of care or ambiguous communication of care. Concerning the latter, five participants described gaps or uncertainties about their parents' expressions of regard. Uniquely, the difficult experiences of Lois provide insight into the suffering associated with a nearly totalizing sense of neglect. Together, these six cases also highlighted a range of approaches in coping with ambiguous or insufficient shows of affection. Framing the story from only one perspective, Lois' narrative about her mother-daughter bond was finalizing, offering few courses of action in service of a happy ending. Keith similarly lacked an interpretive framework for understanding his mother's quiet judgment and opted for the discomfort of avoidance over the discomfort of direct confrontation. Opposing these scenarios, Ria's engagement with new narrative resources offered her new forms of intelligibility, motivation, and confidence to act on her formal bond with her dad (Frank, 2010). Somewhere between these two extremes, Amber and Nina did not construct themselves as avoiding or taking responsibility to improve their emotional connections to their parents; instead, both anticipated that changing circumstances in their lives (finishing school, moving out) would naturally improve their parent-child bonds. In sum, moral evaluations regarding a lack or ambiguity of affectionate love were best tolerated when participants were able to think through them using at least two stories (Frank, 2010).

2.3 Parents as Providers of Practical Help

Without exception, participants represented their parents as providing them with practical help. This care-giving role was assigned to every parent, with variations in the degrees and types of help provided. Furthering or supplementing participants' efforts toward many worthy projects, care in the form of practical help was described in five major forms: 1) the shared household, 2)

financial support, 3) the performance of household chores, 4) caretaking of pets, and 5) caretaking of children. Since each of these forms of practical support held unique significance, I will describe them separately before moving to a more general discussion about feelings and responses toward receiving practical support.

2.3.1 Sharing the Home

Most participants viewed the shared household as a form of practical support, in that its economic benefits promoted their pursuits of many projects and desires. Indeed, 12 of 15 described the shared living arrangement as helping them out financially, with variations in the role it played. Paying little or no rent made it easier for them to hold onto the money they earned (as was discussed by eight participants), whether it kept them from going into debt (Vincent, Walter, Molly), from going into more debt (Adison, Sylvia, Jane, Kristine), or from withdrawing long-term savings (Iris). For each of these participants, debt was perceived negatively. Sylvia put forward this common view, which was often shared by parents:

KM: And... what makes you debt-averse? In that way, like, uh, why would it not be worth it to go into – into massive debt, as you say, to live independently?

S: Well, ((sighs)) because it's so hard to get out of it. And then it like, affects your future pretty good, like, you know like if your credit is really bad it makes it hard to get your own place, it makes it hard to, I think, even like get a car or even like if your credit's really bad you can't even get a phone. Like it's just, it makes all these like, road blocks basically.

KM: Mmhmm.

S: It makes your life that much harder.

In other words, debt was depicted as a source of disempowerment, blocking a person's capacity to pursue specific goals like homeownership (Sylvia), car ownership (Sylvia), job mobility (Vincent), mental well-being (Adison), or financially supporting parents in their elderly years (Adison). The loss of agency associated with acquiring debt was perhaps best summed up by Adison: "I don't want to be that girl that's in debt forever and can't do anything and is just like beyond help, you know." Her desire not to be "suffocated" by debt attested to the view of debt as compromising aspirations for the future.

For many participants, the benefits of living at home were also tied to their preparation for a meaningful role in the work market. That is, ten participants remarked that by saving them

money, their living arrangement facilitated their educational attainment. At the time of interviewing, these participants viewed post-secondary education as a steppingstone towards fulfilling and secure work. According to them, post-secondary education would provide a pathway to a position that offered financial security (described by 5 participants), continuing professional development and on-the-job learning (4 participants), a community of colleagues (Adison), and fulfilling work activities (8 participants). These activities included working with animals (Lois, Jane, Laura, Adison), helping people with substance use disorders (Walter), engaging with literature (Keith, Iris), traveling (Sylvia), and making high stakes financial decisions (Vincent).

The pursuit of meaningful work was a goal that propelled participants forward and brought value to their shared accommodation; at the same time, Jane, Keith, and Molly acknowledged the uncertainty around reaching their career goals. Jane explained:

you know what you're doing, you have these dreams of getting to the peak and then like sometimes these negative thoughts just come like, "what if I never become this, what if I never become that" and I'm just like, at this level, just barely getting by. Well you're working right but it's just ok but what if I don't become this that I want. Like, which is way up there. And I feel like this is the only expectation that scares me sometimes.

These fears underlined the high stakes of her pursuit – stakes that were not just her own but were also shared by her parents. Like Jane, Keith and Lois also raised concerns about their degrees potentially being a "waste" of time or money. Keith, who was finishing his final term of his undergraduate degree, was feeling jaded, stressed out, and a little helpless thinking about his future, having no idea what job he would get or how he would use his degree toward a career. Coming from a different position, Lois had upgraded high school courses and had just received news of her acceptance into university – news that was both uplifting but also daunting:

L: I'm excited but I'm really really nervous. Just because like, you know, what if it's really not what I thought it would be or if it's way too much work or, you know, I fail out or...then I'll just feel like it was all for nothing.

KM: Mmhmm.

L: And then I'll be in even more debt ((laughs)).

As these participants emplotted themselves into a series of contradictory stories about their futures and carried out maneuvers directed at desirable ends, they also made themselves

vulnerable to the unpredictable and open-ended nature of human action (Good, 1994; Mattingly, 2014). With no guarantee that they will achieve what they set out to do, the future remained open and uncertain. Simultaneously, it is the pursuit of the good – and the stakes and risks that come with such striving – that grants a person their selfhood; as Taylor (1989) writes, “We are only selves insofar as we move in a certain space of questions, as we seek and find an orientation to the good” (p. 34, as cited in Mattingly, 2014). Paradoxically, by offering the security of their home, parents emboldened young adults’ in their uncertain quests toward moral becoming and, therefore, the development of selfhood.

Besides promoting their educational and career trajectories, the financial benefits of living at home were also understood as reducing financial stress, accessing a more comfortable lifestyle, and building savings. Five participants remarked that the shared home made it easier to make ends meet. Iris, who was finishing graduate school and working very few hours a month, remarked: “I mean it would be much more stressful for me to still be paying rent without having the income. I mean the income that I’ve got right now barely pays for my cellphone bill.” Amber, Molly, Sylvia and Laura emphasized how not having to pay rent allowed them to travel. Travel, for these women, was a means of expanding social networks, understanding other cultures, engaging in new activities, and challenging themselves. In sum, travel was conceptualized as a way of transcending their current selves and worlds. Lois, Iris, and Laura stated that living at home allowed them access to a pet-friendly environment that otherwise would have been prohibitively expensive. Importantly, caring for these animals granted them a sense of responsibility through paying vet bills, purchasing food, tending to the animal’s needs, and looking out for their well-being. In addition, the animals were sources of joy and interest, affectionately slobbering on them when they arrived home, calling on them to escape homework and go for a walk, and drawing family members together in storytelling (Frank, 2010; Mattingly 2014). In these ways, participants conveyed that their pets allowed them to be happier, more generous, more responsible people. The same three participants who were motivated by pet ownership (Lois, Iris, and Laura) also accessed more living space and privacy by living at home. Whether in terms of a space for craft projects (Lois), an office for doing homework (Laura), or a large enough space to “stay sane” (Iris), each valued the square footage offered by the family home that would have been prohibitively costly to acquire on their own. Iris and Laura added that if they had chosen the alternative to living with parents – living with a friend or in residence

– they would be deprived of the private space they treasured. In brief, the shared home afforded these participants a more comfortable lifestyle compared to paying for their own place. A small number of participants (three – Amber, Molly, and Laura) had even accumulated savings by living at home. Amber outlined a common understanding of living at home (for now) as a straightforward financial choice: “like the fact that I can save as much money – I can save pretty much almost all the money that I’m making, so it’s just like I have that opportunity, why wouldn’t I take it?”

To summarize, the majority of participants (12/15) described themselves benefitting financially from living at home. This translated into their lives in unique ways, where they variously aimed sought out comfortable lifestyles, tranquility, material security, or gratifying work (both in the public sphere and private/domestic sphere). In other words, by saving on many basic necessities, participants accessed social roles and experiences that would have otherwise been inaccessible.

Seven participants indicated discomfort knowing their parents made sacrifices to allow them to live in the home. Some participants recognized and felt remorseful over the fact that their parents were excited to downsize (Sylvia, Keith) or get a second dog (Walter), but were waiting for them to move out before doing so. Lois, Iris, and Ria said they wished they were in a financial position to contribute more to the household. And for her part, Nina felt bad that she was now occupying one of her dad’s favorite leisure spots in the home:

I know he likes watching his Netflix series and stuff at night, like Sons of Anarchy he’ll like watch stuff like that. I know he used to watch it in the basement and he’s like telling me “this is the best spot to watch it” and it’s like... I- I know he didn’t mean to make me feel bad, he was just kind of like oh this is like, “appreciate this.” But it kind of did make me feel bad... like “I’m sorry I took it away from you” ((laughs)).

In brief, these participants were aware of their parents’ desires and how their acceptance of housing support negatively impacted them.

Reflections on parental sacrifice and generosity were also implied in participants’ reassurances to themselves that they were not, in fact, taking advantage of their parents. Many of these arguments focused on the parents’ indications of suffering or contentment. Seven participants found reassurance in the fact that their parents had never mentioned being unhappy with their presence in the house and five participants stated that they knew their parents were not

struggling financially. As a contrasting example, when asked whether her parents' resources were part of the reason she felt comfortable living at home rent-free, Nina stated that her parents' financial well-being was less significant compared to the value they placed on family: "I wouldn't say that like 'oh it's nothing to them' or 'it's just a dip.' I think it's a pretty big sacrifice and I think it's a big part of like how they decided to:: live their life." In other words, Nina clarified that her parents' absolute financial situation mattered less than their high prioritization of family. Reassurances of non-exploitation were also grounded in references to participants' courteous treatment of parents and financial independence. Six participants remarked that they did not add considerably to their parents' bills, which made them feel better about staying at home. The same number of participants also took pride in the fact that their parents paid for virtually none of their personal bills, and that they were doing what they could to be financially independent. Jane, for example, remarked how this helped to alleviate some of the guilt of living at home:

and that's why I try to make up for that by not feeling guilty or bad and not like letting it get to me. I make sure I help my parents, I make sure I don't ask them for anything financially, right? Like it's only – it's fair that I'm living with them because I'm in school and I'm paying my tuition and so I try to make myself feel good for that and make sure I help them out with bills in the house and I'm not just like living with them and not doing anything.

While observing that, in Canada, her situation violates assumptions about the life course, Jane legitimizes coresidence through her treatment of her parents within that situation, which is good and right from her perspective. Other participants made a point of noting that they tried to spend a significant amount of time housesitting (therefore freeing up space in the home), that they had inquired with parents about generating additional costs, or that they did not "take advantage" of the situation as had their siblings. For example, Laura recounted how when her brother lived at home (as a young adult), he would go into the deep freezer and take lobster tails and crab legs for "Tuesday lunch for himself," whereas she understood that those items were intended for special occasions. Kristine, Sylvia, Lois, Iris and Ria reasoned that their free living situation was non-exploitive by pointing to their limited financial resources. Iris stated that in some of her "lavish" gift-giving, she tried to recognize her mother's generosity. Finally, Vincent and Keith spoke

about how they helped out with household chores, which made them feel better about living rent-free with their parents.

In summary, participants legitimized their living situation by appealing to observations of their parents' conditions: their overt satisfaction or dissatisfaction, financial situations, and their values around family. Simultaneously, some referred to their own actions spurred by knowledge of their parents' sacrifices and generosity. They stressed that they took initiative when possible, minimized the burdens they posed on their parents, and showed recognition through gift-giving (a topic I will return to shortly). Altogether, most participants constructed themselves and their parents as violating normative expectations surrounding the life course; however, their moral evaluations of the goodness or rightness of personally accepting parental housing support relied more on practical wisdom that took stock of everyday circumstances, motivations, interactions, and relationships. Critical among these was their capacity to recognize their parents' sacrifices and contributions and act in a way that expressed such recognition (i.e., through courtesy, paying for what they could, offering tokens of gratitude, and checking their assumptions about their parents' abilities to obtain what they needed and valued).

2.3.2 Providing Financial Support

In addition to the many savings inherent to the shared household, some participants also described receiving direct financial transfers from parents. All fifteen of the participants' parents were paying the household bills of water, heat, electricity, cable, internet, and home insurance (the exception here being Molly, who paid the internet bill). Fourteen of the fifteen participants were living rent-free, with Grey being the only one paying rent. Iris had paid rent until recently, but since her research funding had expired, her mother was giving her a break from this expense. In addition, four participants had paid symbolic rent when they were previously living at home, but not working or engaged in educational pursuit (between one and roughly five years ago). I say that this rent was "symbolic" because the money had been returned (or would be returned) to participants, making it less like providing rent to a homeowner and more like a means of cooperatively encouraging the child's savings behaviors. Ten participants said their parents paid for most of the groceries, whereas five purchased their own. Finally, thirteen participants paid their own cell phone bills and two participants' parents paid them.

Eight participants described their parents as helping them out financially, with all eight participants assigning this role to both of their parents (Keith, Amber, Molly, Nina, Sylvia,

Keith) or their single mothers (Walter and Lois). Four participants stated that they had received help from their parents paying tuition, whether parents were paying for all of the child's tuition (Keith), paying most of the child's tuition (Amber), or paying tuition for one or two terms (Molly and Walter). Costs of textbooks (Keith and Sylvia), daycare (Nina), cell phone plans (Sylvia and Keith), and vehicle registration (Nina) were the other purchase categories mentioned as being paid for by parents. Only some of these were discussed in any detail. Lois alone spoke about borrowing money for online shopping – a topic that I will return to later in this chapter.

Pride, privilege, and social change variously surfaced in participants' discussions of tuition support. Molly and Walter described their pride in accessing parental help in only a supplementary way. Both had paid for most of their degrees by working part-time during the school year and full-time during summer months. Walter expressed his pride in funding his own education every term except his last one, when his summer position was terminated and he could not find sufficient work. Similarly, Molly's choice to accept minimal financial support was one that lent her a sense of agency:

I chose to pay for my own tuition and like, I chose to like, I don't know, pay the bills.

Like, I don't have to, because I know they can support us, but at the same time, seeing them work so hard it uh... made me want to help out in any way I could, I guess?

Molly's choice to pay her own tuition was not only an emblem of self-respect; it was also a symbol of her affiliation with the family value of hard work (a topic I discuss in detail in the next chapter). Molly's discourse highlights her awareness of having the privilege to choose to contribute financially, which in turn implies an appreciation of her parents' support. Awareness of such privilege was also brought up by Keith and Amber, whose parents had paid for all or virtually all of their undergraduate degrees. Though neither spoke at length about this topic, each acknowledged that they had received financial help as a privilege and not as a right. As Keith explained, "I kind of get that it's - they don't have to do this." Likewise, Amber confessed that "not everyone gets that opportunity."

Digging further into this topic, Amber uniquely identified a contrast between the support she was getting from her parents and the support they had received from their own parents at her age. She spoke admiringly about her parents' work ethic and initiative, stressing her parents' willingness to adapt to social and economic change:

A: I think that they – or my dad even, and my mom – just were very different in that they paid for everything themselves and were umm I don't know, super hardworking and they had no one to fall back on really. . . .

KM: Mmhmm. Do you think that they...had it easier or had it just as hard, but worked harder?

A: I think that in certain aspects they might have had it easier, but they worked a lot harder. U:::m, I mean there were a lot more jobs available then and they kind of just...I don't know I think my dad kind of just fell into that and...got lucky. But he did work very hard and like I admire that he paid for all of his own school and like moved out when he was 16 and figured that out, but someone moving out when they're 16 today, I don't think could even like hardly sustain themselves.

Amber distinguished the worlds that she and her parents grew up in – worlds with different expectations of young adults, different economic realities, and different relationships between parents and children. Although she did criticize her parents for being too easy on her brothers, she praised her parents' adaptability in raising children in the new world, stating: "I appreciate that they are very understanding and that they're still supporting my brothers and I into our adult life. Umm, even though they never had that themselves." In brief, her views signal appreciation for her parents' "empathic imagination" (Kleinman, 2009, p. 293) in witnessing and responding to vulnerabilities her parents did not encounter as young adults.

Of all participants, Nina was receiving the greatest degree of financial help, accessing parental support for tuition, childcare, vehicle registration, trips, and (in the recent past) legal fees. In contrast to the previous participants, Nina identified feelings of self-consciousness related to such help, though she ultimately accepted it as a form of parental care. Discomfort with financial support was related to three specific social situations. First, the car she drove was registered in her mom's name, which she felt was "a little too much." On one hand, she mused that it was "so weird" being "35 years old to have my mom's name [on the registration]." However, when we dug deeper into the topic, it seemed that it was not so much the practical nature of the support that mattered, but rather that the car did not exactly express her personality. I asked her to clarify whether her discomfort was because she was no longer handling this expense. She responded:

N: Well it's kind of like a car is like personal right. Like it's like you kind of like, it says something about you, like the kind of car you drive . . . my cars have always reflected my personality kind of? And same with like my dad he has like, he always had kinda like sporty kinda like masculine cars and my mom had like the kind of hippie vans -

KM: Mmm.

N: And then I always had like the kind of like Volvo-y kind of old Acura... and now I'm driving my mom's Subaru kind of style and it feels just like... it's not even so much like that it's the money part but it just is like, it's not mi::ne.

A second source of tension related to financial support surfaced in her romantic life. She mentioned the awkwardness of telling her romantic partner that she received help from her parents. Making this more challenging was her partner's background of economic hardship, which contrasted starkly with her own privilege. Here again, it did not seem that accepting financial support itself was the issue, but rather that her romantic interest had initially misread her situation, assuming that, as a single mother, she was in a financially vulnerable position. She explained that this had largely been worked out now and the two had reached a common understanding about her financial position:

I am very like egalitarian when we go out. It's like I pay for this meal now he paid for the next meal, now it's my turn and this and at first he was like "no no let me do it, like-" and I think he made a comment when we first met each other like "no no like you work hard, you're a single mom, like I can get this, it's no problem" and I was like... I didn't want to tell him like "I probably have more money than you do" ((laughs)) . . . he had to figure it out for himself. I didn't really explicitly tell him like "actually I have this much in my bank account right now" ((laughs)).

As a final dimension layering Nina's understandings of financial support, Nina indicated that in the past her father had insisted on her and her sister accepting it:

N: The only like little... not really fights, but like kind of like where he's gotten a little annoyed with me is where like I... when I was trying to do it on my own and he wanted to help and I didn't want him to and he's like ((whispers)) "ugh" . . . "no I set this all up for you guys. Like you have to let me do this."

KM: Mmm.

N: Um... Which was okay, fine.

Again, Nina's use of the past tense here suggests that this is no longer a source of tension between the two of them, in that she is accepting her parents' help (potentially related to her situation as a single parent). Corroborating this interpretation is a contrast she makes between her sister and herself regarding the legitimacy of each of their approaches to parental financial support:

N: the last three years I think she has said no...to any help, which is fine. That's her decision.

KM: Mmm.

N: Versus like I'm like, "Yeah okay!" . . . And I think I can understand that, just like wanting to see how you can do independently 'cause we have been like so privileged and it's so easy for us really. So I can see that.

In empathizing with her sister's position – as well as hinting at a change in her own approach to parental financial support, Nina underscored the importance of considering particular settings, motivations, and needs when evaluating the legitimacy of financial support. Her remarks also reveal the dynamic nature of appropriate caregiving actions across time; whereas at some point in the past, she was trying to build some financial independence, in the present, this was not her priority. Indeed, her negative experiences of financial support are triggered by external sources of discomfort more than by internal ones. She herself seems to be at peace accepting financial support from her parents, knowing that they are in a position to give it and that they – especially her dad – gain something in the process of giving it. As she described of her father, "that's like how he always shows his love with money but it's not like he's just giving us money, he's like... ((softly)) "hey you miss surfing like let's go buy a surf boat" ((laughs))." Each of these facets that Nina brings up seems to support a broader interpretation that, for her, there is no set amount of financial support that would be uncomfortable or endanger her self-esteem; given that material survival was not a concern for her family, the issue was more whether financial exchange occurred in a way that recognized her identity and desires (and, as we saw, this was both true of her exchange relationship with her father and her romantic partner). Once again, this brings us back to the notion that caregiving occurs in relation to a "particular" other person with whom one is in a caring relation (Held, 2006).

A final theme of financial support centered on a conflict between Lois and her mother. As I describe elsewhere in this chapter, Lois often constructed her mom as absent and even

disinterested. The reasons for this were a mystery to me at first, but as we continued our interviews, I discovered that in the past, Lois had borrowed money from her mom and failed to pay it back. We explored together whether this was at the root of their disconnect:

L: I mean obviously I did something that upset her. And she's just not telling me what it is. So I've racked my brain over ideas as to what it coulda been. But... I- I think it's just that...

KM: So what... do you just have a lot of different ideas about it? Or do you have like, a top- a top 3 things it might be? Or? ((laughs))

L: ((laughs)) U:m, one of them would be that I- I quit – 'cause she plays Final Fantasy 11, and then I used to play, and then I just kind of... stopped.

KM: Right. You mentioned that.

L: But my brother used to play too and then he quit too, but yet she still... talks to him, so I'm thinking that can't be it.

KM: Ok.

L: And then there was the: – I borrowed some money from her once or twice, that I still owe her for... ((laughs)) (it's been?) quite a while. Which I think is probably what it is.

KM: Mm.

L: But I still intend to pay her back, it just hasn't happened. But I just wish she would come out and say it as opposed to the silent treatment for... who knows how long.

KM: So you guys haven't talked about it for a long time? Like since you borrowed it?

L: Yeah.

KM: Ok. ((laughs))

L: Which I think it's what the nature is, is just... the whole: not saying anything definitely isn't helping the situation.

KM: Mmhmm.

L: Like I don't think she'd throw me out because of it – because obviously if she was going to, she would've by now. But I don't know. Worst case scenario I think it would just be... an evening of being upset over it.

KM: Do you ever [think of-]

L: [Where]- where now I can just kind of push it down. And not think about it.

KM: Yeah. So do you find yourself, like, procrastinating... uh, repaying her for: the loan? Or?

L: I wouldn't say procrastinating, it's just... I'm... I tend to spend a lot of money and not realize how much it is. So then it's just – I know I need to pay her back and I plan to, it's just... I'm buying useless things that is: prolonging it.

In this excerpt, Lois points to the possibility for gift-giving to go wrong. Drawing on Ricoeur's (2004/2005) conceptualization of the phenomenology of gift-giving, at least three issues could be at play (and since we only have one person's perspective – and not a lot of remarks on it – some imagination and theorization is required to consider how dysfunction might have appeared in the gift-giving process). First, the nature of this exchange itself may have been differently constructed by both parties. Ricoeur (2004/2005) writes that gift-giving occurs when someone gives without an expectation of return; by contrast, money-lending generating profit belongs to the marketplace. Lending money without requiring interest may fall somewhere in between the two, since repayment is expected but there is generosity in the forfeiture of interest payments and the accrual of opportunity costs. At the outset, Lois and her mother may have implicitly disagreed about the symbolic meaning of this creative exchange type and the consequences of repayment failure: Lois may have viewed the loan as more akin to marketplace exchange (where failure to repay holds only a utilitarian consequence, creating an accumulation of individual debt) while Lois' mother may have viewed the loan as a form of gift-giving (where the gift holds weight as a symbol of the bond between the parties). Regardless of how the loan was initially perceived, if we assume that the loan held gift-like features (being generous, freely given, and representative of a social bond), then the absence of gratitude on Lois' part (represented by her squandering of the money) might have triggered in her mother a felt lack of appreciation. Moreover, if both Lois and her mother currently are cognizant that this violation has taken place (which seems to be the case) then both may find it painful or impossible to acknowledge the breakdown of mutual recognition symbolized by their dysfunctional gift-giving process, since the entire purpose of gift-giving is to cultivate and nourish mutual trust through the absence of rules or calculation. Finally, there is the intersection of caregiving and gift-giving to consider; whereas Lois' mom provided her a loan, Lois admits that she is not handling her money ideally at present: “theoretically, I should be saving money. Whereas, I'm just... ((laughs)) blowing it on silly things.” Given that many parents provide financial support to propel their children's

important life projects, it may be that Lois' mother is disappointed in her daughter's incapacity to take responsibility for her financial situation and may even feel complicit in her irresponsibility, given that she has provided her rent-free lodging and loans in the past. Paradoxically, the silence between them suggests a shared awareness of their incapacity to find mutuality. Whereas most instances of practical support were constructed positively by participants, this is one instance where we are permitted a glimpse at the possible challenges within the symbolic and relational universe of financial support.

I have identified some of the experiences of the four participants receiving support for their education. Participants who did not receive such support all accepted their situation without faulting their parents, though Adison did feel "a little bit mad" at her parents for this:

A: I almost felt it was irresponsible of my parents to bring me into this world and then not set up some sort of education fund for me, like, did you think I was just gonna do high school and that was it? Like ((laughs))

KM: Yeah, yeah.

A: You know? And even if I had, like, have something there so I could pursue something else if I wanted, y'know? Like even... a little bit would have helped.

Her resentment connected to a deeper sense that her parents had failed her as financial role-models, neither providing her with post-secondary savings nor guiding her towards sound financial choices. While she admitted that she could not "put all the blame on them," she wished her parents could have had more foresight when it came to their financial parenting. She explained that her parents had experienced a lot of money problems: spending "willy-nilly," having to sell their home because they were house poor, lacking enough credit to buy airplane tickets, being in "a lot" of debt, etc. In sum, Adison's wish to have received more financial support was not only about the monetary value of that support; it was also related to her experience of her parents' failure to impart financial skills (a topic I will develop more fully in the next chapter). At the time of interviewing, Adison was severely in debt, stating that her line of credit had become "a huge, um, issue in my life now" to the point that she was considering filing for bankruptcy. Undeniably, the anguish at being in such a financial position informed the significance of parental financial support in her life, both as tangible assistance and as transmitted guidance. Still, Adison's feelings of injustice were tempered by a recognition that her parents were never given money for school and had little to spare when they were raising her:

A: I don't think it means you're a shit parent if you don't provide for an education after high school. Like, I don't think my parents are bad parents for not doing that for them- for me. Y'know? So. I mean their parents didn't do it for them and that's just how... it was, y'know? And-

KM: Yeah, [right.]

A: We did live paycheck to paycheck growing up, so it's not like they could.

Identifying her parents' material circumstances and the cultural norms of the time, Adison partially excuses them from the responsibility of her current financial position. Her observation and legitimization of their approach underscores yet another way in which the care-receiver (or would-be care-receiver) retains agency: the agency of judging parents' capacities for support with a consideration for practical circumstances as opposed to universal standards. Moreover, a responsible self is expressed through her recognition of her own accountability for her current financial situation, saying that "part of it's school which was unavoidable if I wanted to further my education. But like a good I'd say 40% of it is just me being dumb with money. So like it's kinda my fault that I'm in this much debt." In line with this, she affirmed that she was now confronting her debt situation head-on, and carrying out actions that aligned with this acceptance of her own responsibility (e.g., following her finances closely, budgeting, etc.).

2.3.3 Household Chores

Beyond putting "a roof over my head" (Amber), parents were depicted as supporting young adults through their help around the house. All participants stated that they carried out chores like pet care, yardwork, laundry, dishes, and bedroom-cleaning, yet they also acknowledged their roles as beneficiaries of their parents' household labor. In several circumstances, logics of reciprocity informed discourses about household work, but I will save the discussion of reciprocity discourses for Chapter 5 (Parents as Roommates). For the moment, I wade into participants' understandings of the asymmetrical nature of household chores and the benefits they glean from this unequal distribution of labor. The household tasks that were constructed as asymmetrically distributed included parents cooking most suppers (12 of 15 participants), doing the majority of the cleaning (13 participants), doing most household repairs (11 participants), managing yard work (7 participants), maintaining vehicles (3 participants), and laundering household (as opposed to personal) items (3 participants).

According to participants, parents' contributions to domestic chores largely fell along gendered lines. Mothers tended to do the cleaning and cooking, and fathers tended to do household repairs, car maintenance, yard work, and supplementary cooking (for example, when mothers were sick or when the father was barbecuing outdoors). As exceptions to this trend, two participants noted that their fathers did the household cooking. In both cases, work schedules informed this reversal of roles: Amber's father tended to work night shifts, so it fell to him to make dinner and Kristine's father was recently retired, so he tended to make dinner, buy groceries, and prepare lunches for the family.

Mothers were often constructed as organizers of the household. Participants commented that "she puts the house together" (Jane) and "she is the one that, kind of (2) like makes the home and everything" (Molly). Indeed, half of the young adults described their mothers as preoccupied with duties toward others, always finding ways to cook, clean, baby-sit, or care for friends and family in one way or another. As examples, they described, "she's kind-hearted, goes out of her way for everyone" (Kristine); "she always gives to other people" (Nina); and "she supports everyone in every way" (Molly). This do-it-all maternal figure was identified by Keith in the following excerpt, where he locates this special role within his family mythology:

she's kind of turning into my grandma. Like when I'm making supper or something she'll ask if she can help. "No I got it." "Okay, I'll just make this for you." She can never sit down when we're eating. She has to make sure everyone's got something. So we call her Violet a lot cause that was my Grandma's name.

The sociologist Marcel Mauss (1938/1985) famously described how in American North-Western tribal societies, spirits would be perpetuated through the giving of names. In addition, such names would change as individuals moved through different stages of life. In Keith's family, the use of the grandmother's name highlights how parental caregiving practices are not isolated or idiosyncratic, but rather are transmitted and adapted across generations.

Interestingly, no males were associated with the going-out-of-their-way, self-sacrificing caregiver figure, leading to several possible interpretations. First, it may be that fathers were less occupied with the caretaking duties, leading participants to construct them in alternative ways (i.e., as the complementary breadwinners of the family, as some participants stated). As a second possibility, fathers' contributions may not have been as visibly or directly related to young adults' well-being, making this work less recognizable. Participants were much more likely to

identify the benefit of a home-cooked meal as compared to, for instance, a repaired roof or fixed cabinet. Third, within the participants' sociocultural contexts, there may have been a lack of narrative resources (Frank, 2010) for imagining and describing fathers as family-oriented and devoted individuals. Along these lines, Wall and Arnold (2007) have claimed that even in contemporary representations, mothers are more often depicted as primary caregivers, while fathers are portrayed as only "part-time or secondary parents whose parental responsibilities fit around their employment responsibilities" (p. 523). In all likelihood, multiple forces were informing the gendered patterns I observed in the participants' discourses and stories, and certainly, it could be valuable to conduct more detailed research on how gendered roles are reaffirmed or subverted in this contemporary family form.

While on the topic of gender and household labor, I should state that participants also perceived discrepancies in the quantity of household work performed by their mothers, fathers, and themselves. I asked participants to describe to me how much time each member of the family spent performing household work and their responses pointed to generational and gendered inequalities. Nine of the fifteen participants stated that their mothers spent more time on housework than anyone in the house; three participants stated that mothers and fathers spent roughly equal time and that they – the participant – spent less time; two participants (both daughters of single mothers) said they spent about equal time on household work as their mothers, but that their mothers did slightly more; finally, one participant said that her dad did the most, followed by her mom, and then her. Generally, then, parents were represented as doing more work than young adults and with mothers tending to pick up the slack in situations of labor imbalance. Though most participants did not negatively judge this asymmetrical system, three participants (Sylvia, Ria, and Adison) did criticize the gender imbalance as old-fashioned, with one explicitly stating that she would endeavor to disrupt this pattern in her future household, where she would have greater authority to determine the organization of the household and depart from traditional norms.

Aside from this critique of the gendered division of labor around the house, participants generally stressed the benefits of parents carrying out much of the housework. All saw the value in a generally clean home, even if disagreements occurred about how clean was ideal (a topic I explore in depth in the next chapter). For instance, Walter noted that "I don't like being surrounded by filth" and, speaking to the latter point, Sylvia remarked: "I get the cleanliness

thing that makes sense to me but like clutter and stuff I'm like 'ehhhh.' So sometimes I think her standards are a little high." Several participants (6/14) said that with parents doing most of the work, they were better able to focus on schoolwork. Laura described:

with school and everything right now, I am very busy. And I have other things going on. So... like, the way I see it, what's the point of having my own place and having to like, maintain and upkeep and all that.

Some of the other student participants also identified times in which parents had excused them or allowed them to put off cleaning when they had a deadline or test looming. Such flexibility and generosity on the parents' part communicated their fluency with participants' worlds and stakes, and their willingness to support their moral priorities through their labor. As Molly explained, "she knows that we need to put our time and effort into other things. So, in a way she sees it as actually helping us out when she does more of the household work." Such cases suggest a shared narrative, project, and aim between parents and children regarding the value of post-secondary education.

Student participants and non-student participants also legitimized their parents' higher household burdens in other ways. Nearly all participants (12/15) did so by referring to their parents as uniquely qualified and willing to handle specific tasks, such as home repairs, cooking, weeding, or optimizing the internet. Lois highlighted this in discussing household repairs: "She usually ends up doing it just because...I don't know. I don't know if ((laughs)) she would trust me to ((laughs)) be honest!" Similarly, Walter felt that were he and his brother to cook, "it would be like, you know, mac and cheese. Chicken fingers or something." In some cases, it was also seen as acceptable for a parent to take on more housework when they were essentially a stay-at-home parent (Molly) or recently retired from working (Kristine). Kristine pointed out how this freeing up of time not only benefitted her (as a full-time worker and part-time student) but also benefitted her mother, who continued to work full-time:

Now she has more free time, because that's what my dad has done. He's already prepared supper for us so we can eat when we get home. So I mean, I think she's maybe a little more relaxed now that he's home?

In other words, the benefits of an asymmetrical division of labor were sometimes considered in relation to the family as a whole, not just in terms of direct benefit to the participant. Another way that participants judged asymmetries of labor in the house was by reflecting on the fact that

their parents sometimes noticed and addressed tasks more quickly than they did (Lois, Grey). Grey, for example, pointed out that when it came to taking out the garbage, her stepdad did it, “cause he’s the first up and out of the house.” Still other parents were described as becoming spontaneously engrossed in one-off tasks – “cleaning binges” as Vincent called them – that increased their overall workloads, such as clearing out cupboards or washing the floors (Amber, Keith, and Vincent). Amber described:

My mom will go on like crazy cleaning rampages. Like ((laughs)) my dad and I were coming home from yoga the other day and umm my dad was like “so ahh, your mom said she was gunna clean the pantry.” He was like “I’ll bet you anything as soon as we walk in the house she’ll be tearing apart the pantry” and I was like “oh my God, are you serious?” . . . We come home ((laughs)), literally everything’s on the table ((both laugh)) And she’s like in her pajamas like going through everything,

Some participants (7/15) also justified the unequal distribution by saying that their parent(s) cared more than they did about cleanliness and were more highly attuned to the state of the household. As Ria said of her mother, “we don’t really see it [the division of housework] as problematic cause even when she doesn’t have to do anything, then she’s like, ‘am I missing something? Did I not do anything?’” Finally, participants sometimes referred to their own circumstances as legitimating this distribution, citing that they spent very little time in the home as a whole (Amber, Vincent, Sylvia) or in specific spaces (Walter, Sylvia), which gave them license to do less cleaning, since they were creating less of the mess.

In sum, a global view shows that young adults were generally the ones “being taken care of” (Keith) within the household organization of labor. However, this asymmetry is not connected to a singular meaning or evaluation. Instead, moral evaluations of parents’ heavier workloads were legitimized through a variety of factors, including personal preferences (e.g., for outdoor work, satisfactory repair jobs, or specific standards of cleanliness), household roles (e.g., as homemakers, homeowners, early-risers, or semi-present occupants), and occupations (e.g., as students, workers, stay-at-home parents, or retirees). The complexity with which these arrangements were evaluated underscores the relevance of moral deliberation and judgment in context – practical wisdom that is distinct from universal standards of equivalence and calculation that might otherwise be used to determine the justness of a situation.

2.3.4 Caretaking of Pets

Two-thirds of participants had pets in the household, with seven owning pets they considered “theirs” (in that they had bought or adopted these animals and were their primary caregivers). Of those seven, four reported that their parents helped look after their pets. Taking up this role were Sylvia and Laura’s mothers and fathers, Walter’s mother and her boyfriend, and Iris’ single mother. They helped with early morning feedings, letting the dog out of the house, walking the dog, keeping pets company, and taking care of pets’ needs when the participant was away for extended periods. These practices first and foremost allowed participants peace of mind, freeing them from worry about their pet’s welfare in their absence. Caretaking of pets also created opportunities to bond with their parents as they talked about and spent shared time with their pets. Sylvia, for example, described how she and her dad identified with one another through their joint attraction to pets, claiming “my dad and I especially are like really soft when it comes to animals.” Interestingly, although Walter never identified his mother’s boyfriend as his “dad,” in the context of pet-care, Walter was willing to playfully assign him this role.

W: And they walk her more than I do for sure, just because they have the time to do it. Like, I come home, I have a shit ton of homework. They come home and they have nothing to do but spend time with Tiny, so.

KM: Okay.

W: Yeah. They call it – I’m the dad, and my mom’s the grandma and Ron’s the grandpa.

In many cases, it was clear that parents took some delight in helping the child care for their pet. For example, Sylvia said of her father, “He’ll like, put ‘em out and stuff. Like, I don’t feed them or anything because my dad loves to do that.” She later commented that her dad is the person most concerned with attracting the dogs’ attention. Still, subtle signs of strain came up too: a couple of participants sarcastically said their parents must have “loved” it when they brought home a dog out of the blue and when I asked Laura whether her parents ever expressed disliking her the dogs, Laura quickly replied “Yes ((laughs)). They’re like, ‘come get your dogs. Come home. Your dogs need you.’” Although this topic was not one I examined in depth, it seemed that some parents may have felt taken advantage of with respect to the pet-care they provided.

The clearest evidence of strain caused by pet ownership came from Adison, whose dog had passed away a few months before our interviews. Her dog of more than a decade was facing health issues that required a lot of her time and attention, including letting him outside frequently

to go to the washroom. At that time, she was in full-day courses and given her busy schedule, was feeling a lack of support from her parents in caring for him. Beyond a lack of practical support, she also experienced a lack of emotional support from her mother: “my mom was basically, the whole time, she was like, ‘well, just put him down. Just put him down. Just put him down. Just put him down.’ And I was like, ‘that is SO insensitive, can you not?’” Given Adison’s close bond with her dog, she took her mother’s remarks as dismissive. After Adison had put the dog down, her mother also removed his bowls from the kitchen, which for Adison felt like an erasure of his presence too soon after his death. Altogether, Adison’s perception of a lack of practical and emotional support appeared to conflict with the mother’s ethical conception of the situation. While we cannot know her mother’s views, it may have been that she perceived the dog suffering in everyday life, that she felt its care needs were over-burdening the family (both in terms of labor or finances), or even that she wanted to guide her daughter to accepting death as a part of life. Certainly, a conflict of moral evaluations was what appeared to be at play; it is also possible that the two actually shared some notions about what was right in this situation (notably, Adison did end up putting her dog down), but it was perhaps difficult for them to express, listen to, and negotiate views on this emotionally-charged subject.

This story – and the hints from other participants’ discourses – point to pet-care as a worthy topic for further investigation. This is especially true given that that pet-ownership was a major motivating factor for three participants to live at home. It would be valuable to understand how negotiations over pet ownership and adoption occur, which functions the pets fulfill in young adults’ and in parents’ lives, how family members maintain boundaries around their time and labor when pet-care is involved, and how pet-care decisions are deliberated and acted upon by family members.

2.3.5 Childcare

Of the fifteen participants interviewed, Nina was the only parent and her parents’ roles in looking after her child were central to her construction of them as providing support to her. Nina had been living with them ever since she and her partner had separated (between two and three years ago). Her mom and dad were highly involved in raising her son: keeping her son while she was at school or on a date, picking him up from daycare, watching movies together, and feeding him dinners. Nina framed their caretaking as benefitting both her and her son: her, since she could study, get out of the house, and work, and her son, since he could have more than one

“stable person” in his life, which she felt promoted his development. Importantly, Nina had full custody of the child, with the father being entitled to generous access but holding no legal responsibility for him. As Nina explained, her ex-husband seldom took initiative to care for the child or fulfill Nina’s requests for assistance:

Other parents that are separated do like one week, one week, and they have that week where they’re just like doing their own thing. Even if I had like a night where I could just be like “he’s with his dad I don’t have to worry about rushing home or worry about my mom getting tired” like that would feel *so* good.

KM: Yeah yeah yeah.

N: But it’s n::ever happened ((laughs)). I’ve asked him to do it, like I’m like – that’s why I actually last week I was like “I really would like to know where you live and like that would be cool if you could you know get your shit together enough to have Ethan over the night,” like “is where you live that bad that you can’t – I was like what’s- what’s going on?”

KM: Mmm.

N: But I think the deal is he lives with his girlfriend who doesn’t like... want... his kid around.

Her comment about hoping for someone more “stable” connected not only to the reliable presence of a caregiver, but also referred back to the circumstances surrounding her separation. That is, she had been concerned about her son following a frightening and nearly violent episode with her ex-husband:

N: My son was a little bit traumatized to be honest after that happened. Like he stopped talking for a little while. Like he went from being a really ((chattering noises)) kid to just like super quiet and it really freaked me out.

KM: Yeah yeah yeah.

N: And so I kind of wanted like more people around him.

KM: Yeah.

N: And it did like make a big difference. It was good and it’s good, like my dad does stuff with him. Like they build helicopters and rockets and things. And he gets really into it.

KM: Yeah.

N: So it helped him a lot. And he has a very extensive vocabulary now and never stops talking ((laughs)).

KM: Eh! ((Laughs)).

N: So, yeah. I think it was good for him.

KM: Yeah yeah.

N: And is good for him to live with my parents also.

Here, everyday activities and routines appear to support the child's reconnection with the world (himself, his activities, others), in a manner somewhat akin to Good's (1994) description of certain rituals (in his case, mourning rituals) as "aimed precisely at rebuilding the conventional world, returning solidity to the social order of the survivors, returning the 'houseness' to our houses, the 'streetness' to our streets, masking the absolute change that has occurred" (p. 131). Nina's parents thus transcend the merely practical function of caregiving, revealing a power to transform the child's existential experience through attentiveness, reliability, and affection. And although that crisis was now over, Nina still witnessed her parents' positive impact on her son. Overall, Nina's choice to continue living with her parents seemed to be both out of a care for her son and a concern for her own capacity (as a single mother) to capably pursue the project of parenthood.

Despite her testaments to her parents' caretaking practices, some tensions did arise from this arrangement. First, Nina felt as though she and her mom were very different kinds of mothers with very different understandings of what a mother should do and be. Nina sought a balance between her role as a mother and her roles in other parts of her life (as a friend, yoga practitioner, student, romantic partner), and thought her mom was excessively devoted to caregiving, without taking enough care of herself. She remarked:

[M]y mom just doesn't put that time into herself. I've told you, like she always gives to other people. I'm always like, "Mom let's do this!" And like after like two minutes of stretching her hamstrings she's like, "Okay I've got to do the dishes."

Nina's comments reveal how she sees her mother as defining her identity through her care for others, while she prefers not to reduce herself to this identity. Although it might have been possible for this difference to be accepted or even appreciated within the family, Nina sensed that her mother passed judgment on her alternative conceptualization of herself, which she understood as less closely connected to her role as a caregiver. She explained:

yeah I guess just their judgments of how... you're supposed to be as a mother kind of hit me hard and if they were a little bit more like... uh, understanding and open to that like I... am not the same like my mom was such like a, like so like such a mom. Um... I don't know. It's like- it's like I don't know if she ever like went out or like it seems like, I don't know what they did when I was younger but um... I feel like if I could like talk to them a little bit more and make them understand like... that like I can't just like do school and a child 24/7. Like I need to like go out and I need to have some kind of balance.

Certainly, Nina communicates an experience of misrecognition (Ricoeur, 2004/2005). At the same time, she wishes for an opportunity or circumstance where it would be possible to dialogue with her parents to “make them understand.” If she could find a way to tell her story in a compelling way, her parents might see her choices as intelligible. Her hope aligns with Frank’s (2010) assertion that stories capture the motivations of their characters, and in doing so “make actions at least recognizable and understandable to third parties, if not necessarily legitimate and acceptable” (p. 30). Once again, we see repeated here the notion that recognition “passes through” others; the absence (or perceived absence) of her parents’ approbation threatens Nina’s ability to value herself. Moreover, the absence of a shared narrative about her alterity preserves a sense of disconnection within the family that could threaten the bond itself (Frank, 2010).

Nina’s fear of being judged as “selfish” also made her reluctant to hire a babysitter, even though she relished the freedom of using such a service. What is clear is that Nina experienced a need for spontaneous fun that required a different form of practical help than that which her mother would provide. Let us pick apart why this is the case. First, Nina knows that engaging in spontaneous and “crazy adventures” are an important part of who she is. As she said at one point, reflecting on her attraction to her romantic interest, “to me that’s really important that somebody that I will- I will be able to be like ‘hey, let’s get on this bus! ((KM: Mmmm)) that we don’t know where it’s going’ ((laughs)). . . I just kind of like that adventurous kind of attitude.” She shared many experiences of this in our interviews, recalling the joys of backpacking, traveling, taking up strange jobs, and “doing anything I wanted to do.” She certainly took her responsibility as a mother seriously, but this role did not define her identity. Given this, an occasional night out might have been highly appealing as a way to connect to those aspects of herself that were less accessible given her parental responsibilities. Despite her awareness that she would benefit from some loosely structured free time, she anticipated that her mother would not validate its

importance: “I feel bad I can’t do it and be like ‘well I just want to go out until like three o’clock in the morning one night’ and then I get that judgment because my mom’s really prude, ‘why would you go out to 3 AM?’ like ((sighs)) ((laughs)).” Yet there is a second, more implicit factor that seems to be involved here as well: Nina is highly conscientious about her acceptance of her mother’s childcare. At many points in the interview, Nina spoke about her attentiveness towards communicating with her mother, negotiating what was needed and available, planning in advance, respecting the plans previously made, trying to respect her parents’ needs for solitude, and generally showing her gratitude (through these actions) toward her mother for her help. Moreover, she remarked that her parents’ home was a very private space for them; inviting a babysitter into the space may have felt like a reach, given the value they placed on privacy. My guess is that Nina may not have perceived a way to enjoy a loosely structured and liberating night out considering that she took a very deliberate and considerate approach to accepting help from her mother (i.e., one that showed her love and care in return). In effect, the conflict seems to emerge out of Nina’s concern for her mother’s well-being and her simultaneous sense that her mother would not understand her need to reconnect to her spontaneous identity.

2.3.6 Helping in Other Ways

Besides these four categories of help (via the shared household, household chores, financial support, and caretaking), participants briefly mentioned a few other ways their parents offered practical assistance. Parents lent or gave them their cars (mentioned by five participants), occasionally drove them places (three participants), purchased something special for them here or there (three participants), and helped organize their finances (Kristine). Stocked fridges and pantries were coveted by many participants as well: ten participants consumed from these regularly, while three participants picked from these shelves only if they ran out of their own groceries or were missing an ingredient. For some, the well-stocked fridge or pantry seemed to symbolize the abundance that characterized the parental home (and, by extension, their parents’ generosity). As Laura stated,

you can come and go at any time and like, there’ll always be like, food in the fridge if like – or, like there’ll always be, like, a cooked meal if you want one, like (???) or... I don’t know. It’s just like, everything’s there that you could possibly need?

These brief comments indicate a broad diversity of support types offered from parents to children; such alternative forms and meanings of practical support could certainly be explored in greater depth in future studies.

2.3.7 The Assurance of Parents' Help

All participants reported that parental gifts of practical support contributed to a sense of assurance and security. Fourteen participants (all but Lois in relation to her single mother and Walter in relation to his mother's boyfriend) were highly confident that their parents would provide them practical support whatever the circumstance. Remarks about parents being "there for you" (Nina), "hav[ing] your back" (Jane), and being "somebody you can go to" (Sylvia) were ubiquitous, and the unconditional nature of their parents' support was frequently emphasized through comments that their parents would be there "always" (Amber, Jane, Kristine, Walter, Nina, Adison, Molly, Vincent, Laura), "in whatever way or capacity that we need them to be" (Amber) and "no matter what happens" (Walter). While participants expressed that they would not always need their parents' help, it was understood that "they're there ready" (Molly) should circumstances call for it. Walter illustrated this point by distinguishing what a parent is and what a parent does:

when I'm not there, and we're living far away from each other, she's still my mom. But I think there's a difference between like, the role of a parent, and the definition of a parent. Like...I don't know. In like, you know, a crisis situation and I like, get my legs chopped off, then she'll come back and be that parent again. I hope.

From this perspective, parents would continue to possess some sense of responsibility as caregivers, but children would presumably require their parents' care less and less as time went on (at least, in a practical sense). The permanent and unconditional nature of care indicated here bring to mind Ricoeur's (2004/2005) encapsulation of agape in the image of an "overflowing heart [that] excludes [a] sense of privation" (p. 221). As reflected in Honneth's (1992/1996) discussion of this crucial form of recognition, love of this kind supports children's "faith in their environment" and invites the expression of one's needs, since there is no fear of abandonment (p. xiii).

The theme of assurance also came up when participants considered whether their parents would ever kick them out of the house. Most participants felt it was virtually impossible to foresee such a circumstance. When pressed for one, they responded that it would have to be

“something pretty serious” (Adison); as examples, it might take “killing somebody” (Walter), getting “heavy into like drugs or, or alcohol” (Sylvia), “partying at all hours” (Iris), “if I had like a huge party and trashed their whole house” (Nina), or “if I just turned into like a lazy piece of shit” (Vincent). While we cannot know parents’ views on this matter, participants generally claimed that their parents would be there to provide practical support as long as they had a need for it (bearing in mind that no participant intended to live with their parent rent-free forever). In brief, they characterized their parents’ support as bountiful and as responsive to their needs. Only if they considerably violated rules of respect or lawfulness would their parents revoke their practical support. The situation-specific and super-abundant nature of this support seems to fit well with a conception of caregiving as charitable and generous – as involving “car[e] for ‘the person one sees’” as opposed to being concerned with rules of equivalence and reasons for justification (Ricoeur, 2004/2005, p. 221).

Like the rest of the participants, Lois did believe that it would take “a lot” to get her kicked out of the home, but she was more reluctant to see her mother’s help as rooted in generosity or compassion. When asked if she would ever be kicked out of the home, she conveyed distrust about her mother’s willingness to support her, stating “I’ve honestly: expected to come home and find my stuff on the- ((laughs)) out in the yard. But it hasn’t happened yet.” Quite distinct from the other participants, Lois made virtually no statements about the reliability of her mother’s support besides her admission that it would take “a lot” for her mom to kick her out of the house. Her unique tone – which communicated suspicion and discomfort – appeared to signal not that she experienced an entire lack of support, but that she was reluctant to trust the bond between herself and her mother, fragile as it was.

2.3.8 Being Grateful for Help

In response to parents’ practical help, all participants expressed a sense of gratitude. Having already pointed to the benefits of many forms of practical support, I will only reiterate here that participants often stated their thankfulness to receive such help at this stage in life, whether for home-cooked meals, a rent-free living situation, stocked cupboards, childcare, and financial assistance. They described their parents’ giving practices, for instance, as “amazing” (Amber), “really helpful” (Kristine), “so nice” (Nina), “nice to have” (Vincent), “cool” (Laura), etc. While living at home was not necessarily their ideal scenario, they were grateful to have this option, in addition to the other forms of help provided by parents. As Amber stated, “[A]m I

happy that I'm living at home? No. Am I grateful that I'm living at home? Yes, and I feel really privileged.” Interestingly, participants’ gratitude for practical help was much more apparent compared to their gratitude for emotional support. The reasons for this difference are not clear, and could involve a number of factors that could be explored in future research (e.g., the rules governing acknowledgment of gifts compared to other signs of love, the sense of one or the other being a requirement for parents and the other being voluntary, the exchange of a concrete, tangible object versus affection and attention as a form of symbolizing care, etc.).

Participants also identified themselves as grateful receivers of help. This was expressed in generic ways and in comparison to siblings or former selves. Amber, Kristine, Nina and Walter juxtaposed themselves to siblings who they felt lacked appreciation for their parents’ practical support – whether in the form of money, free accommodation, or help with childcare. Their interpretations of their siblings’ ingratitude were inferred through shows of disrespect or in failures to recognize or appreciate parents’ care as symbolized in, for instance, a sibling never doing dishes, coming home drunk and loud, asking for money, failing to offer help with yard work, or generally lacking initiative. From another angle, six participants expressly stated that new responsibilities – jobs, bills, caretaking of children, and living independently – had allowed them to empathize with their parents, understand their sacrifices, and appreciate their support. For each of these six participants, deep appreciation for their parents developed between their teen years and the present. Vincent, for example, explained that his relationship with his mother had become less “transactional” over time, such that he no longer took for granted his mother’s care. He added that “when you’re a teenager you’re an asshole ((laughs)),” and “in your 20s you wanna find yourself....so then it’s not really until you’re in your late – late 20s, early 30s that you can actually be – like understand where they’re coming from cause now you’re kinda in their shoes.” Adison similarly suggested that “when you’re an adult, like, you realize more. Like, this is their home. They’ve worked hard to have this home, and they put in the time and the effort at their jobs to make this.” Each of these quotations implicitly point to an awareness of parental generosity – one that became more apparent as they gained first-hand experience with (or greater ability to empathize with) the various demands and obligations adults respond to in daily life, including the care needs of children.

Young adults’ appreciation extended beyond the value of support itself to recognize the goodness of the individuals giving it. This was apparent, for instance, through comments that

“she is supporting me” (Iris), “I’m more aware and appreciative of what they do” (Laura), “she is actually a good mother” (Vincent), “they work so hard to give me and my brother, like, a good home and a good environment.” (Molly), and “You literally put a roof over my head” (Amber). While this was true for fourteen participants in relation to their parents, Lois, by contrast, refrained from positioning her mother as the source of practical support, while still acknowledging the personal value of having support. Across all three interviews, the closest she came to affirming gratitude was in saying: “it’s nice to have a roof over my head ((laughs)).” So, whereas other participants ascribed to their parents the role of the giver, Lois appeared to isolate the provision of support from the actor providing it.

Connecting the past and present, all participants reflected on their childhood and adolescent years with an empathetic awareness of the challenges of being a parent, and this awareness often appeared to connect to their gratitude for their continued support. In reflecting on their upbringing, all participants deliberated on the challenges their parents faced, whether in terms of affording children, caregiving as a single parent, immigrating to Canada, upgrading one’s education to gain career mobility, balancing work and family life, affording housing, facilitating children’s activities, etc. These histories of support and sacrifice – sometimes reaching farther back than their own birth – tied into their appreciation of their parents’ present support, often augmenting their felt indebtedness toward their parents. Linking her own maturity and recognition of her mom’s sacrifices, Grey remarked: “I feel like I understand my mom more than I did when I was younger. I just have more like, love and respect for her, what she’s been through and stuff.” In addition to attestations of parents’ past sacrifices, two-thirds of participants mentioned parents making sacrifices in the present to help them out, whether in terms of surrendering privacy, devoting less time to themselves due to caretaking, paying higher bills, postponing downsizing or retirement, or working hard enough to support the family and maintain the home. These sacrifices further contributed to participants’ feeling of gratitude towards their parents. As a final piece to consider, Walter confirmed that the help he and his brother were receiving from his mother was virtually predictable, given his mother’s character:

It's not like a surprise? My mom's always been very supportive, so. . . It's not like I'm ungrateful for everything. But like, it's not like, “oh my god, I can't believe you're doing this.” It's like, “this makes sense.” It's kind of in line with our history, so.

On this point, Ricoeur (1990/1992) notes that character “designates the set of lasting dispositions by which a person is recognized” (p. 121). Walter’s view that it is “not surprising” – as he points out – is not a dismissal of the value of his mother’s care; instead, it is a confirmation of the permanence and immutability of her caring nature as a person.

In sum, participants generally perceived the exchange of practical support with parents as a “good” gift-giving system. In the first place, participants did not associate their parents’ practical help with requirements for repayment or other obligations. Their parents’ help was depicted as freely given and unconditional. Related to this, participants were grateful for the gift not only for its material value, but as a recognition of themselves and the solid and intimate bond between themselves and their parent (Ricoeur, 2004/2005). In responding to their parents’ generous gifts with gratitude – as opposed to feeling a pressure to reciprocate with a gift of equal value – participants highlight the quality of inexactitude that is involved in gift-giving: the market value of what is given and given-in-return is secondary to the significance of giving, receiving, and giving-in-return as a mutual symbolization of the relationship itself. Ricoeur (2004/2005) articulates how gratitude denies the substitutability of positions and the “autonomous circularity” of reciprocity (p. 219), instead declaring the distinctiveness of each person as giver and receiver. Importantly, Ricoeur (2004/2005) argues that the solicitude within interpersonal relationships – which relies on “benevolent spontaneity” (p. 190) inherent in gift-giving – complements justice within institutions. This second, and complementary, ethics of justice, equality, and rights involves its own unique features and will be invoked in the next two chapters (in Chapter 3 as the common right to be free from subjection and in Chapter 4 as both the common rights and norms that make each person equal to one another).

2.3.9 Showing Recognition through Respect and Courtesy

Because their parents helped them out – and because they observed their parents’ sacrifices and generosity in doing so – all participants felt compelled to treat their parents with courtesy. This impulse was evident in a series of ways. Above, I described how young adults usually communicated their whereabouts to parents to save them from feeling anxious, but besides this, a handful of young adults also mentioned keeping parents in the loop out of consideration for their time and energy. For example, Vincent explained that he would text his mom if he was out “just so she doesn’t make a big meal and I’m not there or whatever. [KM:

Mmm]. So I think that's just so she doesn't waste her time." Respecting house rules also was a way of showing gratitude for their parents' support. As Adison described:

A: Like, you should just be grateful that they're letting you live there whether it's like rent-free or for like, a smaller fee than you would be somewhere else, y'know? And so... I think that you have to respect the boundaries that are given to you because it is their house, y'know? It's- it's not – I mean, to a certain extent, like they can't... I don't think they can totally control you. 'Cause you aren't a child anymore, like you are an adult. So. There's certain things that they can't, like they can't ground you. Y'know? Like ((laughs)).

KM: Yeah, yeah, yeah.

A: Y'know? ((laughs)) But I mean you should be respectful of their household and their things.

In brief, participants connected their recognition of their parents' generosity with a concern for their treatment of their parents' home, which as a gift provided by the parent, was a symbol of the parent-child relation itself. Like Laura and Adison, Kristine identified the burdens of owning and maintaining the home; for that reason, she always paid her rent on time and stressed that if no one was home, the heat should be turned down since "you're not paying the bills. Like, turn this stuff down, like, this costs money." Kristine also mentioned her distaste for the coffee her parents bought, but refrained from complaining about it out of courtesy. Instead, she used a creative workaround that promoted rather than detracted from an environment of generosity:

K: I don't like the coffee my parents buy, but I like, drink it anyway cause I can't really be like, "your coffee sucks," and I drink it anyway. And it's just rude to complain about that.

KM: Yeah, yeah.

K: Cause if I want a better coffee I should go buy it myself. Anyway. ((KM Laughs)) Coffee snob. Um, so I'll usually go to MacDonalds I'll say, "does everyone want a coffee?" "Oh yeah, yeah!" So I'll get coffee for everyone in the morning when I wake up.

As illustrated in Kristine's quote, participants symbolized their relation to their parents not only through their treatment of their parents, but also through their treatment of their parents' possessions as symbolic extensions of them. In a word, participants demonstrated a sense of deference, which Goffman (1967) describes as

that component of activity which functions as a symbolic means by which appreciation is regularly conveyed *to* a recipient *of* this recipient, or of something of which this recipient is taken as a symbol, extension, or agent. These marks of devotion represent ways in which an actor celebrates and confirms his relation to a recipient. (pp. 56-7)

Besides their treatment of the house as a cherished possession, participants identified courtesies offered in response to their parents' household labor: Sylvia's family would let her mom choose what TV show to watch after she had made dinner; Nina came home early if her mom was having trouble putting her son to bed; Nina asked for caretaking help well in advance and accommodated her mother's priorities when plans changed; and multiple participants mentioned responding to requests for housework without delay or complaint.

Finally, three participants spoke about the importance of offering verbal "thank yous" in recognition of help. Keith recalled: "I say thanks when they buy my books and stuff. I never just sort of brush it off as a thing that they were supposed to do. I kind of get that it's – they don't have to do this." That simple notion of "getting it" seems to be crucial here; verbal thank yous and other shows of courtesy were aimed at showing a recognition of the relationship symbolized through the act of giving (Ricoeur, 2004/2005).

2.3.10 Giving in Return

As discussed, participants felt compelled to show their parents courtesy for the practical support they received; the other side of this coin was confirming to themselves that they were not taking advantage of their parents. Here, I build upon this discussion of moral intentions and actions to highlight participants' involvement in the third sequence of the gift-giving process: giving in return, where this return gift is experienced as freely given and grounded in a sense of gratitude. Of the 15 participants, 13 described efforts in the present to return support to their parents (22 of 27 parents), with the remaining 3 participants either not discussing or not making those efforts. In looking at the future, 14 participants (in relation to 25 of 27 parents) also stated that if they were able to, they would take in their parent(s) when they became incapable of living alone. Uniquely, Lois, with respect to her mother, made this promise conditional on the relationship improving. Finally, Walter only considered taking in his mother and did not mention his mother's boyfriend.

Participants who were giving back to their parents in the present did so through several means. Nine participants presented their parents gifts of some kind. While gift-giving can be

experienced as an obligation, in these cases, participants were referring to gift-giving as a voluntary and special act; that is, they characterized it as unnecessary, unexpected, or “above and beyond” what would be expected. As examples, these participants described treating parents to lunch or dinner, bringing them a coffee at work, buying thoughtful presents, surprising them with a homemade treat, and taking them on trips. Outside of the benefits of the objects themselves, such gifts often created occasions for spending time together: eating dinner together, a weekend morning spent drinking coffee, bonding while driving to a destination, etc. This point brings us to the second form of giving back: spending quality time with parents, which was mentioned by eight participants as a way of conveying gratitude. Molly expressed how this gift – like all gifts in return – held an inexact relationship relative to the support her parents had provided. In doing so, she highlighted the priceless nature of the gift: that the gift and the gift in return can hold unequal market value because their value is priceless as symbols standing in for each one’s social regard for the other:

I feel like, it’s not – because they don’t need anything? They don’t need me to help with them financially and they don’t – they don’t... um yeah. They don’t need me to help support them financially, but I think how I show my appreciation is just... I don’t know. Spending time with them, take them out for supper or (3) I think that’s like the best thing I give to them. ((laughs))

Outside of gift-giving and spending time with parents, a third form of giving back was doing “extra chores around the house,” which Adison alone mentioned. The word “extra” in this phrase signals its meaning as a gift; it conveys that the performance of these chores went beyond that required by the system of justice that simultaneously informed social action in the household (see Chapter 4.2). Finally, four participants described making donations toward household expenses. By purchasing groceries, paying the internet bill, or reimbursing parents when it was not expected, these young adults affirmed their appreciation of their parents’ support. Again, in these cases, participants appeared to imply the “festive” character of the gift – giving back is not “squaring up,” but is a way of recognizing the value of the bond between themselves and their parents (Ricoeur, 2004/2005). Sylvia explained this point when she was defining the concept of “family”:

S: Yeah. Like I’d say like a really, like, deep connection I guess.

KM: So what would that look like to have a deep connection? I guess can you unpack that a little bit?

S: Yeah. Mm...(3.0) I would say, like, uh (2.0) somebody who you would help and they would help you back and like you wouldn't worry about like, uh, it's not like reciprocal like it's just like, "oh, this is somebody I care about so I'd do this for them" kind of thing? Like, I guess? ((laughs)).

Through their small gestures of gratitude, young adults distanced themselves from identities as "squanderers" of the gift. As Godbout (1998) writes, the squanderer is unable "to give in one's turn, to pass on. And so he leaves no inheritance to anyone, he exits the circuit, he strips it of all its value: no market value, no use value, no bonding value" (p. 47). Their presents may seem minor – a coffee, a homemade birthday cake, a grocery bill covered – however they symbolize a bond of mutual recognition whose value transcends the material benefits garnered in the present (Ricoeur, 2004/2005).

Three participants (in relation to five parents) did not talk about giving back to their parents in the present. For them, it may have been the case that showing courtesy towards their parents and/or offering thanks were felt to be appropriate signs of recognition toward their parents. Some evidence points to this explanation: when I asked two of these participants if they showed their appreciation to their parents in any way, they referred to the ways they thanked and showed courtesy toward their parents. In the case of Lois, the third exception, reluctance to see her mother as offering her support freely or out of love may have blocked her from acting charitably toward her mother in the present (beyond mere courtesy). To go out on a limb and show her love toward her mother likely would have appeared risky, since she was already unsure of her mom's feelings. Of course, there is also the possibility that these participants did try to give back to their parents and it simply did not surface in our interview.

Giving back to parents was also imagined as extending into the future, with participants considering caring for their parents when they became older and more dependent on others. Of the 15 participants, 13 stated that they would be willing to take their parents into their own future home. The other two participants were more reluctant, but for different reasons, having to do with the young adult's financial status (Adison), and the current status of the relationship (Lois).

For the 13 participants who were willing to take parents into their future homes, this desire was constructed both as a gesture of gratitude for their parents' generous support and as a

symbol of their love for their parents. Walter, for example, reflected this first point in his comment that “I don’t think I would ever turn her away after all the help she’s given me,” but he followed this up afterward, clarifying that his help would also be driven by his affection towards his mom: “definitely I would say like, I would want to. It’s my mom! I love my mom.” Several of the twelve participants stated that they would make this choice without delay or hesitation, as was evident in Molly’s comment that she would take them in “in a heartbeat,” Nina’s statement that “I wouldn’t even have to think twice about it” and Amber’s rhetorical question, “how could I not?” Interestingly, Iris pointed to the socially acceptable practice of living with an aging parent to care for them, which diverged sharply from the “stigma” she saw associated with living with a parent who is not dependent: “I keep saying if I live here long enough, that she will get old enough that it will become a good thing that I’m here taking care of my aging parent! ((laughs)).” The beneficence of taking in a parent was also indicated in its comparison to placing a parent in a care home. Specifically, five participants constructed care homes as inadequate forms of care, at least in cases where the parent was reasonably mentally or physically fit. Jane and Amber had the strongest opinions on this subject, connecting this choice to a frequent lack of compassion by family members. As Amber stated, “I just don’t like even the idea of them just like being put in a home and like ‘oh we can forget about them, they’re taken care of.’ The hyperbole of “forgetting” about one’s parents clearly reflects recognition as elemental to caregiving. Nevertheless, three participants (including two of the five who had negative perceptions of care homes) acknowledged that if their parents’ care needs were extensive, they would give parents the support they required by moving them into a care home.

Importantly, although the young adults spoke about feeling indebted toward their parents or feeling that they owed them care in later life, they did not suggest that what they gave – or would give – would erase their indebtedness to their parents. This was captured in Grey’s comment that “we should help our parents as much as we can. I mean, they raised us for sure. That was a tough job. So, yeah. Just repay that. You can’t ever, but, you know, try.” In brief, gestures of giving back were not aimed at equivalence (the return of support equal to that which is given, cancelling out their debt) but rather at recognition (an awareness of the charitable and generous love of parents, which subsumes their caring practices).

Adison and Lois were less confident about taking in their parents when they became older, and for different reasons. Adison’s thoughts on this topic were grounded in her current

financial situation. In her 20s, Adison had accumulated tens of thousands of dollars of debt. She hoped that she would be able to take in her parents when they got older, but she also lacked confidence for two reasons. First, she was an only child, and as a lonely child, she felt the burden of care was squarely on her: “it’s not like a have siblings to shoulder that responsibility with. Like it’s all. On. Me. Which is a bit daunting at times.” Second, and perhaps more importantly, Adison’s reluctance to commit to that care was associated to her present debt and with the salary she expected to make in her field:

A: So like it’s kinda my fault that I’m in this much debt and that I can’t (3) provide the way that I would like to. Not to say that like maybe I won’t get it all figured out in my thirties and I will have, you know, the income to do it. You know, if . . . I’m making a good enough income, and maybe I get married and like there’s that resource too, you know. But yeah, it makes — it makes you feel a little guilty because they’ve just done so much for me. Like I’d like to return the favor, you know?

KM: Yeah yeah.

A: I don’t want to seem like an ungrateful daughter ((laughs)).

Adison projected her lack of financial discipline into her future, doubting her ability to take responsibility for her finances, purchase a home, or afford a space that could accommodate her parents. In other parts of our interview, she said that she was budgeting, cutting back, going through her financial statements, and planning on seeking out a financial advisor to regain control over her financial situation. In her words, these efforts were aimed at a better future, because “I don’t want to keep repeating this mistake my entire life.” These initiatives signal that at least a part of her imagined a transformation that would restore her self-esteem, permit her to contribute to her parents’ well-being, and prevent her from becoming, as she put it, “an ungrateful daughter.”

Lois was the participant who was most reluctant about sharing her home with her mother in later life. She described how she was previously entertaining the idea, but her stance had shifted: “When I was younger, that was actually gonna be my plan. But then we grew apart and then now we don’t even really talk.” Lois felt “guilty” thinking about her mother living in a care home, since she also shared the view that care homes “are not the best.” However, her current relationship with her mom made her apprehensive about offering her home. At the heart of this seemed to be a resentment toward her mother for neglecting to make amends. She described:

L: 'Cause I mean she's obviously not working to try and change that so I mean why would I? You know (2) ju- just keep having it around.

KM: So if your relationship improved would it be a possibility again though?

L: Oh yeah, I think so!

While Lois was not ruling out the possibility of living together later on, she needed their relationship first to improve, but she was waiting for her mother to initiate the change. Again, the absence of storytelling and personal disclosure between them seemed to reduce Lois' willingness to engage in moral deliberation about her predicament. Assigning her mother total responsibility for reconciliation, she is unable to see that she too had the capacity to initiate a reconciliation.

Finally, I must mention that Walter, while explicitly outlining his intention to care for his mother, did not do the same in relation to his mother's boyfriend of five years, Ron. This may have been because Ron played a limited caregiving role in his life, helping out with the house, taking his dog for a walk, chatting with him once in a while, but not offering significant emotional comfort or acting in a protective manner. It is also possible that Walter had his guard up, and refraining from accepting care from Ron, did not feel compelled to promise support in turn. Still too, Walter may not have accepted Ron fully into the family, assigning him a peripheral position until greater trust and security in the relationship could be developed.

In summary, virtually all participants (with the exception of Lois) gave or anticipated giving something back to their parents in recognition of all they had done for them. These motivations to give in return communicated participants' wishes for their parents to know that they appreciated them and the actual market value of such gifts appeared to hold relatively little significance in comparison to their communicative value. Given that Lois was uneasy about her bond with her mother, it is perhaps not surprising that more demonstrable forms of gratitude were not described by her, either in the past or the present. Still, since gifts hold a power of creating "something" out of "nothing" – the power of "natality" – I would wonder whether risking a token of appreciation might have offered a peaceful clearing (Ricoeur, 2004/2005) for re-familiarizing Lois with her mother and possibly working towards reconciliation, for as Godbout (1992/1998) writes, "The transformation of a stranger into a familiar is what the gift is all about" (p. 30).

