Negotiating Boundaries:
The Social Construction of Shared Households

By

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B.A.. Simon Fraser University. 1993

A THESIS SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT

OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF

MASTER OF ARTS

in the School
of
Sociology and Anthropology

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SIMON FRASER UNIVERSITY

October 1997

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                             of Shared Households

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Abstract

This thesis examines the social construction of shared households in the Commercial Drive area of Vancouver in 1996. The aim of this study is to investigate how relationships develop between household members, as they directly and indirectly negotiate household boundaries with each other, and, in doing so, socially construct the form of their shared household. Household boundaries are not only physical, in terms of the built environment and household membership, but also moral, in terms of appropriate or normal behaviour. These boundaries tend to be figured negatively in shared households, as all behaviour is permitted except for that defined as inappropriate. Where these boundaries are set, however, may be open to negotiation: what is considered appropriate or normal behaviour can be contested by household members.

This project is one of urban anthropology. As ethnographic research on shared housing is limited, literature was drawn not only from social and cultural anthropology, but also sociology, social geography, and environmental psychology. Data was drawn from eight interviews (of one to three hours) with members of shared households. Excerpts from the interviews were included, and form the basis for the thesis.

Demographic trends in Canada indicate a movement away from nuclear family households towards people living alone or as single parents. In the city of Vancouver, rental costs are high; many people who might prefer to live by themselves cannot afford to. While for some interviewees, shared housing is solely a financial necessity, for others, it is an opportunity to participate in an intimate social setting, to meet the challenges of interacting with others, and to learn more about people and one's self.

This thesis examines how the recruitment of new members serves to articulate norms of behaviour, and how new members integrate into existing household patterns. The relationships between members and those outside the household also serve to express and define boundaries of behaviour. Shared households are communal to varying degrees. Another task, then, is to determine what in particular is to be shared: space, facilities, a social life? How are norms of behaviour expressed, how are shared households governed, and what happens when one does not comply with conforming pressures? Also explored is the political and communicative context within which these boundaries are created: why some members have influence over others, and what means of influence they use.

Dedication

To all my relations...

Acknowledgements

I was not alone on this journey.

To my parents, then and now, for loving me;
to my friends, for supporting me;
to Noel Dyck, Michael Kenny and Donna Robertson, for believing in me;
to Mickey, Gladys, and Karen, for helping me;
to those I interviewed, for sharing with me;
and to all the roommates I've had, for putting up with me,

Thank you.

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1. Introduction

This thesis examines the social construction of shared housing in the Commercial Drive area of Vancouver in 1996. The aim of this study is to investigate how relationships develop between household members as they directly and indirectly negotiate household boundaries with each other and, in doing so, socially construct the form of their shared household.

This is an ethnographic account which examines the practices, meanings, and knowledge that people bring to and develop during their participation in social relationships. This research is field-driven rather than theory-driven; the framework of boundaries of social and moral behaviour arose from interviews with shared household members rather than from social science literature. This is not an attempt to develop social theory, but an identification of certain social processes in a practical setting, to which existing relevant theory has been synthesized. A number of questions will be explored during the course of this thesis. How are boundaries of behaviour constructed and how do these enter into relations between members and potential members or between members and non-members? What is to be considered appropriate or 'normal' sharing behaviour, and how are these norms expressed? How are individual members involved in constructing these boundaries of behaviour, how do they influence others, and how do they come to hold this power?

Scope

This project is one of urban anthropology. Concern here is not with urbanism and the city itself, yet neither is this a matter of applying traditional field methods to a 'village' or community that happens to be located within an urban setting. Shared households, such as those examined here, are very much a product of the city, and while my focus is on relationships within the household itself, the urban context is inseparable. The fieldwork

techniques used were those which lend themselves to accessing information from persons in modern urban life.

The social form of a shared household is constituted through its boundaries. This is not to say that a shared household is formed in reaction to another or other households, nor in reaction to the urban context in general, but that it is formed against its own alternatives, to the other potential forms that it could take. Household boundaries are not only physical, in terms of the built environment and the household membership, but also moral, in terms of appropriate or normal behaviour. These moral boundaries in part serve to separate and distinguish between actual household members and non-members. More importantly, however, they are a means of expressing the division between moral membership and 'otherness,' the 'amoral' behaviour that could rise out of any household member. Household behavioural boundaries are articulated in the form of rules, guidelines, or simple recognition of 'the way that we do it.' Where these boundaries are set, however, may be open to negotiation; what is considered moral behaviour can be contested. The process of contesting behaviour is behaviour in itself, however, and may in turn be contested. Specifically then, this thesis will seek to identify key moral or social boundaries of shared households and the processes and strategies involved in their negotiation by members.

The Locale

The officially designated Grandview-Woodland area on the east side of Vancouver, which is the locale for the study, is popularly known as Commercial Drive, or to the locals, simply 'The Drive.' While the area was first settled mainly by British immigrants at the turn of the century, waves of Italian and Asian immigrants (beginning after World War I and continuing through to the late 1960s) contributed to a neighbourhood characterized by southern European, Latin American and Asian restaurants, cafes and shops. Generally considered the most eclectic neighbourhood in Vancouver, Commercial Drive has in recent years become home to political activists, artists, musicians, students,

and is also the centre for the city's lesbian population. Traditionally a low income neighbourhood, many young adults are now moving to the area as housing costs on the more upscale West Side and other areas rise. This trend has led to increased amenities, oriented towards the changing population. Commercial Drive has developed a mixed 'alternative' flavour: for instance, a new restaurant in the area caters largely to single mothers and their children, while a wine making shop, upscale coffee shops, juice bars and restaurants have been opened. Greenpeace has an office just around the corner from a firearms shop, and a new drop-in centre for people with mental health problems has just been built. Gentrification is taking place: West Side style condominiums are being built, and older houses are being renovated, often with extra suites added.[1] Dreadlocked, body pierced and tattooed persons, along with upscale young professionals, now coexist with ethnic immigrants and mental patients. The Drive is increasingly seen as a desirable place to live in Vancouver, and housing costs are rising rapidly. It is very difficult to find housing in this neighbourhood, at any price. Sharing housing has become quite common.

As an exercise in qualitative research, this thesis will not attempt to present findings from a statistically representative sample of shared households in the area, nor to generalize its findings to shared households elsewhere. While the social processes of negotiation take place in all forms of housing, the ways in which individuals manage different situations may vary widely (Wallman, 1984:210). While it is beyond the scope of this thesis to explicitly contrast shared households with other forms of households, one of my aims, however, is to show just how different shared households can be from one another.

This variability among shared households leads to difficulty in defining it as a distinctive type of household. What is a shared household? Definitions in social science literature vary. Most indicate that a shared household contains five or more unrelated adults, plus any children, who live in co-residence as a household, where the motivation to do so is relatively pragmatic (as contrasted to counterculture communes), although there may

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[1] Regarding myths and meanings of gentrification, see Mills, 1993.

remain a commitment toward achieving a sense of community (Raimy 1979:5,11;
Zablocki 1980:7; Poldervaard 1987:609). The Vancouver Homesharers Society however
defines shared householding or 'homesharing' as a situation in which two or more
unrelated persons live in a household; no mention of ideology or community is made
(1986: 3-1). The size of the household, the extent to which members are ideologically
motivated, and the amount of resources, facilities and activities they share are all matters
of degree. Demographically, as well, there may exist many combinations of related,
unrelated, and co-habiting (as if married) individuals who may come together to form
various subhouseholds within the household itself. Some may consider their situation a
shared household, while others may not. It is generally assumed that members of the
same household all live under one roof, although this can be misleading, as well.

Why study shared households? The household is "...the next biggest thing on the social
map after the individual"(Hammel 1984:40-41), and functions as an 'immediate ecology,'
or 'micro community' (Clay 1991:4). Much of everyday life for a vast majority of the
world's people occurs in this arena; social interaction in this intimate setting is
fundamentally important to the quality of life that people experience. Our feelings of
home, family and community are all affected by those with whom we live. Shared
housing in North American urban centres has generally been associated with the lifestage
of young adults, particularly students, although it is now increasingly common for people
of all ages and occupations to participate.[2] Contemporary shared housing arises out of a
context that includes a changing family form, changing gender relations, and a depressed
economic situation. It is possible that, rather than being simply part of a lifestage, for
some people shared housing is becoming a lifestyle in itself, as it is in Northern Europe.
While North American authorities tend to only just acknowledge its existence,
Scandinavian countries formally recognize shared households as long-term social, legal

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[2] Shared household representations with three or more roommates on film and television are becoming
more common, ie Three's Company, Threesome, Shallow Grave, Reality Bites, Golden Girls, Full House
(also see Franck and Ahrentzen 1989:xii).

and financial entities (Woodward 1987:216).[3] As well. the growing migration from rural to urban areas in non-Western countries has increased population pressures and made affordable housing in cities an important social concern. Sharing housing resources is one grassroots means of dealing with such a context (in Latin America see Gilbert 1993; in SubSaharan Africa see Tipple 1994). By studying society "from the inside out" (Hammel 1989:19). we may determine how alternative living situations may be managed. Despite the pervasiveness of shared housing. little has been written on the subject by ethnographers or by social scientists in general. Through the examination of boundary negotiation in the formation of shared households. it is hoped that this project will contribute to an anthropology of householding.

Literature Review

As ethnographic research on shared households is scarce. I have had to draw on literature from other fields concerned with housing in general. as well as other forms of alternative housing. This information is useful in providing parameters and points of departure for an anthropological analysis of shared housing.

Urban anthropology has its roots in the ethnographic studies completed by University of Chicago sociologists of the 1920s through to the 1940s. As well as examining urbanism itself. researchers described 'social worlds' that existed in urban settings. such as those of hobos. gangs and ghettos (Hannerz 1980:31-44). One of the founders of the Chicago School. Robert Park. was concerned with what he termed the 'moral order'. in which an individual's position and self-identity is determined by attitudes and standards held by the group to which he belongs. One is constantly struggling to maintain one's status. point-of-view. and self-respect within one's society through recognition from others (Park 1952:176-177). One Chicago study of particular relevance examined life in rooming houses: the high degree of anonymity and mobility of tenants led to social isolation

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The Dutch equivalent to the shared household is referred to as the 'living group'. while the 'big family' in Sweden is of the same form (Woodward 1987:216).

within this household form. Minimal development of relationships between household members, if any at all, took place (Zorbaugh 1929).

Following the Chicago School era, urban anthropological studies sometimes simply consisted of making use of traditional research methods within the city, studying 'urban villages' or ethnic enclaves, with little regard for the urban environment (Hannerz 1980:5-6). Other studies, while relatively conventional in methods and focus, did attempt to make connections to broader concerns of urban development. More recently, ethnographic subjects have increased in range, although still often ignoring the city surroundings (see Amit-Talai and Lustiger-Thaler 1994:122).[4]

In his schema of an anthropology *of* the city, Hannerz views householding as a field of activity that represents a major part of urban social life (1980:102). The city, in Hannerz's view, is a system of relationships; as individuals participate in situations each has his or her own agenda, and yet is influenced to some degree by the agenda of others. (Hannerz 1980:101). Within the domain of householding roles are developed and contested as relationships are continually being renegotiated (Hannerz 1980:102). Other domains - provisioning, recreation, neighbouring and traffic - also contain roles that relate to householding, and to urban social life in general (Hannerz 1980:103).

While shared household members maintain their own roles in these other domains, they will not necessarily directly experience their roommates' roles elsewhere. The shared household is relatively autonomous as a domain. Occasionally one may engage in recreatational activities with other members, deal with neighbours together, or engage in provisioning together; indeed, interviewees confirmed that this did take place. However, they do not appear to be common occurrences; this tended to happen only sporadically and spontaneously. Signs of members' outside interests and occupations may find their

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[4] See Cohen and Fukui (1993), Amit-Talai and Lustinger-Thaler (1994) for anthropological examinations of the city and urban lives in general. See Gulick (1989) for sociological perspectives of this topic. For various theoretical perspectives of and processes involved in the Canadian housing market, see Harris (1991).

way into the household, however. Sports equipment, arts and crafts, books and so on will indicate to other members what each other member is involved in. A student may spend much time at home studying, a person working a late shift may be sleeping during the day. As well, one may learn much about another roommate's interests and experiences through daily conversation.

Wallman is also concerned with householding relationships and activities in an urban setting (1984:11). She sees the household as a process, as a system of resources where the boundaries of the household are fluid and subject to change through the domestic cycle (Wallman 1984:17; see also Hareaven 1974:324). Although Wallman's focus is primarily on relationships between the household as a unit and the outside world, her processual approach in examining how households organize themselves and function in an urban setting is quite relevant to this study. Hammel suggests that we instead view households as histories of decisions (Hammel 1984:34). By determining the potential field of recruits (organized under some set of cultural rules) for any given household, rates of recruitment for households can be computed. Hammel's intention here is to create more accurate typologies of households, which is, however, tangential to my own purposes.

Prior to the late 1960s it was largely assumed that the household's function was essentially to reproduce members of society, that the household and the family were practically the same unit (Yanigasako, in Gray and Mearns 1989:21). Acknowledgment that the nuclear family household is not a cultural universal leads to the distinction between kinship units and residential units and further allowed for the analysis of a variety of household forms within a society (Bender 1967; Yanigasako 1979:196; also see Netting et al. 1984). Indeed, it is generally agreed that stereotypical nuclear families are no longer the norm even within western societies (Brudenell 1983; Marciano 1975; Wallman 1984; Clay 1991; Wright 1981; Baum 1986). Demographic trends in the United States (Alwin 1985) and Canada (Statistics Canada 1994) indicate that there are increases in the number of people living alone and as single parents. According to

Wright. in 1980. only 13 percent of all American households consisted of a stereotypical nuclear family comprising a working father. a stay-at-home mother and one or more children. She suggests that the day of two or three families per house and of boarding is returning (Wright 1981:262).

Statistics Canada maintains categories for non-family private households. which may consist of either an person living alone. or two or more unrelated persons living together. Non-family households in Canada (28.8% of total households in 1991) are expected to have the highest proportional increase of any households over the next 19 years (to between 30.6% and 32.9% in 2016). primarily due to the rise in the number of persons living alone (Statistics Canada 1994:40). However. the most recent compilation by Statistics Canada indicates that in one census area within the Commercial Drive neighbourhood. almost one third (31.8%) of all persons living in non-family households in 1991 had at least one other unrelated housemate (31.2% in Greater Vancouver as a whole) (Statistics Canada 1992:108). Also. while shared households were only 4.7% of all private households in Canada in 1986 (up from 3.9% in 1951)(Statistics Canada 1991:41-43). they account for 13.4% of all private households in Greater Vancouver in 1991 (Statistics Canada 1992:48). These statistics suggest that although shared households may be a small percentage of overall households (including rural households) in Canada. they are a significant proportion in the Vancouver urban context. The City of Vancouver relies on Statistics Canada for its statistical information. It should be noted. however. that zoning bylaws allow for a maximum of five unrelated persons living together in a single family dwelling. Any more residents than this and a license for a rooming house must be obtained.[5]

Various social scientists have traced the history of lodging and boarding in American cities from the 18th century until its decline after the 1930s (Modell and Hareaven 1973: Hareaven 1974: Wright 1981). Boarding households often acted as surrogate families.

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[5] John Jessup. The Housing Centre. City of Vancouver. personal communication. September 5. 1997.

and served to cushion the shock of urban industrial life for newcomers to the city. Such a residence was considered part of the life cycle. even for the affluent (Modell and Hareaven 1973:471).[6] Zorbaugh's examination of rooming houses in 1920s Chicago provides useful observations and ethnographic accounts of social relationships within this household form (Zorbaugh 1929).[7]

Related literature in environmental psychology tends to revolve around the idea of place attachment: the feelings that people have about their home (Low 1992; Low and Altman 1992; Pellow 1992). The key relationship under study in this field is that between the individual and home. so a transactional perspective is proposed, wherein physical environments and psychological events are seen as being inseparable, mutually defining. and a single unit of analysis (Gauvain et al 1983:182). The home may be a source of self-identity. of relating to others. of maintaining privacy and refuge. of providing continuity and stability, of establishing heritage. and so on (Hayward 1982:3-6; see also Duncan and Duncan 1976). Hummon points out that by changing dwelling types one may symbolize the transition from one life stage to another (Hummon 1989:217-218). In this literature. the key relationship under study is that between individual and home rather than those between household members.

Social geographers are. among other things. concerned with locating people within space. Focus in this area is on the relationship between the built environment and human behaviour (with respect to housing see Altman 1976; Sebba and Churchman 1983; Lawrence 1982; Porteous 1976). The home provides a means for expressing and organizing experiences. as relationships revolve around relations in space (Wilson 1980). Because of the relatively high turnover of shared household members, the identity of a shared household may become derived largely from it's being a *place*. a setting for

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[6] Wade's history of social housing in Vancouver describes lodging and boardinghouses during the early 1900s; single immigrant labourers would often rent small houses together and live communally (Wade 1994:21).

[7] Worries that boarding encouraged transiency and discouraged domesticity. along with new definitions of privacy led to its demise. and to the beginning of the nuclear family household (Modell 1973:468).

domestic life. rather than from the composition of it's members (see Kanter 1993b:448:
Kanter 1979:114). While issues of space. territoriality and privacy do enter into shared
housing life. this area of the literature does not address the means by which household
members actually manage such issues in a social context.

Although they are also concerned with space. Cooper and Rodman do however examine
specifically its impact on social relationships within housing (Cooper and Rodman 1990:
1992a: 1992b: Rodman and Cooper 1989: 1993). In their anthropological study of the
social construction of 'home' in Toronto housing co-operatives. they find that boundaries
express spatial organization and may be conceptualized as transitional zones. borders.
barriers and edges. These boundaries are contestable. often ambiguous. and reflect power
relations that exist between members. Cooper and Rodman examine how co-op members
define the boundaries of their homes and their community. and how conflicts arise over
competing interpretations about the appropriate use of space (Rodman and Cooper 1993).
Although Cooper and Rodman's work focuses on inter- rather than intra-household
relationships. their relational analysis has proven useful. Insofar as co-operatives are
formed of a number of private. fully self-contained and relatively autonomous household
units. their form is of a larger order than that of the shared household: indeed shared
households may exist *within* co-operatives (Gorman 1979:19: Stryjan 1994:571). In any
case. literature on co-operatives generally looks at the origins and their social and
administrative structure in broad strokes (see Spronk 1981: Stryjan 1994: Glunt and Clark
1992).

Communes of the 1960s and 1970s in North America attracted much attention from
social scientists. Like today's shared households. these communes did involve unrelated
people living together and sharing some facilities. although communes often had
members living in multiple dwellings on shared rural land rather than in a single
household. While motivations of shared household members range from the simply
pragmatic (not being able to afford their own place) to intending to achieve a sense of
community. communes tended to have a strong ideological basis. wherein members

maintain an anti-bureaucratic, counter-culture attitude (Raimy 1979:11; Brudenell 1983:276; Zablocki 1980:7). The extent to which a commune is ideologically oriented may be a matter of degree, however, as Kanter's 'urban communes' appear to share no specific values beyond those of household intimacy, and are quite similar to what would now be considered shared households (Kanter 1979:112, also see Alam 1976:182-183). Much of this literature follows the rise and fall of the commune movement through the 1960s and 70s: who joined and why, how the communes maintained themselves, and why they eventually dissolved (see Aidela and Zablocki 1991; Brudenell 1983; Cavan and Das 1979; Raimy 1979; Zablocki 1980). Zablocki's study also provides insight into recruitment and retirement processes, issues of autonomy and consensus, decision-making and conformity. Kanter's body of work on communes is perhaps the most related to social relationships in shared households; her analysis of commitment to community and behavioural boundaries and conformity is quite relevant to my study.

