

***CULTURE, FOOD, MEMORY AND HEALTH ~
AN INTERGENERATIONAL STUDY IN LIVERPOOL***

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**A thesis submitted in partial fulfilment
of the requirements of Liverpool John Moores University
for the degree of
Doctor of Philosophy**

June 2010

**TEXT
BOUND INTO THE
SPINE**

CONTAINS A
PULLOUT

On [rainy] days like this when I was a girl, we would always bake, my mother and I. Light sponge. Shortcrust pastry, apple pie. Gooseberry crumble. Fairy cakes. Scones, plain and fruit ... I remember rubbing the butter into the flour for ages between my fingers and thumb. Let in as much air as you can. Dropping the flour through the sieve from a very great height. The rules of baking to my mother were more cherished than morals. There was something comforting about them.

(Taken from 'Trumpet' by Jackie Kay)

*What is patriotism but the love of the
good things we ate in our childhood?*

(Lin Yu Tung)



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DEDICATION

**To my family with so much love ~
you have brought so much joy to my life**

In loving memory of

Ian Letman

&

Alan Taylor

In memory of

Lily

&

Pamela Anne

**To welcome my first grandchild, Joshua Philip,
born on the 2nd June, 2008**

***To all those who work for a fairer distribution of food
that it may become truly valued, and to everyone with whom I've had the privilege of
sharing delicious food. I remember it well!***

§

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I thank my university for granting me the opportunity to study for a doctorate within the Centre for Tourism, Consumer and Food Studies under the supportive and sensitive direction of Dr. Allan Hackett.

I cannot thank everyone enough for their special contribution to my project – my family, friends, supervisors, colleagues, strangers, acquaintances and, of course, my participants. You have given me support, advice, time, space, encouragement, laughter and solace. I hope I have written a thesis that does justice to your contribution as well as providing an interesting read that has something of value to say.

Above all, I thank Dr. Ciara Kierans without whom I would never have undertaken this project in the first place and would certainly never have finished it – it has been your faith in my ability and your enthusiasm, guidance and patience that has led to the best possible thesis I could produce.

§

ABSTRACT

This intergenerational study within Liverpool communities employed embodied memory as an analytical tool to explore the changing nature of food practices and the consequent implications for diet and health. The methodology had a qualitative focus using a phenomenological approach that employed the ethnographic methods of participant/non-participant observation, natural conversations, document analysis and in-depth interviews with eight families that comprised three and four generations of mixed gender and socio-economic backgrounds spanning almost one hundred years.

Memory is a multi-faceted phenomenon through which I have explored a range of concepts in relation to food and familial practices; history, inter-generational transmission, identity, tradition, community and health. The notion of embodied memory involving the senses and emotions, revealed the cultural and social meanings my participants afforded to traditional, ritual and everyday foods and food practices and the extent to which these organised and embodied their relationship with the past bound up in life experiences that included transitions, turning points and significant events and relationships. Within particular temporal, social, economic and historical contexts such memories moulded food and eating practices that in turn, intersected with the major influences on food choice including available resources, corporate marketing, personal attributes and knowledge, family values and health concerns.

The study produced evidence that health and illness are not independent variables that can be tested and measured, but rather are subjective experiences embodied in everyday life attention to which can help us develop a better understanding of why the relationship between food and health has become problematic. Food stories across time revealed that people draw on, and respond to, different knowledges that may, or may not, lead them to improvise or make adjustments to their food practices. A common sense stock of knowledge bound up in the notion of tradition once embedded in the community and family has, to a large extent, been superseded by 'expert' knowledge derived from surveys that provide evidence base for government advice on healthy eating from which, despite inconsistencies, the individual is expected to make rational, informed choices. My study challenges this ethos of individualism wrapped up in the aphorism 'you are what you eat', arguing that we need to focus our attention on the social and cultural ways in which food 'gets done', food as it is valued and practiced, that in turn may lead to more effective health promotion strategies.

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INTRODUCTION

Research can begin with a hunch, an idea or a trigger for the imagination that may lead to questions being asked and formulated and, in turn, studies undertaken. Crotty (1998) reminds us that to a large extent our personal views and beliefs help guide and inspire our topic for research, inform our intended purpose and determine our chosen paradigms and methods. DePoy & Gitlin (2005) encourage the researcher to choose a topic close to the heart in order to sustain interest and provide momentum for this long period of study. I love food and eating, especially in the company of family and friends, and in my many conversations with people about everyday occurrences or special events, these would invariably lead to food and in particular to recollections of the past. What began to strike me about these stories and recollections was not only how rich and varied they were across time, but how food engendered social relations in a way other consumables, such as alcohol or fashion items, did not. Whereas conversations about food seemed to happen spontaneously and could be sustained over many hours (richly illuminating people's past, present and future lives), talk around other consumables appeared to be more frivolous, of less consequence and much more limited. Over time, it became apparent to me that food consumption practices, whilst vulnerable to fads and fashions, had a longer memory span and were richer in content than other commodities. Further conversations with families revealed the ways in which feelings about life and cultural and social experiences could be expressed through food in much the same way as people might use music and lyrics, drawings or poetry. In particular, memories appeared to influence profoundly the place of food in the life-cycle of individuals and their families and dietary changes and continuities appeared to be both indicative and part of broader societal changes that may be recalled from one generation to the next. After a period of initial reading it became apparent to me that rather than being merely the product of language and individual psychology, we are embodied beings and very much the product of our history and culture – consequently I wanted to find out how the embodiment paradigm could enrich and inform a generational study of food and memory.

Food and memory: an embodied practice

The concept of memory has been addressed from a number of perspectives reflecting the diverse range of processes that involve “the notion of experience or meaning in reference to the past” (Holtzman, 2006: 3). Perks & Thomson (1998) tell us that the past may be remembered and recalled through a variety of objects or events. These memories are not passively stored until they resurface, but rather, each item helps to create a past through active remembrance within the social context of people’s lives and, as such, forms an important part in defining both personal and collective identities.

Connerton (1989) is particularly interested in collective memory, that is, “the actual acts of transfer that make remembering in common possible” (p. 39). This, in contemporary Western society, has become problematic in that we store and pass on information through technology rather than orally as is the case in non-literate societies – thus mnemonics tend to be marginalised (Baddeley, 1993). Storage mechanisms such as photography and film have become our memories, or are considered to bear the same relation to our memories, as does the artificial intelligence which some claim is embedded in computers, linked to real, human intelligence (Rose, 1992). For Lambek (1998) this represents a passive and individualised view of memory that renders remembering ‘mechanical’ and ‘impersonal’, which stands in contrast to the way that memory is culturally produced and created ‘between people’ (Sutton, 2001).

‘Cookbook-memoirs’ or ‘memoirs with recipes’ that explore the idea of food and memory in an explicit and conspicuous way (Bardenstein, 2002), may serve as a counter tendency to this passive and individualised view of memory. Slater (2003) and Angelou (2004) recall a lifetime of memories through the medium of food; family journeys, both metaphorical and literal, have been recorded through anecdotes and favourite recipes Luard (1996); an examination of what has ‘gone wrong with food’ uses autobiography, recollections of meals and culinary experience accompanied by recipes and tasting tips (Mallett, 2006). Grigson (1992) combines personal history with recipes of traditional English food, which she extols as a ‘fine cuisine’ if we take the trouble to cook it well. These books allow food ‘to speak’ and Hauck-Lawson (1992) refers to the ‘food voice’ used in research that encapsulates modes of communication which food can hold and share and opens a window onto the ways that individuals use food to express their views about themselves and their culture.