2.3.11 Synthesis

As I have demonstrated, parents of young adults provided practical support in a multitude of ways. Whereas the shared home was one form of practical support that all participants shared in, no other form of help was common to all 15 participants, highlighting diversity in the forms of practical aid offered to young adults by parents. Let me first speak to positive experiences of practical support, examining the outlying negative cases afterward, which nevertheless confirm the same principles of gift-giving.

Generally, practical support was valued for benefitting young adults in far-reaching ways, impacting their bank accounts, their lifestyle, their ability to focus on school, their access to a clean home, their ability to care for others, and implicitly, their ability to recognize themselves as “inestimable object[s] of transmission” (Ricoeur, 2004/2005, p.194). Practical support was experienced as empowering when it furthered projects of parenthood, career development, financial well-being, pet ownership, or travel. As anticipated by Ricoeur’s (1992/2013) definition of a “project,” these initiatives allowed participants to impart to themselves agency and accept help as an action directed at or supporting a “telos” (i.e., an “end for which we live,” Ricoeur, 1990/1992, p. 152). Drawing on Arendt and Aristotle, Mattingly (2014) describes how action occurs by taking initiative or setting in motion something that is directed towards a telos, but reminds us that the outcomes are uncertain: “With action . . . humans are able to create something new – to begin something unexpected. And in this creation of ‘the new’ they create themselves” (p. 16). In other words, the telos is not merely an end in itself; it is part of the process of cultivating wisdom and developing self-esteem in the present (Mattingly, 2014; Ricoeur, 1992/2013).

Participants’ acceptance of practical support was generally experienced and constructed as a positive, mutually-affirming form of gift-giving, wherein the young adults saw themselves as the beneficiaries of their parents’ generous and steady support. In this, their discourses paralleled Ricoeur’s (2004/2005) characterization of the triadic structure of “good” gift-giving. First, practical help given was viewed as freely given (without conditions or concern for equivalence). Second, practical help was received in such a way that participants felt no obligation to reciprocate the exact value of what was given to them; that is, they perceived their parents’ gifts as expressions of their enduring care and love. In that way, their receiving of the gift indicated recognition of their parents’ generosity. In terms of giving in return (the third part of the triadic structure), gratitude, courtesy, and conscientiousness were the key ways that

participants honored their parents for their sacrifices and generosity in the present. In the future, virtually all participants expected that they would be able to provide for their parents if the need arose. Participants' satisfaction with their systems of exchange indicated that, at least from their perspectives, they accepted and appreciated the inexact relationship between what they have received and what they have provided in return (i.e., gratitude). Clearly, what emerges from these descriptions is a sense that forms of support that on the surface only appear to have instrumental value carry deep significance within the world of symbols and social bonds.

Though this positive, appreciative form of receiving help was the trend among participants, Nina, Lois, and Adison expressed more negative or mixed experiences, triggered by unique obstacles in the gift-giving structure. Accompanied by the greatest expressions of suffering, Lois did not construct her mother's current support as a gift; at least, she did not – by any means – affirm that her mother was motivated to provide such support out of generous care. While she certainly recognized the benefits of living at home, these benefits were divorced from her mother's choices, actions, and roles as a caregiver. Instead, it was as though living at home and receiving help were lucky, random, and impersonal circumstances that Lois happened upon. Although Lois did express some awareness that her failure to perceive her mother's generosity (and therefore honor it) was problematic for the relationship, she generally denied herself any responsibility for the broken nature of their communication, instead assigning nearly total responsibility to her mother. The violation of mutual recognition and broken-down nature of their communication were constructed as nearly insurmountable obstacles. Beyond this, the justice of equivalence had become, for her, a perverse tool for inaction and avoiding accountability, for if her mother was not bothering to change the relationship, then why should she? Perhaps, with recognition of her own capacity to provoke (or reduce) suffering through the gift-giving system – and with greater understanding of her mother's own vulnerabilities – Lois might spontaneously find herself making a symbolic offering to usher in a momentary peace (Ricoeur, 2004/2005) that someday might become something more.

Adison acknowledged disappointment with her parents for failing to set aside money for her; she also was uncertain that in the future she would be able to provide support to her parents, which provoked a sense of guilt. Nevertheless, in both cases, she also identified circumstances that were out of her and her parents' control, pardoning herself and her parents for the challenges they had (or would have) in exchanging support. Causing more suffering and resentment was the

exchange of practical and emotional support concerning Adison's dog, where Adison perceived her parents (but more specifically her mother) as having provided insufficient help when her dog was severely ill. Once again, examining gift-giving through its sequential steps offers possible interpretations of how gift-giving can go wrong. In the first place, Adison desired more from her parents than they wished to give, meaning that practical help, in the very first instance, was tied to obligation and constriction rather than generosity and freedom. What she wanted and what she received (or what her parents were capable of giving) were at odds with one another. Adison also perceived that her mother lacked compassion when she encouraged Adison to euthanize her pet. Whereas Adison framed this response as insensitive, the mother's remarks might have been a reaction to feeling misperceived or taken for granted in the first place; that is, the mother may have felt that Adison's requests for support were excessive, unreasonable, and based in a lack of consideration for the parents' capacities. The lack of recognition in the request for help, then, may have been the initial point where the terms of gift exchange were violated. Alternatively, Adison and her mother may have held conflicting views about the significance of caring for the dog, where Adison viewed her insensitivity as disregard for her but her mother viewed it as a duty to impart guidance to her daughter (i.e., about the necessity of death in life, coming to terms with reality, taking responsibility for oneself and one's dependents, etc.). Certainly, this case (like Lois') reveals that a shared understanding of one another's intentions in helping situations is not always readily available, and without that understanding – whether implicit or explicit – many problems can arise.

In Nina's case, the childcare her mother provided to her was certainly perceived with appreciation and construed as generous. However, Nina was guarded about her need for an alternative form of support that would allow her to experience spontaneity and connect with aspects of her impulsive identity. This guardedness arose from anticipating that her mother would not understand Nina's need, given that Nina's mother defined herself primarily in terms of her caregiving roles. Since Nina wanted to be considerate of her mother's generous support, she did not want to request childcare with a more flexible structure. In brief, Nina felt it impossible to voice her desire for an alternative type of support than that offered by her mother. In this case, the gift-giving system was not so much problematic in itself; rather, it was Nina and her mother's inability to reach mutual understanding about Nina's needs that was the challenge. If Nina's need to exit her caregiving role could have been heard and legitimized, then it is foreseeable that both

could have accepted a babysitter coming over occasionally to respond to that need – not as a sign of ingratitude toward the mother, but as a legitimate and complementary mode of support, and even an affirmation of Nina’s recognition for her mother (since she would not make such a request of her).

Altogether, Lois, Nina, and Adison’s unique experiences share the significance of practical support as a communicative or expressive action (Ricoeur, 2004/2005). In each case, participants and their parents lack a shared conception of the meaning and value of practical support, whether the lack of common understanding centered on the perceived legitimacy of the need for practical support (in other words, the aims it supported or was directed at), the sense of freedom or obligation with which it was given, or the freedom or obligation with which it was accepted. Such failures of communication underscore the delicate nature of gift-giving as a symbolic system, where signs have no inherent meaning and are interpreted by people using composited frameworks of understanding (Crotty, 1998). Indeed, researchers’ recommendations that families formalize the boundaries of practical support speak to a need – in some circumstances – to move away from the covert, faith-based nature of gift-giving and draw on explicit negotiation to arrive at mutual understanding. In this type of solution, action is still guided by faith, but it is not faith in the bond, but rather faith in the other person’s compliance with the rules. Whereas gift-giving permits greater flexibility and freedom of action and interpretation (but also carries with it the risks of misrecognition and unintended consequences) a system of rules implies a sense of security through verbal communication (but also limits and constrains freedom in that way). In this particular study, most participants were able to interpret and act within the gift-giving system with relative ease, signalling that they and their parents were well-attuned to and accepting of one another’s aims for giving and receiving. However, in some families (such as the three where more problems surfaced) it may be that more overt modes of communication could provide benefits that would be unattainable through gift-giving alone.

2.4 Conclusion: The Symbolic Stakes of Caregiving

From a global perspective, this chapter highlights three types of caregiving experiences implicitly identified by participants: caregiving that was unquestionably self and other-affirming, caregiving that temporarily disrupted the participant’s sense of self or flow of activities but was rendered pardonable by considering intentions and circumstances, and caregiving perceived as minimal and as posing a threat to self-confidence and confidence in the permanence of the bond.

Most of the time and in most ways, participants reported positive experiences of being cared for; personal strengths and vulnerabilities were recognized by parents who responded with valued care forms. Especially in terms of practical help and everyday reminders of their love, care was received gladly, with few sources of discomfort or irritation. When participants observed their parents' everyday expressions of love, they did not mull over their parents' intentions, their own capacities, their parents' vulnerabilities, or the abstract value of that care. In these instances, care was received in an immersive fashion, with participants remaining in the world rather than interrupting the flow of experience to deliberate upon it (Arendt, 1971; Bruner, 1986). As put by Arendt (1971), "to think about somebody who is present implies removing ourselves surreptitiously from this company and acting as though he were no longer there" (p. 424). Some care forms, though, were received with greater reflexivity. In accepting practical support and interpreting parents' expressions of concern, the circumstances and implications of care were more clearly contemplated. Practical support was evaluated by considering a variety of factors, including personal goals and preferences, parental capacities, household roles, and occupations. Parental protectiveness, too, was evaluated in terms of the motivations behind it, the global sense of confidence conveyed by parents to children, the intrusiveness of parents' worries, and the specific caregiving role occupied by the parent in question. In response to care that fit with their needs, roles, and values (particularly, practical help), young adults expressed appreciation through their actions, including paying for what they could, saying thanks, buying parents a meal, spending time together, doing extra chores, being courteous, and respecting parents' possessions (including the home). In most cases, too, strong willingness to accommodate their parents' future needs reflected a sense of gratitude in the present. Given that such actions were committed freely and without concern for "squaring" up with parents, participants underscored the expressive nature and relational stakes of practical support, where what is given and received holds an inexact relation to one another specifically because what is given and received holds greater weight in signifying each person's faith and commitment to the bond between them. Extending this idea, we could say that participants accepted parental care while continually (through often implicitly) monitoring and nourishing the bond between themselves and their parents. Whereas in market terms, one might only observe that young adults accrued the greatest share of material and economic benefits, in the terms of caregiving likened to gift-giving (in its qualities as freely-given, expressive, priceless, and festive), both parents and

participants appeared to benefit from an experience of mutual recognition and confidence in the permanence in their bond (Ricoeur, 2004/2005).

Clearly distinguished from the most positive experiences of caregiving, Lois seemed to be caught up in striving to accept practical support as if it had no emotional or relational implications (e.g., as though it incurs personal debt without also threatening the bond). An absence of shared understanding and responsiveness to one another was both perpetuated and expressed through broken processes of caregiving and gift-giving. At the outset, Lois' discourses signalled little recognition of the person offering support (her mother); care was divorced from the actions and identity of her mother or was viewed as lacking and as revealing a flawed parental figure (as a neglectful caregiver). Lois alternated between two constructions of herself: first, as a victim of a lack of care, and second, as a person striving to continue accepting support as a consumer – that is, in a depersonalized and purely rational way (Godbout, 1992/1998). To some extent, Lois already understood that this was impossible but could not help herself from acting in accordance with this illusion of detachment. Caught between her desires to protect herself from the pain of rejection and her desire for a good and loving bond, Lois struggled to accept that she might be causing suffering through her inability to act out of recognition for her mother's generosity. She struggled to assign herself responsibility for the bond, feeling highly insecure about its permanence and carrying recollections of a historical denial of care that reinforced mistrust and guardedness. Armed with an ethics based on the justice of equivalence (Ricoeur, 2004/2005), Lois did not want to take responsibility or offer anything of herself to someone who similarly offered nothing and took no responsibility for the bond. Propped up by a reductionist narrative – and with limited resources for incorporating nuance or alternative perspectives into that narrative – vulnerability and a lack of faith paralyzed Lois, her mother, and the bond itself.

Finally, in a third type of caregiving experiences, participants perceived some disjuncture between the type of care they desired and the kind that they received, however, unlike Lois' case, these participants responded to care in a way that reflected both a concern for self and reciprocal concern for parents. Experiences of excess concern were present when protectiveness demanded a response from participants, disrupting the flow of experience and creating an irritating obligation to convince parents of their sound judgment or adequate condition. In the case of Keith, maternal concerns were amplified by personal doubts and social delegitimization, which

resulted in particularly distressing and demoralizing experiences. In addition to excessive concern, some participants depicted a desire for different forms of support or greater support, whether in terms of caretaking of pets, childcare, or shows of affection. How did participants respond to that excessive or limited support? In terms of the former, participants reflected on their own needs and the aspects of self/world that were threatened by a lack of care or excessive care. A variety of possible sources of vulnerability were considered: financial security, identity as a caretaker, occupational security, physical safety, and emotional well-being. Consideration was also given to parents' roles, circumstances, and experiences that alternatively generated an over-concern with the child's welfare or a limited capacity for providing a style of care fitting with the participant's desires. In evaluating their parents' over-concern, participants considered their parents' life-long responsibilities and attachments as parents, their imperfect knowledge of the child's situation, and their emotional responses to uncertainty. In understanding their parents' misses in providing care, participants considered entrenched family dynamics, misperceptions, and challenges in recognizing the participant's alterity, and limits to emotional and financial resources. Overall, attention to these specific (non-universal) factors highlights the relevance of exercising practical wisdom in evaluating the exchange of care within the family; whereas the ideal of the perfect caregiver existed in the abstract, participants were willing to let go or forgive instances of imperfect care, knowing that their parents were also imperfect, needy creatures who themselves desired the solicitude, generosity, and good faith of participants as active contributors to the bond between them. In these instances, the value of a parent's imperfect caregiving was interpreted not only in relation to the ideal form of caregiving, but also in relation to the particulars of everyday life and personal commitments (Mattingly, 2014; Ricoeur, 1990/1992). Simultaneously acknowledging their parents' commitments to them and their practical circumstances (including they and their parents' emotional and material resources, frameworks of knowledge, and propensity for initiating change), participants responded to imperfect caregiving in ways that preserved the bond between them. In responding to over-protectiveness, participants reassured their parents, attempted to convince them of their sound judgment, or avoided confrontation that could lead to a breach in the relationship. In responding to limits of practical support, Adison forgave her parents for what they could not give her, and Nina avoided disturbing the generally positive system they had in place for providing childcare. In receiving access to a car that failed to represent her identity, Nina accepted the situation, seeming to

appreciate the functional dimensions of that support. In brief, participants' actions reflected gratitude not only for the material value of what was given, but also for the parent who tried their best to support and care for them in whichever ways they could. Again, these examples highlight a separation between the value of support in itself and the value of support in terms of the intention behind it. In contrast to Lois' framing, these participants retained faith in the parent-child bond despite the flaws, limits, or unshared interpretations of caregiving at times. Believing in the good intentions of their parents, participants responded with their own good intentions, continuing the circulation of gifts between parent and child. Ricoeur's (2004/2005) principle of inexactitude bears relevance here again: what participants perceived as being given to them (imperfect or unsuitable as it was) did not have to hold an exact relation to what they provided in return (acceptance, forgiveness, letting go, avoidance, etc.) since the intentions signalled through the act of giving (or even the attempt of giving) generated mutual faith in the bond.

While it would be a mistake to generalize the observed distribution of positive and negative experiences, this description suggests that from young adults' perspectives, receiving care in one's 20s and 30s does not inherently compromise personal well-being, parental well-being, or the parent-child bond. Rather, a parent's protectiveness, help, and affection acquire significance in practical circumstances: in relation to the young adults' aims in receiving support, their impressions of their parents' confidence in them, their narrativization of their parents' actions, and the resources they possess for initiating change in the relationship.

If meaning is always grounded within a pragmatic context (Good, 1994; Kleinman, 1999), then a robust interpretation must examine factors in the social and historical environments playing into the patterns observed – in other words, “how large-scale forces alter interpersonal relations” (Kleinman, 1995, p. 186). Most glaringly, the practical support that participants received was tied to their economic statuses. Nearly all participants described the value of the shared home in relation to tuition costs, debt loads, low wages, and expensive rental housing. Only three participants (Grey, Ria, and Nina) claimed that financial considerations were not part of their decisions to live at home; their priorities were restoring mental health (Grey), the companionship of family (Ria), and raising a well-adjusted child (Nina). Post-secondary attendance was also closely tied to participants' receiving housing, financial support, and food from parents. Ten participants remarked that by saving them money, their living arrangement was promoting their educational attainment. Further, all ten participants who were depending on

their parents for groceries were students, with nine either unemployed or working part-time. The five participants who purchased their own groceries all worked full-time, and four of the five were currently non-students (including one doing a paid internship). In addition, the only participant who was paying “real” rent (money that would not be returned to them in the future) had been employed full-time for over a decade, was a homeowner, and was not a student. Since practical support varied with student and employment situations, it appeared to be given according to a status-based logic, rather than an age-based logic. In the terms of Turner (1969), most participants were engaging in a “status elevation ritual,” occupying a temporary low social position that in the end would allow them reverse their dependence and become providers themselves.

While practical support was tied to the young adults’ financial and career situations, so too was it tied to parents’ social positions. Specifically, financial support tended to correlate with parental income, such that the parents who provided the most financial assistance were also the parents receiving the highest salaries (by participants’ estimates). All parents who had provided significant financial assistance in the recent past had combined incomes of over \$130,000 and all were intact couples as opposed to being single or re-coupled. One participant whose parent was single and made a high salary did not receive financial assistance; the participant proudly connected that fact to values of resourcefulness and self-sufficiency in the family. Interestingly, parental education only generally predicted patterns of financial assistance; for example, of the nine participants who received no financial assistance, three had parents with no post-secondary education, whereas all three of the participants who received substantial financial assistance had two parents who had attained a post-secondary degree or diploma. The clearest patterns therefore concerned cases in which both or neither of the participants’ parents had received post-secondary degrees or diplomas. The link between parental resources and financial support highlights the transmission of inequality across generations. While such processes are not new, their effects may be especially pronounced today as families shoulder the burdens of massively diminished government subsidization of post-secondary education – from 92% in 1974 to just 55% in 2016 (Canadian Federation of Students, 2016), an estimated tripling of Canadian tuition rates since the early 1990s (Shaker et al., 2013), the doubling of rental costs in Saskatoon between 2003 and 2013 (CBC News, 2014), and stagnant real wages in Canada dating back to the 1970s (Minsky, 2017).

Gendered patterns of support were most clearly visible in the provision of practical support, where mothers' and fathers' roles and responsibilities diverged. According to participants, mothers tended to do more cooking, cleaning, and caretaking, while fathers tended to do more household repairs, yard work, and supplementary cooking. In addition, mothers were reported to be doing a greater share of household labor, which corresponds to the general pattern observed in Canada today. Sociologist Barbara Mitchell (2004a) argues that prolonged dependence on the parental household creates pressure on mothers, since they perform the bulk of the household labor. The patterns I observed could suggest that coresidence reinforces existing gender inequalities; however, what is unclear is whether these differences are experienced as unfair burdens or not. Within this study, participants were both accepting and critical of the distribution of labor in the household, with three participants (all women) feeling that fathers ought to do more, but in most other cases, appearing to accept gendered disparities according to the specific environments, capacities, and the familial roles they inhabited. To develop a more robust interpretation of the gendered implications of caregiving in this context, future research could examine the significance of household labor among parents of all genders.

With regards to family structure, I will raise only tentative thoughts about siblings, the re-coupling of parents, and families headed by single parents. Among the 15 participants, three lived with mothers who had remarried or recoupled: Grey (age 33), Ria (age 23), and Walter (age 25). Grey's mother had been with her now-husband for nine years (since Grey was 22 years old); Ria's mother had been with her now-husband for nine years (since Ria was 14 years old); and Walter's mother had been with her boyfriend for five years (since Walter was 20 years old). The timing of coupling – but more importantly, the acceptance of the parent's partner into the family – informed participants' constructions of that individual as a caregiver. Specifically, Grey and Ria appeared to construct their stepfathers as caregivers more readily than Walter. Both acknowledged their stepfathers' protectiveness and comforting manner towards them, whereas Walter did neither of these things. Both Grey and Ria were eager to return support to their stepfathers as recognition for what they had received; Walter, again, did not express this intention. With Ria and Grey's mothers remarrying, their mothers' partners also held a different status as compared to Walter's mother's boyfriend, who was not married to his mother but resided with them. Indeed, Grey even suggests that her relationship to her mother's partner would be different were they not married: "if he wasn't married to my mom, I wouldn't consider

him a parental figure.” The ways participants addressed each of these people also tells us about their roles: Ria often referred to her stepfather as “dad,” whereas Grey referred to her stepfather most often as “Carl,” and Walter referred to his mom’s boyfriend as “my mom’s boyfriend” or “Ron.” This likely reflects the fact that Walter and Grey continued to stay in contact with their biological fathers and refer to these men as “dad.” By contrast, Ria had had no contact with her biological father since the age of two. In summary, participants’ constructions of their mothers’ partners as caregivers appeared to relate to the partner’s integration into the family and the status of the biological father.

Siblings also appeared to be significant in the self-definition of young adults as receivers of care. Specifically, several participants identified themselves as good receivers of care by opposing themselves to siblings who were construed as ungrateful or disrespectful. Thirteen participants had at least one sibling, and of these, six told stories about a sister or brother who they felt violated the rules governing the economy of gift-giving, by asking for too much, accepting too much, lacking courtesy, or failing to offer anything to parents in return. Despite this, only one participant expressed jealousy (in the present) over what they received versus what their sibling received. Given these findings, it may be that judgments of a sibling’s treatment toward a parent may influence the sibling bond as much as their perceptions of parental fairness between siblings. Certainly, future research could examine sibling conflicts about gratitude toward parents, cooperation in providing return gifts to parents, and differences in what level of care is considered appropriate and beneficial. Beyond this, it could be valuable to investigate parent-child relationships between siblings, since each sibling’s embodiment of the care-receiver role may also connect to the parent’s unique treatment of each child.

Over the course of this chapter, I have noted how practical forms of care were conceived of as generally temporary and transitional – although their parents would never cease to be their caregivers, all participants expected that in the future, they would not require their parents’ help to the same degree as in the present. Borrowing from Turner (1969), I suggested that this temporal character of practical support makes it akin to a status elevation ritual, in that the participants were accepting their present positions of dependence in order to access positions as providers in their futures. Such a characterization raises questions about obedience and authority with respect to parents. Specifically, Turner (1969) argues that within rites of passage, initiates must accept without complaint the rules of their instructors or superiors. I have noted already that

seeing parents as homeowners contributed to felt obligations of household courtesy and deference. What else did participants say about the way authority operated within the household? What forms of power did parents possess, and which did young adults see as legitimate? What did they submit to and what did they resist? Such questions will be the topic of the next chapter.

CHAPTER 3: PARENTS AS AUTHORITIES

Having become images of ghostly relations under the operation of projection, we have to be *induced to embody* them in our lives: to enact, unbeknown to ourselves, a shadow play, as images, of images of images...of the dead, who have in their turn embodied and enacted such dramas projected upon them, and induced in them, by those before them. (Laing, 1969, p. 11)

If the prestige of authority displaces one's own judgment, then authority is in fact a source of prejudices. But this does not preclude its being a source of truth, and that is what the Enlightenment failed to see when it denigrated all authority. (Gadamer, 1975/2004, p. 280)

Developmental researchers have long been interested in how different parenting approaches permit or prohibit children from developing autonomy (Blos, 1967; Erikson, 1963; Hall, 1904; Mahler, 1974). Beyond examining this process in infancy, childhood, or adolescence, researchers have now begun to look at how it unfolds in young adulthood, with the common assumption being that as young people reach adulthood, they ideally achieve with their parents a “more symmetrical relationship between two autonomous adults” (Padilla-Walker et al., 2019, p. 1), or a relationship of “near-equals” (Arnett, 2006, p. 47) where parents have less of a role in moderating their child's behaviours and views. Researchers have examined how parenting behaviors cluster with one another, producing various classifications of parenting style that permit children more or less autonomy (Nelson et al., 2011, 2015; Padilla-Walker & Nelson, 2012; Padilla-Walker et al., 2019).²⁶ They have also examined how these parenting styles correlate with child adjustment (Howard et al., 2020; Jorgensen et al., 2017; McKinney & Kwan, 2018; Nelson et al., 2011; Parra et al., 2019; Reed et al., 2016; van Ingen et al., 2015). Tending to rely on standardized scales of parenting styles and child adjustment, this line of research has often neglected to examine 1) how young adults themselves construct their parents' power over them, 2) how parental influence surfaces differently or similarly across life domains, and 3) in which cases parents' dominance may be viewed as legitimate – especially outside of comparisons between so-called “collectivist” or “individualist” cultures. As an exception to the last point, some preliminary research by Padilla-Walker et al. (2014) found that a large majority

²⁶ A partial list of these classifications includes the following styles: permissive, authoritarian, authoritative, neglectful, helicoptering, autonomy-supportive, psychologically-controlling, inconsistent, controlling-indulgent, uninvolved, warm helicopter, controlling helicopter, low-involved, average, and high controlling helicopter.

of young adults agreed that their parents had legitimate control in multiple domains of their life – a finding that puzzled the authors. As they stated, “It is uncertain why, during a period in which there are increased expectations for autonomy . . . a shared approach to control can appear to work well for such a large portion of young people” (p. 15).

In response to these gaps and ambiguities, this chapter examines how co-resident young adults construct, experience, respond to, and evaluate their parents’ forms of governance. Many questions support this general aim: how do young adults construct their parents’ authority and control? When is parental power acceptable or useful? When is it illegitimate or unreasonable? Do young adults living at home experience a sense that their parents hold legitimate authority within some domains, as has been suggested by Padilla-Walker et al. (2014)? If so, how is it characterized? What are its features? How is it distinct from blind obedience, subjugation, or tyranny? Do participants view themselves as lacking knowledge or expertise that parents possess? How do young adults respond to the abuse of power? Do they submit to it, resist it, challenge it, avoid it? What are the consequences of these approaches, in terms of young adults’ relations to themselves or to their parents? To what extent do young adults perceive themselves as being capable of acting in the ways they desire? To which extent do they feel their actions, words, or stories are constrained by their parents? How do they cope with such constraints?

To interpret such political processes and experiences within families and between generations, I will draw on philosopher Hannah Arendt’s (1961) concepts of tyranny, authority, and “thinking” characterized as a political mode of action.

According to Arendt (1961), a ruler who relies on authority governs according to laws. These laws are based in sources transcending the political realm but informing its hierarchical structure. Arendt (1961) describes the authoritarian regime as

a governmental structure whose source of authority lies outside itself, but whose seat of power is located at the top, from which authority and power is filtered down to the base in such a way that each successive layer possess some authority, but less than the one above it, and where, precisely because of this careful filtering process, all layers from top to bottom are not only firmly integrated into the whole but are interrelated like converging rays whose common focal point is the top of the pyramid as well as the transcending source of authority above it. (p. 98)

In other words, the authority central to authoritarian governance “transcends the political realm” (p. 97), providing legitimacy to it and informing its hierarchical structure, but ultimately existing outside of it. Arendt (1961) provides as an example Ancient Rome, where authority was drawn from the past – in the founding of Rome. In this context, answers to important questions could be drawn from the great ancestors who laid the foundations of society; individuals in the present looked with reverence to the past, seeking only to augment those foundations (Arendt, 1961). When enacting authority, then, parents represent tradition, such that if the child disrespects them, they disrespect the tradition. Importantly, although some might interpret authority as a form of violence or power through its association of obedience, Arendt (drawing on Mommsen) counters that it is conceptually closer to counselling than to coercion:

Mommsen called it “more than advice and less than a command, an advice which one may not safely ignore,” whereby it is assumed that “the will and the actions of the people like those of children are exposed to error and mistakes and therefore need ‘augmentation’ and confirmation through the council of elders.” The authoritative character of the “augmentation” of the elders lies in its being a mere advice, needing neither the form of command nor external coercion to make itself heard. (p. 123)

Philosopher Paul Ricoeur (2004/2005) – himself drawing from Hans-Georg Gadamer – echoes such an understanding of authority as the “recognition of superiority.” That is, Ricoeur distinguishes authority as a right to command – an “accredited” or “authorized” form of power that is not equivalent to violence or force. Similarly, Arendt points to authority at one point as “expert knowledge [that] commands confidence so that neither force nor persuasion are necessary to obtain compliance” (p. 108). Citing Gadamer, Ricoeur emphasizes that authority is based on earned recognition: an acknowledgment of another’s superior wisdom, judgment, or knowledge. By implication, Gadamer claims that “authority has to do not with obedience but rather with knowledge” (Ricoeur, 2004/2005, pp. 280-281, citing Gadamer, 1991, p. 279). In sum, both Arendt and Ricoeur invoke a concept of authority that is derived from tradition and can be drawn on to guide future generations, simultaneously providing security, stability, and a feeling of permanence that is especially valuable to humans as mortal beings.

In situations where tradition cannot clarify or provide an answer, Arendt points to the “polis” as a model of political communication and decision-making (the Greek polis being her point of reference). In this political mode, individuals engage in negotiation to convince others of

an initiative or path that will lead to the good. In other words, within the polis, “thinking” (Arendt, 1971) is the dominant way of governing action and it is used when traditional knowledge (i.e., the authority of the past) cannot be applied. In addition, the thinking that characterized the polis is described by Arendt (1961) as being removed when tyranny becomes the dominant political regime, for “a polis belonging to one man is no polis” meaning that the tyrant “deprived the citizens of that political faculty which they felt was the very essence of freedom” (pp. 104-5). From Arendt’s perspective, thinking implies ushering something new into the world – an action that involves “the freedom to call something into being which did not exist before, which was not given, not even as an object of cognition or imagination, and which therefore, strictly speaking, could not be known” (p. 151).

Arendt (1961) defines tyranny as a system of governance where one rules all according to self-interest. In direct contrast to the polis – which requires the company of others, spontaneous action, and a social space – a tyrannical regime is maintained through violence, coercion, and the isolation of the individuals being ruled over. To be clear, the term “violence” may be interpreted broadly here, as referring to techniques “meant to intimidate witnesses, to suppress criticism, and to prevent resistance” (Kleinman, 1995, p. 175, referring to the techniques of violence used by “repressive regimes”). In line with this, Arendt (1961) specifies that within tyrannies, one may find “the abolition of political freedom” (p. 96). Tyranny is clearly distinct from other regimes, for “the tyrant rules in accordance with his own will and interest” (Arendt, 1961, p. 97) as opposed to ruling in accordance with transcendent, external principles (as in authority) or through social negotiation and persuasion by argument (as in the “thinking” within the polis). Arendt (1961) identifies tyranny as the most egalitarian form of government, in that each of the individuals ruled by the tyrant is “equal, namely equally powerless” (p. 99). Reflecting this, tyrannies consist of a very simple structure where all subjects are ruled by one individual located above them: their superior.

In relation to young adults living with their parents, the concepts of authority, tyranny, and the polis raise important questions about the governance of action within these families. To which extent are parents represented as bearers of authority? Are there principles handed down from parents to young adults seen as foundational and transcendent? In which domains does authority prevail and in which domains is it necessary for negotiation to occur? Are there any moments, spaces, or interactions in which parents are represented as tyrants, leading according to

their own will and desire, rather than by referring to a principle that transcends them? To what extent do participants feel affiliated with rules or beliefs their parents follow? Or in what sense do they feel compelled to adapt or innovate on them? In which circumstances do parents engage in persuasion through argument? In relation to what kinds of topics or decisions? More generally, how do participants understand their freedom, constriction, or subjugation in their relationships with their parents, and how do the forms of authority, tyranny, or negotiation surface in family life?

In this chapter, I establish the significance of parents as authority figures in the lives of these young adults, paying close attention to the ways in which authority is represented and the ways participants respond to it. In line with my conceptual framework, I emphasize how participants' acceptance of authority does not impede their senses of autonomy, but rather implies a freedom, first, to recognize and judge parents' knowledge as legitimate and, second, to share with parents a confidence in a set of principles for living the good life. Participants depict authority as their parents' main modes of influence; however, they also describe their parents' engagement in more egoistic and unreasonable influence, as well as their occasional willingness to engage in collective dialogue with them.

Whereas in the previous chapter, I presented several caregiving roles in sequence, in this chapter I will discuss the role of parental influence in more context-bound ways, since the stakes, bases, and mechanisms of parental influence were often connected to a specific context being described. Abstracted from context, these important considerations might be lost. A second justification for this structure concerns the unevenness of my data across domains; that is, some of the topics I describe here were brought up spontaneously in interviews rather than being anticipated and integrated into the standard interview script. I have tried to identify instances where my data are somewhat "thin," recognizing that my claims in these cases cannot be as bold but simultaneously hoping that the next researcher may see my findings insightful or useful somehow. Let me begin by offering some context regarding participants' global views of their autonomy in relation to their parents. I will then move on to a discussion of how young adults perceived their parents' powers within specific realms of education and work, finances, romantic relationships, parenting, space, and technical and social skills.

3.1 Affirmations of Freedom and Internalized Norms

Over the course of my interviews, it became clear that participants did not feel very constricted living with their parents. I present evidence for this claim in this section, drawing on participants' general comments about life at home, their behaviour when parents leave town, and their reactions to the idea of a contract between parents and adult children who live with them.

3.1.1 General Senses of Freedom

All participants expressed a sense that they were overall free to act as they wished in their homes and that their parents seldom "forced" them to do things, held them to strict rules, or asserted their dominance in the relationship. Participants living with two parents tended to describe parents as a collective unit when discussing rules, restrictions and freedom in a general way, using a "they" to indicate their mother and father; however, five participants distinguished one parent as being stricter than the other and two participants referred primarily to their mother as the sole authority of the household (in both cases, when the mother had re-coupled in the last 5 to 10 years). The theme of freedom was expressed in many ways. First, all participants used terms that highlighted fluidity and plasticity, stating that their parents were "relaxed" (Molly), "slack" (Lois), "laid back" (Laura), "lenient" (Amber), "easy-going" (Keith, Sylvia), "open-minded" (Ria, Molly), not "strict" (Amber, Kristine, Walter, Ria, Jane, Adison, Molly, Laura), not "overbearing" (Grey, Vincent), and not "exercis[ing] her authority much" (Iris). Complementing these depictions of their parents, participants emphasized that they could usually behave in a way that they desired, for example stating that "I feel like we do what we want. And it just happens to work" (Grey) or "I pretty much do almost anything that I want to do" (Jane). Several participants also emphasized the separation of their lives from their parents' lives, noting that they had very separate schedules, were separate people, and that they did not intrude on one another's lives. Molly and Jane stressed that whereas some friends felt trapped living with their parents, they did not experience a need to "escape." Indeed, as a related point, Kristine, Walter, and Vincent affirmed that if parents were trying to exert greater control – if they had a bunch of "crazy rules" (Walter) or if their parent was "trying to be in control of things" (Vincent) – then their relationships would be strained, and, at least for Kristine, "I'd be out a of there a long time ago!" Amber, Ria, and Jane also situated their parents as permitting them to do what they wanted, while providing guidance and counseling. As Jane explained, "It's not like they will not give you advice but they don't force you to do things." Similarly, Ria expressed, "they just let me be but at the same time they have their eyes on me, like they know what I'm doing. So it's

like giving freedom but still having a, like focus, having a, um, guidance on me.” Importantly, Ria (who, as a teenager, had immigrated to Canada with her parents) felt that her parents – and particularly her mother – found a way to bridge the more traditional, conservative style of parenting of their home country with what Ria described as a “modern,” individualistic style of parenting in Canada. Overall, then, when speaking in general terms, participants tended to emphasize a lack of undue constraint in their parent-child relationships.

Comparing the present with their mid-to-late adolescent years (i.e., high school), participants identified discontinuities and continuities in the forms of governance within the family: five basic plots traced these trajectories of influence from their teenage years to the present. The most basic distinction between plots was between participants who stressed an overall decrease of restrictions and limitations (9 of 15 participants) and those who stressed a continued lack of restrictions and limitations (6 of 15 participants).

Participants in the first category mentioned that formerly, for example, parents had set more limits or expectations around staying out late, getting tattoos, styling their hair, drinking alcohol, having members of the opposite sex sleep over, or keeping parents notified of their whereabouts. These restrictions were lifted around the time of high school graduation except in the case of Ria, who felt her most liberating turning point had occurred when she married her husband at age 22, almost a year before the interview (her husband was living overseas for the time being, but would be joining the family in the coming months). Within this group, a division between participants’ experiences surfaced: there were seven participants who prior to this point (i.e., during their late teen years) actively rebelled against the limitations placed on them. As an example of the rebellious type, Vincent explained that “every time I’d ask to like go out and do something, a lot of the times it’s like ‘no you don’t leave the house’ or whatever.” In response to his mother’s overbearing ways, Vincent described how he adapted; he began to “lie and scheme” to his mother’s face, sneak in and out of the house, and “get in some fights” with her. He explained his resistance and even opposition in engaging with his mom: “back then there was a thing where like ‘don’t do this’ and then it’s like ‘well I’m gonna go do this.’” Like Vincent, the other six participants who rebelled felt constrained by their parents’ regulations, especially if they did not correspond to the expectations their peers’ parents had set (for instance, regarding curfews, overnight guests, being grounded, etc.). It should be stressed, too, that these participants discussed these experiences with a self-deprecating tone, seeming to indicate that since that time,

their worlds had become more expansive and issues that once might have seemed like a grave injustice now could be viewed with greater perspective, as described by Sylvia, “there was [conflict], you know because when you’re a teenager you just, everybody does stupid stuff. I remember there was a few arguments but nothing like really bad.”

In contrast to these participants, Kristine and Ria were more accepting of their parents’ restrictions prior to graduation (Kristine) or prior to being married (Ria). Kristine related her approach to her position as youngest sibling of four, where she witnessed the direct consequences of acting out:

But when my sisters were in high school, man they came home at like one in the morning and on weekends two in the morning. They were late for curfew every day. I think my mom was going through menopause at that time too so, like, everything going on, my mom was like, not a happy camper. And she lost it on my sisters a lot. And I was like, “I don’t want to do that, why would I want my mom to get that mad at me?” So I guess they kind of, like, broke the ground on that part.

Ria, meanwhile, spoke broadly about how prior to marriage, she accepted her parents’ roles in guiding her decision-making, saying that “I would let them take my decisions and it didn’t even, like, bother me that much.” By contrast, Ria felt that her marriage had connected her with a new person; in doing so, this had created distance between her and her parents, removing some of their influence on her. In summary, nine participants perceived a global decrease in parental restrictiveness from the end of high school to the present, but most (seven of nine) were desiring greater freedom prior to that point.

The second group was made up of six participants who felt that since high school, they had been held to few expectations by their parents. Of these participants, Amber, Laura, Lois, and Nina described several manifestations of their parents’ hands-off approach: going to bed when they felt like it, occasionally drinking or smoking marijuana without hiding it, being allowed to get a tattoo, having few required chores, etc. As Amber described, “they were pretty lenient about everything.” Importantly, three of the six participants embraced their parents’ lax approaches, viewing them as signifying their parents’ trust. Laura recalled that her parents trusted her judgment, that they maintained a high level of communication, and that as a result, her parents did not get “mad” when she bent the rules from time to time (for instance, drinking

under-age or staying out late). I asked her how she felt about her parents' approach, and whether she felt she might have benefitted from having more restrictions. She responded:

I was into it. Um... again, like I knew I wasn't being like, abusing all the rules. Like, they trust me so of course in return like, I didn't want to upset them, like, you want to make your parents proud essentially. But... it was just, yeah, like they – they were cool with it. We talked a lot like about... if there was something that – they weren't always being like “where are you? What are you doing? Who are you with?” Kind of deal, so.

In other words, what these participants interpreted as freedom was not so much related to a lack of parental care or responsibility; it seemed that parents may have perceived a mutuality of moral values and worlds between themselves and the child, making it unnecessary to impose rules for promoting good and right conduct. By contrast, the other three participants interpreted their parents' relaxed approaches as evidence of disregard. Lois described the latter scenario, correcting my presumption that her mother's lax approach signaled confidence in her:

L: there was the odd time I'd be up till 4 in the morning. ((laughs)). Obviously the rest of the week sucked. But... sh- she didn't care. She didn't say anything or do anything.

KM: It sounds like she's- trusted you:, to:... take care of [yourse- I mean, or -]

L: [I don't know if] it'd be trust so much, or just that... she just didn't really care.

KM: Ok.

L: Which is... sad ((laughs)).

Like Lois, Nina and Grey both experienced parental permissiveness that was colored negatively (at least at the time). For her part, Nina recalled “trying to get in trouble” since she wanted more attention from her parents. She recalled having a teenage friend whose mother noticed every single thing in her room and was on her case about it. Nina, by contrast, felt like her parents would not notice anything, “And I was kinda like, “Wha:::t?” Like okay this is not fair, like your mom cares so::: much and she like is watching you. But like I think at the time I thought that my parents didn't care. But they actually just trusted me maybe.” Unlike Lois, Nina felt that now, she might have misread the situation and perhaps due to her “teenage brain, I wasn't quite like thinking about it so deeply.” Grey also felt that in some ways, she went through her adolescent years lacking parental presence and guidelines. As she said, “I hate to say it, but like, I felt like I didn't have parents necessarily, even though I mean I know they did the best they could. But there was times when I was just like, ‘this is nuts. Like, this household is crazy.’” As is evident

in the quotation, Grey maintains an awareness of the circumstances surrounding her parents' actions: that both of them were struggling with addictions (alcohol and gambling) while "trying to take care of us" and that "they did the best they could." In sum, Lois, Nina, and Grey each experienced excessively permissive parenting prior to the end of high school, but Nina and Grey had cultivated alternative interpretations of their experiences. Crucially, thinking about the past through more than one story (Frank, 2010) seemed to be connected to their forgiveness of their parents and ability to move on from this conflict. In these cases, past and present could be distinguished from one another, not only in terms of their parents' governance, but also in terms of their increased capacity for thinking through their parents' permissiveness. This stands in contrast to Lois' blending of past and present, evident in her comment that "it's not like I did anything dangerous or needed the cops to show up or what not, but at the same time it's like, well... I don't really feel like I have a support from my family as friends might." In both time points, she felt (and feels) neglected by her mother and at no point does she entertain an alternative interpretation of her mother's past permissiveness.

In summary, approaches and responses to parental governance before the present varied considerably. In nearly all cases, such dynamics led to the participant experiencing fewer restrictions (which fit with their desires) or led the participant to a similar absence of restrictions (which fit with their desires or was re-evaluated in light of the circumstances at the time). Only Lois seemed to be "caught up" (Frank, 2010) in a story where a lack of parental governance bridged the past and present. Altogether, this section suggests the importance of adaptability between parents and participants in co-creating mutually acceptable forms of governance. Simultaneously, it reveals the significance of recognizing shared moral frameworks and worlds to prevent the abuse of power (where power could present itself both through parents' arbitrary, unnecessary, and unjust restrictions and through participants' unwillingness to hear others' stories or shift one's interpretations). The topic of shared moral frameworks will become a clearer theme over the course of this chapter, where I will present evidence that participants typically viewed their parents' standards and values not as externally imposed but as congruent with their personal codes of conduct.

3.1.2 Internalized Norms or Fears of Detection?

Plato's description of the ring of Gyges is a classical thought experiment in the philosophy of ethics and morality: if you had a ring that made you invisible, what would you do?

This was the inspiration for a “what if” question that I posed to participants, hoping to understand more about the motivations for their behavior within the household. I was curious about whether their obedience was motivated by internalized principles or whether they were motivated by a fear of backlash or punishment from their parents. To get at the heart of this topic, I asked them to tell me what they do when their parents go out of town: a situation that implies the retreat of the parent’s gaze and presumably allows young adults to act in accordance with their own moral principles.

Of the 15 participants, 14 emphasized that they would act in pretty much the same way they normally did with only a slight shift in behavior. They said that their habits might change “Mm::, a little bit” (Lois) or “Not overly” (Vincent), that “nothing really” would change (Amber, Grey, Walter, Jane), that their behaviours would be “pretty similar I suppose” (Keith), or that “for the most part my behavior doesn’t change” (Iris). Each of these fourteen, with their one or two exceptions, seemed to echo Ria’s point that when her parents were away she would live “in the usual way I would.” Nina, on the other hand, mentioned several things that would change and unlike the other 14 participants, she did not downplay the degree of contrast between scenarios. Potentially, Nina may have experienced a home environment that was more constricting, such that if her parents were away, she was in more acute need of being lifted from restriction. As we will see in the next sections, this interpretation appeared to be consistent with her feeling that her parents were excessively judgmental about several domains of life (career, parenting, the use of space, and her choice of residence).

If parents were going out of town, participants reported that they might alter their socializing and cleaning practices. In addition, some participants mentioned a sense of being liberated from the social consciousness that they would otherwise maintain with parents at home. Four participants stated that they would consider “having people over,” which they distinguished from having a “party.” With parents away, these participants felt it would be less awkward to invite friends over and they would be able to occupy spaces in the home that their parents had the authority to claim (such as the upstairs of the home or the living room). Three participants (all women) also noted that they might invite a boyfriend or date to stay over, which otherwise, again, they might experience as awkward. Four participants noted that they would take this opportunity to clean according to their own schedule and desires, including leaving dishes in the

sink a little longer (Kristine, Sylvia, Nina, Vincent), making big messy meals in the kitchen (Nina), or leaving socks lying around (Kristine).

A unique kind of intentionality was also associated to the thought of parents going away. Sylvia described that she would enjoy not worrying about “stepping on anyone’s toes.” I asked her to explain to me what that meant:

S: It means like, annoying them, like doing something annoying or not doing something that you should do ((laughs)) Um, yeah.

KM: So when you’re avoiding stepping on other people’s toes –

S: Yeah like I try to be cleaner, like if my mom’s in a really bad mood or something ((laughs)) I’m like, “Ok! Be cleaner!” Try not to, you know, make her more upset!

((laughs))

Sylvia identified a kind of cautious self-awareness when her parents – and specifically, her mom – were at home, where keeping up to her parents’ standards of cleanliness emerged as one of the challenges of living with her parents. She relished the thought of freeing herself, if only temporarily, from these obligations. In line with this, three participants also stated that if they were on their own at home, they would be loud or quiet on their own terms, with Nina saying she would “blast” music in the kitchen as she cooked and Kristine and Jane noting that they would sleep in a little later, since their parents would not be bugging them or being loud in the morning. Ria and Iris said that they would indulge by eating pizza and Keith said that he would keep in touch with his brother about dinner plans and the like, but that he would not feel as obligated to text him his whereabouts. Finally, Lois, Laura, Kristine, and Grey each remarked that if their parents went out of town, they would take on additional household responsibilities, like doing more pet-care duties (Lois and Laura), trying to shovel snow to her dad’s standards (Kristine), and making sure that the house looked occupied when no one was home (Grey).

In sum, participants affirmed that their behaviors would diverge only in small ways from their day-to-day routines – a dish left overnight, a few friends coming over, an indulgent meal, etc. Their remarks point more to a loosening of social obligations as opposed to an opportunistic form of “antidiscipline” (de Certeau, 1984/1988) that might be characteristic of a relationship between dominating and subjugated parties. Given the similarity between participants’ comportment with or without their parents’ presence, it would also appear that in the present,

participants' typical behaviors were governed more by internalized moral codes than by a fear of their parents' surveillance and punishment (Foucault, 1975/1995).

3.1.3 Internalized Norms or Formal Contracts?

A second hypothetical question came to me as I was reading general interest articles about launching young adults from the home. Some of these articles suggested that parents or families create a contract outlining the conditions young adults must meet in order to live at home (Bredehoft, 2017; Burrell, 2018; Christopher, 2020; Edmond, 2016; Lehman, 2020; Seniors First BC, 2020; Singletary, 2018, Weck, 2020). Such contracts are presented as universally beneficial as opposed to being useful within particular circumstances or relationship types.²⁷ I found the idea of the contract intriguing and proposed it to 12 of the 15 participants I interviewed (since the question only came to me after I had already completed interviews with three participants). I was curious about how they would respond to what these authors depicted as a common-sense and universal solution to some of the challenges of collective living.

All twelve of the participants who were asked this question felt that a contract could be beneficial in some scenarios; as they generally expressed, "it depends on the child" (Jane) and "if that's what some people need... to make it work at home, then that's cool!" (Adison). From their views, if the child was failing to live up to certain standards of respect, maturity, or fairness, then the contract could be an effective tool. First, a lack of drive or initiative was seen as an appropriate problem to solve through the use of a contract for a child who was a "deadbeat" who "does nothing" (Sylvia), "someone who's just kind of not living to their full potential" (Nina), "someone was living there and they weren't working or they weren't going to school or like, they were just kind of, like, slummin' out" (Laura), or "if your adult child is... just kind of using you to bum around" (Molly). Second, individuals who disrespected household rules were seen as deserving a formalized agreement: if an adult child did not contribute around the house (Sylvia), disrespected boundaries (Laura), or was wasteful (e.g., leaving lights on or using too much water) (Jane), then it could be helpful to clarify expectations using a contract. As Vincent put it, "I think if the kid or whatever or the adult child . . . was very disrespectful, um, and stuff like that and didn't really care then you kinda have to set lines to keep them in line." Finally, if an adult

²⁷ Uniquely, Christopher (2020) does argue that contracts may be most beneficial for parents and children who have experienced conflict in the past.

child was exploitative – if the “adult child is taking advantage of you” (Molly) or “mooching off the parents” (Vincent) – then a contract, again, could be a valid approach to resolving things.

A smattering of other scenarios were also suggested as appropriate for using a contract. Grey and Iris pointed out that people who need more structure and who have a more difficult time with ambiguity might find a contract appealing. Adison, from another standpoint, stated that families who have more difficulty expressing their needs and interests might benefit more from a formal agreement. Keith noted that a contract could be especially practical when it came to matters involving money. Finally, Ria suggested that this kind of tool would be more appropriate within individualistic cultures, especially where parents prefer to be “relieved from the responsibility of the child”; by contrast, she believed that in collectivist cultures, implicit contracts about family caregiving and receiving were grounded in tradition and established early on in life, with children seeing their parents and grandparents enacting a familiar pattern of communal living. A contract, thus, would be redundant given the existence of these foundational principles and practices.

All twelve participants held unfavorable views of living contracts when it came to their own families and households and for four main reasons. Nine participants claimed that in their situations a formal contract would be unnecessary. Specifically, they argued that because they already treated each other with mutual respect and care, a formal agreement would be redundant. As was described by Iris,

I: I feel no need for one and I don't believe that she feels the need for one.

KM: And then the reason that you don't feel the need for a contract would be what?

I: Ah, that we live well together, I trust her to treat me fairly and she trusts me to treat her fairly.

In a similar vein, Laura articulated that she and her parents related to one another through mutual respect:

I feel like it's very give and take on both ends for us, but like... I don't abuse it. Not that there's... they'd probably like to see me more, but. Um, yeah. I feel like it's not a (3) unfair or unequal relationship by any means for... like I don't feel like I just use them and take them for granted, kind of deal.

Adison and Laura added that because they maintained steady communication with their parents, they already understood their parents' expectations, so a contract would add little value. Adison, for example, stated:

most of the time, if I don't understand, I'll say so. I'll be like, "Okay, what do you want from me out of this situation? Like, I'm not quite sure. Y'know, like... do you want this, or do you want this," Or like, my parents – we've had family meetings about stuff like that.

By contrast, in families with less communication, a contract might be more necessary.

In line with their views that a contract would be unnecessary in their circumstances, several participants hinted that they would only expect a contract to be brought up as a redressive strategy to a violation of some norm. This was most clearly expressed in the questions participants hypothetically asked their parents in their responses. If their parents proposed to them the creation of a contract, they would wonder: how long had this been bothering you? (Grey); what did I do wrong? (Grey, Walter, Keith, Ria, Molly, Laura); why do we need this? (Keith, Adison, Molly, Vincent); why didn't you talk to me about it? (Grey, Vincent, Laura). These questions suggest at least three meanings. First, the questions suggest that a contract would signal a breach of expectations ("what did I do wrong?"). Second, the questions point to an expectation for parents and children to address tensions or conflicts as they come up ("why didn't you talk to me about it?" and "how long has this been bothering you?"). And finally, the question of necessity indicates a feeling that they are already acting in an ethical and just way.

In addition to views that contracts were unnecessary, participants (8 of the 12 who were asked this question) said that a formal contract between them and their parents would be strange or inappropriate. Several of these participants expressed that a formal – and especially, a written – arrangement belonged in the legal or business world. In that sense, this tool was felt to introduce "a different type of authority" (Keith). For example, Sylvia remarked that "I think we're close enough that, you know, we don't have to be formal and like 'o:h I'm getting this in writing in case you try to screw me' or whatever." In other words, participants felt that contracts belonged to the realm of justice, operating through calculation, equivalence, and certitude through the law; by contrast – and as I underscored in the previous chapter – participants' parent-child exchanges were strongly defined by the world of the gift and its dimensions of generosity, gratitude, unexpected reciprocity, and trust, which belong to the realm of the good (Ricoeur,

2004/2005). Reflecting this, Adison, Laura, and Iris said that a contract would be appropriate between landlords and tenants but would feel out of place in their relationship with their parents. Laura described: “I just think it’s funny that there would be like a con – I don’t know, but. I guess like, you know, like, you sign contracts when you rent places or do things, like, of the expectations. So I get that, but it’s just (2) it would be unlike my parents.”

Building on the notion that a contract would violate the logic of their relationships, seven participants also said that they would feel hurt, offended, or insulted if their parents proposed to them a contract. To them, a contract would signal their parents’ lack of faith in them. As Jane said, “I feel like that’s just so ridiculous, maybe I’ll probably just leave the house cause I’m not a child ((laughs)).” This suggests that the formalization of an agreement – and the distrust it signified – also would imply a judgment of her maturity or character. Similarly, Molly commented that a contract

could maybe be, in a way, a lack of trust that they don’t think their kids will... do it? And I feel like – and I feel like that’s when you’re almost like... micro-managing at home and I feel like – I feel like that might even ruin the relationship.

Molly’s point that a contract could feel like “micro-managing” implies that this tool would not help the child to affirm their own agency. Although a contract could potentially help to enforce the child’s compliance, it might remove from them the opportunity to freely think and act in pursuit of their own commitments (Mattingly, 2014). In other words, the contract might remove a sense of agency that only occurs as a rupture from automatism (Arendt, 1961).

Some participants (7/12) also stated or implied that alternative ways of clarifying expectations would be preferable than a contract. Jane for instance claimed that a contract would be unattractive to her, since “it’s not really effective to teach people when you force them to do things. It’s not as effective [as] you making them see reasons why they should do it.” In other words, Jane considered this tool one aimed at controlling behaviors, as opposed to transmitting transcendent moral principles. Possibly hinting at the inferiority of this tool, Molly also said that “I’d try to find like, an alternate way.” Grey, Vincent, and Laura each implied that they would expect their parents to talk to them before resorting to this kind of measure; as Laura stated, “in our situation it would be something, like, we’d talked about before, like... a passive aggressive, like letter or contract came out . . . It’s not going to be something that just builds up.” Likewise, Grey, Sylvia, and Adison each stated that they would prefer to “just have a conversation”

(Adison, Nina), “just talk to you if there’s a problem and not have to have like, something written” (Grey), have a “verbal agreement” (Sylvia), or even engage in “family meetings” as Adison’s family had done in the past. In brief, these participants implied that in addition to the implicit mode of gift-giving and the trust in authority, they also drew on rational debate (i.e., collective form of “thinking”) when conflict arose in the family.

In summary, a contract was undesirable for these participants on the grounds that it would be 1) unnecessary, 2) inappropriate, 3) hurtful, 4) detrimental, and 5) ineffective or otherwise impractical. Their comments indicated that they respected household rules and principles represented by their parents. Beyond that, their allusions to being offended by the proposal of a written contract suggest that beyond merely following orders, they felt strongly connected to the principles behind their actions. In brief, the principles that would be formalized in a contract were already integrated into their very beings as people who thought and acted to preserve and nourish their bonds with their parents. Such a depiction stands in sharp contrast to articles that evoke the figure of the coresident child as one who – without the support of formal, enforceable rules – will “become lazy or take advantage of you [the parents]” (Christopher, 2020).

3.1.4 Synthesis

Overall, then, when speaking in general terms, all participants tended to emphasize a lack of undue constraint in their parent-child relationships. This was evident in depictions of parents as flexible and open-minded, and as being opposite to parents who are either strict and demanding or disengaged. Beyond this, participants asserted their abilities to act in a way that they desired. Experiences of parents’ governance showed both continuities and discontinuities in relation to their mid-to-late adolescent years, such that some participants (9/15) emphasized a diminution of prohibitions and regulations which took place around high school graduation (8 participants) or at the point of marriage (Ria) and others (6/15) stressed a continued low level of restriction. Most participants were not motivated to obey by their parents’ gaze or fear of punishment, with 14 participants stating their parents’ absence would not alter their behaviors in a significant way, suggesting that their typical behaviors were governed more by internalized moral codes (Foucault, 1975/1995). Developing on this notion, participants viewed a formalized contract as holding potential for individuals who violated codes of conduct, but in their own situations, viewed it as an unnecessary, odd, and detrimental tool. Perhaps most tellingly, several

participants stated that they would be offended by this idea, indicating that their adherence to social norms was not superficial, and that it connected to their own values and sense of self-esteem.

In sum, participants identify themselves adhering to a set of principles that transcend their parents' positions as household heads; the principles reflect a higher "authority" that is distinct from a subjecting surveillance or imposed formula of conditions and consequences. Within this arrangement, participants do not conceive themselves as subjugated; their discourses are closer to reflecting the "absence of restraint and possession of 'the power of locomotion'" (Arendt, 1963, p. 33), which Arendt defines as a state of "liberty." In line with this, participants' general experiences of free action were consistent with Arendt's (1961) conception of authority as "implying an obedience in which men retain their freedom" (p. 106).

3.2 Education and Work

I described in the first chapter that two-thirds of the participants in this study felt that by sharing the parental home, they were better able to pursue post-secondary education, which was viewed as a springboard to a fulfilling position in the work market. In addition, I noted that for many, parents' interest in their day-to-day activities – including education and work – was conceived of as an indication of care. Beyond this, parents' judgments about participants' career tracks already have been described as generating tensions and conflicts between participants and their parents. Each of these pieces of evidence hinted at the weight of parental influence when it came to young adults' educational and working lives. In this section, I examine more closely how participants constructed their parents' involvement in shaping their work and career trajectories. I do this with an eye towards whether these trajectories and aims were interpreted according to three concepts. First, to which extent did participants view their paths as chosen free from the restraint of others – in other words, as choices characterized by liberty in Arendt's (1963) conception of it? Second, to which extent were these paths embarked upon with "freedom" in the sense of calling into existence something that previously did not exist (Arendt, 1961)? And third, to which extent were these paths – or participants' work ethics – anticipated by their parents' performances and narratives of work? In other words, how are participants' working lives informed by a tradition or what is "handed down from the past" (Weinsheimer & Marshall, 2004, p. xvi) and what are their responses to those traditions they have inherited?

3.2.1 Choosing Educational and Vocational Paths

When it came to choosing their education and career paths, most participants expressed satisfaction at their parents' levels of involvement, though some reported feeling pressure and several found it challenging choosing their own destiny. Among parents who were part of an intact couple (as well as Ria's stepdad and mother), expectations were depicted as closely aligned, with both parents either expecting the child to attend university or expecting the child to choose for themselves what path to take. For Walter and Grey, whose mothers had re-coupled when the child was an adult, their moms' partners' views did not come up when I asked about parents' educational or career expectations. This may indicate that these matters were beyond the jurisdiction of the partner or that the child had already settled into their path by the time the partner had entered the picture. Of the 15 participants, six perceived from their parents expectations to attend university, with four additionally receiving messages from at least one parent to pursue a specific field. The other nine participants either perceived from their parents no expectations (7/9) or only general encouragement to do some form of post-secondary training (2/9). Since I observed patterns unique to each of these two groups, I will discuss them separately.

As stated, most participants (9/15) described their parents as being "hands-off" when it came to decisions about their post-secondary education and careers. These participants described how their parents had granted them "freedom" to choose what they wanted to do (Amber), that their parents were "totally fine either way" (Laura), or that their parent was "a very 'let them go off and be themselves and let them do what they're going to do' sort of person" (Iris). Some contrasted this posture to one of excessive control, where parents told their child what to do (Grey), "pushed" them into something (Laura), or gave them directions based on their individual experiences even if a "different outcome" was possible (Lois). Situating themselves within this dynamic, all of these participants emphasized how their vocational decisions were self-directed and made according to personal desires and priorities, stating for example that their parents "let us take our own path" (Kristine), let them "do what you want" (Vincent) and "let me do whatever I wanted" (Adison). In that sense, they often conveyed appreciation toward their parents for permitting them the freedom to take up their own initiatives and do so in the absence of confining restraint (Arendt, 1961, 1963). In line with this, some of these nine participants indicated that their parents had wished for them to do what would make them (the participant) "happy" (Adison, Vincent, Laura). However, that did not imply doing absolutely anything:

running through these comments were expectations to be “working hard” (Amber), “do[ing] something!” (Sylvia), and working towards being able to “support yourself” (Kristine).

Principles of personal choice, happiness, and work ethic were captured in Vincent’s description of his mother’s approach: “it’s not like some parents who are like ‘oh you gotta be a doctor or lawyer.’ It’s like basically anything I do that’s you know like I said productive and... as long as I’m happy.” In sum, it was not that these parents had no expectations of their children; rather, they expected their children to choose their own destinies and in doing so, prioritized a tradition of individualism where personal preference was ranked highly within a series of principles for the good life (Shweder et al., 2003).

The experiences of these participants’ parents may have informed their open-minded approaches. For instance, few of these parents had attended university. Of the 14 parents within this group, half had received a high school education or less; four had received a college diploma or certificate; two had received a bachelor’s degree; and one had received a doctoral degree. More importantly, participants’ re-tellings of these parents’ post-adolescent lives seldom emphasized formal education as a key chapter. Nearly all of these parents were depicted in scenes of young adulthood set outside of educational institutions. Instead, these parents were cast into plots that presented identity transformation through other sorts of activities: international travel (Amber and Laura’s parents), settling down and raising a family (the mothers of Lois, Kristine, Grey, Sylvia, Iris, Adison), living a simple rural life (Vincent’s mom), dropping out of university (Lois’ mom, Sylvia’s dad, and Adison’s dad), or working (Kristine’s dad, Adison’s dad, Sylvia’s dad). Though four of these parents had engaged in some post-secondary training (e.g., business college, hairdressing school, trade school) or had eventually carved out a career built on a university credential (in the case of Iris’ mother and Amber’s parents), the focus was not usually on how higher education shaped them into adults. In sum, these parents’ open-minded approaches may have been partially grounded in a belief in personal freedom and partially grounded in their own stories of young adulthood.

Figuring out one’s own vocational path was generally depicted positively, though some participants also toyed with the idea that this freedom was (or had been) more burdensome than if their parents had made the choice for them. It was generally thought that having personal responsibility over this matter was preferable to being forced into a trajectory or pressured to begin when they were not ready. Five participants who were, had been, or were about to be

university students (Lois, Kristine, Sylvia, Adison, and Laura) claimed that they had not been “ready” to enter university after high school, whether because they were sick of school, because they did not know what they wanted to do in life, or because they did not see the value in a university education. Their parents’ acceptance of their choices was greatly appreciated, allowing them to, as Kristine put it, “grow how we wanted to go.” Adison’s comment reflected this general feeling of gratitude toward parents for allowing them this freedom:

I know it was hard for them to let me have that much freedom, just ‘cause the world is a scary place. Like I can’t imagine having a child in this world. Like the shit that goes on it’s just oh my god! So I’m very grateful that they let me kinda like stumble and figure it out on my own, you know. And weren’t like, “No you have to go to school immediately after high school. Like you have to do post-secondary.” I would have — I would have flailed out. Like I know I would have. Like I was just not in the mindset. I needed that year off to be like, “Okay no I don’t wanna work retail for the rest of my life. I need to figure this out, you know.” So I’m very grateful in that sense.

While gratitude was expressed, several participants (6/9) acknowledged the challenges associated with the freedom to choose. Amber, Laura Kristine, and Adison all reported feeling disoriented after high school, describing feeling “lost” (Amber), “hopping from like, one vocation to the other and not really, knowing what to do” (Adison), or having no idea what they wanted to be (Laura, Kristine). Reflecting on being raised in a small town, Vincent uniquely remarked that he felt ill-equipped to reach his goals in that setting: “I didn’t really know the steps and so – and I think being from a small town you’re not really exposed to like the different options and the different paths?” Lois, looking forward rather than backward, stressed that while she was excited to enter university, many uncertainties loomed: “What if it’s really not what I thought it would be or if it’s way too much work or, you know, I fail out,” “What if I can’t get a student loan? How am I gonna cover that first year?”, “I don’t know how this [discipline] thing is gonna work out.” In summary, these participants acknowledged the uncomfortable uncertainty of plotting their own course.

The remaining six participants expressed that their parents (five couples and a single mother) expected them to attend university, with four also mentioning that one or both of their parents expected them to pursue a certain career or field (at least initially). These participants described how early on, their parents were inducting them into stories that included university as

a chapter. As Nina put it, “they never said to me like ‘oh you have to go to... university’ it was just like ‘when you go to university’ ((laughs)).” Similarly, Jane’s parents’ guidance centered on when she should do her graduate training, not if she should do it. Molly also felt that her parents saw university as a natural step for her and her brother – one that would bring opportunities their parents never had, having been raised without a high level of formal education. Somewhat like Molly’s parents, Keith’s parents saw university as a “broadening” experience. Both his parents had grown up on farms; both were the only children in their family to attend post-secondary; and both had found it an “eye-opener” to move away and attend college. He remarked that “They were kind of hoping that both me and my brother would too,” elsewhere stating that “they were a little insistent about me going to school.”

There were variations in parents’ motivations for steering them towards university. Jane, Walter, and Ria each conveyed that their parents expected them to get an education that would bring financial security. For instance, when I asked Jane why she felt her parents had pushed her to do graduate school, she responded that it was important for her to “get the best of education” and when I asked why that was important to them, she replied: “the impression is that you know when you get a certain degree then definitely you will make more money right? Like there will be more opportunities for you and you will make more money.” Like the participants in the other group, Keith, Molly, and Ria also said their parents wanted them to find a job that was satisfying: something they “enjoyed” (Ria), that would make them “happy” (Keith), or that would allow them to live a “healthy and stable” life (Molly). Though these participants did not state it, their parents may have believed that this would be more feasible if they had a university credential. Expanding on the idea of living a good life, Jane and Molly – children of immigrants (Jane) and refugees (Molly) – noted their parents’ wishes for them to lead better lives than theirs. Jane, for instance, stated that her parents expected her to “pursue a career or my academics and make something out of my own life so my life would be better than theirs.”²⁸ Finally, in Walter and Nina’s cases, expectations to attend university connected to parents’ beliefs in their academic abilities (a topic I will return to).

²⁸ Ria also hinted that her parents made the choice to immigrate so that she could acquire a better education. Though she never states this, she does at several points in our interviews remark that “she came over here just cause of me. Like her decision to come to Canada was to give me a good life.” Though I failed to follow up on what a “good life” entailed specifically, it is conceivable that it might include a better education and a better vocational path. Certainly, these were priorities for Ria herself.

Parents who were more insistent about their child attending university tended to have higher levels of education themselves and tended to emphasize the role of formal education in their own post-adolescent lives. Of the 11 parents in this group, two had received high school diplomas or less; three had a college diploma or certificate; and six had received at least a bachelor's degree. In addition, participants told stories about these parents that underscored the value of higher education in their post-adolescent lives. In the first set of stories (told by Ria and Keith), this value was demonstrated in parents' tales of personal growth and independence, where parents transcended their previous selves, statuses, and environments through post-secondary education. In these accounts, post-secondary education took on a significant role, giving their parents opportunities to move beyond their cultural milieus, their dependent statuses, and their family traditions and inhabit new worlds and selves. In the second set of stories (told by Walter, Nina, Jane, and Molly), the value of education was expressed in stories about parents' commitment to education, drawing on the sacrifices parents made to transcend their positions. In other words, their stories seemed to signify that post-secondary education was something worth working hard for. Namely, these participants spoke about parents struggling to raise a family while completing their education, holding down multiple jobs to put themselves through school, and immigrating with hopes for their children to have opportunities they never had.

Responses to parents' university expectations varied somewhat, with participants conveying experiences of gratitude, disorientation, irritation, and self-doubt. Jane, Ria, Keith, and Molly all spoke about the appreciation they had for their parents setting reasonable goals for them. Jane, for instance, found her parents' guidance motivating: "I feel like living with my parents they kind of pushed me to aim better in life than if I was living all by myself like I would just settle for anything." Jane, Ria, and Molly each were thankful for parents who had refrained from being excessively directive, for example with Ria saying that her mother "didn't try to force her own ideas on me." Likewise, Molly signalled that her parents had found a balance of setting expectations without overwhelming her:

They're like, "you don't have to like, be the best, but we wouldn't want you to like, underachieve . . . I'm glad that they're not putting pressure on me because I do put a lot of pressure on myself now that I'm more aware of things.

Finally, both Keith (with respect to his dad) and Ria (with respect to her mom and stepdad) were grateful that their choices of field had been respected by their parents. Ria seemed to be

especially so, potentially because it revealed her parents' willingness to shift perspectives to understand her point of view. When Ria initially expressed her interest in a social science degree, she said her mother "was quite confused, cause of course it's a social science thing." Ria discussed how she would come home from school excited to tell her parents all about what she had learned, and through these exchanges, her parents came to understand and accept her choice of field. In addition, Ria was able to persuade her mom that she could meet her mother's expectation for her to "'make sure that there's a job after the degree' ((laughs))." Ria synthesized her parents' overall shift in recognition of her priorities and initiative: "they saw my interest and now they understand that I would definitely do something with this."

Four of these six participants whose parents were more insistent on going to university described how after high school they had still experienced uncertainty about choosing a career path (similar to the former five participants in the previous group). Walter and Keith both felt as though they had been slow identifying their interests and making choices about their futures. As Keith said, "it would have been nice if I knew I wanted to go to university right out of high school cause I'd be done by now." Likewise, Walter said that he hoped his future child would attend university "right out of high school, because I put it off for too long, I was – I was an idiot about it." Neither Keith nor Walter directly connected their confusion to their parents, whereas both Molly and Nina supposed that if their parents had given them more direction, they may have had an easier time navigating life after high school. Looking back, Nina felt that "It would have been nice to have those expectations put more explicitly or even to know that they had – like I knew my dad had this kinda like 'oh be a doctor' kinda thing but... that was it." Molly likewise weighed the benefits and drawbacks of receiving more or less direction from parents:

M: Without the directions, it just made... it even – I feel like in a way, it made it kind of harder? Whereas like a lot of... I feel like parents that like, do enforce... a goal, kind of, brainwashes the child? I don't know.

KM: Do you mean that positively or negatively, though?

M: It depends on who it is. Like, I feel like... if their kids are willing to do it, I feel like that's awesome, because it kind of helps them figure this – themselves out. But then... I've seen some people like, be miserable because it's like, "well I did this for my parents" and it's kind of like, "well why" and they're like, "well that's what they wanted" and it's

like, “oh” and like, I feel like if you pick your future career, it shouldn’t be because of your parents because it’s your life that you’re living.