Social science literature on shared housing exists, although it is scarce. Baum attempts to isolate the factors that make for a successful shared household in Australia, with emphasis on implications for social policy. Her survey indicates that power imbalances, conflicts over chores and over personalities, and privacy issues are all important aspects of living together (Baum 1984:201; 1986:204). Literature on Scandinavian housing indicates the overall form and history of shared housing more than the social relations that take place within it (Woodward 1987; Poldervaard 1987).[8]

Gorman's analysis of communal living in England is interesting in that some communal households, while not completely rejecting prevailing social and domestic norms, still maintain an ideology of communality or co-operation and appear to some extent to be very much the 'hippie' style commune of earlier times (Gorman 1975:15,24). The distinction between shared household and commune in these cases is not as discrete as is

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[8] Co-housing projects in Sweden tend to attract 'postmaterial' tenants - those often involved in alternative political parties or movements, and who tend to be employed in education or consulting, or as professionals or managers. These tenants value the social aspects of housing over the material aspects (Woodward 1987:215; McCamant and Durrett 1989:85).

often stated in theory. Gorman discusses motivations, recruitment, mechanisms for resolving conflict, dealing with community and privacy, decision making and more in this guide to communal living. In North America, a similar guide has been produced (Raimy 1979). While both pieces discuss social interaction among members, they are presented more as journalistic reports than as ethnographic accounts; generalizations are made as subjects' voices are minimized.

Finally, gerontologists concerned with housing policy have become interested in shared housing as a means of bettering the living conditions of the increasing elder population (see Streib 1978; Schreter 1984, 1986; Vancouver Homesharers' Society 1986; Zahle 1992; Golant 1994). Most studies, however, focus more on the practical success of various placement agencies than on the relationships between the applicants themselves.

Fieldwork

In order to contact prospective participants, I advertised at Octopus Books, a local bookstore where people looking for new housemates in the area often post notices. Unfortunately, just after I posted the advertisement, the store was closed down. There was confusion for a few months as informal bulletin boards set up at other locations created a lack of cohesion. Le Quena, a coffee shop and political activist forum, eventually became the centre for local housing advertisements. During this adjustment and afterwards response to my advertisement was minimal. Two people responded, and only one of these followed through with an interview. I decided to advertise in a local small-scale, community-run newspaper, 'The Drive,' and I also began calling the numbers indicated on the advertisements, stating upfront that I was not looking for a room, but would very much like to interview anyone who would be interesting in participating, and so on. Response to my telephone calls was generally positive, and the interviews were completed.

In one case. I hadn't been able to reach a particular household by phone although I had attempted at various times through the week. I managed to talk with someone on a Sunday morning, just after ten o'clock. They told me that they didn't actually live there, and the others were sleeping, but that the project sounded interesting, and a roommate would most likely get back to me later. After a few days, I received a message on my answering machine.

> *The roomies and I feel that the fact that you called at ten in the morning on Sunday means that you don't even catch the jist of shared accommodations for your study, so we don't want to be involved in it. Thanks, bye bye.*

Apparently I had broken some code, crossed a moral boundary of their household.

For the fieldwork portion of this study, participant observation as a general approach was inappropriate. The household is a setting of very small scale and intimacy. Not only would it be logistically problematic to place myself in various households for extended periods of time, but by doing so I would be distorting the social situation drastically and violating their privacy as well. Rather, I made use of the 'long interview' technique, proposed by McCracken, in which field contact is limited to a single lengthy interview (of one to three hours) with each subject (McCracken 1988; see also Mishler 1986 and Spradley 1979). In total eight interviews were completed. I did not make use of a strict question-answer model of interviewing, in which discreet responses are elicited from standardized questions (Mishler 1986:13). Rather, I developed a questionnaire that contained generalized question areas and yet allowed for open-ended responses. These question areas were used as prompts, ensuring that all aspects of shared household living known to me would be covered. Encouraging extended responses and free flow of thought created an opportunity for interviewees to initiate their own explorations. By maintaining the context within which statements are made, interconnections between them and larger patterns involving them are more readily discerned (Mishler 1986:23). As well, interviewees were able to produce categories and assumptions that were novel to me and to indicate relationships between them I had not foreseen. Interviewing became a reflexive process, in that as I completed interviews I often added or altered my question

areas and specific prompts for the following interviews. In general, the more interviews I completed, the longer they became. For the most part interviewees were allowed to continue without interruption, particularly so when it was apparent that the responses were in the form of a story. Indeed, one participant, Peter, did articulate his role as a narrator when he concluded a two hour monologue with *"That's my story"* (see Mishler 1986:66,74,102). As well as interviewing one member from each of six shared households, I separately interviewed two members from another household, three members of a household together, and a person living with only one other roommate. Interviews took place at their homes, my home, or at local cafes, and were tape-recorded. I attempted to contact a variety of people living in shared housing, however, it may be that since only households undergoing a transition of membership were targeted (by having advertised for new members), more stable households were neglected in this study. As well, those using other matching services, placing advertisements in the local newspapers or recruiting acquaintances or friends would also likely be inaccessible to me.

Motivations for participation in the study varied. The only two people who responded to my advertisement, unbeknownst to each other, were from the same house and simply wanted to vent frustration concerning one another. One person wanted to be indirectly an advocate for low income housing, two appeared to want to befriend me, one planned to write her own popular guide on the subject, and some were simply interested and willing to help me out. By going through the interview process, participants were granted an audience for their stories, a sympathetic ear for frustrations they expressed, an external context within which to reflect upon events (some expressed regret at their behaviour), and they were also made aware of how much knowledge they possessed.[9]

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[9] See also McCracken 1988:29.

The Interviewees

The first interview I conducted was with Gregory.[10] Gregory was 37 years of age, on welfare, and a free-lance writer. I later conducted an interview with Peter, who was also from this household. Peter was 42, also on welfare, and taking a job skills upgrading course. Both Gregory and Peter were university educated. At the time of the interviews, they had three other roommates, all on welfare, all lesbians, and two of them sisters, Sally and Kath.

Janet was a 28 year-old mother of two children, Jonathan, 7 and Alex, 3. She had been living with her long-time boyfriend, Tom, and another friend of theirs, Debbie, along with her own child, Malcolm, 2, for approximately a year. Both Janet and Debbie were full-time mothers, collecting welfare, and Tom was a student .

Another household consisted of Larry, 38, a self-employed engineer (who worked out of their garage), Frank, 42, who preferred not to give his occupation, and Bob, 34, who was recently arrived from Newfoundland and looking for work in communications. Each of these members was university educated - Bob had an M.A. in English. I interviewed the entire household together.

Dan was 24, and had recently moved down from Whistler, to work in a local hotel. He had two roommates, Christina, an engineer, and Alan, a graduate student.

Joyce was 43, unemployed and a free-lance writer. Her only roommate was 31, female, and also unemployed.

Michael, 36, was going to nursing school, and characterized his home as a gay household. He shared a room with his boyfriend, Tobias. They had two other roommates, Angie and Mark, who were students.

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[10] Names of the persons quoted in this thesis, as well as those of persons referred to within quotes have been altered to maintain their anonymity.

Erin was studying for her electrician's certificate, and was 28 years of age. She lived with five other roommates, Kelly, 28, Catherine, 20, Jay, 20, and Robert, mid-thirties, all of them employed or students.

Betty, 34 years-old, worked as a co-ordinator at a local university, and had a Ph.D. in Communications. She had two roommates: an employed female named Sarah, and another male.

Methodology

I myself have lived in two different shared houses on Commercial Drive, with a total of twenty roommates over the past six years. I am an 'insider' anthropologist with respect to my own lived experiences in shared households. Insider research has it's own potential benefits and costs (Aquilar 1981). Over the years I have developed an appreciation of the complexities involved, yet my familiarity with the subject matter has also been limiting. I have occasionally lost my self-consciousness and taken my lifestyle for granted, and have consequently lacked the sense of distance necessary for analysis. As well, I have sometimes fallen into the fallacy of assuming that I knew all there was to know about living in shared households, that nothing much would be new to me. My past has directed me towards recognizing certain processes that have particular meaning to me, and blinded me to other processes that may be experienced.

With respect to other shared households, however, I am an outsider.[11] By interviewing a variety of people who are members of their own shared households, I have been able to distance myself from my experiences (see McCracken 1988:22). The interviews provided me with the opportunity to view this topic through others' eyes, and served to dislodge many notions I held about shared housing. With one exception, I had no other connection to the household than that of interviewer; it appears likely that in at least some

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[11] As well as through non-membership, my gender, education level, and social class made me an outsider in some cases.

of the interviews I was provided with information that would not have been expressed had it been perceived that I had some personal or political agenda (Aquilar 1981:17). My insider experience provided me with the background knowledge of shared housing that enabled me to ask appropriate questions (McCracken 1988:19), while my outsider status in interviews both encouraged candor in interviewees and also furnished me with the necessary analytical distance.

Since interviews are also social situations, ethnographic data was derived whenever possible through participant observation during the interview process itself (see Hammersley and Atkinson 1983:118). In the group interview that I conducted, one member, Frank, was aware of this himself. *"Since Larry pays the most rent, we kind of let him tell the most stories, hey* [he chuckles]." Larry's authority was apparent in the social interaction during the interview.

I found it difficult to develop rapport in some cases. My male, middle class, privileged position distinguished me from some participants, despite our common shared housing experience. I found that my household, consisting of M.A. and Ph.D. students, a lawyer, and a teacher was quite upscale in comparison to others in the neighbourhood, although we still maintained relatively low incomes. Despite this, many of the participants were university educated, and as some responses show, the jargon they used is very similar to my own.[12] In general, I found the more educated participants easier to interview. They understood the interview relationship better, they understood the questions more quickly, and they tended to spend more time of their own analyzing the situation, providing more extensive answers. As well, those who 'ran' shared houses - those who had been there longest, had more responsibilities, power and commitment - tended to have a better developed philosophy, or combination of folk theories concerning the living arrangement.

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[12] The fact that I had known one participant for many years became problematic. I found it difficult to reconcile their version of their household with the knowledge and assumptions I had already formed.

Much of household life is experienced as natural and taken for granted: participants are not always able to express such tacit knowledge directly (see Spradley 1979:9). Occasionally I was forced to provide examples of possible responses to my questions before they could understand my meaning.[13] The ways in which I phrased questions no doubt influenced the manner in which they framed their response. Introducing concepts such as hierarchy, rules, space, and so on were necessary to cover these areas, but this also forced them to think in those terms. Even looking at the title of this study on the consent form prior to the interview influenced interviewees' statements to some degree.

As McCracken states, there exist three sources of information in this form of investigation (McCracken 1988:29-41). Firstly, through my own experiences, I developed an working knowledge of many aspects of shared house living that would be involved in this study. I identified my own cultural categories and the relationships that existed between them. Secondly, reviewing analytical literature provided me with conceptual tools, theoretical and methodological constructs (and assumptions), and field data. Moreover, I discovered where literature was lacking, both in terms of ethnographic focus and of analysis in general. The interviews were scenes of field data creation, and the third source of information. The formulation of both questions and answers was influenced by the joint construction of meaning that took place during the discourse between the interviewee and I (Mishler 1986:52,105). Through this process I elicited cultural categories and relationships from the interviewees. Some were expected, and others I had not anticipated. I found that methods of negotiation were varied and far more extensive than I had realized.

Analysis proceeded from the particular to the general, as according to McCracken's method of inquiry (McCracken 1988:42). Observations were made from utterances in the interview transcripts. These observations were developed alone, then within the larger transcript context, then according to the previous cultural and literature reviews.

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[13] As Mishler notes, respondents must accept the interviewer's framework of meanings in order that a successful interview takes place (Mishler 1986:54).

. Relationships between observations were examined, themes were identified and generalized theses were developed. Through this course of analysis then, I determined that the processes of negotiation were fundamentally concerned with the movement of boundaries of shared households.

Anonymity and Ethics

Since this research concerns itself with social interaction in the home, a characteristically private sphere of life, ethical considerations were of great importance. Approximately half of the participants explicitly asked that their roommates not be told what they were saying, while others said that it would be interesting to interview their roommates as well, to see what they would say. In any case, participants were assured of confidentiality and anonymity where other household members, other households, and university associates were concerned, as well as in the dissertation. They were fully informed as to the nature of the information required and the use to be made of that information. They were under no obligation to maintain participation, and could end involvement at any time.

Symbols and Meaning

People experience living in shared households in different ways; their personal histories, agendas, interests and so on position each person in developing his or her own understandings of social interaction within this context. Concepts such as appropriate divisions of responsibility, rules, cleanliness, sharing, privacy and more are quite ambiguous, and meanings are not often shared by members. As well, members' behaviour is meaningful only through the process of individual interpretation, and received meanings may be quite different from intended ones. As Cohen points out, "Social interaction is contingent upon such interpretation; it is, essentially, the transaction of meanings." (Cohen 1985:17)

Symbols give household members the capacity to make meaning; they are "vehicles of interpretation" (Cohen 1985:17). While meanings themselves may vary widely, many

symbols from which these meanings are derived may be held in common by members. The sharing of these symbols helps the household to cohere, while their ambiguity allows for individual interpretation. Individuality and commonality are thus reconciled.

The fact that moral boundaries in shared households are largely symbolic in character. means that different meanings may be attributed to them by different members, and also that boundaries recognized by some members may not by discernible to others. Household membership is not always calculated as discretely as might be expected. Much household behaviour, as well, is symbolic in nature, and is intended to communicate some meaning to another member or members. Figuring the moral boundaries of behaviour is a process in which all members take part. Each household member has his or her own notions of what is or should be permissible or not - some of these ideas exist prior to joining the household, and others develop during the member's stay. Members' senses of where this moral boundary should lie are often at odds with each other. Determining the position then becomes a process of negotiation, and because agreement is rarely explicitly articulated and the individual interpretations seldom come to be held in common, this process continues. This study, in consequence, will examine how meanings often vary among members - how understandings may conflict with each other, leading to negotiation of household boundaries.

The bulk of this thesis is made up of three major chapters. The second chapter is concerned with the social construction of the boundaries of the household as a physical unit: members and their relationships with those outside the unit, and movements across this boundary. The third chapter explores the boundaries of household communality, sharing household items, space, facilities, food and social life, and also deals with boundaries of conformity: where emphasis is upon rules, systems and organization. Chapter Four investigates the political and communicative context within which these boundaries are created: it deals with hierarchies, power blocs and various means of influencing one another in the process of negotiation. Finally, Chapter Five pulls

together the threads explored in the thesis to readdress the larger concerns identified in this introduction.

2. Household Boundaries

We are most often aware of our culture when we are standing at the edge of it, when we can see the other possibilities that exist. With shared housing, too, members are far more conscious of existing household character, group dynamics and social patterns - as well as of potential ones - when the boundary between the household unit and the outside is in flux.

The process of choosing a new member who will 'fit in' requires that some time be spent thinking about what it is that new members will be fitting into. The representation of one's living situation to potential members requires the articulation of household processes that may otherwise be implicit and taken-for-granted in day-to-day life. While formal membership in physical and financial terms may be acquired at a discreet point in time, becoming fully integrated into the household in social terms may be a longer process and one which is not always successful. Conversely, one may be accepted as part of the household without necessarily being a 'proper' member. While 'proper' or complete membership in the strictest sense implies a financial contribution to the household and allocation of a private bedroom, others may be accorded 'honorary' or partial memberships through their relationship with 'proper' members. Contact with other non-members, such as visitors, telephone callers and neighbours, also brings up domestic patterns and problems specific to shared housing. This section is then concerned with the (re-)definition of boundaries of the household as a unit: the recruiting of members into an existing or potential household, the process whereby members leave, and the process of dealing with other non-members.

Recruiting: Someone *who* fits in, not someone *to* fit in

Although members of shared households often find it difficult to articulate in precise terms, they often have a pretty good idea of the type of people they would like for housemates. This typology is often framed in terms of those kinds of persons they would

not want, however. As Kanter notes, "boundary distinctions can be established on two principles, affirmative and negative. Affirmative principles define the group by what it accepts; negative by what it rejects"(Kanter 1972:174). "Communes as an ideal type tend to be negative rather than affirmative, inclusive rather than exclusive, and permissive rather than strict"(Kanter 1973:279). Members interviewed for this study also experienced determining boundaries of membership and therefore potential behaviour in this negative manner. Most interviewees wished to have at least some common interests and similar values to those with whom they live. Specific requirements, such as owning or being allergic to animals, wanting a strict vegetarian, alcohol, smoke or drug-free environment may lead to a quick dismissal of a potential roommate. At times a specific gender is desired, to keep or develop a uniformity or balance in the house; sexual orientation may be an issue as well. Erin, who along with Kelly was a founding member of a shared household of five members, stated she looked for:

> basically a, a frame of mind... as far as outlook - you can read a lot about a person from your first impression of them. If they are young and more energetic and have interesting lives, an alternative outlook rather than your standard. We didn't really want anybody who was kind of very judgmental, who had a lot of hang-ups in regards to what was appropriate to do in the house and what wasn't appropriate to do in the house. We were not looking for anybody who was a hard-core drinker, drinking beer and sitting on the couch and so forth. Kelly and I agreed that we'd like another male in the house to balance it out a bit, and we also didn't want some stereotypical redneck and of person. Someone who is social, younger, but not a heavy partier or drinker, into the arts community, things like that.[14]

Joyce stated: "One of the things I look for in a roommate is someone that will be able to have some kind of a relationship. To be able to talk, because I want it to feel like a home."

The character of a person leaving a household can influence the choosing of a new roommate by those remaining. Reflection over previous experiences can generate a desire to compare or contrast future preferences in terms of the last roommate. One may

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[14] All direct quotes from interviews that are contained within this thesis are noted in italics.

attempt to 'replace' a roommate whose behaviour one considered morally good with another member who shows potential for similar behavior. Likewise, behaviour that crosses the boundary of acceptability serves to articulate the existence of this boundary in the minds of members. This then also becomes an issue in recruitment. For example, after living with someone who watched television in our living room far more than I wished to be exposed to it, TV-watching became a concern when I was looking for his replacement. I wished to make sure that any new recruit would adhere to my vision of moral behaviour in this matter. During other periods of recruitment, however, the topic of television-watching habits was barely broached. Dan believed that he had been accepted into a household in part because he hadn't shown much concern for cleanliness; apparently the roommate he was replacing had been too uptight, a "cleanfreak," and the other members of the recruiting household wanted someone more laid back. The boundary of what is considered appropriately intimate behaviour may be adjusted as well. Michael, a member of a gay couple within a shared household, indicated that he tends to swing back and forth between finding a roommate with the potential for socializing closely with them and finding one who would keep to themselves more, maintaining a higher level of privacy:

> We've chosen our roommates and what I have - the pattern that I have discerned is that we are doing a bit of a pendulum. [We've chosen] very close people and not so very close people, and back and forth, generally in reaction to the previous roommates. So, as we are interviewing, what's going on in our mind often is what our last experience was, so we choose in reaction to that.

There is generally no empty space between one roommate leaving and another one coming, either in temporal or physical terms. They often exchange the bedroom on the same day, and just as one is being accepted into a shared household, another is being lost to it. There is little time or opportunity to start with a clean slate.

A shared household may be created from scratch, when a number of friends, or at least acquaintances, band together and search for a house to inhabit. Even in this case, there tends to be one or two people who serve as the prime motivators for this project; other

potential members must subsequently meet their approval. While the physical location may not yet be established, the process of recruiting is fundamentally the same.[15]

Recruitment of roommates can be either self-initiated or agency assisted or sponsored. Private or public agencies can assist in just the matching up of housemates, or also in the actual organization of house chores and activities, even providing cooking and cleaning services. It appears that these agencies tend to be directed towards specific user groups: the elderly, the physically infirm, and the mentally challenged. In Vancouver, the Vancouver Homesharers Society acts as a matchmaking service, primarily for the elderly, and also, a new private company called Roomies does the same, for a general clientele[16]. Those I interviewed, however, initiated their own housing arrangements, either recruiting by word of mouth or through advertisements.