The past and the present, then, are continually interacting and thus memory can help us understand people's past and current relationships with food – why people eat the way they do. In the absence of rationing or subsistence, food is a matter for social competition and cultural modelling, and in turn cultural processes and change are central to the construction of memory. This unitary concept of memory is not concerned with pure nostalgia that tends to produce mainly descriptive material, but rather people's 'subjective perceptions' of foods eaten in the past and the connection between memories of food practices and other events in their life histories (Sutton, 2001). However, according to Holtzman (2006), there are many facets to the relationship between food and memory, for in various ways they are both 'floating signifiers', shifting and indeterminate, reflected in the multilayered, multidimensional way they are experienced, spoken and written about by researchers and their participants. A rich variety of social science literature has shown that food is not merely seen as a provider of energy, but has social, psychological, physiological and symbolic dimensions and is imbued with culturally constructed meanings (Douglas 1973, 1975; Murcott, 1983; Counihan, 1984; Mennell, 1985; Mintz, 1985; Fischler, 1988; Fieldhouse, 1995; Lupton, 1996; Beardsworth & Keil, 1997; Caplan, 1997; Warde, 1997; Camporesi, 1998).

During my initial reading on food and memory, I was particularly drawn towards the work of Lupton (1994, 1996), Seremataki (1994) and Sutton (2001). In his study carried out on the Greek Island of Kalymnos, Sutton uses as a starting point for discussion the arguably most famous literary example of a mnemonic food memory that comes from Proust's (1982) great novel, 'Remembrance of Things Past'. Proust describes how the taste and smell of a Madeleine cake soaked in lime tea brings back, with enormous vividness, a whole spectre of memories from his childhood closely related to people and events. Sutton was frequently asked to 'eat in order to remember' Kalymnos and its people, not necessarily through exotic foods, but any food or meal, mundane or special, that could, in turn, be linked to events or rituals. Thus, in consideration of the importance of ritual the role of everyday contexts of memory should not be trivialised, for in many cases ritual and everyday memory are mutually reinforcing:

Anthropological studies of food ... have long recognised both poles, in showing how the functions and meanings of eating extend from the quotidian, yet meaningful, practices of daily provisioning to the extraordinary contexts of celebration and commemoration (ibid, p. 20).

Ritual is seen as a key site where food and memory come together. In Meyers' (2001) study of food connections between mothers and daughters, the sights, sounds and smells of creating and preparing Christmas food are described as unforgettable, "seeping not only into memory, but into bones and glands ... the greedy memory of childhood holds it all" (p. 19). A return to childhood through Christmas food is studied by Wright-St. Clair et al., (2005) in which the mixing of traditional foods with newer novel foods by older women leads to the construction and reconstruction of self and family identities. Whilst recipes and narratives of previous generations are perpetuated, at the same time skilful preparation re-affirms their social standing and reputation, and through gifting Christmas food they are able to give something of themselves. A birthday is also such an occasion, and the happiest and best childhood memories emanate from its special food; if this took time and effort, the appreciation and memory runs deeper (Lupton, 1996). Whilst rituals and celebrations have the ability to bring food and memory together and are thus used to mark "milestones of passage from one stage to another in the biological and social development of the individual" (Meyers, 2001: 90), this does not necessarily mean they always live up to expectations – in 'going wrong' it is the dissipation of the magic that enters the memory (Lupton, 1996).

However, it is the 'everydayness of life', one that is unobtrusive, uneventful or inconspicuous, that may be more appealing in that it provides one with a sanctuary and a certain pleasure (Highmore, 2002). The ritual of morning coffee and cake, or an afternoon cup of tea and a biscuit, may form a significant part of our day where we plan, muse or reflect as we embody its smell and taste, just in the same way that Christmas food might do. Thus whilst a ritual such as Holy Communion that follows a strict pattern may be seen as "a wish to repeat the past consciously, to find significance in celebrated recurrence" (Connerton, 1989: 63), the 'habitual', the 'everyday', embodies much of our unspoken assumptions, orders our culture and determines its direction (Visser: 1986).

Thus Sutton (2001) tells us that rather than being asked to remember foods that represented culinary souvenirs designed for tourists, Kalymnians were specifically asking him "to use the transitory and repetitive act of eating as a medium for the more enduring act of remembering ... to act like a Kalymnian" (p. 2). Sutton realised that there were a myriad of ways that food permeated the memories of Kalymnians - in other words, food could be put in the context of 'historical consciousness'. Through synaesthesia, the crossing over of the senses, or as Seremataki (1994a) explains it, "the memory of one sense stored in another: that of tactility in

sound, of hearing in taste, of sight in sound” (p. 28), food becomes an ‘embodied practice’ that ultimately produces memories that can be ‘embodied’. In other words, the walls between our senses are not solid (Stoller, 1997). Lupton’s (1994, 1996) work takes up the idea of embodied memory and the way our senses and emotions can be evoked by particular foods - of importance to my research project is that this phenomenon was found to play a part in the structuring of food habits and choices, both ‘good’ and ‘bad’, in relation to current nutritional discourses around health. People’s real experiences of food, consumption and production, are filtered through a system of meaning that relies on a divided sensibility. Lupton (1996) explains that food has a strong physical presence, and we interact with this presence through our senses that in turn provide our ‘entrees into culture’ that are divided up by societies in order to make sense of the world. At the same time, Lupton (2005a) points out that in the hierarchy of senses within western culture, taste and smell have been assigned to the ‘primitive’ despite their power to invoke emotions, meaning and memory, whether that be the divine taste of chocolate as it melts in the mouth or the dreaded smell of over-cooked cabbage that connects us to being forced to eat school dinners. Also, the sensual properties of food and their social meaning may evoke emotions within the realms of human experience in which the physical nature of food plays a part:

The actions of touching it, smelling it, preparing it, taking it into the mouth, chewing it and swallowing it are all sensual experiences that may evoke particular emotions on both the conscious and unconscious levels (ibid: p.319).

Thus the body and our eating practices have become central to the study of food for, it is thought, ‘we are [literally] what we eat’. Food consumption is seen primarily as an act of ‘incorporation’ that involves emotions, pleasures and feelings (Falk, 1994; Lupton, 2005a) as well as creation, maintenance and the formation of identities (Fischler, 1988; Caplan, 1997). Food is part of who we are in the deepest sense, and not only because it is transformed into blood and bone; our personal gastronomic traditions – what we eat, the foods and foodways we associate with the rituals of childhood, marriage, and parenthood, moments around the table, celebrations – are critical components of our identities (Meyers, 2001). It could be argued that the condition of embodiment and incorporation plays a considerable part in the creation of power and the multiplicity of meaning attributed to food. For example, the fears and taboos around certain food items which are banned from crossing the boundary between the body and the outside world (Douglas, 1966) and the development of the transformative technologies of food which can be seen as a process of purification before food is incorporated into the body. There is also the importance of the mouth that serves as the gatekeeper between these boundaries (Falk, 1994) and in this regard there may be a moment

of fear when one has accepted food into the mouth and the ensuing act of swallowing, of 'incorporation', becomes irreversible unless one immediately vomits. In contrast, there may be a divine moment when we relish the food as it slips down our throat as Angelou (2004) recalled each time she ate her grandmother's special caramel cake. It is thus a sensation in addition to the taste, that one remembers from another time, usually childhood (Barham, 2004), demonstrating that there exists a symbiotic relationship between food and emotion, "commonly regarded as the preserve of the embodied self rather than the disembodied, philosophizing mind" (Lupton, 2005a: 318).