Implicitly, Molly points to two forms of parental influence here, highlighting the roles of agency and subjugation that distinguish them. First, she points to the potential positive force of traditional authority: parents helping to guide children into a path that fits with them and that they are willing to do. The notion of “willing” is essential; this is authority defined by its accredited, legitimate, and consensual characteristics; as we have seen before, this would be “an obedience in which men retain their freedom” (Arendt, 1961, p. 106). Second, Molly points to the dangers of a tyrannical form of influence: children who follow their parents’ wills, which are not their own, which leads to a “miserable” experience of disempowerment. Thus, Molly does not set up a contrast between authority/disempowerment and freedom/empowerment; she defines two instances where parents may hold power, but in one, the child is merely an extension of the parents’ will, and in the other, the child commits action in collaboration with their parents who represent a tradition worth following.

Unlike the other participants, Keith’s sense of disorientation extended to the present, where he appeared to take his mother’s silence as indicating concern about his career path. To compound the issue, he felt he lacked knowledge about his job options. I pointed out in the last chapter that Keith’s mom’s lack of enthusiasm about his humanities degree signaled to him that “she might want something that’s more stable job-wise.” Here, I would like to add to this interpretation his view of his mother as a financial expert. Indeed, he stated at various points in our interviews that he had found his mom’s “money advice” useful in the past, helping him to make “smart” decisions and expecting that in the future, he would continue to trust it. In thinking about his career and how he would become self-sufficient, he may have taken her apparent judgment seriously based her financial expertise. In addition, I would mention that Keith’s enduring sense of disorientation may have been compounded by disappointing experiences seeking authoritative wisdom within the university institution. He explained an instance of this:

I went to one of those career presentation things. But it was like specifically for [discipline] students. But most of the presentation was about how you can stay and get a Masters and what not. Nothing really helpful at all for if you want just a Bachelor's and to leave, so. I gotta look into more, but yeah. I thought I'd have an idea by now, but I don't.

Perhaps, in the absence of alternative role models and a predictable trajectory, Keith considered his mom's silent judgment "an advice which one may not safely ignore" in the words of Mommsen (cited by Arendt, 1961, p. 123).

Like Keith, Walter and Nina both expressed experiences of disagreement related to their parents' expectations, but unlike Keith's situation, their divergent views had been acknowledged directly and both Keith and Nina remained confident in their own choices (even if their parents continued to question them). In both cases, their parents (Walter's mom and Nina's dad) saw them as academically capable of pursuing professional careers: for Walter, law, and for Nina, medicine. In both cases, the parents recognized their talents and encouraged them to aim high. For instance, Walter remarked that "I'll tell her like, 'oh mom, I got an eighty on this test.' She's like, 'go get over ninety.'" Similarly, Nina noted that she was an "A plus" student and said her dad "always pushed me academically and it was always like – like he would brag about like how well I did." While both performed well in university, they decided against the careers suggested by their parents – with Walter doing so two or three years into his undergraduate degree and with Nina doing so after she had finished a natural science undergraduate degree.²⁹

Walter's mom was "pretty upset" that he was not going to apply to law. Even in the present she continued to question whether his future career would provide him with financial security, prompting Walter's puzzlement: "I don't understand what her issue is." Indeed, she also persisted in encouraging Walter to consider law school "after you get a degree and work for a bit." In response, Walter continued to try to persuade her that he had made a wise choice and would be financially secure. Although his mother may have been correct in believing that her son was capable of law school, he did not feel that she held valid knowledge about the field he was pursuing (at least in terms of its associated wage). Despite his irritation with his mom's unwillingness to engage in rational discussion, Walter seemed to hold to his conviction that he had chosen a good and legitimate path.

Compared to Walter, Nina's decision to depart from her father's hopes created a larger conflict. Nina described how she and her dad had gotten into a "big fight" about her future after

²⁹ Walter was drawn instead toward a program recommended by his advisor that fit with his interests. Nina, meanwhile, decided first that she did not want to be a doctor, gravitating first toward alternative medicine, but then abandoning that and "took off" to travel internationally. While traveling, she became involved with a community group that led her to an interest in research, and eventually, graduate training.

someone close to the family had committed suicide, with her dad worried that her decisions were going to lead her down the same path. She described what happened:

So I think that was like – my dad was just like he had had it. Like I was just like nuts at that point. And, uh, he...I don't know he just – he got like pretty mad at me and (3) s-like said a few like hurtful things. He's like, "You're gonna end up just like Felix."

KM: Hmm.

N: And so—and I think it's because I was like on this ((airy voice)) "spiritual path" and stuff, right? So he thought I was just out of it. And then, uh, I think I said to him like, "Oh (2) the only reason I did like all of this like degree and got all these har- high marks is because of you." And he's like, "Well you should've been doing it for yourself." And I was like, "Well ((laughs)) well thanks a lot! Like you like...raised me this way to do this and put all this pressure on me and then you get mad at me when I actually like," you know what I mean?

It seems that in this moment, a difference of understanding was for the first time surfaced: whereas Nina's father may have thought that Nina was pursuing medicine of her own accord, in this instant, Nina states that she had been doing so under the "pressure" of her father's will. It could even be that the lingering effect of this conflict was not due to Nina's disobedience, but rather to the distrust that the conflict exposed for both individuals: Nina's distrust in her father's sensitivity to her experience and her father's distrust in his daughter's capacity to pursue what she authentically enjoyed (and avoid a situation where his will would supersede her own). Although the conflict had occurred many years ago (at least six or seven years prior to interviewing), Nina felt that the distance she currently experienced from her father was still related to this episode: "after that our relationship – we weren't as close." She expected that when she finished her graduate degree and established herself a little more, the two of them might be able to heal their bond. For now, the rupture remained, with Nina interpreting it as connected to her disobedience: "I feel like I've disappointed him because I didn't go through all like the medical school."

Looking back to the entire group of participants, we can see two ways of providing a destiny to a child, reflecting a different hierarchy of ethical discourses (Shweder et al., 2003).³⁰

³⁰ The third ethical discourse described by Shweder and colleagues – the ethics of divinity – did not surface in participants' discussions of their vocational paths.

In the first group, parents minimized their involvement, prioritizing their child's personal choice of vocation. In the words of cultural psychologist Richard Shweder and his colleagues (2003), these parents aligned themselves most with an "ethics of autonomy" such that their actions were directed to "protect the zone of discretionary choice of 'individuals' and to promote the exercise of individual will in the pursuit of personal preferences" (Shweder et al., 2003, p. 138). However, these parents also concerned themselves with community values and expected their child to fulfill their duty to become an independent, productive member of society. This set of values, which Shweder et al. refer to as the "ethics of community," was certainly important to the first set of parents, however it appeared to be primary to the approaches of the second set of parents. According to participants, the second set of parents approached the child's vocation with a greater sense of the child's duty, whether the duty was to earn a good income, to gain social mobility, to achieve a status commensurate with their abilities, or to repeat the rite of passage that post-secondary symbolized for the parents.³¹ Importantly, these forms of ethics (and the concepts of the self they imply) do not operate exclusively or independently within families or cultures; rather, they coexist. Indeed, the authors suggest that to have multiple interpretive frameworks may even be practical for addressing difficult human problems (e.g., choosing a destiny) since human reality is too complex to be adequately interpreted or addressed from a single perspective (Shweder et al., 2003, pp. 140-1).

3.2.2 The Transmission of Work Ethic

I noted in the previous chapter that parents' protectiveness appeared to be buffered by their confidence in their child: virtually all participants (14/15) alluded to a feeling that their parents were, overall, confident in them and their life trajectories. Another way to consider this confidence would be as a successful transmission of work ethic. Although I do not have abundant data about the transmission of work ethic, I did observe that a strong work ethic was part of many participants' descriptions of family life early on and that identities as hard workers were common among participants. In brief, I observed an intertextual resonance (Frank, 2010) between participants' early-life descriptions of their parents and their characterizations of themselves. That being said, I also witnessed participants coming to grips with the idea that

³¹ Possibly, such social duties transcended the child's individual position in society, implicating an entire lineage and family; however, future researchers would need to investigate this topic, as it was not explored in the current study.

because the world had changed, “working hard” would not yield the same rewards as it had for their parents. In a sense, participants were required to recraft this meritocratic narrative in light of a changing world.

Roughly half of participants (7/15) explicitly identified parents’ expectations for them regarding their work ethic. This surfaced in three different ways: in a general encouragement to work hard and in connection to expectations for living at home. Five participants stated that their parents encouraged them to work hard. Kristine’s parents encouraged her to “have a good work ethic. Be on time. Look presentable. Brush your hair or something.” Jane said that both her parents “kind of pushed me to aim better in life,” while Molly said her parents “always tell us just to work hard” and Grey stated that her mother encouraged her to always “save money and work.” Whereas these participants described their parents’ positive reinforcement of their work ethic, Sylvia, Iris, and Vincent pointed to negative reinforcement, saying that their parents would not tolerate them living at home if they were neither working nor going to school. Sylvia described her agreement with this condition for living at home:

they might kick me out if I was just like, not doing anything. Like if I was just like, sittin’ around...not like, trying to get a job or, you know, if I wasn’t in school, if it was just kinda like ex:pecting to look after me forever I think she might kick me out then. Um... just because... it’s like, um...I don’t know I guess cause like, they value hard work, those two, I would say and like, they don’t really... ah believe in just like ((laughs)) sitting around and not doing anything with your life? Which I guess like I share that kinda idea. I can’t imagine just not doing anything

Whereas only seven participants explicitly discussed their parents’ reinforcement of work ethic, all participants recalled memories of their parents working hard when they were children, suggesting that their parents role-modelled this virtue. Of the 24 parents that participants were currently living with and had grown up with, 22 were characterized as dedicating many hours towards work during their childhoods. The two parents who did not as clearly fit this characterization were Adison’s mother and Grey’s mother, where neither was depicted as making major sacrifices in their care work or part-time paid work.³² Participants framed parents’ hard work in two ways. First, they spoke about parents working long hours or multiple jobs,

³² Of the five fathers who passed away (1/5) or were divorced by the child’s mother (4/5), three were described as working long hours or multiple jobs.

recalling memories of parents who were “always” working or working “a lot” (six participants), parents who took on additional jobs after separating from their husbands (Lois, Walter), parents who worked during holidays (Kristine, Sylvia), and who worked over-time to support the family on a single income (Kristine, referring to her dad during her early childhood). Nina illustrated the figure of the hard-working parent, saying “I didn’t really see my dad a lot also because he works so late ‘cause he was like really like busy in [occupation] and stuff.” Tying in with Nina’s comment, participants also evoked the hard-working parent by describing their absence: they identified parents who travelled for work (Keith, Jane), who attended university in another city (Iris, Ria), who were rarely home in the evening or night because they did shift work (six participants), and who because of their work routinely depended on family members for child-care, including grandparents (Nina, Ria, Molly), aunts or uncles (Iris, Molly), or siblings (six participants). Overall, these participants conveyed that their parents’ working lives were not at the periphery of their childhood; rather, they were something that structured and informed their recollections of this life stage.

Considering that several participants emphasized the sacrifices their parents made to provide for the family – going back to school, working multiple jobs, doing shift work, and sacrificing family time to work – it is perhaps not surprising that participants themselves leaned into constructions of their own identities that centered industry, resourcefulness, and self-discipline. Participants did not often directly relate their own work ethic with that of their parents, but as an interpreter, I saw resonance between them. Four varieties of hard-working identities surfaced in the interviews. First, several participants (6/15) prided themselves in their perseverance through difficult work or educational challenges, whether they had returned to high school to upgrade (Lois, Kristine), had returned to university to earn a marketable credential (Vincent), or had completed a program that was dull but would provide job security in the short-term (Keith, Sylvia). Second, some participants (4/15) spoke about getting jobs as teenagers and their pride in working continuously since that time. Walter, for instance, stated that “I started working when I was thirteen, so that also took up part of – a lot of my time. Like I just always had a job.” Likewise, Iris commented “I worked at the school as a [job] I think from 13 on uh and then I worked all summer as well. Uh, every summer.” Third, Kristine and Laura pointed out their dedication to school while holding down a full-time job. As Laura said, “Even in school full time, I’m still working almost full time and (2) I just, yeah, ‘cause I’m focused on it. But. ((KM::

Yeah, yeah.)) It can be a lot.” Finally, some participants (5/15) depicted themselves as keenly devoted to their studies, mentioning their “passion for education” (Ria), “trying to get good grades in school” (Nina), and pointing to the academic ambitions they were in the process of actualizing (Iris, Jane). No participants framed themselves as lazy or unmotivated, except in the sense of feeling burnt out as they approached the final weeks of their school term and undergraduate degree (Sylvia, Walter, Keith).

Despite these constructions of themselves and their parents, participants evinced a common sense of skepticism concerning the merits of hard work today compared to in the past; in essence, they were less hopeful about their own opportunities to earn prosperity, security, and upward mobility through hard work alone. While these participants were still hopeful, their expectations had been altered by the realization that their economic world was one different than their parents’: whereas for their parents, hard work had earned them many of the facets of a stable, “adult” life, for these participants it guaranteed less. Economic change was spontaneously identified by most participants (10/15) as a force that separated their generation from their parents’ generation: they spoke about how the economy “has changed” (Amber) and was “different now” (Iris); that it had become “ridiculous” (Amber), “crazy” (Laura), and “expensive” (Amber, Kristine, Keith, Sylvia). With these changes, the financial and residential independence their parents were granted at their age was described as “unattainable” (Amber), “not feasible” (Keith), or not “possible” (Walter). Economic changes seemed to be understood as reverberating through many aspects of life, such that participants did not only consider their financial lives different from those of their parents; more generally they felt that “things” were different, that this was “just the world we live in now” (Vincent), that this was “how the world is” (Amber), or “it’s just a different time” (Laura). Although most participants seemed to have figured out ways to cope with their unfulfilled expectations, they also expressed some difficulty accepting that their inherited life course model lacked validity. Adison articulated this:

back when our parents were growing up it was very like you go to high school and then like you find someone, you get married, you have a family, you have a career, blah blah blah blah blah. And like now it’s just so like...whatever. Like everyone takes sort of a different path and that’s okay. And so it’s kinda hard to like — you grew up thinking like adulthood was one way and then you get there and you’re like, “That’s not what it’s like at all ((laughs)).” So like reconciling between those two things of reality and like the

concept you had for so long of what it was like and what I thought my life would be like by the time I was 30. Like I did not see this at all.

In line with Adison's remark, participants identified milestones from their parents' stories that failed to resonate with their own experiences. First, a good work ethic did not necessarily earn a person a living wage or job security, as was described by seven participants. Several of these participants spoke about their experiences working full-time but receiving wages that still made it impossible to move out on their own or pay for their tuition. Iris acknowledged that when she had worked full-time for a year, she had still made less money than she had as a student with scholarships and part-time work. Walter expressed that although he had tried to hold down "as many jobs as possible," he had been unable to earn enough money over the summer to pay his tuition for the next year. Adison said that the wage she would earn in her field – which required a two-year college degree – would not be "very much" and it would take years for her to work off her debt (leading her to earnestly consider bankruptcy). And Sylvia remarked that "to get a "good" job you have to have some kind of education. These days, anyway. There's not really that like, working your way up anymore." Dreams of the homeownership accessed by most participants' parents (14 of 15 participants had parents who were homeowners) were also described as unrealistic by a few participants (4/15). Kristine explained how she was not entitled to own property just by virtue of steadily working:

I just wish that times were different, where like – I mean, back in the day, with the job I'm at now, and the amount I get paid, before I'd be able to afford my own house, and it's just kind of deceiving that I do have to get an education to afford a house and work that much harder. I guess now times are harder, and more like my parents, they could afford a house with the two jobs they have, and for a while my mom was a stay-at-home mom, and my dad was able to make our income.

Like Adison's comment about "reconciling" her expectations with reality, Kristine also expresses a feeling that she has been misled by stories of her parents' lives at her age. I explained how many participants were living at home because it was the affordable option for them; this choice also stood in contrast to most of their parents' lives, where they were able to live independently shortly after (or even before) the end of high school. Again, there was a feeling that in this regard, participants' expectations were out of line with their actual trajectories, as they commented that "In an ideal world I would have money for rent" (Lois) and "if you asked

me when I was fifteen, like, ‘are you going to be [living with your parents]?’ – ‘no I’m moving out as soon as I can’” (Laura). Finally, there were comments from Sylvia and Adison that underscored how unlike their mothers, there was no way they would be able to provide for a family at their age. Sylvia remarked: “I hear about how old I am and how she had my brother and I when she was in her early 20s, and I’m like ‘I don’t need to hear this’ like I don’t have the means to do it so ((laughs)).” Her statement that she does not want to even “hear” about that life suggests a feeling of helplessness associated to the discrepancy between the story she was “inducted into” (Frank, 2010) and the story she is currently acting out. In summary, these participants felt that previous models of the transition to adulthood no longer fully resonated with them – in a sense, the legitimacy and accuracy of these traditional models had eroded, leaving at least some participants with feelings that their emplotment³³ of the future was fragile and uncertain, with a loss of temporal landmarks, and a requirement that they exercise caution. For nearly all participants, to live at home was to reap economic, educational, and occupational advantages that would support their future aims and the future self they were in the process of becoming (Mattingly, 2014).

I have described parallels between participants’ constructions of themselves as productive, motivated, and driven and their depictions of parents as hard-working people. It seems that these parallels – and the shared values they imply – signified the degree to which participants were still trying to adhere to the tenets of their parents. In other words, while being a hard worker was not necessarily sufficient for guaranteeing them economic security, this was still a necessary attitude for adapting to the changing work market. Given that young adults identified with the traditions of persistence and grit of their families, it becomes more intelligible why parents would choose not to make their lives more difficult (i.e., by forcefully launching them from the nest). These particular young adults did not require strict control, discipline, or punishment from their parents; instead, they seemed to move towards mutual goals of financial security and productivity but in a new world that was only partially shared with their parents. Though the templates they inherited were only partially fitting with today’s world, their actions and self-constructions evinced a persistent hope that by working hard they might still achieve a basic level of security and happiness.

³³ Emplotment refers to the way in which a person situates themselves within a story, imagining and anticipating a course of events as they move through time (Good, 1994).

3.2.3 Synthesis

As they made their way from adolescence to adulthood, participants desired jobs that would provide a viable social role and source of income. Participants reported that their parents influenced these quests according to two main approaches. Some participants (9/15) observed their parents putting the responsibility of choosing a path on them, emphasizing individual preference and the freedom to choose (Shweder et al., 2003). Other participants (6/15) found their parents setting expectations for them to obtain a certain level of education or pursue a specific field, assigning them the general shape of their future. Participants conveyed positive and negative reactions to both of these approaches: praising parents for allowing them to shape their own futures, appreciating their expectations of high standards, experiencing disorientation in the absence of direction, and experiencing conflict with parents when they wished for something that conflicted with their parents' desires. In terms of how participants worked (or, more precisely, how they identified themselves as workers) there was a common esteem for dedication and grit. At the same time, they felt that the rewards of steady work were more limited now compared to in the past. From a theoretical standpoint, this data revealed both the persistence of and disruption of tradition – in both cases, requiring the initiative of participants to act in the world to begin something new (Arendt, 1961). Clearly, participants also perceived themselves as holding the liberty – the freedom from oppression – that is a condition for such action, since “nobody would ever be able to arrive at a place where freedom rules if he could not move without restraint” (Arendt, 1963). In terms of their free actions, many participants highlighted parental experiences they would re-create within their own worlds, whether those involved working hard, traveling, or going to university. Participants were also required to act to reinvent tradition or depart from it altogether when it failed to function in the present context: participants experimented in their post-adolescent years to identify compatible work trajectories; they became the first individuals in their families to get or pursue university degrees; they digressed from the careers or fields parents preferred; they reformulated their ideas about what hard work would entitle them to; and they came to understand in a personal way the merits and drawbacks of holding individual responsibility over their own destinies.

3.3 Finances

Parents' financial influence surfaced spontaneously in all fifteen participants' interviews, with topics of spending, saving, and debt being raised.³⁴ Within social science research, money management has been conceptualized and examined as an emblem of maturity and moral goodness. The connection between one's finances and one's developmental identity is supported by research identifying financial independence as a key marker of adulthood, at least within American samples (Aronson, 2008; Arnett, 1997, 1998, 2001, 2003; Arnett & Padilla-Walker, 2015; Benson & Furstenberg, 2006; Shanahan et al., 2005; Sirsch et al., 2009). Beyond this, researchers have uncovered that people's handling of their money is intimately tied to their perceptions of themselves as moral. For example, Sherman (2018) has described wealthy New York families discourses about being "ordinary," where prudent economic choices and restraint from excess marked these families as "morally worthy." Studies have also indicated that young adults living at home position their choice of residence as worthwhile when they consider it a financially-savvy decision (Abetz & Romo, 2021; Mitchell & Lennox, 2020). Extending on this work, it is conceivable that while continuing to live at home, parents may be involved in supporting (or blocking) young adults' self-definitions as prudent and reasonable consumers. The section draws attention to participants' conceptions of parental involvement in informing their financial identities and practices, with three key mechanisms of influence at play: judgment, mimicry, and habit. In a first sense, some parents were consulted for their guidance on how to use their money in specific scenarios and toward specific aims. In the second sense, parents' financial narratives served as resources for guiding financial action (for better or for worse). In the third sense, some young adults were supported by parents' authorization to "play" with financial responsibility to support their initiation into financial independence (Caillois, 1958/1961).

3.3.1 Spending

A handful of participants (5/15) accepted their parents guiding their purchase decisions occasionally or in exceptional circumstances. Keith and Kristine praised their parents for being helpful when it came to car purchases, with Keith recalling that his mom had talked him out of buying a car that would have been a bad deal, and with Kristine saying she wished she had taken

³⁴ Although I asked each participant briefly about their financial habits, I failed to ask them about how their parents influenced their financial lives. This limited my ability to interpret differences between participants, and as a result, I present this data as a departure point for future researchers rather than a robust interpretation of forces at play.

her mom or dad with her to buy a car because she would have made a better decision. Likewise, Ria recounted a recent time when her parents talked her out of spending money on a plane ticket. Sylvia appreciated that her parents had encouraged her to continue living at home, since they saw “no point” in moving out because it was “so expensive.” These brief examples suggest a persistent but limited role of parents in monitoring, judging, or providing guidance on young adults’ regular spending habits. Indeed, only Jane described her parents attempting to influence her more casual, everyday spending – and she did not appreciate it. As she described:

when you live with your parents, sometimes they still complain about some things you buy like “why did you buy this?” “do we need this?” like sometimes when I go shopping right they’d be like “oh why did you buy so many clothes” even though I wouldn’t consider myself – I mean I would consider myself as being conservative ((KM: Mmhmm)). But they don’t see it that way so they’ll be like “why did you buy these clothes” or like if you buy something online they’d be like “oh you bought something again online” you know? So... if I move out I would not have anyone complaining that “oh you’re buying too much stuff” but maybe then your significant other ((laughs)) they might complain I don’t know.

Interestingly, it seems that Jane did not take issue with her parents’ disapproval of overspending; rather, she found their judgment conflicted with her construction of herself as a “conservative” spender. In other words, Jane’s irritation with her parents’ monitoring pointed to her identification with her parents’ values; she merely wanted her parents to recognize it.

Whereas the previous participants referred to their parents’ influence on their spending decisions or behaviors, Iris provided more details about how her frugal financial identity was influenced by her mother and maternal family. She described her mother’s family as “fiscally conservative” and characterized herself as being “extremely stingy” and “very cheap” from a young age. As a child, Iris and her mom moved in with Iris’ aunt, who supported them financially while Iris’ mom attended university. Iris described: “We were poor. There was always food. We always had clothes, we always had food, we always had shelter. We didn’t have money for extravagances, eating out was an extremely rare occasion.” Although Iris recalled that as a child, she was oblivious to her family’s poverty, she had several memories indicating her own cautious approach to spending at a young age: getting a job at age 13, beginning to invest money at age 10, rationing out Halloween candy all year long, and savoring her gum by smelling

it rather than eating it. With respect to the present, Iris reiterated that her mother “doesn’t live beyond her means” and attested to her own frugality, for instance stating that

in graduate school I had [a grant] so I had increased income. Uh, so – so instead of spending it my – my needs are few. I like books. I’m not going to run out and buy a jetski or something so I socked that away and invested it.

In sum, Iris’ childhood experiences of poverty and her maternal family’s influence appeared to have been at play in forming her strong sense of financial self-discipline, which she carried through to the present and drew on to choose her living arrangement.

Distinct from Iris’ story of survival and financial self-discipline, Nina wove herself into a story of financial privilege that seemed to be, paradoxically, constricting. Connecting her present approach to her childhood environment and family privilege, Nina explained that “I never really worry about money. I think I’m just kinda, grew up a little spoiled that way.” This “spoiled” identity carried over into her adult life: Nina’s extensive traveling after her undergraduate degree was partially motivated by feeling like a “bored, suburbs privileged girl.” And although she felt that traveling exposed her to other ways of living and other kinds of lifestyles, she nevertheless admits that she was living in a “fantasy world” where she could be “self-centered,” do whatever she wanted and “wasn’t thinking things through very carefully.” In other words, her privileged status carried over into this world where money was no object, work was unnecessary, and financial responsibilities were minimal. Despite this, Nina showed great reflexivity into the personal benefits and drawbacks she gleaned from her experiences traveling, stating that she found her ability to relate to others expanding but also connecting her travel with a “delay” in building financial skills: “I didn’t... uh, build up that experience or like, you know just like, the mortgage and the bills and being on top of that is like- feels like so:: much effort for me.” Although Nina had acquired many forms of financial competence, she still found herself feeling like a “kid” because she had relied on – and was continuing to rely on – her parents’ money. Distinct from the frugal lifestyle described by Iris, Nina had always been in a secure financial position, being free to spend money in a care-free manner. As revealed in the previous chapter, she sometimes was confronted with the awkwardness of occupying this financial position, but she also actively considered how it informed her capacities and relationships (with her romantic interest, her friends, and with her parents). In that sense, although Nina is called into a story of

privilege (Frank, 2010) – she also actively searches for insight about the implications of this story, holding an openness toward the meaning and moral responsibility tied to it.

3.3.2 Saving

Some participants (6/15) also discussed their parents' guidance in relation to saving money. Whereas Grey simply stated that her parents had given her advice to “save money and work,” other participants explained specific strategies their parents had used to encourage this. Nina spoke about meeting with a private financial advisor annually – a tradition tied to her family finances further back: “I grew up with like my uh... my grandpa like does:: like, plays the stock market and grew his own company and my dad has always had like the::e investment things.” Most commonly, participants (4/15) described how their parents had asked for rent money from them in a fashion that was closer to forced savings than to paying rent:³⁵ in the case of Adison, the money had been returned to her for school; in Kristine's case, the money was currently being put towards her tuition; and in Keith and Sylvia's cases, they believed the money would be returned to them when they moved out (unless their parents were not in a financial position to do so). These participants emphasized that their parents' choice was aimed at teaching them financial responsibility, even if the rent amounts (between \$250 and \$400) were generally lower than what they might pay for a room in a house with roommates, and even if there was a possibility that they would see that money again. Adison noted that this system of saving “was just more of like imprinting in my mind like, ‘This is not a free ride.’ Like you don't get to do and spend however you want. Like you have to be responsible.” Although Laura's parents did not collect rent from her, they did, in different way, encourage her and her siblings to put away money: “when we were sixteen, the rule was you pay rent or you contribute to RRSPs.” While she did not anticipate that her parents would actually take rent money from her and her siblings, the choice encouraged her and her siblings to take initiative:

L: it was just like, okay, like, think about the future, like, you need – so um, it was like, I think when I opened it, it was like, “you're going to put 50 dollars of every pay cheque into this fund.” I'm like, thankful that we started doing that 'cause I have friends who are

³⁵ Grey and Iris both did currently (for Grey) and until recently (for Iris) pay “real” rent to their mothers. Though this money would not be returned to them, special rules did also come into play in the payment of this “rent.” Grey and her partner did not pay rent when they first moved in, since they were helping with renovations. Iris' mother also lifted her requirement of rent money when Iris had virtually no income at the end of her degree. Although these two examples are distinct from the “forced savings” situations of other participants, they underline the flexibility of parent-child exchanges, contrasting with generally more rigid exchange between landlords and tenants.

thirty who don't do that and whatever. Or they're like, "oh" – so it was just kind of like, "okay. Responsibility" like –

KM: Mm.

L: "Add that." Not that like, if we were sixteen, they'd be taking rent money. 'Cause I'm sure they just put it in an account but, we all just opened it. It was like, "you're working, you see like, how money works and financials. So, you're going to do this." We were like, "okay."

It seems that by introducing children to the process of saving money through the playful imitation of tenant-and-landlord, parents transmitted the valuable habit of saving money. Indeed, in offering token payments to parents or entertaining the idea that this could be required by parents, the participants were able to experience "The pleasure [that] lies in being or passing for another" (Caillois, 1958/1961, p. 21). In this case, symbolic payments appeared to have helped them to imagine and experience themselves as financially independent from their parents, even if, paradoxically, their parents were those who invited and promoted their engagement in this "closed, conventional, and, in certain respects, imaginary universe" (Caillois, 1958/1961, p. 19).

3.3.3 Debt

Six participants spoke about their parents' influence on them in relation to debt. First, Amber's parents, Adison's parents, Laura's parents, and Walter's mom explicitly encouraged the participant to live at home to avoid accumulating excessive debt during university. For instance, Laura expressed that "they're like, 'we're happy to help you out in that sense so then, you know, you don't have added debt come the time you want to start – like, once you finish school or have a job or whatever.'" In these cases, it was implied or stated that taking on debt was an initiating event in a dangerous story. Walter elaborated one version of this story:

I'm doing it [living at home] because it's a necessity. Like, I wouldn't be able to afford – like, I could take a loan from the bank and like, you know, live on my own and work more and go to school. And then rack up a shit load of debt, and then graduate and then you know, get a shitty paying job, and take like twenty years to pay off my debt. I could do that, that's an option totally, but why would I when I could just live at home?

As Walter weaves together this causal and temporal chain of events (a debt plot, if you will), he incorporates a series of rhetorical devices: repetition and cacophony that grab the listener's attention and amplify the message ("shit," "shitty"), hyperbole that contradicts other statements

about his future prospects (“shitty paying job” when in other instances he claims to be optimistic about his future earnings), irony (“an option totally”), and rhetorical questioning (“why would I when I could just live at home?”). The cautionary story of debt is one that Walter did not invent, but here, he creatively iterates on it and uses it to make a point: to tell me what people misunderstand about adults living with their parents (the question I have posed to him). Effectively, his answer compels the listener to the negative moral significance of debt as disempowering. By drawing on this cautionary story, the choice to coreside can surface as a worthy and good choice – one that might be intelligible and valid to “those others” who otherwise would not understand. Given that coresidence continues to be seen as culturally deviant in Canada and the United States (Abetz & Romo, 2021; Mitchell & Lennox, 2020), the capacity to tell a persuasive story about it is especially crucial (Frank, 2010); stories that draw on the moral goodness of financial prudence may be the most compelling, legitimizing tales about coresidence.

Adison and Iris also discussed debt in relation to stories, but in relation to family stories. As previously mentioned, Iris aligned herself with a frugal family identity. In addition to refraining from spending frivolously, she and her family were aligned with a tradition of avoiding debt. She explained with an anecdote about her mother:

I: her contractor laughs at her for only doing, uh, for doing – instead of doing one huge renovation overhaul, we’re only doing it a piece at a time.

KM: Ok.

I: But she will not go into debt or take out a line of credit in order to pay for renovations.

KM: Mmhmm.

I: My grandfather always said if you don’t have the money for the truck you stick with your old truck.

KM: Yeah.

I: ((laughs)) If you can’t pay for it you don’t buy it.

These family mottos may be perceived as unrealistic or ridiculous by some (notably, the contractor who in this story plays that role).³⁶ However, Iris and her mother both seem to resist those judgments and proudly uphold a family tradition of living within one’s means.

³⁶ For every dollar of disposable income, the average Canadian owes \$1.79 (CBC News, 2019).

Unlike the affiliation between Iris and her family's financial myth, Adison's familial story was one she was desperately trying to cast herself out of. Her story centered on her parents' imprudent (according to her) financial choices and the traps it had led them into. She positioned herself as struggling against the inertia of her parents' financial habits:

I just—I don't want to fall into the parents of—the parents of my footsteps ((laughs)). The footsteps of my parents. Like they had to sell their house in [Canadian province 1] and move into a condo 'cause they were house poor. Like they just — they couldn't afford anything because they bought this house that wasn't in their price range and then they just spend willy-nilly. And like they refinanced years ago and had no debt. And it was great! And like I guess it was like remortgaging of a house so it just went into that payment so you didn't really notice it. And I've never seen my parents so happy as when they came back from that bank appointment. And it was so:: good and things were great. But because we keep moving, it just keeps getting wrapped up over and over again. And now my parents are at a point where like they cannot move. They cannot afford it. Like they are stuck where they are. And I don't wanna live like that. I don't wanna be that way, you know? And like we're going to [American city 1] in August for a concert. And like we've had the tickets. And for the longest time like my dad didn't have enough credit to like buy plane tickets or a hotel and it was like, "Are we even going to go to this concert?" Like I don't wanna live like that either, you know. Like I understand debt's a part of life and I don't think I'll ever be debt free. But I don't ever wanna be suffocated by it at the same time.

Adison traces the plot points in her parents' financial narrative: a bad choice that "forced" her parents into a condo; a series of relocations that resulted in them becoming trapped in their current home; being marked by financial institutions as unfit for credit; the withdrawal of financial power connected to this designation; and, as she described elsewhere, the relationship stresses that manifested due to money problems ("Money is a huge contention between the two of them"). Adison's remark that she did not want to "fall into the footsteps" of her parents underlined her fear of being ushered into the same story. As I alluded to in the previous chapter, Adison had found herself developing bad financial habits and had found herself in tens of thousands of dollars of debt because of it. At the time of interviewing, she was trying to reclaim agency by holding herself responsible for her actions: she was going through bank statements to

understand her patterns of spending, was devising a budget, and had resigned herself to the prospect of living with her parents longer than she had anticipated to keep from going into further debt. She struggled to emancipate herself from her parents' financial story and yet she retained hope that she could do so. Indeed, one of the key elements of her "plan" was to seek professional help to gain some of the financial skills she felt were not transmitted to her:

I've never really had lessons from my parents on money management it's just kinda like, "well, it's there. I'll spend it!" And my dad's very much like that to this day. ((KM: Mm)). And I'm trying so hard not to be like that ((laughs)). So I mean I have a plan in place for when I graduate, y'know, once I have a job and I'm stable for three months past probation period, I'm going to seek a financial advisor and be like, "what's the issue?" And I've already come to terms with like, "if you need to declare bankruptcy and that's just something you have to do, then you need to learn from that and not repeat this again." Y'know? Like, "you need to... be an adult about this, y'know?"

Adison's struggle was one of trying to launch herself into a new story, and she hoped that with the help of a financial mentor, the two of them could co-construct a tale that would reverse the disempowerment presented in the debt story of her parents.

Nowhere in the data did I find positive stories about debt. No family legacies were built upon debt, or if they were, they were represented by discourses of "home ownership" or "starting a business" instead of referring to the borrowing of money. In other words, while it is virtually impossible today to live independently as a student without taking on debt, participants shared no stories from their parents that valorized or legitimized debt. While participants encountered judgment about living with their parents, they simultaneously encountered a lack of narratives that would make the main alternative – taking on debt – compelling to them. It seems, instead, that both parents and their young adult children shared a view of debt as a setback (a barrier, a source of suffering, a disempowering force). This shared understanding meant that in the absence of inherited wealth or substantial scholarships, coresidence became the option most aligned with families' values. And even as participants opted to live at home, at least five still had to take on debt, albeit a more limited amount than would otherwise be the case. In future studies, it would be valuable to understand more about the significance of debt in informing young adults' and parents' choices to coreside. Are there families in which debt is seen as a character-building or valuable life experience? In these families, is coresidence a less appealing option? What are the

stories that circulate about debt? What will today's youth tell their children about their debt experiences, or will they edit those experiences out of their storytelling repertoires? How might parents transmit to their children more complex ideas about debt or more empowering ways of acknowledging and confronting it?

3.3.4 Synthesis

Becoming financially self-sufficient is commonly considered a key milestone of adulthood (Aronson, 2008; Arnett, 1997, 1998, 2001, 2003; Arnett & Padilla-Walker, 2015; Benson & Furstenberg, 2006; Shanahan et al., 2005; Sirsch et al., 2009). Parents' influence in developing this competence was evident in several forms. Some participants (6/15) spoke about their parents providing valued guidance or feedback about spending and saving, identifying their parents as trusted experts who could lead them to make wiser decisions about managing their money in specific circumstances. Some participants (4/15) reported their parents' innovation of a system of exchange – forced savings through “rent” – that allowed them to mimic financial independence without exacerbating their precarious statuses. Some participants described being cast into financial stories and identities, which they embraced (Iris' frugality), resisted (Adison's parents' debt), or criticized (Nina's privilege). And several participants (6/15) spoke to parental stories or discourses that made debt undesirable, bad, and even dangerous. Importantly, no participant retold family stories that made debt a desirable, healthy, or normative option – likely an important factor in many decisions to live at home.

In sum, when it came to financial matters, I saw very little evidence of parents exercising their individual wills over their children: they did not control their children's spending or force their children to make financial decisions against their will, and though Jane did complain about her parents' monitoring, her complaint was less about their surveillance than their misrecognition of her as a frivolous spender (implying her agreement with their tradition of conservative spending). Parents were also depicted as thoughtful in their approach to promoting their children's financial skills, whether in the ways they counselled their children against purchases, or in their creative solutions to the dilemma of supporting their children without compromising their acquisition of self-discipline. Finally, the presence of traditional authority was evident in participants' trust of their parents as financial counsellors, in their belief in cautionary tales about debt, and in their identification with family members' financial identities and stories. This is not to say that parents' embodiments of authority were always accepted by participants; indeed, we

saw Nina and Adison's criticism and rejection of their parents' failures to transmit to them financial self-discipline. Taking Arendt's (1961) view of authority as transcending those who wield power, these participants signal a forgiving yet critical view of parents as miscarrying traditions of financial prudence and modesty.

3.4 Romantic Relationships

A historical view of European-Canadian families shows that prior to the 1920s, parents participated in the selection and approval of their child's romantic partner. Prospective partners would call on women in their homes and parents would actively take part in the pairing up of their children, with kinship, love, and economics closely interwoven (Comacchio, 1999; Moogk, 2003). In a time of relatively weak state support, a person's marriage held out the prospect of "physical well-being, longevity, social and geographical mobility, and security, if not dignity, in their old age" (Gagan, 1976, p. 373). As Gaffield (1991) writes,

The process of courtship and the right to marry appear to have continued to be controlled socially in nineteenth-century Ontario, with parents doing their best to supervise both the selection of mates and the timing of engagement. The material consequences of not respecting the familial ideology (as articulated by parental wishes) were often sufficient to encourage young adults to plan their lives as continuing members of families rather than as individuals. (p. 182)

However, over time, personal fulfillment replaced property and economic concerns as the chief priority for partner selection (Mandell & Momirov, 2005, p. 49). Today, romantic relationships tend to be conceived of in more individualistic terms, and yet, the influence of parents on romantic relationships persists, though its contours have undoubtedly changed (e.g., with respect to parental intentions, mechanisms of influence, the consequences of heeding or accepting it, etc.). In this section I examine participants' discourses about that influence, including parents' roles as gatekeepers to the domestic space, and less often, as judges of romantic matches or sources of relationship advice and inspiration. Once again, this section was highly exploratory, and apart from questions about sex or overnight guests, none of these topics were queried in a standard way across participants, meaning that I was unable to make many interpretations about patterns across participants. Still, in the absence of much literature on these experiences, I hoped to offer at least a departure point for future researchers examining the intersections of parental influence and young adults' romantic lives.

3.4.1 Accepting and Welcoming Romantic Partners into the Home

Of the 15 participants, 11 were in exclusive romantic relationships, with the age of the relationships ranging from 4 months (Nina) to seven years (Amber). Nearly all couples had been together at least a year. Besides these 11 participants, the remaining four participants (Lois, Iris, Adison, and Vincent) were not in relationships and for different reasons: Iris was asexual; Vincent was not interested in a relationship (seeing it as requiring too much sacrifice); and Adison and Lois wished to be in relationships, but were finding it difficult to find a partner. Of the 27 parents, all but two were described in connection with participants' dating lives in one way or other. The two individuals not discussed in this role were Walter's mom's boyfriend of five years and Grey's stepdad of nine years.

Participants who were currently dating as well as Adison (speaking about recent boyfriends) signalled their parents' non-interference in their romantic and sexual lives. At the most basic level, they described their parents as permitting them the freedom to experience and cultivate these relationships within the household. Nearly all participants were allowed to have overnight guests, and only two participants reported rules against having sex in the house (a topic I will return to shortly). Nina's parents agreed to caring for her son when she spent time with her boyfriend, seeming to indicate some level of support of her romantic life. Many parents seemed to encourage their child's romantic partnerships through their hospitality towards long-term girlfriends and boyfriends. For instance, some participants (5/15) identified parents who shared meals with their partner. Participants also spoke about how their partners were welcomed to stay overnight (6/15) or stay for an extended period (3/15). As examples of the latter, Ria's husband was soon going to be living with her family; Grey's partner was currently living with Grey's family; and Amber's boyfriend was staying with her family for several weeks. Kristine, Walter, Laura, and Grey also recalled instances in which their siblings' partners had lived with them and their parents for months or even years. Finally, several participants (7/15) described their parents including their partners in more ordinary activities: watching TV, doing chores, or simply sitting around and chatting. These participants implied that their partners had been accepted into the household, sometimes to an extent that the boyfriend or girlfriend was now treated less ceremoniously than formerly. Sylvia illustrated this point:

K: if somebody's coming over like, everybody tries to be like happier and like more... except for my boyfriend because like – he – I – think he's been ((laughs)) accepted so

much that it's like "Eh!" I mean they always – they almost always like, uh, "oh here have – [disruption at café]

KM: Um! Uh – er – your boyfriend's been accepted? ((laughs))

S: Yeah so I mean like usually, like... uh, I mean my dad always offers him a beer pretty much unless we're like headed out, he's like "oh you wanna beer?" Uh, my mom, like, she always says hello to him but like ((laughs)) depending on her mood again it's like, other than that, that's it. ((laughs))

KM: Yeah, yeah ((laughs))

S: ((laughs)) That's how I know he's been like kind of ((laughs)) nobody puts on airs for him ((laughs))

KM: Yeah, they're not like, doting on him [or anything like -]

S: [No, no]

KM: Like, "so!" ((laughs))

S: And like you know, sometimes it's like, if they're feeling lazy, they'll just be like, "go – go get a beer", ((laughs)), like, "I'm not gonna get it for you but you go ahead" ((laughs)).

The observation that her family members were no longer "putting on airs" signalled a familiarity between Sylvia's partner and her parents: the parents appeared to be comfortable presenting their ordinary selves, finding it unnecessary to perform a ceremonial host role by greeting, entertaining, or serving them. Echoing other participants, Sylvia's parents' relaxed responses indicated their acceptance of her boyfriend as a part of their intimacy – as part of the home as a domestic and private space.

As described, parents were viewed as permitting and possibly even encouraging participants' romantic relationships through their lack of restrictions and inclusion of boyfriends and girlfriends. Uniquely, Kristine highlighted multiple stakes caught up in her boyfriend's presence or absence at family suppers. In our interviews, Kristine intimated that she had been frustrated with her boyfriend who she felt was avoiding dinners with her family. Although he had made it out to a couple special celebrations, he had made excuses or "ditched out" on many others. Kristine said she had tried to communicate the importance of these family meals to him and had tried to be accommodating by inviting him only when she knew he was available, or by suggesting that they could stay for an hour if it was out of his "comfort zone" and he needed to

“start slow.” However, Kristine’s patience was being tested and her boyfriend’s absence was becoming a problem:

I said [to him], “relationships are give and take. You gotta help me out here.” But I think he knows that I’m like, at my last straw. He’s like, like I need somebody to be there because I’m a family person. Not that I need him there, but it’s just nice to have him there so when I am talking about him, like they can understand, “oh, he makes her happy.” But I can’t – instead of just telling stories, like it’s nice if he could be there.

For Kristine, family dinners were not trivial matters; they were rituals that confirmed Kristine’s identity, role, and values as a “family person.” Drawing a connection between the past and present, Kristine highlighted the enduring significance of this nightly routine as a “big thing” for her family. I asked her why this was and she replied:

I think that’s just like what kind of kept us close, that was always our one thing, that even if you were – not that kids are really busy, but if we’re out playing, like, y’know you come home for supper, we’re together and then you go do your own thing. But that was maybe always our one thing that we had as a family.

To take part in this ritual had a symbolic value; attendance was a mark of family membership. On one hand, her boyfriend’s attendance represented an opportunity to persuade her parents of her partner’s good character and their suitability as a couple. On the other hand, it seemed that Kristine’s request for his presence was not just aimed at gaining her parents’ approval; it also seemed to be a means for her to verify the quality of their match. That is, if Kristine was going to commit herself to him, he would need to accept Kristine as she was, for who she was, and she was a “family person.” Beyond these issues, there is the possibility that coming to the table as a couple might transform Kristine’s relationship to her parents and sisters or permit her to express a new side of herself to the family. Certainly, the multi-layered significance of incorporating romantic partners into existing family rituals could be explored, notably in terms of how these encounters intersect with identities, social roles, parent-child relationships, and sibling relationships.

3.4.2 Sex Under the Parents’ Roofs

Participants in this sample signalled acceptance at their level of sexual freedom in the parental home. Of the 14 participants who were asked about the topic,³⁷ 11 stated that they were permitted to have romantic partners sleep overnight at their homes. As these participants described of their parents, “it’s just not a big deal for her” (Vincent), “they never cared” (Laura), “I don’t think it’s ever been an issue that I’m aware of” (Lois). In contrast to this, only Sylvia stated that she was not allowed to have partners sleep over: as she said, “my boyfriend can’t stay over. At all.” In the remaining two cases, restrictions about romantic partners overnighing were less relevant and therefore more hypothetical. One participant identified as asexual, and due to this, the topic of having sex under a parent’s roof did not arise with her mother. In the other case, the participant stated that although he and his partner might have sex if no one was home, “As far as staying over, logistically it’s hard because my bed is like, the size of this table.” In other words, sex at his parents’ home was not desirable. Still, Keith did point out that sleeping in the trailer with his girlfriend had never been an issue for his parents during family trips, suggesting that they might accommodate overnight stays were he to have a more accommodating set-up.

I also asked whether participants’ parents had rules about having sex in the house specifically (as opposed to partners staying overnight). Twelve participants stated that they did not, whereas two participants responded that their parents (and mainly their mothers) expected them not to have sex at home. As Kristine expressed, “No having sex in the house, under her roof.” Laughing as she did so, Sylvia similarly recalled: “I think my mom one time said this, this was when I was quite a bit younger, like in my teens I think, and she’s like, “if I let you guys have sex here you’ll never move out!” ((laughs)). Both participants tolerated this restriction but remarked that if their parents were away they would defy it without guilt. As Kristine explained, “I mean if they were home I’d be like, ‘this is so weird!’ But if they’re gone, I mean, they’re not gonna know. So I guess I’m a little rule breaker.” Whereas this rule tended to refer to a spatial context (“under her roof,” “sex here”) these participants seemed to interpret it to reflect a social context instead. As Sylvia said, “again it’s not really – that’s not really a rule cause it’s like ‘as long as I’m not here, rarr rarr’ ((laughs)).”

³⁷ Only fourteen participants were asked questions about this topic, since I made the error of skipping this section in my interview with Jane. Reflecting that omission, I will discuss this sub-section in relation to 14 rather than 15 participants.

Participants seemed certain about their parents' expectations concerning overnight guests and sex, but these topics were rarely addressed overtly by parents or children. Four participants said that their parents had never talked to them about overnight guests or sex in the house. Another seven participants said that their parents had communicated to them expectations when they began having boyfriends or girlfriends over (i.e., most often in their teenage years) but had not really addressed it since that time. In some of these seven cases, parents had communicated rules or guidelines about their child's sexual practices, whether about not having sex in the house (Sylvia), not having boys stay overnight (Amber, Adison), or keeping the door open if a guy was in the bedroom (Kristine). As one example, Amber described how she had begun sneaking her boyfriend into her house when she was 17 or 18, and when her dad found out, "he would freak out." After seven years as a couple though, her dad had gradually come to accept her boyfriend's presence in the home: "he realized like 'okay, he's not going anywhere, so.'" In contrast to this form of laying down the rules, two participants' parents approached them as teens in a way that was closer to a dialogue. Molly said that her parents at one point brought her into a discussion by asking if she was "bringing people home." Likewise, Walter indicated that he and his mother had needed to come to an understanding when she discovered that he had been having his girlfriend over in her absence. As the most recent example, Ria described how her mom initiated a conversation about expectations regarding sexual or romantic expression in the home because she was concerned that she and Ria's stepfather's displays of affection might make Ria's husband uncomfortable when he moved in. Finally, two participants said they and their parents had only ever acknowledged sex in the house and overnight guests through joking. To illustrate, Laura spoke about how bringing home someone from the bar might invite a wry comment:

the joke was like, "oh whose sandals are at the front door tonight?" and then you'd see... someone sneaking out in the morning. But like, it was just very like, comedic. Like, we'd all laugh about it. [And] -

KM: [Oh yeah.]

L: Vice versa, like, it wasn't like, "okay, Eric, we need to have a talk about this" like, it was just pretty funny. Or like, you know those awkward run-ins, like, someone leaving in the morning and like, my dad's leaving at five-thirty a.m. for work, so. But... we've all been there I think -

KM: ((laughs))

L: So it wasn't like – my parents were never mad. But it was just, like as long as you didn't drive home, like, wasted and you took a cab, like whatever, but.

KM: Mm.

L: Yeah, it wasn't ever an issue but it was just funny, like, [we joked about it].

In sum, expectations about overnight guests or sex in the house were hardly ever discussed in the present; more often, these topics were raised when participants had started dating, with further modifications to the rules seeming to occur implicitly and through actions rather than conversations.

Though I did not dive into the topic deeply, I observed three norms surrounding participants' expression of sexuality within the home. First, even if everyone (parents and children) were having sex, it was not something people wanted to acknowledge or think about. Essentially, the nine participants who brought this up pointed to the topic of sex as taboo in their households, in that there was a prohibition against speaking about it, a reluctance to think about others doing it, and a desire to keep it as private as possible. "Doing it" – or signalling to the other that you were aware of them doing it – was or would be "weird" (Grey, Amber, Sylvia, Adison), "awkward" (Iris, Sylvia), "hella awkward" (Adison), or "discomfortable" (Ria). Participants did not want to think about their parents having sex and they imagined that their parents did not want to think about them having sex. Even thinking about a parent thinking about them having sex was an uncomfortable thought, as Amber remarked: "I think about his thought process about his daughter having sex and that creeps ((laughs)) me out."

The second implicit norm around sex was being courteous and respectful. Seven participants implied that sex or overnight guests must be approached in a manner that would minimize disruption to the household norms. That meant that there were expectations around privacy. Ria for example noted that bedrooms were vital spaces of guaranteed privacy. Likewise, Walter highlighted that if the bedroom door was closed, then one should assume the person inside needed privacy. Sex also should be quiet so that it would not disrupt other people's schedules, as was mentioned by Lois and Nina. Adison, uniquely, noted that she always consulted her parents before inviting someone to stay the night, though her parents did not require it: "I never assume. My parents always go, 'Yeah! This is your house too.' And I'm like, 'no, no. It's your house. This is a little bit weird.'" Finally, Molly felt that part of the reason her

boyfriend was permitted to stay overnight was because, first, he did not do so “all the time,” and, second, he helped out around the house.

The third and final implicit norm surrounded who should or could be invited to stay in the home overnight. Specifically, three participants (all women) said that it was more acceptable for them to bring over a long-term partner compared to a string of “random guys” (Adison), “randoms from the bar” (Laura), or “a million boys over every night” (Amber). I did not have more details to interpret these comments, but it is possible that parents preferred to have a degree of familiarity with the people who stayed overnight in their homes, as opposed to having a rotating group of strangers encroaching on their space. Alternatively, these expectations may have reflected parents’ beliefs in monogamy as the most legitimate sexual partnering institution (perhaps especially in the cases of their daughters). To develop a more inclusive and precise view of these moral principles and norms, future research could explore the intersections between living arrangements and parents’ views of their young adult children’s sexual lives.

3.4.3 Assessing and Selecting Partners

For most participants, parents mainly were described as permitting or facilitating their freedom to explore romantic options; by contrast, Kristine, Ria, and Jane also described parents as legitimate adjudicators of their romantic partners, though with varied levels of influence. Ria, Jane, and Kristine implied or outright stated that their parents’ judgment had been superior to their own when it came to assessing a romantic match between themselves and someone else. Jane mused that if she lived on her own for the past three years her romantic life might have turned out differently: “maybe I would have made some bad choices . . . maybe I would have just dated anyone . . . I wouldn’t have thought carefully before I started dating someone.” I had few other details outside of this remark, but Jane appeared to have been suggesting that in the presence of her parents, she somehow took on their frame of evaluation, which implied higher standards than those she might have set for herself. Again, I had few details to work with here, but her cognizance of her parents’ perceptions may have granted her critical distance, providing an alternative perspective of herself, of her potential suitors, or of the compatibility between the two of them. Similarly, Kristine noted that she had her own expectations about her partners, and although her parents would not prohibit her from dating someone, she felt in some way that her expectations “go up to my parents.” After some initial difficulty describing what she meant, she explained with an example:

I was seeing this one guy and she's like, "he's not great." And I'm like, "you don't know that." So I tried to prove her wrong, but I'm like, "oh my gosh, I can't stand this guy." I'm like, "why does she have to be right."

Unlike Jane, Kristine appeared more resistant towards her mom's assessment, though she eventually accepted it as sound. I wonder if, here, her reaction might have been sourced in its implications for her, as someone who still lacked some judgment of character.

Ria's case provided the most intense example of parental authority in the domain of romance. Just over a year before our interviews, Ria was introduced to a man from her home country who her mother wanted her to marry. She told me that "It was an arranged marriage. My mom chose." At first, when her mother proposed the idea, Ria was resistant. She said that, initially, the two of them "had a lot of arguments on that" and explained that "I used to think that she doesn't really understand me, she doesn't really understand my point, she was just forcing her own traditional views on me, like getting me married at like 22, I'm like, 'I'm too young for that.'" However, Ria began to chat with this person over Facebook and on the phone, and after getting to know him "for a whole month" Ria felt that he truly was a good person and that her mother had made "the best decision," so she agreed to marry him. Importantly, his qualities as a "good person" closely aligned with Ria's values: he appreciated her intelligence; he encouraged her career ambitions; and he agreed that the two of them would share domestic labor in their future. As Ria said,

R: we keep talking that when we have our own home that sometimes he will cook then sometimes I will cook. Like you know that word, um, egalitar-

KM: Egalitarian? Yeah.

R: Yeah. So yeah. That thing.

What struck me in Ria's description was how her mother had chosen for her a partner that fit with Ria's values, which were not replicas of her mother's. Though Ria depicted her mother as balancing "conservative" and "modern" values, Ria considered herself more progressive. She therefore wanted to have a relationship that deviated from the traditional gender roles she saw her mom and stepdad performing. From her perspective, her mother "doesn't really get the idea of egalitarianism" and yet, her mother had selected a partner who wanted to split the domestic work, who encouraged her to pursue a career, and who generally was "not that kind of traditional person." Ria was very grateful for her mother's cultural creativity, which illustrated a capacity to

blend traditional and modern institutions and principles. Interestingly, at the time of interviewing, Ria felt that her marriage had been the biggest turning point in her relationship with her parents. She explained to me that before marriage, “I would let them take my decisions and it didn’t even, like, bother me that much.” But after marriage, she was becoming more vocal and was observing that her parents were “seeing that after that I’m trying to have my own opinions.” I asked Ria what it was about marriage that changed her:

R: I realize that I have [my] own life, I got married, I have a different person related to me that’s not my parents. So yeah like, kind of, that kind of thing like I am not dependent on my parents any more. I have my own life and in future I will have my own home as well.

KM: Ok.

R: So that’s kind of made me think that I should get the chance to make my own decisions now, like I should get that freedom.

This case points to the nuance embedded in what, from the outside, might appear to be a practice concerned only with status and the preservation of traditional community values; by contrast, Ria’s story shows how at least in her arranged marriage, her mother also acted out of respect for her personal preferences and values (Shweder et al., 2003).

Two participants did mention complaints about their parents’ opinions of romantic partners: Kristine and Adison. Both had felt irritated by their mothers for sometimes being too judgmental about their partners, stating that their mothers would hold things against their partners in an unfair way. A complaint about a temporary problem, for example, might be transformed into a “grudge,” as Kristine explained. In the same vein, Adison complained that

Once my mom always formed an opinion of a boyfriend, it never really changed no matter what. So if I brought up anything negative she’d be like, “Well see, I told you so. You should just break up with him.” And it was never like trying to talk through the problem or being like — could see it from that side or whatever.

In contrast to Jane and Ria’s discourses of their esteem for parents’ judgments, in these two cases, parents’ views were seen as excessively critical and even unfair. To put it another way, these remarks were perceived as superficially grounded, arbitrary, and out of line with reality. Rather than being subsumed by the category of authoritative knowledge or practical wisdom, they were interpreted as failing to consider a complexity of variables and a possibility of change

over time; in brief, these views were discounted as prejudiced rather than wise. As a result, Adison and Kristine sometimes avoided talking to their moms about their romantic lives.

To tie up loose ends, I will note that three of the four participants who were not dating anyone at present spoke briefly about their parents' views on their romantic lives. Iris, who identified as asexual expressed some appreciation toward her mother for refraining from judging her based on her romantic or reproductive choices. Vincent and Adison both said that their mothers hoped they would settle down with a partner and appeared to be fine with that idea (not describing it as a burdensome or unfair expectation).

3.4.4 Relationship Advice and Modelling

Eight participants discussed their parents giving (or not giving) relationship advice. Two participants spoke about parents giving helpful advice and roughly half of participants (7/15) said that they typically preferred not to go to their parents for relationship advice.

Kristine and Walter's moms were both described as offering helpful counsel about romantic relationships. What they seemed to appreciate most was their mothers' frankness when they were experiencing relationship problems. Kristine for example described how she would go to her mom for "answers" to her relationship problems: "she's like, 'well that's just something you have to live with, or break up with him.' I'm like, 'okay.'" Walter similarly pointed to his mother as someone able to put into perspective the kinds of conflicts that he and his girlfriend were experiencing:

KM: can you tell me a little bit more about like, the advice that she gives you, or like what typically transpires, or?

W: Mostly, like. It can almost entirely be summed up in her saying almost every time, "god you two fight about the stupidest stuff." Cause it's always like very small arguments. I've never had like, a full out like, giant fight with my girlfriend over like, the five years we've been together. So that's pretty good. But yeah, we do have arguments about usually really stupid things.

Though their mothers' advice could be read as trivializing, the participants both seemed to appreciate their mothers' takes. It may also be crucial that both Kristine and Walter, in these instances, were soliciting that advice, with Kristine saying she has "gone to my mom for answers" and Walter pointing out that "even when I was a teenager, whenever me and a girlfriend would have a fight, I'd be like, 'mo:m, this is happening in my life right now.'" Quite

possibly, their satisfaction with their parents' guidance may connect to the fact that both participants were seeking advice – in other words, they were freely and consensually accessing it as opposed to being subject to it.

Seven participants stated that they preferred not to go to their parents for relationship advice (with Kristine included in this bunch). Their reasons varied. Lois, Grey, Keith, and Amber described their roles in their families as somewhat introverted, seldom disclosing personal information or problems to family members. In line with that, they conveyed that it would be uncomfortable, awkward, or out of the ordinary for them to get relationship advice from their parents. Capturing this attitude, Keith mentioned, "I'm sure I could talk to them about sex and what not, I just don't want to." With a somewhat different motivation, Jane said that she would prefer to resolve relationship problems with her partner directly rather than involving others. She remarked: "I don't see any reason why I should let a third party know." As we will see in the next chapter, her resistance to disclose her relationship issues was connected to her view that her parents crossed boundaries by telling her too much about their relationship problems. Kristine and Adison would sometimes avoid approaching their moms for relationship advice because their mothers could be unyielding in their views. As Kristine highlighted, "I will talk to my sister, or my friends, because my mom can hold sometimes – not a grudge, but she can get more – her feelings get more invested than mine would." Finally, Adison and Lois both expressed how their mothers' cynical attitudes about marriage made them reluctant to ask for guidance. Lois noted that her mother would spout off glib advice, based off her own negative experience with an unfaithful partner: "she'd make comments about, 'oh:, don't get married unless you wanna change your last name.' And just, y'know, kind of just blows it off. So." Lois' view that her mother was "blowing off" the legitimacy of marriage suggests a view of her mother as narrow-minded – bound to her own experience of marriage, unable to see past it as a choice that could be positive for Lois. In a similar vein, Adison conveyed dismay at her mother's approach to marriage, believing that the only reason her mom stayed with her dad was for financial security. Reflecting this cynicism, when Adison asked her mom why she stayed with her father, she exclaimed "better to be with the devil I know, than the devil I don't" underlining the lack of emotional attachment that defines modern romance (Coontz, 2004; Giddens, 1992). Adison further explained her feeling that her mother was only in the marriage for material security:

there's not a lot of love between them anymore and I think it's just... a matter of convenience and what's easy right now. Because with her pay and her job right now... there's no way... she could live the life she wants to keep living, so she stays with my dad.

Both Adison and Lois implied that their mothers' attitudes toward marriage were connected to their experiences of a husband's infidelity – experiences they had had decades ago but from which they had never fully healed. To put it differently, these participants perceived that their mothers' advice was informed by their wounds, which themselves were associated with a breach of tradition (the sanctity of marriage broken by the husband's infidelity). Overall, participants' motivations against seeking parental counsel were grounded in intuitions about the presence of trust in their relationships, judgments of parents as unreliable storytellers, and senses of belonging to a tradition of romance distinct from that of their parents.

Only two participants brought up their parents' romantic relationships in relation to their own behaviors or beliefs concerning romance. As mentioned, Jane frequently criticized her parents for venting to her rather than sorting out their issues directly with one another, and specifically, she felt that a child should not be privy to that knowledge:

one thing I feel like I also learn from them is in terms of the mistakes they make in their marriage like coming to me as a child I feel like that's something I'm going to take that my kids should not know what's happening between me and that person. We should be able to – and that's why right now I'm trying to build that up with my boyfriend like if I have issues I just tell him how it is like I just tell him what's going on in my mind. It doesn't matter whether I would feel bad or not like it's just good that he knows that this is how I feel and we should be able to, you know, talk things through instead of going to meet people and... yeah. Going to vent to them.

Jane's comment pointed to a wish not to repeat this component of her parents' relationship, and in that sense, indicated a form of agency and innovation she exercised within her romantic life. Resonating with this intention to disrupt what was viewed as a flawed tradition, Ria said at multiple points that she did not want to mimic her parents' gender roles in her relationship. She illustrated a scene she did not want to recreate: "I keep seeing my mom, my mom does all the stuff, my dad is like sitting on the couch, on the table and like, I think in my mind 'why! Why is that?' I don't like that kind of traditional thing." She hoped that she and her husband would be

able to have more egalitarian roles, with each contributing to housework and each pursuing career goals. Like Jane, Ria highlighted how she also hoped to discontinue some aspects of her parents' relationship style. In both cases, these participants seemed to be sorting out what they would emulate and what they would discontinue in the transmission from their parents to them. As Jane put it, "It's not everything about them that you like, just pick out the ones that you like and help them improve on those areas that you do not like."

3.4.5 Synthesis

Today it seems as though social scientists tend to under-estimate parents' roles in couple formation, especially in the North American context, where younger generations are depicted as choosing and defining their relationships freely as individuals. Present day circumstances tend to be contrasted to past ones, when parents were more involved in the selection of romantic partners (Coontz, 2004; Giddens, 1992) and if variation is presented, it tends to be through contrast between individualistic cultures and collectivist cultures (Bejanyan et al., 2015; Buunk et al., 2010; MacDonald et al., 2012). The evidence I have presented underlines the persistent importance of parental influence among all young adults living at home, not just those identifying with collectivist cultures.

Parents' influence in this domain typically meant setting an expectation for their children to figure out their own romantic lives and carrying out that quest while simultaneously being respectful of the parents and their household. Thus, parents did not generally interfere with their children's relationships and there were almost no explicit restrictions that limited sexual expression within the home; instead, parents were accommodating and relied on implicit norms. Parents permitted boyfriends and girlfriends to come over, with many partners even being assigned an honorary status as part of the family (i.e., partners who were treated without the decorum of other guests, partners who lived with the family for extended periods). Nearly all parents permitted their children's partners to stay overnight, and only two sets of parents were reported as having rules about them having sex in the home. Expectations around sex and overnight guests were rarely addressed in a direct, confrontational way; rather, it seemed that parents more often spoke to participants about these topics during their adolescence and then negotiated a progressive liberalizing of rules in subtle ways after that point. In other words, there seemed to be a gradual shift in the rules, one occurring without a formal pronouncement or verbal negotiation taking place. No participants questioned their parents' right to influence who

did or did not enter the house. By contrast, two participants who were prohibited from having sex at home re-interpreted this rule to mean no sex when parents were nearby (transforming what was a spatial condition into a social condition). The selection and adjudication of partners was a topic addressed by only a few participants, and they acknowledged their parents' good intuitions about the compatibility of their partners or denounced the "grudges" or rigid views they unfairly held. Several participants stated that they did not turn to their parents for romantic advice, though two participants did feel that their mothers sometimes were effective in giving them perspective on issues they were experiencing. Finally, a small number of participants described wishes to avoid repeating aspects of their own parents' relationships, pointing to their own innovation and freedom to create a romantic life for themselves.

3.5 Child-Rearing

I described in the last chapter Nina's gratitude for her parents' help with childcare, valuing her parents' help in raising a well-adjusted child and appreciating how it allowed her to focus on graduate school. Her dual role as child and parent also exposed differences between her and her parents' approaches to parenting. Namely, Nina found herself in situations where 1) she felt the need to hide her social and sexual life due to her mom's conceptions of motherhood; 2) she observed her dad's lack of concern (or perhaps willful resistance) to model good behavior in front of the child; and 3) she navigated a close connection with her child that was, in her view, a departure from her parents' childrearing approach.

As the reader may recall, Nina relied on her mom's childcare on a nearly daily basis, and though Nina was very grateful for this help, she also found that this arrangement made her vulnerable to her mother's judgments about how she cared for her child and what she pursued outside of that caregiving role. Nina remarked that she and her mother were very different kinds of mothers: whereas Nina saw her mother as being defined by her service toward others (her children, her extended family, the community), Nina preferred to avoid reducing her identity to her role as a caregiver. Yet, accepting her mom's help meant exposing herself to the scrutiny of her mother's puritanism, since her reliance on her mother required her to communicate her needs and activities.

This support dynamic reverberated in a pattern of control and retreat between Nina and her mother. When I asked Nina about the worst aspect of her relationship with her mom, she answered "her judgments. And her prudeness on like me not being able to be sexual in any way."

Her hyperbolic wording (“in any way”) suggested Nina’s sense of constriction in front of her mom’s views – in other words, it highlighted how Nina felt her mom’s views would not be adapted in response to her world and self. As she stressed at one point, she wished that her mom would “have some perspective. Like, I’m not you.” Yet, according to her, her mother seemed to expect obedience, apparently caring less about whether her daughter internalized her values than whether she had the appearance of emulating them. As I discussed in the previous chapter, Nina was reluctant to disclose to her mom that she might want a babysitter so she could go out to a club or possibly have a few drinks. In addition, she mentioned telling “little lies” to hide activities her mom would disapprove of:

sometimes I just like straight out like tell a little lie to her. Like I’ll be like “oh yeah I have to go work on this” and then I’ll work on it for a bit and then I’ll also go do something else and I won’t tell her:: and I feel kinda, I feel really guilty actually not kinda guilty. But like if I don’t do it I’m going to like lose my mind and be less productive in the long run and I just can’t tell her because I feel like she would just be so hurt.

Similarly, at another point, she remarked:

This is ridiculous but like I met my friend Ted to go for like a little jog or walk by the river... and I didn’t tell her. ‘Cause I feel like she wouldn’t, like that’s selfish of me that I should’ve been working, she’s helping with Ethan and stuff.

Because her mother seemed to take such an unbending view, she effectively requested to Nina that she should hide from her dimensions of her identity to fit with her puritan views. Nina’s “little lies,” then, can be viewed as a response to a different lie imposed by her mother, where her mother commends her for being someone she is not, and Nina accommodates the story while sacrificing the expression of herself. Whereas on the surface, Nina’s insincerity appears to be her own, it seems that she is not in fact an agent, but a patient in these circumstances.

A second issue that surfaced with respect to Nina’s parenting and her parents’ parenting was her father’s refusal (or negligence) to submit to her norms. A couple times over our interviews, Nina told me how she was trying to raise her child to be “respectful and mindful in how he speaks.” For example, she instructed him not to use swear words, not to say “oh God,” and not to use the word “hate” carelessly. I inferred that Nina wanted her parents to follow this approach as well, since she stressed her frustration that her dad would not control his “potty

mouth.” She described: “my dad comes home and he’s like ((low-pitched, gruff tone)) ‘ah Jesus Christ, what the fuck is going on with this TV?’ ((laughs)).” In these situations, her mom would get “pissed” at her dad, which would make him more angry, at which point Nina would retreat and leave the two of them to sort it out. From this account, Nina’s mom respected her daughter’s approach: she rebuked her husband for defying Nina’s norms and Nina even noted that “she wouldn’t get pissed, if Ethan wasn’t there,” hinting that the issue is probably related to Ethan and not a general distaste for cursing. Nina’s father, on the other hand, is depicted as incorrigible:

my dad couldn’t care less in what I’m teaching Ethan in how to talk. Like he really doesn’t care I think. Like he’s like “whatever the kids gonna probably grow up and talk whatever way he wants to” that’s his thinking?

In other words, whereas Nina’s mother is willing in this instance to accommodate Nina’s childrearing approach, Nina’s father is obdurate, which not only creates tension between Nina and her father, but also between Nina’s mother and father. Nina frames this situation as one in which her father has disrespected her claim to authority; however, if we take into consideration Nina’s sense of constriction, we might interpret the conflict not as her father’s disrespect for her authority, but as a response of protest to Nina’s excessive demands. In other words, Nina’s insistence that her parents follow her parenting rules may itself have been rigid. Having experienced her mother’s narrow expectations for her as a parent (which were out of touch with her alterity) she now requests that her father embody her own style of parenting, which is out of touch with his. In this sense, the three caregivers become caught in a cycle of expecting and resisting each other’s tyrannical (or at least, conformist) approaches, while recognition of each other’s alterity or practical capacities is in short supply.

I have discussed already how Nina and her mother differed with respect to their embodiment of motherhood (what obligations of servitude toward others, what kind of sexual identity a mother could legitimately inhabit). I have also pointed to Nina’s father’s defiance of her rules for parenting. A third facet connecting authority and parenting concerned the type of intimacy shared between a parent and their child, and how Nina was intentionally reinventing a tradition of parenting. Nina often described her playful, open, and active engagement with her son: building Lego with him, hanging from the monkey bars when they went to the playground, and “talk[ing] to each other about like everything.” She contrasted her childrearing approach with that of her parents, stressing her effort to be present with her child and engaged in his world.