Through roommates, friends or people with some other connection to the household, one may learn of a potential recruit. In this case one has the advantage of learning something of their background through the person who referred them. As Janet notes, this is important regarding safety issues for her children: she would never recruit a person that she had no previous knowledge of. Problems may arise however, in that accepting a friend of one of the existing members of a household may potentially lead to the creation of a new power bloc. Peter mentioned that he on a couple of occasions accepted friends of roommates without actually meeting with them. The first time this was thought to have worked out well, but the second time it didn't and conflicts began to arise between him (the founding, or most 'tenured' member of the household) and the others. When the roommates asked to bring in yet another friend, he refused. Peter described how one of the less 'tenured' roommates queried his stand by wondering aloud: *"Oh, you probably have enough girls in here', and I said 'No, that's not the point.' My issue was enough fanatics. I was starting to think, but I didn't mention it."* Peter had found that by

[15] For more on the admission process to communes, see Zablocki, 1980:108-114.
[16] Roomies maintains a database for people searching for roommates or rooms. For a fee, they will take information concerning one's lifestyle, habits, and desires in roommates and match this with those of others'.

recruiting their friends. these women had begun to form their own social unit. which as it increased in size and proportion to the household in general. threatened to dominate the construction of household boundaries. They were all women who were "man-hating lesbians," who shot heroin. and in Peter's perception. fanatics.

A common and more neutral method of recruitment is to place advertisements at local bookstores and cafes. There is no cost to the household. and the size. content. and form of the notice are relatively unlimited. Moreover. potential respondents are for the most part limited to those persons for a place in that general area. Advertisements may also be placed in the local or regional newspaper (the major daily newspaper, The Vancouver Sun now has a new section headed 'Roomies'). but this can be costly and descriptions are limited. Two interviewees. Joyce and Erin. thought that this would provoke an overwhelming response from potentially 'strange' people even while acknowledging the diversity of people living in the neighbourhood. while Michael would have been concerned with attracting crank phone calls to their gay household. As well. many higher learning centres (such as universities. colleges and technical schools) have notice boards. some dedicated specifically for housing. Commercial Drive is not really close to any of these centres. however. although many students live on the Drive. All persons interviewed for the study said that limiting advertisements to local bookstores and bulletin boards still elicited enough responses. from what was generally thought to be an appropriate 'market.' As Peter noted:

> To get people on the spot its a marvelous place. I mean, every minute you look somebody is there. taking ads. you know. And its all kind[s] of people. you know. there's students. there's travelers. there is gay people. there is working people. people on welfare. so I thought was the easiest thing to do.

Correspondingly. Gregory. who was recruited by Peter stated:

> ....its one of the most effective strategies of dealing with that system, is just simply to hang around there for an hour or two hours in the afternoon and see who comes along and puts up a new sign. 'cause if its a good place and its affordable. it goes in hours. you know.

Presentation of Self: Potential Behaviour

Advertisements are designed to attract certain types of potential members and to screen out others. Bob described the search for his relatively conventional shared house:

> *I was looking at the ads at Octopus Books, and I sort of filtered through all the ones that had kind of quirky - you know - statements on them - all the earth goddess stuff and all that - you know, its fine, but its not the kind of arrangement I'd like to live in.*

The words 'roommate', 'housemate', 'shared house' are usually included, in order to designate the type of housing available. Specifics concerning matters such as location of the dwelling, the monthly costs of rent and utilities, the number of current members, their sexes, any animals existing or (not) allowed, and the date of availability are included. Information on space available (one advertisement actually drew a layout of the house, indicating rooms) and various facilities may be included. Often the character of the household is depicted, as well as that of the roommate they are looking for: for example, ecologically-minded, quiet, creative, energetic, family-like, etc. Following are four advertisements posted at Octopus Books in December of 1995:

> Room to Rent. Gardener's Dream. Comfortable home with large beautiful garden. Near Commercial Drive. Looking for ecologically minded, woman preferred to share with two men. Avail. Jan 15 / Feb 1. $267. + 1/3 util. 555-4261 Ian

> House to Share. Wanna share a house in East Van.? We are looking for two new female housemates to share our bright, spacious home. On 28th Ave between Knight and Fraser. It's a quiet neighbourhood with mainly families and students. Our place has hardwood floors, big windows, a fireplace, balconies, laundry, a back porch and parking all included. Call 555-2464. Come see our Xmas tree and have a glass of eggnog on us. Check it out! Rooms go for: 1- $400/month (avail Jan 15th) 2- $450/month (avail Jan 1st)

Roommate Wanted. by January or February in spacious top floor of funky house just off Commercial Drive. Working student preferred. Mellow person who is into jazz and my cat Oscar. $300 (plus util) 555-2552

The House of Orange is looking for a 6th segment for January 1. Must be female to complete our Brady Bunch motif. You must enjoy keeping a clean house and be energetic and creative. We have a gigantic home with fireplaces, a deck, laundry, orange carpet and more. Stone's throw from the Drive. Very open minds. Employed preferred. $250/mo. + $50 util. 555-6894

As Peter recalled from the time he was recruiting, "...the ad said 'prefer artsy, alternative people', and basically 'you pay your bill, clean up your shit, no hard drugs - that I want to know of' - and then 'music sometime[s] loud, pets and smoke OK.'"

Most interviewees stated that they screened prospective applicants or households over the telephone as well, pursuing details from the advertisement and seeking information on other details previously unmentioned, as well as getting a sense of the other person. Interviewing in person takes a great deal of time and can be difficult to organize - this is particularly so when large numbers of potential recruits must be met by a household made up of many members - so the process often begins over the telephone, just to make sure that each meets the basic qualifications. Larry explained:

> You put the ad in and just start taking calls, and you know, especially at times - and this is one of those times where there was a lot of people looking - you get a lot of calls, you know. And you have to sift through them, and sort of hone in - try and hone in as much as possible when its over the phone. And, you know, we've got cats here, for instance, and if somebody's highly allergic to them its no point in them spending their time coming over, so you eliminate off some of the key things that people may or may not be looking for.

People looking for a room in a house may hold varied priorities. Some may be concerned primarily with the size and condition of the bedroom, while others look more towards the type of people living in the house, and the house architecture as a whole. The rental and

utility costs are always an issue, and the location and length of time available are important as well (often sublets exist).[17]

Interviews held at the house generally last about 20 minutes to half an hour. In some shared houses, the most tenured person(s) set(s) up the interview, while in others it is done by whoever was involved in the first contact. The interview takes the form of an unstructured conversation, although in at least one case, the 'house' had a set of specific interview questions that they used each time they recruit.[18] Both the house and the potential recruit may seek to present themselves in a certain way during this process. The existing members of the house may clean the house more thoroughly than may be normal, in order to attract more people, or to indicate that this state of domestic order or neatness is what they hope the prospective new member will contribute to maintaining the household should he or she be accepted. Larry noted that:

> At times when we cleaned the house when we were showing it there was an immediate difference [in the responses of potential recruits] before and after it was cleaned. If you don't clean it, in a way you're saying - you know, your odds are increasing of finding somebody who will fit in, because...[they can see it in its natural state] but on the other hand, you actually get a lot more people interested in the place[because it is more attractive], so...

Larry's roommate Frank joked: "I think we got Bob [their third and newest roommate] with the two flower pots on the porch."

The recruit tends to obtain much more information about the household than members of the household gain about the prospective recruit, through presence in the house during the interview, and also because members of the house tend to have more to say about household patterns and processes than the potential member, who is implicitly expected to fit in. This can cause confusion and miscommunication, especially with the assumption of tacit agreement or consent. Just because a potential recruit may seem to

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[17] See Neighbourhood Reinvestment Corporation (1985) for topics to discuss with each other before sharing.

[18] They had been willing to provide me with a copy of the questions, but were unable to find the original during the period I was in contact with them.

endorse household members' statements about their lifestyle doesn't necessarily mean that he will share such lifestyles, but only that he acknowledges that that is how they live. Michael was quite aware of this, and conducted the interview process in such a way as to collect information from the potential recruit prior to disclosing established household patterns, thus forcing the recruit to present herself on her own terms:

> *We, in the interview, are pretty careful not to give anything away, because we know people will say, 'Yup, yup, yup, yup, I'm that way, I'm that way, cheap rent, I'll go for it.' We generally ask people to describe themselves and how they live, and how they want to live. And then we let them know, you know, if they are at all reasonable, we make it clear to them this is how we do it, and this is how its going to be - and these things are negotiable, because a lot is negotiable. We don't enforce people to follow a particular pattern of living, we want people who are already following that pattern. Because if you force something, then eventually people get tired of it. It ends up being a mess. We've made it very clear that we wanted people who fitted in, not people to fit in.*

At the other extreme, Dan recounted how his household appeared to lack concern about the lifestyle and preferences of potential recruits when they interviewed him:

> *I was over at my friend's house visiting him, and* [the woman living downstairs] *said she needed somebody to live there, so I'm like "Sure, I'll take it." They were just looking for somebody. Just anybody, you know.*

As Michael stated: *"its a gamble, its a twenty minute interview. You're going to pick someone to live with in twenty minutes."* In twenty minutes you choose whether or not to live with a person; what is said and the way one acts is crucial. The first impressions presented by all parties becomes highly significant, and, as Joyce pointed out, one statement deemed to be out of place can affect one's chances dramatically:

> *I'll say "And I've got two cats", and they'll say "Oh, that's all right". [But] I'd rather have someone that says, "Oh, great! You've got cats!", because I don't want them to be ignored.*

Generally all house members take some part in making the decision about recruiting new housemates, although this is not invariably the case. For instance, as Gregory related:

> [Peter, the more tenured member] *essentially goes out and finds whoever and drags them home, and that's who I end up living with. I have no real input on who I end up living with, nor does he feel that I should have any input.*

The process of interviewing makes household members aware of all the possible new members, and of the potential changes to the household environment that any given recruit might precipitate. Having relatively intimate encounters with strangers leads one to choose the best available, not necessarily one who would be considered an ideal roommate. Financial considerations often require that membership levels be maintained at full capacity in spite of the risk of incompatibility between housemates. Peter acknowledged that he chose new members without much thought because he needed the money quickly, and that his hasty decision was sometimes the cause for regret on his part later.

Social Acceptance

Once formally accepted into the household, the process of negotiating social acceptance within the reconstituted household begins. Integration of new member into household routines requires a learning curve for the recruit, and the rest of the members of the household must adjust to the new participant as well. Frequently a 'honeymoon' period takes place, in which old and new members are generally cautious of each other and take care to moderate their behaviour towards one another. In fact, this period is often one of renewal, where there is an increased awareness of the domestic social unit and of the need for co-operation in cleaning, and so on. In time the newcomer tends to express himself more, taking more chances, starting to do his or her own thing. They may feel more comfortable at this point and may risk offending others more in expressing themselves: with good-natured insults, watching more television, relaxing on their cleaning duties, and so on. Dan, whose roommates had wanted to recruit 'just anybody' found that when he became less cautious in his household behaviour they reacted negatively. His natural behaviour patterns apparently did not correspond with those already established by the rest of the household:

> *When I first moved in there, I sat there and talked with her lots and listened to her chat, trying to get to know her, and then, as I kind of got to know her, I kind of talked with her less, and stuff like that. I did everything by their rules, and then after a month I started to kind of like -ahh I'm going to start to kind of do some of*

my own stuff, and that was like, whoa, knock it off. I was on a totally different wavelength, you know. Christina and I get along fine now. I just had to learn how to play her a little bit.

In this case, "learning how to play her" essentially meant learning how to negotiate with her while still being able to maintain a positive relationship.

Peter found that his new roommate, Gregory, began to do his own thing right away:

Anyway, he got the room, and right away I saw kind of a change. As soon as the rent was paid and the receipt given by the landlady that came, and then he was actually, he was different.

Rather than attempting to fit in to or at least learn about established household behaviour, Gregory entered into intense negotiation - or rather, a power struggle - with Peter.

A household may have a celebratory dinner, or some sort of ritual of welcome for the new arrival; if it is not specifically meant to be such, the first few get-togethers tend to serve the purpose of bringing the recruit into the moral household. This first stage involves a process of integration, an initial move at educating the newcomer in household ways and establishing bonding. Erin explained:

Its a pretty complex system to move into, like with all the individuals and all the kind of quirks and stuff, and its - there's a lot to get used to and so... We've never asked anyone to leave, though. Most of the time we allowed the group to change with the person, the person to change with the group.

It is possible that the integration of others can cause an existing member to feel like an outsider. In Peter and Gregory's house, four new members moved in at one time. They were all friends and shared a first language that Peter spoke, but Gregory did not. Peter expressed surprise at this occurrence, complaining: *"At that point, from the beginning, from the day they moved in, [Gregory] never, never, never socialized again."* Some new members never really integrate into the social life of the household. While acknowledging that behavioural boundaries shift with the introduction of new roommates, Erin found one recruit's attempts at establishing changes was not acceptable:

"She came in and wanted to make some changes, and her approach to making the changes was not the way we had been doing it..."

Occasionally misrepresentation appears to have taken place, where either a member of the household or the newcomer realizes that things are not as they were said to be at the onset. For example, a recruit may initially downplay his interest in listening to loud music if he knows that this might not be acceptable to his roommates, but over time, as he becomes more secure in his position as a household member, this behaviour can again arise. Peter had assumed that Gregory had regular employment as a writer, but this turned out not to be the case: *"He presented himself like being a professional, like not being on welfare. He's on welfare, but he didn't tell till the month after."* Conversely, one may simply misunderstand or miscommunicate. In Dan's case, time wasn't taken to interview a number of people: *"They were just looking for ....anybody, you know. I think they kind of regretted it actually, because I moved in there and I was on a totally different wavelength, you know."* Sometimes this miscommunication relates to one's initial presentation during the interview process, and the assumption of tacit agreement, as Joyce noted:

> *I should have been more direct, but I [simply] said I didn't watch much TV. I usually just use the TV to watch videos sometimes, thinking, you know, and now she'll tell me how she feels about it. And she said, "Oh, that sounds good", so I thought that's how she feels about it too. Well, no, she was watching TV all the time. I just hate coming home with the TV going.*

Becoming an Ex-member

Generally, members initiate their own departure from a household. Positive reasons exist, such as relocating, getting one's own place, moving in with a significant other, and so on. Negative reasons, for example, could be a personality conflict with one or more of the roommates, or loss of willingness to put up with the uncleanliness or the noise. In only one case did I hear of a formal trial or probation period being set. There may be a core person or persons who hold the lease or rental agreement, and they would have the

option of asking another housemate to leave at any time.[19] Michael stated that he had asked another roommate to leave because she didn't maintain her cleaning duties,

> *She didn't clean, so she got her notice. "We gave you a lot of warning, and its time for you to find somewhere else to live." Well, we've kicked out two roommates, and one hated our guts, and blah, blah, blah, blah, blah, we were awful scumbags, and she spent the whole month at her girlfriend's essentially, and came to pick up her stuff and that was it. And the other one wasn't. The other one was much more complicated. And the problem with her was that we just got sick of her, and she really got sick of us too, but she didn't want to move because it was cheap, and it was really kind of a destructive relationship, so I just told her it was time to move, because it was destructive for everyone and it wasn't going anywhere, and she burst out crying, and blah, blah, blah, blah, blah, and then she decided, when she had time to think about it, that it really wasn't that bad, and then she got along just fine with us. We still see her quite often.*

Larry explained that he had only once asked a roommate to leave, and that usually such persons would be inclined to initiate their own departure if problems were apparent. On the other hand, however, when Dan was asked by his roommates to move into a vacant room in his friend's apartment upstairs, he said:

> *"forget it", you know. "I like where I live. I'm not - I'm cool, you know, other than you guys are kind of a drag. I like the location, and I like - you know - my room's fine", I said. I told Christina [the leaseholder], "Like, forget it," you know, "I don't get in your guys's way that much."[20]*

Joint tenancy is another matter; each member pays rent directly to the landlord, and has a rental agreement as an individual, therefore all tenants have equal rights to stay, and one cannot force another out. Peter, the founding member, discovered that under the terms of the household rental agreement he had the right to give Gregory, a new recruit, notice to move out only during the first month. Gregory's stalling tactics served to legally secure his position as household member:

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[19] In British Columbia, shared household members must pay rent to the landlord directly and have their names on a rental agreement to be considered tenants under the Residential Tenancy Act. Otherwise they have a Right to Occupy the premises, rights which are based upon any contractual agreement between them and the landlord or leaseholder. This is also the case when members share the dwelling with the landlord. If a lock is placed on the outside of a member's bedroom, however, he becomes a tenant of that particular room, and is considered a tenant with respect to the holder of the rental agreement, or with respect to the landlord, should the landlord be living on the premises (B.C. Ministry of Attorney General, 1996).
[20] Also see Zablocki 1980:139.

I said "Well, you got to find another place", and on a regular basis I say "Gregory, are you looking for a place?" "Oh no, I haven't seen anything yet "[Gregory replied.] And I found after, legally that I have no choice. I have no right to put him out, because he's been there now four months, and he's actually a tenant, and since we have joint tenancy, either we stay together or go together, unless somebody wants to leave on their own.

In this case, Peter recruited Gregory and then three women. Peter and the women wanted Gregory to leave, but he kept postponing. There was a shift of alliances, wherein the women came to find Peter's behaviour more offensive than Gregory's, and sided with Gregory to have Peter removed. They attempted to have Peter evicted through residential tenancy arbitration, while in turn, Peter and the landlord sided together to have Gregory and the women evicted. In this case, none of the members wished to leave the house, despite the intense conflict that was taking place within the household. Going through arbitration they discovered that neither could have the other removed. Peter did indicate to me, however, that a possible option he had planned with the landlord was to miss paying his rent one month, in which case they could all be evicted, and then to write a new agreement, excluding the others.

Occasionally a farewell celebration may be held. At the least, there is usually a pulling away, a separation process, although, as Michael observed:

there's a whole renewal process that happens around the new person, so that kind of overshadows the end of the last relationship, because this new one is right there.

If a household member is leaving on good terms, there is just a gradual winding down of the relationship, whereas if housemates are on bad terms, people may just put up with each other until the end, or a loss of communal values or an escalation of antagonism may take place. Just as the household boundaries change when a person joins, when a person leaves a change takes place as well. In one case the process of losing a founding member left a particularly dramatic impression upon Erin, who had also been a member from the household's inception:

...it was very important to have her around, and it [was] going to be very hard to keep it together, 'cause it was really feeling around this time that the whole place was falling apart - the whole house was losing some kind of cohesion. It changes the whole kind of structure of the house.

Visitors: Access and Avoidance

Having visitors in shared households can be a mixed blessing.[21] There exists an opportunity to meet new people; indeed most participants believed that by living in shared housing the types of people with whom they would socially interact had been broadened. On the other hand, as Bob pointed out, visitors can be inescapable:

There are people just coming around all the time. People, who it seems come once or twice a month, and then there are people who come just about every day, so there's a constant cycle of visitors. For me it was interesting because there's such a broad dynamic range of the types of people who come here, you know, from professionals to welfare people and everything in-between, so I find it very interesting. It can be a bone of contention, really, that sometimes there's no escape. Like I want to be alone, like I'm into a book or something and tired of the endless conversations that are going on, with people dropping around, and there's a gathering in the kitchen and a gathering in the livingroom, and my bedroom is right beside the kitchen, so it's not really an escape. Sound carries, you know.

Issues of safety exist, as well, as Dan found:

They got kind of choked about my friends, because I had some really weird friends, right. People I have met. I have this one guy I was playing in a band with who freaked out and chopped the back door up. He showed up in a drunken rage in the middle of the night demanding his guitars back and his amps back, and all this stuff, and I wasn't there right. So that was pretty bad. I fixed the door, it was repaired within like hours, but...

Correspondingly, the exclusivity of personal relationships with one's own visitors must be re-negotiated, as well. The only place one may entertain privately is in one's bedroom, and that may be too intimate a setting to be appropriate. Much entertaining therefore takes place in shared living areas, where other roommates are generally entitled

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[21] Also see Raimy 1979:119; Brown and Brown 1973:264; Kanter 1979:116.

to be present. As Michael observed, one can ask other members to limit their interaction with one's visitors:

> *Generally friends are available to people, unless someone says, "Angie's over this one time and I want to spend some time with her alone." But people vary in how they interpret that. One woman who was trying to be everything in our lives always joined in, and after a while that got to be a bit of a drag and we just told her, "Give it a break." And then there was another woman who objected to my not respecting her* [private social interaction with her] *friends. She didn't want me talking to them, so she told me that and I stopped doing it.*

Household moral boundaries with respect to fraternizing with other roommates' visitors may not necessarily be discussed, however. Dan realized that he had crossed a line his roommates had assumed:

> *I slept with one of their really good friends and I think that really pissed them off, you know what I mean. I'm like, I don't care, that's my business, you know what I mean.*

Some households have two living rooms, or a separate dining area or sunroom which makes segregated entertaining possible, or an announcement to others to leave temporarily may be employed, as well. As Erin stated:

> *If you are entertaining, having a bit of a dinner party, whatever, I usually let people know about it and ask that they go. "Go away"* [sounding plaintively]. *"Just go away for a few hours, I'm having friends over for supper", kind of thing, you know, and for the most part it's responded to fairly well.*

In many ways, one's presentation of self to visitors is compromised; a loss of control over one's physical and social surroundings takes place.