Stoller (1997) takes up this idea of embodiment and the senses in researchers themselves that he describes as 'sensuous scholarship' – we should connect to our bodily senses and 'reawaken' the 'scholar's body' in order to be true to the people who participate in our study rather than relying on the oral and visual. As researchers we should not merely concentrate on a textual interpretation of the body, a body that can be read and analysed, but rather we should 'eat' or 'embody' the words of those who have gone before that may lead to a greater understanding of human experience in general. I began to ask myself whether I had 'what it takes' to be this kind of researcher – had I 'embodied' memories of words and practices and 'eaten in order to remember'? Was singling out fruitcake, hearty vegetable soup and fresh scones so often, an active wish to repeat the past consciously in the shape of my grandmother's and mother's superb cooking? Memories came flooding back that connected me to significant people and events in my life. I began to wonder whether my family held memories that were worthy of remembrance and, indeed, in the 'hurly-burly' of my own modern day life, had I denied them precious food memories that could provide them with a sense of who they are? I talked to my mother, now aged ninety-four, about her memories of food, particularly as she had cooked for a living and fed us so well. During our conversations, I not only learnt about parts of my mother's life she had never before revealed, that highlighted the power of memory as a research tool, but also she had something of note to say, what one might call 'pearls of wisdom' that had been passed from one generation to another – putting a cloth over a pot of strained cooked potatoes that removes the moisture and makes perfect mash and the 'patient' art of making gravy and custard without lumps. It was through these conversations with my mother that I made a connection between 'embodied' memory and Mauss's (1973 [1934]) notion of 'Body Techniques', those particular ways of doing things that are a result of culture and not nature.

My mother remembered working in my grandfather's bakery and through observation and imitation had learnt how to cut huge slabs of cake into perfect one pound pieces, and a particular way of making pastry where she merely rubbed the fat very roughly into the flour with her hands, mixed in an egg and ice-cold water alternately with a palette knife and rolled out with a cold milk bottle rather than a wooden rolling pin. Her pastry was divine and she is famous for it. By observing and imitating, I also learnt her pastry-making technique and 'ways of doing' cooking without recipes or necessarily oral instruction. Similar to Seton (2000) I found that much can be learnt without reading; it is the 'hands that remember' and as the 'apprentice' one must watch and listen, copy and learn. There were, of course, recipes transmitted from one generation to another in my family that sometimes needed to be followed in the early stages of cooking and alongside these certain ways of 'doing' food a 'key site' had been created for the transmission of certain types of memories and histories, both textual and embodied (Sutton, 2001). However, Polanyi (1966) points out that it is not easy for any culture to explain verbally its embodied habitus, its 'techniques of the body', that can be viewed as forms of knowledge. We may know more than we can tell, what Polanyi describes as 'tacit knowledge', or 'practical knowledge', that is difficult to put into words; "the performance of skills, whether artistic, athletic or technical" (p. 4). Particular fields of practical knowledge (that may include food practices) have been transmitted in various ways that donate cultural and linguistic differences as well as varying sociological factors such as social class, gender, generation and education. Inoue (2006) also points out that a range of 'local knowledges' is produced through microsociological networks that are increasingly threatened by 'global knowledge' (as exemplified by the world-wide web) and it is thus important to preserve the 'rich localities' of knowledge.

Personal trajectories and reflective focus: unravelling the social history of Liverpool

I pondered these important features of food and memory. In learning how to cook and provide and care for my own family, memory and food practices played an important part in helping me form a 'template', a kind of baseline, from which to work. These memories not only came from time spent with my mother, but also with my grandparents, aunties and uncles and significant others. I therefore agree with Lewis (2006) that we tend to 'Other' the older generations and not listen to the valuable information they can give us as 'local experts'; in giving a voice to this generational group it is possible to gather rich and valuable data on individual experience, skills, cultural knowledge and history. 'Local knowledges'

and the historical and social contexts that produce them must have shaped the lives of my family members across generations and influenced our food practices, and surely, I reasoned, particular contexts must be pertinent to Liverpool families across time. Despite a myriad of changes, I will argue here that certain aspects of Liverpool social life and culture are as relevant today as they were over one hundred years ago, for instance, I was to discover that certain aspects of the Victorian era remain deeply embedded in Liverpool society. I am not, therefore, interested in the past for the past's sake, but the past as it relates to the present and, indeed, 'future history'. I agree with Sutton (1998) that history cannot be discarded, it is not 'bunk' as Henry Ford would have us believe, indeed, it is hoped that my use of 'historical consciousness' will give 'ethnographic flesh' to the idea that there are other ways in which we can construct a relationship between the past, present and future. As Holtzman (2006) comments, memory involves a range of different processes, both social and individual, that rather than being tied empirically and objectively to notions of 'truth' in the way history might be, memory "intrinsically destabilizes truth through a concern with the subjective ways that the past is recalled, memorialized, and used to construct the present" (p. 2).

Campbell-Kease (1989) believes that to weave local histories and voices into an interesting, valued and coherent story they need to be set against geographical, economic, cultural and political factors, as well as national, regional and local events. These thoughts made sense to me during one of many walks through St. James' Gardens, once Liverpool's main cemetery, that are situated at the back of the Anglican Cathedral where I would often pause to read the headstones of the people buried there. Surely there must be a 'history' behind these epitaphs that would provide stories and lend greater meaning to so few words? I started with the sea captains and young sailors lost at sea or buried in the far off lands of Africa, the West Indies and the Americas, and the grand obelisks marking families of bankers and merchants of the mid and late 1900s. I discovered these reflect the meteoric rise of a port that had been 'supercharged' by the Victorian Empire that enabled trade and movement of goods and human beings to straddle the globe, in particular, within the infamous 'slave triangle' from which vast fortunes were made and power and standing within the higher echelons of society assured (Cameron & Crooke, 1992). I also found families whose roots lay in Ireland who probably joined the mass emigration during the famine of the 1840s alongside the scores of people who were drawn to, or passed through, the port in search of work and what they hoped would be a better life (Midwinter, 1971). However, whilst Liverpool offered architectural splendour and a playground for the rich, for the seamen and others who made it so "it was a

city that at times provided a harsh and scabby mother” (Shaw, 1971: 25). The city contained a ‘veiled’ duality in that great wealth and power “concealed some of the most appalling social and environmental conditions imaginable” (Miller, 1988: 1). Liverpool’s social geography had a north south divide; mansions in the south housed the city’s many millionaires, whilst the north housed the unskilled and casual labour that had flocked to the city; the ensuing chronic overcrowding and living conditions created poverty that was both relative and absolute (Meegan, 2003). Among the headstones I found children who had died so young during the 1800s, not just from the orphanages and ‘asylums’ but also among wealthy families. This reflects the view of Midwinter (1971) that it was the assault on the senses, as well as the realisation that fever cared not for social gradations, that eventually forced the town’s middle class to introduce public health measures and appoint the first Medical Officer of Health in the realisation that such conditions were “bad for health, bad for trade and bad for social intercourse” (p. 101).