Importantly, this aim was connected to her own sense that as a child, “I really wanted this different kind of um, love from my parents.” She recalled wanting more of her parents’ attention and presence, even “trying to get in trouble” so that her parents would take notice of her. She remarked on how her own upbringing was influencing her parenting: “now I think, yeah I wouldn’t want that same relationship with my son. I – I wanna be there, like more – more time with him.” She felt she was already moving towards a new kind of bond with her child – one that incorporated roles as a confidante and companion:

I already have like a way closer relationship like that with my son. Like we’re very like close. We sleep in the same bed. And we talk. And we have like long, deep conversations even though he is only five years old. And...my mom has even said that. He’s – she’s like, “Well you guys have kind of a different kind of – you guys are really close.”
((Laughs)) [Like] like I don’t know if she was kinda judging or like thinking it’s weird
((laughs))

Nina’s commitments as a parent struck me as a corrective to the experiences of misrecognition that she encountered in her own relationship with her parents. While Nina’s aim may have been one of healing from the past (through her redressive action with her own child), her innovative parenting style seemed to have been perceived with some judgment by her mother, who made comments that Nina and her son were “weird” because they talked about “everything” with each other. Nina’s father, on the other hand, was not observed making any remarks of this kind, but Nina seemed to judge him – perhaps in jest, perhaps not – for his emotionally-distant approach towards both her and her son. When I asked her to tell me about the most negative aspect of their relationship, she responded that it was her father’s “absolute lack of emotion ((laughs)).” She went on to illustrate with an example:

N: It’s so bad he even tried to shake Ethan’s hand once ((laughs)) instead of hugging goodbye, we’re like leaving for a long time. He’s like “okay” ((laughs)) I’m like... “are you actually shaking your two-year-old grandson’s hand? Like, what is wrong with you?”
((laughs)). He’s stunted.

KM: Do you wonder what goes on in his mind? ((Laughs))

N: I kind of get it. Like I’ve processed it now like it’s... you kind of get older and you see like your parents’ upbringing so it’s fine.

Nina negatively appraises her father's approach, but at the same time, she considers its origins, which lie in the relationship between him and his parents. Like the participants who forgave their parents for being at times over-protective, Nina avoids blaming her father for what she sees as a dysfunctional emotional bond; what is more, she initiates something new in her own child-rearing practices to hopefully compensate for the harms she associates with it.

3.6 Spatial Borders and Boundaries

It is without question that I should have something to say about authority in relation to space, given that participants considered themselves partially dependent on their parents because they occupied their parents' space. And indeed, participants depicted the home as their parents' dominion, implying that they had legitimate control over the border between the domestic space and the outside world and over the organization of space within the home. Whereas this spatial authority was generally accepted as legitimate, participants did also identify instances where parents crossed over from authority into tyrannical control, particularly when parents willed their child to "stay close" to them (rather than move away) or when they had excessively high standards or rigid expectations for cleaning the home.

3.6.1 The House as the Parents' Possession

Parents were clearly seen as possessors of the house where participants resided. In the previous chapter, this was apparent in participants' views of their shared living arrangement as a form of support given to them by their parents. All participants made comments that reflected their recognition of the "house" belonging to their parents. This was evident in participants' use of the third person possessive in relation to the home: "I am in their house and I know that I'm in their house" (Amber), "this is their house" (Kristine), "her house, our house currently" (Grey), "it's her actual house. Like, she owns the house" (Walter), "it's their house" (Keith), "it is their house" (Adison), "I mean it's her house" (Vincent), "I'm living in her house" (Iris), "being under my parents' shelter" (Ria), "It's not really my property, it's just my temporary living area" (Walter). Most often, these acknowledgments were made when referring to their parents' support (i.e., their parents sharing something in their possession). These remarks were also made when discussing their adherence to the household rules. Among a small number of participants (Lois, Adison, Nina, Walter), these affirmations surfaced when discussing the aesthetics of the home as expressing their parents' identities or values.

In connection to parents' possession of the home, I should also state that all participants

recognized their parents as financially responsible for the home. In other words, parents were identified as paying for virtually all household expenses, including mortgage payments, utilities, renovations, maintenance, and insurance. There were only two small exceptions to this general pattern: Molly paid the family's internet bill and Jane occasionally tried to help with "some bills." In other words, it seems likely that parents' statuses as possessors of the home were informed by their total financial responsibility over it.

3.6.2 Having Friends Over

To establish participants' recognition of the home as the parents' dominion, we can also look at the topic of hosting friends.³⁸ This topic was brought up by ten participants who fell into two categories: 1) participants whose parents approved of them having friends over and who did it without ambivalence, and 2) participants who felt their parents did (or would) allow them to have friends over, but who preferred not to do so or felt that it was impractical.

Five participants fit into the second category, where they felt reluctant to bring their social life into the home, even though their parents did not prohibit it. Reasons for their reluctance were not clear for two of these participants, but the others referred to some justifications supporting their choice. Grey, Nina, and Vincent each were disinclined to bother their parents. For Grey, the issue had not come up yet, but she wondered, "if we actually have friends, how would we have them over while still being respectful of the space?" Vincent said that the issue had not really come up because he had other places to hang out, but he said that in addition, he would prefer not to "bother my mom as much too." Nina spoke in most detail about her parents' needs, stating that they "kind of like having their privacy in their home" and "They just like to like have their own space." Her words highlighted a common conception of the home as a space of retreat and private solitude for these parents. Nina also complained that when she had male friends over, her parents would often assume that they were potential suitors, giving her a "look" that she did not appreciate:

N: Before it was like kinda cool. Like my friends would just come over and play video games with us and like now it's kind of like, "Umm:: mom is it okay?" And I do have a lot of male friends and I feel like they're really judge-y about that?

KM: Your parents are judge-y?

³⁸ The topics of sex and overnight guests, which I discussed in a previous section, were also intimately tied to space. However, given that I presented these topics already I will not repeat myself by addressing them here.

N: Yeah. Like they're always looking like, ((low-pitched voice)) "Who is this guy?" Like thinking it's a romantic thing but it's not at all.

KM: Mmhmm.

N: It's just a guy who's a friend. And so they're always questioning that if it's a guy. And I'm like, "Ughh god, like." It's just annoying! It's irritating. Bec- and I have to explicitly tell them sometimes 'cause my mom will not say it directly but be like, "Oh well you know, but something because he's.." And I'm like, "Kay like this person, think of them as a girl."

Nina referred to a uniquely irksome experience of spatial restriction, which was connected to at least two conflicts. First, she felt that in taking up space at her parents, she had "give[n] up that part of my life" – a relaxed fluidity between the domestic space of her home and the public space of the external world, such that her home was no longer a gathering place. She noted that there would be conflict if she brought friends over because "my parents kind of like having their privacy in their home and stuff? Versus like I would have kind of an open door." By contrast, Grey and Vincent expressed that not having friends over was not a big deal, whether because right now they did not have a large group of friends or because they had alternative places to hang out. Besides this loss of communal space, Nina's experience of spatial restriction intersected with other tensions between herself and her parents: namely, her mother's difficulty accepting her sociable and sexually-liberated identity and her parents' protectiveness following her separation from her ex-husband. In that sense, and unlike Grey and Vincent, Nina's parents' gatekeeping was felt to be more inhibiting.

Participants who did not hesitate to invite friends over (four participants) also were sensitive to the house as their parents' home. While they did not allow this to stop them from having people over, they did affirm that implicit norms guided how they hung out with friends at the house. Keith and Molly both stressed that they gave their parents a "heads up" or asked them for permission before having friends over. Iris and Keith mentioned that they tried not to be "super loud" if they were hosting friends, with Keith adding that his parents were fine with him having guests if they did not leave a "huge mess." Finally, Molly remarked that if she did have friends over, she would try not to do so too often out of respect for her parents' space. As I will describe in the next chapter, some of these norms aligned with the kinds of expectations

participants had not only of themselves, but also of their parents (notably, mutual duties not to be too loud, to give each other a head's up, and to be conscious of the home as a shared space).

3.6.3 Parents' Spatial Privileges

Many participants (9/15) spoke about spaces to which their parents had privileged access. Unlike bedrooms, the spaces I am referring to were communal ones that parents had special license to occupy. By contrast, bedrooms were viewed as spaces each household member had the right to govern and use according to their needs. In most instances, participants accepted their parents' privileged access, connecting it to their parents' statuses as owners of the home and providers of shelter. Main floors, TV rooms, and living rooms were generally reserved for parents to use at their discretion (as these nine participants described). Specific couches and chairs – often in front of the television – were prized spots, coveted as spaces of relaxation on weekends or after a long day of work. As Ria described, “when my dad is at home then he is on the couch and watching tv. Dad – well that couch is everyone's favorite! ((laughs)).” Likewise, Amber pointed out that her mom would often be in front of the TV when she got home, “as soon as I come home from work it's just like my mom is always in her chair sitting in front of the TV. Like I could never go and sit on the couch.” As reflected by these participants' comments, parents commonly had special privileges to use televisions. I mentioned in the previous chapter that Sylvia's family embraced her mom's exclusive right to the choice of TV programming (old re-runs) after she made them dinner; in a similar way, other participants mentioned that if their parent wanted to watch the only TV or the best TV or the main floor TV, then they would concede it to their parents. Walter illustrated this norm:

W: I mean like it's not my TV, it's her house, her TV, so it's like, I would never ever like – like it's never been an issue really. But I wouldn't be like, “I'm watching this!” You know, like I have my own computer, so like, why would I need to ever do that? I don't even watch TV, I watch Netflix, so yeah.

KM: And that's kind of their domain?

W: Yeah. Like, I'll go in there sometimes, it's not like I never go in there. When they're not home or they're asleep or something, yeah I'll – cause it's a bigger TV than my laptop, so. I'll go in to watch something if they're not using it.

Besides main floors, living rooms, and TVs, participants mentioned parents' spatial authority in terms of their right to set the overall aesthetic of the home (Nina) and prohibit the storage of belongings in common spaces (Sylvia).

Participants generally seemed to consent to their parents' spatial privileges, though three participants did report feelings of irritation that came with this arrangement. These participants showed how consenting to the organization of social space did not necessarily mean doing so happily or without frustration. Sylvia, for example, pointed out that this constriction required her to limit what she purchased: "it's like, 'I can't buy this thing for this big shelf cause' like, 'I don't have a place to put it because this is my family's home' or like dumb stuff like that." Showing more agitation, Adison expressed how some spatial limitations were a constant reminder of her role as a dependent:

I don't feel like it's my house? I feel like I'm staying at my parents' house and I have a room there. And so like, I have a shelf in the pantry and I have a shelf in the fridge and that's it. Like, I can't take up anymore space than that. And there's space in the basement for my stuff, and I can't go beyond that. And like, if I wanna do laundry I have to check in with her, like "are you doing laundry? Is this going to interfere with you?"

In Adison's case, residing with parents gave her a sense of restriction that was especially significant in contrast to the freedom she had experienced when she was living independently. In both of these cases, participants were not questioning the legitimacy of their parents' spatial authority; instead, they were reflecting on their own incapacities to act, which were related to the living arrangement and more broadly, the life circumstances that had led them there. As described by Ricoeur (1990/1992; 1992/2013) among others, the diminishment of one's power to act can occur through a number of mechanisms, not only due to one's subjugation by others: the incapacity to act (which Ricoeur equates with "suffering") occurs any time a person is trapped into passivity (including self-imposed passivity).

Whereas the previous examples depicted parents as possessing a lawful right to certain spaces (with participants' willful consent), a small number of examples (described by Amber and Nina) portrayed parents as taking over spaces unjustly. Amber and Nina both spoke about their mothers dominating kitchen space, while Nina alone described her father taking over the main floor when he came home from work. Both remarked that when their mothers were using the kitchen, they could be "controlling" of others' access. As Amber described, "she will be like,

‘No one else is in here right now. I’m doing my own thing.’” Similarly, Nina noted that “my mom would answer that I can just cook or make whatever I want whenever I want,” but if Nina made a supper, “she’ll make something anyway and then it will- there- will be like some tension. So, ‘cause it will be like a double supper in the kitchen.” In addition to this competition over kitchen space and activities, Nina noted that her father would sometimes take over the main floor after a day of work:

with my dad, it’s like you kind of have to tiptoe around him a little bit and give him his space and like kind of let him do his thing a little bit. So my dad’s always kind of been like that way though with him. Like when I was growing up it was like, “((low tone of voice)) He works hard, he needs to sit down and watch his show and drink his scotch at night; leave him alone.” ((Laughs)) Like it’s kind of – it’s kind of silly.

In these circumstances, participant’s own use of space became “an extension and instrument of the superordinate’s will” of the parent (Lengermann & Niebrugge, 1995, pp. 25-6). Whereas the previous examples of deference underlined the participants’ consent to defer to their parents’ authority in the organization of space, the current examples reveal Amber and Nina’s experience of involuntarily submitting to their parents’ unlawful occupation of space. In response, both fantasized about the future, when they would feel less pressure to adapt their use of space to others’ priorities. In addition, Amber pointed to her preference to be at home by herself, stating for instance that “then it just kind of feels like, ‘Oh I’m not being judged by what I’m doing in the kitchen.’” It’s not like they judge me but they’ll just like question what I’m making or what I’m doing.” In a similar way, Nina sometimes found freedom by going to a friend’s house to cook dinner or by avoiding cooking; on this point, she lamented “I just don’t do it. Which I eat less healthy now... which sucks but.” Interestingly, in both cases, disputes over space in the kitchen intersected with both women’s dietary preferences (as vegetarians), such that conflict occurred not only over kitchen space and activities, but also over their alternative diets.

The previous nine participants reported their spatial deference to their parents, with Nina and Amber adding their unique experiences of expulsion or (sometimes) escape from certain spaces. In contrast to these nine participants, Iris and Grey both depicted more equitable spatial arrangements with their parents. Iris emphatically distinguished this arrangement from the one that existed when she was an adolescent:

I: Ah... I think I have more space in the house that's mine now than I used to. Like it used to be, my stuff was in my room –

KM: Mmm.

I: – and I might leave a book on the coffee table or something but my stuff wasn't throughout the house. Now I have things, like I have pieces of furniture in the house that are mine, I have mugs in the cupboard that are mine, not that it matters, I don't care if other people use my mugs, but if and when I move out I know which ones are mine and which ones I'll be taking with me, thank you.

KM: Mmhmm!

I: Um, my knitting I don't keep in my room. When I was a teenager my knitting would have stayed in my room because it was my stuff, but I don't knit in my bedroom, I knit in the living room where the TV is, so I keep my knitting in the TV room.

KM: So you've expan-

I: I have expanded.

Iris therefore points to a different organization of space, where she seems to have greater access and control over common areas compared to the other participants. By introducing objects and pieces of furniture to these spaces, the home shifts in meaning from her mother's possession to a space shared between the two of them. Interestingly, Iris was uniquely careful about positioning herself not as someone who lived “at home” since she did not spend her childhood in this house. Indeed, she declared at one point that “My mother and I both came to the house at different times uh and different stages of our lives” – a comment that similarly described her sense of communal sharing in the home. The comment may have also implied new roles and rules were made possible within this space and time – ones that would have not come into existence prior to that point. Through her spatial expansion and reluctance to define herself as living “at home,” Iris presented a style of cohabitation where borders were less prominent, space was more communal, and joint authority surfaced across a greater number of spaces.

Like Iris, Grey was in a unique spatial arrangement. She and her partner were living in the basement of her mom and stepdad's new house. Although the basement area was not a legal suite, it did have its own bathroom and kitchen, meaning that Grey and her partner had a level of separation from her parents unparalleled by other participants. Indeed, Grey felt that “the fact that we do all have our own space” was one of the key reasons they did not have a lot of conflict

with her parents. In addition, like Iris, Grey had a backstory that made her living with her mother seem distinct from other participants. Specifically, Grey and her mother had previously purchased a home together because Grey's mom had very little credit built up. Given the spatial independence Grey had as well as this background of equal ownership, Grey appeared to occupy the house in a way that implied less deference to authority compared to other participants.

3.6.4 Powers to Evict

Another way power surfaced in relation to space was in the acknowledgment that participants' parents could kick them out if they breached a major behavioral expectation. I asked participants if their parents would ever kick them out and what that scenario would be. A full two-thirds of participants uttered in their responses "I don't know," potentially suggesting that this scenario was not at the top of their minds and that it was difficult for them to fathom. Generally, participants pointed out that to be kicked out by their parents, it would take "a lot" (Lois, Grey), "something really bad" (Ria), "something really, really, really bad" (Kristine), "a weird extreme case" (Keith), "something pretty serious" (Adison). In other words, the threat of eviction was apparently not one used to incentivize compliance to mundane norms. Instead, being kicked out would only come as the consequence of considerable violations of sacred social principles.

Participants offered examples of these violations. To be kicked out, they would have to be showing a lack of initiative, such as stopping to go to school, stopping to go to work, or signalling somehow that they expected to be a "mooch" (Vincent) and have their parents care for them forever (as four participants said). Another reason might be if they began to disrespect the boundary between the private sphere and the public sphere. For example, having parties, bringing over lots of people to the house, having strangers over, or having random friends sleep over could be considered grounds for eviction (mentioned by four participants). The symbolic properties of the home and its contents also surfaced as important: disrespecting the home as the parents' property or the objects within it as their belongings would constitute a disrespect of their parents. Four participants noted that if they "trashed" the house, sold all their parents' belongings, or if their parents' personal things were "destroyed or stolen" (Adison) this could potentially be sufficient grounds to be kicked out. Extending on the theme of deviant behavior, participants suggested that they might be evicted if they murdered someone (Keith, Walter, Adison), got "heavy" into drugs or alcohol (Sylvia), turned into a "psychopath" and began raping

children (Walter), or had “a “major brain injury” that caused them to become aggressive and hostile (Iris).

These comments collectively highlight participants’ senses that only if they violated their own principles – becoming someone other than themselves – would they be kicked out of the parental home. Importantly, this again highlights the notion of authority as a set of principles that transcend the power of those who represent them (i.e., parents). In honoring the principles of living well together, participants are not simply conforming to parental pressures; they are also honoring their own principles for pursuing a meaningful future, respecting the boundary between the domestic and public sphere, demonstrating reverence for others’ possessions, monitoring moods, and treating others well. As another implication, these comments reaffirm my earlier finding that participants believe their parents to hold legitimate authority in overseeing that such principles are generally respected within their home. Third, these comments suggested a principle-based approach to the child’s tenancy in the parents’ home. No participants thought that their parents would automatically eject them from the home if they failed to adhere to any one term or condition; rather, their responses hinted at the application of general principles – ones centered on work ethic, clear boundaries, and adherence to ethical and legal conventions. It is possible that this principle-based approach may have been desirable since it lent itself to interpretation and adaptability within practical situations. By contrast, a list of unambiguous terms and conditions might have been more appropriate in situations where the child had a history of disrespectful behavior, or a tendency to interpret guidelines in a self-serving manner (as participants suggested in their discussion of contracts).

3.6.5 Pressures to Stay Close

As participants looked ahead, they faced choices about when they would leave home and where they would go. Parents were generally depicted as being open-minded about their decisions surrounding their departure; this was the case made by participants in reference to their recoupled mothers (Grey and Walter), both mother and stepfather (Ria), both parents (9 participants), or in relation to their fathers but not their mothers (Adison and Nina). From participants’ views, these parents had put no pressure on them to leave home at a specific time or to move to a certain location (i.e., to be within a certain proximity to them). For these participants, the decision to leave home was one they imagined they could make without their parents’ intervening; that is, it was a choice they could make freely and without external

pressures or constraint. None of these participants stated that their parents were pressuring them to stay living at the parents' house or in the same city. Most (9/13) expressed that if they were to leave, their parents might feel "lonely" (Kristine, Iris, Vincent), "sad" (Grey, Sylvia, Jane), "a little empty" (Molly), "upset" (Ria), or "bored" (Laura), and they acknowledged that the separation might be "hard for them" (Jane). As the only parent of the participants, Nina noted that moving would probably make it "harder" for her father to see his grandchild. Nevertheless, in each of these cases, the participants believed that their parents would be able to "adapt" (Vincent), would be "fine" (Nina), or would "get over it" (Jane). In nine cases, participants certainly felt that their parents enjoyed having their presence in the house and would miss them when they left, but they placed no obligation on the child to stick around. For Sylvia, Keith, and Walter, there was also an emphasis on how their parents wanted them out of the house so they could proceed with some projects currently on hold, including home renovations (Walter's mom), getting a second dog (Walter's mom), or downsizing (Sylvia's parents, Keith's parents). Although their parents were more vocal about the sacrifices they were making to allow them to stay, these participants did not feel pressured to leave before they were ready; rather, my impression was that they and their parents were in agreement that the child would launch when they were financially able. As a whole, then, these participants and their parents appeared to share an understanding that the young adult was under no obligation to continue living with them and, in these last three cases, that moving out at a fitting time would be a developmental step for the family, permitting parents to pursue new roles and interests and symbolizing the child's readiness for self-sufficiency.

In contrast to these scenarios, Adison and Nina anticipated more difficulty negotiating their separation from their mothers. In both cases, they felt pressure to stay close to them – not necessarily in the house itself but in proximity to their mothers. Nina told me that looking ahead she felt "pressure to stay in Saskatoon." She related these feelings to a past experience in which she had considered moving overseas (without telling her mother):

N: I had also ((laughs)) applied to [country 6]. And I didn't tell my mom. And then the package came in the mail. Oh. My. God. Like all the blood drained from her face! And she just like gave me this look, like I thought she was gonna stab me or something ((laughs)). Like she's like – I was like, "Don't worry. Like I'm staying here. Like I." She's like, "You didn't—what is this?" Like and I – I didn't tell her. I was like, "Oh it's

just like some information.” But I like kinda lied to her a little bit ((laughs)). I – I omitted telling her. Is that the same as a lie? I just chose not to tell her ((laughs)) that I had applied and got in and everything. So like—well started the process of getting in.

KM: Mmhmm.

N: And she—yeah, so uh, I would have moved to [country 6] but I feel like it would have been a big blow up.

KM: With them?...Mmm what would be their – what would be the issue?

N: Going with Ethan.

KM: Oh.

N: Like my mom’s so like – ugh it would be like taking a mom—a child away from a mom. Like it’s the same kind of relationship.

KM: Yeah. When you applied, was that something that you were thinking about too?

N: I was like so guilty when I was doing it. But at the same time I was like, “This is my life. Like I can’t...I don’t know.”

As Nina was planning what could be one of the major chapters in her life, she felt guilty and unable to disclose this vision to her mom. Her choice to “omit” information fit with a more generalized pattern of suppressing aspects of herself to avoid conflict. Although her mother’s reaction (“I thought she was gonna stab me or something”) sounded aggressive, Nina also seemed to recognize it as an expression of hurt. Indeed, it does seem that her reluctance to tell her mother was motivated not just by a fear of being judged but also out of a desire to avoid causing her mother suffering. Her mother’s attachment to Ethan was one easy for her to empathize with, being strongly attached to him herself. Interestingly, when she imagined Ethan leaving home for school, she presumed that the separation would similarly be tough on her: “((whispers)) oh my God! I don’t know if I could like... I’d have to like let go of him at some point I know but it would be like really hard.”

Let us take Adison’s situation and compare it to Nina’s. Like Nina, Adison told me that she anticipated conflict over her departure from the family nest. She explained:

I brought up how my practicums are in [Canadian province 1] and I’m hoping to get a job there. And she basically said, “Well, no, you can’t move there because that’s too far away from me.” And I said, “Well, it’s not about you mom.” And she’s like, “Well, it’s not about me. I’m not saying it’s about me.” It’s like, “you have to be near your mom and

dad.” You know, I don’t have to be near my mom and dad. Like she’s like, “Well, who’s going to take care of us?” I’m like, “Well, give it 20 years and then we’ll talk about it!” ((laughs)) Like you guys are fine right now. You don’t need me to be here. She just has certain expectations of what she wants me to do and they don’t always line up with what I wanna do.

Connecting present to past, Adison outlined how she had historically found it difficult resisting her parents’ (especially her mother’s) influence when it came to making decisions:

she’s always said to me, she’s like, “well, if you move out you have to stay in the same city.” And it’s like, “No::, I don’t have to stay in the same city.” She’s been like, “but it’s gonna... hurt me if you move to another city.” And I’m like, “I’m sorry that it hurts you but like, I’m an adult. I’m gonna do what I want to do, I can’t live my life doing what you want me to do. ((KM: Mhmm)) [in mother’s voice] “So you’re okay with it.” And so that’s been kinda hard to, like... like... uh, I don’t wanna say rectify but like... come to terms with, I guess? I kinda realized that I’m not always gonna be able to please my parents and do what they want me to do because that just doesn’t fit with how I want to live my life?”

The conflict in both Adison and Nina’s cases is similar: their mothers want them to stay close but know one day they will go. In both cases, there seems to be a recognition by the daughters that leaving their mothers would cause their mothers pain and both feel guilty about this. However, what distinguishes Adison and Nina are their responses to their own reactions. Nina states that she conceals her conflicting desire to move out. By comparison, Adison depicts herself as confrontational, staking out a boundary between herself and her mother. Of course, there are also differences between the two cases. The fact that Nina’s child lives with her parents introduces additional attachments that must be considered. The grandmother’s care for the child also complicates matters by generating a sense of indebtedness from Nina toward her mother. Further distinguishing the two, Adison had been attending therapy and felt that as a result she was increasingly able to distinguish her own needs and desires from those of her parents. She noted: “that was another thing that I was like in therapy for, was relying on my own voice and not letting others influence decisions I’ve made because that’s happened to me.” By contrast, Nina had not (to my knowledge) received the help of a professional who could help her to re-narrate her feelings, reactions, and responses toward her parents.

To summarize, participants commonly recognized the vulnerability of their parents as people who cared about them and would experience the normal pain of “unbinding” (Ricoeur, 2004/2005) when they left. In most cases, participants did not anticipate their parents’ vulnerability would provoke manipulation intended to prevent separation and the pain that it would generate. By contrast, in Adison and Nina’s experiences, each did perceive their parents’ attempts (intentional or unintentional) to compel the participants to stay close to them, and in both cases, they struggled to view their parents’ fear of pain as being outside of their responsibility. The impulse to act out of care for the parents’ vulnerability simultaneously created an experience of subjugation. These cases remind us that the act of interpellation – being called on to be a certain self or identify as a certain character (Frank, 2010) – is an articulation of power by the person or collective that “hails” the person into that role. As Frank (2010) notes, it is up to the person to accept or refuse this call, but “refusal is achieved only through the effort of fashioning a story that can contain the original interpellating story” (p. 51). Adison is able to re-narrate her own story through the help of a therapist, whereas Nina – especially with her strong identification with her mother’s attachment – finds such refusal more challenging. While this data is not detailed by any means, it suggests the potential richness of examining how parents’ care and suffering (and young adults’ concern for their parents’ suffering) can unintentionally generate situations of subjection.³⁹ Beyond this, interventions that focus on identifying (without reacting to or acting on) one’s own and others’ negative emotions could be helpful both for parents and young adults. Interestingly, these types of scenarios might require that young adults and their parents temporarily remove themselves from “being” with one another (or, in Levinas’ terms, being “hostage” to the other) in order to think about the situation (Arendt, 1971). Such situations stand in contrast to many other circumstances where the spontaneous immersion of being-with and in-concern-for one another is a highly positive, mutually-affirming experience, as in the cases where young adults accept – without the need to think – their parents’ gestures of love and affection.

3.6.6 Clean Spaces and Dirty Spaces

³⁹ Importantly, such investigations could examine both coresident and independently living young adults. As proposed by one of the key psychological figures taking a suspicious view of the family, there is a power of the family capable of spanning great physical distances: “the family that one can separate from over thousands of miles and yet still remain in its clutches and strangled by those clutches” (Cooper, 1970, p. 18).

Beyond the borders between the domestic retreat of the home and outside public world, and the division of territories within the home, there existed an important division between clean and dirty spaces. More precisely, what counted as clean versus dirty was an important distinction in all households and participants described many scenarios where parents instructed, reminded, requested, role-modelled, or somehow expressed ideas about what a clean home ought to look like or be achieved. In many cases, participants identified their parents' standards and practices as ones that they explicitly accepted. However, participants still acknowledged occasional difficulty acting in service of these abstract principles; that is, they depicted an occasional gap between the doctrines they had internalized and their capacity for taking initiative to realize them. In other, more limited instances, standards and demands about cleaning felt excessive or unreasonable to participants. Overall, this section points to a diversity of forms of power: the authority to define (Wolf, 1999), the power to subjugate according to one's will (Arendt, 1961), and the power to act in service of an aim (Ricoeur, 1990/1992).

Of the 27 parents, 23 were at some point described as possessing authority in defining what a clean home was and how participants should be involved in maintaining it. This is not to say that parents had to tell their children what to do in every instance or reward and punish them to incentivize good behavior; indeed, evidence of internalized values is presented here as well as being implicit in participants' comments about what they would change if their parents went out of town (Section 3.1). In addition, I write in detail about participants' initiatives and sense of collective norms in Section 4.2.1 of the thesis. Here, I highlight that parents still played some role in actively transmitting aims and practices related to cleanliness. In the next chapter, I complement this analysis with a description of participants' collaborative efforts to maintain the home (i.e., as being akin to roommates rather than parents and children).

Expectations regarding cleaning were conveyed in a variety of ways. Many participants (11/15) made comments that simply reflected their parents' expectations to keep a "clean" or "tidy" home. For example, they identified expectations to "take care of your own shit" (Walter), "clean the house if it's dirty" (Jane), "pic[k] up after yourself" (Laura), or "clean up after yourself" (Sylvia). Negative feedback in response to the violation of norms also confirmed their existence: as was described by five participants, parents might get "frustrated" "when everyone piles up the dishes constantly and no one's doing them" (Amber), show "stress" about the state of the house (Sylvia), issue a "complaint" "when we'd stop doing stuff" (Walter), and "yell at us

or make comments” when things were messy (Molly). Sylvia and Laura also identified instances when their mothers had provided positive feedback or gratitude in response to them taking initiative to clean. For example, Sylvia commented “my mom would say ‘Oh thanks for doing that’ or she’d be like ‘oh good’ like she’d be happy” (Sylvia). Verbal commands corrected participants’ behaviors or informed them of their responsibilities: Kristine’s parents told her to pick up the dog poop, to wash bedsheets when her friend was staying overnight, and to purchase the correct toilet paper the “next time” she went grocery shopping; Laura’s dad told the kids “not to leave toothpaste in the sink” and to “take the hair out of the drain”; Walter’s mom gave reminders about mowing the lawn and shoveling snow; Ria’s mom asked “why is it like that!” if something was out of place; Nina’s mom informed her she needed to tidy before their cleaner came in. Closely tied to the issuing of commands, requests were another way parents invited participants to take part in household cleaning, with participants (5/15) mentioning their parents asking them to empty the dishwasher, vacuum, make dinner, do yard work, or perform other tasks. As one example, Kristine described “he’s like, ‘can you vacuum?’ ‘Yeah, of course.’ So if he’s asking you to do something, you do it.” Finally, Ria and Kristine identified their mothers’ role-modelling of cleaning standards.

In many ways, parents’ cleaning standards were described as good or worthwhile, even if participants sometimes still felt that enacting those standards was effortful. In other words, participants alluded to the nuance of internalizing the aim of cleanliness (i.e., at the level of doctrine) and developing an embodied habitus that would make cleaning practices “unreflecting, second nature” to them (Taylor, 1995, p. 29). Illustrating the level of explicit doctrine (Taylor, 1995), participants (11/15) commonly made statements that conveyed their agreement to the goal of having a clean home; for example, Vincent stated that “when I was really young I didn’t care about messes at all, right? Like most kids. But now I kinda understand like the tidiness aspects”; Sylvia said the principle that everyone to clean up after themselves “is a good one”; Kristine indicated that she herself was now “anal about stuff,” and Molly noted that if her mom bugs her to clean, “I’m more on the same page as her now...some days, I think it would bug me more, but for the most part um it’s been okay ((laughs)).” The transmission of cleaning ideals was evident in participants’ remarks that their parents’ expectations made sense to them. Indeed, it seems that such internalization even made it easier for some participants to joke about failing to adhere to

that rule. Illustrating this, Vincent told me about how his mom would occasionally still remind him to take his dishes upstairs from the basement, but now, both were able to find humor in it:

I think I've improved enough that now she just kind of finds it a bit funny but like irritated but it's like "augh he's – he did it again!" ((laughs)) So then yeah cause I think I've gotten better or whatever and since I like help do the dishes now.

In other words, since Vincent and his mother's approaches were more closely aligned, breaches of the norm could affirm their solidarity rather than their difference. In sum, many participants described here a tendency to validate their parents' beliefs about filth and cleanliness.

Several participants (6/15) expressed enthusiastic responses to their parents' cleaning wishes. Kristine, Ria, and Molly each spoke about their parents' cleanliness rules as being a helpful template for them; for instance, Kristine affirmed her gratitude for her mom's laundry tips; Ria liked having her mother as a role model in terms of keeping a clean kitchen; and Molly appreciated being able to observe her mom's skillful management of the household. Five participants also showed their approval of their parents' ways by advocating for their parents' principles or exercising some authority themselves in relation to their siblings. Interestingly, all four participants living with a younger sibling recounted moments when they had reprimanded their sibling for breaching rules around cleanliness. In the following example, I began asking my questions in reference to Keith's parents, but Keith quickly shifted the framing to take up the authoritative role himself:

KM: Okay. And with your brother and like, he's a little bit messier?

K: Yeah. A lot messier. ((laughs))

KM: Okay. So do your parents have to talk to him about that kind of thing, or?

K: Eh, yeah. Like whenever he makes – it's whenever he makes supper, he'll like, he doesn't get that you can put tin foil in a pan and make it way easier for yourself. So he'll just wreck a pan essentially and just leave it in the sink. And that drives me fucking crazy. I had to tell him that last night even, cause he made ribs or something. And the barbecue sauce just caked on this pan, and he just left it. And I – I was out – I went to a movie last night and I came back, like, "you should – you should've cleaned this a couple hours ago dumbass."

Evaluating his brother's observance of tidiness, Keith himself became judge and authority, with his brother as the oblivious neophyte; the relationship between him and his parents was newly

incarnated in his relationship to his sibling, suggesting that the transmission of these principles was already being continued by Keith.

Some participants (5/15) – including two who also expressed some enthusiasm for parents’ cleaning approaches – described a more grudging form of acceptance, where the general aim was seen as valid, but the action required to serve that aim was nevertheless effortful rather than natural or effortless. At times, these individuals felt slight bitterness toward the obligation to clean. As examples, they described reacting “I’m like ‘okay, whatever’” (Kristine), “It’s tough. But I don’t know, I’m getting better at it after living there for like a year” (Nina), and “it’d probably be like... I don’t know like, an eye roll” (Molly). In these instances, the maintenance of domestic standards was still an effortful undertaking of something that they nevertheless believed was reasonable.

In some instances, participants were not so much carrying grudges about their cleaning obligations, but they took their time to complete tasks rather than doing them right away. Molly, Nina and Walter each indicated that they might “push things off to the side” (Molly) if they had other priorities than cleaning. I initially interpreted these responses as a form of protest to excessive or arbitrary demands; however, upon closer inspection, I believe they may have instead revealed honest convictions that they had other tasks that required their immediate attention. In other words, their delayed initiative was not a form of resistance, but rather a reflection of their practical circumstances and priorities, which sometimes conflicted with the general aim to maintain a tidy home. As one example, I heard from Molly about how cleaning would drop off as a priority if she became busier in her day-to-day life:

It really depends on how busy and what I have that day. Like, I think it might happen more when I have school and my internship? So it, yeah, just comes down to how busy I am ‘cause on my free time when I – it – when my day to day isn’t as hectic, I do like to do more house hold chores, but if it’s really busy, I just push things off to the side.

In a similar vein, Walter stressed how remembering to do yard work was challenging when his mind was on school or work:

W: She doesn’t think she should remind us. She’s like, “you shouldn’t be reminded, you should just do it!” Like, “No, I’m gonna need a reminder.” ((both laugh)) But yeah.

KM: Um, do you think that – do you think that it’s fair that she has to give you reminders? Or like, what’s –

W: I'm – I don't want to pretend like I'm like, "oh, my time is too important for this." It's just like I am really – almost always busy with work and school. So like, my mind is usually elsewhere. I'll come home and be like, "okay, what do I have to do for school." I don't think what I have to do about the yard work.

While Molly, Nina and Walter both deferred to their parents' wishes, they nevertheless acknowledged that in some cases, their priorities differed, which might create a forgetfulness or delay in the completion of the task.

In contrast to the reasonable cleaning requests and standards I have outlined, I also observed parental expectations considered illegitimate. Such constructions were expressed by seven participants, referring to five mothers and three fathers, including one couple. Importantly, all of these parents were also spoken about in the previous sense, meaning that they were seen as oscillating between acceptable and excessive prescriptions for cleaning. Senses of illegitimacy were grounded in views that 1) parents had radically high or even unfeasible standards, 2) parents over-reacted to violations of cleaning standards, and 3) parents obsessed over methods, nit-picking or micro-managing how cleaning tasks were performed. Mentioned briefly were parents' disregard for participants' priorities and inconsistencies in the application of principles.

Excessively high standards for cleaning were described by five participants, all of whom also recognized their parents' legitimate requests regarding cleaning. In other words, these parents were understood as occasionally shifting from reasonable requests to extreme ones. These participants outlined parents' expectations that "everything has to be perfect" in the home (Nina), that they would like "everything tidy and clean" (Vincent), or that "every nook and cranny" needed to be cleared (Kristine). The common refrain "every" underscored the absoluteness assigned to these ideals. Qualities of rigidity also were present in these descriptions, with participants stating that parents required things "to be a certain way" (Adison, Sylvia), or that they had a "low tolerance for like messy" (Sylvia). That rigidity – and often, an anxiousness that it was connected to – contrasted with the open, flexible, and relaxed experiences of life at home that participants described at a more general level. Indeed, when it came to cleaning, Nina and Adison went so far as to use metaphors that characterized their houses not as homes (with their associations of intimacy and comfort) but rather as sterile and immaculate public spaces. Reflecting this, Nina stressed how "I have to make sure it is spotless because my parents' house al- almost always looks like a show home." Likewise, Adison mentioned that, for her mom "it

has to be perfect. It's almost like living in a museum?" As a counterpart to these excessive expectations, parents were also described as over-reacting when their standards were not met. Participants (4/15) alluded to parents who would get into "a huff and puff" over a spilled plate (Kristine), who would be "set off" by a dirty dish left in a bedroom (Adison), who got into a "really bad mood" when things were not clean (Sylvia), or who had "like a phobia of having a dirty dish" (Vincent). In summary, some participants critiqued parents' high standards, seeing them as laden with an excess of significance or an over-investment of emotion – a perception that leaned in the direction of the tyrant and their need for egoistic control.

In response to these excessive ideals and reactions, all five participants drew on naturalizing frameworks that made sense of their parents' limited capacities for thinking and judging. Rather than viewing their parents as being faithful to a different set of values, they identified their parents as psychologically or neurologically peculiar. Sylvia and Adison drew on biological interpretations when they explained their mothers' over-reactions to mess as "just a chemical imbalance" (Adison) and "just that hormonal change" (Sylvia). From a more developmental perspective, Kristine spoke about her dad's over-reactions as part of "him becoming an old man slowly." Psychological types informed Vincent, Sylvia and Nina's interpretations of their parents' behaviors, with Vincent analyzing his mother as having a "fixed mindset," a "phobia" of dirty dishes, and a need for a clean house as "a thing that keeps her calm." Nina and Sylvia's mothers, similarly, were respectively described as "control freaky" and "anal." Finally, Nina distinguished between her father as a "Type A" and her as a "Type B" to explain their conflict over tight restrictions of cleanliness in the home. The function of these characterizations appeared to render difficult social behaviors immutable, natural, and forgivable: if parents' impulses were psychologically ingrained or biologically-driven, then parents themselves – as capable agents – could be deserving of compassion rather than blame. In addition, these depictions could legitimize resistance or disobedience, since it meant that participants were not disobeying the legitimate aim, but rather their parents' warped interpretation and formalization of it. Given that these participants also pointed to their parents' legitimate articulations of the aim, it suggests that participants made a balanced judgment of their parents, neither reducing them to their eccentricity, nor ignoring that it was a part of them.

Four of these participants also described having negative emotions and feelings in response to the high standards of their parents. Trying to live up to these principles could be

exhausting, stressful, and guilt-inducing. Sylvia especially emphasized her tendency to “really grab other people’s emotions” and anticipated that, once she moved out, it might be “better” and “healthier” for her having some distance from her mother’s day-to-day displays of frustration regarding the state of the household.

When parents had high standards for the orderliness of the home, the same five participants also responded by setting limits on their contributions. One of the ways this surfaced was in participants’ admissions that they might try a bit harder every now and then to live up to their parents’ standards, but they would also just accept their own sub-standard job (from the point of view of their parent) and whatever consequences would come from it. Nina perhaps described this best when she spoke about the challenge of maintaining her space to the “perfect” standards of her parents:

I just feel like the basement is kind of like a mess and they would kind of like that... Like if I were to keep it like perfect I would not get any work done. Like I would never finish my thesis, I just like could not like survive, I would never see my friends, I would never, I would have to just like stay in that house and clean it all day and tidy it and organize Ethan’s Lego and put away the... Play-Do perfectly in the boxes every single time he takes it out and – or the alternative is Ethan cannot play. I’d be like “no, you can’t do that” ((laughs)) like I would- I just would never do that, so.

The outcomes of Nina’s satisficing approach were her mother’s nagging and her father’s avoidance of the basement. Accepting to do less also sometimes meant that parents ended up doing extra work to make up the difference; for example, Adison noted that, on one hand, it was somewhat unfair that in their household her mom did dishes the most, “But,” as she explained, “I feel like that’s because it bothers her ((laughs)) more.” Participants also sometimes set limits on their household work by affirming distinct territories within the home; Sylvia, Vincent, and Nina each acknowledged that they were entitled to some messiness within their own rooms, with Vincent and Sylvia adding that they did not feel responsible for maintaining spaces that they did not occupy.

Kristine was the only participant to talk about confronting a parent about over-reactions or high standards. She stated that she gave her dad a “hard time” sometimes for taking things so seriously and encouraged him to see messes as “not a big deal” or as something that they could fix together. Kristine’s approach suggested that she viewed her father (the one with excessive

standards) as someone who may actually listen to her and respect her opinion; if she did not, then, like the other participants, she might have taken a more passive approach, believing that her dad would never see it her way. This is not to say that other participants felt change was impossible; rather, it only implies that they did not see themselves as being capable of triggering that unlikely transformation.

I have outlined how according to participants parents sometimes set the bar too high for domestic tidiness. Another issue that emerged was parents' fixation on how and when cleaning was done. Amber, Vincent, and Nina highlighted instances when parents demanded that things be done a "particular" way, privileging the method over any other dimension of the task. Amber and Vincent identified parents who refused to use the dishwasher, due to beliefs that it wasted water and energy (in Amber's case) or due to an aversion toward dirty dishes sitting around (in Vincent's case). Similarly, Nina recounted her attempt to mow the lawn and her dad's questioning of what "pattern" she used

when I first moved in I tried to do the mowing. I was like "oh okay I feel so like bad that I'm not paying anything and I'm living here" and I started like doing the mowing and stuff and he was just complaining about it. He was like... ((low-pitched voice)) "what, what uh:: pattern did you do on the front lawn?"

KM: ((Laughs))

N: I was like, "I... what?" ((laughs)) and he's like ((low-pitched voice)) "well you gotta like go blah blah blah" and I'm like... "kay I'll do that next time" and then the next time I did it he was like, "oh..." well I don't know, he had something else like, it was just always something to complain about like some kinda like ((low-pitched voice)) "well oh did you do it this way?" or "it's kinda wet, what did you do with the grass?" like –

KM: ((Laughs))

N: So it's like "ho::ly shit" so I just stopped.

Nina's story stressed her father's rigid standards for executing household tasks, apparently to an extent that it felt as though Nina would never get it right. Although Nina may have alternatively confronted her father's strict demands, instead she took a more passive approach, sacrificing what could have been (from her perspective) a meaningful gesture of giving back. Similarly, Adison also evidenced this pattern of trying then giving up when a parent became too nitpicky about how to perform a chore; as she described of her mother, "She likes things done a certain

way and if you don't do it her way, she'll make you redo it. So a lot of [the] time we just let her do it herself so ((laughs))." Vincent and Amber, meanwhile, said that their parents did not listen to their method suggestions (in Vincent's case, to get a dishwasher) or would accept them but with a snarky remark (in Amber's case, when she suggested that "hey I think we should use the dishwasher today").

Closely related to the topic of method-fixation was an issue of timing; Jane, Walter, and Nina expressed that when parents requested participants to do a cleaning task immediately, or at a prescribed and exact date and time, this was experienced as signaling a lack of respect and empathy. Illustrating this, Jane contrasted her father's approach to requests with her mother's:

I feel he's more understanding cause if I'm like, "oh I'm doing something" then he'll be like oh I should let him know when I'm done and then that's it. Compared to my mom that would just be like "oh you have to do this for me right now" and that type of thing. Responses to this issue usually involved the participant doing the chore according to their own schedule.

As a final source of illegitimacy in the domain of domestic cleaning, Kristine and Adison pointed to what they perceived as contradictory (and therefore arbitrary) expectations. For her part, Kristine described her father's negative reactions to her placement of dishes:

The one day I came in, and I put my cup in dishwash- or my coffee mug in the – or in the sink, and he's like, "put it in the dishwasher!" And I'm like – normally he doesn't tell me those things, I'm like, "what?" But I'm not going to be like, "no dad, I'm not doing it." So like, I put it in the dishwasher, and then, like a couple weeks later I went and he heard- I think he was in the bathroom, and he heard me open the dishwasher, he's like, "just put it in the sink!" And I was like...me and Carmen were like, "dad you just yelled at me two weeks ago for putting it in the sink!" And he's like, "well don't worry about it!" I'm like, "I'm so:0 confused."

Identifying a different kind of contradiction, Adison and Ria both were critical of their mother's expectations that father do no domestic labor in the house. Adison described how she had backed down from her initial critical position:

when we're both home and my mom's not and he goes, "Can you do the dishes?" And I almost wanna be like, "Why can't you do the dishes?" Like it's literally emptying the dishwasher and putting the dishes in, like I don't understand why I — it falls to me.

Because I'm the daughter? Because I'm a girl? I just don't fight it anymore. I just do it. But like for the longest time it would — it would just bug me and be like, “((Slowly)) Why do I have to do it? Like I don't understand? Like you're not doing anything either.” But I just let it go now. It's just the way it is.

Though Kristine did seem to call her father out on his contradiction, it also sounds like she too accepted this contradiction as “the way it is” in a similar fashion to Adison. Their tolerance suggests that they felt limited in their capacity to persuade their parents through argument, or perhaps more importantly, that it was not such a burden to choose to accept things as they were.

As I noted earlier, four parents were not described as actively educating participants on standards of cleanliness or issuing commands for members of the household to uphold them; these were Lois' mother, Walter's mom's boyfriend, Sylvia's dad, and Adison's dad. Lois reflected directly on the lack of expectations for cleaning within the home, saying that she inhabited a “super slack environment” where she and her mother rarely cleaned. Immediately prior to this, she was reflecting on the idea of moving out with another person, hoping that “we won't be at each other's throats ((laughs)).” The adjacency of these thoughts suggests an association: Lois may have believed that by inhabiting a space with low standards for upkeep, she would be worse prepared for living with other people. In the cases of the other three participants' parents, cleaning roles were quite strictly gendered, with Walter's mom's boyfriend, Sylvia's father, and Adison's father seldom contributing to or organizing domestic tasks. In addition, Sylvia and Adison's mothers both were reported to be excessive in their standards and demands, which may explain a more relaxed approach taken by their fathers as compensation.

3.6.7 Synthesis

A critical-phenomenological approach to the spatial domains implies the value of examining space in terms of its social, symbolic, and political meanings. The data I collected on these topics (incomplete as it was) supports the claim that the configuration and definition of space was informed by, and contributed to, the political relations of participants and their parents. Most relevant to this examination of space were two borders. First, there was the border between the inner domestic space and the external public world. This border was implied in constructions of parents as owning the house, permitting or restricting the flow of people entering and exiting, and protecting the sanctity of the home through the management of mess.

Second, there were the borders within the home itself. These were implied in the microgeography of access and denial to specific spaces.

Generally, this data showed how parental authority was reflected in the use and representation of space. This authority was revealed through the construction of the house as the possession of the parents, participants' deference toward parents in bringing guests into the space, tolerance of parents' privileged occupation of communal spaces (main floors, living rooms, outdoor spaces), participants' confirmation of their parents' legitimate right to evict them, and participants' respecting parents' desires to keep dirt "out" and cleanliness "in." In more limited instances, space was described as a site for parents exercising tyrannical control over participants. This was most apparent in three instances: in the unfair domination of space described by Nina and Adison, in the coercive tactics by mothers to maintain proximity to their daughters (also described by Nina and Adison), and in five participants' descriptions of cleaning standards that were excessive, arbitrary, or unreasonable. Finally, from a third direction, this chapter hints that parent-child relations may be renegotiated through the reorganization or redefinition of space. This was apparent in at least three places: in Iris' expansion into the common space of the home, which distinguished her status as an adolescent from her status as an adult; in the implicit negotiation of borders that must have occurred to transform rules about overnight guests and/or sex in the home; and in Nina and Adison's struggles to claim for themselves the right to distance themselves from their mothers, which seemed to correlate with a desire to transform the power dynamics of their relationships (an ongoing process). If anything, this data suggests the fruitfulness of examining parent-child relationships in a specifically spatial way. Because of its intersections with so many aspects of social life – with friendship, sexuality, protection, support, identity, ownership, etc. – the domain of space offers exceptionally fertile grounds for cultivating an understanding of the politics of coresident parents and children.

3.7 Technical and Social Skills

Participants made brief mentions of parents' technical knowledge outside of the domains already discussed. Most commonly, participants (5/15) felt they had acquired their mothers' cooking practice. Keith, Molly, Jane, Laura, and Grey all stated that their mothers had had a marked influence on their cooking, whether their mothers had passed on their skills (Molly, Jane, Laura, and Grey) or encouraged them to cook for the family (Keith and Jane). As one example, Molly described how her parents "always tried to teach us to cook" and praised her mom's

expertise especially, saying that she “has like a really crazy palate where she can taste something and she – she’s able to re-create it.” Likewise, Jane noted her interest in observing her mom at work in the kitchen: “My mom is definitely a good cook so I definitely always try to watch what she’s doing.” Both Keith and Jane added that their parents instilled in them the importance of being able to cook. Keith, for example, did not claim that his parents taught him cooking techniques, but spoke about how his mother had helped him to prepare for the future by asking him and his brother to make a family meal each week. As he remarked, this was a “basic skill” and “she wanted us to be ready for when we do move out.” The value of cooking was also a part of what Jane learned from her mother, who stressed the importance of anticipating family members’ needs by cooking in large batches: “if you’re home you should cook for everyone in the house like, especially when they are going to work and you know they will get back tired and yea so you should cook for them.” Finally, Molly’s parents emphasized the value of cooking both as a preparation for when they moved out and made an effort to “pass on” their recipes in case their children wanted to open a restaurant as a “back-up plan” for earning a living. Besides cooking, other forms of technical knowledge were presented briefly by participants (4/15): Kristine and Keith both praised their dads’ knowledge of car maintenance; Amber laughingly recalled her dad trying to give her backpacking tips from his own journey in “a totally different era”; Kristine invited her dad’s expertise on birds and plants on their nature walks; and Sylvia described her mom giving her health tips (both legitimate and dubious, from Sylvia’s point of view) and lessons in ceramics.

In addition to technical knowledge, the topic of social skills was brought up by two participants who expressed that they were still learning from their mothers about how to read and navigate different social situations. Iris, who described herself as “very socially awkward” as a child said that she was still learning from her mom, stating “Her social skills are – are far superior to mine so I’m – I’m often interested in how she handles particular social situations or her take on what is acceptable in social situations.” For her part, Molly said that her parents were always telling her and her brother “to not be so trusting.” And since Molly was now seeing “how people schemed around each other” and “were shady” in her office environment, she had found her parents’ advice very relevant. Commenting that she and her brother were “pretty naïve,” she was finding their guidance helpful: “they’re like, ‘you just have to be adaptable and then if this person’s like maybe, like, they’re like this’. . . we would just kind of like, walk through...

scenarios.” In summary, Iris and Molly’s parents helped them interpret and act in social situations.

No participant discussed negative experiences concerning the transmission of social skills, but Adison did point to an obstacle she had encountered in receiving her parent’s technical knowledge. She noted that her dad had “talked down” to her a couple times recently when they had been talking about geo-politics. She had felt that her dad was taking a “tone” that conveyed “you think you’re superior to me or whatever.” She emphasized how “the one time I didn’t say anything, but the second time I stood up for myself,” recalling:

it was about (3) something to do with voting. And he’s like, “Oh you don’t know how that’s done?” And I was like, or like, “You don’t need to talk down to me ‘cause I don’t know how it’s done. Just no one’s ever explained it to me. Just explain it to me.” And he did, and he hasn’t done it since.

The first time, Adison did not address her father’s diminishment of her, the second time, she acknowledged her lack of knowledge (“I don’t know how it’s done”), confirmed her willingness to learn (“explain it to me”), and critiqued her father for his dismissive tone (“You don’t need to talk down to me”). In contrasting her former response (passive and complicit) with her latter response (assertive and self-preserving), she invited me to bear witness to her expanded capacity to demand recognition from her father, who she felt “still tries to hold on to me as I’m like, an 8-year-old little girl.”

To summarize, several participants (10/15) discussed their parents’ aims of transmitting various technical and social skills to them, highlighting the parents’ legitimacy as educators. These diverse lessons appeared to be aimed at two functions. First, they seemed to be aimed at increasing participants’ self-sufficiency and ability to survive in the world. Second, some lessons seemed to aim less at the development of self-sufficiency and more at introducing participants to new worlds, such that engagement in these worlds would allow participants to discover aspects of themselves (Crotty, 1998; Ricoeur, 1986/2008).

It was not always possible to ascertain the nature of the political modality parents took in transmitting these skills. That said, I believe that in this section I did see some evidence that the combination of traditional authority and persuasion through argument were at play. For instance, some of the examples identified parents has holding superior knowledge about a given topic or skill, but participants nevertheless wanted to understand the reasoning behind it. This was the

case in Adison's confrontation with her father about geopolitics, for instance. The merging of authority and well-reasoned explanation also appeared to be present in some parents' explanations of the importance of cooking along with their recognized expertise in it. Molly and Iris' trust in their parents' social skills also revealed not just their parents' knowledge of social patterns, but also an ability to exercise wisdom in specific situations – to “walk through” or provide a spontaneous “take” on a given social situation. And with regard to Sylvia learning ceramics from her mother, we can see that she not only trusts her mother's judgments, but also that her trust is based on her mother having evidence for her views. As she illustrated:

sometimes she can be critical about my work, like if I'm handbuilding something, but generally.... Like... it's like, well warranted? ((laughs)) So like I don't get mad, I'm like, “yeah I was trying to be lazy” ((KM: Yeah.)) “I'm not even gonna lie ((laughs)) I was trying to take a shortcut” and she's like “well you probably shouldn't, you know better” and I'm like “I kno:w” so stuff like that.

Interestingly, in Sylvia's mom's point that “you know better” it also seems that she is inviting Sylvia to affirm that she already shares the tradition her mom has transmitted and is no longer just a recipient of it. It suggests a form of mutual recognition occurring, with Sylvia recognizing her mother's authority and her mother recognizing her daughter's successful internalization of that authority. It is this process of internalization – the process of becoming a part of the transmitted tradition transmitted – that was simultaneously at the core of participants' experiences of freedom, described at the outset of this chapter.

3.8 Conclusion: The Acceptability of Authority

Throughout this chapter, I have brought evidence to support the claim that authority was the central political regime relied on by participants' parents, with more limited expressions of egoistic domination (Arendt's model of “tyranny”) or collective negotiation (Arendt's model of the “polis”). To put it differently, parental governance was based not on personal whim or philosophical reasoning and persuasion; it was largely based on their representation of transcendent principles including individual freedom, self-discipline, work ethic, reason, solidarity, and private ownership. The norms and practices associated with these principles were broadly accepted among participants, with few young adults questioning or defying them. Participants' acceptance of authority surfaced in many spheres: in the transmission of work ethic, the expectation of personal responsibility for one's vocational path, the imparting of financial

habits, stories and identities, the permission or prohibition of others into the home, the selection or adjudication of romantic partners (among a small number of participants), the definition and protection of boundaries between the home and the outside world, the zoning of space in the home, and the instruction of technical and social skills. This is not to say that parents were passive vessels in the transmission of tradition; indeed, I observed several instances where parents were depicted as adapting their principles to fit with contemporary circumstances – in other words, instances where parents engaged in the subtle reinvention of rules at the heart of “practical wisdom” (Arendt, 1971; Mattingly, 2014; Ricoeur, 1990/1992). As examples, parents planned an arranged marriage that accommodated ideals of gender equality; they tried to impart financial responsibility to children in financially precarious positions; they encouraged the development of life skills (e.g., cooking) while the child prolonged their material dependence on parents; and they transmitted values regarding romantic partnership while accepting the presence of sexual or romantic partners in the home.

From the perspectives of Arendt, Ricoeur, and Gadamer, authority implies freedom, not subjugation, coercion or force. In fact, Arendt (1961) affirms that “where force is used, authority itself has failed” (p. 93). We saw in the previous chapter that in the gift-giving system, participants retain the freedom to give back to their parents; similarly, within a political regime based on authority, participants retain their freedom to recognize and trust their parents’ knowledge of durable principles for living a good life (Arendt, 1961). It is this freedom that resolves the question of why young adults would be willing to accept “sharing” power when there are expectations to be progressing towards an equal relationship (Padilla-Walker et al., 2014). A contradiction arises only if we presume that by accepting authority, young adults necessarily sacrifice personal agency, autonomy, or freedom. By distinguishing legitimate from illegitimate domination, we are less likely to conflate the fear associated with a threat of violence from the challenge associated with acting in accordance with a set of principles: there is a difference between coercing action through intimidation compared to inspiring action through trust, allegiance or deference.

Still, it should be recognized that participants did not imply that they accepted parental authority in every case, or that when they accepted it they did so effortlessly. In some cases, participants were unable to challenge their parents’ traditions in the present, but they looked forward to a future where this would be possible (for example, in Ria’s intention to have an

egalitarian division of labor in her marriage or in Adison's intention to seek professional financial advice). In other cases, participants were already deviating from their parents' traditions, and they were tasked with persuading their parents that their choice was a legitimate one (e.g., pursuing a career or education that departed from their parents' models). In other situations, participants accepted their parents' authority but did so with irritation (e.g., cleaning rules) or discomfort (e.g., accepting the responsibility to find their own career path). Finally, we saw instances where participants reinterpreted authoritative principles to fit them to their own circumstances (e.g., coming to terms with a new understanding of work ethic, given a changed economy).

When authority proved insufficient, reasoning and argumentation were sometimes used by parents to persuade the child of a course of action. In other words, situations arose where "adherence to conventional, standardized codes of expression and conduct" either failed to be effective or demanded verification by young adults; in these situations, it became necessary to interrupt these modes of action to think about them (Arendt, 1971, p. 418). As examples, parents were depicted as providing thoughtful arguments about living at home, learning to cook, making purchase decisions, saving money, navigating social situations, evaluating romantic relationships, and presumably teaching other sets of skills or knowledge. It seemed to be the case in several of these situations that participants trusted their parents' authority but wanted to understand the reasoning behind it, highlighting that parental influence could take place through a combination of political modalities (persuasion by argument as well as authority). Beyond these examples, I also witnessed instances where parents' opinions were viewed as lacking reasoning or nuance: for instance, participants were critical of romantic advice based on parents' personal wounds, childrearing judgments based on narrow definitions of motherhood, unfair grudges against boyfriends, dubious nutritional advice, out-of-date travel advice, and irrational expectations for cleaning.

Outside of authoritative and argument-based parental influence, parents were reported to also resort to more forceful modes of influence. When parents coerced or intimidated participants into doing their will, they came closer to the figure of the tyrant described by Arendt (1961). This is not to say that these parents themselves should be viewed as tyrants, but rather that in occasional moments, their posture became tyrannical in that their imposition of their will upon the child constricted their child's agency or autonomy. I will reiterate that all participants

reported being generally able to conduct themselves as they wished; these experiences of tyranny, therefore, did not tend to dominate their day-to-day lives. These experiences were generally isolated to one or two domains at most. More often than not, parents were seen as open-minded and sensible when it came to their child's education, working lives, finances, and romantic lives. The most common domain where parents were reported to be more domineering was in their rule over the home space. Among a smaller number of participants, parents were depicted as imposing biased judgment about romantic partners (Sylvia, Kristine, Lois, Adison) or childrearing practices (Nina). And finally, in Adison's anecdotes about her father's condescension, we appeared to see her father asserting his superiority over her in addition to providing her with information. What united these discussions were participants' perceptions of illegitimacy in their parents' instructions, judgments, or commands – illegitimacy grounded in its arbitrariness, excessiveness, and nonsensical nature.

Participants responded to tyranny in at least five ways – sometimes combining strategies to preserve autonomy or an inner sense of freedom in their dealings with their parents. First, participants approached their parents' constricting actions and judgments by interpreting them within explanatory frameworks that naturalized (but simultaneously pathologized) these actions, whether based on biology (e.g., hormonal changes), psychology (e.g., personality types), formative relational experiences (e.g., upbringing, relational wounds), or entrenched attachment patterns (e.g., enmeshment). As described by Shweder et al. (2003), such explanatory frameworks (or "causal ontologies") do not necessarily reduce a person's suffering, but they may make suffering meaningful by "trac[ing] its genesis to some 'order of reality' where one may point the finger at events and processes that can be held responsible as suffering's cause" (p. 121). A second strategy used by participants was to retreat into themselves. For instance, if parents presented punitive or unfair judgments, participants might lie to them, withdraw to another space in the home, exit the home itself, or engage in condemned behaviours when parents were absent. In other instances, retreat meant escaping from the present, uncomfortable moment and imagining a future where they could exercise more autonomy. Finally, retreat could involve disengaging from a confrontation with one's parents while preserving their own judgments about the situation (e.g., giving up on changing their parents' views but continuing to believe that these views were unreasonable). The impulse to retreat can be likened to a drive to retain one's "inner freedom," another useful concept from Arendt (1961), which she defines as

“the inward space into which men may escape from external coercion and *feel free*” (p. 146). As claimed by Arendt (1961), this freedom is inferior to a sense of freedom that occurs in the external, social world: “The experiences of inner freedom are derivative in that they always presuppose a retreat from the world, where freedom was denied, into an inwardness to which no other has access” (p. 126). Closely related to this strategy of retreat, participants discussed avoidance as a third strategy; that is, some participants described withholding information from their parents or avoiding topics so that opportunities for judgment could not present themselves. A fourth strategy taken by participants in response to parents’ tyrannical uses of power was refusal: that is, participants sometimes decided to disobey their parents’ commands. If parents were going to put pressure on them or be incessantly critical, then they might quietly refuse to do something entirely or refuse to do something in the manner that their parents wished. Finally, and most rarely, participants responded to their parents’ moments of tyranny by confronting or questioning their parents’ actions or intentions. Moments of direct criticism were few, but surfaced in Kristine telling her dad to chill out, in Adison affirming her boundaries in response to her mother’s request for her to live in the same city, and in Adison’s critique of her father’s condescending ways. It is noteworthy that direct confrontation was so seldom taken by participants; future work ought to examine in greater detail the feelings, fears, and desires that may be at stake in this pattern.

Importantly, parents’ reliance on multiple methods of influence suggests that each has its value and that each would be insufficient on its own. If parents governed only through authority, which is characterized by its durability (Arendt, 1961), then families would be frozen in place. If parents relied only on persuading their children through argument – the process of “thinking” which implies the interruption of “doing” – then life itself would stop. If parents relied only on the force and violence of tyranny – wherein the ruler reigns according to personal desire and change can occur most rapidly (Arendt, 1961, p. 139) – their families would be doomed to collapse, since the lack of wisdom or justice that characterizes the tyrant would eventually become intolerable to his or her subjects, leading to their revolt (Boesche, 1996).

In considering participants’ respect of parents’ authority alongside the system of gift-giving described previously, I observed parallels. I emphasized in the previous chapter the importance of children understanding their parents’ support as freely-given and generous; no participants felt they were getting the same thing out of this living arrangement as their parents

and no participants felt their parents were receiving more support than they were through this living arrangement. In other words, participants clearly saw themselves as the beneficiaries of this living arrangement. The gift of support symbolized and reinforced the caring relationship between them. In response to this, participants did not feel obligated to return a gift of equal value; however, most desired to return to them favors or small tokens of appreciation, signalling not only their recognition of their parents' care, but also identifying themselves as good gift recipients. With respect to authority, shared faith in moral principles functioned in a similar same way as sharing faith in the system of gift-giving; by sharing and acting out of respect for the same transcendent principles, bonds with their parents were affirmed and strengthened. As a further implication, it is possible that moments of collective negotiation and persuasion might surface more often as the participants become less dependent on their parents, since a "principle of equality" is a presupposition of the polis (Arendt, 1961, p. 117). If children are beneficiaries of their parents' shelter, it makes sense that parents and children did not often make decisions about the home space as a "political community...composed of many rulers" (Arendt, 1961, p. 116) because within the household, there is a clear distinction between the rulers (the parents, possessors of the home) and those they ruled over (the children).

With respect to my findings concerning authority in the domain of work, I would also point to Katherine Newman's (2012) claim that young entrants are especially subject to feel the effects of a changing labor market. Today, this labor market is increasingly defined by automation (the replacement of human labor by technology), globalization (the outsourcing of labor to other countries), and the growth of digital platforms; these trends have contributed to the rise of independent work, to shifts in desirable skills sets, and more generally to a hollowing out of the middle tier of the economy (Government of Canada's Advisory Council on Economic Growth, 2017; Newman, 2012). Given these changes, it is conceivable that some (or perhaps many) of the parents being described did not feel they had the authority to prepare their child for this labor market, which might explain some of their open-mindedness towards their child's educational and work pursuits. Put differently, parents may have perceived themselves as encountering this new labor market (and its new challenges) alongside their child. Still, young adults believed that a strong work ethic would assist them in life. Perhaps their common faith in a good work ethic was sufficient to provide some kind of path toward well-being and happiness. Participants' discourses identify an enduring challenge of parenting: passing on to the child a

way of living knowing that the child will (and must) innovate on it. Arendt describes this:

education...is where we decide whether we love our children enough not to expel them from our world and leave them to their own devices, nor to strike from their hands their chance of undertaking something new, something unforeseen by us, but to prepare them in advance for the task of renewing a common world. (Arendt, 1961/1977, p. 196)

To understand parents' limited application of power over the participants, we might also consider that participants were occupying recognizable and esteemed social roles. At the time of interviewing: all were either attending school full-time (Ria, Adison, Vincent), attending school full-time and working part-time (Walter, Keith, Sylvia, Nina, Jane), attending school full-time and working full-time (Laura), attending school part-time and working part-time (Lois, Kristine, Iris), or working full-time (Amber, Grey, Molly). Beyond this, no participants reported challenges finding or holding down these roles due to a criminal past, severe impairment, or issues related to mental health and addictions. In other words, these participants might be considered "good kids" by their parents, in that they kept busy, stayed out of trouble, and were making progress towards self-sufficiency, as suggested by their occupation with school and work. Alternatively, participants may have engaged activities that parents would perceive as more disruptive, deviant, or even dangerous. In such cases, we might have seen parents relying more often on tyrannical modes of influence. Such as it was, parents and participants appeared to be fairly aligned in their approaches to the good life, meaning that parents did not to impose their own will on the child or persuade them of the value of school or work. In addition, I should remind the reader that one of the conditions for participating in this study was living with one's parents for a minimum of four months; participants who disagreed with their parents' lifestyles and values may not have been able to tolerate four months of coresidence, meaning that families with more conflictual dynamics might have been ineligible for participation from the get-go.

Two family statuses appeared to intersect with unique dynamics in this chapter: grandparents and mothers' partners. First, there seemed to be the greatest degree of political strain in Nina's situation, where she and her son were living with both of her parents. Here, challenges accompanied Nina's dual role as dependent child (to her own parents) and parental authority (to her child). Her parents appeared to struggle to accommodate the simultaneity of these roles, such that parents could respectfully defer to Nina's parenting approach or Nina and her parents could negotiate an approach to co-parenting that would allow her and her parents

some parental authority over her child. Second, just as we saw in the first chapter, mothers' partners (especially those who entered the family in the recent past) were described in political roles in relatively narrow ways: mainly, in terms of their authority over household spaces and the border between the home and the outside world. These individuals were seldom (or simply not) considered bearers of authority when it came to participants' vocational paths, financial choices, or romantic lives. As such, mothers' partners (again, especially the most recent ones) were not held as accountable or responsible for the child's destiny. In a sense, since these parents did not bring that child into physical existence, they were not tasked with preparing and launching the child. Alternatively, it may be that their roles were ambiguous and they shied away from this responsibility or the child resisted it out of distrust. Certainly, more work could be done to explore the limits of step-parents' legitimate and illegitimate powers over coresident children and the kinds of conflicts or creative solutions that arise within these relationships.

I began this chapter by raising questions from the literature about young adult autonomy and whether (or how) children may retain their freedom in accepting the authority of their parents – or, more accurately, the authority represented by their parents. As I noted, much of the developmental literature presumes that as children move towards adulthood, they become closer to achieving with their parents a “more symmetrical relationship between two autonomous adults” (Padilla-Walker et al., 2019, p. 1), or a relationship of “near-equals” (Arnett, 2006) with parents exercising less control than previously. I have argued that in many respects parents retain their roles as authorities in these young adults' lives, but that acceptance of such authority should not be conflated with the removal of agency or autonomy on the part of the child. Still, the question persists whether there may be other ways in which symmetry presents itself in these relationships; if parents and children are not symmetrical in their authority or in their roles within the gift-giving system, is it nevertheless possible that they possess symmetrical attributes or statuses in other ways? Let me explore this topic in the next and final findings chapter.

CHAPTER 4: PARENTS IN SYMMETRICAL ROLES

We Americans place so much faith in the boundary drawn by our skin, that thin physical membrane, that we build our whole concept of personhood there. (Trawick, 1992, p. 252)

Love is the *I* satisfied by the *thou*, grasping in the other the justification of its being. (Levinas, 1991/1998, p. 20)

As citizens we must prevent wrong-doing since the world we all share, wrong-doer, wrong-sufferer, and spectator, is at stake; the City has been wronged. (Arendt, 1971, p. 440)

Like a bad concert hall, affective space contains dead spots where the sound fails to circulate. The perfect interlocutor, the friend, is he not the one who constructs around you the greatest possible resonance? Cannot friendship be defined as a space with total sonority? (Barthes, 1977/2001, p. 167)

In the chapters on authority and caregiving, parents were examined in terms of their unique social positions within the family. Parents were constructed as caregivers to participants, while participants identified themselves as the receivers of such care. Parents were also represented as transmitting legitimate, authoritative principles and traditions in many domains of life, with participants identifying as the recipients and/or beneficiaries of that influence. Departing from this asymmetrical positioning of self and other, this chapter highlights the ways participants constructed their parents in symmetry with themselves, drawing attention to their parents as members of the family, members of the household, and friends.