Guests may sometimes become almost partial household members through their relationship to formal members of the household. Ex-roommates, friends or partners of roommates may have their presence accepted with or without limited financial and/or social obligations. In my own experience, one person whose relationship to the house had aspects of all these categories was accepted any time (he was even given a key) with no financial obligation, as he participated in house activities, and sometimes even led

them. In other cases, a boyfriend or girlfriend of a member may be allowed to spend a great deal of time in the house, provided that he or she contributes to the rent and is not present when his or her partner is away. Like full members, partial members also need some education in communal responsibilities, conserving hot water for others, maintaining reasonable hours, and so on. When one's interpretation of moral household boundaries of behaviour are crossed, the acceptance of a partial member may be contested. This occurred in Peter's household, as friends of his roommates would visit the house and make use of the facilities, even at times when he was the only one at home:

> *The two girls. Sally and Kath, bring a lot of their friends over. OK. They treat me like shit, like sometime I'm watching TV and almost push me out of the sofa, or change [the] channel without asking. One day this girl was doing her laundry downstairs, and I told her - and I think it was the breaking point - I told her she couldn't do her laundry there.*

Although some households develop explicit guidelines for visitors, in some cases there is no explicit discussion of how long guests will be welcome to stay; it may be that their departure date becomes postponed to the point that other members begin to complain of the guest's continued presence. Erin's household had two visitors who were quite disruptive, and stayed to the point that roommates began to complain: *"Basically it was Kelly's* [one of Erin's roommates] *responsibility to look after these guys because she invited them in."* Kelly had asked other members for permission originally, but, as Erin noted:

> *There was kind of a mix up in regards to how long. Originally it was only going to be a week, and then it was like "Well, it could be two weeks", and then it ended up longer, and we were like, "Whoa, whoa, whoa, wait a second. This is really getting out of hand." It would normally be OK if the person wasn't so intrusive.*

Telephone Calls

The greater number of members living together, the less chance there is that a call coming in is for any one person. It may become a waiting game; holding back to see if another member will answer it first, or just letting the answering machine take over. Members can become very irritated about taking messages for others, especially if they do not get

many phone calls themselves. This also applies to answering the door, according to Larry:

> *You can imagine, if you're answering the phone - probably two out of every three times you answer the phone its for somebody else, so Similarly, if you're tired and you just want to, you know, lie down and take a nap, and then somebody's at the door asking for somebody else .*

Conversely, Erin pointed out that avoiding calls and visitors becomes difficult when other members announce to the caller that one is, in fact, home. Again, the privacy of one's relationships to outsiders may be compromised when house members in a communal area are able to hear one side of the telephone conversation, as Joyce found. Dan discovered that not erasing messages off of the answering machine can be contentious, as well.

> *Alan started getting choked, right, that I had messages on the machine piling up, which I cleaned them all off, right, but I think it was basically in his face, right The phone is like his lifeline*

Friends of members may become upset that their telephone messages are not always relayed by others, or that they can't get through because of a busy line. Janet learned that friends may also become hesitant to visit if animosity develops between themselves and other roommates. Conversely, living in shared households can potentially lead members to neglect previous friendships; while those living alone are generally forced to go outside of their household to see others[22], shared household members may have no need to go elsewhere for social life[23].

Neighbours

Relationships with neighbours may also influence moral boundaries of the household. As shared household dwellings are generally filled to capacity with members who are often young adults, the potential for frequent and loud socializing is great. Shared households have a reputation for being noisy to neighbours. Erin commented, however, that their

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[22] In a 1978 survey, those living alone frequently exhibited higher levels of "extrahousehold" social connectedness than those living with others (Alwin and Converse, 1985 319)
[23] This occurred in Alam's study of a commune (Alam 1976 187)

house was generally very quiet: "*The neighbours complain that we don't make enough noise, in a joking way.*" Indeed, approximately one half of those interviewed characterized their households as quiet. Larry, whose household was not so tame, believed in keeping lines of communication open with neighbours:

> *For younger, single people who like to listen to music, its really important to have a good working relationship with your neighbours, right, you know, you have to be considerate. All the neighbours sooner or later have some party or cranks it* [the music]. *But it is also really important that these neighbours know who we are and that they can talk to us and if they've got any complaints about the noise or anything else, that we are easy to talk to, and they can tell us what's on their mind, so we are not in a situation where they are just going to arbitrarily call the police.*

Again, household members may vary in their willingness to actively interact with neighbours.

Summary

This chapter has dealt with the recruitment and integration of new members, having members leave, and dealing with outsiders. Potential recruits are recognized by existing members as containers of potential behaviour. Boundaries of behaviour must then be expressed by both the household and the recruit during the recruitment process, in order to increase the likelihood of a successful integration into, and negotiation of, existing household behavioural norms. The process of learning how to negotiate appropriately takes work, and social and moral integration does not always take place. The turnover of members means that those involved in the negotiation of behavioural boundaries, and, consequently, the boundaries themselves, are always changing. Relationships to those outside the household unit, such as visitors, telephone callers, and neighbours also require some co-ordination of behavioural boundaries by household members.

3. Communality and Conformity

What is to be Shared?

Members of shared households often have varying ideas of what is or should be in fact shared, and to what extent. The sharing of physical living space is generally assumed, as in the use of kitchen and bathroom facilities, living room furniture and so on. But what about items such as food, alcohol, toiletries, music tapes and CD's, books, clothes, bicycles and vehicles? Are costs of living shared? Do members combine money towards food, utilities, and purchasing new household items? How are social events and activities, such as meals, entertaining, and going out together, or personal information and intimacy to be organized?

Interviewees in this study indicated that their bedroom existed as their sole private domain. In some cases locks are installed on bedroom doors, in order to ensure protection of belongings and privacy from other members and/or outsiders. All other rooms are considered public areas and are generally accessible to all members, and the use of space in these communal areas must be managed. The overall floor space per member may be limited. Yet, as noted by Corbett in her study of student housing, "A feeling of spaciousness may not be merely a function of square footage, but rather a function of the number of activities which a space will accommodate"(1973:418). A house design with an open living plan would require a higher degree of compatibility in the activities performed by each member than a design in which a greater number of separate common areas exists.

Working around each other's activities may be a matter of time management. Accessing the laundry or kitchen facilities, for example, takes some co-ordination in determining the patterns of others, and scheduling for the bathroom in the morning may be structured to the minute, creating situations where the slightest inconsistency causes a delay. Very often, people's living patterns are taken into account during the interview process, so that

use of facilities is carefully scheduled. For example, Joyce stated that she preferred roommates who bathe at night, so that she would have the bathroom free in the morning.

Certain activities are more intrusive than others. Listening to music or watching television tends to dominate aural space and sets the tone of activities possible in that place at that time. *"He'll watch TV, play guitar, and listen to the stereo at the same time. And its like completely unnerving for me. "* Dan complained. Conflicts over taste in TV programs and music may occur, but it is generally accepted that those who initiate the activity have first choice over the form it will take. The households of Gregory, Janet and Michael relegate TVs and stereos to bedrooms, while Erin's household has two living rooms, TVs and stereos, an arrangement which allows for an increased variability of usage. In Larry's household, TVs and video cassette recorders may be brought into or out of a communal area for specific temporary purposes. While members are expected to be considerate about not making undue noise while others are sleeping, the sound created by simply walking about, flushing the toilet, or making something to eat may be disturbing, as may be the cries of a baby. Different noises bother different people; Betty is irritated by the vibrating bass of music, while Erin uses music for sound cover:

> *We've agreed that if we have anybody - if we are entertaining anybody that we would play music, because she says she'd be able to hear the condom unwrapped, and anything, anything, because she's right there, it's like she might as well be in the room.*

Peter stated:

> *The only thing bothers me is the stepping back and forth of Gregory, because there is an impatience. Its the mood of it. Noise don't bother me... as long as the mood is good, I can sleep.*

Odors, in the form of cooking food, perfumes or uncleanliness may also be intrusive, as Joyce pointed out.

Furniture may be supplied by one or more individual house members and is shared. The same applies to decorative items. When a member has a new item or some change they

wish to introduce into the communal area, prior consultation may or may not take place. The change may or may not be accepted by others on the basis of factors such as adequate space, the quality of the new item compared to a similar existing item, potential territorial value, aesthetic value, moral value or often a simple lack of interest. As well, in Michael's household:

> *We have the veto rule that if something offends you, you have the right to have it removed. For example, Jesus with pearls. We had a Christian roommate who thought that was offensive, so we took the pearls off. No big deal. ...[although] we make clear to people when they move in that the general appearance is not going to change.*

In some cases, a change or addition is made without consultation, creating a situation where eventual acceptance or rejection may take place. All interviewees were aware of the risks they take in that any item they have offered up for communal use may be broken, lost or damaged by others. Determining responsibility for such losses when it is not volunteered may be difficult, as is calculating and enforcing restitution in the form of an apology and/or repair or replacement. The usual consensus is to refrain from sharing expensive or irreplaceable items, a strategy which unfortunately leads to furnishings of low quality, typified by Gregory as: *"East Vancouver Back Alley Deluxe".*

The sharing of utilities, such as heat, hot water, and telephone must also be negotiated. Members may vary in the level of heat required for their comfort, while maintaining enough hot water for all to bathe may be problematic. Having to wait for some period before the telephone is free for use may be inconvenient, so some houses have two or more private lines. Interviewees were very aware of the potential for ex-members to leave owing money for utilities, particularly for long-distance telephone charges. Peter refused to get a telephone for this reason, while Erin's household made it a requirement for members to bill long distance charges to individual members' calling cards.

Sharing Attitudes: a Family or a Hotel?

Thus far the discussion has focused on sharing externally defined space, resources, facilities and utilities, which generally comprise minimum requirements any shared household. "Sharing can be simply co-presence: occupying the same room or space without any spoken acknowledgment of the other's presence"(Ahrentzen 1989:xiv). At the other end of the spectrum, one may share one's self: participate in group activities, share experiences, bond with other members and feel like one socially belongs to the household. The extended family model is most often cited in characterizing this level of communality. Kanter notes that "... 'family' is a metaphor for a quality in relationships - supportive, sentimental, warm, loyal, self-disclosing - regardless of the kinds of ties and kinds of people who share the feelings"(1979:116). Indeed, many interviewees used the term themselves, holding it as some sort of ideal which may be more or less attainable.

The varying degrees to which this attitude is held by members may bring about a great deal of conflict. As Peter recounted:

> *I took Gregory aside a few times and I explained "Come down, watch TV with us", you know, "I mean Its not a hotel here, you know, its a home, you know, and you got to socialize." It would be so nice to have somebody which is part of the family, you know. He was not obnoxious or anything, he was just not part of the group, you know. Roommates that are not part of your life are actually an encumbrance, like extra furniture, that you got to deal with, you know, and they don't bring you nothing.*

At the opposite extreme, the phrase that often arises is 'doing my own thing', explained by Dan and then by Gregory:

> *I think Christina would like everybody to be a lot more family-like, but I think Alan and I would like everybody to be completely separate, and not have to talk to anybody, you know. [In my last place] we got along so well, because he did his own thing and I did my own thing, and we never ever like crossed paths, you know what I mean.*

I think one of the real crucial things that can lead to success in this kind of situation is that people are just basically using [the house] as something of launch pad and they have their own things that they're doing.[24] *I don't bother them and they don't bother me. basically its a working relationship. and you just got to do what's necessary to cooperate*

The motivation and expectations that members bring into the situation influence the extent to which they participate. Those who acknowledge the obvious financial benefits and yet are also motivated by the social potential often attempt to develop fairly intimate relationships with other members. In their study of communes, Brown and Brown identify the former attitude to be 'monist'. where emphasis is on the ability of the group as a whole to meet the needs of members and a high degree of communality is practiced (1973:416). The movement of goods and services between household members is performed in an manner of generalized reciprocity; any imbalance. whether temporary or permanent, is perceived to bind members together. "The strength of a communal relationship can be thought of in terms of the costs one would be willing to bear to benefit the other. The stronger the relationship, the greater costs one will incur to meet the other's needs without exacting specific repayment"(Clark and Chrisman 1994:79).

People who take part in shared housing simply because they cannot afford their own accommodation often look at it as a necessary and only temporary evil, and develop only minimal relationships with others, such as in a rooming house or hotel. These 'pluralists' focus on the importance of individuals' independence - 'doing their own thing' (Brown and Brown 1973:416). They are primarily self-interested, and enter into as few transactions as possible. Those proponents of a minimalist working relationship may gravitate directly to the exchange rule and indirect reciprocity. "They will only do things for the other if they anticipate being repaid or in response to benefits given to them in the past"(Clark and Chrisman 1982:84). Shared household members adhering to this philosophy may attempt to refuse goods or services offered by other roommates, thereby

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[24] In one study of a commune. it was found that putting more energy into activities outside of and unrelated to the commune essentially turned it into a boardinghouse to which they returned at night to sleep (Brown and Brown 1973:265).

avoiding any need for repayment. A constant eye is kept on the level of parity so as to both avoid doing more than necessary and to also avoid being in debt to another. They avoid the gift and the ties that it creates.[25]

Those anticipating a communal type relationship most often initiate it by attempting to establish communal norms. These members are more likely to contribute time and effort to the household during this initial 'honeymoon period'.[26] Clark and Chrisman suggest that as relationships become more established, members are less vigilant about their own and others' violations of the communal rule, thus the boundary moves from a communal ideal towards an exchange rule (1982:82). While this may be an overall trend, I would argue that fluctuations occur over time. As well, while it would appear that most members tend to be either monist or pluralist, one may vacillate between these extremes depending on individual or household mood. One period may encourage inward-looking behaviour and endogamous interaction in the household. At other times the mood may be outward-looking, where members go elsewhere for social life. Nor are these attitudes necessarily mutually exclusive; it is most likely that tension between commitment and responsibility to the group and the desire for freedom and autonomy for oneself always exists. Both household and individual interests must be reconciled. As pragmatic concerns are favoured over ideological visions, members will leave if their individual needs are not met (Raimy 1979:148; Kanter 1972:167).

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[25] To illustrate the distinction, lets say that two members of a shared household, John and Allan, are typically monist and pluralist, respectively. John would be more likely to wash all the dishes (with little regard to who dirtied them) in order to tidy the area and benefit the group as a whole. As he is primarily concerned with his own needs, Allan, on the other hand, would tend to wash only his own. Allan also may not be appreciative if John washes Allan's dishes; Allan may find himself forced into a position in which he must now wash John's dishes in order to avoid 'owing' John a favour.

[26] This is to be distinguished from Zablocki's 'golden age', in which members of a newly-formed commune briefly experience the benefits of total individual freedom (Zablocki, in Kanter 1973:145). While this feeling may take place when a shared household is initially created, the consistent turnover of members means that the majority of shared household members join an existing household rather than form one. Consequently, recruits are very aware of moving into an informal structure that inhibits their freedom to some extent.

As would be expected. members who have lived in shared households for some time generally appeared to be much more aware of communal responsibilities and social potential than newer or more transient members who were interviewed. In particular. those members who founded their own shared households tended to have a monist orientation. with a greater level of commitment to the project. and higher expectations (see Kanter 1973:100). Larry. Michael. Betty and Peter were each not only the founding members of their households. but also the eldest members. with the longest history in shared household living. Despite the presence of older people in shared housing. the majority of members still appear to be young adults. with limited economic resources and relatively transitory lifestyles.

Promoting Household Identity: Making it a House Thing

Shared activities may be spontaneous or pre-arranged. Watching TV. preparing and eating food. entertaining guests or simply conversing. doing extra-household activities and so on can be turned into a social event that brings members of the household together. Indeed. some activities appear ritualistic in their repetition and form. for example. bringing home coffee or other drinks from the local cafe. making a special dessert for everyone. choosing and watching a video or particular TV program. playing cards nightly. As the level of communality in most households ebbs and flows over time. these rituals serve to generate a sense of togetherness that may be otherwise lacking in certain periods. Members may intentionally organize an activity to improve household morale; dinners and parties may be either focused inwards to house members or outwards to enlist guests to help to repair the household morale. 'Making it a house thing' is a phrase often used in such circumstances.[27] Indeed. some households give themselves names. such as 'The Hillbilly Hotel'. or 'The House of Orange'. which symbolically express or involve the desired communal spirit. The process of recruiting a new member may be ritualistic in form. and also helps the household members to reconnect with one

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[27] As in Kanter's study of urban communes. "(t)hey refer to their living arrangements as a "house." as in "house meeting." or "friend of the house" (a friend of everyone's). or "I'm taking my house out for dinner.""(1979:114) The house is seen to be a location where social interaction takes place. Indeed. the interaction may become inseparable with the location. Also see Kanter 1973:404.

another by requiring re-articulation of shared values and expectations. By reinforcing a symbolic boundary between the household and the outside, the perceived differences between individual selves are lessened.

Just as the preparation and eating of food plays a central role in traditional family forms, the potential exists for shared households to develop this aspect of household life into a means of cohesion (Warde and Hetherington 1994; Kanter 1979:117). Dan sensed this in his household:

> *If Alan and I would consent, I think Christina would like, you know, a sit-down family meal every night, where we would sit down and talk about our day and stuff like that.*

Participants' households ranged in food-sharing patterns: buying and consuming separately; buying separately but sharing occasionally; buying separately but sharing consistently; and buying together and eating together. Again, forms are related to household atmosphere and to perceptions of reciprocity; shifts often take place over time, as Janet pointed out:

> *We used to split the bill three ways, and then there was a - Jonathan* [Janet's child] *consumed so much food at one point that Diane* [Janet's roommate] *just flipped out because there was no bagels in the house, and no juice, so now we each have our own cupboard and we buy our own food. And then its just worked out at dinner times that somebody just makes dinner for the whole house, and everybody takes turns making dinner, and everybody contributes food at dinner time.*

Sharing Consumables: Borrowing or Stealing?

Communal eating may also exist within a subgroup of the household, a practice which if consistently practiced tends to undermine the coherence of the household as a whole. When food is bought separately, sharing may take place through explicit offers of one or more items at a particular time or a blanket offer for sharing any time. A member may also request something from another, or simply take it, perhaps assuming that if the owner were present, they would respond positively. In this case, an explicit offer is not made, yet the consumption of one's food by another is expected to be condoned to some

extent. As Peter and Erin explained, within certain bounds, it may be perceived by the owner and taker to be simply "borrowing", where the assumption is that it will balance out eventually, either through replacement or through "borrowing" in the opposite direction. Just as behaviour regulation in shared households tends to be negatively oriented, members often borrow from one another until explicitly told not to... where perception on behalf of the owner shifts towards a more negative view of the act: 'stealing'.

This process may take place with respect to all consumable items, not only food. Dan explained:

> *Yeah, I mooch on Christina's soap, because she's got great soap, she's got all this great, like apricot, orange - it smells so good, you know. And I gave her - the other day she wigged out about something - this was a couple of weeks ago - I gave her five bucks for soap, so...*

Borrowers may initiate their own admission of culpability, or they may not admit it even under direct questioning. The more members in the household, the more difficult it may be to determine blame when something goes missing. Rumours can circulate. In Peter's household, *"there's always food missing. We know it's Gregory, everyone agrees that Gregory's drinking all his* [welfare] *cheque."* Acts of theft may be symbolic, as well, as Peter noted: *"It's always a meaning to things that disappear, you know. Gregory steals to hurt people."*

Often the only way to get a sense of who is a consistent borrower is to observe any changes that take place when a member is absent for some time, or leaves the household. More generally, members who find items missing either become more explicit in defining their personal boundaries and may attempt to convince others to follow their lead, simply ignore the problem, or shift their boundaries to include borrowing from others in return.