The headstones not only pointed me towards these elements of social history, but also recorded the names of South American, Italian and Portuguese families that reflect the rise of the Port of Liverpool as a cosmopolitan merchant city who inevitably introduced a range of goods and foodstuffs equated with particular traditions and food practices (Lane, 1997). The Elder Dempster Line ships, for example, carried West African crews from the mid 1800s (Davies, 1973) a number of whom settled in Liverpool and readily purchased the yams, plantains and sweet potatoes sold to local shops by enterprising African seamen (Lane, 1997). Folk rituals also marked diversity, for example, Cowper (1948) can recall the Portuguese practice of dragging burning effigies of Judas Iscariot through the streets of Dingle at daybreak on Good Friday that was brought to the city with the fruit trade. The Chinese New Year, that remains a major calendar event in the city, was known in Liverpool long before the rest of Europe as an ever-increasing Chinese population made its mark on the city’s culture that included the introduction of new foods (Lane, 1997).

Although most seafarers from around the globe were transient, churches in the city indicate that many stayed, for example, the Scandinavian Seamen’s Church, built in 1883-84 in Park Lane, primarily served domiciled Swedish, Norwegian and Danish sailors (Lee & Stocks, 2007). It is thought probable that these sailors brought the seaman’s stew known as ‘lobscouse’ to the port. Later shortened to ‘scouse’, this dish came to denote the accent and identity of working class Liverpudlians. However, not only did Northern European

fishermen introduce new dishes and practices, but also Irish emigrants introduced Irish stew and potato dishes, Russian and Polish Jews fleeing the pogroms established shops that sold bagels (a recent 'American' introduction to our present diet), sauerkraut, salt beef and rye bread (Liverpool Women's History Group, 2002) and Italian political refugees opened fish and chip shops and introduced pasta and ice-cream (Cooke, 2002). The economic and industrial prosperity of the era, then, had not only attracted the wealthy, but also the displaced and the poor that created a city that was to become known for its deep-seated divisions (Parkinson, 1952). The insatiable labour demands of the Industrial Revolution, together with these migrant populations, turned a rapidly developing working class population into "a complex blend of different social groups and cultures" (Cooke, 2002: 5).

Liverpool became a city of contrasts in terms of income, education, housing amenities and so forth, and it was food practices and consumption that grew to be indicators of social duality and division. Whilst the Victorian upper and middle classes enjoyed a lavish diet and indulged in 'conspicuous' entertaining, the working classes subsisted, in the main, on meals of bread and dripping or jam and various stews (Coles, 1993). The Victorian legacy was such that this wealthy, vibrant city based on class distinction and huge economic disparities set the scene for decades to come. The meagre diets of the working poor at the end of the nineteenth century were inadequate to fuel the expectations of war and the industrial boom that would characterize the century to follow. Indeed, forty per cent of the working class were unfit to fight in either the Boer War or the First World War which forced the government to put measures in place to improve the health status of men eligible to sign up (Burnett, 1989). Walking amongst the headstones I noted the men who had 'gallantly' died carrying out their duty for 'King and Country' in the far off fields of Western Europe, whilst those who were lucky enough to return were often physically and mentally scarred exacerbated by the hardship many endured on meagre pensions (Liverpool Women's History Group, 2002).

According to Deagan (1980) the 'better world' that had been promised after the First World War did not materialise and saw a drop in the wages of dock labourers. The Liverpool poor remained crammed into the dockland areas where they could make themselves available for work, forming a 'city within a city' (Lane, 1997). In 1919 Liverpool was in 'dire straits' and money was scarce; many families, as in Victorian times, existed on bread, margarine and tea on most days of the week (Pooley, 2006). Unemployment insurance was in its infancy and

stood at fifteen shillings in 1921, whilst the parish out-door relief ranged from seven shillings to thirteen shillings for a man, wife and three children (Garrett, 1970). However, food served as a unifying force for those people who continued to live in the city's slums. Corner shops were open as late as midnight, where one could purchase a 'halfpenny' worth of assorted essential goods, often 'on trust' (Cooke, 2002). Lack of cooking facilities persisted and was often no more than an open fire or gas ring, thus, 'one-pot' cooking was commonplace in poor households (Westland, 1978). Against this restricted economic and culinary background a variety of stews, that included 'scouse', served as readily available, low cost options as well as meals such as pig's cheek (half a pig's head), spare ribs, rabbit and boiled beef and carrots (Cooke, 2002). With little change in the range of foods available to the upper classes, huge disparities in food consumption and diet persisted throughout the Great Depression of the 1920s and 30s, a period during which the usual food and drink available to the economically disadvantaged constituted a gravely deficient 'poverty diet' (Oddy, 2003). However, there was little chance to dwell on hardship before the outbreak of the Second World War, that for those who joined the forces or the Merchant Navy, if nothing else, provided a break from poverty. The latter was also alleviated through full employment and the employment of women who became relatively well paid.

Further searches amongst gravestones in other churchyards in Liverpool revealed a large number of soldiers and civilians who had become casualties of the Second World War. Liverpool, as the centre of the Western Approaches, suffered the heaviest enemy bombing of all provincial cities (Chandler, 1960). Recorded accounts express the shared fear and anxiety of people who endured the bombing raids as they took refuge in crude shelters, comforted only by the fact that others were with them (Ayers, 1988). A loss of home meant the loss of the 'taken-for-granted' necessities of life such as food, clothing and shelter. Despite new welfare reforms people often had no choice but to rely on agencies, such as the Red Cross and the WRVS, or the 'black market', the clandestine market of regulated essential goods or goods that were not freely available, as the government feared a 'dependency' culture leading to any 'official' help being means tested (National Museums Liverpool, 2002, 2003). At the beginning of 1944 every commodity (except bread) was in short supply and people had to restructure eating habits in line with what was available, for example, fish and dried eggs (Ayers, 1988). There are many recipes that reflect the socio-economic climate of the time that required the frugal use of ingredients. At a local level, a recipe for 'War Cake' was devised by Miss. Fanny L. Calder in 1914 (cited in Hall, 1976), that reflected the nature of

rationing with the inclusion of dripping rather than butter or margarine and the omission of eggs:

1lb flour; ½ lb dripping; ½ lb mixed fruit; 1 small teacup of milk; 1 small teacup of golden syrup;
2 oz brown sugar; 1 teaspoon of bicarbonate of soda; 2 tablespoons of vinegar.

Howard (2005) comments that post-war food (rationed up until 1954) summons up bitter-sweet memories, atavistic memories of continual hunger and feeling morally obliged to eat up food enforced by concerned parents. This is why, Howard says, those brought up during this time love hamburgers, shining white bread, tinned custard and traditional puddings, when they had to eat such things as bread and dripping, molasses on lumpy porridge, nettle soup, 'Spam' fritters and coffee ground from horsechestnuts. Elliott (2006) remembers a staple Liverpool diet of porridge, bread pudding, fish and chips and blind scouse, a similar diet recalled in my many conversations with Liverpool people.

However, as Acheson (1988) points out, although there was less food available than in the following decades, rationing provided an interruption and challenge to such an unequal society as it inadvertently created a measure of social levelling through fairer distribution. Woods (1989) recalls that many well-dressed visitors would come to Liverpool food warehouses in chauffeur-driven cars and even acknowledge the presence of workers, something unknown before rationing. However, with most men conscripted, the challenge to keep families fed was left to women, which they did through enterprise, innovation and ingenuity; 'ingenuity' was a 'key' word in the task to 'make ends meet' (Ayers, 1988). The 'rationed' diet was worked out according to physiological need based on scientific evidence that contributed to improvements in health status (in particular improvement in child health and an increase in the average age of death from natural causes) in that poorer sections of the community had greater access to foods that contained higher protein and vitamin levels, whilst for others it involved a reduction in the consumption of meat, fats, eggs and sugar (Borg, 1985). Along with the universal availability of fresh vegetables, some fruits and whole grains, these imposed changes echo current health promotion messages that seek a reduction in intake of fat, sugar and salt, reduced cholesterol levels and increased fibre intake (Department of Health, 2005).