4.1 Parents as Members of the Family

In this section, I examine how parents were identified as part of “the family” as a collective unit. Here, parents existed alongside participants, identifying with and committing to family as a valuable life project (Mattingly, 2014). Much like the ways gratitude and intentions to reciprocate granted participants a sense of moral agency despite their statuses as care-receivers, participants’ allegiance to family constituted a joint project for participants and their parents – one that contextualized their own dependence within a web of interdependence. While it was not clear that this necessarily reduced participants’ feelings of dependence, at minimum, family-oriented initiatives and identities were another route for them to view themselves as moral agents in their parent-child relationships.

This chapter is somewhat of a departure from the literature on coresidence, where researchers have tended to look at family bonds in terms of the parent-child dyad. In other words, most research identifies young adults' and their parents' perceptions of either one another or the parent-child bond. For instance, work has been done to examine coresidence in relation to perceptions of closeness, warmth, frequency of conflict, frequency of support exchange, or overall relationship quality (Akin, et al., 2020; Aquilino, 1997; Bilette et al., 2011; Fingerman et al., 2017; Leopold, 2012; Mitchell et al., 2002; Seiffge-Krenke, 2010; Ward & Spitze, 2007; White & Rogers, 1997). This dissertation is not a radical departure from such an approach, since it focuses most centrally on the parent-child bond; however, since I collected data about family meanings, values, activities, and routines, this project offers insight into coresident young adults' perceptions of their families as collective units. This section also sheds light on familistic values that only tend to surface in discussions of visible minorities, religious groups, immigrants, and cultural minorities – groups who have historically been shown to hold distinct values from individualistic and less “traditional” reference groups. While there has been academic interest in capturing group variations in coresidence rates and trajectories, data concerning family orientation or family identity has rarely been reported. As exceptions, Tomaszczyk and Worth (2018) recently highlighted in qualitative research of Canadian young adults that “an ethic of mutual reliance” informed some young adults' everyday experiences of living at home. In addition, some survey work has looked at family-oriented motivations to live at home (Gee et al., 2003; Mitchell, 2004a; Roberts et al., 2016). Here, I hope to explore in a more dedicated way how family is constructed and experienced by young adults living at home. To do so, I draw on concepts of family as a collective identity (Singer, 1984), a moral ground project (Mattingly, 2014), and as a social process involving a dialectic between structure and anti-structure (Turner, 1969).

The concept of a collective identity has been usefully described by Milton Singer, whose semiotic approach emphasizes people's constructions of their identities in dialogue with others and with public signs of collective identity (e.g., the home, family stories, shared activities, etc.). Drawing on the work of Charles Sanders Peirce, Singer argues that people recognize and express themselves in terms of a personal identity as well as in terms of collective identities – including family identities (Singer, 1984). Collective identities are often reflected in statements that use pronouns of “we” and “our”; likewise, statements that contrast the “we” and “they” distinguish

the boundaries between the collective and those who exist outside of it (Singer, 1984). In brief, individuals recognize themselves as belonging (or not belonging) to important social groups and pronouns can offer clues into this mode of self-recognition. By examining young adults' affiliation as signaled through the "we" of the family, I highlight the social and familial contexts where parent-child bonds are embedded.

Extending the moral dimensions of identity processes, I also draw on family ethnographer Cheryl Mattingly's work in the anthropology of morality to examine family as a valuable "ground project." Ground projects are important commitments that define our identities and engage us in discerning and acting to create what is good and worthwhile (Mattingly, 2014). Such projects include "deeply cherished and self-defining ideals, activities and personal associations" (Mattingly, 2014, p. 12). Though Mattingly focuses on individuals' and couples' projects of care in the context of parenting, she acknowledges that ground projects can unite all types of people in quests to deliberate on and advance particular ethical aims in particular circumstances. As she writes, such "social moral projects" are dynamic and may require "the development of *communities of care*, an expanding 'we' that brings together an array of people outside the immediate family, including neighbors and friends, other parents, and clinical professionals" (p. 5). In this sense, one can see the connection between ground projects as deeply held moral commitments, and family as a collective identity.

Family – as a collective identity and ground project – can also be approached through a more processual lens; ritual theory provides a helpful framework for discerning how family identities and commitments are maintained and rejuvenated through collective action. Turner (1969) maintains that social groups and societies do not exist as pure, static structures; rather, they move through phases of structure and anti-structure. In "structural" phases, individuals' statuses, roles, obligations, rights, responsibilities, activities, and possessions are defined and distributed according to the normal political, economic, lineage, and gender-based organization (Turner, 1969). In families, for example, this may mean that the traditional authority of parents and relative subordination of children is respected. By contrast, in "anti-structural" or "liminal" phases, social groups are characterized by the suspension of normal principles that assign differentiated statuses and responsibilities to members (Turner, 1969). The social dimension of anti-structure is referred to as "communitas" by Turner (1969), who defines it as the "communion of equal individuals" (p. 96). As can be gleaned from this description, anti-structure

and structure oppose yet reinforce one another (Turner, 1969). Drawing on Eister, Turner (1969) affirms that social structure is an organic and inevitable outcome of human beings coping with their environments, interacting with one another, and developing classification schemes, specializations, and institutions based on their needs and aptitudes. Nevertheless, the suspension of social organization is essential for renewing, adapting, and temporarily escaping such structures; senses of imagination, potency, possibility, and subjunctionity that pervade phases of anti-structure allow members of a society or social group may reflect on, critique, express, escape, and play with the constraints imposed by society (Turner 1969).

Whereas Turner (1969) defined the “liminal” as being more characteristic of small-scale, tribal societies, in later work, he introduced the “liminoid” as a ritual state more common in large-scale, modern, individualistic societies (Turner, 1982). The liminoid, unlike the liminal, is freely chosen by an individual and does not require the participation of an entire society (Turner, 1982). It is a restorative temporary removal – a short, playful “break” that revitalizes the individual without altering her or his position within society. For instance, sports, hiking, concerts, museums, boardgames, bars, and cafes might be considered liminoid activities and spaces (Turner, 1982). From Maisonneuve’s (1988) synthesis of ritual theory, modern festive rites, calendrical celebrations, and media-based consumption might also be clustered together with Turner’s (1982) liminoid category, as they are described as more-or-less profane and integrated into daily life. While liminoid rituals may not involve total participation or common religious significance, both Turner (1982) and Maisonneuve (1988) recognize these events as holding the same value for rupturing and offering relief from ordinary life to rejuvenate it. Within the context of my interviews with participants, activities and spaces discussed took on more liminoid than liminal significance.

In sum, through an examination of young adults’ descriptions of family – as an identity, ground project, and dialectical process – this section draws attention to parent-child relationships within a broader social context: one that for most participants granted a sense of agency and belonging that aggregated them with and alongside their parents.

4.1.1 Family as a Collective Ground Project

Extending beyond the system of caregiving and receiving described in Chapter 2, all participants designated their parents as part of the family unit that subsumed themselves, their parents, and their siblings. Although family could also refer to members of the extended family

or community, in this sub-section I focus most often on the immediate family, which was where participants identified their strongest commitments. All participants but Lois referred to themselves, their parents, and their siblings as caring for each other. Mutual concern and dependability characterized such discourses. First, participants highlighted family members attentiveness to one another's needs and states of well-being. As Walter articulated, "I keep my mom in mind all the time, and like, my brother to an extent, so." Attending to the welfare of the family involved a sensitivity to the struggles of its members. As Vincent described, family members "can tell that you're down or hurting or whatever like they [the family] will try to help." Whereas participants tended to refer to this form of awareness more indirectly than directly, they were explicit about their responsiveness to one another's needs for support. For example, participants said of their families that they were "quite loyal to each other should problems arise" (Iris), that "we depend on our family and we take care of them in bad times, good times" (Ria), that "we have each others' backs" (Jane), that they are "just like a big team" (Molly), that "everyone cares for each other" (Vincent), and that "we're a highly dysfunctional group of people that love each other very much" (Adison). As reflected in Adison's comment, family unity was sometimes characterized by its resilience in the face of challenges or dysfunction. Participants for example mentioned that "good or bad times, we'll – we'll be there for each other" (Molly), that they would always encourage each other to "patch up" if they had a fight (Ria), that "you'll always be there for me, even if we don't talk" (Amber), or that "no matter what" efforts would be made to maintain the family bond (Kristine). In situating themselves a member of the family who would "be there" for one another, participants affirmed a steadfast devotedness that echoed their parents' love and care for them.

Among participants who had immigrated to Canada (Ria and Jane) or whose parents had immigrated to Canada (Molly), isolation, loss, and acculturation were conceived of as stressors that tested and ultimately strengthened family bonds. In a foreign environment with a limited support network, family was an invaluable source of security and belonging. This view was especially pronounced among Ria and Jane, who as a teenager (Ria) and young adult (Jane) had left behind most of their extended family in their home countries. Jane reflected:

We care so much about each other. We're so into each other and I guess it's because we never really had people come live with us. Well some people come to visit and then they go but not where we have like an extended family coming to live with us for months.

For these three participants, too, culture foregrounded their commitment to family, with Ria referring to her culture as “collectivistic,” Molly describing her family and their “cultural background” as “family-oriented,” and Jane saying she liked the “security” of family interdependence in her “culture.” The only other participant who referred to their cultural background to explain their family orientation was Nina, who at one point identified her choice to live at home as consistent with her Eastern European background, where “the families are really tight and living together would not be a big deal.” In addition, her marriage to a Southeast Asian man also informed her emphasis on the cultural nature of her family values, where she pointed to a hybrid that combined her own Eastern European traditions with those of the Southeast Asian community: “I think I have said a lot to a lot of people. I was like ‘well you know like we’re just like, more Eastern European, Southeast Asian style’ ‘cause you keep the families together, that makes you more happy ((laughs)).” In line with Nina’s remarks, references to culture tended to surface to explain deviance from mainstream patterns or values in Canada. As Molly indicated, “I always have to explain myself and like, I always end up feeling like – like, with my family relationship, it’s like a cultural thing.” These participants seemed to identify with their cultural backgrounds, but given that these remarks often surfaced in contexts where the participants were accounting for their close family ties, it may also be that other people (i.e., from the majority culture) were hailing them – or interpellating them (Frank, 2010) – to assume their cultural identities.

General comments about the strength, dependability, or resilience of family bonds surfaced among all participants except for Lois. An illustrative case, Lois expressed doubts about the strength of her relationship with both her brother and mother. Lois’ bond with her brother was tenuous; she made references to her brother not talking to her “a whole lot” and stated that the two of them used to spend time together “every now and again” but that these hangouts had diminished over time. With her mother, things were even more uncertain. Lois doubted her and her mother’s capacity for healing, feeling that she (Lois) was unable to address tension that she felt, that her mother might not communicate to her if she had a “serious issue” with Lois’ behavior, and that her mother might be unwilling to address their conflict through therapy. Beyond these interpersonal issues with each family member, the unity of the family (herself, her mother, and her brother) was threatened by Lois’ perception that her mother had a “closer connection” with her brother and “spent more quality time” with him. Indeed, Lois was the only

participant who in the present still felt unfairly disfavored by a parent. In brief, affirmations of faith and devotion in family bonds (which surfaced among the other 14 participants) were missing or reversed in Lois' narrative.

Extending comments concerning the "we" who cared for "one another," the familial "we" surfaced when participants spoke about their involvement in sharing care and concern for specific members of the nuclear or extended family. Many of these statements related to the monitoring of a family member's well-being, theorizing about their condition, making plans to support them, or taking action to help them out. In other words, these comments resonated with Mattingly's (2014) description of the "moral work" carried out in relation to one's ground projects, which necessarily involves discerning what is good and worthwhile and taking "experimental action" to achieve it. Participants identified their alliances with various family members in support of siblings, parents, pets, and extended family.

With respect to siblings, Amber worried alongside her parents about whether her brothers were "okay" as they seemed to wander aimlessly through adulthood; Walter and his mother kept tabs on Walter's brother who was recovering from alcoholism; and Iris and her mother both "fret[ted]" about her brother's financial and familial life. One of the best images showing this shared concern was Kristine's, where she described the collectivization of childcare at their Sunday night family dinners:

KM: How does it change things having grandkids in the mix?

K: Uh...not, I don't think it's changed. I mean, you got highchairs, and someone's gotta hold a baby. I mean, it's not like we made Ashley do everything cause they're her kids. Like, if my mom can feed Noah, or I can feed Noah, or I mean he can mostly feed himself now. But someone's gotta hold Todd now. So if it's – if Ashley's eating, but I'm done, then I'll say, "oh here, give me Todd, I can hold him, I'm done eating." Or if I'm holding him, cause I gotta hold him in my left hand, but I eat with my left hand. So I'm eating really slow and Ashley's done, she's like, "oh here, give him." Or mom, or dad, or whoever. . . So, I don't know, I think that's the thing that changed. An extra leaf in the table to make more room. But, yeah.

Coordinating and sharing this care at the scale of Sunday dinners paralleled the family's broader initiative to support Kristine's sister in caring for her two young boys: "we help her a lot, so if

she needs to bring the kids in, we gotta watch em. Like, ‘sure yeah, bring em over. Someone's at home.’”

With respect to parents, participants (Sylvia, Walter, and Grey) referred to their alignment with one parent in their concern for the other parent’s needs, whether in terms of work-life balance (Sylvia and her mom, concerning Sylvia’s father), companionship (Walter and Walter’s mom’s boyfriend, concerning his mom), or more practical concerns, such as providing a place to sleep for a stay in town (Grey and her mom, concerning Grey’s dad/mom’s ex-husband).

Commonly, participants referred to joint efforts to support extended family and family friends (described by 10 participants). Participants and their parents and/or siblings spent time caring for grandchildren, nieces, or nephews (Nina, Grey, Iris, Kristine), provided social and other forms of support to isolated grandparents or grandparents with cognitive or physical impairments (Amber, Keith, Sylvia), and demonstrated commitments to aunts, uncles, and cousins during trips motivated more by checking in with one another than by festive celebration (Iris, Vincent, Molly). Two participants also aligned themselves with parents through references to their home as a welcoming place for anyone who wanted or needed to be there: as Laura put it, our house too has always been too like a come and go for anyone. So like, friends would always be over and just like, they’d [my parents would] see things and they’d get to know everyone . . . if someone didn’t have a – or like, someone was going through something and needed a place to crash kind of deal, like ‘we’ve got couches, beds, anyone’s welcome’ in a sense.

Similar to this community-oriented care described by Laura, Kristine proudly affirmed that in her house there was an “open door policy,” meaning that she and her parents welcomed friends, extended family, and neighbors into their home, whether by encouraging them to walk in without ringing the doorbell, stay over for a meal, sleep over if they needed a place to stay, and for some, “come and go” as they pleased or consider that “our home is your home.”

Finally, providing care for pets in the forms of affection, food, and exercise was another way participants regrouped themselves and their parents under the familial “we” who looked out for each other (as mentioned by Lois, Keith, Walter, Iris, and Laura). As alluded to in an earlier chapter, some participants jokingly referred to their pets and the family using kinship terms, with participants referring to them as “the babies. Like, my mom like, calls them her grandkids” (Grey) or noting that “my mother is the cat’s nana and I’m the cat’s mum but it’s – it’s always

with a little grain of sarcasm” (Iris).⁴⁰ Amber, Adison and Sylvia, whose family dogs (Amber, Sylvia) or personal dog (Adison) had passed recently, also pointed to the shared care their families showed towards these pets, with Amber for instance exclaiming “when the dog was around we could all be like, ‘Oh Lulu!’ And act crazy and weird and like giddy and talk- like we’re talking to babies. And that like brought like some form of happiness and interaction like within all of us.” The reader may also recall from Chapter 2 the “hu:::ge issue” triggered when Adison perceived of a lack of support from her mother during her dog’s last eight months. In sharp contrast, Sylvia’s family was described as a unified front in caring for their dog, Daisy, at the end of her life:

We kind of like, really pandered after her cause she was so old and we were like “but she keeps going!” Like, she – and then she finally got sick one day so we had to euthanize her. But uh, yeah, like there was a lot of like, dealing with that dog. ((laughs)) ((KM: Mmhmm!)) And like, ok, “who has Daisy,” like, “who’s gonna” – like my mom would carry her up the stairs and stuff. Uh, it was just ridiculous.

Whereas in many cases, caring practices were described as nourishing pre-existing bonds between family members, in rarer cases, these care practices brought together family members who were otherwise distant. Walter and his mother’s boyfriend (Ron) had no major conflicts, but Walter did not tend to construct Ron as a paternal figure, source of valued wisdom, or friend. Yet, the two were connected through their mutual care for Walter’s mother. At one point, I asked Walter what role Ron played in the family dynamic. He responded:

W: He plays the role as my mom’s boyfriend. There’s really nothing else. Like, I don’t – me and my brother, we maybe will – what’s the word I’m trying to think of, or phrase. I don’t know, just chat very shortly. In passing basically.

KM: Like -

⁴⁰ Several participants also discussed pets’ regard for family members. In some instances, these remarks paralleled or perhaps even symbolized divisions and aggregations between the human family members. In the following story from Walter, for example, the changing relationship between Tiny (the dog) and Walter’s brother paralleled brother’s return to the parental home and integration into the family: “Tiny, she is – she used to really hate my brother, cause she hates everybody basically, she thinks the house is hers and she protects it from people who come in, so she barks at everybody. So she didn’t like my brother for the longest time because he was only ever in the basement, so she hardly ever saw him. So she’d always bark at him. Now that he’s actually coming upstairs more, she’s starting to really like him too. She spends a lot more time with him as well, and yeah, she likes everybody in the family.” In this story, the dog’s acceptance of the brother is synchronized with his passage from living independently to living with his mother, from being part of “everybody” to being part of the household, and from being siloed in the basement to joining the family upstairs.

W: Like we know that he's really good for my mom, and she likes him a lot, so we're like, 'whatever, I don't -, ' like it doesn't matter, we're like fucking grown-ups.

As is evident, Walter did not have a strong personal bond with Ron, but the two were joined as accomplices in their love for Walter's mother. Having Ron as a partner-in-care was perhaps especially meaningful to Walter given that he felt somewhat "protective" of his mother as a single parent. In a somewhat similar way, Grey described that she had initially been skeptical about her mother's relationship with a much younger man, but had grown fond of him:

I have a lot of positive feelings towards him because he makes my mom so happy. It took time for him to grow on me though. But he's totally grown. Like I just bought a shirt at Value Village the other day ((KM Laughs)) that says, "What a Difference a Carl Makes."

Finally, I would like to point out how Lois and her mother – who were otherwise very distant – were connected through their mutual care for three dogs. As I have described previously, Lois and her mother spoke very little and throughout our interviews, Lois expressed how detached the two of them were. One of the only points of connection was their joint responsibility over the three large dogs who lived with them. When Lois talked about these household companions, I saw a discourse of affiliation surface: through the "we" who adopted the dogs, the "we" who guessed at one of the dog's breeding ("Sheperd we think"), the "we" who let the dogs into the backyard when needed, the "co-parenting" that symbolized their coordinated care, and the "contribution to the family" represented by Lois' coverage of the dogs' food, medication, and vet bills. At one point, I offered Lois the observation that she and her mom "have the dogs in common" and Lois responded, "Yeah! That's pretty much it, now." It seemed that the dogs served an indispensable role in making this living arrangement tolerable for Lois, especially when we recall that Lois considered herself "a big animal person," that she was hoping to enter an animal-centered career, and that she was living at home in part to provide her dogs with a good life rather than "being in a condo with no yard." She felt that dogs offered "unconditional love" and a happy mood whenever she came home; potentially, these dogs may have also offered Lois and her mom a channel for expressing mutual affection rarely communicated in their relationship.

Most comments about shared attachments to family members reflected positive sources – in other words, a certain directedness towards shared aims – but connectedness could also be forged through shared pain, even a shared perception that trust had been violated. As mentioned

earlier, participants who left family behind in other countries (Ria, Molly, Jane) said that distance from other family members had brought their nuclear family closer together. Some (but not all) of the participants who described their biological fathers as abusive or neglectful also indicated some feelings of solidarity between themselves and the family members their fathers had hurt (e.g., Lois, Walter, Iris). Iris and Lois especially implied shared disillusionment between themselves and their brothers towards their father's role as a caregiver and authority figure, where they had recognized their fathers' incapacities as fathers, referring to them showing off their children like "trophies" without actually caring for them (Lois, Iris), offering money to convince their children to spend time with them (Lois), imposing no boundaries or discipline (Iris), and initiating communication only when they seemed drunk and depressed (Lois) or not at all (Iris). By contrast, Walter had fewer recollections of neglect, and more so referred to a general sense of being protective of his mother. In all three cases, shared senses of betrayal were signalled through mutual distancing from fathers, whether through reduced visits, intentionally reducing or ceasing communication, or supporting one another's decisions to limit the father's participation in family events. As a contrasting example, Grey reported experiencing her father's "addiction and abuse" during her childhood, but he had taken initiative to redeem himself, get sober, and make amends. Within their greater family, solidarity was represented in a shared desire for their forgiveness to be accepted: "I just want him to not feel guilt, because I think everyone has forgiven him, and he doesn't need to. Like he can let it go too." While I intentionally chose not to focus on non-residential parents within this thesis (since this would have enlarged the scope considerably) I mention these points briefly to point to them as valuable considerations for future work, where dynamics involving absent, abusive, or neglectful parenting in the past could inform present senses of solidarity within the family.

As a final case example to consider, let me draw on the experiences of Kristine, who was the participant who elaborated most on a situation wherein a collective family identity was sustained by negativity toward an estranged family member. At the time of interviewing, Kristine and her family were not talking to her brother, nor was her brother talking with them. She introduced this situation to me by saying that "five years ago he got married...and kinda married a crazy lady, and very controlling, manipulative, and...won him over I guess." Although I could not fully piece the story together, the estrangement seemed to occur through the cumulative effect of several events where the brother sided with his partner's family over his

natal family. These events built to a physical altercation at the son's wedding, where Kristine says that her brother's in-law family "attacked us" and a "big fight" broke out. Since that time, the brother's actions seemed to have evolved into a myth that informed Kristine's fierce loyalty toward her family.⁴¹ She repeatedly distinguished her brother from her family: in her comments about her family being "there for each other," she identified each family member except her brother; when she described herself connecting with her dad by learning skills from him (salsa-making, car maintenance, sports, renovations), she pointed out her brother's reluctance to seek "my dad's help or anybody's help really"; and she contrasted her brother's values from those of the rest of the family, saying that "My brother's kind of a...weirdo. Not a weirdo, but he was never really family-oriented, whereas me, my sisters, my mom and dad, we are." These comments not only reflect how the events of the past impacted Kristine's present sense of family identity; her current resentment may have colored her recollections of the past, where she remembered her brother showing signs of non-commitment early on. In brief, Kristine pointed to what appeared to be a form of negative unity that was continually being nourished by stories depicting a brother's violation of family solidarity. Despite these sentiments, it was interesting to see Kristine acknowledge that she would accept her brother back into the family under certain conditions. Out of consideration for her mother (who she felt "has the most hurt and pain from it"), Kristine said she might tolerate her brother's re-integration into the family. Participating in the subjunctive nature of stories (their indeterminacy and proneness to re-evaluation and reconstruction, see Good, 1994) she expressed:

I'm sure if he came back and was like, "hey mom, I'm sorry," she would accept him. I probably wouldn't accept it, but I would accept it for my mom. Like I don't need to go be his friend, I don't need to talk to him every day, but if he's there at the house, I can be like, "hi." That's all I need to do, to do it for my mom. I wouldn't do it for me, cause like, [I could] give two craps about the kid.

An apology given then accepted with forgiveness would be the redressive ritual that would allow Kristine to accept her brother back into the fold of the family. In maintaining an opening for reunification – however improbable and unlikely – Kristine refrains from finalizing her brother's

⁴¹ Here, I use the word "myth" not to convey falseness or distortion, but rather to convey the idea that stories encapsulate key group values and social boundaries (c.f., Frank, 2010; Leenhardt, 1947/1979).

story as the betraying brother, signalling an interpretation of family stories as complex and complicated (Frank, 2010).

To summarize this section, participants did not only relate to their parents as principal caregivers within the family; they also considered their parents as part of the family as a caregiving system itself, constituted by members who would look out for one another, be there for each other, and be cared for by one another. Put differently, caregiving in these discourses was symmetrical, mutual, and multidirectional rather than unidirectional and asymmetrical: each member of the family was both agent and patient, caring and being cared for, alternating between these two poles depending on the specific situation and context (Ricoeur, 1992/2013). In expressions about family members caring for one another, about sharing concern for particular members of the family, and even through mutual feelings of rejection or pain, participants showed how they and their parents were incorporated into the internal structures and mechanisms of the family. In the next section, I highlight how this system was maintained through processes of ritualized togetherness.

4.1.2 Family Rituals and Celebrations

Although all participants did live at home and most saw their parent(s) on a daily basis, they pointed to special moments and occasions where their co-presence with parents and other family members contributed to their aggregation as a family unit. Commonly mentioned were family meals, with most participants pointing to both regular family meals and special occasions (11 participants) and a minority mainly eating with family only for special occasions (4 participants). Every participant mentioned at least one or two holidays that might be spent with the nuclear or extended family, including Christmas, Thanksgiving, Easter, Eid, New Years', and birthdays. Excursions out of town were also identified, including trips to see extended family (5 participants) and vacations (7 participants). In Walter and Nina's families, dog-walking also brought the family together. Finally, some families watched specific TV shows together (Sylvia, Adison, and Walter), watched TV shows in their or their parents' native language (Molly and Ria), or went to movies at the theater together (Lois, Walter, Grey, and Keith). Such activities and occasions were tied together by extraordinary qualities and were acknowledged as important to all participants, though Lois was not experiencing many of them in the present time and both Lois and Amber wished they would take place more often.

Already in this thesis, I have described several types of activities that bound family members together, including the giving of practical support, expressions of care and concern, the sharing of tradition, and even participation in conflict. Here, I point specifically to bonding activities that were defined by their distinction from the everyday life of the family (i.e., that had “liminal” or “liminoid” qualities). Most importantly, these were moments where “everyone” got together. “Everyone” had different meanings within different contexts; in some instances, “everyone” meant every person who lived in the parents’ home (e.g., having a Sunday supper together, having coffee together in the living room on the weekend, walking the dogs after supper, watching TV after supper). In other contexts, “the family” meant the nuclear family: everyone living at home as well as their siblings and occasionally their spouses (e.g., some families’ Sunday dinners, certain holidays, trips to the lake or cabin). And in other moments, “everyone” or “the family” included extended family: grandparents, aunts, uncles, nieces, nephews, and cousins (e.g., a grandmother’s birthday, some holidays, visits, trips to see family living elsewhere, Sunday night dinners). Whereas the prior meanings of family were common among virtually all participants, a smaller proportion of participants (7/15) additionally referred to family events where family friends would be present. My data about rituals was not detailed enough to make precise comparisons between each of these gatherings. Reflecting that, the description that follows mainly identifies the commonalities between these events, rather than examining in detail the distinctions between them. Where possible, I have highlighted patterns correlated to different family settings.

As is likely obvious, family rituals were described as involving collective actions of “everyone.” That is, participants described how family members were present, taking part in the same activities, communicating with one another, and achieving common goals, whether these might be related to preparing a meal, caring for children present, cheering on a favorite team, contributing to a party-like atmosphere through singing, telling stories, dressing up in fancy clothes, or rattling off jokes at the dinner table. To look at one example, Walter described an appetizer potluck that his extended family held every year:

on Christmas Eve, we do appetizers for dinner. So like, everybody just brings a shitload of different appetizers and we bake ‘em all at the same time. It's fucking amazing . . . we have like, you know, a shit load of taquitos, jalapeno poppers, chicken wings, like oh god, there's so much, I'm getting so hungry thinking about it.

Here, we see the family unified through their contributions to the potluck: when every person brings an appetizer, individual actions collectively result in an “amazing” meal. Moreover, with no host acting as provider, it is possible that the potluck approach also contributed to the sense of commonality between everyone. The temporary levelling of statuses between family members could be further identified in shared states of intoxication and game-playing (Caillois, 1958/1961) – a topic Walter also brought up with regards to his family’s Christmas Eve and Christmas day:

that's the day we all get like, really drunk usually, we play a lot of games like you know, sociables or – and like, it’s very rare I see my mom drunk, I only ever see my mom drunk on Christmas Eve. That’s like the only day of the year I ever see her drunk. So it’s – it’s always fun. So we play a lot of games. And yeah. Then Christmas day, everyone’s super hung over.

Family activities were often described (i.e., by 14/15 participants) as creating a sense of togetherness. In one sense, these events were described as reuniting family members who were not in contact with on a regular basis. Reflecting a common sentiment, Nina spoke about Sunday dinners (with her sister and her boyfriend) as being important for maintaining contact: “it’s just to stay closer to family who doesn’t – like we don’t see as often.” Likewise, Molly reflected on the importance of her grandmother’s birthday for her extended family:

I think it’s nice to get the extended family together. It’s just now that everybody has their own kids, their own lives and some of us are grown up, it’s hard to bring us together as a whole. So, having... my grandma’s birthday... just sets the – the ground rules and it’s like, you can’t miss it. ((laughs))

Thus, in the first sense, family gatherings were opportunities to interact with family, and through that interaction, reaffirm their bond. In a second sense, family get-togethers were moments for interacting in a uniquely purposeful way that contrasted with their day-to-day interactions (as was described by 14 of 15 participants – all but Lois). Most participants noted that despite living with their parents, they had few opportunities to interact with their parents or siblings in a focused way. Molly observed that “sometimes being busy with school and work I don’t even see them just ‘cause our schedules are different.” Similarly, Walter pointed out that “when I am home, I’m usually in my room or on my computer. When I’m – or watching TV. That’s really all I do. I don’t really interact that much with my mom other than like, you know, saying “how’s

your day?” Likewise, Adison explained that “we’re almost like... a bunch of... I was gonna say independent beings, just kind of co-existing, so kinda like room mates? I guess? That come together and do family things every once in a while?” In other words, even if participants saw their parents on a regular basis, planned activities offered opportunities for “some sort of family time” (Jane), “quality time” (Nina), or “a special occasion just for family even though we hang out all the time” (Sylvia). Trying to get to the bottom of what precisely was good about spending quality time together was challenging; in many instances when I followed up on this topic, participants would reiterate that spending time together, itself, was what was important; as Laura said, “it’s just like, good to be all together.” Perhaps, then, this second meaning of connectedness is closer to the first than might be initially thought; confirming a familial bond might be distinct from day-to-day interactions that continually confirm their relatedness as roommates or members of a household. And indeed, the notion that participants and their parents needed to “tak[e] time” (Amber) out of their lives to engage with one another this way suggests as much. This is not to say that family members only bonded during vacations or special dinners (indeed, I saw evidence of meaningful bonding that occurred in short or spontaneous moments too) but it is to say that some of these out-of-the-ordinary times were significant in their dissolution of social norms and roles, which permitted spontaneous modes of relating to occur. Carrying over these experiences into ordinary life, therefore, contributed to the consolidation of trust and faith in one another.

Departing from the trend among this group of participants, both Adison and Lois identified strong feelings of *disconnection* in their general experiences of family events. For her part, Lois described a kind of alienation in spending time with her brother and mom, as well as time with her extended family. Invitations to family dinners with her brother and mom were often last-minute, which gave Lois the impression that her presence was unwanted. Additionally, at larger family gatherings, she felt like “the black sheep” and the “joke of everything”:

Whenever the whole family gets together, like, my mom was the oldest of five kids. And so there’s 17 of us altogether when we get together. And I’m always the one being teased for most of everything and it’s like... yeah. I’m 30. ((laughs)) Time to get over this.

It seems that at these extended family events, Lois was unwillingly cast into the role of the entertaining fool. While this role can be one that people willingly play and that can hold valuable institutional significance, Lois was not “in” on the joke, and so it made her feel alienated within her family group.

Whereas Lois had not, in recent years, experienced many positive family ritual experiences, Adison depicted more mixed experiences, where some family events were enjoyable and others created strain. With respect to her immediate family (herself, her father and her mother), she noted that when the three of them took trips together, “it just leads to more fighting,” but did acknowledge that less-onerous activities, like a quiet Christmas at home – especially if they had not seen each other in a long time – could make for valuable bonding: “I think whenever we travel: and do things as a family, that’s when it like, hits the fan. ((KM: Mm.)) But just like being a family unit at home if we hadn’t seen each other? Is really nice.” At the level of the extended family, the stakes were different and involved alliances and tensions between Adison, Adison’s nuclear family and the rest of the extended family. First, she felt that her mom’s family held “really racist” views, which she personally did not “wanna be around.” Second, Adison’s mother’s family drank a lot and could be very rude towards her mother when they were intoxicated. Adison explained that “no matter how many times they’re rude to her, or they disrespect her... she defends them... like, vehemently. Like, she’s just like, “it’s family. That’s what you do.” It is possible that being witness to her mother’s belittling within these situations was at the heart of her unwillingness to spend time with these family members. In summary, Lois and Adison’s cases highlight how rituals did not necessarily eliminate hierarchical organization within families nor did they always create a sentiment of comradeship. Future research could more carefully examine the stakes and significance of expressing conflict and tension during family gatherings. Do arguments during family activities express conflicting and deeply held values? Do some arise merely from disagreements about how tasks ought to be managed (for example, during road trips)? Do some point to internal divisions, and what are those divisions based on? To be certain, experiences and understandings of battles small and large during “family time” could be fascinating to look into with more detail.

Generally, family celebrations or rituals were associated with positive moods and all participants at some point expressed that they did (or had) enjoyed family rituals. Nine participants described dramatic or exciting aspects of their family celebrations, whether referring to the drama of choosing fantasy football picks (Laura), the excitement of seeing siblings (Kristine), the amusement of watching relatives interact when alcohol is involved (Walter, Kristine, Keith), or the quiet anticipation associated with present-opening stretched over the entire day (Iris). Such moods appeared to correspond to Maisonneuve’s (1988) observation that

parties and festivals often present a double function, being both “ceremonial and entertaining” (p. 48, translated from French). As described by half of the participants, family rituals could also take on a more relaxed mood. Experiences of camping (Grey), going to the lake (Nina, Keith), spending a quiet Christmas together (Iris, Keith, Adison, Sylvia), drinking coffee on a weekend morning (Grey), or taking a day trip out of town (Ria, Vincent) were moments to step out of the busyness of daily life and enjoy themselves. As Vincent expressed, short road trips that he took with his family (most recently to see a concert out of town) were valued for their removal from the demands and pressures of ordinary life:

it’s good to do something where like... you’re just there to have fun, kinda thing. I think that’s what that... the importance of that thing too is it’s all about like just instead of either like getting a job done – er like getting some work done or like doing this or that it’s like kinda time to relax and enjoy.

Grey referred to the value of family gatherings within natural settings and the value of “Just being in nature, and I don’t know, not having a schedule.” Other participants also referred to general experiences of contentment in getting together. Molly expressed that when eating family dinners, “it feels good, like it just feels good being with them.” From a different angle, witnessing parents’ enjoyment of family time also provided a degree of satisfaction to participants. As Kristine described “I think my mom likes that we’re all together.” In sum, family activities appeared to connect members of the family through the sharing of a “potent” affective state (Turner, 1969), whether it was one of excitement, peacefulness, or pleasure.⁴²

Despite this, participation in family rituals – and more often, extended family gatherings – could lend a more awkward, uncomfortable, or strained mood. At least some mixed feelings were evident in the remarks of ten participants (and were particularly common among participants who identified themselves as introverted or quiet). Spending time with distant relatives could feel more like an obligation than a choice, as was mentioned by eight participants. For example, Iris described trips to see family with her mother as a combination of obligation

⁴² I should note that although participants and I discussed more positive affective states during festive and celebratory rituals, there is also the possibility for connecting through negative affective states. Indeed, the previous section, which highlights solidarity in shared pain, provides some evidence of this. What was not clear in those examples, however, was how or whether painful emotions were formulated or expressed through ritual. For example, was Kristine’s brother’s estrangement mulled over collectively during Sunday night dinners? Did Vincent’s or Grey’s family therapy sessions after their parents’ divorces create shared affective states and meaning-making? How did the immigration journey unfold within Ria, Molly, or Jane’s families?

and pleasure: “I find the trip itself fun. The going and the coming back I enjoy. The being there is obligatory for me. I enjoy my relatives, in small, non-chaotic doses.” Part of the chaos Iris was referring to involved her interactions with the many children she visited. Echoing this, Grey described slight anxiety when children came along on camping trips:

kids are very unpredictable, and so you just never know what’s going to happen, which is something I don’t like. And I don’t like all the questions that – I just kind of relax. And I don’t like talking at the best of times. So, there’s that. But I mean, some kids are very hilarious and cute, but just for a few minutes.

Large crowds stressed out Sylvia and Ria, as Sylvia described of her aunt’s gatherings, “it’s just so many people and I’m super introverted.” Witnessing other family members’ suffering could also cause tension, whether the suffering was related to a declining health (Keith) or some form of disrespect being shown (Adison, Sylvia, Kristine). Some interactions were also awkward for no known reason. Amber described this at her grandmother’s weekly Sunday dinners:

A: It’s so silent though, it’s awkward. You can just like hear the cutlery [(laughs)]

KM: [(Laughs)]

A: [Hitting the plates and it’s just like ‘will you pass the potatoes?’ you know ((laughs))

KM: [(Laughs)]

A: I don’t know, but it is nice. I do enjoy going. I try and go every Sunday because I’m like “well how much longer is this gonna happen for her too?”

Finally, Keith found Sunday dinners somewhat redundant, given that he saw his parents everyday. In brief, family visits – especially those with extended family – were often met with at least some mixed feelings, even when they were seen as valuable. Such ambivalence suggests that for participants, these gatherings held significance both as normative obligations and as pleasurable, comforting, or entertaining excursions.

Timing, spaces, and foods were other features characterizing special family time. First, many of these activities had intermittent and recurrent timing. From a theoretical perspective, the anticipation, execution, and referral back to specially timed events synchronized family members, joining them together in “calendar time” that “integrates the community and its customs into the cosmic order” (Ricoeur, 1986/2001, p. 209). As noted earlier, all participants mentioned major holidays as important moments for being with family. These family celebrations often reflected seasonal rites shared by a broader cultural community (Maisonneuve,

1988; Wolin & Bennett, 1984). Several also mentioned family members' birthdays and a few pointed out recurrent summer holidays or spring trips. For five participants, Sunday dinners, too, were weekly get-togethers, in some cases, involving extended family or family friends, and in other cases, involving the typical members of the household but incorporating ceremonial symbols (e.g., sitting at the table together, eating a longer dinner, or preparing a fancier meal). As Maisonneuve (1988) points out, celebratory expressions (which may include suppers and holidays) rest on a tradition of rupturing daily continuity ("la continuité quotidienne" p. 48), punctuating it with moments of excitement and animation.

Ceremonial spaces were another way that family members symbolically shifted into the "extraordinary." Family cabins, campgrounds, aunts' houses, the highway, or even the crossing of conventional boundaries in the home (e.g., parents descending into the basement) set apart "normal" family interactions from "special" moments of bonding. Likewise, a normally mundane space could be transformed into an extraordinary one: the living room (normally used for TV watching) could become a space to mark the culmination of a special meal with pie and coffee (as described by Sylvia); a living room set up with multiple TVs could take on the mood of a sports bar (as described by Laura); or a garage could be arranged to become a karaoke lounge (as described by Grey). Each of these transformations of space readied participants for a passage from the ordinary into the extraordinary (Wolin & Bennett, 1984). Eating supper "at the table" was for several participants also a ceremonial space for the family – one that called family members to be fully present with one another. As an illustration of this, Sylvia's family usually ate supper in the living room while watching TV, whereas eating at the table was a rare and special event. I asked Sylvia why it was important for her immediate family (who saw each other every day) to eat together at the table for Easter:

I don't know why it's such a big deal but I guess just it's a chance to all sit at the table and eat ((laughs)) I guess that's really it cause – ((KM laughs)) – like we do eat together but it's just – like it's more of a big deal. . . . Yeah I don't know, I think – that's it, like it's just – like a special occasion just for family even though we hang out all the time but ((laughs)).

Her comment that eating at the table implied a "big deal" and "full visits" underlined that suppers at the table were intended to be ritualized spaces and moments for bonding.

As a final characteristic that contributed to the extraordinary nature of “family time,” food was commonly invoked in descriptions of family events. The intermittent timing of family events often combined with food symbolism, in that many of the special foods associated with family bonding time were only eaten at specific times of the year (e.g., Turkey, cabbage rolls, Chinese food, MacDonalds, fondue, mini chocolate eggs, etc.). Participants also identified foods that required personal investment of time and energy – as Jane put it, “Special food that requires more time and ingredients.” An excess of food further contributed to the festive nature of many celebrations. Sylvia captured how food intersected with many other features of family rituals, including moods of excitement, expressions of love, and cyclical timing:

we really look forward to it. And she’s always like “I gotta make turkey dinner for my kids cause they love it” and I’m like “yeah” that’s why we like Christmas and.. And ah, Easter and I mean, like we make cabbage rolls and stuff too like so it gets like really outta hand at Christmas! ((laughs))

Finally, specific beverages were also mentioned by a few participants as patterning their family interactions, with coffee and alcohol being mentioned most often. Kristine, for instance, often congregated with both her parents and her sister weekday mornings as they drank coffee, and within this family ritual she and her dad shared their own pouring ritual: “Dad’s just sitting there with his coffee. And then when I pour my coffee I pour him some more coffee. Just our little thing. Just like, ‘I got you dad!’”

To some extent, the patterned nature of family rituals defined activities as rituals; however, the extraordinary quality of these times (i.e., for affirming and expressing care) also could be preserved while their constitutive parts changed. All participants acknowledged a degree of flexibility and adaptation in their family rituals over time (though for Lois, this surfaced only with respect to her extended family events). People changed; the family changed; rituals that bound the family together, too, changed. First, all participants spoke about the presence of family members changing over time and from event to event. Family member participation might ebb and flow, whether due to their changing workloads, a need to simplify events, family members moving, or a need to split time between one’s natal family and the family of one’s significant other. Romantic partners, grandchildren, and family members’ pets might be added over time (as mentioned by eight participants). Here and there, family friends might join in for certain celebrations, as Jane, Kristine, and Iris noted. Elderly family members

passing away (mentioned by four participants) or family members relocating (mentioned by Amber, Ria, and Jane) could also change the people present at such events. The setting of family events might change over time as well (as was mentioned by five participants): older family members would hand over hosting duties to younger generations; travel became less common as children got older; and overnight stays could shift from a family member's home to a hotel to ease burdens of hosting and/or interacting. Three participants noted food traditions changing, whether in terms of choosing different restaurants for birthday meals (Amber), adapting when a favorite Chinese restaurant closed down (Walter), or the Easter Bunny ceasing to visit (Lois, Sylvia). Adapting the timing of certain events from year to year also ensured that family members could be present despite work conflicts, school demands, or obligations towards in-laws (as was acknowledged by Lois, Kristine, Keith). Kristine provided an example of her mother's accommodating approach:

Thanksgiving, Easter, Christmas, we're always all together. And my mom's like, super convenient about it since we all have boyfriends, I guess, if Ashley's fiancé's is on the twenty fifth, then okay we'll have it on the twenty sixth. Well if maybe Carmen's boyfriend and my boyfriend have it on the twenty sixth, we can move it.

According to Wolin and Bennett (1984) such flexibility is important, in that without it rituals can become forced, hollow, and potentially out of touch with the shifting aims, capacities, identities, and roles of the family. In line with this, Kristine conveyed how spending time together was more important than recapitulating on the ritual formula itself:

this year we had Christmas out at Ashley's so I guess that was a little bit different, cause now she can host Christmas or Thanksgiving or whatever, but we were still altogether so that's all that mattered. Like, we don't care where we're going, just as long as we're together and everyone's updated on the plans.

While Lois' extended family events showed some adaptability over time, her nuclear family lacked persistence and creative reinvention in its rituals. She recalled that she, her brother, and her mother used to go to concerts and movies, play the same video games, have TV show marathons, and go to MacDonalds for McFlurries during the holidays – activities that helped her to “feel like we're a traditional family” – but each of these rituals had discontinued, partially because her mom was often busy with online gaming events. Lois described:

L: it'd be like ((high-pitched)) "Oh, we'll do this on this weekend." And then it kinda just... like... I dunno what the word is I'm looking for – petered out

KM: Yeah, yeah.

L: We would never do it and it'd be "oh! Next weekend." And then it would just kinda never happen.

Being let down repeatedly in this way had made Lois feel "pushed to the side." Her brother did not seem to bolster her efforts either and she struggled to get him to respond to her calls and texts: "I mean I can understand him reading it once or twice and forgetting it. But when it's e::very: time, it's like, I don't even wanna text him anymore unless I have to." In brief, Lois' situation of minimal communication may have been compounded by the fact that her family lacked purposeful moments for renewing and strengthening their bonds. Without her sibling's allyship, too, it may have been difficult to work against the inertia that distanced her family members from one another.

As they looked ahead, participants also foresaw their family rituals adapting. In relation to their nuclear families, participants confirmed their faith that they would be able to continue connecting with one another once they (the participants) had left the parental home. All participants anticipated that, at some point, they would likely have less contact with their parents compared to the present, saying that they would not have each other "around all time" (Grey) or that they would not see them "every day" like in the present. However, with the exception of Lois, who anticipated her relationship with her mom "deteriorating," all participants expressed confidence that their parent-child relationships would remain intact, and often this confidence was at least partially connected to promises and recollections of ritualized contact. Many participants (8/15) emphasized dimensions that would remain the "same" when they moved out, despite their reduced contact. To support their continuing relationship, participants stated that they would still talk to their parents regularly (Sylvia, Jane), that "on the emotional level" it would still be the same (Ria), or, in a more general way, that they would still see each other, visit, and be involved in each others' lives (Kristine, Laura, Walter, Keith). As a specific example, Kristine reflected on a hypothetical move for work, maintaining that it would be important to her to continue visiting the family: "even if I gotta go home every few months just to see how it – I want to see how everyone's doing, I want to see them." Several participants (8/15) also spoke about or implied that there would be new rituals for connecting with their

parents, whether they were related to interacting with (grand)children, sleeping over at the parents' home on occasion, scheduling visits, or taking part in weddings. Molly emphasized what seemed to underlie these comments: that "if you really do want to, you always make the time for somebody." Finally, among six of the eight participants who had moved out previously, there were some expectations that life would return to how it was when they had been living away, remaining connected through intermittent phone calls, video chats, visits, dog walks, or holidays. As Iris put it, "we have maintained good contact when we were apart in the past."

While most participants appeared to be generally content with the level of ritual interaction within their families, two participants (Amber and Lois) expressed wishes to spend more time together as a family. Each related this desire to perceptions of detachment within the nuclear family. Amber viewed her family members as somewhat "disconnected" from one another. She described that to "Just like live in this house collectively...so disconnected with one another, it's so strange" (Amber). Lois also described a "lack of communication" between her and her mother, which was heightened by an impression that her mom favored her brother. Though both Amber and Lois did occasionally take part in family rituals, there was a gap between what they currently experienced and what they desired. These remarks were distinct from those expressing that there were acceptable limits on people's participation in family rituals, which was seen as a fact of life. Lois and Amber both described wishes for family time with ritual characteristics that corresponded to those described by other participants. For instance, they idealized moments to "sit down...just to feel like a family" (Lois) or "sit down and like just talk to each other" (Amber). Both participants also expressed wishes to punctuate ordinary time with special family time. For example, Amber said that "we never even have family dinners in our house, ever, which is really strange." Lois similarly held onto a wish to feel "like we're a traditional family." I asked her how she imagined "a traditional family." She replied, "I mean the TV shows that I remember as a kid, like... the fam- er, my friends even, like, the families all get together at like, 6:00 or 6:30 and have supper." Similarly, when I asked Lois about what she thought about their current division of household work, she pivoted to express her yearning for regular family time, stating "it would be nice to have, you know, like you said, like chores. Like we'll do – we'll do this certain days and just like have something to do together. Just build more of a relationship." These scenarios underscore that being "around" one another does not necessarily imply being present with one another. And, indeed, what makes

a ritual a ritual is not mere co-presence or repetition or special features, but rather its power in expressing and nourishing shared faith in the sacred qualities, values, and powers of the family that are not directly perceivable – for example, its capacities for loyalty, care, and love.

4.1.3 Conclusion: Faith in the Family as an Evolving Institution

Altogether then, this section highlights participants' experiences of family as a collective identity, ground project, and dialectical process. Generally, these young adults highlighted persistent commitments to family in multiple ways. Participants expressed family as a collective responsibility, where everyone looked out for and cared for one another. This global project of caring was supported by internal and particular aims for care, with two or more family members being allied in their intentions and actions to support other family members, whether a parent, parent's partner, ex-husband, friend, sibling, pet, or grandparent. A collective identity was revealed, too, in implied deliberations over family boundaries, where get-togethers and stories contributed to a sense of belonging to the family, but could also create factions within the family. Generally, the active ritual lives within participants' families appeared to inform a sense of connection, not only within their nuclear families but also within extended families and communities. Moreover, these ritual lives showed evidence of adaptability over time, with some participants underlining that their importance was derived more in bringing the group together than in following a ritual formula as an end in itself. As participants looked ahead to a time where they would have less physical contact with their parents, faith in the persistence, reinvention and founding of ritual activities (i.e., phone calls, sleepovers, visits, weddings, etc.) seemed to signal the endurance and strength of their family commitments within the present. In positioning themselves alongside their parents as caring for the family, participants surfaced bonds of affiliation and allyship that transcended their dyadic relations with their parents and incorporated this bond within a legitimate institution, identity, and ground project of "family."

This is not to say that the pursuit of family orientations and identities did not pose challenges. At least four were apparent throughout this section. First, this section points to the challenge of recognizing a need for intentional bonding (or "quality time") even within situations of daily contact. Despite living at home and seeing their parents and/or siblings on a daily or nearly daily basis, participants valued the communicative functions of rituals, both in terms of hailing family members into intentional communication and in their ability to symbolize the care that family members felt towards one another. Lois and Amber, who seldom had these types of

experiences within their immediate families, wished that they could leverage such ritual efficacy to rectify their senses of familial detachment.

As a second challenge to the pursuit of family unity, care, and affiliation, families were required to adapt to a membership that organically changed and evolved over time. Not only did the family have to adapt to accommodate changes to its membership (i.e., due to births, pet adoptions, deaths, relocations, immigration, or couplings), the family also evolved to accommodate the evolving identities of its members who required different forms of support and love over time. As examples, we saw how, Grey and Walter accepted their mothers' partners (Ron and Carl) into the fold of the family after some initial reluctance. Likewise, among first and second-generation immigrant participants, the meaning and value of family was reformulated after leaving behind family in their native countries. In the case of Lois, we saw a situation where family rituals did not evolve in step with the changing interests of its members; when Lois' interest waned in the activities she shared with her brother and mother, these activities were not supplanted with new ones. In brief, this data revealed the task of reinventing or generating new rituals that respond to the changing members, identities, and roles of family.

A third challenge confronted to families concerned the potential for rituals to be commandeered by subgroups to assert dominance over others. Both Adison and Lois expressed confronting this. We saw Adison resisting participation in get-togethers with extended family who insulted or disrespected her mother (who remained loyal to them), and we saw Lois' sense of alienation in feeling like the disfavored child and "butt-end" of jokes. These situations highlight the hazard of rituals reifying harmful internal group dynamics under the guise of celebrating and reaffirming togetherness and care towards one another.

A final and more implicit challenge concerned young adults' needs to personalize and appropriate their involvement in family rituals to retain their moral agency and self-esteem. Three scenarios clearly expressed this activity or a need for it. Adison uniquely exemplified these processes in her selective participation in both nuclear and extended family rituals; though she would participate willingly in a quiet Christmas at home with her parents, she preferred not to go with them on shopping trips or long vacations, since these activities tended to be stressful and highly conflictual affairs. Similarly, she affirmed her willingness to say hello to her mother's extended family (what *Maisonneuve* describes as "conviviality") but had decided not to spend extended periods with them when their drinking would often lead to disrespectful treatment of

her mother and what she felt were racist remarks. In her personal negotiation of these activities, Adison seemed to affirm her personal boundaries while maintaining a level of ritual contact that preserved her attachment to her family relations – potentially, one that mitigated conflict between her and her mother (who she described as “one of those people that, like, ‘blood is thicker than water’ type of people”). As another example, Kristine depicted her brother’s estrangement from the family in numerous ways, proclaiming that his values were out of line with those of the rest of the family. I suggested earlier that these stories might have been akin to a family myth that reinforced the identity and values of the family. Despite this, Kristine left open the possibility for healing in her storytelling about her brother, imagining the potential for her brother to apologize to her mother, for her mother to accept the apology, and for Kristine to accept him back into the fold out of her care for her mother. In this way, Kristine (like Adison) acted out of protection for herself and her family (especially her mother) while leaving an opening for redress. The cases of Adison and Kristine raises the question of whether, in the future, Lois might find a self-affirming means of protecting herself while participating in – or even initiating her own – family rituals (including those that could help to redress and heal family wounds). Her mentions of trying family therapy suggest that she has considered this possibility.

Already, I have hinted at some of the pragmatic forces that informed participants’ constructions of family. Participants’ family structure played into their descriptions, with two clear patterns and one more tentative one. First, participants were more likely to describe negative or mixed feelings in spending time or caring for extended family compared to their nuclear families. Given that the nuclear family continues to be one of the dominant family structures in Canada (despite the growth of multi-generational and single-person households) this may reflect more ambiguous social conventions within extended family. Alternatively, it may point to a more formal sense of obligation and duty towards extended family with the nuclear family being held together with interpersonal bonds in addition to senses of duty. Step-relations also factored into the significance of family identities; specifically, Grey and Walter’s mothers had coupled later in life and it appeared that caring alliances with their mothers’ partners established the basis for their relationship. Finally, I noticed a potential (and surprising) connection between intergenerational ruptures and a lack of ritual interaction (Lois and Amber) or dysfunctional dynamics within the extended family gatherings (Lois and Adison). In each of

these cases, there was a break or strain in the maternal family line. Lois stated that her mother had “not the greatest” upbringing, with Lois’ grandmother “not being very nice” and making her children “feel bad about themselves.” For her part, Amber reported that her mother “hates her parents” and talked neither to her parents nor her sisters, summarizing that “she’s like really disconnected with her own family.” Lastly, Adison claimed her mother “hates” Adison’s paternal grandmother and that Adison’s paternal grandmother was “not very welcoming and loving to my mother.” On the other side of the family, Adison’s maternal grandmother passed away when Adison’s mother was 15. Amber, Lois, and Adison were the only three participants to describe such negative relationships between their mothers and grandparents (and did so spontaneously, I should add), which raises the question of whether some of the family disconnection and conflict the participants experienced may have been informed by family resentment or loss confronted by their mothers. In North America, women have traditionally taken up roles as kin-keepers: members of the family who “maintained ties with kin over the life course and who held kinship networks together across geographic distances” (Hareven, 1991, p. 118). A rupture in transmission could explain why these participants mothers’ had not been socialized into such roles and why Lois and Amber (the only daughters in their families) and Adison (an only child) may have been in unique positions to experience a lack or dysfunction in family bonding rituals.

Participants who had themselves immigrated to Canada (Ria, Jane) – or whose parents had immigrated (Molly) – also showed some unique patterns in their descriptions of family. First, they were most likely to foreground culture in explaining the importance of family for them. The only other participant who explicitly brought up cultural values in relation to family was Nina and given that she described her family in relation to both Eastern European traditions and in relation to her ex-husband’s Asian background. For these participants, membership in a cultural minority and immigrant group – or a former marriage to someone holding these two statuses – may have informed the explicit way they discussed their family orientation.

To continue with the topic of culture, I noted that many of the rituals discussed fell into what Turner (1969) described as the “liminoid” as opposed to the “liminal,” given that most of these rituals were voluntary and did not require the presence of the entire society (or, more relevantly, the presence of all nuclear or extended family members). I would extend this interpretation to suggest that many of the rituals described here reflected the largely secular and post-industrial society where they occurred. First, many of the rituals discussed did indeed

depend on a separation between work and leisure, with entertainment and vacations being highly common. There were only a few exceptions offered that subverted or at least brought nuance to this division of spheres, including meal preparation that was considered a part of a holiday ritual and extended family get-togethers that were occasionally experienced as more obligatory than voluntary. It is possible that with a more in-depth investigation into different types of family rituals and their features, I might have stumbled upon activities that challenged the tidy separation between work and play, but given the limits of my data, it seemed that playful excursions and retreats were the dominant type of ritual activity, fitting with Turner's (1986) argument that the liminoid is more characteristic of contemporary society. On a related note, religious holidays (Christmas, Easter, Thanksgiving, and Eid) were virtually never discussed in terms of affirming the family's shared religious commitments, despite that three participants identified as Christian and one identified as "somewhat Muslim." Finally, while birthday celebrations were commonly discussed by participants, these also tended not to be discussed as sacred or transformative moments. This is not to say that rites of initiation do not exist among young adults living at home, but rather it seems to indicate that in the present or recent past these kinds of rituals were not especially key moments for family connection. Given that many participants occupied statuses as students, as unmarried, and as childless – and all of them were living with their parents – most of the more common rites of initiation of young adulthood had not yet come to pass, which may be why rites of initiation were not identified as important family events. Certainly, researchers in the future could look in a more in-depth way at how rites of passage during young adulthood inform orientations and collective identifications to family, potentially even adding to these rituals that forge bonds between adult children and their parents through collective struggle or loss, such as immigration passages, funerals, downsizing, or relocation.

Although the liminoid tended to be more apparent here, the normative and obligatory qualities of liminality did surface in some instances: in perceptions of obligations to attend family events, in self-identified divergence from mainstream culture due to a lack of family activities, and in references to the significance of "everyone" being present (as well as their accommodations to ensure this during especially important holidays, such as Christmas holidays). I wonder if by inquiring about the significance of repeated and ongoing absences for

important family events I might have uncovered more details supporting an interpretation of “family time” for its liminal features.

4.2 Parents as Roommates

In addition to the symmetry forged through shared familial values, symmetry between parents and children appeared in a second sense that related to a model of recognition based on universal rights. In discussions about “living well” together, participants drew on the figure of the roommate and cohabitant (i.e., as someone with whom they shared a space) to describe norms of civility common to all members of the household. Virtually no studies have surfaced such symmetries related to sharing a common space. In analyses of labor-based and financial contributions to the household, for example, it has been more common to consider these practices either independently of broader relationship contexts (e.g., Milan et al., 2016) or mainly in terms of authority/subordinate relationships (Warner et al., 2017).

To examine the figure of the roommate, I will draw on Ricoeur’s (2004/2005) model of recognition on the “juridical” plane, which he distinguishes from a model of recognition based on love, generosity, and gift-giving. Recognition in its juridical sense implies an understanding of people as “bearers of rights” who have “normative obligations” towards others (Ricoeur, 2004/2005, p. 197). Ricoeur (2004/2005) emphasizes here the fundamental two-part structure of this model of recognition, involving 1) the norm, which is recognized as valid, and 2) the person, a rational being, who is understood as being “free and equal to every other person” (p. 197). Following the philosophical work of Kant, respect is a foundational pillar within this model of recognition. Nevertheless, how valid norms of respect are applied by people in context, is a topic that is best described through Aristotle’s notion of “phronesis,” which describes the use of practical wisdom in day-to-day life. That is, recognition on the juridical plane implies norms of respect that are universal, but these norms still must be interpreted and followed within the particulars of everyday life and in relation to personal and human commitments (Mattingly, 2014). Bridging the division between deontological morality ethics (abstract norms) and teleological ethics (practical wisdom), participants’ discourses about household norms often drew on the language of universal rights and obligations, but with intimate knowledge and concern for how the violation of such norms affected the people they cared about within the household.

4.2.1 Mutual Responsibilities for Household Duties

In the caregiving chapter, I emphasized parents' heavier housework duties as a form of caregiving to their young adult children in that participants considered themselves as beneficiaries of their parents' help. I also hinted in that section that housework duties were informed, to some degree, by norms of reciprocity and the sharing of tasks. Here, I would like to follow up on the idea that participants perceived themselves as contributors to the household and not solely as dependent within it. Specifically, I will be exploring three different but related housework norms that were assigned to all members of the household: turn-taking, cleaning up after yourself, and taking care of your personal space.

All participants referred to norms of turn-taking of some kind when it came to household chores. The tasks that most often came up in these discussions were dishwashing and yard work. Less commonly, participants mentioned shared efforts towards meal preparation, refilling or replacing household items, cleaning common areas, and laundry. Interestingly, turn-taking was often tied to the accomplishment of labor that was created collectively (e.g., in the case of dishes dirtied through the preparation of family meals) or that was created by a neutral force (e.g., snow or leaves that had fallen). Most often, this norm of joint participation was described as "helping out" around the house, but it was also indicated in mentions of doing one's "part" (Amber, Keith), "partake[ing]" household maintenance (Laura), being part of a "team effort" (Kristine) or "family effort" (Walter), and participating in the "split[ting]" up of tasks (Iris). This was also evident in some participants' descriptions of alternating tasks; for example, Sylvia pointed out that "We have this like...rule that whoever cooks supper doesn't have to help with dishes." In some instances or regarding some tasks, participants would also point out how the distribution of labor approached – but did not fully arrive at – an egalitarian distribution of labor. For instance, mentions were made that work was "almost divided equally" (Keith), or "fairly even" (Iris), or that it was "very give and taken on both ends for us" (Laura). As reflected in Laura's comment, the interchangeability of roles was prominent in discourses about egalitarian norms for household work: "someone" would do dishes if they needed to be done (Lois); "you" would help out with shoveling (Kristine); "everybody" would do things "when they see that this needs to be done" (Jane). The substitutability of roles when it came to chores was maybe best described by Molly in the following quote: "there's day[s] where I definitely... slacked on tasks? And it – my brother or my mom will pick up... on the chores and then there's day[s] when they're busy and then I'll pick up on the chores." At the heart of these discussions was the presumption that it

would be unfair to burden only one person with the lion's share of household labor. This was sometimes paired with a recognition that parents (and usually mothers) were entitled to have time to relax and do what they wanted. As was described by Keith, "if it were all on one person, like if my mom was doing everyone's laundry or something, and cooking everything and fixing stuff, that would be a little excessive." Similarly, Molly made the point that she did not want to place an unnecessarily high labor load on her mother – a sensibility that had developed over time: "I just...just feel bad like, burdening my mom with like, all these tasks... now that I'm older, more aware, it's like, I do want to... let her relax and enjoy her life a little bit more."

Although participants did express their beliefs that certain tasks should be shared by all members of the household, they also acknowledged that they spent less time on housework compared to one or both of their parents. For example, Iris stated that she and her mother had arrived at a "a more equitable share of responsibilities, at least in terms of the indoor housework" and Keith expressed that "as far cleaning the parts of the house that everyone clean, it's almost divided equally. My parents clean more than we do, but." Indeed, just two participants saw themselves as doing nearly equal amounts of work compared to their residential parents (who in both cases were single mothers and were the only other occupants of the home). In eight cases, participants clearly acknowledged that both their parents (or their single parent) did more than them and in five cases, participants felt that one parent did more work than them and one parent did less than them (in most cases, with mothers being the parent who did more than them). In brief, participants seemed to be oriented towards egalitarian distributions of labor, but their tendencies were also informed by an understanding of their parents as caregivers who had a legitimate duty to take on a greater share of work. Certainly, it would be interesting to examine in greater detail the relationships between ideals for the division of labor and the performance of household labor, potentially inspired by recent work on gendered divisions of labor (interestingly, researchers have observed a trend towards more egalitarian divisions of labor between men and women, but these efforts still have not produced households where labor is split evenly). One thing is certain among the young adults within this sample: from their perspectives, it would not be acceptable to be a "complete freeloader" (Lois).

Scenarios involving "helping out" or "doing your part" tended to be tied to the performance of labor with a collective or neutral origin. By contrast, norms of "cleaning up after yourself" (which were endorsed by all participants) implied conditions of disorder that were

attributable to a single person who was then charged with resolving them. This norm was variously phrased as commands to “take care of your own shit” (Walter), “be neat” (Iris), “don’t leave a mess” (Laura), and “clean up your own mess or kinda deal with your own things” (Vincent). As specific examples, participants mentioned expectations to put food items away after use, wash up dishes only they had generated, keep personal belongings out of communal spaces, turn the lights off after yourself, and ensure that laundry loads were not blocking others’ access to the dryer or washer. What seemed to be at stake in these instances was that household members were expected to, first, respect common areas by refraining from personalizing them with their belongings, and second, that they should take personal responsibility for the messes that they created, such that no other person should have to clean up after someone else. Whereas norms of turn-taking implied the “we” that banded together, the norm of taking care of your own things implied that “every person” should be able to access communal resources and shared spaces. In both cases, these principles concerned excessive burdens on single individuals; however, in the case of “picking up after yourself” the burden was linked causally to the role of another person (as opposed to being connected to a collective or natural force). The distinction between these context-specific logics was expressed by Iris’ comment that “I’m not a glorified housemaid... it’s her stuff, it’s not communal stuff, it’s hers so she should be cleaning it up.”

The third and final form of reciprocal duties (i.e., shared by family members) concerned care for personal spaces – a topic that was discussed by nearly all participants (13/15). Cleaning up your “own” spaces meant taking care of one’s bedroom, and occasionally also alluded to caring for other spaces participants occupied more than others, like basements, offices, desks, or bathrooms. Some participants pointed to laundry as being a shared task (or a task that was within the domain of one person but was balanced by the duties of others), but most participants identified laundry as a personal responsibility.⁴³ As examples, participants pointed out that “nobody cleans someone else’s room or anything” (Keith), “we all do our own laundry, like no one does anyone else’s laundry” (Amber), and that “I’m also expected to keep my room clean and nice” (Ria). Interestingly, participants’ discourses about cleaning “their” areas revealed a greater degree of personal agency in setting the standard for cleanliness. That is, several

⁴³ Household laundry – such as bath towels, tea towels, and cloths – was not addressed as a distinct type of laundry in all the interviews. This might have been helpful to investigate more systematically, given that the dirtying of these items may be generated communally rather than individually.

participants indicated that they had more entitlement to how orderly or untidy these spaces were. As an example, Keith described his frustration with his brother's messiness within communal spaces, but reserved less judgment about his brother's messiness within his bedroom: "It's mostly just his room that's really fucking gross. Or the basement. Which kind of sucks, cause I actually use the basement. His room I don't care about cause it's his." Likewise, after discussing how personal belongings should not be left all over the house, Iris contextualized this communal duty by identifying spaces where standards were individually-determined:

in reality we both have messy spaces. I can do whatever I want in my room – it's mostly neat, but if it's a mess, she [my mother] [i]s not going to be mad it, and her room is a mess, and I'm not mad about it, although I sometimes mock her for the number of clothes that are on the floor. Ah, and our desks are usually messes, that is apparently the nature of desks, I try and I try and yet it is never neat, or clean. But those are like restricted messy zones.

Building on Iris' and Keith's points, these families drew on multiple context-specific principles to ensure that every family member could protect their own time, freely access communal spaces, and, perhaps implicitly, also respect the standards of the neighborhood (i.e., by cleaning their yards and sidewalks). In this way, they articulated a system of rights and constraints supporting the goodness of an orderly environment.

4.2.2 Respecting One Another's Needs for Peace and Quiet

Corresponding duties and entitlements to quiet in the house were another way in which participants highlighted symmetry between themselves and their parents. Such norms were discussed and endorsed by all participants, with each speaking directly to the importance of quiet spaces and times. Most commonly, participants (10/15) referred to this norm as underpinned by the common need for good nights' sleeps. Actively disrupting another person's sleep was viewed as generally inconsiderate. The need for quiet was also related to the need to "decompress" (Adison) after long days at places of work or education, which might be "noisy" (Sylvia) or "stressful" (Lois). Adequate rests, for these participants and their parents, were vital for restoring energy for the following day and for recovering capacities to work and/or study. On a related note, a quiet household was appreciated by participants who needed to focus on schoolwork (12/15 participants). As described by Vincent, "I need to have like silence when I like study and read and stuff." Finally, a sense of quiet at home was referred to by several participants (7/15) as

generally “good” or helpful somehow. For instance, Iris described how her quiet home with her mother was an environment that “nourished” her – a point that I hinted at in the first chapter on caregiving, where I described Iris’ view that affording solitude would be challenging were she paying marketplace costs to rent (as opposed to the discounted rate her mother gave her).

Several expectations – and personal practices – accompanied the aim of respecting one another’s needs for quiet. Most commonly, participants (9/15) spoke about refraining from making noise during the night. Several participants said if they were to come home late, or were up and about, they would try to avoid or minimize disrupting the sleep of others. Participants views on this shared duty echoed Sylvia’s view that “it’s just being courteous again and like trying to respect other people’s schedules and you know, cause I don’t want people doing that to me! ((laughs)).” Kristine described in detail how she applied this standard while carrying a freedom to come and go from the house freely:

you don’t come home at two in the morning on a Wednesday and start banging things around. Like, don’t be disrespectful, you still respect that people are sleeping in the house. You come in quietly as possible and you go to bed. If you want to watch tv, go downstairs, turn it on, and go to bed.

At another point, Kristine reinforces that this norm is one shared by the household, describing how she has at times been frustrated with her sister for failing to conform:

I have had to yell at her numerous time – I’m like, “be quiet, people are sleeping. Like, just cause you’re here doesn’t mean the house revolves around you now. Have respect, people are sleeping.”

Similar comments were made by Walter, who criticized his brother for coming home and being “incredibly loud and obnoxious.” Molly and Nina both spoke about late-night guests, and how they tended to minimize them or keep the noise level low if someone came over late at night. Uniquely, Nina indicated that she monitored and checked in with her parents about herself and her son’s volume levels at night, asking, ““Are we loud at night? Or like can you hear—did you hear Ethan last night when he cried? Like did he wake you up?” And they’re always like, ‘No no no. It’s fine.’” Although comments about limiting noise at night were the most common way participants spoke about noise norms, some participants also said they would modulate music volume to accommodate one another (Iris, Lois) and several (Jane, Laura, Lois, Iris, and Amber) referred to their general appreciation for their family’s quiet nature. As Laura put it: “my parents

are good roommates. They go to bed at reasonable hours, they don't make a lot of noise... um, so yeah."

Just three participants, Adison, Keith, and Kristine, pointed to violations of the norm to respect others' sleeping schedules (and always, it seemed, by accident). Adison noted briefly that she was usually mindful of her noise level and her parents "do the same for me – well, to a certain extent." Kristine and Keith also said that once in a while, they might accidentally be a little louder coming home on a weekend, but in both cases, they would acknowledge their wrongdoing and try to keep their disruptions to a minimum. Keith described his efforts to be pay mind to his "heavy foot": "I always try to [be quiet], but I forget. Or I'll forget that like, part of the house is louder sounding than the other. Cause It's kind of an old house, it has weird areas that are really creaky." Likewise, Kristine pointed out that if she was accidentally loud, she could simply apologize for it: "Then too you just say, 'oh I'm really sorry for waking you up last night mom.' And I mean it's not like an everyday thing, so if it did happen, I mean, at least it's once a year versus every single day." Like Adison, Kristine also noted that she had to sometimes cope with her parents being loud in the morning while she slept:

I like to sleep in later than the average person. I mean, I'm still in bed by 8:15 or 8:30 when my parents are up, my sister comes over before she goes to work, and they're all stomping around, so I'm like, "it would be so nice if I lived on my own."