It is difficult to establish a household consensus in sharing food. People have different ideas about what is shareable and what is not, and how to manage their sense of

reciprocity. For example. noticing that some of the eggs one purchased are missing. a
member may feel justified in using someone else's milk. thus righting the imbalance.
However. the owner of the milk may value milk over eggs. or may not have been the one
who took the eggs at all. and therefore feel infringed upon. It is difficult to determine
parity. Erin stated: *"Its fairly lax. I mean you can borrow milk and so forth. and so far
there hasn't been any problems. "* Both those with a greater or lesser sense of collective
responsibility may borrow anonymously. the distinction being that those doing their own
thing may be less likely to be concerned with providing for others in return.

Even when not sharing food at meals. the process of preparing and eating at the same
time and place can be a opportunity for conversation as well. which. again. may be more
or - in Gregory's case - less desirable:

> *My own philosophy is that one way to share the resources in the house is for
> different people to use them at different times, and so when I know that there's a
> group of them down there. working in the kitchen. I just leave them to it. a lot of
> the time. and I wait for them to be finished. and then I'll go down and use it. if I
> need to. Contrariwise. Peter comes up from his basement when there are people
> there and just sort of hangs around in the kitchen looking for companionship. and
> so we have diametrically opposed approaches to what happens. and then of
> course people tend to get hungry around the same time of day.*

This kind of temporal segregation rises with the increase in animosity between members.
as in Dan's household:

> *I don't like Alan. Like. the less I see of that guy the better. Like he keeps different
> hours than me. so we don't correspond very much. And that's just fine. If I'm
> laying in bed. I'll wait for Alan to get up. I'll wait until after ten o'clock when
> Alan leaves. because I just don't want to. you know. deal with him. get in his way.
> or even talk to the guy. And when Christina - I try not to be home at like six
> o'clock when Christina gets home. because she gets home from work. you know.
> and she's kind of weird about. I don't know. always freaking out about her job
> and stuff. so..*

It has also been suggested by Larry that segregation may increase animosity.

> [In situations where] ...*the other person is just an acquaintance that they bump into in the kitchen..., I think those* [households] *are a lot more open to having difficulties, and, you know, house meeting affairs and stuff like that, because they are so insular.*

In each of households involving subjects interviewed for this study there existed members on both sides of the spectrum. Where the majority in the household wanted to minimize communal relations, there was an absence of group pressure, in the sense that there was no real group cohesion. Household participation thus simply fell to the lowest common denominator, and the minority had little choice but to follow suit, and live individualistically. Where the majority wanted to maximize common activities, however, group pressure is oriented towards participation, towards creating and contributing to communal life. This is similar to communes in that friction between members arises over how involved and present everyone is (Kanter 1973:406). The minority in this case may be swayed by others and join in, or stay separate and be an outsider, as in Dan's case:

> *I went in there and I brought my own toothpaste, right, and he took it downstairs. And he's like "Well, we share toothpaste", and all this stuff, like this, and I'm like, "Well, I don't, so."*

In Erin's household, a member chose not to participate in communal responsibilities, such as interviewing potential members and group cleaning activities.

> - *We just said it's not worth the battle, because he's a good roommate beyond everything else. He doesn't make a mess and he keeps to himself pretty much - not that that necessarily makes a good roommate, but he's pleasant to be around, and* [so] *we give him a bit of grace.*

One simply learns to live with it, knowing that eventually that person will leave the household. In Peter and Gregory's household, however, Gregory was pressured to leave because he constantly avoided socializing with others and made the other members feel uncomfortable. As described earlier, this particular situation escalated into a struggle over control of the house, and even minor physical confrontations.

Outsiders

As Larry pointed out, "...*everybody in the situation also has to have reasonable social skills, you know. The outcast is going to be an outcast no matter where* [he] *is.* "
Those who have difficulties maintaining adequate social relations in general are likely to have the most difficulty sharing living space (Neil 1990:24). Again, as boundaries of behaviour are generally figured in negative terms, any behaviour deemed to be outside the realm of what is considered acceptable is in fact often the only means by which acceptable behaviour is explicitly articulated. As Zablocki notes in his study of communes "By his unwillingness to obey the norms of the group, the outcast provides a way in which these norms can be defined and be made concrete to the other members."(1980:140) The term 'outcast', however, neglects the bearer of such a label's own initiative in adopting this position: "... while it is clear that groups use deviants as scapegoats in order to create solid boundaries, little is said about the persons who volunteer for the role of deviant by breaking a rule or speaking out against group consensus in order to obtain attention"(McMillan and Chavis 1986:9). This does not necessarily mean that only one member may be deviant; it is possible that different members may be outsiders in different ways, for example, by not participating in social activities or not doing their share of cleaning. As well, outsider status may be alternatively placed upon various members, depending on the mood of and cohesion between others.

This process of scapegoating may be structural, as noted by Gregory, who had occupied this position:

> ... *there's often somebody that's on the bottom rung of the ladder and is being pressured to move out by the other people and its sort of - its an ongoing process. When one person moves out often enough the attention shifts to another, and that person starts to be pressured.*

It may be that the greater the number of members, the more likely an outsider will be tolerated; with a smaller group, deviant behaviour appears more likely to disrupt group cohesion.

Expressing Norms: Rules or No Rules?

Norms may be expressed in the form of rules, guidelines, or simply as 'the way that we do it here.' As communal households tend to stress negotiated rather than institutionalized norms, shifts in what is deemed normal or deviant behaviour are constantly taking place. Shared households generally govern themselves in an anarchistic fashion. As Kanter states, "naive anarchism is essentially a personal means of group regulation, relying on intimacy and mutual tolerance and bound together only by members' knowledge of one another's behaviour, moods and preferences. Understandings are tacit rather than formally stated"(Kanter, 1973:280). "It is a kind of disorder in which it is assumed that decisions will be made spontaneously when needed, that individuals with good intentions will adjust their behaviour to co-operate with one another, and that no formal rules, structures or leaders are necessary."(Kanter 1973:279)

Dan maintains that in his household,

> *there's no rules set down. That's why I kind of liked the idea of moving in there, because, you know, I don't particularly like living in a house with a bunch of rules.*

Similarly, Janet states:

> *We just go with the flow. Everybody does what they want. If you leave your shirt on the couch, you leave your shirt on the couch. If it gets in somebody's way, it gets thrown upstairs or thrown downstairs.*

Kanter argues that communes functioning through a form of naive anarchism must develop some structure, with clear expectations, roles and rules, in order to survive past the 'honeymoon' period. Communitas, the spontaneous, emotion-laden feeling of belonging together is unpredictable and unreliable as a foundation for group living (Kanter 1979:127).[28] A consistent turnover of members may to some extent serve to maintain spontaneity and communitas in shared households. Commitment to the house,

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[28] This is derived from the work of Victor Turner, in which he contrasts communitas, with it's emphasis on spontaneity, immediacy, "existence", and personal relationships, with structure, based on roles, rules, custom and obligations (Turner 1969:112-113).

in terms of cleaning shared spaces or increasing social interaction, is often renewed with the addition of a new roommate.

Elaboration of household structure does often take place over time, as well. Even in instances where subjects denied the existence of a structured set of rules, it became apparent through the course of most interviews that many rules, at least in the minds of the interviewees (more so in those of senior members of shared households) did in fact exist, and were enforced. Michael denied that there were any specific rules, although through the interview it became obvious that many did exist, and were labeled as rules: no smoking, no TV, stereo, or books in the living room, no writing notes, one must get permission from other members for guests staying more than one night, one must do more than simply one's own dishes, and no doing laundry early in the morning.

Again, as behavioural boundaries are figured negatively, all behaviour is permitted except that defined as inappropriate (Kanter, 1973:279). In shared households most rules are implied rather than explicit. It is questionable that all members are aware of each other's rules - that there are shared understandings and clear expectations; one wouldn't necessarily know that a rule exists until a boundary is crossed and it is broken. As long as everyone's behaviour conforms, the thought behind the behaviour will rarely be communicated. Even then, depending on the context, unless one is identified as having been at fault, discussion of the offense may never take place. When a member has been offended and the offender cannot be identified, she can announce to all through various means (see section on communication) the occurrence of the offense. If the offender can be identified, she still may not want to confront the person with the issue, when, for example she thinks it is not that important, if she feels awkward in any confrontation, if she is concerned with being perceived as being controlling, or if she has some general interpersonal problem with that particular member.

Some members assume that if they hear no direct complaints about their behaviour, they are not offending anyone, whereas other members may simply not want to raise the issue.

Adherence to those rules that are shared may vary from member to member. With a fairly high turnover of members, as well, one continually encounters people whose experiences have predisposed them to perceive and behave in certain ways. New members must learn the ways of the established members, and continuing negotiation of these rules means that they are always evolving, as Larry pointed out:

> *In the case of a house where there's just three or four or five people living together - unless you are willing to make your set of rules that thorough, that good and that well thought out - chances are the set of rules you've got are going to have a number of flaws in them: either won't be fair, or they won't be enforceable, or when a person doesn't abide by them there's no disciplinary code, or whatever else, right. So hence this is all to say that I think in your average three person shared arrangement a system of rules isn't going to go too far. If people can't just sort of mutually come to accept and respect each other's style of living, then a piece of paper with a few rules written down on it isn't going to get you very far.*

The denial of rules in general is associated with the denial of authority. Who would develop these rules, and to what extent could they be negotiated by new members once they have been written down? Junior members were not interested in moving into a pre-existing system of rules, and some senior members, although recognizing the need for more structure for the good of the household as a whole, were often hesitant in assuming the accompanying position of power. Egalitarian ideals also persist. Thus, a gap exists between those norms considered important enough to have rules associated with them, and those which aren't. Betty discussed how one member may think it worthwhile to bring up for discussion their thoughts on keeping the shower curtain open or closed, or leaving the bath mat on the floor or draped over the edge of the tub, while another member would consider it too trivial. In these cases, one would be hard-pressed to describe the adhesion to a particular method to be a rule, perhaps, in part, because it seems too unimportant to enforce. One may still feel pressure, however, as Gregory noted: *"...so I'm violating the precepts of this alternative household by having the audacity to listen to CBC radio. Listen to the CBC radio - it's just too right wing."*

Cleaning: Mess Thresholds and Cleaning Systems

Dan declared: *"Like if the place is dirty, clean it, and if its not, you know."* Most participants in this study adhered to this anarchistic approach to cleaning shared houses. Each member had his or her own patterns of behaviour, and while they intersect at various points, they do not simply converge. With respect to dishwashing, one may only do her own dishes and put fruit and vegetable waste in the compost bucket; another may do everyone's dishes at once plus clean the counter and stove area, but leave organic waste on the counter to be disposed outside at a later date, and yet another may do all the dishes but only occasionally, and throw organic waste in the garbage. Movement between washing only one's own and washing everyone's dishes may take place depending on the perceived parity of chore sharing and one's sense of communal responsibility. Members' behaviours may vary widely in their response to chore requirements; work gets done, but rarely in the same manner and even more rarely with the same accompanying meanings. As noted by Erin:

> *The thing that happens when everybody does their own dishes - nobody does anything else. The stove never gets wiped, you know, all the rest of it, so it doesn't work.*

Larry's household did not develop a structured cleaning system, although he had a well-developed sense of the issues involved. In his view, two types of chores in housecleaning exist: those concerning personal responsibilities (i.e. cleaning up after one's self, doing one's own dishes, tidying one's own space, etc.), and those concerning shared responsibilities (cleaning the common floor, taking out the garbage, etc.):

> *One key thing is to delineate what's an acceptable mess level for most people - because this is where it often breaks down between housemates, is that people have different - call it mess thresholds, if you will.*

The level of a member's threshold relative to others' to some extent can determine how much cleaning he or she will be required to do. Often it becomes a waiting game, where those members who can wait the longest for someone else to do the cleaning win, as in Gregory's household:

*One nice thing about sharing with these women actually is that they keep it clean.
I do it when I see - when I see something that looks like its dirty to me, and I clean
it too, but I hardly ever have to do that, because they are ahead of me.*

Those members with lower 'mess thresholds' are forced to either clean more than their fair share, or to shift their own preferences to a lower standard. In this way, the level of cleanliness in shared households has a tendency to move towards the lowest common denominator. This may happen even when a cleaning system regulates parity.

The next concern is determining, within a reasonable degree, that each person is doing their proportionate amount of shared responsibilities. As a common perception among members is that they often feel that they are doing more than their fair share, Larry explained that sometimes the only objective measure is to note a change in mess level once a member is absent for a period of time. Just as it is difficult to place responsibility for mess, it can be difficult to get recognition for cleaning; it may not even be readily apparent that any cleaning takes place.

Sometimes roommates have their own cookware and dishes and are responsible for cleaning these, but dirty dishes still look like dirty dishes, so responsibilities are delineated but mess thresholds may not necessarily correspond. One tactic is to limit the amount of cooking/servingware so that one is forced to wash everything regularly in order to have clean items for use.

Often a roommate will have a preference for doing a particular chore: washing dishes, cleaning the bathroom, or vacuuming, etc. The initiative that Michael's roommate took in completing one task was perceived as balancing out her lack of attention to other chores. In Joyce's household:

It's actually worked out that she [Joyce's roommate] *does all the vacuuming and I
do everything else, which I'm not all that sure, you know, how fair it is, but so far
so good.*

The departure of a member may leave a gap in this loosely organized and implicitly defined system. This was particularly obvious in Dan's case:

> *... the thing was the person who moved in before me was a cleaning person, and she - ... the cleanfreak bugged them, but I think that they realized that this person was cleaning the whole house for them, and she left, so I moved in, and all of a sudden, you know, there are a lot of things in the house that aren't getting cleaned and stuff like that. I think it was more looked at as like, all of a sudden everything's messy, like I'm messy. But I wasn't.*

Michael put it this way:

> *We are pretty anarchistic in our approach in that everyone is responsible all of the time, and everyone can clean whenever they want, and its also everybody's responsibility to monitor their own feelings and to tell people when they are not happy with the way things are happening. And that's it, and there are no lists, there are no rules, there are no rotations or specific chores that specific people do, although some people have assumed certain things. Like we have one roommate who just loved to vacuum all the time, and it was fine, and we just let her do not much else, because she liked vacuuming and it was great.*

More formalized systems do exist, as in Erin's household:

> *Basically the way it works is there is a calendar system - where there is a calendar in the kitchen, and if you do any common housekeeping, anything like cleaning the washroom, the living room, washing the dishes, you write it down on the calendar. That way its not imposed upon you when and where you do the housecleaning, but if someone sees that you haven't done housecleaning in a couple of weeks, they're going to go "Hey", you know, "maybe you could like pull your weight a little more around here," sort of thing. Everybody but Jay participates in that, and that's OK. Jay doesn't make much of a mess, and he chooses not to participate, and that [system] actually works quite well.*

The mirror image to this system is the 'shame chart', noting the date, what the problem was, who did it, and the consequences or repercussions. Another alternative is a weekly or bi-weekly cleaning schedule that rotates, so that members are responsible for alternating chores. For those who can afford it, maid service is a possibility as well.[29]

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[29] Members may have conflicting philosophies concerning cleaning up: for example, clean up after one's self and leave nothing in other people's way, or leave mess around which others can move or clean if they desire.

Some sense of communitas generally improves commitment to cleaning. In Erin's household:

> one of the things that is nice is if there's a bunch of us at home and someone starts cleaning up, everybody gets into it so the whole house gets cleaned up with a group effort. Its an infectious sort of thing

The cleaning issue is often the primary cause of conflict in shared households. Even when a system is agreed upon by all members, negotiation of cleaning behaviour continues to take place. Rather than simply being an issue of different standards of cleanliness, the political context may dramatically influence the positions the members take. Whose mess threshold will prevail, and whose perception of parity in cleaning will become the accepted norm? As Kanter notes, "proponents of "clean" and "neat" are also proponents of collective responsibility. Those who are messy tend to resist order and deny the legitimacy of collective demands" (Kanter 1979:119).[30] Should one member make a declaration about wanting it cleaner, it can be seen as a power move as well as commitment to the household in general(Kanter 1979:120).

Summary

Not only are use of household items, facilities and space negotiated, but also the extent to which household behaviour is socially active, and group oriented. The tension between commitment to the household and autonomy for one's self must constantly be reconciled, both at an individual and a group level. Certain social activities, such as eating together, serve to promote a household identity. Some members, however, may not participate in household social life or in specific communal behavioural patterns, establishing themselves as an outsider.

Maintaining conformity in such an atmosphere of negotiation is problematic. Norms of behaviour generally remain unexpressed, and are left for each member to determine, in an anarchistic fashion. The existence of household rules is often denied, although it is likely

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[30] Douglas argues that 'dirt', or mess, is essentially disorder (Douglas 1966:2).

that each member has her own rules, her own boundaries of household behaviour that she would not want transgressed by others. Expression of rules generally takes place only when they have been broken.

Norms of cleaning behaviour are particularly contentious. Even when explicitly structured cleaning systems are established by members, adherence to them may be poor.

4. Influence and Communication

This chapter is concerned with the construction of household norms and rules. Members with varying histories, approaches and interests come together to negotiate the form household norms will take. Political processes determine what becomes natural - 'how things are done'. Social behaviour is interpreted and boundaries are constantly being re-negotiated. Despite often espousing egalitarian ideals, participants generally recognized that a hierarchy of power existed, that some members had more influence over the group than others. These members are often concerned with the benefit of the group as a whole, and rely on this for some justification, but are still self-interested in terms of putting forth their own standards of behaviour as a model.

On the other hand, some members are more concerned with avoiding others' influences, and contest the legitimacy of such authority. As McMillan and Chavis point out, influence is a bi-directional concept. A member must believe that he has some influence over the group in order to belong, to identify with, to be recognized and to make a difference, while inversely, the group must influence individual members in order to develop cohesiveness (1986:11).[31] Erin stated that they let the group change with the new person, the new person with the group.

Decision-making

Often decisions regarding household norms are simply made by those involved at the moment, or those who take the initiative, and they may or may not be contested. Some assume that if they are not told that it is a problem, that it is fine with everyone, that they have been given tacit consent. House meetings generally arise when it is perceived that

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[31] As McMillan and Chavis note, " ...consensual validation research demonstrates that the force toward uniformity is transactional - that it comes from the person as well as from the group. Thus, uniform and conforming behaviour indicates that a group is operating to consensually validate its members as well as to create group norms."(McMillan and Chavis 1986:11)

there may be different views. or when conflicts have already arisen that have not been resolved by the individuals involved. As Janet described:

Most [decisions] *are made together, or it's just common sense. I mean if something happens instead of calling everybody together to make a decision about it, you just do it.* [People] *take it upon themselves.*

The emphasis on negotiation and egalitarian ideal means that the most important and explicit decisions should be made as a group rather than by one individual. Group decisions may take place at arms length. where a note is placed with a suggestion and others comment in written form. or through a face-to-face discussion. generally referred to as a house meeting. The house meeting may be spontaneous. when everyone, or at least the majority of members is at home. or planned for a future date for members to attend. The anticipation of confrontations at future house meetings can be anxiety-producing in certain members. so in some households. such as Erin's. discussions are spontaneous (see also Kanter 1979:128) Interviewees held opposing views in the calling of meetings: for Larry. the formal house meeting is a forum that is necessary only when members don't communicate enough through daily interaction. while for Michael. it becomes necessary when members have spent too much time together and have consequently developed problems. They can be useful in discussing behaviour prior to it becoming a real problem. or. as Betty pointed out. to discuss problems some time after they have been encountered. when emotions are lower.

Influence: Being Responsible or Going Mad with Power?

Because house meetings revolve around resolving group concerns. more committed members tend to be the initiators. These participants try to make sure that everyone is happy. that everyone is allowed a voice. and that consensus is achieved in decision making.[32] In some cases the meeting may simply be a forum for one to influence others

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[32] The search for consensus may be problematic in itself. as the issue must be phrased loosely enough for individuals to interpret. (as a general policy statement. for example) thus encompassing all concerns. and yet concisely enough to limit individual interpretations that may conflict in practice. I.e. whatever statement is decided upon insofar as it is derived from language is symbolic. and will most likely have

or to gain their consent for some action rather than to come to any true group-originated decision. As Zablocki notes with respect to communes: "... there are always not one but two worlds of collective decision making: an overt. formal and often highly ritualized collective search for consensus: and. at the same time. a covert. informal. and continuous process of relational decision making in which people are constantly being accepted or rejected. dominated or deferred to. courted or ignored"(1980:11).