Memories of the 1930s and 40s have been recorded by The Liverpool Women's History Group (2002). The group felt that women's lives had been overlooked in the history books,

wrote several, and started to hold workshops that would teach children social history, that included local food history, and in so doing, bridge the knowledge gap between the generations. Many of the women came from large, often extended families housed in cramped conditions. Although the food eaten at that time would not be eaten by children today (such as, sheep's head broth with dumplings, home-made brawn, pig's feet and belly, tripe and onions and rabbit soup) nevertheless such passing on of cultural knowledge is described by Sutton (2001) as a key site for the transmission of memories and history.

In her research Ayers (1988) found that women held mixed and indellible memories of the war years – women felt these years were no worse, and in some ways even better, than the lived experience of the 1920s and 30s. However, austerity did not end with the War, as rationing persisted as part of the transition from a war to a peacetime economy. Although the dock trade enjoyed an economic boom during the 1950s that improved standards of living, it was not to last – between 1966 and 1985 Liverpool's share of all ship arrivals in the United Kingdom had been halved, while Dover's share increased four fold as the manufacturing industries, population and wealth shifted to the South-east (Chandler, 1960). At the same time the decline of the Commonwealth countries as trading partners and the rise of the European Union left Liverpool marooned on the wrong side of the country. The decline and eventual closure of the sugar refineries severed the historical links between the city and African, Caribbean and Pacific countries (Noon, 2001).

This, therefore, forms the uneven playing field, starting in the Victorian Era, on which the global city of Liverpool developed; a field that led to wealth and power sitting alongside great poverty and destitution at critical periods in its history. In more recent times it has been increased urban poverty and worsening urban conditions that have been the subject of much government concern and numerous interventions, often within the framework of 'regeneration'. Regeneration is one of the major themes of the current agenda, whereby funding is made available to arrest and reverse the decline experienced in towns and cities throughout the country.

'The World in One City' was the strap line that the City of Liverpool used in 2003 to underscore its bid to become one of two 'European Capitals of Culture' for 2008 (the second city being Stavanger in Norway). This was the year a British city had the chance to secure this prestigious title and the accompanying boost in tourism, regeneration and economic

growth. Liverpool desperately needed such an injection of capacity because, in the late 1980s, the European Union recognised the extreme poverty of Merseyside and of Liverpool in particular – the latter was deemed poorer than Sicily and many Eastern European capitals (Pye, 2007). In fact, the patterns and processes of inequality in everyday life has changed very little over the last two hundred years; within the city itself it is still possible to identify particular areas that have suffered continued deprivation from the mid-nineteenth century to recent times, as well as those areas that have remained the exclusive residences of the wealthy (Pooley, 2006).

Following requests for help by the British Government, in the early 1990s the European Union granted Objective 1 status to Merseyside, making available vast amounts of grant money for social and economic regeneration projects. Although this was a welcome boost to the area, this designation confirmed in the minds of Liverpoolians that they were ‘on their uppers’, and that they were all living in a failed city (Pye, 2007). Just as Cowper (1948) believed that Liverpool did not deserve the sole reputation of being the ‘black spot on the Mersey’, Pooley (2006) maintains that Liverpool’s distinctiveness is often not derived from, for example, its architecture, stunning waterfront and resourcefulness, but rather as a negative trait derived from its reputation for high rates of crime, mortality and morbidity, unemployment and bad housing. Therefore, the decision by the Government in 2003 to approve Liverpool’s bid to become the British representative for the Capital of Culture award and the decision to grant World Heritage Site Status in 2004, was warmly welcomed. Liverpool had more to celebrate in 2007, for it had been 800 years since it received its charter as a Town and Borough from King John.

However, in discussing the current regeneration of Liverpool, Munck (2003) does not see it taking the form of ‘suburbanisation’ that empowers the poor, but rather the form of ‘urbanisation’ where the needs of the newly globalised professional classes, a burgeoning student population and an ever-increasing number of tourists have been catered for, intensified by the successful bid to be ‘Capital of Culture’ in 2008. This is reflected in the mushrooming of city centre apartments, designer shopping malls that have replaced independent small businesses and open markets, eating places that offer chic brasserie and global cuisine as well as new hotels and associated amenities, all serviced by low-paid (often informal) workers and ringed in places by a ‘relatively deprived’ and ‘alienated suburbia’ that may continue to produce a fragmented and divided city (Belcham, 2006). These redeveloped

areas of the inner city were once the site of the communities in which some of my older participants had once happily lived before they were forcibly moved out into the newly formed suburbs that, in turn, were allowed to decline. The Liverpool screenwriter, Jimmy McGovern rages about these areas that have been left to decline and then become subject to demolition. Here he talks about the Granby area of Toxteth:

This is Liverpool Eight, the only place which you really can describe as ‘The World in One City’ ... there’s Irish and Welsh, Somalis and West Indians – and look at it, bricked up for demolition. It’s the ‘Capital of Culture’ on its arse – fucked up by these bastards wanting to knock it all down for development, investment or whatever they can get out of it. That’s not culture, that’s vandalism (cited in Vulliamy, 2004).

The following photographs show the state of the main Granby shopping area that once sold the aforementioned yams and plaintains brought by enterprising African seamen:



Such duality, that harps back to the Victorian era, reflects the concept of ‘cultural capital’ identified as a crucial axis of social inequality that prioritizes certain kinds of cultural values,

a singularly important factor generating the transmission of inherited social position in all Western societies (Bennett & Savage, 2004). In order to create a sustainable programme that will benefit all sections of society, what current developers need to ‘pull off’, is to “combine the benefits of globalization with those aspects of local culture, identity and townscape that have become deeply embedded over the past two hundred years and made the city distinctive” (Pooley, 2006: 247). The following picture shows the old preserved flour mill of Joseph Heap alongside a new development of apartments that look out over the Mersey River which signifies the meeting of the old with the new:



What had merely started out as casual readings of local gravestones became the site of a legitimate archival resource, written evidence, that led me to research the socio-historical context against which food stories and subjective memories could be voiced, thus helping me to piece together in a more meaningful way, intergenerational food practices and choices. Alongside my many conversations I began to realise how much life histories reflect cultural changes in eating habits and practices and that knowledge takes on the flavour of what is happening in society at particular times –different memories of particular life histories produce different knowledge and understanding (Schank & Abelson, 1995). Telling a story

about a culture through food that includes what and how we eat, where, how often and with whom, helps to make sense of current food and eating practices in which continual reference is made to the past. Such reference may be produced through two different modes of memory; 'private memory', the memories of everyday life, on the one hand, and what has been termed as 'social' or 'collective' memory on the other. The former is described by Lupton (1994) as personal memory of personal experiences and personal memory of things not experienced (those that emanate from discussion with others and various forms of the mass media). In her 'memory work' with students in order to discover influences that had impinged on their food choices, Lupton was not only able to draw parallels and comparisons between the memories of individuals, but was also able to show that personal memory connects social narrative and social memory to the personal. These findings resonate with the work of others on the connection between personal and social memory (Connerton, 1989; Muxel, 1993; Sutton, 2001; Nelson, 2003).