In sum, these participants seemed to signal that strict adherence to this norm was not necessarily the goal, but rather that family members ought to make an effort to minimizing their disruptions to others' lives – and in cases where this was not possible, it could be forgiven.

4.2.3 Respecting Each Other's Space and Belongings

In examining the history of domestic space in Canada, Ward (1999) notes that during the 19th century, the interior spaces of homes became more specialized and "lines between zones of relative privacy became more sharply inscribed" (p. 25). Although there was a turn towards open-concept homes during the 20th century, the value of privacy has persevered over time (Ward, 1999). Indeed, participants overall shared a sense that rights to private space – and duties to respect it – were vital to living harmoniously with their parents.

No participant shared a bedroom with another member of the family (excepting their pets and Nina's child) and bedrooms were identified as private spaces for all household members. Participants alluded to these constructions with comments that reflected their respect for their

parents' bedrooms (e.g., Amber's comment that "I would never go in my parents' room" or Ria's note that her parents' room was "their space"), that they respected their siblings possession of their own bedrooms (e.g., Keith's comment that "his room...it's his"), and that they were the rightful possessors of their bedrooms (e.g., Iris' comment that "my bedroom is mine" and Ria's that "my bedroom is my own space"). For Grey, Molly, Vincent, and Laura, basements were also available to them as larger semi-private areas that might include a family or TV room, a personal bathroom, and (in Laura's case) an office of her own. As Molly described, "me and my brother are in the basement and they do have the upstairs, I feel like we are pretty well separated." Statements about private bedrooms and basements signalled mutually understood boundaries in the home. Several participants affirmed in a general way that they and their parents gave each other space, saying that, for instance, they "respect each other's space" (Laura). At a more granular level, five participants referred to norms of knocking on doors, checking to ensure it was okay to enter a room, or giving a warning if they were about to enter. Molly illustrated this point:

if the doors are open, it's kind of a free for all? But if the doors are closed, it's expected that you... knock before you just barge in. . . . I think it's just 'cause you never know what the person may doing – be doing and if they need their privacy.

Participants discussed their needs for privacy in relation to 1) needs for retreat from social life, 2) fulfillment of personal needs, 3) relaxation, and 4) productivity. Nearly all participants (13/15) emphasized that accessing privacy was often a restorative process needed to compensate for interaction with others. Keith illustrated this point:

KM: And you said before that sometimes if you've been out and about, you like to just come back and hang out in your bedroom?

K: Yep.

KM: Can you tell me about what it is that is kind of nice about being in your bedroom?

K: Uh, I don't know, you don't have to feel a certain way. Or anything. Like if you're going out with people you gotta be upbeat and stuff. If you're tired, or hungover, or something you can just hang out, you don't have to worry about keeping up appearances and what not.

The experience of public performance Keith refers to resonated with many participants' senses that a part of themselves was not available to them when they were in the company of others.

Reflecting this, access to “alone time” was depicted as necessary for maintaining their personal well-being (both among participants identifying as introverted and those identifying as outgoing). As Kristine expressed, the times in which she could be home by herself allowed her to “get reconnected with myself in a sense.” Similarly, Adison remarked that “I’m very like- I am very outgoing, and I love being around other people, but I find that like, I’ll get energy from that but then I need a:lo:ne time to kinda just, get back to who I am?” In interpreting these desires, I would caution the reader not to see them as desires to return to a more authentic self (via solitude), but more so to see them as reflecting desires to explore and express one’s selfhood through different channels and worlds (Mitchell, 1993; Ricoeur, 1986/2001). For example, Adison remarked that she had invested energy to decorate her bedroom with “adult furniture” that she was proud of, a television, and many framed photos and reminders of people and moments in her life (high school graduation, convocation from university, deceased pets and family). She described:

I just put really good things in there . . . it’s just a very, like, cozy:, comfortable, very nice place. Like if you go into my room, you’d be like, ‘Oh yeah, that’s Adison. Like, that’s who she is as a person,’ kinda deal.

In other words, in addition to the aesthetic and textural components her bedroom offered, images that brought her world into her bedroom seemed to support Adison’s self in relation to herself, which was distinct from the self that related to her parents. As described by Ricoeur (1986/2008), “self-understanding passes through the detour of understanding the cultural signs in which the self documents and forms itself” (p. 114). It seemed to be the case that in the bedroom, the symbols of selfhood she could access were distinct from those accessed in interacting with her parents or spending time in the communal spaces of the home. Supporting this idea, four participants emphasized that while they appreciated access to privacy, they also liked to spend time in the common spaces in the home. As Kristine put it, “I don’t like being cooped up in my room. I’m always upstairs! I guess upstairs is where like everyone hangs out.” Similarly, Nina commented that her parents likely wished she spent more time in the basement, but because she was a “social person” she found herself gravitating towards the upstairs of the house more.

In their discussions about the importance of privacy, five participants also focused on the creature comforts of their bedrooms. Emphasizing how “cozy” (Molly) and “comfortable”

(Walter) their room was, or how much they “loved” their bed (Ria, Jane), the bedroom was identified as a resting place.

Finally, for four participants, private spaces were valued as places to get work done. Whereas other spots in the house (like living rooms and kitchens) might have seating or space for doing work, these spaces sometimes invited disruption from other members of the family. For instance, Kristine described how within communal spaces in the home “it seems like when I’m trying to read or type something, my parents were like, ‘so how’s your day going?’ I’m like, ‘why now?’” Being able to hole up somewhere was therefore an important strategy for appropriating the home space into a productive workspace. Reflecting this and other strategies for focus, Vincent discussed:

I have like a fan and like noise cancelling headphones and stuff so like... when she’s around and like moving around like I feel like I gotta like trap myself in the basement a bit more just to like get away from it?

No participants felt that their parents regularly or egregiously violated norms of spatial privacy in the home; however, Nina, Jane, Laura, and Adison each pointed to occasional moments when their parents transgressed the boundaries of their privacy. Disrupting the sense of privacy or “me time” valued by participants, these parents were described as interrupting with a request for work to be done around the house, a technological problem, or a series of questions about their days. Uniquely, Adison expressed dismay that her mother would sometimes knock as she was entering her room, seeming to show a simultaneous awareness of the norm, but also a refusal to respect it as it stands.

Closely tied to the topic of private space was the topic of personal possessions (or what might otherwise be termed “ownership”). This topic (discussed by 8 participants) tied into conversations about members of the household respecting each others’ private spaces. Implicitly, each of these participants pointed to a right to claim certain items as personal possessions and identified a corresponding duty to treat such items as extensions of their owners by caring for them, protecting the owner’s access to them, and ensuring that the owner could depend on their consistent whereabouts. Many comments were made about the importance of asking for permission before borrowing another person’s belongings. Encapsulating this view was Amber’s comment that “It’s usually:: okay as long as you have consent ((laughs)) to take said item.” Similarly, other participants referred to the need to “ask” (Kristine, Keith, Grey, Sylvia) as a

“respect thing” or something that was “just kinda nice” to do for one another, or something that fell under “like normal, like roommate respect” (Grey). Annoyance and frustration occurred when others violated their own (or their parent’s) rights to personal belongings, by using, borrowing, or consuming an item, whether it was a phone charger (Amber), a piece of clothing (Walter), an alcoholic beverage (Amber), or a favorite hat (Sylvia). At the intersections of personal space and possessions, Keith articulated the common norm for families to “not go through each other’s stuff.” Similarly, Laura said it was expected that household members were not “going in and moving things around in your room or like, cleaning up your room even though... or like, just going in yeah, like, disrupting things, kind of. Like, changing what you had out or set or whatever.” In addition to these general norms, Kristine brought up several other more specific guidelines for navigating lending and borrowing within the household: not using up a product “until it’s all gone,” putting back objects where they were found, and clearly claiming and labeling food items intended for personal use. Together, these discourses about space and personal belongings highlighted a form of shared respect centered on the individual person and, by extension, their spatial dominion and personal possessions.

4.2.4 Recognizing and Coping with Bad Moods

Sharing space with other people also meant coping with one another’s bad moods. Here, I use the term “bad mood” in parallel with the way participants were using it: to indicate sporadic, negative affective states that they and others carried into the home. I say “carried into” because bad moods were described differently than legitimate emotional states derived from interpersonal conflict between the participant and their parent. In other words, when participants were referring to “bad moods” they were not focusing on legitimate or rational feelings derived out of conflict between themselves and someone else in the house; they were pointing to a relation between individuals and the issues they were experiencing within their own, separate worlds (whether related to car trouble, finances, workplace politics, family politics, or school stress), which then spilled over into the shared household. This was indicated through language showing the unidirectional force of a bad mood that would “take over” (Sylvia), be “project[ed] onto everyone” (Amber), affect “everything” that is being said (Ria, Walter). It was also evoked in discussing someone experiencing stress and “tak[ing] that out on us” (Adison) – language that indicated the one-sided, unfair, and even irrational nature of these moods, which threatened

norms of civility in the home. For virtually all participants (14/15), recognizing and responding to their own and/or others' bad moods was a part of sharing a household with someone else.⁴⁴

Each of these participants reported tuning into their own, their parents', or their siblings' moods. Detection often occurred by observing shifts in tone, demeanor, or interaction style, and seldom occurred through direct verbal disclosure of one's own moody state. As an example, Iris illustrated how a "bad mood" might be picked up on through shifts in typical interactions: "I don't think either one of us just stomps in and starts snarling but we don't usually initiate, um, conversation or verbal exchange when we're in a bad mood but uh, but we respond and we don't respond well." I asked her to give me an example and she pointed to the difference in how her mother would respond to Iris' "cooing" over the cat depending on her mood:

I: Yeah. "Who is the most adorable cat in this house? Is it you?" ((Laughs)). Well and she might not actually respond to that but you can feel the chill in the air descend another couple degrees.

KM: Ok.

I: Um... but if she's in a good mood, I would say "Who's the most adorable cat in this house?" and she would say "Crick is! Crick is!"

In a similar vein, other participants described noticing parents' "sighs" (Lois), "stomping" of feet (Lois), "storming around" (Amber), and "complaining" (Sylvia). They also described noticing themselves if they became "moody" (Molly), "grumpy" (Keith, Grey), "stressed" (Jane), "depressed, frustrated, angry" (Ria), or "hitting things and slamming doors" (Molly). In addition, a couple participants mentioned other household members in this respect, with Grey describing her live-in partner as "grumpy in the mornings" and Walter identifying times when his brother was "in a bad mood." For the most part, bad moods tended to be described as relating to minor issues – "just small stuff" (Keith), "a bad day" (Kristine, Keith), "little stuff" (Molly), or "stupid things" that would "erupt" (Walter). However, some participants did also report that bad moods could be caused by more considerable and persistent challenges including finances (Amber), work (Adison, Nina), menopause (Keith, Sylvia), or recovery from addiction (Walter).

⁴⁴ Laura did not appear to struggle with this issue with her parents' moods and did not remark that they struggled with hers. When we discussed conflict, she noted that she was "never there" and her parents would "see me in passing" since she was a full-time student, working full-time, and often spending time at her boyfriend's. She suggested herself that were she at home more often, she and her parents might have conflicts more often, and that it would constitute a "different situation" with "different frustrations."

Subjecting others to their own bad moods – or being subject to others’ moods – could cause irritation, annoyance, anxiety, and tension. To return to Iris’ mother’s cool reaction to her cooing at the cat, we see that bad moods for her brought into effect a felt threat. I asked her what Iris would feel or what would go through her head during one of these exchanges:

I feel tense. Anxious usually. I feel like a small animal who needs to be very very quiet ((laughs)) so that the cat doesn’t see me. ((KM: Mmhm)). And usually I don’t need to physically remove myself from the situation. If I just sit there very quietly and don’t move very much and play on my phone or read for a bit it’s usually long enough for her to regain her equilibrium.

Lois, Sylvia, Adison, and Amber felt especially attuned to others’ feelings and despite this self-awareness, struggled to modulate their high sensitivity to the moods of others. Adison described, “I tend to take on the emotions of people around me, and I just can’t take on that negativity.” Likewise, Sylvia found it difficult to ignore the moods of others in the house, saying that “I tend to really grab other people’s emotions and then I feel really ‘eugh.’” Other participants who did not describe themselves as highly sensitive nevertheless described how perceiving the negative moods of others could be “annoying” (Amber), “frustrating” (Amber), an “irritation” (Grey), something “some days I have more patience for than others” (Keith), or something that could trigger a “small conflict” (Ria).

The strategies that participants used to respond to bad moods (their own and others’) reflected a sensitivity to the fact that they were occupying the same space as others. Commonly, participants (8/15) said that when it came to responding to others’ negative moods, avoidance was appropriate. If a parent was in a bad mood, then they might refrain from doing or saying things that might worsen their mood further. Participants described knowing their parents’ stressors and avoiding these, whether it was sarcasm (Walter), a joke taken too far (Kristine), words that could be taken as criticisms (Vincent), or specific topics that brought up negative feelings, such as work (Adison) or money (Amber, Adison). For example, with respect to her dad’s post-work grumpy moods, Adison noted that “he’s the type when he like gets stressed he just doesn’t want to talk about [it]. He just wants to forget it.” Along the same lines, Vincent hinted at the importance of paying attention to and learning what might set someone off: “I kinda know her switches ((laughs)) and so I know what to stay away from.” What may have been touchy in the past could change over time too – a factor that Vincent noted: “sarcasm would be a

switch. But now I think she's kinda used to it too or whatever and like doesn't take it as personally coming from me anyways." Uniquely, Nina highlighted how gaining an awareness of her parents' inner lives – and responding to them in accordance with this understanding – was a part of growing up:

I'm expected to care for them a little bit more. Like be more considerate and see them more as people who go through like the daily stresses and have multiple things affecting their life versus when you're a kid you're just like, "It's mom. It's dad. They're super mom!" Like you don't consider that they're like actually human and like have this whole history.

This sensitivity to parents' inner worlds highlights the context-specific way in which participants applied norms for civility in the home: one person's "switch" might not be a switch for another person, and the right approach for dealing with a grumpy person could vary from person to person as well.

In addition to avoiding certain actions or topics, several participants (7/15) also described responding to parents' negative moods by removing themselves from communal spaces, going to their bedrooms, or getting out of the house. Sylvia provided an example of this approach, which she was trying to adopt more regularly:

more and more recently I've just been trying to like, remove myself from the situation because I know it's not good to like, take that all on. Especially because it's – it – you know it's not really her... and it's not really rational, it's just like, you know. So and there's nothing I can do about it anyway, so why worry about it ((laughs)) is what I'm trying really hard to do.

As previously mentioned, since it was Sylvia's tendency to "tr[y] too hard to keep everybody happy" it was a challenge not taking on felt responsibility for others' (here, her mother's) emotional states. By reasoning that these actions did not reflect her mother's normally reasonable character, Sylvia distanced herself from her typical, interpersonal solicitude, adopting a discourse of rights and duties belonging to "rational" beings. Other strategies for coping with others' emotions included reaching out to others (Molly, Lois), distracting oneself with entertainment (Lois, Adison), trying to mentally "block it out" (Adison), or affirming self-other boundaries – in other words, reflecting on how the other person's mood had nothing to do with them or on how

their influence was limited (Lois, Amber, Adison, Sylvia). As Amber put it, “you can only do so much.”

Strategies for managing participants’ own negative moods showed some convergence and divergence from those for coping with other people’s moods. Interestingly, some participants (4/15) reported that if they themselves were in a bad mood, they would withdraw from communal spaces. Stated reasons for this were that they would not want to speak to others when they were in a bad mood or because they found that leaving the house helped to focus inward, reflect, and calm down. As Jane described, “Usually when I’m stressed I’m – I don’t want to talk to anyone I just want to be by myself.” Pointing to the need to look inward, Molly also stated that “I’ll reflect and it’s like, ‘yeah I got worked up for no reason.’” Some participants (4/15) also acknowledged moments when they might need to apologize to others for their negative states. As Ria described,

when I’m depressed, frustrated, angry, then I put all my anger on mom. I get irritated on everything she says. Then we have like small conflict. And then after some time I tell her that, “sorry, my mood wasn’t really good” like, “I’m going through a lot of stuff so I’m sorry” ((laughs)).

Goffman (1967) conceptualized apologies as social rituals capable of restoring the honor of the offending individual while simultaneously honoring the sanctity of the rule they have transgressed. In other words, by apologizing, Ria confirms that she understands how to live peacefully and civilly with others. Bringing some nuance to the role of apologies in this context, Molly said that she did not always take the initiative to acknowledge the times she let her bad mood spill into her interactions: “I feel like for the most part I would apologize for my actions, but then sometimes . . . I try to just brush it off like it never happened.” It may be that in the most egregious instances apologies might be warranted, whereas in minor instances, time and space apart were accepted as doing much of the healing. In line with this, Walter and Amber both indicated that when it came to conflicts due to someone’s bad mood, involved parties would get over it “in like an hour” (Walter) or “eventually” (Amber).

Altogether, these discussions of bad moods highlight the social and interdependent nature of affect within the household – what some researchers might conceptualize as “mood spillover”: the transference of moods from one sphere of life into another, which is more common with negative moods than positive ones (Williams & Alliger, 1994). In sharing space with others,

participants were required to respond to the rhythms of their own emotions and those of others. To prevent themselves and others from becoming emotional collateral, multiple strategies were used: avoiding triggering topics, removing themselves from interactive spaces, occupying themselves with distractions, attempting to cognitively “tune out” what was going on, and using practical wisdom and judgment to prevent other people’s negative emotional states from escalating. While no participant expected all members of the household to be in perpetually good moods, it was important for household members to observe when they and others were in a bad mood and to act in a way that would minimize unintentional and illegitimate conflict.

4.2.5 General Comments about Consideration for Other Household Members

In a more general sense, all participants expressed that consideration for others’ feelings and well-being was key to a peaceful coexistence. We have seen in the previous sections that participants recognized their own and others’ rights to common spaces, tranquility, privacy, personal ownership of belongings, and civility. General comments were also made by 12 of 15 of the participants about the need for mutual consideration and courtesy in the household. Whereas in other moments, the value of respect was used to refer to participants’ deference to their parents (i.e., the need to respect the home as the possession of the parents), in these cases, it implied two-way respect between members of the household. For example, Sylvia commented that “our system seems to be based on like respect for one another? It’s like, you know, try and help each other out and try and, you know, don’t make anybody else’s life harder than it needs to be! ((laughs)).” Likewise, other participants spoke about “mutual respect” (Grey), “being respectful of the other people that live there” (Keith), or how “I trust her to treat me fairly and she trusts me to treat her fairly” (Iris).

All 15 participants also highlighted how, since their teen years, they had become more considerate of the people with whom they were living. In brief, they described themselves as being more attuned to the social environment and their place within it. As examples, they stated that they became “more reliable” (Lois), “much more responsible” (Nina), “more . . . respectful” (Laura), and “more like, aware and respectful?” (Grey). Others also pointed out that over time, they were more willing to make contributions towards the household, saying that they “started to contribute as much as I could” (Amber), began seeing themselves as “working towards the same goal” as their parents (Keith), became more “willing to – to pitch in and assist if assistance is needed” (Iris), or started to “help out a lot more” (Molly). These comments seemed to parallel

Adison's view that "as a grownup you should be contributing to your environment" (even if, as noted earlier, participants did not take on an egalitarian share of the duties).

Within these accounts of change were references to improved emotional perceptivity and self-regulation. Kristine, for example, identified both her improved awareness and management of emotions, stating that "now that I'm older you can pick out when someone's having a bad day or they're upset or they're mad, you can pick up on it." Beyond this, she pointed to her own ability to manage her feelings:

I don't get mad anymore. Not that I don't get mad, but I mean, I've learned to deal with it so my mom doesn't get upset, so now that I'm aware of her and that I know I need to be. Or aware of my dad. So I think, maybe? Cause they know me and I know them, so we can work together to not purposely upset somebody.

Interestingly, for a subset of four participants, learning to live well with others involved an improved acuity in perceiving the limits of their responsibility for others' moods. As mentioned earlier, these four felt highly sensitive to others' feelings, so although they stressed a greater awareness of what their social environment required from them, a part of that involved learning what was beyond their duty to address. Identifying the situations when parents could not be reasoned with helped them to protect their own emotional well-being, since being powerless to help (but being subject to their parent's state) could "bring you down" (Adison). For instance, Amber noted that "I've just learned to be like "kay, I can't really do anything about this." In a similar vein, Sylvia acknowledged that developing this ability was a work-in-progress:

it's just my own weirdness that I have to get over but like, cause I like to help people and I wanna make things better and uh, you know when I can't do that like I just get all like "ugh."

In these cases, the same principle of conscientiousness was being applied but for a different purpose: to identify and respond to situations where others violated the social norms of cohabitation. In other words, these participants were learning that if parents were excessively negative and unresponsive to reason or empathy, they (participants) needed to preserve their own well-being by limiting their sense of responsibility over their parents' situations.

Even if participants felt that it was possible to mature or become more conscientious while living at home, several participants (8/15) still looked forward to having their "own space"

in the future, highlighting that in some ways, it would be freeing not to have to accommodate others quite as often. As Vincent put it, the worst aspect of living at home was

just the... the lack of independence in the sense that I'm kind of – it's not like a spot-place that's mine, it's just a spot that's mine. Like I have my room but there's just like – there's always kind of like someone there and the fact that I kind of have to like take into account what they're doing

For these participants, living alone would allow them to fulfill desires that at present were sometimes sacrificed for the collective good; if they were living independently, possibilities would open to enjoy reading a book in the living room (Amber), walk around in their underwear (Adison, Amber), be less affected by the moods of others (Sylvia, Lois, Amber), express their own aesthetic in common areas (Sylvia, Keith), and not have to worry about noise levels in the household or disrupting others' sleep late at night (Kristine, Nina, Adison). In addition, Nina, Adison, and Kristine each said that their sleep-wake cycles or routines were somewhat different from their parents'; were they living on their own, they would be better able to sleep at the times they wanted. Interestingly, these participants did not seem to consider futures where accommodations towards neighbors or coresident partners might still be necessary. There was no one factor that united these participants in their desires for a space of their own, though six of these eight participants (Lois, Sylvia, Keith, Vincent, Amber, and Adison) said that they were fairly introverted, potentially signalling that these participants were especially sensitive and over-aroused by their environments (Deng & Wu, 2020).

4.2.6 Conclusion: Dwelling Peacefully (or Peacefully-Enough) with Others

Overall, this section highlights how a home is not only a shelter provided by parents, a dominion presided over by authorities, or a gathering point for the family collective; home is also a household with duties, values, and attitudes expected and required to the same degree for all members, independent of their respective titles, ranks, or relationships. As stated by Keith, "I guess to some extent we all recognize that we're just living in the same place. And kind of have to co-exist." Likewise, Kristine emphasized the common theme of conscientiousness required by such a situation of coresidence: "just cause you're here doesn't mean the house revolves around you now." In line with a centering of the "common" good, participants drew on discourses stressing rights and corresponding obligations – a discourse of mutual respect, or what Grey labelled "normal, like roommate respect."

First, participants highlighted the importance of distributing the burden of some household tasks across household members, especially those types of labor whose source was neutral or shared. Second, participants highlighted a shared right to use communal spaces (with a corresponding obligation not to personalize common spaces). Third, participants endorsed norms regarding the observation of quiet times, indicating shared needs to restore energy and focus attention in order to carry out various life projects, but most centrally to carry out their occupational roles as students and workers. Fourth, and related to the third, participants identified a common desire to access private space in order to retreat from social life and immerse oneself in the solitude, creature comforts, and self-affirming symbols of one's room. In a related way, a subset of participants brought up the need to respect one another's personal belongings, which were often located within private spaces. As a fifth theme within this section, participants described duties and rights to manage "bad moods" within the home, such that people sharing space would not unnecessarily contaminate one another with their personal states. Notably, "bad moods" implied emotional states perceived to be somewhat irrational and unrelated to the interpersonal relationships between household members. In that sense, these moods were described as being outside the responsibility of participants themselves. To contain such states, participants highlighted strategies to both monitor and respond to others' moods, and in some cases, also monitor and respond to their own moods. Beyond this, four participants stressed the importance of ignoring their inclinations to "take on" responsibility for the moods of others. Finally, in considering changes to themselves from their adolescent years to the present, all participants indicated a shift towards improved consideration and respect for others, which involved contributing their share, managing their inclinations to slack off, and refraining from over-burdening others (or themselves) with negativity.

This section, more than any other, surfaced a high level of similarity across participants. In addition to what I have described concerning shared conceptions of norms and obligations, some pragmatic circumstances may also be a factor at play. First, given that recruitment required participants to have lived with their parents for at least four months, it may be that many of the kinks of cohabiting with their parents had been worked out by this time, forming a balanced foundation of collective responsibilities and rights. Consider, for example, a young adult who might be unsuccessful in attaining a proper sleep, accessing a study space, using common spaces, or finding privacy within the home – such individuals may be most likely to find another living

situation, given that their basic needs for living would not be met. Second, it is possible that given the full-time occupations of participants and their parents (as students and/or workers), their needs for a home environment may have converged more easily than in other circumstances; notably, all 15 participants were working full-time (6/15) and/or were in school full-time (10/15) and virtually all of their coresident parents (25/27) were working full-time. For example, similar schedules might have made it easier to accommodate one another in terms of sharing the same quiet hours. From another angle, shared stories about work might have supported family members abilities to recognize and validate each other's household needs (e.g., to distribute household labor, to access privacy, to have a quiet space, to be free from each other's bad moods). Indeed, researchers have found that adult children's status transitions are related to the degree of conflict they experience with coresident parents: relationships are judged less conflictual when coresident children are enrolled in school, employed, and financially independent versus when they occupy none of those statuses (Aquilino & Supple, 1991; Newman, 2012; Ward & Spitze, 2007). Perhaps such dynamics relate not only to parents' satisfaction with their child's development, but also to a compatibility and/or mutual understanding of lifestyles.

4.3 Parents as Friends

In prior work examining shared living arrangements between parents and adult children, the topic of friendship has occasionally been examined. In a peripheral way, survey and interview-based studies have noted that parents and young adults derive from this living situation a sense of "companionship" or "friendship" (Abetz & Romo, 2021; Mitchell, 1998, 2004; Mitchell & Lovegreen, 2009; West & Lewis, 2018). With more elaboration, qualitative work from Arnett (2006) and Strom and Strom (2005) has described how friendship – or a relationship that is friendship-like – can exist between parents and young adult children (in Strom and Strom's case among young adults who coreside with parents and in Arnett's case, among "emerging adults" in general). These accounts converge in defining features of such a budding friendship, though Arnett (2006) frames them from the child's perspective and Strom and Strom (2005) frame them from the parent's perspective. Both emphasize how parents and children's understandings of one another become more focused on each other as individuals: they "learn to see each other as persons" (Arnett, 2006) – or parents "get[] to know children as grownups" (Strom & Strom, 2005, p. 527). Arnett (2006) claims that they talk about a greater variety of

subjects and do so more openly, while Strom and Strom (2005) highlight parents “exploring their [children’s] goals, values, and concerns as individuals” (Strom & Strom, 2005, p. 527). In both accounts, social hierarchy is viewed as intersecting with friendship. For his part, Arnett (2006) repeatedly pairs friendship with the accomplishment of a “near-equals” relationship between parents and children. For their part, Strom and Strom (2005) state that when a relationship of hierarchical authority is “augmented with greater friendship,” it can lead to a mutually supportive relationship where “both parties are more inclined to look to one another for advice” (p.527). Further, Strom and Strom (2005) state that the exercise of authoritative judgment can “shut down conversation” (p. 527) and force parents to “forfeit the role of confidante” (p. 527).

These descriptions spur questions about friendship between parents and coresident young adult children. What, precisely, does it mean to know a parent “as a person”? Within which practical contexts, activities, or conversations do parents and children extend their understanding of another “as people”? Are all friend-like interactions positive? What are the limits of friendship between parents and young adult children and how are those limits evaluated?

To explore these questions, I will be drawing on Aristotle’s conception of friendship. Among varied interpretations of his treatise on this topic, I have chosen to use Thomas’ (1987) account because it distinguishes friendship-based interactions from interactions that are highly structured according to social roles – a contrast that was central to participants’ constructions of friendship with their parents.

Let me offer some context to begin with. Thomas (1987) focuses on what he terms “companion friendship,” which is his interpretation of Aristotle’s notion of “virtue friendship.” Virtue friendships are one of three types of friendship identified by Aristotle, where each type centers on some form of reciprocity – reciprocity having a key function in human life, given our incapacity as individuals to attain all that we require (Ricoeur, 1990/1992, citing Aristotle). Besides virtue friendships, two other types of friendship are identified by Aristotle: friendships motivated by pleasure and friendships motivated by utility. Both of these types are depicted as more transitory and unstable compared to virtue friendships, which are rarer and uniquely “provid[e] the very form and mode of life within which an agent can best realize her virtue and achieve happiness” (Sherman, 1987, p. 595).

While reciprocal pleasure and utility do appear in my participants’ discourses (and will be discussed), Thomas’ (1987) three features of companion friendship best illuminate young

adults' constructions of the nature and limits of their friendships with coresident parents. The first feature of companion friendships is that they involve choice. Not unlike Turner's (1969) distinction between anti-structure and structure, Thomas (1987) argues that social interactions vary in the extent to which they are governed by social roles. He draws on Erving Goffman's sociological work to define a role as "a pattern of behavior that is prescribed (expected or demanded) in a given social relationship" (Wegner & Vallacher, 1980, p. 23, as cited by Thomas, 1987, p. 235). On one end of the spectrum are interactions maximally structured by social roles; as examples, Thomas (1987) offers the highly codified protocols for interaction between heads of states. On the other end of the spectrum are interactions minimally structured by social roles. It is on this end of the spectrum that Thomas (1987) locates the bonds of romantic partners and companion friends. Minimally structured relationships, he points out, tend to be rare:

we have every reason to believe that there are very few people with whom we could interact in this way. For minimally structured interaction will be harmonious only if the parties involved are sufficiently attuned to the way in which each other views and interacts with the world. Only the most self-centered of individuals could assume that most people are so attuned to him. Successfully minimally structured interaction requires a shared conception of the good. (p. 220)

Thomas (1987) is quick to point out that in speaking of "choice" he does not mean that we choose friends in the same way that we pick out an outfit; rather, friendships are experienced as "something which happens to us" (p. 220). The possibility of companion friendship often catches us by surprise, revealing itself when a story told, a fact revealed, or an action performed triggers self-reflection or curiosity about the other person (Thomas, 1987). In these moments, despite the knowledge that most interactions are highly structured, people detect an opening for a bond that could transcend role-based interaction (Thomas, 1987).

Thomas' (1987) second feature of companion friendship extends upon the first: that no one friend feels entitled to make authoritative judgments of the other. This is not to say that friends do not influence or judge one another; it merely implies that one person does not presume to hold superior authority over the other. As a contrast to this dynamic, Thomas (1987) offers the situation of parents and children early on in life. Although children have some wherewithal to determine for themselves their own good, generally, society considers parents to have "justified

authority over their children” (p. 222).⁴⁵ Thomas (1987) highlights that because of this imbalance, it is rare for parents and children to ever become true companion friends:

Parents generally take this presumption for granted; children spend a lifetime calling it into question. Even after a child becomes an adult and has acquired a defensible version of his own good, this presumption tends to linger on the part of the child's parents. Consequently, the bond of trust that is indispensable to deep friendships is rarely formed. (p. 222)

In a companion friendship, by contrast, mutual self-disclosure is encouraged by the absence of a presumed relationship of authority (Thomas, 1987). Again, this is not to say that friends do not influence one another's actions or beliefs; it is to say that within the realm of friendship, the mechanism of influence is self-understanding made possible through mutual and reciprocal self-disclosure – a mechanism distinct from coercion, persuasion, or trust in legitimate authority (Arendt, 1961; Thomas, 1987).

The third feature of companion friendship is mutual trust, which is “cemented by voluntary self-disclosure” (Thomas, 1987, p. 223). To bring precision to this topic of self-disclosure, Thomas distinguishes between two types of information about ourselves: public information and private (or intimate) information. According to Thomas (1987), public information can be obtained by observing a person's patterns of behavior, whereas private information is that information that “matters considerably to us” (p. 223) and that is kept more guarded. Chief among this information are our motivations for our actions (Thomas, 1987). By going beyond the “outlines” of one another's lives, choosing to spend time with each other, and gaining access to each other's ways of relating to their actions, contexts, and beliefs, friends gain a “commanding perspective” of one another's lives that enables them to accept each other's advice and support each other's moral flourishing (Thomas, 1987, p. 227). To return to an earlier theme, by seeking to spend their time together, friends also observe each other's expressions of themselves within a range of social situations and roles and this, too, can contribute to a deep, complex, and non-reductionist understanding of each other (Thomas, 1987). In sum, friendship

⁴⁵ The legitimate authority of the parent, here, is connected to the concept of moral agency on the part of the child. As has been discussed by philosophers of morality and ethics – as well as legal scholars of parenthood – a moral agent is one who “is competent and in possession of the relevant actualized capacities that enable us to attribute moral responsibility to the agent for her actions” (Austin, 2007, pp. 38-9).

as a dialogue of first-person perspectives implies a quality of openness (Mattingly, 2014; Throop, 2014).

Together, the features of minimally-structured interaction, mutual trust, and absence of hierarchical authority raise new questions about friendship within the bonds of parents and adult children who coreside. For example, it remains to be seen which contexts permit minimally-structured interactions and personal disclosure and what these types of interactions mean to coresident young adults. There is also the question of whether participants who feel the least judged in their relationships with their parents are also the most likely to experience a friend-like relationship with them. And finally, there is the possibility to explore friendship as a bond cultivated over time through personal self-disclosure: where are parents and children within this process and if they are not yet true companion friends with their parents, do they aspire to have this type of relationship?

4.3.1 Cultivating Companionship

Before examining the characteristics of participants' parent-child friendships in the present, let me first put friendship into temporal context. Of the 27 parent-child pairs, 23 of these relationships were depicted as becoming more intimate between the end of adolescence and the present; three were described as becoming more distant, and one was described as remaining more or less the same, neither closer nor more distant. This is not to say that 23 parent-child pairs each achieved the companionate friendship described by Thomas (1987), but rather to say that the dominant trend was towards a more open and intimate type of bond.

The group whose bonds had grown more intimate over time described this shift through spatial metaphors, references to an emergent "friendship," and acknowledgments of increasing willingness to spend time with their parents. As anticipated by Lakoff and Johnson (1980/2003), spatial, channel-like, and volumetric metaphors of becoming "closer," becoming more "open," or connecting in a "deeper" way symbolized bonds that had increased in communicativeness and reciprocal effect. For instance, Vincent described that he and his mom had gotten "closer for sure" referring to "the more open-ness and kinda more myself, more willing to engage a bit, yeah. From – from high school to now yeah it would be kind of a – not black and white, grey to white kinda thing." Several participants also explicitly referred to friendship-like relations emerging, making statements that "we're more friends now" (Sylvia), "my dad's a little more, just my friend now . . . my mom's kind of similar" (Keith), and "my parents have kind of

become like my friends” (Molly). Increasingly voluntary and pleasurable bonds with their parents were also described, echoing Laura’s comment that “I like hanging out with them. They’re fun. So, I think that’s probably the biggest change.”

Not all of these participants explained the mechanisms triggering such shifts, but among those that did, four changes were noted, chief among them the relaxation of parental authority (mentioned by 8/15 participants, in relation to 12 parents). For example, Kristine described “maybe now we’re closer because they don’t have to parent me as much, where we can be more friends, and not so much mother daughter, father daughter.” Similarly, Sylvia noted that with her mom not “scolding” her anymore, “we’re more friends now” and Iris stressed that her mother had “transitioned I think from a parental mentor figure, ah, into a friend.” As described by some of these participants (5/8), self-expression was more possible now that they were not subject to their parents’ scrutiny to the same degree. Whereas in the past, these participants were at least somewhat reluctant to tell their parents about their activities or opinions, as they transitioned to adulthood, they no longer felt it necessary to conceal as certain dimensions of their lives, citing as examples their partying (Molly, Kristine), their whereabouts (Jane, Vincent), or their romantic relationships (Amber). Jane, Vincent, and Nina also reported that as they matured, it became easier to relate to their parents, which also created closeness. Nina identified this as a unique benefit of living at home as an adult:

as a teenager when you’re living with your parents you don’t think the same and you’re not as developed as a person and it’s kind of almost a missed opportunity not to be that close with your parents as an adult.

In sum, these participants felt that gaining more equal footing with their parents allowed them to relate better, reveal more dimensions of themselves, and enjoy the time they spent together.

There were three other mechanisms of change participants interpreted as fostering more friendship-like relationships. First, Kristine, Laura and Walter felt that it had become more acceptable for them to spend time with their parents now compared to in their late teenage years. Laura, for instance, said that in the past it might have been somewhat “embarrassing to do something with you or I don’t want to do because you’re my mom.” She elaborated:

hanging out with your parents, like... wasn’t cool. Now it’s like, “oh! I’d rather go out and hang out with you” but. Or like, be like, “oh! What’re you doing this weekend? Do you guys want to do something?” more than when I was in high school.

Whereas parents had formerly been othered – as part of an out-group with whom one ought to not fraternize – in the present, participants no longer defined themselves and their parents in these terms.

As a second mechanism, Keith and Amber brought up a converging of interests with their fathers, with Amber highlighting the role played by weekly yoga sessions and Keith describing a shared geekiness with his dad. Keith described their mutual attraction, which developed out of their shared activities and interests:

we have a lot of the same interests. I've gotten a little geekier, so he's more into – well he's always been a geek, but I've got a little more into what he's into. He's gotten a little more into what I'm into. He doesn't – he doesn't play much music, but he is interested in what I'm doing, and he'll help me with – like if something's wrong electronic wise, he'll know how to fix it and stuff. So we just have a lot of the same hobbies now.

And finally, four participants (Laura, Nina, Iris, and Vincent) underscored how spending more time with their parents had allowed them to know and appreciate their parents' experiences, permitting them the perspective of someone who is to be respected (Mattingly, 2014) that could serve as a basis for trust and intimacy. Vincent summarized this point by suggesting that as a principle “when two people live together after a while they end up liking each other no matter what basically.” When I questioned him on this premise, asking whether it was always true, he qualified this by saying that “Or at least become – kinda see each other's side of things too or whatever?” This comment was echoed in Nina, Laura, and Iris' views that living with their parents (or, specifically their mothers, in Iris and Nina's cases) had allowed them to acquire a closer, more intimate relationship with them. As Laura said, “I feel that, if I did move out when I was eighteen, like, I probably wouldn't have been as close or developed the relationship and appreciation that I have now?”

There were three sets of parents and children described as becoming more distant over time – Lois and her mother, Nina and her father, and Adison and her mother. In each case, this distancing process involved less dialogue over time, for instance, with Lois saying that she and her mother “used to talk quite a lot” but now “we don't talk a whole lot anymore.” Using the same spatial metaphors mentioned earlier, these participants also reported becoming “not as close” with their parent (Adison, Nina) or in Lois' case, saying that her mom “doesn't seem to want to be around me right now.”

Explanations for this estrangement varied somewhat by participant. In Adison and Nina's cases, their distancing was largely related to the presumption of personal authority, with Nina's father exercising authoritative judgment over her and Adison's mother shutting down dialogue with others more generally. Nina said that since her father had expressed his deep concern with her path in life, "after that we weren't as close." It seemed that this honest but painful exchange (which I described in Chapter 3) made it difficult for Nina and her father to trust and communicate with one another. Adison, by contrast, spoke about her mother increasingly blaming her issues on others, never seeing herself as responsible: as she put it, "Nothing's ever her fault. So she just kind of...blames...anyone and everyone else." Adison went on to say that it was tiring when her mother could not see things from anyone else's perspective and "so it gets a bit more difficult to talk to her about certain things so we just don't I guess." In contrast to Nina's depiction of her father, Adison saw her mother's closedmindedness as generalized to many of her close relationships, compromising her social life overall. This made it harder for Adison to maintain boundaries:

I don't want to completely cut her off in that because she literally doesn't really have anyone else. . . . as she's gotten older and she's gotten more bitter and she's gotten more negative... I feel like she's pushed people away. But she doesn't realize that she has, and so then she blames it on everybody else."

In that sense, both Adison and Nina had experienced their parents' struggles to engage in dialogue, whether due to their parents' inability to see and validate their perspective (Nina) or other people's perspectives in general (Adison). In affirming their own authority, these parents might have been motivated by good reasons (e.g., to protect the child or to affirm their own views), but in doing so, they sacrificed the kind of trust necessary to the formation and sustenance of friendship.

Whereas Adison and Nina had grown apart from their parents in a way that intersected more with dimensions of authority, Lois' distance from her mother connected to the erosion of trust within their gift-giving system. Rather than repaying her mom back for a loan she provided, Lois had been procrastinating and had even been buying "useless things" in the meantime. Lois struggled to take the initiative to pay back her mother and felt irresponsible for making frivolous purchases instead. Her actions might have been interpreted both as representing an absence of

gratitude (toward her mother as a provider of support) and as an inability to reciprocate (toward her mother as a friend).

Finally, Lois and Nina also brought up diverging interests in their discussions about the parents from whom they had become distant, though this mechanism of change did not appear to have the same magnitude as the obstacles related to authority and gift-giving. Lois reported that she had become more interested in crafting over time and that her mother had become more interested in gaming, and the activities they used to share fell by the wayside. Nina, meanwhile, observed that she and her dad used to share many niche interests, but she felt her dad had changed over time, becoming a person she could not relate to as well:

when I was younger he was like guitar and the Smiths and Pixies and, uh:: like he listened to Nirvana before any of my friends did. Like he's just like kind of super cool guy. Um, indie films all the time. Like it was—he—I grew up watching South Park with him and like just weird stuff like that. Versus now...he's more into like cars and shit. And I'm just like, "Wha:::t? What happened to you man?" Like I – I never expected that he would ever drive a truck and he has a truck. Like he's—I thought he would have like some old vintage kind of cool car. That's if he would have not changed so drastically that's would have happened. 'Cause I remember him talking about that. And then all of a sudden he has a truck and he's watching the Roughriders and I'm like, "What happened to you?" And I just like can't. I just like w- that's not me.

In the past, she and her father appeared to be bonded through their shared tastes in entertainment, art, and aesthetics. Her present declarations that "I just like can't" and "that's not me" showed a sense of disaffiliation as her father became attracted to other symbols and stories to express and discover himself. Such changes did not appear to be the key mechanism of their distancing over time, but growth in different directions might have compounded a lack of mutual understanding already at play.

The remaining parent-child pair, Walter and his mom's boyfriend (Ron), was represented as staying more or less the same in terms of personal intimacy over time. Although Walter had accepted Ron into the family (for the sake of his mom) he had made no efforts (and was not receiving efforts) to develop a more voluntary and personal relationship with him. As Walter put it, "it's pretty much stayed the same for the past five years." There seemed to be some level of discomfort in developing any sort of personal relationship with Ron, with Walter saying that it

would be “weird.” Beyond this, I had little data to help interpret the lack of developing intimacy within this relationship. It may be that while Walter trusted Ron enough to be a part of the family, their interactions had remained highly structured with limited opportunities for self-revealing or mutually pleasurable activities that would involve them both. Supporting this interpretation, when I asked Walter to describe Ron’s role within the family dynamic, he reported in a matter-of-fact way that “He plays the role as my mom's boyfriend. There’s really nothing else.” As an alternative interpretation, we could say that Walter and Ron had a friendship of mutual utility, where their allied support of Walter’s mother was the central motive for relating to one another. Finally, greater analysis of Walter’s relationship to his biological father (and mother’s ex-husband) might have supported a more solid interpretation of persistent distance between Walter and his mother’s partner.

In summary, the majority of participants located their present parent-child relationships against a background of emerging openness – an openness that intersected with more equal footing, shared interests, and time spent together. In the cases where companionship had declined over time, it was seen as related to the persistence (or even increase) of authoritative judgment, and to a lesser extent, to a divergence of interests or erosion of trust.

4.3.2 Choosing to Spend Time Together

Within the present, choice was featured in most participants’ discourses about spending time with their parents; of the 27 parent-child pairs, 23 were described (by 14 participants) as involving mutual personal interests that transcended their obligations within the family and household. For the other four relationships, preferences to spend time together were not as evident and interactions seemed to be more defined by familial social roles (these cases will be addressed at the end of the section).

One of the clearest and most interesting expressions regarding the dimension of choice came from Grey and Keith, who used a thought experiment to contemplate their bonds outside of the family context. Keith and his father’s interests had converged over time and he now felt that “if I were to just meet my parents, I’d say I’d actually be friends with my dad.” Grey mused on the same topic, but with some additional detail:

G: when I was talking to my boss, I was explaining to him about the relationship I have with my mom, and then he's just like, “I could never live with my parents.” And I think a lot of people don't – maybe would live with their parents if they could. But he's just like,

“I can’t -,” he’s like, “small doses. I can only take them in small doses.” And so it’s a personality thing too.

KM: Yeah, yeah, yeah.

G: Like there’s an obvious conflict in them getting along. Like, they wouldn’t be friends if they weren’t relatives, you know. I think me and my mom would be friends. ((laughs))

Grey’s contrast between tolerating “small doses” of a parent and being “friends” suggests that friends (like her and her mother) are people inclined to spend time together. With the removal of institutional bonds and structured interactions – but a preservation of the individuals in question – Grey and Keith’s thought experiment identifies a free and mutual attraction between themselves and their parent. It is perhaps also worth mentioning that at other points in the interview, both participants referred to their parents as their companions, with Grey affirming that her mom was her “closest relationship” and Keith stating that he was “friends with” his dad.

Affirmations of choosing to spend time with each other were also offered by participants who discussed how activities and conversations with parents allowed them to share “common ground” (Amber), something “in common” (Sylvia), a “common connection” (Adison), something to “bond over” (Keith), “a way to connect” (Iris) or a “personal connection” (Jane). These remarks seemed to indicate sources of unity that were personal and at least partially distinct from the other connections they shared with their parents (i.e., within the caregiving relationship, the family as a shared support network, and the transmission of authority within a lineage). Often intersecting with discussions of what they had “in common” with their parents were comparisons of their, their parents’, and sometimes also their siblings’ personalities (as occurred in 7 participants’ descriptions). Intersections and oppositions between personalities within the family were then used to explain patterns of closeness and distance. Sylvia, for instance, said that her and her mom were closer than her and her father and shared “similar issues and personality traits I think ((laughs)) in some ways.” Bonding over what defined them as individuals was often implicitly or explicitly set apart from the sharing that occurred by virtue of sharing a family lineage or household. To illustrate this, consider again Sylvia, who shared interests and personality traits with her mother:

I think my mom and I like, have more in common, too? Um, so we share similar interests like pottery and like crafts and stuff like that. Um... and... hmm (3.0) what else? And

like yeah for the most part we like get along really well, ah, just disagreements on like, living together I think is like the biggest thing ((laughs))

As we will see later in this section, for this reason it was especially valuable for Sylvia to remove her mother from the house so they could enjoy each other over shared interests, not as “friends” from Sylvia’s perspective, but as “friendly.”

Finally, Laura reflected on how she related to her parents in a way that transcended her social position as a child and her parents’ social positions as parents:

KM: So what do you like most... about your relationship with each of your parents? Or if it’s the same thing for both of them?

L: U::m I think that it’s just like, not so much... you’re my parent. Like, it’s actually like, good to talk to them. Like, friends more like or... yeah. It’s a good sce- like, I like being close with them but it’s not like, in a weird, like – well I shouldn’t say weird, but ((KM laughs)). Like, I don’t know. You know, where it’s like (2) they – like, we treat each other like real people and not just like, you’re my mom, so I’m not going to hang out with yo::u. Like, yeah. So, I like that with them. And like, it’s fun to do things and like, I like travelling with them and like, so yeah.

KM: You enjoy their company.

L: Yeah! Yeah. It’s not like... yeah. It’s not like a strict, like (2) relationship like, mom/daughter or like, dad/daughter. Like, it’s more, I don’t know. Like, breaks those barriers, if that makes sense.

Describing her relationship with her parents as “breaking barriers” suggests a movement away from the maximally structured interactions highlighted by Thomas (1987). In his words, “a complete picture of a person is not to be had if our observations are limited to only one of the social roles which that individual occupies” (Thomas, 1987 p. 229). Her sense of knowing her parents as “people” highlights that Laura’s parents’ roles as parents are just one of the many ways that they perceive, experience, and act in the world. The ethical implications of this are hinted at in her remark about “treating” her parents in a way that recognized this complexity of parents as “real people” as opposed to one-dimensional beings. And lastly, in alluding to treating “each other” this way, Laura affirms a reciprocal recognition of her own status as a “real person,” revealing a foundation of reciprocity that is central to friendship of any sort.

As anticipated by Laura's quote, participants frequently gestured at parent-child friendship by describing the mutual pleasure and enjoyment these bonds provided. This dimension recalls Thomas' (1987) point that friends "seek to live together" and that "because they take delight in one another's company and in doing things together, they want to maximize the amount of time spent together" (p. 227). While it would be inaccurate to say that in every parent-child pair, young adults were literally trying to maximize the time they spent with a parent, it was clear that in most, initiative was being taken to get to know parents outside of more institutionalized, family-centered, or utility-based interactions. Participants (14/15) commonly mentioned the pleasure they and their parents took, for instance, in: going for walks; getting exercise; joking around; shopping; reading a book aloud; watching TV, movies, or YouTube videos; traveling together; building things together; or spontaneously spending the whole day together. More broadly, they referred to a general pleasure they felt in spending time with parents, stating for example: "I like to hang out with my parents" (Kristine), "my mom is very fun to hang out with" (Grey), "I really enjoy spending time with my mother" (Iris), "it's fun" (Laura), and "she's enjoyable" (Vincent). They also alluded to their parents' pleasure in spending time together, stating that "you're just there to have fun" (Vincent), "he enjoys it too" (Amber), and "I genuinely know that she does like us all being around" (Grey).

As another interesting consideration on the topic of seeking time together, we should recall that living at home was viewed as a temporary and circumstantial situation for most participants. As indicated in chapter 2, participants' motives for returning home or continuing to live at home centered on accessing support to promote specific aims related to finances, careers, pets, parenting, and travel. Coresidence was usually considered a temporary arrangement in the service of other goals; however, two participants held out the possibility that they might continue living with their parents for an indefinite period. Grey's mom and stepdad were looking at purchasing an acreage that could accommodate two houses, which Grey thought was "sweet" and was something she was "open to." At one point, she even stated that this was "the plan" and at another point that "I like living with my mom, and currently that will continue and we've talked about when they buy an acreage that me and Natasha will just go along." For her part, Iris was considering living with her mother if she could find employment in the city. She also mentioned that if her mom wanted to relocate to another city to live with her, she "wouldn't have any problems" with her mom doing so. In both cases, it seems likely that strong relationships

with their mothers – with Iris describing her mother as “my best friend” and Grey describing her as “my closest relationship” – partially shaped their openness toward sharing a future together.

Within the 23 parent-child bonds that were described as friendships or friendship-like, participants still pointed to frontiers within these bonds. First, both participants and their parents had other priorities and pre-occupations that limited the amount of time they spent developing their personal relationship (described by 12 participants in relation to 19 parents). As was the case with some family rituals, work, school, and study schedules meant that parents’ and children’s time together was limited by external commitments. As Vincent put it, “we’re kinda in our routines.” For participants who had a romantic partner they saw frequently (8/15 participants) those visits also limited their interactions with their parents. In reference to these 23 dyads, limits on time spent together were seen as a fact of life as opposed to being viewed negatively. The only instances where participants did share some concern was if their parent was occupying themselves too much with a single activity that eclipsed all others, as was the case with Sylvia’s dad being “kind of a workaholic” and Kristine’s mom spending a lot of time in the garage smoking, missing out on some moments of “talking” and “connecting” with the family.

The second type of limit described in relation to these parents and children who enjoyed spending time together related to differences of interest (noted by 10/14 participants and in relation to 16 parents). Several participants (Keith, Sylvia, Adison, Molly, and Vincent) mentioned unshared hobbies or interests with their parents, including hunting, travel, girly things, live theater, or sports. Participants also mentioned activities that they and their parent liked but with different levels of enthusiasm. For example, while Kristine enjoyed going for nature walks with her dad as a way to “hang out,” she had certain reservations about this activity: “going out into the field to get ticks and bugs, like, that's just not me . . . I will not get a tick, like, I will scream.”

Finally, some participants (Kristine, Iris, Keith, and Nina) mentioned sharing activities with their parents but diverging in how to carry that activity out. For instance, Kristine’s mom preferred to spend more time socializing when they went shopping together; Keith and Nina and each of their mothers liked watching movies but had different tastes; and Iris and her mother both liked biking but preferred different styles. To illustrate, take this last example from Iris:

I: she has a lot more power than I have but she doesn’t have the speed or the stamina that I have, so my preferred length of bike is much different from hers and the terrain that I

like is much different than her, she really likes short steep hills? I like the long slow inclines. She wants to bike on paths, I want to bike on the road wherever it's possible, so it's just, our biking styles are not very – not really compatible.

KM: Mmhmm.

I: So I've started to avoid that and I think she's avoiding it as well, so that's nice, we're mutually – in a mutual avoidance situation.

Such differences of personal taste, interest, or style were not judged negatively, nor did they spur wishes for personal change or change from the other person. Instead, it seemed that such differences or limits in “overlaps” (Vincent) were taken as respecting one another's individuality. Indeed, such mutual respect is another dimension of friendship invoked in many interpretations of Aristotle, notably in those that consider friendship a dialogue of first-person perspectives (Mattingly, 2014). Frank (2010) offers some insight about how dialogue requires both similarity and difference. He writes:

Understanding either a text or another person hangs between two principles: no two people's horizons ever overlap entirely, but neither do these horizons completely diverge. Dialogue requires difference, or else people would have nothing to say to each other. Dialogue also requires similarity, or else people would have no basis for understanding what others say. (p. 94)

In other words, personal difference does not block dialogue; it can support it so long as there is also sufficient mutual understanding to negotiate that difference. Like in Iris' statement, it was fully possible to be friends and also be in a “a mutual avoidance situation” acceptable to all parties.

I have spent most of this section describing those 23 parent-child dyads that aligned with Thomas' (1987) assertion of choice as a key feature of friendship. The other four parent-child pairs did not describe having optative or personal bonds with their parents (Lois and her mother, Nina and her father, Amber and her mother, and Walter and his mom's boyfriend). In none of these cases did participants describe choosing to spending time with the parent (or mother's partner) and for various reasons. Walter did not actively seek to spend time with his mother's boyfriend since he felt it would be weird. Amber, Nina, and Lois offered explanations based on divergent interests and a parent's absorption in one singular activity or occupation. Each described this parent as focusing on one activity that took precedence over most others, whether

it was gaming (Lois' mother), golf (Amber's mother), or work (Nina's dad). In addition, all three felt that they had different interests and identities than these parents, with Amber reporting with respect to her mother that "we are such different people" and Lois noting with respect to hers that "we have different interests." While differences of identity could potentially lend to an interesting dynamic, in this case, such differences were used to explain both a lack of intimacy and a lack of mutual understanding. As noted previously, Nina felt that she and her father formerly had a foundation of similar interests but that their identities had diverged over time, with Nina feeling as though her dad had become "a lot more...kind of mainstream."

Representing her and her father's relationship by their familial roles, Nina reversed the conclusion of Grey and Keith's earlier thought experiment, noting that if she was not currently living at home, "I would barely talk to my dad probably. Besides like going to the lake and stuff." Given that trips to the lake were family activities – and Nina and her father no longer did their one-on-one activities at the lake – this comment underscores the frailty of their personal relationship in the present time.

4.3.3 "Being Yourself" with Parents

Besides spending time with their parents out of choice and pleasure, many participants expressed a trust and freeness in their parent-child interactions, rarely claiming a deep level of reciprocal, voluntary self-disclosure, but showing signs of a budding trust. I examined topics of trust and self-disclosure on the participants' parts by asking participants about "the person" they could be around their parents compared to in other contexts and by asking about the topics they could or could not discuss with their parents. Participants' responses to these questions tended to be correlated, and as such, I will discuss these clusters of responses in turn, beginning with participants who described being more open and comfortable interacting with their parents.

With respect to the question about who they could be in different contexts, 12 participants (with respect to 22 parents) emphasized their comfortableness being themselves around their parents. They clarified this in two ways. First, all 12 of these participants stated that in many ways, they acted the same with their parents as they would with their friends, being as "vocal" or outspoken (Kristine, Adison, Jane), "swearing" just as much (Kristine, Walter, Sylvia, Adison), being as talkative (Ria), as "comfortable" (Grey, Walter, Ria, Laura, Molly), as able to voice disagreement (Ria, Iris, Adison), and as able to joke around like friends, whether in terms of telling "off-color" jokes (Keith) or through "sarcasm" (Vincent, Sylvia). Interestingly, both

Molly and Adison connected this constancy of self-expression to a growth of self-esteem. As Molly described, “I’ve opened up because I’m just comfortable and I can be who I am.” Likewise, Adison implied that being the same person across social situations reflected a level of self-understanding and acceptance that she had developed over time: “I used to be the type of person that was different depending on who I was around because I wanted to emulate that reflection of the group I was with. But then it’s like, ‘Then who are you really?’”

While these twelve participants focused on similarities between their self-expression with friends and parents, some acknowledged minor variations – or as Iris put it, “some subtle differences, small differences.” Kristine and Grey both refrained from swearing in front of one of their parents; Adison said that she would show “a different level of respect” towards her parents; Sylvia and Vincent said she might not tell as inappropriate jokes or be as sarcastic; Vincent mentioned that he tended to be more “loud and boisterous” with his friends (especially after a few drinks); and Keith said he would be “quieter” because he would have more to “catch up” on with friends. These nuances mainly pointed to a preservation of deferential respect within parent-child interactions (whether by habit or intention was unclear), and Keith’s remark added that different rhythms of interaction created different social dynamics.

As I have described, 12 participants made statements that they were similar with their parents as they were with friends. Out of these 12, 11 also reported that they had to put on a more public face at work or school than with their parents.⁴⁶ Addressing these contexts, participants referred to “fak[ing] it” on some days (Molly), acting in a “more reserved” fashion (Sylvia), keeping their distance (Jane, Walter, Ria, Vincent), mustering up the energy to be “positive, cheerful and humorous” (Iris), and trying to be “sociable” (Iris), “normal” (Grey), “professional” (Vincent), or not “awkward” (Ria). By contrast, they implied that with their parents, performance was less necessary. With their parents, they felt generally more comfortable, able to be “tired” (Molly), introverted (Walter, Iris, Grey), casual (Vincent), whiny (Iris), or chatty (Jane).

Grey, Jane, and Molly provided further details that highlighted the stakes of performance within the workplace setting. First, Jane explained that when she was with her parents, she was more sociable because “they are so used to me like they see me – they know most things about

⁴⁶ Kristine said she would be the same with her parents as with her boss “‘Cause it’s just me and my boss” potentially implying that, without complex social organization, their interactions were less formal than would be typical for most employees and employers.

me, like in terms of my good and my bad so maybe that's why I talk more with them." In brief, Jane highlighted her parents' acceptance of her based on an intimate understanding of her various dimensions, good and bad. Offering helpful insight into social contexts that may not, by comparison, offer such acceptance, Grey explained how within work contexts she felt expected to suppress some of her uniqueness (at least initially and/or generally):

cause I am a total introvert, and I don't fully believe in like, "the system" as it is. And so I have like, my work persona, like "work Grey." And so before I started this job, I was like, "who is this Alex going to be?" You know? "I can be whoever I want, this is a whole new job, new people." . . . if I get to know someone, I can show bits and pieces of my self. But you like, test it out, and see how it goes, and see how the response is. But if it's not good, then you just go back to "work Grey."

I asked Grey about the consequences of failing to perform this "work Grey" and she responded: "Like I'm...strange, a little bit. Not that I'm strange, it's just that...I've found my people? And they're not there. Like I have met like, good friends, and I can just like, be myself and say weird things, and they'll get it." Considering that Grey described her mother as her "closest relationship," we could infer that her mother might have counted as one of those people who "get it" – who would not evaluate her through conventional social expectations about what was strange or normal (Thomas, 1987). Somewhat similarly, Molly described keeping up a public persona on at work, which she contrasted with her social comfortableness at home:

at home I'm really relaxed and I try to be myself. Whereas like, at work, even if I'm having a bad day, I can't even show that. Like, I just have to stay positive. So at work I have this reputation that I'm really like, smiley. ((laughs)) And it's like, "that's awesome!" But like, I'm really not like that. . . . I feel like I'm just kind of like (2) like building my own image at work. Like, even though I'm not like that.

This daily performance took its toll on Molly, who was now trying to distance herself from the persona she had created and remarked that "it's just hard being someone you're not." Although it is true that participants' interactions with their parents were certainly shaped by social role expectations, adhering to these expectations occurred more easily and readily than adhering to social protocols within work and school settings. Combined with participants' affirmations that

they could be similar with parents as with friends, these 12 participants offered evidence that their interactions with their parents generally accommodated their individuality.⁴⁷

Participants who said that they could be themselves with their parents also tended to be the same individuals who reported that they could talk to their parents openly and about a range of subjects (10/12, with respect to 17 parents). They made remarks that they could speak to these parents about “anything” (Ria, Molly), “mostly everything,” (Walter) “pretty much everything” (Jane, Sylvia), “private things” (Adison), and “things in...of any variety” (Adison). Several also echoed Kristine’s allusion to their interactions as occurring over an open channel: “we’re so open, I think, there’s nothing I wouldn’t tell them.” While most focused on their own willingness to share information with their parents, a handful also identified their parents’ reciprocal freedom to talk to them about anything. As Ria reported, “in my family like I can express and they can express too.” Iris similarly described:

I would share most things with her and I suspect that she shares most things with me. There aren’t really any subjects that are taboo, uh, it’s not like we don’t talk about politics or uh, if we disagree about something we can’t talk about it.

In sum, these participants characterized their parent-child bonds as permitting open dialogue. This is not to say that all participants engaged in deep and personal self-disclosure with their parents (or vice versa), but some did, as we will see.⁴⁸

Paralleling participants’ views that, over time, voluntary and communicative bonds were made possible through a relaxation of authority, participants’ views of openness in the present were also related to their perceptions of being free of illegitimate judgment. Perceptions of parents as open-minded people who would not “judge you” (Kristine), who would not “boss” them around (Jane), or who were not people to be “scared of” (Ria) figured into accounts of open

⁴⁷ To offer greater precision into these topics, it could have been helpful to ask participants about more specific types of friends or types of colleagues. Asking participants to compare their interactions with their “best” friends and their parents, for example might have delivered insights missed by my general reference to “friends.” In the future, these nuances could help to tease out more of the possibilities and limits of friendship within the parent-child context.

⁴⁸ Admittedly, fleshing out participants’ conversations with parents was challenging. When I asked about the nature of their conversations, participants sometimes responded vaguely, noting that they talked about “what’s going on” (Grey), “everything” (Jane), or “whatever” (Keith). At other moments, they asserted that there was no pattern governing the topics they covered, that they “always talk about something different” (Kristine) or “we don’t have like, specific topics we - like, ‘okay we gotta cover this, this, this - ,’ nah we just go and we talk.” (Walter). While some of my questions were successful in drawing out general perceptions of openness and trust, my approach was limited in exploring this topic, and as such I will address these limits in further detail in the Conclusion.

dialogue. Moreover, in referring to the free flow of information within their parent-child relationship, four participants expressed their openness by denying a fear that would motivate them to withhold information. They reported that they did not have to be “hesitant to tell [them] anything” (Ria), did not have to “hide anything” (Kristine, Jane, Molly), or could not think of a topic they were “hiding or not willing to discuss” (Laura). This is not to say that there were no limits or frontiers in their dialogues, or even to say that each of these dyads disclosed deeply private information about themselves to one another; rather, these comments merely highlighted a perception of openness and receptivity that could be accessed when and if participants wished to, even if some participants (or their parents) only occasionally took up that opportunity.

Beyond being able to talk openly with their parents, some of these participants additionally stated that they could offer their parents support or advice in their conversations, much like friends would do for one another. Several participants (6 female participants, with reference 6 mothers and 2 fathers) identified their roles in supporting their parents’ well-being through conversation, just as their parents did for them. For example, Kristine encouraged her mother to come “tell me things” to help her feel better during a bad day: “I’ll be like, ‘mom just talk about it, let it out.’ And then she’ll blab my ear off for ten, twenty minutes if that’s what she’s upset about, and then an hour later she’s fine.” Likewise, these participants noted that they and their parents would complain to each other about their work, study, family members, etc. In nearly all these dyads (7/8), mutual support appeared to be accessed regularly and initiated by both participants: Iris fit into this group, stating that “complaining is one of our chief occupations.” By contrast, Grey explained that even though she tended not initiate heart-to-heart conversations with her mom, she “loved” to have these kinds of deep conversations if they happened and seemed to express satisfaction in accommodating her mother’s “more open” communicative style while her mother respected her preference to be more private.

With reference a smaller number of parent-child relationships (5 female participants and 5 mothers), participants also identified reciprocal problem-solving and advice-giving. Iris and Ria made this point in general terms, with Iris saying that “Sometimes she’s a sounding board but I’m also a sounding board for her so it’s a bit of a quid-pro-quo” and Ria reporting that “We are our like, problem solvers like we do everything with each other, friends, problem solving, then like if she needs counselling then I give her advice, if I need counselling then she gives me advice.” As more specific examples, participants brought up shared and voluntary deliberations

to help the parent navigate parent-sibling interactions (Kristine), marital relationships (Ria), retirement decisions (Laura), workplace conflicts (Laura), and quitting smoking (Sylvia).

Sylvia's experience regarding her mother's quitting smoking provided an interesting example. She explained to me that when she was younger, she used to "nag" her parents to quit, but "realized it's not helpful, the best I can do is just try and support them." Importantly, by observing her parents' trials and failures, Sylvia had gained an understanding "that it's not as easy as being like, 'ok, I'm done,' like, I've seen my mom try and quit before and it was real bad." When her mom was complaining about being hoarse recently, Sylvia helped her mother into self-reflection, refraining from dismissing her mother's perspective or playing the judgmental nag:

S: I did kind of make my mom feel bad because she was complaining that she was hoarse? And like, I've noticed like when she – she has like a wheeze? That – it's really quiet but I can hear it when I'm talking to her and I'm like, "well, it's probably," like, "I'm not trying to be rude but it's probably cause you're smoking," and she's, "((hesitant noise))," ((laughs)) and then she went to the doctor and got the Champex -

KM: Yeah

S: ((laughs)) And I'm like, "well I didn't mean to be, like – but I'm just saying that's probably what it's from," and she's like, "well, probably from the dust at the shop, too"

KM: [Mmhmm]

S: [And I was like] "well, yeah, but I think it would help," you know, to quit.

On the surface, this exchange may not appear to be much, but Sylvia's comment that she made her mother "feel bad" suggests her causal role in triggering her mother's self-examination. Moreover, Sylvia's approach seemed to be effective in triggering her mother's renewed initiative toward a long-standing goal of quitting smoking. Sylvia felt happy to help her mother, demonstrating the joy Aristotle describes in supporting a friend's flourishing (Ricoeur, 1990/1992): "I was like, 'ok well that's cool,' like, 'good,' like, 'I'm glad you're on the path.'"

In summary, these scenarios of reciprocal influence through dialogue – while rarely surfacing in my interviews – featured moral dimensions of virtue friendships, where among these five mothers and five daughters, the exchange of dialogue was represented as influencing one another's perspectives and actions through self-examination. As Mattingly (2014) writes, in friendship

one is confronted not by an impartial judge (a sort of third person arbitrator) who demands justifications for one's actions. Rather, one encounters oneself and one's way of life in a questioning way through *conversation* with friends. (p. 90)

By inference, these participants must have held some "moral standing" with their mothers (Mattingly, 2014), underlining an emerging form of symmetry and opportunity for exercising moral agency within their parent-child relationship.

Although many of the participants who were comfortable being themselves with their parents also highlighted their open dialogues with their parents, Vincent, Keith, and Walter did not. Both Vincent and Keith identified themselves as preferring not to disclose private information to many people, limiting their disclosure to close-knit friends or siblings; their private natures likely factored into their comments about personal disclosure with parents. In addition, although Walter was comfortable being himself around his mother's boyfriend, at the same time, the two did not have a strong familiarity, which may be why he did not provide evidence of their open dialogue.

Whereas the previous twelve participants implied openness, authenticity, and even – in some cases – reciprocal influence in their parent-child bonds, Lois, Amber, and Nina framed their parent-child relationships as more distant, performative, and structured in nature. All three described their relationships with their parents (both of Amber's parents, both of Nina's parents, and Lois' single mother) as distant. As Amber said: "I always describe them as being distant and we're not very like close knit, um...despite my living with them for so long." Nina also stated that she was not "super close with my mom or dad" despite having "really good relationships with them" and Lois said that her mother had been giving her the "silent treatment for... who knows how long," pointing not just to the limits of their conversations but to a lack of communication more broadly. Whereas the previous 12 participants stressed similarities in expressing themselves with their friends and parents, these 3 participants placed more emphasis on the differences they perceived; moreover, none of the 3 identified a greater comfort being around their parents compared to interacting with colleagues or other students. Indeed, all three felt that they could be more outgoing and sociable with friends and at work than with their parents. Whereas Lois merely pointed out that she "talked more" with other people than with her mother, Nina and Amber provided some additional detail. Nina said that she was "more outgoing and intimate with my friends. Very like close relationships where we can talk about like literally

anything. And no—no holding back kind of relationships.” In addition, in her work environment, she still felt that she had “less filter than at home,” saying: “I keep it professional but also I’m a fairly open person.” Likewise, Amber identified that with friends and colleagues, “I’m different yeah like more outgoing, happy like I will have conversations with anyone, see how they’re doing, sit down, talk to them. And just be weird and crazy.” All three contrasted these candid selves with their more self-conscious and constricted expressions of themselves with their parents. Lois pointed to a rigid pattern of non-communication; Amber highlighted the highly formulaic nature of their discussions (“it’s just like this like monotone, no engaging conversation with them . . . it’s just like ‘Hi.’ ‘Bye.’ ‘How was your day.’”) and Nina said she had to use “a lot more filter” with her parents, since they were easily shocked by what she might say.

These participants shared some of the same obstacles to self-expression with the other participants, which I will discuss collectively in the next section. What I would point out, though, is that other participants were more likely to identify obstacles that stopped them from discussing one or two topics with their parents – for example, identifying judgments that made them reluctant to discuss politics or romantic relationships specifically. By contrast, Amber, Lois, and Nina showed a more global reluctance to express themselves in their relationships with their parents. In addition, the other participants – unlike Amber, Nina, and Lois – more often described limits felt to be inherent in their own disposition or temperament. By contrast, Amber, Lois, and Nina each would have preferred to share more of themselves with their parents. Indeed, Lois’ highest wish for her mother-daughter relationship was “To feel like I’d be able to talk to her.” Amber also expressed her hope that when she moved out, the distance might help to transform the relationship “I feel like it’s going to be a lot better and I think that we’ll have real conversations and show our emotion.” Nina looked forward to “getting closer” with her dad in the future, when she had “worked through” some issues. With her mother, Nina had accepted that she might be “a little bit too out there for her” but she nevertheless expressed a similar desire for intimacy: “I kinda wish I could tell my mom a little bit more. Like I wish I was a little bit closer with her in that way. But she’s just kind of a prude so ((laughs)) whatever.”