Both worlds exist simultaneously within the house meeting context. As there is an absence of formal statements of rules and standards of behaviour. the most aggressive or assertive members are likely to have more control over others in the ongoing process of negotiation (Kanter 1973:281). Those who have occupied the house longest. who have the primary relationship with the landlord or are the landlord themselves. are more likely to have greater influence over others in determining what may take place (Kanter. 1973:281).

While inherent in the anarchistic approach is the idea that no one should tell any other what to do - that no system of authority exists - some hierarchy is maintained in terms of decision making. Despite generally lacking any explicit system of establishing norms or rules that regulate their behaviour. most members are aware of a hierarchy of power. (Kanter 1973:144) Often the most tenured. those 'having been there longest.' are accorded a certain amount of deference.[33] The most tenured generally take more responsibility for operating the household: dealing with the landlord. paying bills. providing furniture. organizing recruitment. motivating cleaning. and so on. Commitment level to the household tends to be higher for these members than for others (Kanter. 1972: Crawford. 1986). They tend to be monists in orientation and believe more in the social potential of shared living. and desire to play an important role in fulfilling this potential. Working for group interests requires a greater investment of self. and a

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multiple meanings attached to it. I therefore disagree with Zablocki in his statement that there would be consensus at the level of meanings (1980:256).

[33] In Crawford's study of a commune. he found that the turnover of members provided the leader with an ever-changing audience. which allowed him to perpetuate his performances (Crawford 1986:302).

greater return is expected. Erin and another founding member. Kelly, were in the process

of changing their second livingroom into a room strictly for entertaining guests:

> *...because Kelly and I have decided to put some energy into it we kind of feel like*
> *we have a right - and everybody else could have put some energy into it too - and*
> *with that energy, we assume it grants us a bit more words, more say than anybody*
> *else, and that's basically what we are going by. Everybody's welcome to use it,*
> *but there's just going to be some guidelines that we're going to try to maintain.*

Taking the initiative in being responsible for some aspect of household processes

increases one's potential to influence the group. In Dan's words: *"I'd say Christina is on*

the top of the ladder, you know. Definitely, her name's on the lease, she's got the TV, she

decorates the place.." Newer members often prefer to let others deal with group

responsibilities and to allow them some level of authority, although this is not always the

case, as Gregory explained:

> *He's basically the tenant who's been there - in terms of hierarchy, he's been there*
> *the longest. Which really means nothing, he's just simply been the tenant that the*
> *landlords have dealt with the longest, and he's sort of expanded into the vacuum*
> *of collecting people's cheques, and he's the - the landlords prefer to deal with one*
> *individual rather than more than one - rather than several individuals. And so he*
> *essentially has, in his own mind, at least - established himself as the character*
> *that's uppermost in the hierarchy, and has the right to say who comes and who*
> *goes, and who is allowed to stay and who is not allowed to stay, so basically this*
> *sad little man, who is so frustrated in his life in so many other ways has found,*
> *you know, a way to establish a small amount of petty authority and has since gone*
> *mad with power - is what I like to say.*

Gregory reacted negatively to Peter's attempt to dominate the household. As McMillan

and Chavis note, the most influential communal leaders tend to be those who

acknowledge and are responsive to others' opinions, needs and values (McMillan and

Chavis 1986:11). Peter was not responsive to Gregory, and so Gregory rejected his

leadership. Larry, on the other hand, attempted to maintain at least the appearance of

egalitarianism, and seemed to be generally respected by his roommates:

> *I don't consider it my home with other people living here. It's really important, I*
> *think, that people - that no-one feels like they are a guest in someone else's home,*
> *you know. It has to feel like home for everyone.*

Some members. such as Betty. Michael and Larry. are comfortable with taking on responsibility and having influence over others. Others. such as Erin. would prefer not to have the responsibilities that others assume they will take care of.

> *For a while I was the one who kind of established the guidelines on which the house would be run. and - with always referring to everybody else, making sure that they don't mind, and how do they feel about this or that. And then I withdrew from that role because I was taking a lot of responsibility for things that I actually wasn't comfortable taking responsibility for. I made sure someone took out the garbage. I made sure that dishes were washed, I made sure that bills were paid and the rent was paid, and so forth like that. And so I withdrew, and things kind of went - you know, they kind of teetered for a while, but then everyone else ended up taking up the slack.*

As Larry pointed out. managing multiple roles can be problematic. as well:

> *...the way I look at it is that you're playing the role of both being a house member - you're on an equal footing and have no special rights compared to your other housemates. and at the same time. you're there almost like a referee. and you're almost there also - another role - you have to sort of enforce something in terms of saying to people we've got to change the housework here. or whatever. Then you are becoming a bit of an autocrat. you know. by telling people what to do. And those things are like - how do you differentiate between when you are in one mode and another?*

Some households have each member both individually pay rent and take responsibility for a utility bill. in order to offset any power imbalances that would associated with one person taking on these tasks. In Joyce's household. another member would give her the rent money to pass on to the landlord for rent. and *"...she came to resent that - even though it wasn't my idea. She felt like she was paying me."*

Tenured members tend to be the ones who initiate discussions concerning cleaning and chores. As mentioned in the previous chapter. the effect of political circumstance over cleaning behaviour is considerable. Regarding her new roommate. Joyce stated:

> *From what she had said. she had been living with a bunch of slobs and she was the cleanest one there. so she thought it would be no problem to live with someone and be neater. but it actually was a problem for her. and she resented hearing about it.*

The fact that Joyce was cleaner and also assumed authority in setting such a standard meant that the new roommate felt at a disadvantage. Michael described a roommate who didn't clean her share, and was eventually asked to leave:

> *She's got her own place, and she's got her own roommate to deal with now. So she comes back and tells us stories about how the shoe is on the other foot now, and she's having to tell this other person to clean up all the time, so...*

Her level of interest in her new household has changed now that she is the most tenured and most committed.

Other Means of Influence

Use of and control over space is another means of influencing behaviour. Space has use value in the sense of offering intrinsic rewards for those who occupy it (Cooper and Rodman 1990:47). Despite varying use values among members, the creation of usage boundaries is attempted by those with the greatest influence: designating a room for crafts, keeping bicycles out of the hallway, and so on. Again, these boundaries may continually be contested by others.[34] Territorial behaviour can be as explicit as declaring certain areas off limits to others, or as subtle as leaving clothes or books lying around (Sebba and Churchman 1983). Joyce was forced by her roommate to become aware of other forms, as well:

> *We had this big house meeting, where she made all these demands. She wanted her voice on the answering machine, and she wanted half the pictures on the walls to be hers. You know, to feel like the place is hers as well. It felt like war and she wanted territory or something.*

Possessions are both a means of identity and of controlling territory (Belk 1992). Tenured members who were interviewed stated that they simply assumed veto power in being able to refuse any household items introduced by new members into communal areas, whereas new members had less power in rejecting existing items. As a form of possession, pets may also be territorial Markers, as Peter explained:

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[34] As with respect to the discussion of outsiders earlier, Cooper and Rodman note that conflicts help to define use values, not only express them (1990:55).

Actually I caught her once - one morning - kicking [my] *cat out, and she got caught red-handed. She wanted her cat to take over, right. They want to take over the house, so they want their pets to take* [precedence] *over* [my] *cat.*

Power Blocs and the Incest Taboo

Influence does not only occur within a hierarchical context. Alliances that take place between a subset of household members can effectively hinder outsiders' freedom of behaviour.[35] The existence of an outsider requires that there is some group that he is excluded from (see section on conformity). Alliances may alter as membership changes and the outsider is re-positioned. Gregory moved in and out of favour with Peter, his more tenured roommate, depending on how well Peter related to other roommates. As Gregory stated: *"There's been like a shifting set of allegiances and an attempt at least to form what amount to power blocs within the structure of relationships of five people..."*

Persons of the same sex may be natural allies (Caplow 1968 in Kanter et al 1975:438), and many households with mixed sexes tried to be sure that there was a gender balance. Friendships between members can effectively exclude other household members and pose a power bloc. Both Peter and Betty were wary of recruiting two friends together for this reason. Couples also represent a natural coalition; such pair relationships exclude others and potentially support the couple in decision making and behaviour. Most households have a sense of the conflict of loyalties and obligations inherent in coupling, and instill an 'incest taboo' in order to avoid this (see Kanter 1973:280 and 1979:129). In Erin's household:

...if two people in the house are beginning to spend a lot of time together, we kind of you know, like "So what's going on with you and so-and-so? You're spending a lot of time together", and they'll say "Oh yeah, we're just hanging out", sort of thing, and we're like "OK, cool."

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[35] The formation of such power blocs tends to fragment the group as a whole, threatening overall cohesiveness (see Brown and Brown, 1973:265).

In this case, other members made their discomfort known, without telling them specifically to end it. Roommates may become lovers, but most interviewees agreed that as a general rule, it should be avoided because of the effect on group dynamics.[36]

Natural alliances in shared households also occur in parent-child relationships. Both couple and parent-child interaction can potentially set the tone for household activities within any communal space. As opposed to the normal negative figuring of boundaries of behaviour, a parent must also express them positively in raising their children. The process of socializing one's children requires the articulation of rules of behaviour that would otherwise be left unsaid; a forum is created in which one may put forth one's perspective on 'good' and 'bad' behaviour. Other roommates may feel indirect pressure on their own behaviour when these parental boundaries are expressed. This may be exacerbated when two separate parents with separate children have conflicting boundaries. Janet, the sole interviewee whose household included her own children and her roommate's child, found this problematic:

> I'm a little more disciplined and strict where my kids are concerned - as opposed to her - and it - I'm sure the kids find it unfair, because they are not allowed to do a lot of the things that Malcolm [her roommate's child] is allowed to do, and they get in trouble for it.

The presence of others tends to diffuse the boundaries established within parent-child units, as it does with couples. The amount of parental influence over one's children is more diffused in shared households, as increased self-consciousness in the presence of others and diminished abilities in exclusively making and enforcing rules takes place (also see Raimy 1979:67, Kanter 1973:145, Kanter 1979:121).[37] As Kanter points out with respect to communes, "...paradoxically, while both couples and parents report a loss of control, they still tend to have more power in the household than other adults uninvolved in relationships, so that while they report their *lack* of control, other

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[36] In her study of urban communal households, Kanter found that the couple boundary is more permeable and intimacy more diffused because of the continual presence of others (Kanter et al 1975:437).
[37] As Kanter states, "commune members seem to release around children otherwise suppressed, authoritative, demanding behaviour, even if children are supposedly equal."(Kanter 1979:124).

household members report the "unfair" control of people in couple or parent-child relationships."(Kanter et al 1975:434)

Beyond Negotiation: Mean Tricks

In one extreme example, a household became severely divided when a power bloc was formed. Peter, the most tenured member, and the highest in the hierarchy, became a common enemy to others in the household. He was apparently not responsive to other's desires, and his authority came into question. A 'mutiny' was attempted, where a coalition of members, including Gregory, tried to oust Peter and take over the house. Peter had paid the Hydro bill, but the others refused to pay him their share. He decided to cut off the heat and hot water until they would pay. The other members called the police, who informed Peter that under the Residential Tenancy Act this action was illegal. The other members still refused to pay him, so Peter kept the heat at a minimum, turning it on only when cold at night. He removed all of his furniture, small appliances and kitchen items, which amounted to almost everything, from the communal areas. The other members made a complaint to city inspectors about the condition of the house; this was unsuccessful, the condition was adequate. All the members applied to evict Peter, while, unaware of this, the landlord placed an eviction notice on Gregory. This went to arbitration according to the Residential Tenancy Act, where it was determined that no one could be legally forced out. Attempts to increase each other's discomfort escalated between Peter and the others. Peter described the atmosphere of rising tensions:

> So lately, they've been playing more little tricks. Stamping on the floor to bother me, turning all the lights on, the oven. They've been disconnecting the fridge - I'm the only one having food in the fridge right now. It's regularly disconnected. Every little mean trick I answer with a mean trick. Like a couple of days ago now, they turn the oven on all the time, twenty four hours a day, so the other day I throw a pizza in there and I left. So the pizza burned and smoked up everybody, right.

One morning he threw some old fish in the oven, but forgot to turn down the furnace. Not only was there a terrible odor from the burnt fish, but the house was stifling with

heat. A second physical altercation between Gregory and him took place. This was one hour before our interview.

Initially, the conflict arose over alleged abuse of authority on one hand, and the withholding of utility payments on the other. Escalating means of influencing each others' behaviour took place, which only served to further antagonize each other. No longer was the conflict over moral behaviour, but simply about taking control of the house, and forcing the other(s) to leave.

Communication: Ruffling Feathers, Hints and Notes

Often it is not necessarily the case that members wholly reject the rights or control that another has over them, but that they resent the mode of communication used in attempts to influence them. As Dan explains:

> *The reason I did start slacking on* [my cleaning duties] *is because the way they approached me with it at first, which is Christina kind of freaking out about it and being kind of manipulative about it, you know what I mean. Eventually I had to tell* [Christina], *you know, that they're going to have to be a little more direct with me, you know. I can't stand this, because she'll drop hints, you know. She'll drop two weeks worth of hints and then something will get bottled up inside her, and then she'll explode. And I'm like, I don't pick up on hints, and when I do get hints, I'll just ignore them, let them slide by me. I don't deal with people that way, you know.*

Some members, such as Peter and Betty, are explicit and assertive in regulating the actions of others and risk 'ruffling feathers' whereas others, such as Larry and Dan, prefer to be more circuitous in their methods of influence perhaps in an attempt to maintain the egalitarian pose, or to avoid confrontation and the risk of having their authority questioned. Conversely, some members would prefer to be given hints so no one is seen to be 'telling them what to do', whereas others prefer more explicit instructions, so that there are no misunderstandings. Joyce realized that rather than simply stating during the interview that she didn't watch much TV, she should have said that she didn't want her new roommate to, either; later on she found that her roommate watched far too much TV

for her own liking. Unfortunately, members in the same household may have different preferences, as in Larry's and Frank's case:

I don't like doing that. I don't like dropping little hints - feeling like I have to do that.

As a kid, I had to take the garbage out at home. It was the same thing every week. I had to be reminded of it.

Humour or teasing can be used to dissuade people from certain relatively benign behaviour: one household member was nicknamed 'The Fish' because others had to wait for extended periods while he was in the bathroom, while another member was asked 'Do you know how to use that thing?' when he was spotted wielding a dishcloth. Another approach would find a member slamming dishes and grumbling loudly to point out a perceived imbalance in washing dishes. Michael pointed out that another method of educating members is to *"...tell stories about past roommates - examples of behaviour we considered outrageous and unacceptable - and neat things they did too."*

Occasionally a verbal statement may unintentionally be associated with a secondary meaning, as Joyce explained:

Because we did talk about her taking showers late at night, and she agreed to take them before midnight, so if its like getting towards midnight and I say goodnight, it's like there's this whole other message there. Its a little bit awkward, because I feel like I'm telling her to hurry up and take her shower or something, so I don't say that as much as I used to.

Influence over behaviour may be exerted through non-verbal means, as well. As mentioned in the previous chapter, a cleaning chart may be posted to remind members of chores. Notes may be posted to express displeasure or - less often - pleasure with a member's behaviour. In some households members' paths don't cross often, so this is a means to avoid a wait, as well as to avoid verbal confrontation. As Peter recounted:

I had a sign that I put on a pack of spaghetti- I kind of over-reacted, I guess. A sign - and there was half a skull, like pirate with a bone across and "Eat your own", because several times Gregory [his roommate] - I caught him red-handed cooking my food, and I didn't like that.

Critical notes are generally not well-received, however, and some households, such as Erin's, attempt to dissuade members from their use:

> *We occasionally come across the note thing, and we've found it to be really, really ugly, and so its been avoided for the most part. There's been a few notes that have happened - probably half a dozen notes to a dozen notes that have been used as a form of communication and they're usually done in anger, and they're usually a pretty sorry way to deal with the situation.*

Signs may be left as hints; moving or leaving some item in a particular spot may be intended to communicate something about another's behaviour. The potential ambiguity of signs means that nonrecognition or misinterpretation occurs easily, and as with notes, they may be poorly received, as Joyce explained:

> *I had never really realized that it would be in people's way, but I had left [my washcloth] draped over a faucet, and of course it is in their way, but it had never - she had never mentioned it as a problem. So she started pinning it up to the shower head, which would have been OK if she had mentioned it to me, but she didn't, she just kept moving it. And so I decided to just let her keep moving it if she felt like it. I could have put it where she wanted it put, yeah, but I wasn't going to do that. I think that she would have been furious if I had moved something of hers without talking to her about it, so I didn't - it was like she was intentionally invading my boundaries, sort of, and so I wasn't going to acquiesce, and - you know. It was a war."*

Indirect Communication: Hearing Through the Grape Vine

Much communication in shared households actually takes place indirectly, where concerns are passed from one member to another through a third member acting as intermediary[38]. Erin described the process:

> *The biggest thing we do in regards to communicating is to bitch to somebody else. And then if its big enough, you get going to actually talk to the person directly. Sometimes it actually goes side angle to the person - you find out about it in another way. Sometimes I will specifically ask somebody that I know somebody else has communicated with, "What's wrong with so-and-so because she's not talking to me?", and "What have I done?", and they go "You know when you did this she was actually kind of pissed off", and then usually at that point I know*

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[38] Two people have only one line of communication, but three or more may communicate through others indirectly, in exponentially increasing paths (Simmel 1950:135).

where I'm standing. I'll approach the person and go "Sorry about that. I didn't realize I did that", or "My intention wasn't to piss you off when I did this", so that's usually the way its handled. Somewhat around the angle, but eventually getting to the right person.

Members often discuss their household relationships with each other; to some extent each house member knows what other members think of each other, and of their actions in specific situations.[39] Again, maintaining the egalitarian ideal and avoiding controversy is seen as being important.

In some cases, simply making one's feelings known to a third party is all that is warranted for establishing peace of mind. Some members are quite aware, however, that there is the potential for this information to be passed on to the person it is directed against, and may adjust their comments accordingly. Involving others in the communication serves many purposes. As a story it can indicate recommended behaviour to others, and by including others it becomes a group issue, where one can look for both external support or allies for one's cause, and also for direction in terms of recommended behaviour. Janet became involved in such a way when a conflict erupted between her roommates: *"Tom left a note once, but that wasn't taken very well by Debbie, so I got the bitching from that."* Janet explained to Tom how Debbie felt, consequently Tom refrained from writing notes thereafter.

This process doesn't always work, as Dan described how one roommate, Alan, presumed to speak for another, more tenured roommate, Christina, in grasping authority for himself:

One time I wrecked this frying pan - I forgot about this - and he goes - and I haven't replaced it yet. I just won't, you know, because he was so spineless about it. If he asked me about it again, I will replace it. He goes "Christina wants you to replace that frying pan", and I'm like, "Well, yeah, definitely", you know. And I go to Christina - Alan's right there - and I go "Christina, sorry about the frying pan. I'll get you a new one", and she says "Oh, I don't care about that frying pan, that's Alan's." And he's standing right there, right, and I'm like, you fucking geek, you know, why didn't you just say something, you know. So I've been really lackadaisical with this frying pan. She approached me with a broom

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[39] As Hannerz notes, gossip may be a way of expressing and confirming norms (Hannerz 1980:186).

and a frying pan - I lost the broom, so I went and got the broom, but I haven't got a frying pan yet. Oh yeah, and they even took a frying pan ad out of a Consumers Distributing catalogue and put it up on the fridge. That frying pan has been a constant source of [inspiration for] *poetry for me. I use it as a symbol of them - [in] everything I write about them I use that frying pan.*

Not Communicating

Certain potential recommendations are not communicated in any form. These may be concerned with behaviour that, while irritating, is not worth the trouble involved in negotiation. When it is believed that another can not change his behaviour, that it is part of his personality, it may appear pointless to discuss it - as Michael states, it may only be harmful to tell another that you don't like 'the way they breathe'.[40] Some members, such as Dan, like to avoid confronting problems if at all possible: *"If he like was doing something that was really annoying, I'd just let it wash off my back, and him the same, you know what I mean?"* In worst case scenarios, any contact at all is avoided, such as with two of Erin's roommates:

Kelly just basically - every time Nick came home, she'd scoot downstairs, and his room was upstairs, so that was his domain, and hers was downstairs so that was her domain, and they barely talked to each other when they were in the same space, i.e. the kitchen or something like that.