Social memory is also articulated through 'public representations', that which is played out in public, concerning 'our' history, heritage or tradition. Ohnuki-Tierney (1993) brings the personal and the collective together in her use of rice as metaphor to examine, on the one hand, the historical processes in which cultural practices and institutions involving rice and rice paddies have played prominent roles in Japanese society and, on the other, how rice is deeply embedded in Japanese cosmology both of the elite and 'common folk'. For example, rice as soul, rice as deity, rice as self and collectively as 'our ancestral land', 'our village', 'our region' and 'our land of Japan'; in other words, the consumption of this food item lies at the heart of Japanese 'tradition'.

Tradition and traditional practices

According to Rauch (2000) it is the notion of tradition that supports the 'habitus of remembering', reviving the meaning of history for its revision in the present. It is further seen as the means by which experience is transmitted, transformed and translated into language from one generation to another. Histories of human experience are necessary for the creation of meaning and we cannot do without tradition if we are to understand both ourselves and others through written and spoken words as well as passing on visual aspects, such as clothes, gestures, games, dances and so on. In discussing family memory, Muxel (1993) sees the collective memory of a group to be the expression of a common family

identity that is transmitted from one generation to the next that provides an ‘anchoring point’ for traditions and maintains family characteristics. Thus reference to the past is seen as a key component in discussions about tradition described by Hobsbawm & Ranger (1983) as “a set of practices normally governed by overtly or tacitly accepted rules and of a ritual or symbolic nature, which seek to inculcate certain values and norms of behaviour by repetition, which automatically implies continuity” (p.1).

Traditional food and food occasions, according to Sutton (2001), carry meaning and provide a significant medium for sharing culture and ‘times past’. The repertoire of food that is often referred to as ‘traditional’ (and sometimes distinctive, or even unique, within towns, regions and countries) has been influenced by the history, industry and the fertility of the soil. Indeed, the influence of the Saxons and their use of herbs and the Romans and their agricultural methods, together with their love of both food and wine, have left their cultural mark on our shores and regions, influencing the eating habits of generations (Ayrton & Fitzgibbon, 1985). Thus whilst reference may be made to the traditional ‘British’ Sunday roast dinner that may include ‘Yorkshire’ puddings served with beef, such puddings are traditionally served in that county as a separate dish; whilst we may refer to a full ‘English’ breakfast that may imply a ‘British’ tradition, in parts of Wales a cooked breakfast comprises bacon served with ‘laver bread’ a speciality made with seaweed; the ‘British’ Christmas pudding has a Scottish counterpart in the ‘black bun’, as has Christmas cake with ‘Dundee’ cake from the Scottish town (the latter topped with whole almonds and the former with marzipan and white icing); the ‘London Particular’ soup made with split peas and ham is, in fact, similar to the Liverpool dish known as ‘peawack’. Nevertheless, these traditional food items that may move between national, regional and cultural boundaries are hugely symbolic and may imply the use of particular ingredients that may, or may not, be accompanied by a recipe or a particular process or set of practices (Cayot, 2007). For instance, ‘Liverpool’ seaman’s stew (also known as ‘scouse’), ‘Irish’ stew and ‘Lancashire’ hotpot may share similar ingredients, but the mode of preparation and cooking are very particular to those who serve and eat it. My data show that many Liverpudlians do not think scouse is authentic unless it has been prepared in a heavy-bottomed pan known as a ‘dixie’. Similarly, an old, heavy, black cast-iron bakestone, rather than a modern griddle, is seen as central to authentic Welsh cooking (Freeman, 1984). This is not cosmopolitan food, but rather shared ‘common’ food and no matter where we are in the world, traditional food can separate us from the ‘other’, for example, the provision of fish and chips and a ‘full English breakfast’ in Spanish

tourist resorts in preference to local cuisines (implying a measure of parochialism and xenophobia) that provides a source of comfort as well as an expression of identity (Andrews, 1999).

Whilst people may readily cite examples of what they consider to be traditional British food, what they actually eat in practice may be rather different. Slater (2007) notes that whilst people may wax lyrical about the traditional roast beef dinner, steak and kidney pudding and apple crumble and custard, it is more likely that the same people will be consuming a Thai curry, a pizza or cheesecake rather than any of the aforementioned. Slater meanders through a whole series of oddities and eccentricities that represent what and how British people eat; bread and butter pudding that originally made use of stale bread baked with egg, milk and dried fruit; boiled eggs eaten with fingers of toast known as ‘soldiers’ dipped in the yolk; favourite sweets such as hard, sugary tubes of coloured and lettered seaside rock and small fruit gums known as ‘midget gems’; a whole range of biscuits that have become icons within British food culture, for instance, plain ‘Rich Tea’ ideal to dip or ‘dunk’ into a morning ‘cuppa’, soft, spongy ‘Jaffa Cakes’ and wheatmeal ‘Chocolate Digestives’; a love affair with Heinz Tomato Ketchup for smothering chips and almost anything one fancies; pomegranates eaten with a pin; eating fish and chips out of newspaper, and the almost black ‘Marmite’ savoury spread that one either loves or hates. Food traditions that span many decades may be met with delight or derision; whilst there is nothing chic or retro about Greggs (the long-established High Street bakery chain), it has recently been noted in the Guardian (2010) that eating greasy sausage rolls, a cheese pastry or doughnuts on the street is “as British a ritual as drinking warm beer and moaning about the weather” (p.3). One only has to stand across the road from one of these bakeries (and there are many locations to choose from) to note how popular these shops are. On the other hand, tradition is not necessarily ‘a given’; Moran (2009) denounces the Christmas pudding as ‘inedible’, describing it as “a molehill that someone has brought in on a spade from the garden as a joke ... and cannot be trusted as a foodstuff that needs to be boiled, steamed, doused in alcohol, set on fire and covered in cream before you’re supposed to eat it” (p.5). What is the point, Moran asks, when one can alternatively purchase delicious chocolate puddings or tarte au citron? Pertinent to my study here is that many of these traditional foods are fat, salt and sugar laden and would not be considered ‘healthy’ according to current nutritional guidelines.

Several writers have suggested that the notion of 'tradition' is becoming lost under the pressures of the modern world; what have been described as 'Olde English' traditions have long disappeared, for example, celebrations around special days – Twelfth Night, May Day, Midsummer's Day – many displaying nuances and differences according to different villages, towns and regions, that often included special food items and practices (Spicer, 1954). My data show, for instance, that younger people are no longer aware that the Sunday before Advent is the traditional time to make Christmas pudding or cake, a day commonly named as 'stir-up' Sunday taken from the Book of Common Prayer – loss of traditional knowledge means loss of practice. Serematakis (1994) privileges the traditional, uniquely tasting, varieties of peach indigenous to certain areas of Greece over the mass produced homogenous varieties that have flooded the market in more recent times, and Counihan (1984) uses bread as a tool of analysis to track social and economic change in modernising Sardinia. There, bread making has moved from a communal, reciprocal and creative endeavour producing loaves of various shapes, sizes and designs, towards the individual purchase of commercial, homogenous 'end products' that negates the significance of such practices. Amongst Sardinians, new technologies and modernisation have not only marked a decline in home bread-making but also the 'traditional' practices of preserving tomatoes, salting olives and drying figs. In addition, many small, traditional Sardinian shops have closed having been replaced by self-service stores where shopping is no longer a social activity in that there exists little rapport with staff or traditional 'bartering'. This new mode of shopping, underpinned by a drive towards higher and higher profit margins, is now replicated throughout towns and cities in the United Kingdom and such change has been linked to the emergence of a homogenized 'global culture', a kind of 'cultural imperialism', primarily American in origin, that is seen to pose a threat to national and local cultures and traditions. This is demonstrated, for example, in the 'sameness' of towns and cities – pertinent to my study, homogenization can be seen in food items and dishes, eating places and media images used by global concerns such as Starbucks and McDonald's who pride themselves on their consistency and 'sameness' (Strinati, 2004). Such eating places stay open seven days a week and in line with market principles based on free choice, supermarkets now offer the opportunity to shop around the clock as well as on Sundays, an activity that often now appears to structure this once very separate day 'traditionally' marked by church attendance and related observances (Hopper, 2003).