Every participant acknowledged limitations on what they would or would not discuss with their parents. Interestingly, these limits could hold positive, neutral, or negative significance. To begin with, a small number of comments revealed that participants’ withholding of information could be motivated out of care for their parent (as was described by Kristine,

Nina, Ria, and Vincent). Ria highlighted that her mother had started sewing clothing and that she did not think her mom was very good at it, but she quickly noted that “I don’t tell her [to] her face! ((laughs)).” Likewise, Kristine pointed out that when she was teasing her parents it was important not to take it too far and end up hurting their feelings. She explained:

you don’t be rude when you poke fun at somebody. Like, what’s an example. Like, “mom, you gained a little weight on your trip.” Like, she didn’t, but that’s not something you would say cause that’s gonna hurt her feelings, it’s gonna bring her down.

Vincent, for his part, said that he did not give his mother emotional advice because “I view things from more kinda like the rational, logical perspective so I usually don’t have that great of like emotional advice ((laughs)).” And Nina reported that she sometimes withheld some details from her past travels since she did not want to make her parents “feel guilty” about letting her get into some “kinda dangerous” situations when she was younger. Each of these scenarios highlights benevolent motivations for withholding of information – cases that are perhaps best interpreted by drawing on the philosopher Alain, who states that a sincere friend is prudent and tactful: rather than saying what immediately comes to mind – which could have negative consequences for their shared future – he tells a friend what can “awaken the best in him” (p. 233, translated from French).

Often, participants referred to the limits of their discussions in fairly neutral terms – in other words, without identifying a negative emotional motivation such as resentment or distrust. In these cases, participants simply pointed out the kinds of topics they did not tend to talk about with their parents or would prefer not to talk about with them. Several participants (8/15, with respect to 15 parents) said that they would not share certain personal struggles, such as mental health issues, relationship troubles, personal problems, etc. In many of these cases, participants identified themselves as being generally reserved, preferring to keep these matters to themselves. For example, when Grey was discussing how she tended not to bring up deep, personal issues with her mother, she clarified that it was “not because of my mom and I’s relationship, but just because the kind of person that I am.” As foreshadowed by the chapter on authority, many participants (7/15, with reference to 11 parents) also avoided talking about sex with their parents, pointing to a shared discomfort with discussing the topic. Partying was a subject Grey and Sylvia both would not give excessive details on, but in both cases, confirmed that they would not lie to their parents; they simply did not feel the need to tell their parents “every little thing that’s

happening” as Sylvia put it. Finally, Vincent, Laura, and Iris noted that “shop talk” (Iris), field-specific “ideas and concepts” (Vincent), contemporary LGBTQ concepts (Adison), and university courses (Laura) were matters they would not usually discuss with their mothers (Vincent, Iris, Adison) or father (Laura) because they did not share a common framework for discussion. As Vincent summed up: “you’re explaining it to her and it’s just over her head.” As a final point concerning non-moralized limits to disclosure, two participants pointed to the complementary ways that they could speak with each parent about different topics, with Laura saying that she bonded with her dad over sports and with her mom over fine arts. Similarly, Molly felt that “each parent, I have different topics with them, and it kind of... balances it.”

In rarer instances, the limits of discussion were clearly motivated by an avoidance of judgment, whether because the participant did not wish to be judged by their parent or because they did not want to become judgmental of their parents. Some participants identified moments in the past where their parent had been overly harsh in their opinions of their romantic life (Nina, Adison, Kristine), career path (Nina) or finances (Adison) which triggered participants’ guardedness. Like Sylvia and Grey, Keith also mentioned that he did not talk to his parents about “partying stuff,” but did so with a clearer concern about being judged, saying that his parents “Wouldn’t approve of it, I don’t really know what they would say. How disapproving they would be, I’m not very eager to find out.” Amber and Keith also described avoiding the topic of politics with their mothers, since they had conflicting values and they preferred not to become irritated or frustrated with their moms. Finally, Adison avoided talking to her father about tattoos, because, as she said, “he’s s:uper against them.” In these cases, parents and participants seemed to find themselves “sit[ting] in judgment upon one another” (Thomas, 1987, p. 222), which closed down dialogue and therefore posed obstacles for friendship, where self-understanding is gained through a dialogue of first-person perspectives (Mattingly, 2014; Thomas, 1987).

As a last obstacle to self-disclosure, Lois reported being reluctant to tell her mother information partially because her mother had breached her trust in the past. She described: “the thought of that scares me back to when I was a kid and y’know, her telling all our relatives about ho- well, obviously not about shaving legs. . . just in general, y’know, like, her going and telling everybody certain things.” This violation underlines the point that disclosure of private information, in and of itself, does not automatically build trust; rather, that information must be treated with the same “special regard” that friends have for one another (Thomas, 1987).

4.3.4 Seeing Parents' "Other" Sides

As participants spent time with their parents, they noticed, discovered, and experienced dimensions of their parents' selves and worlds that, in some way, transcended their social positions as parents. Participants felt that they were, as Adison put it, "getting to know" their parents "in a different way. Outside of like, the parent-child relationship a bit." Fourteen participants (referring to 24 of 27 parents) stated that they gained insights into their parents' personal character by spending time with them, whether through the exchange of conversation, shared activities, or observation of their parents in pursuit of what they enjoyed.

Some participants (6/15) reported deepening their knowledge of parents' identities in a general sense. They reported getting to know their parent "as a person" (Nina), "get[ting] to know them from a different perspective" (Molly), gaining access to their "cool opinions of things, even if they're different than mine" (Grey), and coming to understand "each other's side of things" (Vincent). Spending time with a parent allowed them to, as Kristine said, "learn something new or something different [about them] which is always good." These remarks pointed to participants' perceptions of their parents as complex people, non-reducible to their social positions as parents. Thomas (1987) highlights that interactions between companionate friends are "not defined by this or that set of social rules" (p. 219). While participants did relate to their parents by interpreting and acting on social rules, they suggested that they were in the process of gaining a more nuanced understanding of their parents' selves and worlds, which could permit them to interact in a way that was less defined by social roles. In the following sections, I highlight how participants gained awareness of their parents' vastness of identity as they observed their parents liberated from social responsibilities, as they witnessed their parents' pursuits of personal projects, and as they listened to stories about their parents' pasts.

Many participants (9/15, in reference to 14 parents) spoke about their parents expressing other sides of themselves when they shed their work, family, and household-related responsibilities and stresses. In these moments, participants got to see their parents "party like they're teenagers" (Kristine), "let her guard down" (Vincent), show their "weird" sides (Amber), become "a lot more playful" (Nina), or surface their "fun and funny" personality (Sylvia). Generally, these moments seemed to be more common when participants interacted with their parents in extraordinary spaces: outside of the home (e.g., on trips, out for dinner, shopping, on walks, etc.), when in the company of "goofy" individuals (Nina), when surrounded by

individuals who “lighten the mood a little bit” (Amber), or when parents were with their friends (including close-knit relatives, family friends, or childhood friends). In some participants’ descriptions (5/15), alcohol was valued for its ability to reduce inhibitions, loosen adherence to social roles, and promote self-disclosure between young adults and their parents. Grey for example noted that she and her stepdad had experienced “some bonding moments” initially spurred by drinking together: “sometimes you need that. For the initial bonding, and...yeah. We certainly can have like, good discussions. Not necessarily even having to be drunk.” While such explanations were not often forthcoming in my data, drinking, being with friends, and being in out-of-the-ordinary contexts may have promoted expressions of other selves by placing parents in enjoyable and/or comfortable settings, temporarily removing them from their assigned duties and obligations, reducing their self-consciousness, or calling on them to identify with old stories (e.g., with friends) or new stories (e.g., in watching TV or movies).⁴⁹

One illustrative example of this theme was provided by Sylvia, who underlined how escaping the ordinary helped nourish her personal relationship with her mom, given that her mom was often stressed out. Occasional shopping trips and lunches offered the two of them “free time” where they could talk but “there’s no... point to the conversation ((laughs)), it’s not like ‘k, this needs to happen, this needs to happen’ it’s just like talking because it’s fun or whatever.” I pressed Sylvia to explain why this was important:

For me it like, kinda makes me like her a little more? ((both laugh)). That sounds so bad but sometimes like at home, especially right now, like she gets so stressed out and just like freaked out and then she – it stresses me out? And then I don’t like her as much? ((laughs)) That sounds so bad, but, yeah, it’s like – and you know like the shop, too, being at the shop like there’s so much going on it’s like, “ugh” but this it’s just relaxed and is like more friendly I guess? . . . Cause she is, like and she’s fun and funny and all that but it’s just like when – especially the last few years like she’s been really stressed out and, with the house and with the business and just other stuff so like she hasn’t been as fun ((laughs))

⁴⁹ It is conceivable that in disinhibiting contexts, parents might express themselves in a way that participants would find disagreeable or off-putting. However, such dynamics virtually never appeared in my interviews save for some remarks made by Adison, who reported that when her dad drank, he could be quite charismatic and funny, but he could also get carried away in a way that was annoying: “he goes on and on like he’s the center of attention and he’s this great storyteller and I’m like, ‘ok, tone it down a bit. Like, it’s alright. Not everyone needs to know the story for the 8th time.’ And like, he changed it a bit and might have embellished, y’know? And... so I’m just like, ‘ok.’”

Sylvia's description provides an interesting variation of a discourse described by some other participants: that they had friends they would not want to live with. Along the same lines, Sylvia wanted a good personal relationship with her mother and it was more possible to do this when they shifted out of their household interaction mode, which Sylvia said "grates on me a little bit."

Getting to know a parent also involved gaining awareness and appreciation for their hobbies and interests – a topic that was discussed by nine participants in reference to 12 parents. The topic of "hobbies" intersected with parents' occupation of liminoid or out-of-the-ordinary time, if we conceptualize hobbies as investments of time and energy motivated primarily by personal satisfaction as opposed to external rewards (i.e., wages) or social status (Gelber, 1999; Turner, 1982). In line with this, when participants spoke about "interests" they referred to domains about which their parents had free rather than obligatory concern. Examples of these hobbies included everything from watching sports, to science fiction B-movies, to sewing, to preserving vegetables, to cooking. Remarks about these activities emphasized parents "liking," "loving," and "enjoying" them and often implicitly or explicitly highlighted the parent's focused attention and pleasure in pursuing them. Such concentrated attention was for example clear in Iris' description of her mother: "she's on Pinterest all the time looking at recipes. She falls asleep dreaming about what she's going to make next. Ah, so she very much enjoys cooking as a hobby." Similarly, Laura highlighted her parents' love of tending to their yard: "their yard is like both of their pride and joy. They love it and spend most of their time out there, but like, redoing furniture, stuff like that." Speaking about her dad, Kristine also pointed to similar themes: "I think he likes to go see his product, I guess in a sense. I mean, that makes him happy. Cause I mean, even me, like, if you start seeing things grow and sprout, it's an accomplishment. That's awesome." These quotes highlight participants' interpretations of their parents' intrinsic motivations, pointing to an inner life that was not necessarily disclosed through dialogue, but could be inferred through observation. These discourses therefore provide evidence that personal disclosure depends not just on the providing of personal information; it depends on an interaction between the expression of an inner life and another's perception of it (much like disclosure through conversation requires a listener). Participants' remarks – which stressed their observations more than what their parents had told them – also highlight that disclosure need not only occur through dialogue; here, it seemed that interpretation of action could, contrary to Thomas' (1987) view, provide more than an "outline" of another person's life. Indeed, we might

be better able to understand this by complementing Thomas' (1987) view with Throop's (2014) reflections on what friends can know about us that we do not necessarily even know ourselves.

He writes that friends

have insights into our motives, feelings, and intentions that might not yet be readily available to use in the context of self-knowledge. That a friend can say something about my self-experience that is not yet evident to me, and that I can take this information into account in my own self-understanding, and vice versa, is then another way that friendship is forged. (p. 76)

Beyond being attuned to their parents' personal projects (and the significance these held for them), in nearly all of these cases, participants also clearly expressed support and validation of their parents' projects. Besides Kristine's quote affirming "it's an accomplishment. That's awesome," other examples underscored participants' interest in and support of their parent's activities. Sylvia let her dad feed the dog "because he wants to them to like him the most ((laughs))." Amber inquired about her dad's separate yoga session. Kristine made accommodations during shopping trips with her mother, saying that "she doesn't like to be rushed, so I'll look through stuff. Sometimes I'll pretend, I'm like, 'oh yeah, this is nice.' And I let her do her thing so she feels relaxed." A TV commercial made Vincent remember his mom's enjoyment of a past concert and he conspired to get her tickets to see the same musician again. And Iris – despite saying she did not "do" parties – co-hosted parties with her mom because she knew her mom loved these events as excuses to make "fancy food." Grey also referred to her stepdad as an "engineerd" (engineer + nerd) and highlighted that "that's what I kind of love about him." And Keith's earlier comments – about a shared geekiness between himself and his dad – also validated his father's "geeky" identity. In line with Thomas' (1987) emphasis, these examples point to evaluations of parents that were not "in terms of the prevailing expectations concerning their social roles" (p. 230). Rather, they pointed to the approbation of the other person as a "nonsubstitutable" entity – a form of esteem and validation that highlights participants' solicitous treatment of their parents, where "each person is *irreplaceable* in our affection and our esteem" (Ricoeur, 1990/1992, p. 193). Beyond this, participants' support of their parents' projects underlined their desires to promote their parents' flourishing – another key feature in Aristotle's conception of friendship (Thomas, 1987).

A final way that participants were getting to know their parents better was through hearing stories of their pasts (10 participants with respect to 13 parents). Some of these stories (or, more precisely, some functions of these stories) were referred to in the chapter on authority as templates for action. However, what is relevant for friendship was how these stories revealed dimensions of parents' selves to participants, often holding a revelatory quality that shifted their interpretations of their parents' identities. Some of these stories and their functions were referred to more generally by participants (Kristine, Amber, and Laura). For example, Amber emphasized: "my dad has told me um quite a few stories about his past like growing up with his friends. And I love listening to that." Interestingly, this storytelling activity often occurred when she spent time with him and his friends – a space where she saw him at his happiest:

I love seeing my dad with his friends because I know that he is happy and it's like they talk about like what they did that day or like how golf's going or like bring up old stories. Because he's still friends with everyone from growing up.

Indeed, Amber goes beyond describing the role of storytelling here to highlight a scene that she likes to see her dad in – one where he is with his best friends, talking about his favorite activities, and engaging in a collective reminiscence. This scene was one that promoted familiarity with his unique character. Amber compared her relatively close relationship to her father to that with her mother, who she felt she did not feel she knew as well, in part due to a lack of storytelling:

A: my dad has told me um quite a few stories about his past . . . I haven't really heard any of my mom's. So I'm just like I see this pictures and my mom was so – like she looked so cool. Like I wanna learn about her. Did she have boyfriends? Did she travel?

KM: Mmhmm!

A: Like, who were her best friends? What did she do after high school?

It should not be surprising that Amber also mentioned that in contrast to her dad, who invited his friends over here and there, she had virtually no contact with her mother's friends: "I've never even met- like I know one of my mom's friends maybe." Like Amber, Kristine also noted that she had become increasingly curious about her parents' "past and the things they did, what they watched," identifying not only a desire to understand her parents through their stories, but also through the stories they identified with when they were younger (Frank, 2010). Interestingly, four participants referred about parents' deviant or illegal behaviors of the past – that a parent had had a "stoner" boyfriend, used illegal drugs, dined-and-dashed, or had been a "hell child" as

a teenager. These facts were responded to with some shock and amusement, with participants remarking that “it completely blew my mind,” “I was like, ‘holy shit,’” and “I was like ‘what the fuck?’ but it’s just funny.” In gaining access to their parents’ less socially acceptable pasts, participants’ conceptions of who they were seemed to expand to accommodate a more complex view. Other stories that brought intimate understanding to parent-child relationships concerned parents’ experiences of personal or family suffering (as was mentioned by Kristine, Grey, Ria, and Adison). Experiences of suicidal thoughts, a “destructive” temperament, rape, and childhood poverty figured into these, and often were described as helping participants to empathize with their parents during conflicts. For example, Adison remarked:

getting to know like, what it was like for her growing up and like, what it was like for her when she was my age, and like, how she sees the world and stuff like that. It’s nice to know – it’s easier for me to understand... where she’s coming from sometimes when we disagree on things?

Finally, participants gained insight into their parents through stories about their adventures before having children (e.g., traveling and having fun with friends, as was described by Amber, Laura, Molly, and Nina), and passions or interests they had when they were younger (as was described by Molly and Adison).

Although this section has stressed participants’ various ways of getting to know their parents, it is important to recognize that there were limits to what parents shared with them and what participants knew or could pick up about their inner lives. Just as participants affirmed certain boundaries of their own expression, so too did participants (12/15) observe these within their parents (17/27). Some of these limitations were perceived neutrally or positively while others were seen as undermining or blocking the development of a closer relationship. On the other end of the spectrum, an excess of personal information also appeared in two participants’ discourses, which further supported the value of some personal boundaries.

Many limits to knowing a parent were conceived of in neutral, non-judgmental terms. Four participants (Kristine, Molly, Ria and Adison) depicted their fathers as being somewhat reserved. That is, they discussed their fathers as being reluctant to discuss personal issues or problems. Kristine described her interpretation of this as a dispositional trait:

it doesn't bother me or anything cause I know that if it was like, maybe something – if he was all chatty chatty chatty, and then he just wasn't talking it would be like, “okay dad, what's up, what's going on.” But, that's just who he is.

Similarly, Sylvia said of her father that “he's not really one of those people that always lets you know how he feels about stuff?” Although these men tended not to spontaneously bring up difficult topics themselves, all were acknowledged as being open to discussing these kinds of topics if directly asked. As Kristine noted, “he doesn't show a lot of emotion, but sometimes I think it would be nice if he did cause it'd be easier to know what he's going through. But I mean too, if I just have to ask then it's not that hard for me to do that, so.” In Molly and Adison's cases, part of this reluctance may have been related to the father's strong identification as a provider within the family. Indeed, Molly suggested that her dad “doesn't like relying on people” and Adison described her dad as “the breadwinner of the family and like, kinda takes care of us.” On a similar note, but referring to both her parents, Molly said that her parents were “good at taking matters into their own hand,” rarely approaching her or her brother in a state of vulnerability. Besides these cases, two participants (Iris and Kristine) acknowledged that their mothers sometimes “might take a while to address something” (Kristine) or did not acknowledge conflict through overt means, waiting until “it will go away on its own after everybody has, on their own, worked things out for themselves” (Iris). These cases did not necessarily suggest a lack of information transmitted, but rather pointed to a conflict style that was somewhat avoidant. Again, while Kristine did (on one specific occasion) find this conflict style challenging to cope with, both Kristine and Iris also seemed to empathize with their mothers' preference for avoiding conflict, even if it meant closing down communication sometimes.

Two participants (Kristine, in reference to both her parents, and Keith, in reference to his mother) indirectly referred to the limits of their knowledge of their parents, saying that they were hoping to get to know their parents better over time. In these cases, it was not that participants felt they knew little about their parents, but they could imagine that there was much more to know. For example, Keith also highlighted how an inability to find a fitting gift showed some lack of knowledge about his mother and her interests:

KM: What is she – what is she into?

K: It's weird cause I don't really know. Like, every time me and my brother think that we have a cool birthday gift for her, it'll just – she'll open it. “Oh!” But then it will sort of

stay in the box and stuff. So I don't know what my mom likes. Which is really weird. Ah she likes going to movies and stuff like that.

Although friends may arrive at relatively robust understandings of one another, a friend is someone who recognizes that there is always more to find out: as highlighted by Throop (2014), friends retain “an orientation of openness to the other who is our friend, in all of his or her complexity, plenitude, and mystery” (p .76).

Whereas in the former cases, little or no judgment was directed towards the parent for protecting the boundaries of intimacy in the relationship, four participants (Lois, Nina, Ria, Amber) saw their parents' limited disclosure as impairing the relationship (Lois' mom, Nina's dad, Ria's stepdad, and both of Ambers' parents). In these relationships, there was also a hope for more openness, but it was expressed as an alternative to a current lack, rather than being part of a continuous process of unfolding the parent's identity. For example, Amber described of her parents:

I just wanna get to know them more because I feel like I don't know them. Um...I know how they are around us. And like I said we've just like normalized all of our interactions and stuff but I still don't like...get who they are and like how they've come to like be like this. You know?

When Amber had previously moved out, their communication had increased considerably, but she felt that moving in had reverted them back to the status quo. As she looked ahead, she hoped to once again have a more intimate relationship with her parents: “I feel like it's going to be a lot better and I think that we'll have real conversations and show our emotion ((both laugh)). In a few years ((laughs)).” Similarly, Ria felt that she was currently making efforts to “break the ice” with her stepdad, but hoped that the two of them could close their communication gap and get on friendlier, less formal terms in the future. With Lois and Nina, more specific conflicts needed resolution before they felt that they might get on with their parents (Lois' mother and Nina's father) the way they had formerly.

In two unique cases, parents (Adison's mother and both of Jane's parents) were seen as violating boundaries of privacy, disclosing information that put these participants in uncomfortable positions. For each, this was one of the key problems in their relationships. For example, Jane stated that “if they didn't have to come talk to me about their issues then I feel I would probably enjoy more living with them” and Adison remarked that the dimension of her

mother-daughter relationship she liked the least was “that she feels that she can talk about almost anything with me::: ‘cause sometimes that crosses boundaries ((laughs)) that I’m just not really comfortable with.”

In both cases, parents were coming to the participant to vent about their spouse, which put the participant in a difficult position. As Jane described, this knowledge would make her wish she could act to help the situation, but given her status in the family, she did not think it would be within her rights to offer counsel. Highlighting this predicament, Jane explained:

let’s say my mom comes to me that my dad did something to her. If she comes to tell me [something] it’s not like I would tell my dad to stop doing it I don’t see it as my right to go tell my dad what to do with his wife, right? So that’s why it doesn’t make sense to me like, you’re coming to meet me, fine, I can’t do anything for the situation, right? So.

Both Jane and Adison also said that receiving this kind of information shaped their views of the other parent, even if it was not their desire nor their business to have that kind of information in the first place. As Jane remarked, “maybe it also makes me kind of dislike my dad or dislike my mom because of this, right?” Likewise, Amber felt that her mother’s badmouthing of her father’s family was inappropriate:

She has made that very apparent and very clear my entire life. That she does not like his family at all. And I think that’s a bit damaging, like, to constantly be in the negative about... your partner’s family and to their child, like, that’s my family too.

In both cases, it seemed that the moral dilemma stemmed from their parents sharing stories that prohibited the other parent from “holding their own” (Frank, 2010). In other words, moral discomfort was not only related to the violation of valued boundaries (i.e., between the roles of parent and child), but also to the reductionism of the stories told. That is, parents’ stories appeared to call on them to take a moral stance against the other parent, limiting their freedom to think and judge for themselves (Arendt, 1971; Frank, 2010). In brief, Adison and Jane both affirmed that some boundaries of personal disclosure were worth upholding, both for reducing role conflict and for promoting the family unity. In addition, they highlighted the value in avoiding absolutes and permitting multiple stories to co-exist, notably in a way that might embrace (rather than reduce) the complexity of social life (Frank, 2010). While neither claimed that there were benefits to these violations, each indicated that they occurred in relation to the parent’s disempowerment and suffering rather than out of malice.

4.3.5 Conclusion: Foundations of Trust and Dialogue for Emergent Companionship

In this section, I have examined the possibility of friendship between coresident young adults and their parents – a situation where friendship’s minimally-structured nature is confronted by pre-existing and relatively structured relationships of caregiving, authority, and civil respect. Bringing light to these tensions, Thomas’ (1987) conception of companionate friendship has offered three features that were referenced in all participants’ descriptions of their parent-child relationships: choice, mutual trust, and absence of presumed authority. Nearly all participants discussed enjoying and desiring to spend time with their parents (14 participants, 23/27 parents) – evidence that pointed to the feature of choice described by Thomas (1987) but that would also be present in friendships motivated by pleasure. In addition, most participants felt that they could be themselves with their parents (12 participants, 22/27 parents), that they could talk about most subjects with their parents (10 participants with respect to 17 parents), and that they could interact with their parents in a way that was distinct from interactions attached to their roles as parents (14 participants, 24/27 parents), whether this was accomplished through the exchange of dialogue, shared activities, or observation of their parents in pursuit of what they enjoyed. This evidence indirectly pointed to mutual trust in the relationship by indicating processes of self-expression and acknowledgment that cement mutual trust (Thomas, 1987). While I clearly saw evidence of participants seeking out time with their parents, enjoying that time, and getting to know new sides of their parents, there was less evidence for mutual and voluntary self-disclosure that clearly promoted each person’s self-examination. In other words, I would not conclude that these young adults have necessarily attained with their parents a full companionate friendship (at least, as Thomas defines it); rather, most participants’ discourses suggested signs of an *emerging* friendship – a claim that is supported by their comments about voluntarily spending time with their parents, developing more open forms of communication, being able to relate with one another more easily, perceiving less judgment from their parents, and showing both acceptance and validation of their parents’ personal identities. These transformations could even be interpreted as developmental ones, in the sense that they aligned with participants’, parents’ and the relationship’s altered circumstances and needs. Although it is impossible to know whether this friendship would become richer or fuller over time, the flexibility described in participants’ accounts suggests at least a valuable capacity for adaptation, in the sense that people and their relationships are not eternal or static.

Recognizing that possibilities for friendship change over time, we must also identify that some persist or are introduced over time. To address the question of the limits of friendship between coresident children and their parents, we can begin with Thomas' (1987) third feature of companionate friendship – the absence of presumed authority. This theme came through in participants' comments about change over time, in their framings of open dialogue with their parents, and in the outlying cases where self-disclosure was limited by a reluctance to be judged. When parents were described as unyielding to others' perspectives or as being prudish about the participant's lifestyles and choices, participants were less willing to disclose aspects of themselves and their worlds to their parents. When illegitimate judgment was experienced in multiple domains, self-disclosure was severely diminished, whereas when judgments targeted a more specific domain, participants might only selectively withhold information about that domain without necessarily sacrificing a sense of companionship overall. Interestingly, a couple participants revealed that they might avoid situations where they found themselves in a position of judging their parents. This finding suggests a fruitful avenue for future research, given that researchers most often emphasize parental judgment and control towards children rather than exploring these forces in the opposite direction.

While Thomas (1987) describes a presumption of authority as the central impediment to the voluntary personal disclosure central to friendship, I also identified other factors that – for better or for worse – limited personal disclosure within the parent-child bond. First, disclosure could be limited by a breakdown of trust within a gift-giving system. Notably, Lois and her mother were in an impasse that Lois attributed to her own failure to respect her mother's gift of a loan. Second, friendship might fail to emerge where there has been a breach of privacy. Again, Lois' situation showed that a parent's divulging of private information – even if it occurred long ago – could shape a child's willingness to share their inner lives. As a third obstacle, some parents' and children's interactions appeared to be locked into pre-existing roles, with few spontaneous and minimally-structured interactions. Nina and Amber identified their own wishes for this to change, whereas Walter appeared to have no problem lacking a personal relationship with his mother's boyfriend. On a related topic, some forms of deference towards parents (e.g., not swearing, not being too crass, not talking about sex, not talking about partying) were assigned a neutral moral value even if they placed limits on participants' expression of

themselves. In sum, the significance attached to more role-based interactions could vary from context to context.

The most common and least problematized limitations to friendship centered on personal and unavoidable differences between participants and their parents, including differences of personalities, schedules, interests, frameworks of understanding, and modes of self-expression. Such differences tended to be described in a neutral and matter-of-fact way.

Some boundaries of self-disclosure held positive significance. Most clearly, this was identified in Jane and Adison's experiences being privy to their parents' marital problems. Wishing that their parents might withhold this information from them, they appeared to experience a conflict between their statuses as a friend and child. As a friend, they wished to offer support and help to their parent, but as a child, they felt that this information threatened the unity of the family and was out of their power to address. This powerlessness was compounded by the seemingly biased and emotionally charged stories their parents told, which called them to incite battle (Frank, 2010). Outside these outlying examples, the ordinary and positive significance of boundaries also surfaced in participants' discourses about withholding truths that would be hurtful to their parents, whether it was the framing of a joke, the provision of honest feedback, or storytelling that implicated parents in endangering their child's well-being.

Gender, family structure, and cultural context appeared to be the pragmatic forces most significant in shaping participants' experiences of friendship with their parents. Compared to the male participants, female participants were more likely to describe their relationships as intimate and reciprocal (especially their mother-daughter relationships). Mother-daughter relationships were more often described as involving mutual emotional support (6 female participants, with reference 6 mothers and 2 fathers), as involving mutual influence through dialogue (5 female participants, with reference to 5 mothers), and as holding a possibility for continued coresidence into the future (2 female participants and their mothers). There are a few reasons why gender may play a factor here. First, mother-daughter relationships tend to reflect more constant and direct communication (Rossi & Rossi, 1990), which may mean more opportunities for personal disclosure that cements friendship (Thomas, 1987). Second, and as more of a methodological bias, my interviews may have not been as well-calibrated for exploring intimacy through shared activities as opposed to through verbal exchange (Cancian, 1987). While some argue that gender differences in the expression of intimacy have been over-exaggerated (Wright, 1988), men and

women have been shown to engage in friendship in different ways, with men tending to express themselves through instrumental support and engagement in simultaneous activities and women being more likely to share with one another through verbal disclosure (Wright, 1982). In brief, my script may have been biased in favor of capturing the intimacy of mother-daughter friendships more than that of men or mixed genders.

Family structure also appeared to play a role in the relationships here. There were four parent-child pairs that had highly limited mutual disclosure: Lois and her mother, Amber and her mother, Nina and her father, and Walter and his mom's boyfriend. The reason family structure seems to have played into this is that among these four dyads, Walter's bond with Ron was the only one wherein change was not desired. In other words, in the other three relationships, there was a desire to forge a closer friendship with the parent, whereas Walter seemed to be at peace with his at-an-arm's distance relationship with Ron. It may be that without a clear social precedent for how to develop a personal relationship with his mom's partner so late in life, Walter defaulted to their family-based roles and interactions. Alternatively, it may be that Walter had no interest in familiarizing himself with Ron because he already felt as though he saw him outside of the parental role: as anticipated by Turner (1969), the mother's boyfriend might have occupied a more liminal than structural role, diminishing the dynamic pull of spontaneous and free expression featured in both liminality and friendship.

Continuing with this theme, when participants described themselves getting to know their parents "as people" many of the contexts where these sides were expressed depended on a distinction between social duty and personal choice. In every culture, this contrast likely exists; however, the concept of the private and personal self is especially prominent within Western societies. As stated by Shweder and Bourne (1984), in the West:

the individual *qua* individual is seen as inviolate, a supreme value in and of itself. The self becomes an object of interest per se. Free to undertake projects of personal expression – personal narratives, autobiographies, diaries, mirrors, separate rooms, early separation from bed, body, and breast, of mother, personal space – the autonomous individual imagines the incredible, that he or she lives in an inviolate region (the extended boundaries of the self) where he or she is free to choose . . . , where what he does is his own business. (p. 151)

In the West, the essence of the self is conceived to be underneath one's outer layers of social roles and duties (Geertz, 1973). It is perhaps not surprising, then, that "getting to know" parents – or what could alternatively be interpreted as finding the truth of parents' identities – often implied knowing who they were outside of their social obligations, whether with their friends, in work-free environments, or in pursuit of their hobbies. In another cultural or historical context, companionate friendship might rely less on a separation between these forms of selfhood (Bell & Coleman, 1999).

4.4 Global Conclusion: Experiencing Mutuality and Reciprocity

Each of these sections have covered quite distinct dimensions of the parent-child bond – from its embeddedness within the family system, to its articulation of moral duties within the household institution, to its potential as a channel for revealing and discovering first-person perspectives that support mutual flourishing. While each of these three sections may have a unique emphasis, what binds them together (and distinguishes them from the previous two chapters) is their investigation of mutuality and reciprocity. In the previous chapters, mutuality was central, but without being accompanied by reciprocity. In the chapter on caregiving, participants and parents participated in and appeared to share an understanding of a gift-giving system, but participants identified themselves as receivers and beneficiaries of their parents' gifts of care. In the chapter on authority, participants trusted in many of the principles transmitted by their parents, but their parents were not represented as internalizing the participants' authoritative traditions or wisdom. By contrast, in each of the sections of this chapter, we see a combination of reciprocity and mutuality at play. As members of the family, participants confirmed their positions as both givers and receivers within the family – as caring for the family, as benefitting from the support of the family, and as being active in sustaining and rejuvenating family bonds through ritual. As members of the household, too, participants confirmed their agreement to abide by specific norms for living together and, in turn, expected their parents to do the same. And in the section on friendship, although reciprocity was to a degree limited, there was nevertheless an emphasis on participants' and their parents' self-disclosure in interaction with one another, in addition to testimonies of reciprocal interest in spending time together, seeing each other flourish, and enjoying shared pursuits. In sum, these sections highlight identities and modes of interacting that depart from those based on a presumed and legitimate asymmetry of social position (i.e., as child and parent).

Each of these sections also spontaneously pointed to a dialectic of structural and anti-structural forms of symmetry. A duty to care for other family members might be conceived of as a structural and deontological obligation that can be carried out by family members with the capacity to perform such care work, and yet ritual *communitas* nourishes and perpetuates that commitment to support others. Universal household rules support the functioning and individual welfare of its members, but each person's private retreat provides a sacred space for escaping these norms and reconnecting with oneself. Within bonds of friendship, there is a constant tension between respecting the boundaries of privacy (which preserve self-respect), transcending these boundaries (which can promote mutual flourishing through self-examination), and being unilaterally subjected to another person's boundary transgressions (which can be experienced as a violation of freedom).

The persistence of mutuality, the alternating presence and absence of reciprocity, and the complementarity between structure and anti-structure underscore how the family functions as a dynamic and multi-dimensional social unit. In the conclusion of the thesis, I explore the patterns and implications of the dynamic and multi-dimensional features of the family.

CHAPTER 5: THE ART OF LIVING TOGETHER

[Practical wisdom] is not a matter of learning rules, but of a wisdom in life; further, this virtue is not taught, it is formed or cultivated; this wisdom has no particular content and is not dogmatic, but rather consists of a capacity to adapt itself to particular situations. (Grondin, 1999/2003, p. 27)

the reimagining of oneself, one's family, one's life, is not a private introspective matter, some sort of internal story one tells oneself (though it may be that too), as much as an active, creative remaking of life through the development of new daily rounds of activities. In the local morality of the household, self-making and remaking are manifested most vividly, concretely, and compellingly in the creation and recreation of domestic routines. (Mattingly, 2014, p. 66)

The family institution is continually in a process of reinvention. In Canada and other post-industrial, Western societies, intergenerational coresidence has emerged as a contemporary family type as young adults and their parents increasingly live with one another. Indeed, coresidence may even be considered a “new normal” as the most common living arrangement among Canadians and Americans in their 20s (Fry et al. 2020; Milan & Bohnert, 2012). But what are the features of this new normal? How is it lived? What does it require and what does it permit? This conclusion develops an interpretation of the core features, variations, and implications of coresident young adults' family worlds. I present three worlds which vary by their incorporation of diverse styles of relatedness, their depths of mutual understanding, and their balance of joint involvement. Based on the above analysis, I make four claims that act as the global line of argument of the thesis. From here, I develop a dialogue with the literature, state the limitations of the present study, and introduce future directions for studying the relational experiences of young adults who live at home.

5.1 Three Worlds of the Family

Table 4 below highlights the styles of relatedness presented in the thesis. Each style of relatedness is defined by its particular figure(s) (e.g., caregivers and care-receivers) and the constitutive actions and practices that indicate those figures and conventions of interaction (e.g., sharing expressions of affection). In addition, I have pointed to the contributions of each style of relatedness to the family world. As is described in the thesis, there is no family who participates in only one style of relatedness; for all participants, there was some involvement between them

and their parents in at least four styles. In Table 6, I summarize these and other variations between participants.

I use the term “style” to indicate a collective template creatively used to guide action and generate meaning in everyday family life (Geertz, 1973). Parents and coresident young adult children do not invent radically idiosyncratic ways of interacting with one another; their bonds are informed by existing figures, practices, and ideals whose constitutive rules are established socially (Ricoeur, 1990/1992). In exploring human action in everyday life, I find inspiration in the notion of a “repertoire” of styles, which conveys a fluency and agility in adapting one’s actions to particular settings, players, moods, and purposes. The notion of a repertoire also suggests a level of competence in knowing various interactive styles and skillfully performing them with others.⁵⁰ In choosing the term “relatedness,” I have attempted to capture the ongoing development and engagement with these styles. In summary, the concept of “styles of relatedness” showcases how coresident young adults and their parents draw on a plurality of socially derived figures, practices, and ideals to jointly perform the art of living together.

Table 6

Summary of Styles of Relatedness

Style of Relatedness	Contributions to Family Life	Figure(s)	Constitutive Actions and Social Practices
Caregiving & receiving	Affirms mutual recognition, supports self-esteem, deepens trust, and propels personal and shared initiatives	Caregiver	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Indicating concern about the child’s financial, psychological, interpersonal, and bodily well-being (i.e., through care, reminders, and requests for reassurance) - Sharing expressions of love - Offering emotional support during distressing times - Giving practical support that support’s the child’s aims (e.g., accommodation, financial support, cooking, cleaning, pet-care, food purchases) - Conveying awareness of child’s skills, achievements, ambitions, and qualities of character

⁵⁰ Here, I draw on Schutz’ (1951) concept of mutual tuning-in, which describes musical players’ reciprocal communication in time, where each must “take into account what the other has to execute in simultaneity. He has not only to interpret his own part which as such remains necessarily fragmentary, but he has also to anticipate the other player's interpretation of his - the Other's - part and, even more, the Other's anticipations of his own execution” (p. 117).

		Care-receiver	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Deliberating about how the acceptance of help may entail positive or negative outcomes for parents - Expressing gratitude through verbal expressions of appreciation, gifts in return, and honorific treatment of gifted possessions - Reassuring parents of their (the child's) wellness and goodness of their choices - Negotiating the appropriateness of concern and one's assignment to the status of vulnerable - Negotiating the meaning and value of actions carried out in the spirit of care
Transmitting and receiving authority	Offers the wisdom and durability of tradition	Representative of authority	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Transmitting legitimate and valid principles via storytelling, modelling, and advice (i.e., regarding work ethic, personal responsibility, social position, financial prudence, public/private boundaries, partner suitability, and technical and social skills)
		Receiver of tradition	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Assessing the legitimacy and validity of parents' advice, guidance, modelling, and storytelling - Avoiding topics that trigger parents' illegitimate advice - Appropriating tradition, embodying it, and confirming how it makes them bonded with the representative of authority
Tyranny and subjection	Promote personal interests with expediency and rapidity	Tyrant	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Issuing egoistic demands via instruction or emotional manipulation
		Subject of unconstitutional influence	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Empathizing with parents' vulnerability - Explaining parents' illegitimate, contradictory, excessive, or irrational expectations - Avoiding or retreating from parents' egoistic influence - Questioning parents or attempting to draw out their reasoning - Resisting onerous requests
Collective negotiation	Generates an experience of freedom,	Equal member of the polis	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Exercising equal rights to decision-making

	promotes mutual recognition & assuredness, and ushers new ideas into the family world	(i.e., public forum)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Sharing reasoning behind arguments for a course of action - Requesting reasoning behind arguments for a course of action - Jointly generating new ideas and actions
Civil cohabitation	Structures coexistence through predictability, order, and lawful justice	Respectful roommate	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Aligning one's behavior to a set of common norms (e.g., distributing the burdens of household work, upholding shared access to communal spaces, respecting quiet times, respecting privacy & property, managing bad moods, taking up a reasonable level of responsibility for others' emotions) - Practicing consideration for others in particular situations
Family as a ground project and identity	Nourishes a sense of belonging and security through shared affiliations and interdependence	Family member	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Caring for one another - Caring for others alongside one another (e.g., for pets, grandparents, the other parent, siblings, grandchildren, nieces, nephews, community members) - Participating in meaningful reunions, dinners, holidays, and trips - Persevering through conflict together & telling stories about these experiences
Companionate friendship	Permits a commanding perspective of one another's lives that enables them to accept each other's advice and support each other's moral flourishing	Like a friend	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Spending time together out of choice and enjoyment - Mutually negotiating difference - Appreciating and celebrating difference - Exchanging mutual support - Children "being themselves" with parents - Deepening knowledge of a parent's alterity (via conversation, storytelling, shared activities, and observing parents doing what they love) - Accepting limits to self-disclosure via dialogue and shared activities

By analyzing participants' experiences across and within these styles of relatedness, three worlds of the family surfaced, with each characterized by their incorporation of diverse styles of

relatedness, and, across these styles of relatedness, the family’s depth of mutual understanding and adequately-shared responsibility for managing the bond (from the perspective of the young adults).⁵¹ As noted by Ricoeur (1986/2008), these worlds were not arrived at through pure, inductive discovery or by unveiling the intentions behind the text; they unfolded between my interpretive horizons and the references opened by the text. Table 7 below describes the distribution of participants across worlds of the family, the styles of relatedness comprising each world, the degree of mutual understanding shared across styles of relatedness, the acceptability of shared management for the bond across styles of relatedness, and the hazards encountered in each world.

Table 7

Three Worlds of the Family

	A Balanced and Robust Family World	An Imbalanced and Delicate Family World	A Frozen Family World
Participants	Amber, Kristine, Grey, Walter, Keith, Sylvia, Iris, Ria, Jane, Molly, Vincent, Laura	Adison & Nina	Lois
Styles of relatedness	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Caregiving - Transmission of authority - Tyranny & subjection (limited) - Collective negotiation (limited) - Civil cohabitation - Family as a ground project and identity - Friendship (limited for some) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Caregiving - Transmission of authority - Tyranny & subjection (excessive) - Collective negotiation (very limited) - Civil cohabitation - Family as a ground project and identity - Friendship (limited) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Caregiving (very limited) - Transmission of authority (limited) - Civil cohabitation - Family as a ground project and identity (very limited)
Perception of shared understanding (i.e., of each other’s aims and actions)	Generally, yes	Yes and no (aims are at times obscured, presumed, or misidentified)	Generally, no (aims and actions are often obscured, presumed, or misidentified)

⁵¹ Note that my aim here is not to capture all aspects of participants’ nuclear or extended families, but rather to capture those dynamics most central to participants’ experiences of their parent-child bonds, whether as a dyad (between themselves and their single parent) or as a triad (themselves and their parents or mother and mother’s partner).

Perceived involvement in maintaining the bond	Joint management	Somewhat one-sided management by child	Joint lack of management
Hazards described	Minor missteps and misunderstandings due to communication challenges, occasional egoism, and conflict avoidance	Deep-seated missteps and misunderstandings due to lack of mutual involvement, unchecked presumptions of aims, unawareness of aims, conformity of appearances, and lack of collective negotiation	Inability to move through conflict due to inaction and impenetrability of one another's aims

5.1.1 A Balanced and Robust Family World

Twelve participants experience their family worlds as robust and balanced. These participants connect to their parents through eclectic styles of relatedness. Each of these styles of relatedness contributes to the family, with complementarity and even opposition underlining a necessary oscillation *between* these styles to adequately respond to the complexities of coresidence (Shweder et al., 2003). As examples, one can trace dynamic tensions between: 1) the unilaterality of tyranny vs. the collectivization of the polis; 2) the lawful norms of civility vs. the spontaneous benevolence of friendship and love; 3) the common affiliation of family identity vs. the nonsubstitutability of identity revealed in friendship, 4) the durable and transcendent wisdom of tradition vs. the specific authority of friends who share first-person perspectives, and 5) the asymmetrical vs. symmetrical character of relatedness. This repertoire of styles – and the family’s competence in knowing and performing them together in live settings – allows young adults to experience freedom, creativity, adaptability, and security. Reflecting their human character, no style of relatedness is absolute in its scope or application – and it is this feature that creates a clearing for reconciliation (Ricoeur, 1990/1992, pp. 244-249). As proposed by Shweder (1991a), such an approach “presses irreverence into the service of reality, in recognition of the idea that it is only by constantly switching frames that we honor the multiplex world” (p. 71).

Looking across styles of relatedness, a deep sense of mutual understanding and tuning-in connects these participants to their parents (Schutz, 1951). That is, within each style of relatedness (apart from tyranny-subjection), there is little evidence of deep and troubling

misunderstanding of one another's aims or actions. Instead, parents and young adults seem to share common frameworks for the aims counting as good and the actions that can support those aims. Of course, mutual understanding is not always possible. Participants describe experiences of feeling misrecognized or invalidated when parents dismiss their assurances of well-being (Molly, Ria, Walter), when they show a lack of interest in their activities (Amber), or when their persistent questions disrupt their flow of experience (Sylvia). Participants also identify moments where they fail to understand their parents' aims, for example in parents' silent judgments regarding their career track (Keith), in their disclosures of marital issues to them (Jane), or in insisting on weekly Sunday dinners when they seem redundant (Keith). At times, parents are described as displaying unintelligible or unreasonable expectations as well, whether about cleaning (Sylvia, Kristine, Vincent) or boyfriends (Sylvia, Kristine). And there are times where the participants cannot fully understand why, between them and their parents, there is awkwardness or difficulty decoding emotion (Ria, Amber, Kristine, Molly). Nevertheless, what is crucial in defining these worlds as robust and balanced is that misunderstanding and misrecognition exist in the periphery of their shared world: most of the time, these young adults see themselves and their parents as drawing on common frameworks of understanding, which permit them to recognize one another and interpret one another's actions as guided by worthy aims (even when they create suffering). Of course, it must be acknowledged that this perspective is issued from only one source: the young adult.

In addition to a sense of mutual understanding, this world is characterized by young adults' experience of shared involvement in maintaining the bond. That is, young adults identify mutually acceptable thresholds of joint involvement from themselves and their parents, especially within the styles of caregiving, family caregiving, civil cohabitation, and the transmission of authority. By contrast, friendship and collective negotiation have more peripheral importance in this family world, where they are treated as desirable but not as essential. In addition, subjection to tyranny takes a very peripheral position in this world, being both rare and disvalued by participants. Among parental couples, the notion of an acceptable threshold connects with the finding that complementarity of parent roles was acceptable or even beneficial to participants (for example, with one parent playing the role of the worry wart and the other being more easygoing). Among single mothers who recoupled later in life (Walter and Grey's mothers), the assemblage of actions and practices rests more squarely on the mothers, with their

partners assigned fewer and less important functions in transmitting wisdom, providing emotional and practical support, or developing friendly intimacy with the coresident young adult. In summary, this world of the family is characterized by diverse styles of relatedness, mutual understanding, and satisfactorily shared management of the bond. Suggesting a state of equilibrium in the present – and a capacity for successfully integrating novelty into family patterns and conceptions – these participants anticipate changes to their bonds, but do so with a tone of acceptance and equanimity more often than with hope, doubt, dread, or resignation.

5.1.2 A Fragile and Imbalanced Family World

The second world of the family (inhabited by Nina and Adison) is also characterized by its diverse forms of connection, but there is less balance between styles. In addition, this world features less depth or confidence in mutual understanding across styles of relatedness. Finally, this world is stamped by a perceived sense of imbalance in the management of the bond.

Like the first group of participants, Nina and Adison define their family worlds as incorporating diverse styles of relatedness; however, there is an exaggerated presence of subjection-tyranny. Whereas for the previous participants, this style of relatedness is either not described (i.e., by six participants) or is limited to a single domain of life (such as cleanliness). By contrast, Adison and Nina see egoistic control surfacing in relation to the domination of space, proximity to the parent, standards and methods of cleaning, romance, and, for Nina, childrearing.

Another key distinction between this world and that previous is the absence of mutual understanding within these styles of relatedness. These gaps of understanding – or presumptions that generate misunderstanding – surface not in peripheral or isolated ways, but globally within multiple styles of relatedness. Nina and Adison depict such gaps in experiences of caregiving and receiving (where parental questioning occasionally becomes invasive) and where suffering is caused by divergent understandings of the value and meaning of practical support (especially regarding childrearing and pet care). They also describe their parents in postures of compromised authority, especially in their transmission of financial prudence, grounds for selecting a career/educational track, approaches to family politics (for Adison), and marital dynamics (for Adison). Importantly, while these participants eschew their parents' "wisdom," their alternatives tend not be collectively recognized or understood, generating further gaps of understanding. Indeed, moments of collective negotiation are very limited among these families, potentially

contributing to irreconciled differences of understanding. Conflict avoidance (for Nina) and the expression of conflict without resolution (for Adison) appear as the key processes for managing these gaps and conflicts of understanding. Still, it should be noted that these participants do describe many aims knowingly shared between them and their parents (i.e., concerning the love and commitment between them, the value of conscientious and deferential respect within the household, the love and esteem shared for Nina's child, and the gratitude they share for moments of family bonding, particularly within low-key, immediate family settings).

In addition to the gaps of mutual understanding that distinguish this world from the first, this world is characterized by young adults' senses of unevenly distributed involvement in maintaining the bond. Relative to the other two groups, Nina and Adison depict themselves as guarding their needs for fear of judgment, demanding reasoning rather than condescension (Adison), accessing alternative mentors to compensate for parents' modelling, maintaining some façades of alignment while holding alternative ideals for parenthood (Nina), individually coping with conflict between parents and extended family (Adison), and explaining parents' excessive demands regarding cleanliness, proximity to the child, territorialization of space, or self-disclosure of marital issues (Adison). Overall, these participants described struggles to express or bridge the distance between their own and their parents' identities and expectations; they lived with ongoing tensions over hiding their deviation from parents or accepting the negative consequences of self-disclosure. This situation recalls Foucault's (1982) conception of power as "guiding the possibility of conduct and putting in order the possible outcome" (p. 790). In line with this, participants here often occupy positions as patients who must respond to and endure their parents' actions (and this is true not only in their conceptions of the present, but also of the future, where change hinges on parents' initiatives and shifts of understanding). While we cannot know what forms of coping and adaptation their parents take on to manage the relationship, from these young adults' views, it is they who shoulder the burden of preserving the relationship. In sum, Adison and Nina reference a collective inability to cultivate mutual understanding and faith, which in turn leaves them responding to and enduring parents' actions as opposed acceptably alternating between roles as patients and agents or jointly pursuing mutual aims (the respect of alterity being a potential one). The experiences of suffering engendered by such limitations of mutual understanding and imbalanced power do not jeopardize the survival of the family bond, but they do lend it a fragile and anxious character. In sum, Adison and Nina

indicate limitations on their actions and abilities to effect change: possibilities for the future are felt to be structured by the parents and their environments, not by them. This story is the one that is most suspenseful, perhaps because its tellers experience the least agency and most uncertainty in its unfolding (Mattingly, 1994).

5.1.3 A Frozen Family World

The third world of the family (inhabited by Lois) is distinguished by its narrow band of experience, global lack of mutual understanding, and state of mutual non-involvement. Compared with the two previous worlds of experience, this world lacks diverse styles of relatedness. Lois and her mother relate to one another most clearly as roommates, adhering to general codes of civility and non-interference. Besides this, Lois shares with her mother caring duties for their three dogs, affirms a deferential respect for her mother as the homeowner, and shows some awareness of her privilege to live at home rent-free (though she never attributes generosity to her mother directly). Indications of care, legitimate authority, and caregiving in the family system are rare or reversed from their positive versions: the mother is represented as the neglectful, distant, or disinterested caregiver; the family system is represented as a source of exclusion rather than belonging; and the authority figure is depicted as compromised. Absent are experiences of collective negotiation, tyrannical governance, or friendship.

Looking across their styles of relatedness, mutual understanding is consistently out of grasp. Lois' mother's aims are frequently described by Lois as unknowable or as conflicting with her own aims (for example, in her sense that her mother does not want to be around her, does not love her in equal measure to her brother, does not care about her interests, and does not want to heal the relationship). This pattern reverses the sense of confident mutuality in the first group, retaining some of the trappings of misperception immanent in Nina and Adison's world. We see repeated returns to this relation of "two partial and unilateral visions" whose reconciliation is deemed unlikely (Ricoeur, 1990/1992, p. 244). Profound limits of mutual understanding can be traced to at least three sources. First, there is almost no dialogue between Lois and her mother and the dialogue they do exchange consists of only short and instrumental instant messaging. Second, the two occupy parallel and unshared spaces in the home, with Lois' mother preoccupied with computer games in her room virtually all the time. Third, the life they share is confined within the walls of the home and the routines of daily life, with essentially no spaces or times for out-of-the-ordinary experiences that might rupture patterns and meanings of daily life.

With such limited and mundane interactions, the relationship is interpreted by Lois in terms of an *absence* of connective gestures, conversation, exchange, events, and shared activities.

The first group of participants signalled a family world jointly maintained by themselves and their parents. By contrast, Nina and Adison described a relational world whose possibilities are often structured by parents and accommodated by adult children. For her part, Lois presents a world distinguished by a joint lack of involvement. In other words, she indicates a shared lack of initiative and responsibility for rebuilding or maintaining the bond, which is at once immobilizing and disempowering. In summary, this world is defined by shared suffering, the sources of which lie in a presumed lack of mutual aims, an absence of shared understanding, and a common “strategy of avoidance” that obstructs the path to reconciliation (Nussbaum, as cited by Ricoeur, 1990/1992, p. 243). With little knowledge or faith in her mother’s aims, the introduction of action and dialogue might put Lois in a highly vulnerable position. In response, preservation of the status quo may form the only viable course. And yet, in guarding herself against vulnerability through mutual stasis, the bond itself becomes compromised. Lacking nourishment, the future of this bond leans towards the tragic, with its “themes of descent, struggle, and fatalism” (Frank, 2010, p. 140).

5.2 Global Line of Argument

With these variations now described, let me put forward four claims, which constitute the main line of argument of this thesis. First, coresiders’ experiences of the parent-child bond cannot be adequately represented by a single world of experience. The preceding analysis suggests a minimum of three worlds of the family inhabited by young adults living with their parents, each distinguished by their incorporation of diverse styles of relatedness, their varied degrees of mutual understanding, and their degrees (and satisfaction with) shared responsibility for managing the parent-child bond. These worlds do not neatly map onto sociodemographic variations in family structure, socioeconomic status, occupational status, gender, child/parent relationship status, or participant age. The three participants from immigrant families did cluster together into the robust and balanced world (which itself was described by 12 participants). Beyond that, no clear patterns emerged. This is not to say that such patterns do not exist in the larger population; with 15 participants there is a limit to discovering patterns across social and demographic position. I would make no claims about this typology being universal, replicable, or exhaustive; rather, its value lies in its rigor, plausibility, resonance, and coherence (Tracy, 2010).

Moreover, its value lies in identifying variable features and patterns of parent-child relationships and their implications for young adults' experiences of suffering and empowerment.

My second claim is that young adults draw on a repertoire of styles of relatedness to engage with their parents across social settings. More elaborate than a tension between independence and dependence, these findings show how young adults navigate a layered system of figures, ideals, actions, and social practices that serves many functions. Acting as a template of and for action (Geertz, 1973), this repertoire supports multiple functions, which complement, supplement, and counterbalance one another: generating order and predictability in daily life; developing shared affiliations; transmitting and receiving principles for life; structuring the management of power and power imbalances; providing relief from structured routines and roles; grounding foundations for moral and ethical deliberations; elaborating mechanisms for the identification and expression of virtues; recognizing, accommodating, and celebrating alterity; and forging faith in one another and in the bond itself. Young adults who move fluidly between these styles of relatedness tend to characterize their families as providing meaningful and resilient mutual belonging. By way of reversal (and recognizing the limits of the data), a limited repertoire of relatedness was associated with experiences of detachment and precariousness. In other words, these findings predict that in families where parents and young adult children constitute themselves *only* as caregivers and receivers, *only* as roommates, *only* as friends, *only* as participants in a broader family project, or *only* as channels for authoritative wisdom, the relationship world is likely to feel static (being incapable of transversing social situations) and superficial (being reduced to a narrow band of experience). Importantly, it seems that in families headed by two parents (or a parent and their partner), this diversity can be satisfactorily distributed across parents, whereas in families headed by single parents, versatility must be incorporated into the dyadic relationship. Quite possibly, siblings' articulations of these styles of relatedness may also remove some of the responsibility from parents to embody some figures. In summary, a minimum threshold of diversity in the family seems to support an agile fluidity in everyday life.

Diversity alone is insufficient, however. As a third claim, I argue that to live a good life with their parents, coresident young adults require not only the abstract knowledge of varied styles of relatedness, but also the competence to discern when, where, and how these ought to be performed. In a word, young adults require *practical wisdom* to sustain their parent-child bonds

within situations coresidence. Young adults' draw on practical wisdom to connect their ideals to the requirements of day-to-day situations, enabling them to select fitting courses of action with the highest probabilities of desirable outcomes (Mattingly, 2014; Ricoeur, 1990/1992). This is observable in their deliberations over accepting different types and degrees of support, in striving for a fitting kind of intimacy, in carrying out some household tasks and leaving others to their parents, and in adapting traditions in light of changing selves, circumstances, and worlds. Practical wisdom is also exercised in finding prudent responses to parents' actions. Participants described themselves contemplating the outcomes of exercising gratitude, forgiveness, self-removal, confrontation, and avoidance within specific situations. Given that the outcomes of action are uncertain and out of human control (Mattingly, 2014), such practical wisdom is crucial for preserving bonds between ourselves and others with whom we share a life (since sharing a life necessarily means involvement with one another both as agents and as patients of action, Ricoeur, 1992/2013). Earlier, I indicated that mutual understanding between parents and young adult children patterns family worlds; extending this idea, I would argue that mutual understanding is vital to the practical wisdom required for positive parent-child relationships in situations of coresidence. Lacking a foundation of trust or knowledge of each others' aims, how can it be possible to forgive, heal, or brush off breaches of moral codes? How can new initiatives be carried out without a basic level of trust in one other's intentions? In scenarios where parents and coresident children cling or regress to old patterns of relatedness, I wonder: what is the status of mutual understanding? By pointing out the foundational nature of mutual understanding, I do not suggest it is simple or easy. By contrast, it can be immensely challenging to strive for mutual understanding, since no person can ever fully "know" the intentionality of another person (Jaspers, 2003; Throop, 2014). The truth of social understanding cannot be verified objectively through method; it relies on the art of understanding that integrates little truths or facts into a meaningful whole (Veyne, 2010; Zimmerman, 2015). Overall, the task of exercising practical wisdom is no small feat. As Mattingly (2017) remarks, it "places a heavy responsibility on the actor because no rules, laws, or knowledge of the good in general can supplant this situation-bound discernment" (p. 260, citing Aristotle 1986/1999). Recognizing this challenge, in the ideal scenario, this task is undertaken in a joint fashion – by both young adults *and* their parents.

Building on the previous two arguments, my fourth claim is that coresident young adults constitute themselves as capable persons by cultivating and performing a repertoire of styles of

relatedness – ideally undertaking this work alongside their parents as a joint project of moral becoming (Mattingly, 2014; Ricoeur, 1990/1992). This thesis clearly denies a general depiction of young adults as powerless subjects of domination, just as it denies the reduction of parents to that status. Instead, these findings underline myriad actions and interpretations taken by young adults that serve their own unique aims and aims shared with their parents. In brief, the findings demonstrate possibilities for coresident young adults to hold power-to-do (their power to consider themselves authors of their actions) and power-in-common (the power of a community to take action to cultivate a shared life; Ricoeur, 1990/1992). Possibilities for taking initiative appear at many junctions: they appear when young adults act out of care and concern for their parents. They appear when young adults bear accountability for discerning what counts as legitimate or compromised authority. They appear when young adults concern themselves with promoting the circulation of care. They appear when young adults think and act to respect a system of household norms, nourish family bonds through ritual, and devise initiatives to express and recognize alterity. And they appear when young adults come up against the limits of their parent-child interactions and spawn new styles of relatedness to adapt (i.e., expanding their capacities for conscientiousness, gratitude, responsibility, and intimacy). While it is possible to carry a sense of agency in one's individual actions and in responding to the actions of others, holding onto such agency seems to be more likely when living well together is a project – or art – that is shared by young adults and their parents. My findings indicate that this occurs when parents draw on practical wisdom to recognize in coresident children their unique needs for care, their readiness for trust, their worthiness of wisdom, their investment in family projects and identities, their desires for sharing dialogue, and their value as beings other than themselves.

5.3 Dialogue with the Literature

My depiction of coresiding young adults shares some features with the literature and introduces many new ones. The reader will recall that the literature tends to examine dimensions of coresidence by isolating its economic, cultural, developmental, and interpersonal qualities. Reflecting this, I have framed my dialogue with the literature as a conversation with each of the central themes, paying special attention to those surfacing from the field of psychology.

5.3.1 Economic Dimensions

In demographic and sociological literature, co-resident young adults are commonly portrayed as patients of economic forces, including globalization, recession, precarious

employment, and inaccessible housing markets (Kaplan, 2012; Lee & Painter, 2013; Lennartz et al., 2015; Matsudaira, 2016; Merten et al., 2018; Mykyta & Pilkauskas, 2015; Newman, 2012; Sironi & Furstenberg, 2012). In response to these forces, young adults draw on parental support as a resource that allows them to get by (by sheltering them from economic hardship) or get ahead (by accumulating financial wealth and/or human capital; Goldscheider & Goldscheider, 2014; Goldscheider et al., 2014; Maroto, 2019; Newman, 2012; Pustulka et al., 2021; Worth, 2021). Views of coresident young adults as responding to economic forces are extended by perspectives that position young adults and their families as citizens who are – to various degrees – buffered from these forces by state supports (Aassve et al., 2013; Arundel & Ronald, 2016; Mandic, 2008). While views of young adults as rational and economic individuals are common, many researchers – including some of those previously cited – see this depiction as insufficient for explaining rates and variations in coresidence (Beaupré et al., 2006, 2008; Bilette et al., 2011; Iacovou, 2010; Mitchell et al., 2002, 2004b; Pustulka et al., 2021; Sandberg-Thoma et al., 2015; Sassler et al., 2008; Sironi et al., 2015; South & Lei, 2015; Tomaszczyk & Worth, 2018). As described by Tomaszczyk and Worth (2018), “Discourse[s] that presume that young adults live at home as a result of economic precarity often elide a nuanced understanding of cultural expectations of coresidence” (p. 19).

The current findings reaffirm the relevance of economic challenges and opportunities in motivating young adults to live at home. Converging with past studies from American, British, Canadian, and Australian contexts, most of the participants indicated that pressures of home ownership, employment, post-secondary education, and debt factored into their evaluations of practical support provided by parents. In addition to these, costs of accessing travel, privacy, pet ownership, groceries, and central locations contributed to their appreciation for this living arrangement. While such factors surfaced in most participants’ evaluations of living at home, there were also participants who did not value or choose coresidence for economic reasons.

Whereas both economic and non-economic motivations for living at home have been identified previously, the greater contribution of this work is in bringing an interpretation of practical and economic support in terms of its symbolic and relational value. Young adults who accept practical support do so not only for financial security or prosperity, but also as an affirmation of the caring bond that practical support represents. In other words, young adults’ moral deliberations indicate that what they accept hinges not only on its calculable economic

value, but also on its inexact value as a symbol for the mutual faith between them and their parents. While this research confirms young adults' receiving the greatest material benefits in living at home, it simultaneously situates this dependence within a symbolic system where expressions of gratitude and tokens of appreciation contribute to the circulation of generosity, care, and love within the family, despite the fact that such gestures bear an inexact relation to those gifts provided by parents (i.e., being returned after some delay and carrying market a value that is incommensurable with the value of the initial gift; Ricoeur, 2004/2005). In describing the phenomenology of the intentions of giving, receiving, and giving in return, this work equips researchers to identify situations where family support "goes wrong" (Ricoeur, 2004/2005) – an understanding that cannot be derived from a balance sheet measuring economic inflows and outflows.

5.3.2 Cultural Dimensions of Coresidence

A second and less prevalent theme in the literature (Tomasczyk & Worth, 2018) posits that practices and meanings of residential transitions are heterogeneous due to differences in cultural values and social timetables (Abetz & Romo, 2021; Bilette et al., 2011; Boyd, 2000; Gee et al., 2003; Jeong et al., 2014; Milan, 2016; Mitchell & Lennox, 2020; Mitchell & Lovegreen, 2009; Mitchell et al., 2000; 2002; 2004a, 2020; Roberts et al., 2016). Commonly, this diversity is interpreted through a bifurcation of young adults into those who belong to "individualistic"/"Western" cultures and those who belong to "collectivistic"/"non-Western"/"Asian"/"familistic" cultures. Whereas the former group is characterized by its esteem for "independence, self-sufficiency, and voluntary association with family members" (Mitchell et al., 2004a, p. 425, citing Pyke & Bengtson, 1996), the latter group is conceptualized as prioritizing "traditional values of family cohesion, commitment and obligation" (Mitchell et al., 2004a, p. 424). Whereas most studies have examined culture via indications of group membership, few have offered thick descriptions (Geertz, 1973) of cultural values, practices, stories, and institutions attached to coresidence. The literature suggests that increased rates of coresidence may be partially attributable to Canada's increasing ethnocultural diversity, and particularly, an influx of immigrants from Asia (Gee et al., 2003; Milan, 2016; Mitchell et al., 2020). Meanwhile, discussions of cultural change, resistance, and reinvention within groups are scarce (especially in relation to European-descended groups). Standing as exceptions are works by Mitchell and

Lennox (2020), Abetz and Romo (2021), and Newman (2012), each of which examine lingering stigma and changing discourses surrounding coresidence in Canada or the United States.

In line with literature highlighting cultural forces, this dissertation confirms that experiences of coresidence cannot be reduced to a singular type. Concerning ethno-cultural variations, I did see some clustering between participants whose parents immigrated to Canada or who immigrated themselves (from West Africa, South Asia, and China). Their trust in parents' authority tended to extend further and histories of leaving family behind lent a unique significance to the nuclear family, with the community often standing in for extended family. Still, this group's global experiences of the parent-child bond fit alongside that of non-immigrant participants who similarly lived well with their parents. These findings underline the threat of distortion through "a falsely uniform pattern" of experience assigned via cultural membership (Taylor, 1995, p. 28).

Where this research contributes most to a cultural understanding of coresidence is in documenting the many styles of relatedness that support parent-child bonds in situations of coresidence. Notably, this work provides a clearing for future researchers to compare alternative styles of relatedness across cultural communities.

This research also contributes a depiction of parents and coresiders as agents of cultural change. Co-creating pet ownership arrangements, pseudo-rent payment models, accommodations for romantic partners, new ways of spending time together, and other inventive practices, these families extend the repertory of cultural templates for acting (Geertz, 1973). Moreover, as they make meaning of the world they are entering and inhabiting – expressing ideas about the changing economy, friendship within the family, taking in elderly parents later in life, the features of a "good" job, the moral value of debt, etc. – they also elaborate the cultural templates for understanding the world of coresidence (Geertz, 1973). Put this way, it is not hard to define young adults and their parents as bricoleurs, which Crotty (1998) defines as

a person who makes something new out of a range of materials that had previously made up something different . . . they are utterly focused on what they have to work with. The question is not, "Can I do it? Do I have the skills?" Rather the question is, "What can be made of these items? What do they lend themselves to becoming?" (p. 49)

Materialist conceptions of change (Engelhardt et al., 2016; Hughes, 2003; Matsudaira, 2016) offer little agency to human actors and cannot suffice in making sense of how a world comes to be. For that we require a cultural view of change. As put by Taylor (1995),

We need some notion of what moved people to push steadily on one direction...But what is invoked here [in acultural theories of modernity] are often motivations that are nonmoral. By that I mean motivations that can actuate people quite without connection to any moral ideal. (p. 27)

He offers as examples desires for survival, control, power, or wealth – motivations that largely parallel those used to explain historical increases to coresidence. In providing a thick description of the moral “goods” that are pursued *through* coresidence, this thesis brings a decidedly cultural view of historical change that complements materialist ones.

5.3.3 Developmental Dimensions of Coresidence

Developmentally, coresident adult children are depicted in two contrasting ways. On one hand, there are those that situate coresident young adults as relatively dependent, prone to their parents’ surveillance, and limited in their opportunities to exercise autonomy within the parent-child relationship or household (Arnett, 2004; Dubas & Peterson, 1996; Hong & Cui, 2020; Jonkmann et al., 2014; Kins & Beyers, 2010; Mendonça & Fontaine, 2013). This figure frequently implies a view of the parents as overbearing, nosy, and controlling. These characteristics are viewed as manifesting readily due to their physical proximity to and daily contact with the coresident child. The implicit assumption is that within the familiar environment of the parental home, family roles and interactions are structured and stable, leaning more towards preservation (or regression) than innovation (or development). A contrasting view depicts coresident young adults as similar compared to their independent peers – similar in their psychosocial maturity (Fozio-Thielk, 2015), as refraining from excessive reactions towards parents (Mendonça & Fontaine, 2013), and as achieving a sufficient level of privacy and autonomy within the parental home (Zupančič et al., 2012). From this perspective, adaptation and mutual learning are seen as possible for young adults and their parents, for instance, with parents learning to encourage autonomy while engaging in some monitoring and young adults adapting to their situation to achieve emotional autonomy (Fozio-Thielk, 2015). Some also note that parental support continues to be provided to some young adults after they exit the home, hinting that that the boundary of the home is not fully indexed to a person’s level of dependence

(Kins et al., 2013). Overall, researchers holding this second view warn against literal, simplistic, and de-contextualized notions of separation. As stated by Kins and colleagues (2011):

these results plead against a literal interpretation of separation as physical disengagement from parents and instead support a view on separation as intrapsychic process (Blos, 1967, 1979; Mahler, 1963) . . . Although physical distancing from the family by moving out of the parental home may be an outward manifestation of the inner process of separation, it is not the core element of this process. (p. 660)

At the outset, it is important to recognize that nearly all of these conclusions in the literature have been reached through comparisons between coresiding and non-coresiding young adults. Given that my research focuses on the worlds of parent-child relations among coresiders, my object of research is fundamentally different. Still, conclusions about coresiders and parents – and about the role of living together – are possible in both cases. Recognizing these divergent starting points, let me state what I believe this thesis says about development.

First and most clearly, these findings do not finalize young adults as dominated by their parents by virtue of sharing a home. Instead, they describe a general sense of freedom in their experiences with their parents, where trusting in legitimate authority in select domains can be separated from experiences of tyrannical governance or totalitarian control (Arendt, 1961, 1963). Of course, some participants experienced more constriction than others; however, in these cases, the shared living arrangement was not viewed as the only contributor to that sense of constriction (and other agents of transformation were thought to be even more relevant for changing the dynamic). Recognizing distinctions between legitimate authority and illegitimate control also permits this thesis to show how coresiders in their 20s and early 30s generally express appreciation for parental guidance when it “counts as” legitimate. Likewise, they show resentment and frustration in contexts where parents appear to fail to transmit or wisely apply guiding principles. Importantly, modes and consequences of influence were highly contextualized, with distinct roles and stakes across domains of education, work, finances, romance, child-rearing, the use of space, and others. These insights suggest that future developmental work consider devising stronger conceptual distinctions between forms of influence and their consequences for young adults’ powers-to-do within specific domains of life.