Summary

Despite ideals of and mechanisms for promoting egalitarianism, behavioural boundaries are influenced by some shared household members more than others. Being more tenured, taking on more responsibility, and being a member of a sub-group within the household all bring increased power. The degree to which this power can be transformed into actual influence over the behaviour of other members is generally contested, however.

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[40] As Crawford noted in his study of a counter-culture commune where confrontational communication was promoted, people expressed themselves without censorship which eventually created an atmosphere of disharmony that undermined social relationships (1986:295, 304).

As well, the means by which boundaries are expressed will to a great extent determine how they will be received. Through verbal and non-verbal communication, hints and notes, and through indirect communication via third-party members, one may educate other members concerning one's own preferred boundaries.

5. Conclusions

This thesis has been written with a number of purposes in mind. One aim has been to investigate how central relationships develop between members within shared households. Another aim has been to identify key moral and social boundaries of behaviour that are formed within shared households, and the processes and strategies involved in their negotiation by members. Thirdly, an objective of this thesis has been to examine how household behaviour is meaningful to members, and how these meanings may conflict with those of other members. A fourth purpose has been to illustrate the variation of negotiation strategies that exists between members within a shared household, and also between shared households in the Commercial Drive area. Finally, this project has also been intended to contribute to the body of literature that concerns itself with the anthropology of householding.

Living together in shared households forces social interaction on a daily basis; such close proximity forms the foundation of relationships between members (see Gusfield 1975). Rather than making explicit arrangements to meet and engage in some social activity as one would with a friend, events in the household tend to be more spontaneous. Regular · encounters, however, lead to potentially intimate knowledge of one's self as members are able to see 'behind the scenes' of each others' lives. As Joyce related: *"I wouldn't really consider her a friend,* [yet my roommate] *probably knows some things about me that my friends don't know."* The application of the family metaphor to members' relationships is common, although one can leave a household much more easily than a family; commitment is contingent on the continued fulfillment of members' needs, and a member's relationship to other members will not often last once he or she has moved out. As Kanter states, the consistent turnover of members creates a life cycle more reminiscent of an affair than of a marriage (1979:132). Instead of friend or family, the relationship that develops between members is primarily one of consociate, based upon continuing historical co-participation in household life (Sansom 1980:139).

The shared household is a social arena to which a member not only brings habits learned with family members during childhood and behavioural patterns derived from a history of living with other adults, but also expectations and attitudes concerning what constitutes consideration. respect. flexibility, equality and generosity. Indeed, the interpretation of social meaning contained within household behaviour is carried out by individual members; the process of reconciling one's interpretations with those of other members is fraught with difficulties. The generally permissive stance and lack of explicit norms in shared households also lead to blurred boundaries of behaviour. Issues arise that one may never have imagined, as one's 'natural' domestic practises are brought into question and brought up for negotiation.[41] What is considered suitable behaviour is negotiated between members on a daily basis as practical situations become the bases for judgements of morality. Indeed, members may not only engage in negotiation to explicitly influence another's behaviour. but also to express and claim the higher moral ground.

The negotiated relationships and the absence of external conforming structures in the shared household environment promotes the participation by individual members in the construction of the household. Members to varying degrees have control over determining household norms of behaviour. yet the household takes on its own momentum over time. It can be difficult to initiate a change once a certain behaviour has become entrenched. while at the same time. changes are constantly taking place. As Erin observed: *"They are all passing things, everything passes, that's basically how a house runs. So it's always shifting - it's like "So what's going on today?""* As members move in and out. old issues arise; routines may be short-lived. and any sense of order is temporary. Rules and household patterns evolve as hierarchies and power blocs shift. Individual and group commitment to the household rises and falls over time.

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[41] Most participants stated that motivations were financial and social. However, being involved in the process of negotiation may be gratifying in itself. In Michael's words: *"I like the challenge of dealing with people... I appreciate being pushed by living with other people and having to adjust to the situation. I like having people around. It's cheap housing, but it's not a financial decision."*

Social boundaries of behaviour concerned with sharing, borrowing, cleaning, paying bills, the use of space and facilities, dealing with visitors, neighbours and telephone calls, and the appropriate communication of these boundaries are all determined by negotiation. Similar processes take place within different shared households, although they often manifest themselves in different ways. Methods of recruitment, patterns of sharing, cleaning systems, rules, guidelines, hierarchies, power blocs and so on are all a part of shared household living, and yet, as excerpts from the interviews have indicated, the strategies that members within different households use to negotiate may vary widely.

Although my own history of shared household living has provided me with an essential understanding of the subject matter, the findings in this thesis have been derived from interviews conducted in the field. As an ethnography, this project should aid in addressing the dearth of anthropological literature on householding. While primarily limited in scope to interaction between members within shared households, these findings provide a base from which one could make comparisons to other forms of households, or to examine connections to other urban domains.

Appendix One

Interview Schedule

Preparation
- explanation of interview procedure, signing of consent form
- date of interview
- location and time of interview
- number of participants

Demographic information
- sex of participant
- year of birth
- age
- occupation

Past living situations
- sorts of housing arrangements lived in over the past three years
- reasons for leaving, and for entering into new ones

Current living situation
Basic
- sort of housing arrangements living in now
- geographic location of the household
- description of neighbourhood, zoning, community, people
- reasons for choosing this particular household
- composition of the household
- physical household layout
- how would you describe your household

Recruitment
- started with friends, saw advertisement, advertised
- new members, from where, how, in what way, interviews, deciding
- what sort of qualities would you like in a member
in terms of how the household/the new member represented originally themselves, were there any surprises or changes
- how long before you/other were comfortable there

Sharing
- was there a pre-existing house culture
- shared events and activities that take place in the household
- do all participate
- social activities that you wouldn't do with other members
- activities shared with members outside the house
- food, tv, music, books, recreation, property, telephone

Structure
- hierarchy
- making household decisions
- develop, expression and alteration of rules and guidelines
- sharing of chores and responsibilities
- administration of the household - rent, utilities, damage deposit
- would you run a shared household yourself

Space
- management of sound, space and time
- communal vs private space
- dealing with varied food, music, and decor tastes
- property, whose is it, what happens if it breaks

Relationships
- how would you describe your relationship to others
- where do the boundaries of relationships lie, ie too close, too distant
- have any couples/partnerships developed, how does this change things
- power blocs
- rituals, things you do to bring you together
- do you gain anything from living with others, ie vicariously

Privacy
- reasons and methods for seeking out/avoiding the company of others
- maintenance of privacy, how/what do you/others do
- is your sense of security and safety affected

Education/Communication
- how do you/are you educated in household behaviour
- methods of communication with other members
        ie speaking, asking questions, notes, symbolic behaviour, humour, slamming
doors, talking loudly, telling stories about past situations
- how do methods change depending on context
- what is left unsaid/ what do you not communicate

Etiquette
- bathroom, telephone, laundry etiquette, kitchen
- time, cleaning up, taking messages

Others
- managing friends and relatives of members visiting, leaving alone or joining in
- people staying overnight
- other friends' and relatives' views of your living situation
- does shared housing affect your external relationships

Leaving
- the process of losing a member, how do survivors react, separation
- how long do expect to stay
- what reasons could you imagine for leaving
- what happens, how who decides, why

What would be a typical day in the household

General
- housing situations most/least liked
- best/worst times
- reasons for living in shared housing - convenience, financial, social (forced or chosen,
like lifestyle or simply pragmatic)
- reasons for not living in shared housing
- characteristics of a good/not so good housing situation
- what makes a successful shared household
- do you see yourself living in shared housing in the future
- were your expectations met

- any other questions I should ask

Grandview-Woodland:
# A Community Profile

No. 6 in a Series of 23

1994

This is Grandview-Woodland

One of Grandview-Woodland's most distinctive characteristics is its diversity. Commercial Drive includes some of the best ethnic restaurants in town and a collection of cafes and coffee houses that draw customers from all over the City.

History

In the 1870s and 80s, Grandview-Woodland was part of a timber stand feeding Hastings Mill on Burrard Inlet (now New Brighton Park). The first roads (later Victoria and Commercial Drives) were originally skid roads with paths running off them. Elk were hunted in the Grandview area and sold to settlers by Natives when their stock ran out.

Grandview might have remained a wilderness of stumps if not for the Vancouver-New Westminster interurban railway which opened in September 1891; the same year the area's first house was built. It had hourly runs from Carrall and Hastings Streets along Park Drive (now named Commercial Drive). Construction of 2nd and 3rd Avenues, between Clark and Wood-
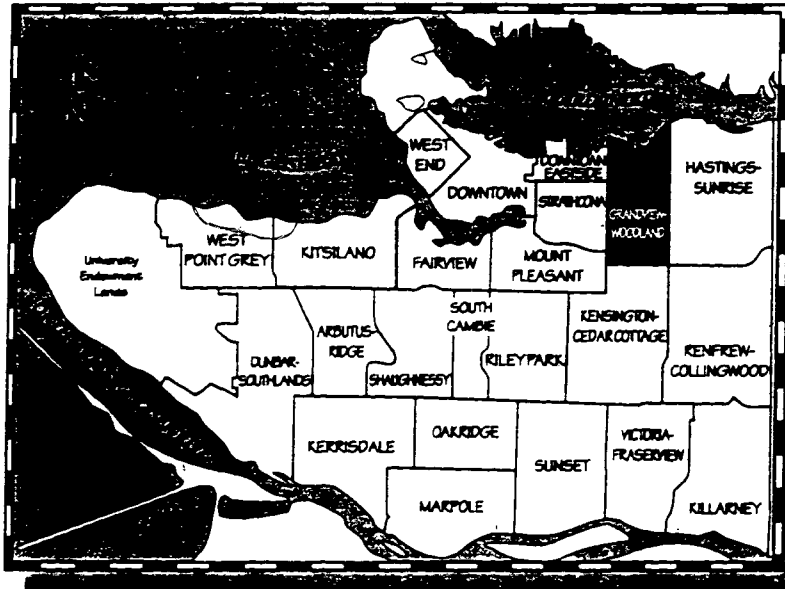
Vancouver's first suburb, Grandview-Woodland is one of 23 communities. It stretches from Broadway to the Burrard Inlet waterfront, and from Clark Drive to Nanaimo Street. These boundaries are defined by the City for planning and administrative purposes and may not accurately reflect smaller historical neighbourhoods.

land, by chain gangs from the Powell Street jail in the late 1890's opened the area for development. Arrival of the city water system along Commercial Drive in 1904 allowed for more expansion.

Grandview's early settlers were usually tradesmen or shopkeepers, in shipping or construction work. They were largely of British origin.

Early settlement years saw business activity centre on Park (Commercial) Drive while industry claimed the area's northern fringe (largely influenced by the CPR line and the Port). After 1910, industry reclaimed the False Creek, marshlands, and began locating

west of Clark Drive. This was made possible by the Burlington Northern Railway and the Canadian National railway who used the extracted soil from the Grandview Cut to build their railyards.

In the early 1900's, "Park Drive" was renamed "Commercial Drive", and "9th Avenue" was designated "Broadway". After 1912, building in the area slowed due to a recession, and a new political and economic focus centred on westside neighbourhoods such as Kitsilano, Point Grey, and Shaughnessy. This new focus followed the construction of the Burrard Street Bridge

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▶ Planning & Development

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and the establishment of the University of B.C.

Transportation has always played a central role in the areas history: in its origins, development and focus for community action. As early as 1907 residents organized to have Park (Commercial) Drive improved so children would not have to walk along rail lines to school. Ratepayers rejected the First Avenue viaduct three times before agreeing in 1934.

Population Age Pyramids

Grandview-Woodland 1971

Vancouver 1971

Grandview-Woodland 1991

Vancouver 1991

In the 1950s residents complained of: improper lighting, crumbling streets, poor drainage, no library and poorly equipped schools. The trolley tracks on Commercial Drive were replaced with new blacktop and brighter street lights in 1954. Motor buses took over from the electric trolleys. A library did not arrive until the 1970s.

The Britannia Community Services Centre was one of North America's largest facilities when it was built in 1975. Carefully planned not to overwhelm the neighbourhood, its innovative design integrated recrecreation, learning and social facilities to provide services to a very mixed population. The 1970s also saw residents join the successful lobby to prevent an extension of the freeway down Venables Street to the Georgia Viaduct. The 1980s saw the arrival of Advanced Light Rapid Transit (ALRT) in the area.

The face of the community changed after the First World War when Italian, Chinese, and East European immigrants arrived in the area. After World War II, a second wave of Italian immigrants made the area home. They renovated old houses and noticeably changed the look of Commercial Drive with new shops and restaurants. Grandview's Chinese residents increased in numbers in the 1950s and 1960s as some of the earlier Italian and East European residents moved on to other neighbourhoods. In the late 1960s, Grandview's first East Indian residents also made the community home.

People of Grandview-Woodland

While Grandview-Woodland's total population has remained relatively constant since the 1970s, the community's mix has changed. Three significant trends emerged in the 1980s in this community which, historically, has

attracted a large number of families. Between 1971 and 1991, there was:

- an 11.8% increase in the proportion of young adults (those aged 20-39);
- a 0.2% increase in the proportion of seniors (those 65 & over);
- a 12.1% decrease in the proportion of children (those aged 0-19).

Baby boomers (those born between 1947 and 1965) made up 43% of Grandview-Woodland's population in 1991. City wide, 39% of the population are baby boomers. As the baby boomers have married and started their own families, the number of young children (those aged 0-4) increased 9.7% between 1986 and 1991.

Such changes in the age composition of the community affect the demand for housing, health care and community facilities such as schools, recreation centres and parks.
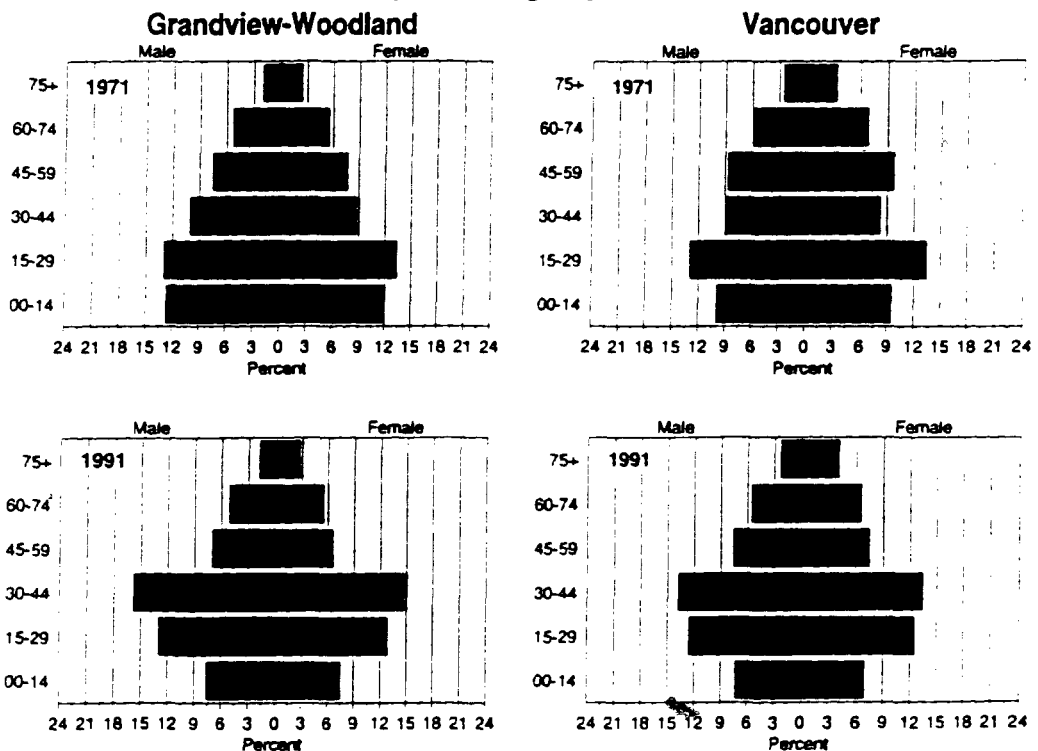
Language

The residents of Grandview-Woodland are a diverse group. The number of people who list English as their mother tongue (the language they first learned and still understand), has increased since 1971; counter to a city wide trend. In 1971, 55.8% of residents listed English, with Chinese being the next most common language in the community (13.7%). Although the Italian community is still well represented, only 4.2% of residents listed Italian as their mother tongue in 1991 as compared with 12.7% of residents in 1971.

Income

How well off are Grandview-Woodland residents compared with the rest of the city?

- The median 1991 household income in the community was $25,026; 27% less than the city median of $34,174 (median household income, as defined by Statistics Canada, is the amount which divides an area's income distribution into two halves, where an equal number of households are either above or below the median amount).

- There was a relatively larger proportion of low-income persons here than city wide; 38% as compared to 25% across the city.

Source: Statistics Canada, 1991 Census Data

(Low-income cut-offs as defined by Statistics Canada are income levels where 59% of gross income goes to the essentials of food, clothing and shelter.)

Stability

Grandview-Woodland is a relatively mobile community. Between 1986 and 1991, 62% of residents changed their place of residence. Overall, 58% of Vancouverites moved during the same period. In other communities, the range was as high as 80% (Downtown) and as low as 40% (Shaughnessy) for the same period.

Grandview-Woodland Housing

The Grandview-Woodland community offers a wide variety of housing types, from single-detached homes to duplexes, to low- and high-rise apartments; suitable for a range of incomes and household types. The area east of Commercial is zoned for apartments while duplexes and single-family homes with additional suites are found in the area to the west of the Drive. Housing statistics show:

- Between 1971 and 1991 there was a 44% increase in the total number of dwelling units, from 8,820 to 12,665; and

Mother Tongue
Percent of Total Single Responses, 1991

Grandview-Woodland

English 58.5%
French 1.6%
German 1.1%
Italian 4.2%
Chinese 17.3%
Indo-Pakistani 0.3%
Portuguese/Spanish 1.9%
Other 15.1%

Vancouver

English 59.9%
French 1.5%
German 2.0%
Italian 1.7%
Chinese 18.4%
Indo-Pakistani 2.4%
Portuguese/Spanish 1.3%
Other 15.2%
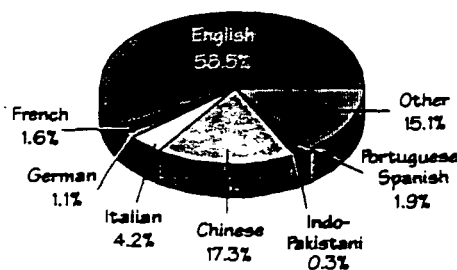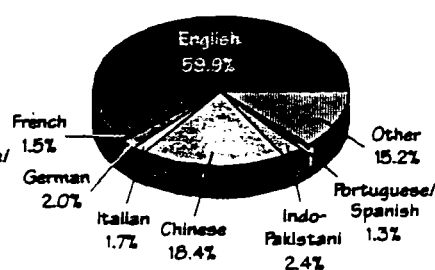
Source: Statistics Canada

- a 67.5% increase in the number of rental units, from 5,485 to 9,185.

In 1991, 72.5% of Grandview-Woodland residents were renters; most in low-rise apartments of five storeys or less (City wide, 59% of Vancouverites were renters).

Non-Market Housing

Today, Grandview-Woodland has 2,005 dwelling units in 58 government-assisted housing projects (both non-profit rental and co-op) which provide housing for low- and moderate-income households. Non-market housing in Grandview-Woodland accounts for about 16% of all housing units. City wide, non-market units make up 9.3% of all dwelling units. In Grandview-Woodland 38% (775 units) of non-profit dwellings are targeted for seniors. The balance are available to lower income singles and families.

Special Needs Housing

Some residents (such as the elderly, people with physical or mental disabilities) need housing which provides special care, assistance or supervision. Grandview-Woodland has 9 such Special Needs Residential Facilities (SNRFs).