However, although loss of tradition in relation to food may appear to be part of the modern

world that does not embrace 'social reproduction' as we take on new identities and develop new material relations to the world, this may merely indicate that traditions change over time or, are a maleable construction, used in different ways and in different social settings within families and the community (Sutton, 2001; Moisio et al., 2004). Globalisation has put people in touch with numerous other cultures, that has enabled them to 'pick and mix', so to speak, from a variety of food cultures; through food, we learn there are other people in the world. Such awareness of the food of others may lead to a re-assessment of what is considered to be traditional or traditional ways of doing things or, conversely, tradition may serve as an antidote to such an invasion as people retain these practices (Giddens, 1991). The folktale, the myth, the legend, are all genres that change slowly and may hold out against the rhythms of modernity and constitute themselves enclaves of the traditional. Hobsbawm & Ranger (1983) describe how tradition is a social construction whereby traditions may be kept, 'reinvented' or 'reshaped' that have become somewhat lost or forgotten, reflecting that there remains a wish to reconnect with the past in some way or another. Roseberry (1996) points out that traders and marketers also do this, for example, coffee shops often display artefacts and pictures from an 'imagined' past in order to reconnect the customer to a world before mass production and consumption. Sutton (2001) points out that it is the power of tangible everyday food experiences that evokes memories on which identities are formed and in our more atomized and fragmented society we have difficulty finding a cohesive base for such experiences. There is, therefore, a need to find shared sensory experiences through synaesthesia within communities, families and the various groups to which one belongs, achieved through "simple iteration [that creates] a universe of domains, an acceptable cosmology of participation, a compelling whole" (Fernandez, 1986: 193). In the absence of 'whole' or shared experiences we may 'revitalize' traditional foods whereby we revalue them for ritual or everyday purposes and they become 'mutually reinforcing' (Sutton, 2001).

Tradition has also been described as a 'common sense stock of knowledge' that is passed down through generations that draws retrospectively on the work of others (Schutz, 1970; Keller & Dixon-Keller, 1999). Common sense uses our personal experiences and the experiences of those we know as the source of 'practical knowledge' and the idea of 'intuition' can be thought of as 'direct access knowledge', a way of knowing that operates on 'gut feelings' without the use of intellect (Ruane, 2005). However, as Ruane points out, traditional, authoritative knowledge, common sense and intuition tend to encourage an uncritical acceptance of information when 'one size' experience does not necessarily fit all;

just because some knowledge has passed the test of time, we cannot assume (as many people do) that enduring assertions about the world are true. This idea can be linked to the idea of ‘communal reinforcement’ whereby a claim to knowledge becomes a general belief through repeated assertion by community members that may lack any rational basis (Goldacre, 2008).

Traditional knowledge used in the transmission of food practices often infers notions of ‘authentic’, ‘home-made’, ‘proper’, ‘the way grandma used to do it’ and so on, notions that are often used interchangeably and have positive moral connotations when used as ideal reference points in terms of standards and beliefs. These are set against the meteoric rise in ‘convenience’, ‘processed’ and ‘ready-made’ food that has caused much debate and concern in relation to the consumption of one over the other in terms of health outcomes (Caraher et al., 1999; Lang & Heasman, 2000). Lyon & Colquhoun (1999) referring to the avoidance of all things processed as ‘culinary luddism’ see their use as representative of the reality of daily life, whereas Visser (1986) sees a slower, more dependable past being replaced by the desire for instant gratification. For better or for worse, convenience foods have opened up a whole new way of catering for the family, that includes purchasing ‘end products’ for traditional meal occasions such as Christmas and Easter – but where did it all begin? I may have seen my mother open a tin of baked beans for a quick tea, but never ready-made meals, ready-prepared roast potatoes or gravy in a jar. I wanted to discover whether the heavy use of convenience foods served to, or used individually by, family members, have had a positive or negative effect on family life and, indeed, whether tradition and traditional food still held a place within the families and the communities in which they live that are the subject of my investigation. This forms an important part of my study in that family eating habits and practices are thought to be laid down over the course of childhood and the shared meanings and values attached to meals emanate from a particular familial food ‘ethos’ (Fischler, 2008, Massil, 2001).

Thus an understanding of food practices within families and their relationship with the wider community is important if we are to understand food choice in relation to health. The symbiotic relationship between family and community has become an important part of food studies in the sense that the ‘private sphere’ of the family does not represent a ‘hermetically sealed microcosm’ that can be examined in isolation, but is “inextricably linked to the structures of the wider social system” (Beardsworth & Keil, 1997: 73). Whereas the

function of the family within the wider society may be seen to provide an intimate, supportive and protective institution that offers stability and continuation to its members, it has also been critically scrutinized to reveal conflict, disunity and differential power between the sexes and age groups. Explanations for these differences often involve the notion of 'traditional' patriarchal families vis-a-vis 'neo-traditional' or 'non-traditional' families that have negotiated more egalitarian, less rigid, domestic arrangements (Tansey & Worsley, 1995) that are set within the broader context of 'community'.

Tradition and the 'gemeinschaft' community

Tradition has been linked to the idea of 'community', particularly 'traditional' institutions and practices such as organised religion and marriage seen to be pivotal to the functioning and cohesiveness of communities and society that offer support and security for citizens and families reflected in Ferdinand Tönnies' (1951 [1887]) notion of the 'gemeinschaft' community. These 'traditional', habitual ties of community, are seen to involve close kinship links, affective bonds, shared space and religious and moral values and beliefs that create a high level of certainty and predictability. In other words, communities rich in 'social capital' is "the glue that binds or holds societies together, and enables them to function effectively" (Hopper, 2003: 1). Durkheim (1960 [1893]) suggests that in order for communities to function there is a need for 'social solidarity', cohesion within the group that can effectively work for the common good, evidenced in more recent times during the Liverpool dockers' strike and 'lock-out' during 1995/96 (Lavalette & Kennedy, 1996). Support was offered to those both inside and outside the docks that extended to sick workmates, older generations of dock workers, families with a large number of children who needed to be fed and clothed, as well as children with special needs. In addition, 'class solidarity' emerged out of the hardship and poverty experienced by dockers' families and their struggle to improve their conditions. de Certeau et al., (1998) refer to the importance of the 'dominant and essential values of identification' that revolve around 'solidarity practices' fundamental to urban culture - being a worker is not just about being 'tied' to a particular task but also about participating. 'Class solidarity' in relation to Liverpool also comes from the idea of what it is to be 'scouse', to be working class, to have a 'scouse' accent and eat 'scouse'. Whilst the upper classes may distance themselves from the humble dish of seaman's stew as well as the pronounced accent, Maria Eagle (2000), M.P. for Liverpool, Garston, believes, the word

'solidarity' is made to be said in a 'scouse' accent, for it defines, in part, what it is to be Liverpudlian. Not only do Liverpudlians call themselves 'Scousers' after the seaman's stew, but also 'whackers', a 'wacker' from the army slang, 'whack', to share, being a friend, one with whom one shares (Shaw, 1971). Thus, de Certeau et al., (1998) believe that in the absence of rites and peasant tales collected by folklorists, urban culture is founded on practices concerning specific relationships. Social capital is reflected in the kind of relationships we build in our families, communities and organisations reflected in the amount of trust we have in each other, the extent to which we fulfil our responsibilities to each other and our communities, the amounts of health and literacy we achieve through common efforts and the extent to which we are free of crime (Zohar & Marshall, 2004). In addition to social capital, Zohar & Marshall point out the importance of 'spiritual capital', the shared meanings and values and ultimate concerns and purposes in life, as well as 'material capital' in the form of money and what money can buy.