This thesis lends evidence to the second developmental claim that mutual and adaptive change is possible between parents and coresiding children. Indeed, it suggests that mutual

adaptation is even necessary, given the changing nature of people and their environments. Though it was beyond the scope of this project to detect or synthesize all transformations in the family, I was nevertheless able to identify changes related to forms and degrees of support (i.e., with practical support arrangements changing according to the child's financial and occupational status and with young adults becoming more grateful support over time), forms of governance (with fewer explicit rules over time and greater internalization of principles), intimacy (with most young adults reporting becoming closer with their parents), and civil cohabitation (with participants reporting a growth of conscientiousness over time). This research also confirms the importance of adaptation being mutual; when adaptation was depicted as one-sided, participants tended to feel more tension with their parents.

In focusing on family relationships of young adults, this work has provoked some reflection about the study of “emerging adulthood.”⁵² Admittedly, my sample skews older than the typical age ranges used to define emerging adulthood (18 to 25 or 30), yet only two participants were older than 30 and all participants described retrospective changes occurring from adolescence to the present. With this in mind, I find it warranted to offer some reflections on how the current work might inform this field.

Arnett (2004) has claimed emerging adulthood to be the “freest, most independent period of life for most people” (p. 292). He has also asserted that each of the cornerstones of becoming an adult (taking responsibility for oneself, making independent decisions, and becoming financially independent) “has connotations of independence specifically *from parents*” (Arnett, 2004, p. 49). I will not dispute these claims; rather, what I wonder is whether such claims have inadvertently contributed to an under-appreciation for parent-child bonding during this period. A review of studies examining family dynamics during emerging adulthood indicates most parent-child bonds becoming “more mutual, horizontal and closer...as well as less conflictual” during emerging adulthood (Oliveira et al., 2020, p. 4). And yet, the conceptualizations of parent-child bonds during this period remain narrowly tied to the emerging adulthood's neo-analytic origins

⁵² All along the thesis, I have intentionally refrained from using the terms “emerging adult” and “emerging adulthood.” I have done so because emerging adulthood as a concept seems to oscillate between two meanings: on one hand, merely identifying a group of people within a certain age range (i.e., ages 18 to 25 or 30), and on the other, identifying a specific type of experience (i.e., one emphasizing identity exploration, instability, self-focus, feeling in-between, and an opening up of possibilities [Gilmore, 2019; Hendry & Kloep, 2007a; Syed & Mitchell, 2013]). I opted to use the terms “young adulthood” and “young adults” because these terms carry fewer presumptions and fewer opportunities for misunderstanding, being widely understood as an age group.

and their emphasis on individuation. By contrast, this thesis highlights a plurality of relational figures, styles, actions, and ideals that support transformations to parent-child bonds over time. Notably, this thesis identifies a range of capacities that develop in relationship with parents, not only through separation: for example, self-responsibility emerges as a quality of character that flourishes for the good of the parent-child relationship; independent decision-making requests their capacity to see and trust legitimate authority represented by their parents; practical support is relevant not only for propelling paths to independence but also for its contributions to interdependence and the affirmation of bonds; taking initiative is motivated by an unwillingness to burden others; distance from parents as parents permits proximity to parents as people, and so on.

In examining young adults' maturity in a relational sense, this thesis responds to theorists of the ethics of care, who have long called for the study of relational ethics to be given as much credence as the study of abstract, rational, and utilitarian ethics. As argued by Held (2006), a narrow emphasis on the former can be distorting:

Every person starts out as a child dependent on those providing us care, and we remain interdependent with others in thoroughly fundamental ways throughout our lives. That we can think and act as if we were independent depends on a network of social relations making it possible for us to do so. (pp. 13-14)

People are not “mushrooms sprung from nowhere” and such a view “obscures the very real fact that’s of dependency for everyone when they are young, for most people at various periods in their lives when they are ill or old or infirm, for some who are disabled, and for all those engaged in unpaid ‘dependency work’” (Held, 2006, p. 14). Similarly, in the field of development, Carol Gilligan has called for developmental theorists to balance their portraits of human life and change, bringing bonding and relationality into the picture as much as separation and individuation. Gilligan’s (1982/1993) arguments continue to ring true in many respects:

there seems to be a line of development missing from current depictions of adult development, a failure to describe the progression of relationships towards a maturity of interdependence. Though the truth of separation is recognized in most developmental texts, the reality of continuing connection is lost or relegated to the background where the figures of women appear. In this way, the emerging conception of adult development

casts a familiar shadow on women's lives, pointing again toward the incompleteness of their separation, depicting them as mired in relationships. (pp. 155-16)

Perhaps a similar shadow has been immanent in moral panic over coresidence, where adult children living at home are seen as incompletely separated and "mired" in their parent-child bonds. Potentially, what Gilligan (1982/1993) describes may be based not so much on the contrast between men and women, but on the capitalist system and its ideals and practices of the free market, which are arguably prioritized above mutual care, interdependence, and gift-giving (ideals and practices that nevertheless support the viability of the capitalist system).

In any case, it seems to me that young adults do not only reorganize their parent-child relationships during this period of life (c.f., Nelson, 2020; Tanner, 2006); they also take part in processes of eroding, supplementing, diversifying, recomposing, and deepening dimensions of worlds they share with their parents (Goodman, 1978).

5.3.4 Dimensions of Well-being

A fourth theme in the literature depicts relations between coresidence and young adult well-being. The simplest version of this theme suggests that past a certain age, living with one's parents as an adult will tend to be viewed as violating a normative transition causing young adults to internalize social shame, experience low self-esteem, and have low life satisfaction (Nikolaev, 2015). A somewhat more nuanced view suggests that co-resident young adult will assign their living situation a diversity of meanings and only some of these meanings will lead to negative evaluations of their selves and worlds – for example, if they view themselves as wavering on important decisions or opting for a living arrangement that misaligns with their personal needs or values (Kins et al., 2009; McMillin, 2017). This view permits that when young adults feel especially vulnerable, parental support may even garner positive assessments of themselves and their lives, given that protection from distressing situations is desirable in those cases (Fingerman et al., 2012; Seiffge-Krenke, 2010; Watson et al., 2016). As an extension of this view, personal needs and values are partially informed by the cultures young adults belong to; thus, diverse conceptions of the life-course, family, and self will come into play when young adults assign evaluative meaning to their statuses as coresiders (Smorti et al., 2020).

My research did not include a global evaluation of self-esteem, and so my arguments must be confined to the relational worlds participants discussed. As indicated in my comparison of worlds, the data revealed a diversity of self-evaluations, with the majority skewing positive.

The participant with the worst experiences and most diminished sense of agency connected disempowerment to a multiplicity of sources – not primarily or solely viewing these as caused by her living arrangement itself (indeed, she noted that were she to move out, nothing would likely change in the relationship and she and her mother still would not talk). The same was the case for participants who felt somewhat burdened by accommodating their parents; living at home might have intensified their exposure to their parents’ obstinate or unreasonable ways, but it was not a primary determinant of their self-esteem in relation to their parents. Finally, the participants who evinced the most positive experiences of self-in-relation carried capacities to move fluidly between modes of relatedness within their parents, not perceiving this living situation to be a central factor in this form of relational self-esteem.

In sum, positive constructions of self in relationship with parents were based on particular features of the relationship more than on the living arrangement itself. Whether or not such a pattern might translate to young adults’ global evaluations of themselves or their worlds is difficult to say. I would imagine that for different young adults, we might see distinct weightings of priorities that would collectively ground a global sense of well-being (Shweder et al., 2003). Taking as a model the findings regarding their relational experiences, the greatest well-being might be found among participants who move easily between coresidence and a variety of other lifeworlds (such as work, romance, community, entertainment, etc.). In reflecting on the phenomenological features of chronic illness, Good (1994) notes something along these lines:

Lived experience is organized in natural social rhythms, moving activity to rest, from work to play, concentration to relaxation. Exclusive involvement in one or the other is a sign of pathology, or a moral flaw. We have some sense from the anthropological literature of the social shaping of such rhythms, as social life moved from formal transactions to intimacy, from structure and hierarchy to ritual and *communitas*, from the everyday world to specialized worlds of religious experience or aesthetics or philosophical contemplation, and on a larger scale, from periods of order and quietude to eruptions of social dynamism or revolution. (p. 131)

Perhaps the diversity of experiences and modes of relatedness supporting the good life within the parental home have their parallel in the global worlds of coresiders; future research should explore whether this may be the case.

5.3.5 Relational Dimensions

A fifth theme in the literature gathers depictions of young adults in relationship with their parents and evaluating the shared home they occupy together. Research identifies young adults (as well as their parents) as generally satisfied with the living arrangement (Aquilino & Supple, 1991; Casares & White, 2018; Fingerman et al., 2017; Mitchell, 1998; Mitchell, 2004a; Parker et al., 2012; Sassler et al., 2008; Worth & Tomaszczyk, 2017). The research also demonstrates that coresident young adults participate in a diversity of support exchange arrangements with their parents, but most often occupy roles as beneficiaries of their parents' material support, which is accepted as a means to promote goals of financial, educational, and career mobility – goals that parents generally acknowledge and legitimize (Aquilino, 1997; Casares & White, 2018; Dehn, 2017; Fingerman et al., 2017; Hill & Hirsch, 2020; Iacovou & Davia, 2019; Leopold, 2012; Lewis & West, 2017; Medgyesi & Nagy, 2019; Milan, 2016; Napolitano, 2015; Sassler et al., 2008; Sestito & Sica, 2014; Tomaszczyk & Worth, 2018; Warner et al., 2017; West et al., 2017; White & Rogers, 1997; Whitehead, 2018). It is currently unclear whether coresiding young adults experience more conflict with their parents than their independently-residing peers (Aquilino, 1997; Fingerman et al., 2017; Ward & Spitze, 2007), but certainly, conflict appears as another key topic in studies of coresidential families. A primary source of conflict identified in the literature concerns limitations to young adults' autonomy and privacy (Dehn, 2017; Hall & Zygmunt, 2021; Henriques et al., 2016; Hill & Hirsch, 2019; Mann-Feder et al., 2014; Napolitano, 2015; Newman, 2012; Sassler et al., 2008; Strom & Strom 2005; White, 2002). Conflicts over respective labor and financial contributions constitute a second source of strain stressed in the literature (Newman, 2012; Sassler et al., 2008; Warner et al., 2017; White, 2002). Given their simultaneous desires for support and independence, coresident young adults are also often viewed as experiencing ambivalence with respect to their parent-child bonds (Henriques et al., 2016; Kins et al., 2013; Mann-Feder et al., 2014; White, 2002), though they do not appear to be any more ambivalent than their independently-residing peers (Fingerman et al., 2017). Finally, when it comes to family processes and transformation, emphasis has been placed on the presence or absence of formal expectations and overt negotiation between parents and children (Abetz & Romo, 2021; Casares & White, 2018; Warner et al., 2012; West et al., 2017) with few other transformational processes acknowledged, with the exceptions of Tomaszczyk and Worth's (2018) allusion to loving bonds that buffer young adults from relationship strain and Henriques

et al.'s (2016) description of young adults' resistance, dissociation, and ritual expressions of conflict (i.e., playfulness, humor) that affirm adult identities and mutual ties.

This research brings considerable depth and breadth to our understandings of parent-child relationships within contexts of coresidence. Making sense of the general satisfaction with shared living arrangements, this research contributes a robust account of the diverse set-ups that nourish a good life shared by young adults and their parents who live together. In addition, this research highlights that the significance of parental support is not limited to its servicing of economic goals for the young adult. The acceptance of practical support is situated within a system of gift-giving where the marketplace value of the gift exists alongside its value as a symbol for the relationship. To recognize the marketplace value without also considering the bond value of practical support distorts its implications for families.

With respect to the topic of conflict, this thesis has two major implications. First, this research offers researchers departure points for bringing precision of their conceptualizations and measures of conflict. The literature currently offers multiple measures of conflict within coresidence, ranging from slight irritation to disagreement to coercive control; what is missing is a sense for experiential significance of each of these measures. The current study finds diverse meanings and consequences associated to different forms of tension and conflict, whether in terms of the injustice of another person's mood spilling over, the frustration of self-censorship, the ambivalence of self-doubt paired with parental concern, the pain of perceived neglect, or the patient tolerance of well-established difference. Drawing from such findings, researchers may find it valuable to examine the longevity of negative emotions accompanying various types of conflict or tension (e.g., "how long did were you angry for") and the results of conflict engagement (e.g., whether conflict escalates with no reconciliation, whether it provides a meaningful mode of shared expression, or whether it forges new, mutual understandings and practices that strengthen the bond). As a second contribution to the literature, this research extends knowledge of the sources of conflict beyond issues of privacy, autonomy, or advice on major life choices (though each of these sources were also supported by the present findings). Varied degrees of tension or conflict were observed to be sourced in perceived neglect, mood spillover, unreasonable or contradictory expectations, sibling favoritism, bad advice, modelling of poor behaviors, rigid role adherence, divergent expressive styles, unreconciled interpretations of support, difficulty reassuring parents, parental marital problems, etc.

With respect to the depiction of young adults as experiencing psychological or sociological ambivalence (i.e., the coexistence of contradictory emotions and/or social roles), my response requires careful maneuvering. On one hand, I have suggested that young adults occupy a multiplicity of roles with complementary and even opposite functions, and which also carry with them unique repertoires of emotion (i.e., the irritation of mood spillover being quite different from the contentment related to receiving care). In this sense, one could argue that indeed, these young adults demonstrate psychological and sociological ambivalence about their parent-child bonds. However, I would argue along the lines of Coser (1966) that the coexistence of contradictory roles and emotions constitutes a form of conflict resolution and creative adaptation. As he writes:

It is the ability of the individual with a “strong ego” to make use of the accumulated resources developed in manifold patterned role relationships of the past and present in the performance of his various roles. Role relationships, rather than being a source of constraint as some will have it, provide the opportunity for socially creative behavior. (p. 187)

Finally, with respect to the topic of family processes, this thesis contributes insights through conceptually grounded and thick descriptions (Geertz, 1973) of gift-giving, authority, friendship, ritual, and household codes of respect. Notably, this work underlines that normative expectations for behavior are only one of several mechanisms that support a well-functioning and happy coresiding family. This raises the question: in other adult bonds – whether the those of siblings, friends, cousins, colleagues, or roommates – what is the significance of interweaving relational forms and styles? Which functions are universally necessary across different sorts of relationships and how are these functions manifested as local variations of style or performance?

5.4 Implications for Practice and Policy

Researchers have issued recommendations for policy, practitioners, and families. Calls have been made to identify how parental coresidence is impacted by (and shapes the outcomes of) policies and programs – including those related to housing, student loans, labor markets, and food assistance (Bilette et al., 2011; Kaplan, 2012; Maroto, 2019; Matsudaira, 2016; Mitchell et al., 2004a, 2004b; Mykyta & Pilkauskas, 2015; Sironi & Furstenberg, 2012; Worth, 2021). Policymakers and researchers have also been asked to reassess families’ roles in absorbing the financial shocks associated to a changing economy (Newman, 2012; Swartz et al., 2011; Warner

et al., 2012; Worth, 2021). Recommendations have been made to increase state supports to young adults and families to reduce wealth inequalities perpetuated by intergenerational transfers (De Marco & Berzin, 2008; Lewis & West, 2017; Maroto, 2019; Manzoni, 2016). Providing adequate access to housing (Aeby & Heath, 2019; Krahn et al., 2018; Lennartz et al., 2015; McMillin, 2017) could help youth who wish to reside independently, though Manzoni (2016) highlights that supports must extend beyond this, since many young adults who do not reside with their parents still rely on their financial support. Other proposals target the costs of higher education, with suggestions to subsidize costs of higher education, support students coping with high debt loads, and promote the success of students with diverse backgrounds (Krahn et al., 2018; Manzoni, 2016; Maroto, 2019). Finally, Krahn et al. (2018) has recommended incentives for employers who offer permanent, full-time work to young adults.

In brief, these authors recommend extending supports to younger generations and evening the playing field for young adults of diverse socioeconomic backgrounds. These proposals align with participants' perceptions of challenges in getting a foothold in today's economy (i.e., viewing it as hard to get a good job, make enough money, become a homeowner, etc.). Still, it is difficult to see how economic policies would improve relationship dynamics. I observed no relationship between participants' contentment living at home and their personal or familial socioeconomic resources; the three participants who expressed the lowest satisfaction with their living arrangements came from diverse economic situations, with one occupying a full-time job (no post-secondary education), one being severely in debt (with a Bachelor's education and completing a diploma at present), and one having access to a family trust that guaranteed financial security (and working on a graduate degree). Likewise, the two participants who were most satisfied (and were even contemplating long-term stays with their mothers) were in different socioeconomic positions, with one employed full-time and securely for over 10 years (with no post-secondary education) and the other making virtually no income as a graduate student. Given that some young adults do not live at home for economic reasons, it is also questionable that these policies would address the priorities most important to them.

Researchers have also made recommendations for service-providers who work with young adults and their families. Clinicians have been encouraged to identify harmful family dynamics and promote mutual adjustment (Casares & White, 2018; Kins et al., 2011). Recommended strategies involve supporting families in clarifying boundaries and ground rules

(Casares & White, 2018), finding new ways to relate to one another (Kins et al., 2013), reconfiguring power relationships (Casares & White, 2018), identifying sources of strength (Casares & White, 2018), and co-constructing a “positive family narrative, capable of generating meaningful shared experiences and promoting greater financial stability and professional success for a boomerang child” (Casares & White, 2018, p. 239). Clinicians are encouraged to help parents use empathy and self-restraint to promote the child’s autonomy as well as encouraging young adults to choose living arrangements that fit with their needs and values (Kins et al., 2009). Proposals have been made for universities to increase awareness of their health services and potentially offer financial counselling and planning services (Watson et al., 2016). Uniquely, Culatta and Clay-Warner (2021) suggest that young adults receive more information about the changing transition to adulthood and its economic underpinnings – a strategy that might reduce psychological distress related to the feeling of “falling behind.”

Based on my findings, I agree that professionals ought to encourage mutual adjustment, shared understanding, and new ways of relating. I would add to these a need to address the emotional underpinnings of rigidity, misunderstanding, and denial of alterity. That is, it seemed to me that discomfort with vulnerability sometimes contributed to young adults’ failures to express themselves or initiate new patterns of action. For parents, too, experiences of vulnerability may challenge their abilities to absorb the child’s messages, accept their difference, or experiment with new patterns of activity. Family members might benefit from considering what capacities they carry to respond to and managing their own insecurities. Such self-awareness may require moments of temporary removal and thoughtful reflection to permit re-engagement in life in a way that promotes moral action (Arendt, 1971).

This research also supports the view that families carry a need for positive family narratives; as pointed out by Frank (2010), Mattingly (1994), Geertz (1973) and others, stories express and provide a template for acting in the world. In that sense, the importance of a positive family narrative has great implications for the everyday lives of coresiding parents and young adults. Beyond finding a shared narrative that can reconcile and affiliate family members, I would add that parents and children alike benefit from thinking with *multiple stories*. Following Frank (2010), this research indicates that a diversity of narrative resources keeps stories from getting out of hand or dangerous. Lois’ sense of defeat, for example, was largely (though not totally) defined by a singular perspective, a repetitious set of roles, and an adherence to the tragic

genre. By contrast, most other experiences drew on a greater diversity of viewpoints, roles, and genres. Recall, too, that narrative resources are not discovered or created by individuals; they are collectively shared and negotiated. Mitchell and Lennox (2020) have argued that many mainstream news stories about coresidence tend to be formulaic and narrow in content and theme. As I noted in the introduction, the pandemic may have shifted the discourse to some extent. Perhaps, in engaging with a broader repertoire of stories, we might see parents and young adults interpreting their relationships and living situations with greater fluidity and acuity.

Few researchers have outlined recommendations for families themselves. As an exception, Abetz and Romo (2021) identify family preparation and open-mindedness as key principles for harmonious experiences of living together. Like Casares and White's (2018) recommendation for clinicians, Abetz and Romo (2021) state that parents and young adults ought to set clear expectations to reduce the stress of uncertainty related to adult children's return home. Abetz and Romo (2021) also recommend parents avoid comparing their life-course experiences to those of their children, since such "comparative lessons" tend to be internalized as negative judgments, even when they are well-meaning. Parents should instead exercise open-mindedness and perspective-taking to understand their child's paths to adulthood and the conditions that have influenced them (Abetz & Romo, 2021).

Drawing on the present findings, I can confirm the importance of common expectations; however, I would tend to view these as insufficient by themselves, particularly when such expectations merely involve contractual obligations. In reducing the totality of the ethical sphere into codified norms for behavior, obligations – on their own – are likely to fail to promote a fluid, dynamic, and positive family experience. Families who rely only on a set of common rules for living together will be poorly equipped to fulfill the complex and diverse needs for interacting and maintaining bonds between coresiders and their parents. While normative rules may provide structure and predictability, they cannot engender trusting, loving, or caring bonds since they make every person subject to the law as opposed to accountable to the person (Ricoeur, 1990/1992). According to the present findings, families are best served by drawing on shared ground rules as one mechanism among others for governing action. Complementary functions may be served by incorporating opportunities to transmit and receive values through storytelling, teaching, and modelling; bonding rituals; exchanges of perspective, gift-giving systems; collective negotiation (not only the moment of creating a contract, but also in everyday

determinations of action and judgment). Future research might also examine whether the use of coresidence contracts carries implications for relatedness through these other mechanisms (for example, does the lack of trust implied by the contract diminish possibilities for gift-giving?).

Some may find comfort in setting ground rules or developing contracts for reducing the threat of the unknown, and yet, the outcomes of action always bear a “radical uncertainty” (Mattingly, 2014, p. 16). We may ask for promises or commitments, but the intentionality of others is never fully visible and can only be gleaned through interpretations of actions (Jaspers, 2003). Recognizing these dilemmas, parents and young adults might benefit from considering how uncertainty itself can be grafted onto their individual and collective processes of moral becoming (Mattingly, 2014). Is it possible to strive for the good, while retaining an understanding that there are perils, obstacles, and possibilities for failure? Can the ideals and practices of families be sufficiently adaptive to embrace that “human flourishing requires the pursuit of goods that fall well outside of human control, especially the control of a single moral agent” (Mattingly, 2014, p. 109)? Can the discomfort of uncertainty generate new initiatives? Can accepting the invisibility of others’ intentions support a willingness to endure, inquire, and even grow from that position of unknowing? Can the impossibility of predicting the future spawn moments for sharing desires or fears? Which collective resources can families deploy to live peacefully with the inescapable uncertainty of themselves, of others, of the bond between themselves and others?

On the principle of “open-mindedness,” I would tend to confirm its value (or, more precisely, the value of respecting the alterity of the other, c.f., Ricoeur, 1990/1992). The question then becomes: how can family members embrace each others’ differences? Through sheer will, meditation, or setting aside of bias? From a social constructionist perspective, no person can fully cast themselves out of thinking through stories or collective templates. We can listen to stories and try to map them onto all other stories we had the “dumb luck” to have heard in the past (Frank, 2010). Or we can listen to stories with “smart luck” – listening to a diversity of stories for the unique possibilities of understanding each one opens up, including those understandings that may at first be “intolerable” to us (Frank, 2010). Frank (2010) describes:

Smart listening does not simply react to a story according to its fit with previous stories. Smart listening hears the story as a potential *hermaion*, a lucky find, a gift that will require working with but can bring riches. Having heard a story, retelling it in the right

place at the right time and especially to the right people also requires luck that can be smart or dumb; that right occasion of telling is another *hermaion*. (p. 158)

If a parent automatically and arbitrarily draws on their experiences as a baseline from which to judge all other stories, this can cause trouble. Young adults can fall into the same pattern, believing that because their parents lived their young adult life in a different historical time, their experience is devoid of value. By drawing on smart luck, parents and young adults can work to examine one another's stories with curiosity for the unique experiences they reveal, not only for their divergence from the stories each happened to be cast into.

5.5 Limitations of the Current Study

The reader will note that I make no mention of limitations due to generalizability, reliability, or internal validity; in line with my grounding in a social constructionist approach (and more specifically, in phenomenological and hermeneutic traditions) these criteria for excellence in research are not ones I employ. Instead, most of these limitations are grounded in the techniques I used to draw out different types of storytelling, which could be improved upon to “bring in more stories” (Frank, 2010, p. 153) – an aim that simultaneously holds interpretive, ethical, and political value.

Most of the participants in this study told success stories, where they and their parents had found ways to live more-or-less peacefully together. My recruitment did not actively target success stories; however, I also made no effort to purposively balance participants with globally positive experiences and globally negative experiences. Indeed, in requiring all participants to have lived at home for a minimum of four months, I may have unintentionally filtered out those families less successful in finding a way to live together. Future researchers might consider a more fine-grained analysis of negative family experiences and the mechanisms that underpin them. The positive expressive and relational processes outlined in this thesis could be compromised or broken, leading to significant breaches in the relationship or even estrangement. Data collected about non-residential parents (which I deemed beyond the scope of the thesis) even pointed to this possibility. There also may be aspects of the parent-child relationship undetected in this thesis that contribute to experiences of suffering. It could be hugely illuminating to compare families who thrive through coresidence and who become estranged through it, reflecting on whether the two groups reverse one another's processes or whether there are unique features that characterize these divergent plots.

One of my initial goals for the thesis was to be able to describe a pattern of changes in participants parent-child relations from adolescence to the present. While I have brought a sense of temporality into many of the chapters, it was not possible for me to trace each dimension of the parent-child relationship across time nor was it possible to identify the key turning points in which each of these dimensions of the relationship changed. What I did not understand, in constructing my life history question, was that the parent-child bond is made up of multiple modes of relatedness, and while some of these are bound up with one another, they seem to also have some independence. Beyond this, participants' narratives about their bonds with one parent were only partially shared with the other parent, and there were sometimes step-parents to consider as well – all of which complicated the storytelling event. In brief, I thought I was requesting participants to tell one story, when in fact, I was asking them to tell me multiple stories. This made my examination of processes somewhat limited and uneven across participants. To bring a more robust understanding of changes across time, I recommend that future researchers bring down the scope of each life history to get a more comprehensive view: it is my sense that each of the relationship domains presented in this thesis (caregiver/receiver, authority/subordinate, tyrant/subjected, cohabitant, family member, friend) in relation to each parent (or parent's partner) could be taken up as a separate life history question, which would make it possible to gain a fuller view of each process and would allow the researcher to compare participants systematically.

Keeping with the topic of temporality, another key limitation of this thesis was in accounting for how decisions, norms, and rules were established. Although I was able to capture some global shifts and transformations, the key mechanisms, events, or revelations that prompted these were frequently obscure, with participants unable to recall the specific moment (or series of moments) triggering changes. It seemed that many of the negotiations about shared life may have occurred earlier in life (i.e., prior to the end of adolescence) or they occurred slowly and tacitly from adolescence to the present (rather than suddenly or overtly). In brief, I uncovered few depictions of clear and obvious turning points in their parent-child relationships, with gradual developments being the more common type of change process described. Given these findings, it would be my recommendation to future researchers to conduct interviews not at a singular point in time but at multiple well-spaced time points to capture quiet processes of negotiation or conflict – processes that otherwise might be forgotten or recalled only in terms of the general

shape of development. For example, research participants could be interviewed bi-weekly for a year, with each interview session focusing on recent episodes in the family and the series of interviews capturing global changes taking place.

As a fourth limitation to this research – and interview-based research generally – I encountered difficulties collecting details about participants' conversations with their parents. To me, conversation topics held the possibility of understanding the level of intimacy that participants had with their parents. Were they talking openly with each other about things that mattered to them? Were they revealing new dimensions of themselves through such conversations? As I noted in the section on friendship, much of the time, participants signalled that their topics of conversation were unremarkable or mundane, and not worth getting into the details of. Although I collected sufficient details and global comments to give me some sense of the intimacy they experienced (or did not experience), future research could certainly mine parent-child conversations for their significance. One option might be to ask parents and young adults about their most recent conversations with one another (whether through interviews or journal prompts). As an alternative method and perspective, one might use observational methods to interpret the significance of everyday discussions between parents and coresident children. I have focused here on conversation as an everyday interaction type worthy of fine-grained analysis, but this idea could be extended to other minute forms of interaction, such as greetings and goodbyes, instant messaging exchanges, coordinated movements in the kitchen, or negotiations over television entertainment.

As a fifth limitation, comparisons based on participant characteristics were limited due to my recruitment method. The only purposive sampling I did was in an effort to prioritize non-student participants: in the first four months of recruitment, I chose not to advertise my study through university channels, given that students tend to be over-represented in the literature on youth and young adulthood (Rosenbaum et al., 2015). In total, recruitment took seven months, and this was with relatively liberal inclusion criteria and few exclusion criteria. A purposive method – with balances of ages, genders, and cultural backgrounds – might have taken much longer to complete. Given that universities impose time constraints on graduate research and funding, there was a practical disincentive to use more purposive sampling. Still, for those researchers who might have had access to a greater number of prospective participants (and who are not limited by the practical constraints of a graduate program) purposive sampling could be

highly effective for drawing comparisons. This study hinted at potential differences of family interactions based on gender (in terms of reciprocated intimacy and the organization of household labor), culture (in explaining family commitment and accepting some forms or degrees of authority), financial resources (in predicting practical support), educational status (in predicting practical support), parent socioeconomic background (in guidance concerning post-secondary education and in parents' provision of financial support), the multigenerational structure of the household (in spurring conflicts of authority), and the role of mothers' partners, particularly those who entered the family late in life (who were assigned fewer roles or less important roles as caregivers, authorities, and family members). There are many more patterns to investigate in Saskatchewan, especially given its unique geographic, demographic, and economic characteristics. These patterns might be best captured through an explicitly comparative approach. For instance, researchers could examine the parent-child relationships of rural youth who move for post-secondary and youth who remain in their parents' homes within cities. Young workers in the oil and gas sector may also showcase differences in the forms and functions of family bonds and living arrangements compared to workers in other industries, especially given the relatively high wages that can be earned in this industry.

5.6 Future Directions

I have offered several suggestions for approaching future research, based on the limitations I encountered in this study. Here, I offer five further recommendations for orienting future work on parent-child relationships within contexts of coresidence.

First, I would suggest future researchers take a longer look at coresidence. Longitudinal interviewing could highlight how, over time, family members continue to create, appropriate, and reassign meaning to their relationships and to the living arrangement. By interviewing young adults prior to, during, and after they live with their parents, shifting networks of meaning could be traced. Do depictions of living at home improve or worsen as young adults move out of the parental home? How do young adults' recollections take on new meaning when they face the decision to let their adult child live at home (or not)? Does caring for elderly parents redefine memories of coresidence, for better or for worse? Where living together has been as a "dark" chapter for parents or children, what makes healing possible? What triggers re-narrativization? Do rosier depictions of living at home become tinged with darker contours? If so, when? What social roles, circumstances, and life events alter people's recollections of a life previously lived

and shared together? How do stories of living at home continue to breathe long after they are first told? (Frank, 2010).

Second, I recommend researchers take a closer look at the constitutive figures, aims, and actions supporting the life of the parent-child relationship. Within this thesis, I have offered multiple departure points in this regard, but these could be explored with greater precision within and outside of contexts of coresidence. Charting the inner workings of families as they move through mid-life stages, researchers could begin to sort through parent-child relationships in adulthood as a topic of its own right – one that deserves attention given that "the longest period of parent-child relationships today takes place in the adult years for both generations" (Seiffge-Krenke, 2013, p. 121).

As a third orientation for future research, I recommend that academics situate young adult's experiences of the parent-child relationship in relation to their experiences in other kinds of relationships. Very clearly, bonds with pets seem to intersect with parent-child relations, providing points of connection, shared entertainment, meaningful roles, and opportunities for caregiving that otherwise might be inaccessible. How do bonds with pets exert influence over the parent-child relationship and how does the reverse process occur? For the sake of simplifying the writing, I commonly referred to mothers' partners in this project as "parents" when their statuses were not always clearly conforming to that status. When parents re-partner after the child's adolescent years, how do those new partnerships shape the parent-child bond? This research was also limited in its exploration of siblings, romantic partners, and friends. Participants' social networks outside of the family, especially, were obscured from view, though they likely are an important backdrop for the way parent-child dynamics play out. Future research might address how the meaning and value of the parent-child bond emerges in relation to alternative presence or absence of close friendships, trusting romantic relationships, or loyal siblings. Some of the interview data also lent the interpretation that parents' value as roommates might be usefully compared to young adults' hypothetical or lived experiences with peer roommates. Finally, it may be worth examining the parent-child relationship alongside other bonds of transmission and authority. How does robust or unsubstantial mentorship outside of the family contribute to the value and experience of mentorship within the family?

As a fourth recommendation, future researchers could explore parent-child relationships through a more diverse set of perspectives. Already some work has been done to examine

parents' views of coresidence; however, in-depth, qualitative research on parents' relational experiences is lacking. To my knowledge, no research has examined siblings' views of coresident young adults. This dissertation provided clues about the relevance of sibling judgments, care, and loyalty; from a different direction, it would be fascinating to explore how siblings depict one another's relationships with the same parent(s), with the potential for similarities, differences, and even disparities coming to the fore. Likewise, there may be value in exploring the views of romantic partners of coresident young adults, where their dual inside-outside role in the family (particularly for unmarried young adults) might bring them to observations that challenge or rearticulate their observations of their own families.

My final recommendation focuses less on the subject and perspective of research participants and instead addresses researchers of coresidence. In attempting to synthesize the findings of the literature, it became apparent to me that much of the research on coresidence takes place within siloed disciplines, where depictions of economic, cultural, relational, and developmental processes seldom mingle. I would hope in the future to see research that underlines and describes the dynamics *between* diverse realms of human social life. For instance, how are entries into the parental home both economic decisions and relationship decisions? How does learning to stand alone imply a capacity to be relied upon? How are economic obstacles collectively narrativized, shared, and legitimized as being culturally "real" while also being "real" in a material sense? How can we recognize sources of resilience within families while at the same time creating programs that reduce barriers to the good life? How can we bring color, light, and movement to the study of coresidence? How can we further develop our feel for "the texture of family life" shared by parents and young adults who live together (Furstenberg, 2010, p. 74)?

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APPENDICES

Appendix A: Recruitment Advertisement

Department of Psychology
University of Saskatchewan



ARE YOU BETWEEN 25 AND 35 AND LIVING WITH YOUR PARENTS?

TELL ME ABOUT IT!

I am looking for volunteers to take part in a study examining how people living at home find meaning in their parent-child relationships. As a participant in this study, you'd be interviewed about your parent-child relationships over time, your everyday experiences of home and family, and your understanding of what it means to become an adult in today's world.

Your participation would involve three interview sessions, each of which would take approximately 1 to 2 hours.

In appreciation for your time, you will receive a \$25 gift card for Tim Hortons or Starbucks.

For more information about this study, or to volunteer for this study, please contact:

Kathrina Mazurik
Department of Psychology
at
306-966-2603
Email: kathrina.mazurik@usask.ca

This study has been reviewed by, and received approval through, the Research Ethics Office, University of Saskatchewan.



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Appendix B: Screening Interview

Hello;

My name is Kathrina Mazurik, and I am a graduate student in the Department of Psychology at the University of Saskatchewan. I am responding to your call/e-mail indicating your interest in my study, *Experiences of parent-child relationships among co-resident young adults*

Thank you for your interest in my study. Before we discuss the research process, I need to confirm that you meet the criteria for the study. Are you:

1. Between 25 and 35 years of age? yes no

2. English speaking? yes no

3. Currently living in the same household as one or more of your parents? [*not in a separate legal suite, or in a home that is owned by your parents, but not inhabited by them?*]

yes no

4. Been in this living situation for at least four months?

yes no

5. Willing to share with me your experiences of your parent-child relationships in three audio-taped interviews for approximately one to two hours? yes no

If the interested person answers no to any of questions 1 to 5, I will thank them for contacting me and explain that I am unable to include them in my research project.

If they meet the criteria I will read to them the letter of invitation which briefly explains the study and ask them if they have any questions.

If they indicate that they would like to volunteer to participate in this study, I will ask for their contact information and arrange a time and place for the first interview meeting.

Name:

Phone number: _____

E-mail: _____

Meeting place:

Appendix C: Letter of Invitation

My name is Kathrina Mazurik. I am a graduate student in the College of Arts and Science at the University of Saskatchewan. I am conducting a research study as part of the requirements for my Doctoral Degree in Psychology and I would like to invite you to participate.

I am studying the meanings of parent-child relationships of individuals who currently reside with their parents. I am particularly interested in your thoughts and feelings about these relationships across your life, how you experience your various social interactions with your parents, and how you understand the process of becoming an adult in today's world.

If you decide to participate, you will be asked to take part in three individual interviews, each taking approximately one to two hours, and spaced approximately a week apart. The interviews can take place in a private room at the University of Saskatchewan, in your home, or at another public meeting place (wherever you would be most comfortable talking about personal matters) at a mutually agreed upon time. The interview will be audiotaped so that I can transcribe it and accurately reflect on it later. The data will be securely stored on a password-protected computer, with consent forms stored separately in a locked filing cabinet on campus. The data will be stored for a minimum of five years after the completion of the study. When the data is no longer required it will be destroyed beyond recovery.

The first meeting will involve a life-history interview. This takes an open-ended approach: I will ask you to describe your parent-child relationships in the past, the present, and how you imagine them looking into the future. The second and third meetings involve more specific questions, and together will make up the "semi-structured" component of my research. In the second and third sessions, I will ask you more targeted questions about family, living at home, and growing up.

Some participants may experience discomfort or sadness when sharing their stories. If you decide to participate, I will provide you with a list of resources available in the community if you feel you need further support.

As a small 'thank-you' for participating in this study, you will receive a \$25 gift card from either Starbucks or Tim Hortons (your choice). You are under no obligation to participate, and there will be no negative consequences if you withdraw from this study. If you begin the study then decide to withdraw, you will still receive the gift card. At the end of the study, you will be able to read through and edit your interviews until you are satisfied with them. You will have two weeks to do this. After these two weeks, you will no longer be able to withdraw your data, as some of the results may have already been analyzed or shared. I will preserve your confidentiality by reporting data using pseudonyms and removing any personally identifying information. Although every effort will be made to preserve your identity, it is still possible that individual participants may be identifiable on the basis of what they have said. The results of the study will be published in my doctoral dissertation, and may be published or presented at a poster conference or in a scholarly journal.

If you have any questions or if you would like to participate please let me know.

Kathrina Mazurik (kathrina.mazurik@usask.ca)
306-966-2603

Appendix D: Consent Form

You are invited to participate in a research study entitled: *Experiences of parent-child relationships among co-resident young adults*. Please read this form carefully, and feel free to ask any questions you might have about the study.

Researcher: *Kathrina Mazurik*, PhD Candidate, Department of Psychology, kathrina.mazurik@usask.ca
(306-966-2603)

Supervisor: *Michel Desjardins*, Associate Professor, Department of Psychology, michel.desjardins@usask.ca
(306-966-6650)

Purpose and objective: Today, a growing number of Canadian youth are delaying their moves from the family home or are returning to live with parents after a period away. Though academic research has identified some of the economic, developmental, and cultural factors associated with this trend, almost no research has examined the meanings of parent adult-child relationships in this context. The purpose of this qualitative research project will be to answer the question: “What is at stake in the parent-child relationships of young adults living at home?”

Procedure: In this study, participants will partake in three audiotaped interviews (approximately 1 to 2 hours each), each separated by roughly a week. These interviews will take place in a room on campus, at your home, or at another public meeting place – wherever you’d prefer to talk about personal matters. I will ask questions about how your relationship has changed over time, how you interact with your parents in everyday life, and how you make sense of growing up in today’s world. You will also fill in a short, socio-demographic questionnaire. In total, this study will take between three and four hours of your time. After interviewing you, I will email (in an encrypted and password protected document) or hand-deliver to you the transcribed interviews, and you will have the opportunity to add, alter, or delete information as you see fit. I will then set up a brief meeting to obtain your signature, authorizing the release of your transcripts for research purposes. You will have two weeks to read, revise, and sign off on these transcripts, after which point withdrawal from the study will no longer be possible, and your transcripts will be used as they are.

Funding: This research has been funded by the federal government, through the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council Doctoral SSHRC.

Potential risks and benefits: There are no known or anticipated personal benefits associated with participation in the study. Some participants may experience discomfort or sadness when sharing their stories. If you decide to participate, I will provide you with a list of resources available in the community if you feel you need further support. You will be free to skip any questions that you are uncomfortable with. At the end of the study, you will be given some information that better explains the nature of the research and you will be given a chance to ask any further questions you may have.

Compensation: No compensation will be given; however, as a token of appreciation, a \$25 gift card to Tim Hortons or Starbucks will be rewarded to each participant.

Confidentiality: Your data will be kept confidential and no personally identifying information will be linked to your data. Your contact information and consent forms will be stored securely, in a locked cabinet in the research supervisor's research laboratory at the University of Saskatchewan so that it will not be possible to associate a name with any given set of responses. All personally identifying information will be removed from the data and all data will be reported using pseudonyms. Hired transcriptionists will not have access to your full name or contact information, and they will be required to sign confidentiality agreements to protect any identifying information that is presented in the interview recording. Although every effort will be made to preserve your identity, it is still possible that individual participants may be identifiable on the basis of what they have said. The data will be securely stored on a password-protected computer separate from consent forms, which will be stored in a locked cabinet in a U of S research laboratory. The data will be stored for a minimum of five years after the completion of the study. The data from this research project will be published and presented at conferences; however, your identity will be kept confidential. Although we will report direct quotations from the interview, you will be given a pseudonym, and all identifying information (e.g., places of work, home neighborhood, job titles) will be removed from our report. When the data is no longer required, it will be destroyed beyond recovery.

Right to withdraw: Your participation is voluntary and you can choose to answer only those questions that you are comfortable with. You may withdraw from the study for any reason, at any time, without explanation or penalty of any sort. After your last interview, the researcher will hand-deliver to you (or send in an encrypted and password protected file) interview transcripts, and you will have two weeks to review, revise, and sign off on these. After two weeks, you will no longer be able to withdraw your data from the study, as some of the results may have already been analyzed or shared. If you withdraw from the study, any data that you have contributed will be destroyed beyond recovery. Your right to withdraw data from the study will apply until the transcript release form is signed. After this it is possible that some form of research dissemination will have already occurred and it may not be possible to withdraw your data.

Follow-up: To obtain results from the study, please notify Kathrina Mazurik by email or phone.

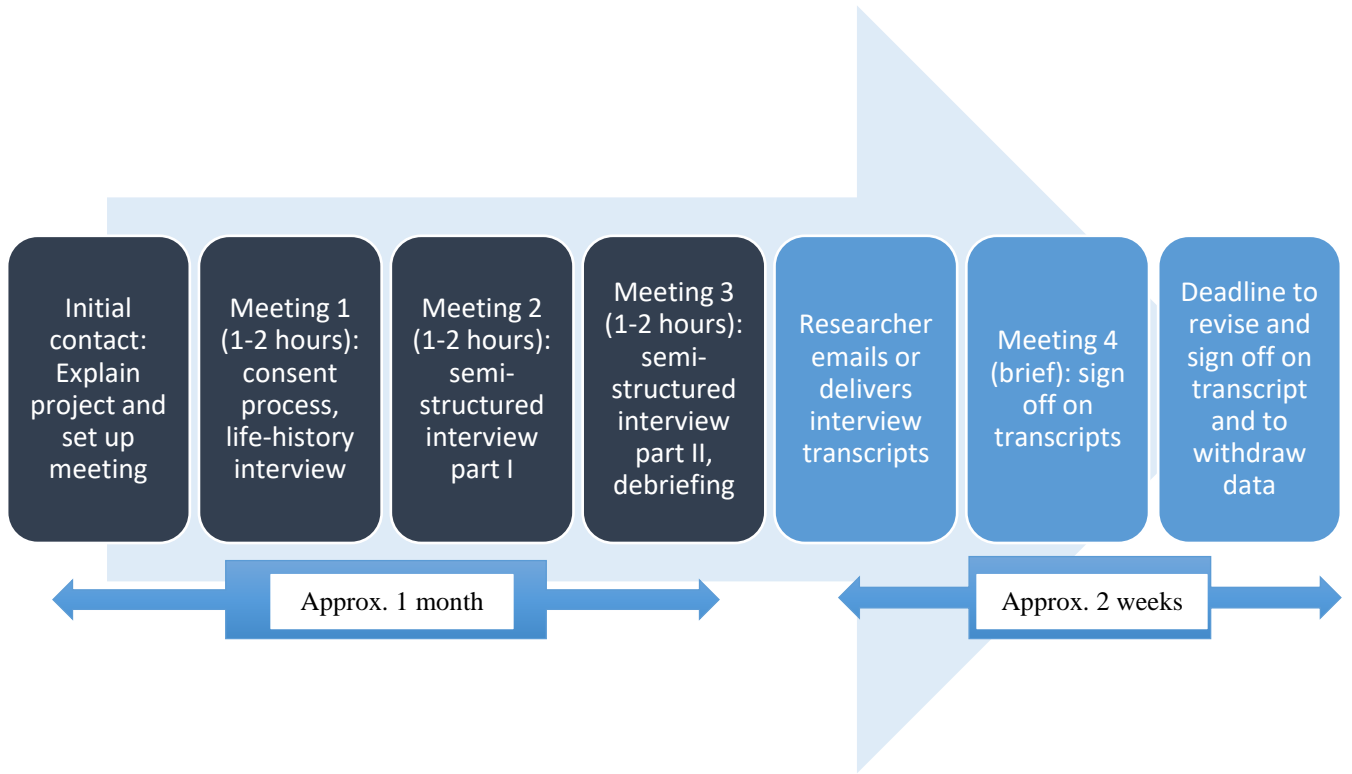
Questions or Concerns: Please feel free to contact the researchers at the emails and phone number provided if you have questions or concerns. This research project has been approved on ethical grounds by the University of Saskatchewan Behavioural Research Ethics Board. Any questions regarding your rights as a participant may be addressed to that committee through the Research Ethics Office ethics.office@usask.ca, locally at (306) 966-2975, or toll free at 1-888-966-2975.

Consent to Participate: I have read and understand the description of the research study provided above. I have been provided with an opportunity to ask questions and my questions have been answered satisfactorily. I consent to participate in the study described above, understanding that I may withdraw my consent to participate at any time. A copy of this consent form has been given to me for my records.

(Signature of Participant)

(Date)

(Signature of Researcher)



Appendix E: Life History Interview

I'd like for you to tell me about your relationship with your parents across your lifetime: what that relationship was like in your youth, leading up to the present and how you experience living with your parents now, and how you envision this relationship as you look ahead to the future.

Additional prompts (use as necessary):

- What do you remember from your family life as a kid?
- What was your family life like as a teenager?
- What was your relationship with your parents like after finishing high school?
- How would you describe your parent-child relationships now?
- What do you think your relationships with your parents will look like over the next few years? What about further down the line?
- What will your relationship with your parents in the future, compared to now?
- Overall, what do you think are the biggest differences in your relationship with your parents now, compared to when you were younger?
- What are the greatest similarities in your relationships with your parents now, compared to when you were younger?
- (in each sequence) what were the biggest differences between how you related with each of your parents?

Appendix F: Semi-structured Interview

Characters of the family

1. How would you describe each of the “characters” of your family? (those you live with and those you don’t) **Probes:**
 - a. Their **projects/interests**
 - b. Particular **roles**
 - c. Nature of your **relationship** with each
 - d. **Your role** (how would your family characterize you?)
 - e. **Pets**
2. How would you describe your family as a **whole**?
3. How would you **define** what or who a **family** is?
4. How would you **define** what or who a **parent** is?

Lifeworld of the home

5. I’d like for you to describe to me a typical weekday in your life, from the time you wake up, until the time that you go to sleep. What you’re doing, where you go, who you see, just a general idea of how you go about your daily life. **Probes:**
 - a. **Time** (time spent at home vs. other places)
 - b. **Mood** of the home (best times, worst times, when different people are at home)
 - c. **Space** (where you and your family members spend your time)
 - d. **Activities** (what you and your family members spend time doing)
 - e. **People** (when visitors are there vs. not)
 - f. **Interactions** (face to face interaction with parents, text/email/phone with parents)
6. How are your weekends different from your weekdays?
7. What about your family makes you feel like it’s a **normal** family?
8. What about your family makes you feel like it’s an **atypical** family, whether in a positive or negative sense?

Roles, rules, and expectations

9. Can you think of any formal or informal expectations that you guys have for living together? Things that, if you didn’t do them, someone or everyone would get in trouble or ticked off? **Probes:**
 - a. Possible types of rules
 - i. **Space and property** (public – open to all vs. private – permission needed)
 - ii. **Romantic activities** (sex or staying overnight)
 - iii. **Knowing/reporting** whereabouts or activities
10. (Summarize last points). **What do you think** about having these rules/not having many rules? Does it work well or poorly?
11. Are there particular rules or expectations that you **break** when your parents are out of the house, or out of town?
12. Do you feel that your parents treat all their children **equally or identically**?

13. I've read some self-help books and articles on parenting adult children, and some of these sources suggest creating a **contract or written agreement** that lays out the rules or conditions that the child must meet if you're going to live at home.
 - a. What do you think about this idea?
 - b. Benefits/drawbacks?
 - c. What would be your reaction if your parent(s) brought you a written list of rules for you to follow?
14. Have the **rules** of the house **changed** from the time that you were a teen until now?
15. How would you define a good or bad _____ (insert from below)
 - a. Parent
 - b. How should a child behave towards his parents as an ADULT?
 - c. Sibling
16. Would your parents ever **kick you out** of the house? What would have to happen for that to occur?

Leisure activities with parents

17. I'd like to hear about some of the things that you do with your parents when you have free time. What kinds of things do you do together for fun? **Probes (for each activity presented by the participant)**
 - a. **People** there
 - b. **Mood/feelings** during the activity
 - c. **Time** (how long, how often?)
 - d. **Institutionalization** (who plans it?)
 - e. **Interaction** (do you talk while you do this activity? If yes, about what?)
 - f. **Significance** (what do you and your parents like or not like about this activity? What would happen if it stopped occurring?)
18. Are there any activities that you avoid (or try to avoid) doing with your parents?
19. How have leisure activities with your parents changed or stayed the same since you finished high school?
20. We talked about how you *usually* spend time with your parents, now I was wondering if you could tell me about any special activities, events, occasions, holidays, or other special times where you spend time with your parents. **Probes from #11.**
21. How have special activities or holidays changed or stayed the same since you finished high school?

Emotional bond

22. Okay, I'd like to talk now more about you and your parents, more specifically in terms of how you relate with one another. I'd like to start by asking you how you would describe your relationship with each of your parents. **Probes:**
 - a. **Closeness/disclosure** (how much do you share with your parents; how much do they share with you, **why** that much or that little?)
 - b. **Topics** shared (and **why** those particular topics?)
 - c. **Valence** (the successes/positives vs. challenges/problems/distress?)

- d. **Value** (what do you get out of sharing these things with your parents? What do they get out of sharing these things with you?)
 - e. **Topics not shared** (is there anything you would hide from your parents or lie to them about?)
23. What do you know about your parents' lives, from when they were teens to when they were the age you are now?
24. Have your parents ever give you advice, based on their own experiences as a young person?
- a. Where else do you turn for life advice?
25. Since your teenage years, have you gotten closer or more distant from your parents?

Identity

26. What are the major ways you have changed as a person since finishing high school? In other words, how is the person you are now different from who you were when you had just finishing high school?
- a. How has that had an impact on your relationship with your parents?
27. How have you seen your parents change from when you were a teen until now?
- a. How has that had an impact on your relationship with your parents?
28. Do you feel that your parents have expectations for you, in terms of how you live your life? **Probes:**
- a. **Domains of life** those expectations concern
 - b. **Degree of explicitness**
 - c. **Evaluation** (how do you feel about those expectations or absence of expectations)
29. Thinking about the kind of person you are at home, how do you think that person is similar to or different from the person you are in other settings or with other people you spend time with? **Probes:**
- a. Work
 - b. Friends
 - c. Partner
 - d. School
 - e. Other "scenes"
30. Do you talk to other people about living at home?
- a. **People** (who would you tell or not tell about your situation?)
 - b. **Topics** (what would you talk to them about?)
 - c. **Feelings** (comfortable or comfortable?)
31. How do you see yourself as similar to or different from friends who do not live at home?

Economy of work in the home

32. In this section, I want to get a sense for how work is divided up in the home – cleaning, cooking, laundry, yardwork, repairs, those kinds of things. First of all, can you tell me about the kinds of household work that your parent(s) do? **Probes:**
- a. **People/person** who does it (both parents or just one?)
 - b. **Time** (how much time would you say each of your parents spend on housework, say in a day or in a week)

- c. **Evaluation** (what do your parents like and dislike about doing it?)
33. Let's focus on you now. What kinds of things do you do around the house? **Probes:**
- a. **People/person** who does it (just you, or also your siblings?)
 - b. **Time** (how much time would you say you spend on housework, say in a day or in a week)
 - c. **Evaluation** (what do you like and dislike about doing it?)
34. What do you think about this system? (does it work? Is it fair?)
35. How has the distribution of housework changed or stayed the same since you were a teen?

Finance in the home

36. In the next few questions, I'd like to talk about how your family works things out financially. Before I do that, though, I was wondering if you could tell me a little about your own financial situation. **Probes:**
- a. **Occupation?** Full-time/part-time?
 - b. How do you find **balancing** your income with your expenses? Is it easy or hard?
 - i. What are the greatest challenges?
 - ii. What makes it easier?
 - c. What **strategies** do you use to manage your money?
37. We've talked about some of the ways that you and your parents contribute to the household in terms of doing housework and that kind of thing, now I'd like to ask you more about the financial side of things in your family. To begin with, could you start by telling me a little about who pays for what in your family? **Probes:**
- a. Mortgage/rent/property taxes
 - b. Utilities (internet, heating, electricity, water, internet) and insurance
 - c. Cell phone
 - d. Vehicles (participants' or parents'?)
 - e. Groceries
 - f. Tuition or living expenses of any of their children (beer, food, clothes?)
 - g. Holidays
 - h. Gifts
38. Do your parents expect you to contribute financially to the household? Have you ever discussed it?
39. Overall, how do you feel about this system of exchange? **Probes:**
- a. Does it work? **Why** does it work?
 - b. Is it fair?
 - c. What would you change about it, if anything?
40. How do you think your parents feel about this system?
41. How has this system evolved over time?

Conflict, tension, and disagreement

42. Tension, irritation, and conflict are parts of virtually any relationship, so it's important that we investigate that as well. I was wondering if you could begin by telling me about

some of the things that create tension, irritation, or conflict in your relationship with your parents (one or both)? **Probes:**

- a. **People** (who is involved?)
 - b. **Time** (frequency, duration)
 - c. **Source of conflict** (What things create the most tension, irritation, or conflict?)
 - d. **Mood/emotions – yours and your parents** (how are you/your parents feeling when it's occurring? What about after? How do you cope with these moods?)
 - e. **Thought patterns** (what thoughts do you think are going through your head?)
 - f. **How addressed** (how is it handled? Overtly or covertly? What happens if it goes unaddressed? Does the behavior change? Do these situations change your relationship with your parents?)
43. Through the years, how have your conflicts (and the way you deal with them) changed? (e.g., in terms of frequency, intensity, management/resolution, etc.)
44. What would make it easier to live with your parents?
45. Do you think your presence in the home impacts your parents as a couple (or your parents and their respective partners)?

Ideology of development and family – dominant stories and discourses

46. In this section, I'd like to get an understanding of the ways you think about and describe adulthood in everyday life. To begin with, I'd like for you to think about the most MATURE 30-year-old you can, and the most IMMATURE 30-year-old you can. What do these people look like? What differentiates one from the other?
- a. Salience of particular “milestones”
 - i. Marriage (what about a committed, long-term relationship?)
 - ii. Becoming financially independent
 - iii. Working a full-year, full-time job
 - iv. Becoming a parent
 - v. Moving out/living at home
 - vi. Finishing school
 - b. **Time** (how often do you think about these topics?)
 - c. Do you think that you and your parents have the same ideas about what it means to be an adult?
47. In what ways do you feel like you're **mature**?
48. In what ways do you feel like you're **immature**?
49. How do you think young people or “Millennials” are portrayed in the media?
- a. What do you think about that portrayal?
 - b. Why do you think the media depict young adults in those ways?
50. How would you respond to people who say that adults who live at home are being **coddled** by their parents?
51. Do you think that there is different value attached to living at home, depending on whether you are a **woman or man**?
52. How many friends do you have who live with their parents?
- a. Are their **reasons** for living at home similar or different from yours?
 - b. Are their **experiences** of living at home similar or different from yours?

Reason for living at home and global interpretations of parent-child relationship

53. How is it that you came to be living with your parents at this time? **Probes:**
- Pull factors** (anticipated benefits or desires)
 - Push factors** (constraints or suffering)
 - Feelings** in the circumstances that led up to this (how did it feel to be in that position?)
54. What do you like least and most about living with your parent(s)?
55. What would you have done if you hadn't been able to live at home?
56. It sounds like this support is/has been important to you. Are there any ways that you show your parents appreciation for their support?

Future

57. Now I'd like to talk to you about your future plans. Just to start out broadly, how do you imagine your future life? Where do you see yourself in the next **five** years? What kind of life do you want to be living? What do you want to be doing – investing your time and energy in?
- Significance of a PROJECT** (what would that do for you? Why would that be fulfilling?)
 - Living situation** (will you be living at home? When will you leave/under what conditions?)
 - People** (who will you be living with?)
 - Positive aspects** (things you're looking forward to or excited about?)
 - Negative aspects** (things you're worried about or dreading? Things you will miss?)
58. How do you imagine your parents will experience the home without any kids?
59. If you have a child in the near future, when that child got to be in his or her 20s or early 30s, do you think you will treat that child the way your parents have treated you, or will you be different?
- [If the participant has at least one child: When your child is in his or her 20s or early 30s, do you think you will treat him or her like your parents have treated you, or will you be different?]*
60. Have you ever thought about whether you will let your parents stay with you when they get older? How do you imagine your relationship with your parents will be when they become less independent?

Final thoughts

61. What do you like least and most about your relationship with your parent(s)?
62. How would your current relationship with your parents be different if you weren't living at home?
63. What do you think people misunderstand most about people who live at home? What would you want them to know?
64. Finally, can you tell me about why you decided to email/call me to take part in this study, and what it's been like to go through this interviewing process?

Appendix G: Sociodemographic Questionnaire

Gender identity: _____
(e.g., male, female, trans man, trans woman, gender queer/gender non-conforming, etc.)

Age: _____

How would you define your present relationship status? _____
(e.g., casually dating, in a committed relationship, not dating, etc.)

What is the highest level of education you have completed?

- Less than high school/GED
- High school graduate - high school diploma or the equivalent (for example: GED)
- Some college credit, but less than 1 year
- 1 or more years of college, no degree
- Bachelor's degree (for example: BA,BS)
- Master's degree (for example: MA, MS, MEng, MEd, MSW, MBA)
- Doctorate degree (for example: PhD, EdD)

Are you currently...? (check all that apply)

- Employed part-time for wages
- Employed full-time for wages
- Self-employed
- Out of work and looking for work
- Out of work but not currently looking for work
- A student
- Unable to work

How many hours of paid work do you do each week? _____

What was your personal income before taxes during the past 12 months?

- Below \$20,000 \$20,000 - \$30,000 \$30,000 - \$40,000 \$40,000 - \$50,000
- \$50,000 - \$75,000 \$75,000 - \$100,000 \$100,000 - \$125,000 Above \$125,000

What is your best estimate of your total household income (income of all household members totaled) before taxes during the past 12 months?

- Below \$20,000 \$20,000 - \$30,000 \$30,000 - \$40,000 \$40,000 - \$50,000
- \$50,000 - \$75,000 \$75,000 - \$100,000 \$100,000 - \$125,000 Above \$125,000

Please indicate the level of education of each of your parents (whoever you would consider that to be):

Parent 1: _____(relation: mother/father/step-parent?)

- Less than high school/GED
- High school graduate - high school diploma or the equivalent (for example: GED)
- Some college credit, but less than 1 year
- 1 or more years of college, no degree
- Bachelor's degree (for example: BA,BS)
- Master's degree (for example: MA, MS, MEng, MEd, MSW, MBA)
- Doctorate degree (for example: PhD, EdD)

Parent 2: _____(relation: mother/father/step-parent?)

- Less than high school/GED
- High school graduate - high school diploma or the equivalent (for example: GED)
- Some college credit, but less than 1 year
- 1 or more years of college, no degree
- Bachelor's degree (for example: BA,BS)
- Master's degree (for example: MA, MS, MEng, MEd, MSW, MBA)
- Doctorate degree (for example: PhD, EdD)

Parent 3: _____(relation: mother/father/step-parent?)

- Less than high school/GED
- High school graduate - high school diploma or the equivalent (for example: GED)
- Some college credit, but less than 1 year
- 1 or more years of college, no degree
- Bachelor's degree (for example: BA,BS)
- Master's degree (for example: MA, MS, MEng, MEd, MSW, MBA)
- Doctorate degree (for example: PhD, EdD)

Parent 4: _____(relation: mother/father/step-parent?)

- Less than high school/GED
- High school graduate - high school diploma or the equivalent (for example: GED)
- Some college credit, but less than 1 year
- 1 or more years of college, no degree
- Bachelor's degree (for example: BA,BS)
- Master's degree (for example: MA, MS, MEng, MEd, MSW, MBA)
- Doctorate degree (for example: PhD, EdD)

Appendix H: Transcript Release Form

I, _____, have reviewed the complete transcript of my personal interviews from this study, and have been provided with an opportunity to add, alter, and delete information from the transcript as appropriate. I acknowledge that the transcript accurately reflects what I said in my personal interviews with Kathrina Mazurik. I hereby authorize the release of this transcript to Kathrina Mazurik to be used in the manner described on the Consent Form. I have received a copy of this Transcript Release Form for my own records.

Name of Participant

Date

Signature of Participant

Signature of Researcher

Appendix I: Confidentiality Agreement for the Transcription of Qualitative Data

Name of Study: Experiences of parent-child relationships among co-resident young adults

Study PI: Kathrina Mazurik

In accordance with the University of Saskatchewan Research Ethics Board, the researcher will ensure that they do not disclose identifiable information about the participant in the reporting or dissemination of the research findings. Therefore any personal information or any of the data generated or secured through transcription will not be disclosed to any third party.

By signing this document, you are agreeing:

- not to pass on, divulge or discuss the contents of the audio material provided to you for transcription to any third parties
- to ensure that material provided for transcription is held securely and can only be accessed via password on your local PC
- to return transcribed material to the research team when completed and do so when agreed in password protected files
- to destroy any audio and electronic files held by you and relevant to the above study at the earliest time possible after transcripts have been provided to the research team, or to return said audio files.

Your name _____

Your signature _____

Date _____

Appendix J: Debriefing Form

Thank you very much for participating in this study!

The purpose of this research was to examine the parent child relationships of adults who reside with their parents. Did you know that in Canada, living with one's parents is very common? Roughly **25% of Canadians 25 to 30** live with their parents, a proportion that has **doubled** in 30 years. Looking at Canadians in their 20s as a whole, that proportion grows to about **42%**. Past research has found a few interesting things about these families, for example:

- “Coresidence” (parents and adult children living together) is **more common in some families than others**. Young adults in intact (non-step) families are more likely to be living at home, and young adults with fewer siblings are more likely to be living at home. **Ethnic background** also is a very strong predictor of whether or not young adults live with their parents, what age they move out, and whether or not they return home.
- Most parents report fairly **high degrees of satisfaction** with this arrangement, but this partially depends on whether or not young adults are achieving (or trying to achieve) adult roles, such as full-time work or completing their education
- Parents and adult children who coreside **give and receive more assistance** to one another than families where adult children live independently. Interestingly, long-term research has found that people who live with their parents longer are more likely to give support to their parents in their old age
- Many young adults feel ambivalent (or “**mixed feelings**”) about their living situation, because of their conflicting roles depending on and trying to be independent from their parents. **Conflict** also seems to be more common in these families than others.

If you are interested in this topic, you may want to look into the following studies about families with young adults living at home:

Milan, A., & Bohnert, N. (December 18, 2013). *Living arrangements of young adults aged 20-29*. Retrieved from https://www12.statcan.gc.ca/census-recensement/2011/as-sa/98-312-x/98-312-x2011003_3-eng.cfm

Newman, K. (2012). *The accordion family: Boomerang kids, anxious parents, and the private toll of global competition*. Boston: Beacon Press.

If you have any questions about this research, or would like a copy of the final research report, please feel free to contact Kathrina Mazurik (kathrina.mazurik@usask.ca or 306-966-2603).

Once again, I'd like to thank you so much for participating in this research. As a student, researcher, young adult, and former co-resident young child (who lived with her own parents until age 24), I have been truly grateful to learn about your experiences and explore your ideas about family and human development.

Kathrina

Appendix K: Community Resources

Catholic Family Services

Counselling on a sliding scale fee (based on personal income)

Address: #200, 506 25th St E

Phone: 306-244-7773

Call the above number to set up an appointment with a counsellor

Saskatoon Food Bank (in partnership with Catholic Family Services)

Counselling; free Thursday afternoons from 1-4 p.m.

Address: 202 Avenue C South

Phone: 306-664-6565

Call the above number in the morning to book an appointment with a counsellor in the afternoon

Family Service Saskatoon

Counselling; sliding scale fee (\$10 minimum per session, based on household income)

Address: #102, 506 25th St E

Phone: 306-244-0127

Call the above number to make an appointment with an intake counsellor who can set you up with a counsellor

Student Health and Counselling Services: University of Saskatchewan

Counselling available to registered University of Saskatchewan students; free

Address: 3rd floor, Place Riel Student Centre, 1 Campus Drive

Phone: 306-966-4920

Call the above number to speak to an intake counsellor who can set up an appointment with a counsellor

Community Adult Mental Health Services, Saskatoon Health Region

Individual and group counselling; free

Address: Suite 156, 122 3rd Ave North, Sturdy Stone Building

Phone: 306-655-7777

Call the above number (or go to the Sturdy Stone address) to set up an intake appointment with a counsellor.

SWITCH

Counselling by university students in training and/or with a registered social worker; free

Address: 1528 20th St West

Phone: 306-956-2518

Walk-in counselling is available Mondays and Wednesdays from 5:30 to 8:00 p.m. and Saturdays from 12:30 until 3:00 p.m.

Employee and Family Assistance Plan

Please consult your EFAP program information for counseling and/or therapy services that might be available to you through your employment.

Appendix L: Letter of Invitation for Organizational Partnership

To whom it may concern,

My name is Kathrina Mazurik. I am a graduate student in the College of Arts and Science at the University of Saskatchewan. I am conducting a research study as part of the requirements for my Doctoral Degree in Psychology and I would like to invite you to participate. **I would like to know whether your organization would be interested in partnering with me to help me recruit potential participants.**

I am studying the meanings of parent-child relationships of individuals who currently reside with their parent(s). I am particularly interested in their thoughts and feelings about these relationships across their lives, how they experience living with their parents, and how they understand the process of becoming an adult in today's world.

Participants will be asked to take part in **three individual interviews**, each taking approximately **one to two hours**, and spaced approximately a week apart. The interviews can take place in a private room at the University of Saskatchewan, at the participant's home, or at another public meeting place (wherever the participant would be most comfortable talking about personal matters) at a mutually agreed upon time. The interview will be audiotaped so that I can transcribe it and accurately reflect on it later. The data will be securely stored on a password-protected computer, with consent forms stored separately in a locked filing cabinet on campus. The data will be stored for a minimum of five years after the completion of the study. When the data is no longer required it will be destroyed beyond recovery.

The first meeting will involve a life-history interview. This takes an open-ended approach: I will ask participants to describe their parent-child relationships in the past, the present, and how they imagine them looking into the future. The second and third meetings involve more specific questions, and together will make up the "semi-structured" component of my research. In the second and third sessions, I will ask more targeted questions about family, living at home, and growing up. Participants will not have to answer any questions they do not wish to.

Some participants may experience discomfort or sadness when sharing their stories. If someone decides to participate, I will provide him or her with a list of resources available in the community, should that person desire further support.

As a small 'thank-you' for participating in this study, participants will receive a \$25 gift card from either Starbucks or Tim Hortons (their choice). Individuals are under no obligation to participate, and there will be no negative consequences if they withdraw from this study. If a person begins the study then decides to withdraw, he or she will still receive the gift card. At the end of the study, participants will be able to read through and edit their interviews until they are satisfied with them. They will have two weeks to do this. After these two weeks, they will no longer be able to withdraw their data, as some of the results may have already been analyzed or shared. I will preserve participants' confidentiality by reporting data using pseudonyms and removing any personally identifying information. Although every effort will be made to preserve each participant's identity, it is still possible that individual participants may be identifiable on

the basis of what they have said. The results of the study will be published in my doctoral dissertation, and may be presented at a conference or published in a scholarly journal.

Your role as a partner in recruitment would be to send out an informational poster to members of your organization. This informational poster will have my name, e-mail address, and phone number. Any interested members of your organization would be instructed to contact me directly. This means that the confidentiality of your members will not be compromised in any way. To preserve the confidentiality of your students, I would ask that when sending out group mailings, use the “blind cc:” (blind carbon copy, or blind courtesy copy) software feature to keep recipients invisible to each other. I hope to recruit 20 participants for this study. Importantly, participants should be young adults, between the ages of 25 and 35, who have lived with their parents for longer than 4 months. I have already begun interviewing participants and hope to finish data collection by September 2017. After the final report has been written, I would be more than happy to provide a copy to your organization, in case you would like to learn more about family during the transition to adulthood.

If you are interested in being recruitment partners for this research project or have any questions, comments, or concerns, please contact me through my e-mail: kathrina.mazurik@usask.ca. You can also contact my supervisor: Michel Desjardins (michel.desjardins@usask.ca). This study has been reviewed by, and received approval through, the Research Ethics Office, University of Saskatchewan.

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

Sincerely,

Kathrina Mazurik
kathrina.mazurik@usask.ca

Appendix M: Transcription Notation

Notation	Meaning
KM:	Kathrina speaking
A: (first initial of pseudonym)	Participant speaking
Yeah.	Falling/final intonation
What?	Questioning/asking
Dad!	Strong emphasis without falling (final intonation)
so,	Low-rising intonation suggesting continuation
I'll de-identify them late- I'll change them later	Abrupt cut off of word, with level pitch.
and I was – another thing too is that	Abrupt cut off of phrase, with level pitch.
K: Okay, and so then - KM: What was that like?	When one person is cut off by another person mid-sentence
word <u>underlined</u>	Emphasis/stress on this word
word in CAPITALS	Loud volume
((laughs)) ((coughs)) ((sighs))	Verbal description of actions, including non-verbal actions
...	Indicates a pause of <u>under</u> two seconds
(2.5)	A pause of two or more seconds; indicate roughly how many seconds inside the brackets
KM: [Okay] K: [I wouldn't say huge] but	Speech enclosed within square brackets indicates overlapping speech between two people
And he's like "I don't like babysitting" like "why does my mom have to do this? Why does she have to work?" and I'm like, "well why are you doing that?"	Quotation marks within the text indicate that the speaker is imitating someone, expressing the voice of another person, or expressing an inner dialogue.
He really loved (doing that?). And I don't know if that was his (???)	Parenthesized words are possible hearings. ??? in parenthesis indicates the words are unintelligible.
No:! I was like, "Wha:::t?"	Colons indicate prolongation of the immediate prior sound. The length of the row of colons indicates the length of prolongation.