Heritage

G randview-Woodland is characterized by an eclectic mix of buildings; elaborate houses on large corner lots sit next door to cottages on narrow lots. Many large houses date from the area's early days when Grandview-Woodland was promoted as a prestigious residential area. Several prominent Vancouverites including Professor Edward Odlum,
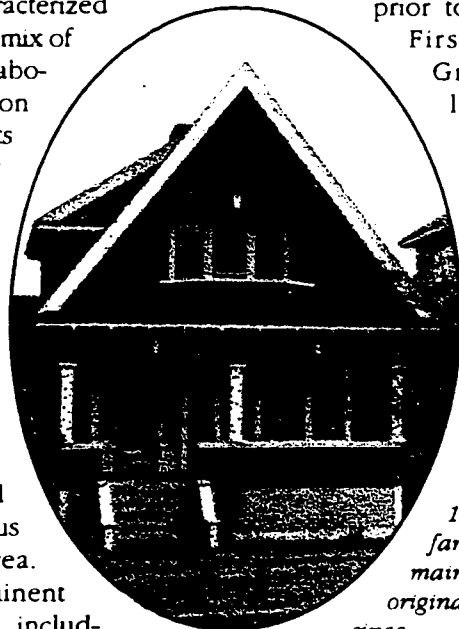
Alderman John J. Miller, and realtor Captain W.H. Copp, built their Queen Anne style homes here prior to 1911. After the First World War, Grandview-Woodland attracted more affluent Vancouverites. Homes built in later years were much more modest in comparison.

Built in 1908 for a Reverend James, the home was purchased in 1919 by the Harris family who have maintained it in its original condition ever since.

Industry

G randview-Woodland's industrial lands are divided into three sub-areas: Burrard Waterfront, East Powell Street, and Clark Drive. These sub-areas occupy 280 hectares, representing 40% of the city's total industrial land base (688 hectares). The sub-areas are home to over 602 firms providing 12,260 jobs. Proportionally, these represent 30.1% of all firms and 26.4% of all jobs located in industrial lands city wide.

Manufacturing is the dominant land use in Grandview-Woodland's industrial areas producing: garments, processed food, car repairs and printing services. Wholesaling, transportation and storage are also prevalent, with many of these businesses servicing the port and located in the Burrard Waterfront sub-area. The frontage of Hastings Street will soon be released from industrial uses to provide a mixed-use commercial and housing zone.

Transportation

T o address community concerns regarding through traffic, a Traffic Management Plan for the area was completed in 1986. Council approved recommendations to reduce commuter traffic on local streets and increase pedestrian safety. Traffic volume on major Grandview-Woodland streets increased between 1982 and 1992; from 30% on Victoria south of Adanac, to 33% on 1st Avenue east of Lakewood. This increase is slightly lower than the city wide average of 34% over the same period.

Relative Transportation Times: Hastings & Commercial to Downtown

|				
Transit:	14 minutes	Automobile:	8 minutes	

Skytrain: 7 minutes
The Broadway Skytrain Station is located in the southeastern section of the community, at Broadway and Commercial Drive.

Did You Know...?
...Every summer the residents of Rose Street close the street to traffic and hold a street party.

Bicycle: 15 minutes
The Adanac/Union bicycle route was opened in June 1993 linking the east side of Vancouver with False Creek.

Schools

- The five elementary schools (kindergarten to grade 7) had a total enrolment of 1,397 students in 1993/94 (the same as in 92/93). School enrolments ranged between 144 and 423 students. The St. Francis of Assisi School provided elementary education to another 179 students in 1993/94.

- Britannia and Templeton Secondary Schools had a combined enrolment of 2,109 in the 1993/94 school year (a 1% decrease from 92/93).

Shopping

Commercial Drive is the heart of Grandview-Woodland for shopping, services, socializing and recreation. The "Drive" is one of Vancouver's oldest shopping areas and known throughout the city for its cosmopolitan nature. While predominantly Italian, businesses represent many other nationalities as well, such as Portuguese, Ukrainian, East Indian, Asian, Scandinavian, and Hungarian. Retail activity features a mix of shops: clothing boutiques, second hand stores, fruit and vegetable shops, family restaurants and cafes.

The East Hastings commercial area (between Victoria Dr. & Renfrew St.) offers shoppers a variety of retail goods and services: everything from food markets, clothing, furniture and appliance stores; to services such as beauty salons, barbershops, banks, insurance agencies and medical/dental offices.

Day Care

- Four provincially licensed pre-school and group day care facilities provide spaces for 85 children.

- There are five licensed family day care homes.

- Britannia Community Centre, Macdonald Elementary and the Grandview Terrace Childcare society are provincially licensed out of school care centres for older children.

RS (one-family dwellings)
Single-family homes, secondary suites or one additional dwelling unit within a single-family residence.

Planning and Development

The Zoning and Development By-law regulates the use and development of land throughout the city. Areas are divided into zoning districts with specified permitted uses such as housing, retail and industrial. The By-law also regulates siting, height, bulk, floor area, and in some areas, design of buildings.

While land use in Grandview-Woodland is primarily residential, only a small area is zoned exclusively for single-family housing. Commercial activity is found along Commercial Drive and Hastings Street. The northern waterfront area is used predominantly for port-related activities. On its eastern edges are wholesaling, light manufacturing, and warehousing.

Existing land use may differ from that specified in the district's zoning regulations as many of the area's buildings pre-date current zoning.

Zoning Districts in Grandview-Woodland

The following is a simplified description of Grandview-Woodland's zoning districts. The Zoning and Development By-law must be consulted for a definitive statement of district schedule intent and regulations.

RT (two-family dwellings)
Two-family homes such as duplexes, low density multiple dwellings and the conversion of large homes to additional accommodation.

RM (multiple dwellings)
Medium density development, including low- and high-rise apartment buildings).

CD-1 (comprehensive development)
A site or area with zoning tailored to an intended form of development.

Parks, Recreation & Leisure

There are 10.35 hectares of park land distributed throughout Grandview-Woodland, with all residents within a comfortable walking distance (800 metres) from one of the area's twelve parks. Grandview-Woodland has 0.4 hectares of park land per 1,000 persons as compared to the city average of 1.12. The Park Board is aware of the shortage and has identified the area for future land acquisition. In 1994, a park site was purchased at William St. and McLean Dr. to help address the problem.

Parks

Grandview (Commercial and Cotton Drives, William and Charles Streets)
Offers a fabulous view of downtown, the harbour and the mountains. Next door is the Britannia Community Centre which provides a range of facilities and programs.
McSpadden(5th Avenue & Victoria Drive)
Facilities include a playground, soccer field and tennis courts.
Oxford (Oxford and Wall Streets)
One of the area's several street end parks.
Templeton (Templeton & Garden Drives, Turner & Adanac Streets)
Facilities include a playground, indoor pool, soccer, softball, and 300-metre track.
Victoria (Victoria and Salsbury Drives, Grant and Kitchener Streets)
A favourite among locals for a game of checkers, or a lively game of bocce.
Woodland (Woodland and McLean Drives, Frances and Adanac Streets)
Facilities include a fieldhouse, playground, wading pool, softball, and soccerfield.

This map depicts a simplified version of existing land use only and should not be relied upon for zoning information.
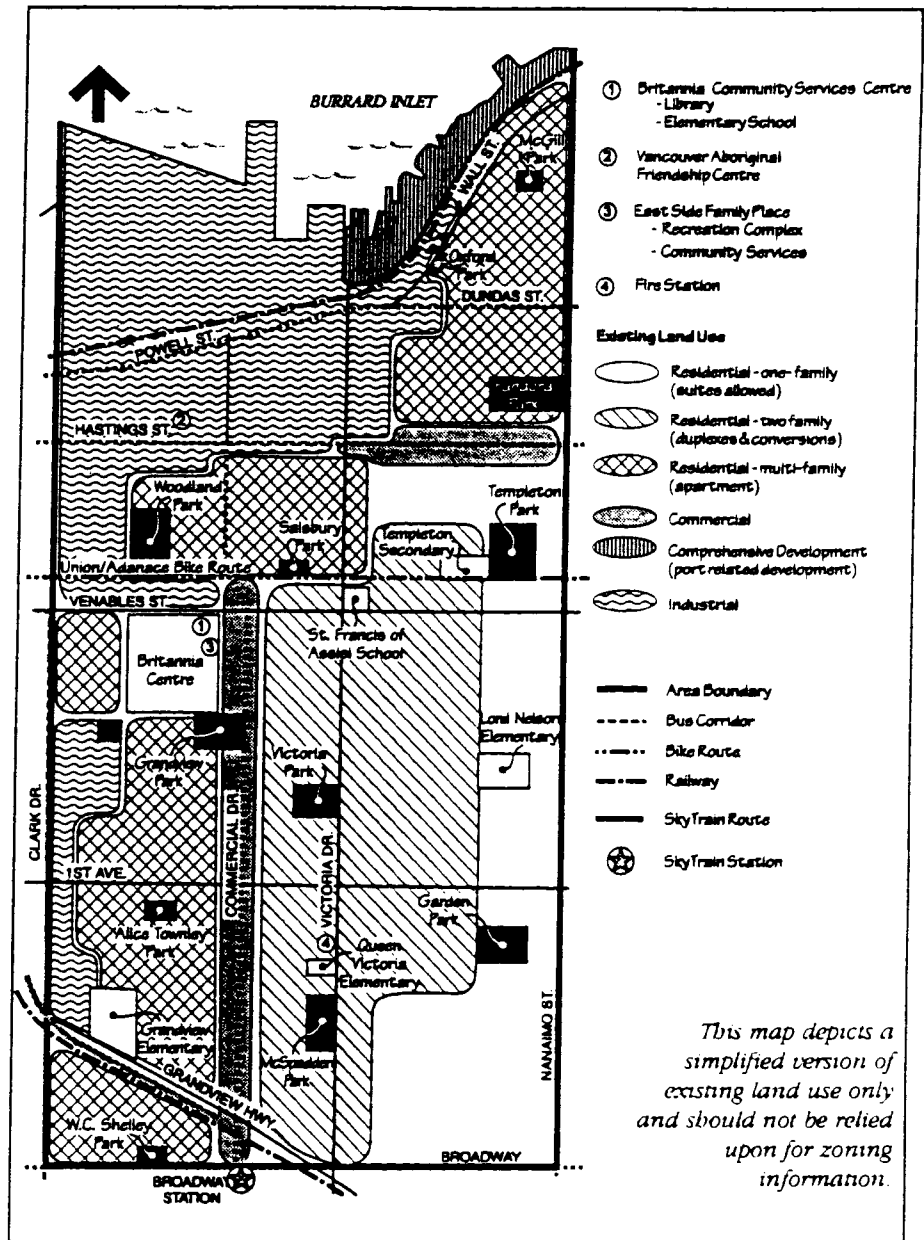
Recreation & Leisure

A focal point in Grandview-Woodland is the Britannia Community Services Centre. The Centre is a completely integrated facility run by a local board and supported by the Vancouver Park Board, Vancouver School Board, the City of Vancouver, and the Vancouver Public Library. Britannia offers a pool, rink, racquet courts, three gymnasiums, library, seniors centre, teen centre and the resources of both elementary and secondary schools.

The Vancouver East Cultural Centre at the corner of Victoria Drive and Venables Street was formerly Grandview United Church. It underwent an extensive renovation in 1976. This multi-purpose community cultural centre has seating for over 300 in its main hall and hosts a variety of live performances.

The Vancouver Aboriginal Friendship Centre is a focal point for Vancouver's native community, offering a variety of social, economic, cultural, recreational and educational programs, as well as referral and counselling services.

C (commercial)

Depending on location, from corner stores to shopping districts with a broad range of retail and service activities (commercial districts also permit residential development);
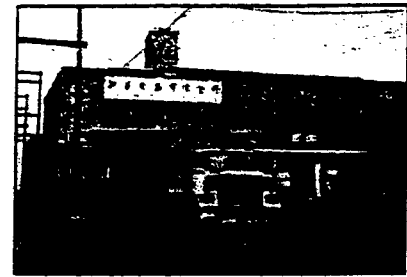
I (industrial)

Depending on location, from light to heavy industrial use.

Community Planning

Community planning in Grandview-Woodland was initiated by City Council, in 1976, in response to requests from citizen's groups. The Planning Department had also identified the area as a priority for planning attention.

To complement community planning, the Neighbourhood Improvement Program (NIP) was initiated, providing federal, provincial and City funds for capital improvements. A local planning and NIP committee worked with staff to develop three sub-area plans. The majority of the funds were used to improve parks, schools, and social service facilities in the eastern portion of the neighbourhood.

In 1979, the first sub-area plan was completed. It focused on single-family and conversion areas emphasizing the retention and rehabilitation of housing and the improvement of services. Council adopted the second sub-area plan in 1982, the Commercial Drive Plan, which enhanced the retail and pedestrian character of the Drive's shopping area. The third plan, the Britannia Area Plan, adopted by City Council in 1983, encouraged housing renewal by increasing the range of options for compatible redevelopment. The intent was to support housing suitable for families with children, and to create increased open space.

In the early 1980s, a portion of Grandview-Woodland was in-

cluded in a Station Area Plan for the Broadway ALRT Station. The Commercial Drive ALRT alignment was controversial as Council and residents called for a cut-and-cover tunnel under the Drive to reduce impacts. B.C. Transit preferred an elevated route. Council approval of this portion of the alignment was never granted and B.C. Transit proceeded with the elevated route.

Recognizing that ALRT could have dramatic effects on future development, Council assigned Planning staff to enhance ALRT's opportunities, while assisting in mitigating its negative impacts. Working with a Planning Advisory Committee comprised of local residents, land owners and business people, staff created the Broadway Station Area Plan. The plan addressed problems, issues and opportunities in the community and provided recommendations to deal with them. The Plan and implementation actions were ap-

proved by Council in mid-1987.

Recently, Planning initiated a Burrard Waterfront Port Land Study. This study has been put on temporary hold at the request of the Vancouver Port Corporation. The study will deal with land use issues in the industrial area east of Victoria Drive, adjacent to the port. A small portion of East Hastings will be reviewed for possible residential use.

Development Activity

City permit files indicate that in 1992, 319 new dwelling units were constructed and 46 were demolished.

Under Grandview-Woodland's existing zoning there is the capacity for the potential addition of approximately 4,000 housing units within residential areas and another 550 in areas zoned for commercial activity.

Residential Building Permits, 1992

	Single-Family Dwellings		Two-Family Dwellings		Multiple Dwellings		Other Dwelling Types**		Total # of Units
	# of Bldgs.	# of Units	# of Bldgs.	# of Units	# of Bldgs.	# of Units	# of Bldgs.	# of Units	Total # of Units
Permits Issued for New Construction*	18	18	11	22	11	278	1	1	319
Permits Issued for Demolition	33	33	3	6	1	5	1	2	46

* Based on building permits issued and may not reflect actual construction
** Includes housekeeping/sleeping units, caretaker suites and units associated with another use

Source: City of Vancouver

Community Services and Facilities

City Services

Britannia Community Library	1661 Napier Street	665-2222
Fire Station		emergency 911
		non-emergency 665-6100
North Health Unit	#200-1651 Commercial Drive	253-3575
Community Policing Office	1661 Napier Street	665-3944
Vancouver Police Department		emergency 911
		non-emergency 324-1122

Associations and Services

Britannia Community Services Centre Society	1661 Napier Street	253-4391
Commercial Drive Business Assoc.	1661 Napier Street	
East Side Family Place	1661 Napier Street	255-9841
Grandview-Woodland Area Council	1661 Napier Street	251-1491
Kettle Friendship Society	1993 Commercial Drive	251-2854
Lion's Den Adult Day Centre	770 Commercial Drive	253-9716
Ministry of Social Services	2350 Commercial Drive	660-9066
MOSAIC	1720 Grant Street	254-9626
REACH Community Health Centre	1145 Commercial Drive	254-5456
VSB Adult Learning Centre	1909 E. Hastings Street	253-4907
Vancouver Aboriginal Friendship Centre	1607 East Hastings Street	251-4844
Vancouver East Cultural Centre	1895 Venables Street	254-9578

Day Care (** After School care program)

Preschool

Britannia Preschool**	1661 Napier Street	253-4391
St. Francis of Assisi	870 Victoria Drive	253-7311

Day Care (3 to 5 yrs)

Grandview Terrace Child Care Centre**	2055 Woodland Drive	255-0513
Little Semlins	1665 Semlin Drive	255-8665
Sundance Day Care Centre	1607 East Hastings Street	251-4844

After School Care

MacDonald Out of School	1950 East Hastings Street	255-3856

Schools (* Federation of Independent School Associations)

Britannia Elementary	1001 Cotton Drive	255-7773
Britannia Secondary	1001 Cotton Drive	255-9371
Grandview Elementary	2055 Woodland Drive	253-5202
Macdonald Elementary	1950 East Hastings Street	255-5174
Nelson Elementary	2235 Kitchener Street	254-0707
Queen Victoria (Grandview Annex)	1850 East 3rd Avenue	255-7741
St. Francis of Assisi*	870 Victoria Drive	253-7311
Templeton Secondary	72 Templeton Drive	255-9344

Recreation and Leisure Facilities

Al Mattison Retired Citizens Lounge, Britannia Centre & Library	1661 Napier Street	253-4391
Lions Den Recreation Centre	770 Commercial Drive	253-9716

Parks

(* children's playground)		Size(ha)
Cambridge*	Cambridge and Wall Streets	0.20
Garden*	Garden and Templeton Drive, 2nd and 3rd Avenues	0.97
Grandview*	Commercial & Cotton Drives, William and Charles	0.89
McGill	2300 Block McGill	0.22
McSpadden*	5th Avenue and Victoria Drive	1.69
Oxford	Oxford and Wall Streets	0.13
Pandora*	Pandora, Franklin, Nanaimo & Templeton Streets	1.66
Salisbury*	Salisbury and Adanac Streets	0.17
Shelley*	8th and Woodland	0.26
Templeton*	Templeton, Garden Drive, Turner & Adanac Streets	1.70
Townley	2nd and Woodland	0.19
Victoria*	Victoria, Salisbury, Grant & Kitchener Streets	0.89
Woodland*	Woodland, McLean, Frances and Adanac Streets	1.58
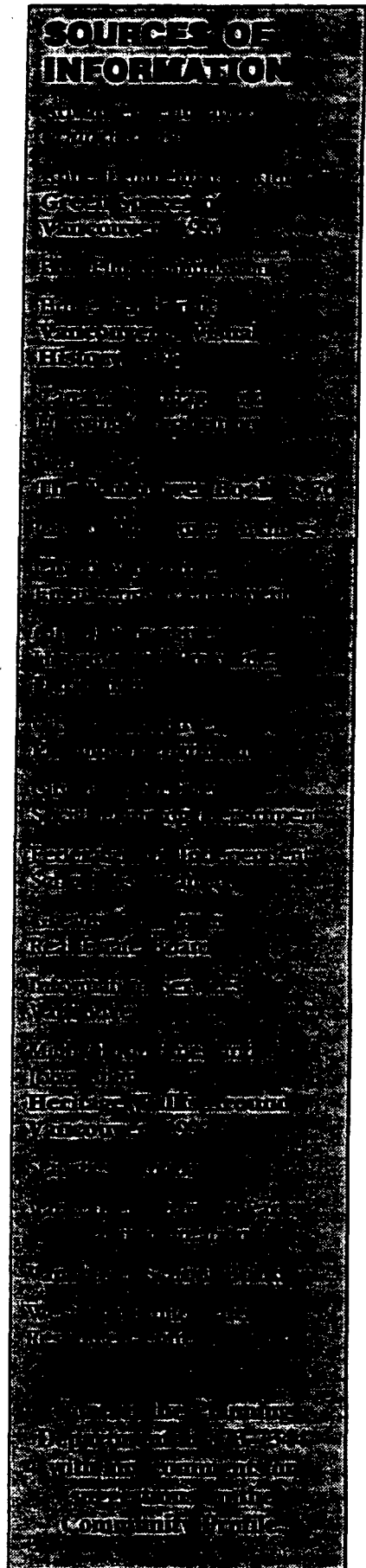
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