The idea that to be part of a community increases 'social capital' emanates from co-operation and reciprocity that engenders trust reflected in what Mauss (1970 [1950]) refers to as 'gift-debt'. This creates a mutual inter-dependence between givers and receivers in the sense that a gift is not an object per se, but rather, through the act of giving, part of the giver is actually invested in whatever that object may be. Consequently, the receiver feels indebted and thus obliged to reciprocate; in other words, there is no such thing as a 'free' gift. Reciprocal exchange also carries with it the reputation of the individual and his or her community that in turn creates a memorable impression. However, such exchange should not be fetishised as a way of increasing one's 'capital' (material, symbolic or other), but rather, should be a human attempt to create social relations that is not based solely on thoughts of future benefit. Ashkenazi (2001) sees food as an 'intimate' gift implying comfort and closeness, and because food is a primary need, gifting is seen to involve a measure of emotional support. The ethnographic record further shows that food sharing and gifting not only exists to ensure the distribution of critical resources but also indicates personal generosity, obligation and ties to kindred and community well-being, for example, the customary sharing of seal and caribou meat, even in times of scarcity, amongst the Arctic Inuit (Collings et al., 1998). However, writers have noted a shift from this kind of community towards what Tönnies refers to as the 'gesellschaft' community.

From the 'gemeinschaft' to the 'gesellschaft' community

In his Kalymnian study, Sutton (2001) found that reciprocal exchange of food had the ability to create thick social relations and social memories that reflected broader ties and obligations embedded in the notion of 'gemeinschaft' that provide a metonym for community values and a social world, both positive and negative, that some might consider has been lost to our modern, globalised and commodified world. The 'gemeinschaft' community that represents one culture and set of rules that emanates primarily from the family and the church, has undergone what Hopper (2003) refers to as 'detraditionalization', a move towards the 'gesellschaft' community identified by Tönnies that incorporates a range of cultures and ways of life with few social sanctions or definitive reference points. This type of community is identified as one that is characterised by 'anonymity, individualism and competition' driven by the quest for economic progress, a higher standard of living and visibly greater social status (Forrest & Kearns, 2001). Within this newly created commodity economy Mauss (1970 [1950]) believes the bond between the object and the giver found in the notion of 'gift-debt' is negated by the notion of private property – the object is sold and thus ownership is completely transferred to the buyer and the original owner becomes alienated from the object. What is then of value is not the gift per se, but its monetary value. Philips & Taylor (2009) contend that self-interest has become our ruling principle and secretly people believe that kindness is a sign of narcissism or weakness, a 'virtue of losers' except between parents and children – in giving up on kindness, especially our own acts of kindness, we are depriving ourselves of a pleasure that is fundamental to our sense of well-being.

At a local level, the dismantling and reshaping of communities in Liverpool during the 1960s and later under the banner of 'regeneration' (Murden, 2006) imposed a strain on the transmission of cultural traditions such as reciprocal exchange and gifts from one generation to the next (Sampson, 1998), perpetuated by lifestyles that by their very nature reflect the notion of 'gesellschaft'. With the passing of 'old' integrated Liverpool communities – small terraced streets that singly might have housed hundreds of men, women and children, the courts that crammed human beings together, traditional small shops and market places where people gathered to socialise – the nature of this change can be detected. However, my intention is not to idealise the communities of the past, for whereas the closeness of old communities tended to integrate people, there also existed deep divisions based on class,

ethnicity, religious differences between Catholics and Protestants, socio-economic disparities, local politics of the left and right and so on. Neither did they allow for privacy that has become desirable in more atomised communities – people do not necessarily want their business to become everybody else's business (Bryden & Floyd, 1999) falling in line with Abercrombie's (2004) notion of 'family privatism', and the 'privatisation' of culture itself whereby self-reliance turns inwards rather than embracing society (Chaney, 2002).

Thus, we might say, there are two sides to the community coin. On the one side, Forrest & Kearns (2001) see social cohesion as a means of 'getting by' and 'getting on' at the more mundane level of everyday life through social ties, interaction and mutual dependency, a community which Abercrombie (2004) suggests offers "a sense of who we are [that] is inseparable from a feeling of belonging to some social entity larger than we are" (p.10). This sense of belonging, coupled with the notions of reciprocity and solidarity, that is, notions of 'gemeinschaft', is seen as a way of accruing social or community capital in lieu of economic or cultural capital. Bunting (2009) notes that belonging is as much about commitment as possession, whereby we nurture our capacity for awareness of the host of histories that make up a particular place and from where we draw inspiration that shapes our sense of self and community. However, Bauman (2001) would draw us to the other side of the coin, in that the word 'community' has an idealistic 'feel' to it that on the one hand encompasses notions of 'goodness', safety, trust, inclusion and pleasure to those on the 'inside' and on the other the very opposite to the 'outsider'. Positive notions are now more likely to be imaginary, something that, in present day reflexive, more complex and individualistic communities of 'gesellschaft', are both missed and mythical, rather than part of people's lived experience. However, these shifts in community life can be seen in a more positive light in that they serve to 'release' the 'constraints' placed on people by the authority and influence of traditional institutions in their pursuit of more individual, flexible, and private life-styles (Hopper, 2003). To these one does not have to conform but can make one's own decisions and assessments about what is right or wrong, good or bad without reference to others. Detraditionalization has brought with it, for instance, the release of women from 'traditional constraints and status' and what was 'expected' of them towards greater autonomy and a broadening of horizons. Young people's lives may also be less constrained by traditional structures such as gender and class, but at the same time this may result in greater uncertainty about what is, and what is not, 'normative' behaviour – there is no 'template', no 'parameters

of expectancy' (Furlong & Cartmel, 1997).

Within a 'gesellschaft' community people no longer have to rely on traditional media forms or means of communication (Giddens, 1991). Virtual or global communities are possible because most people want, and have been able to, acquire the technological means to communicate without face-to-face or tactile encounters. For instance, people no longer need to purchase food from local shops or supermarkets – everything can be ordered on the internet and delivered to the door. Whilst some people might think we are 'drowning' in data that invades privacy and is open to abuse, nevertheless technological strides mean, for instance, that programmes can be developed that will enable mobile phones to accommodate e-mails, on-line maps, news and the weather. In addition, social networking sites can let people know where their friends are (even those that are 'virtual') and allow doctors to monitor elderly people who live alone – thus mobile devices will form a 'bridge' between the 'virtual' and the 'real' world (Arlidge, 2009). The 'lost' togetherness, the solidaristic ties of belonging of *gemeinschaft* from which people formed their self-identities are being replaced in other ways (Giddens, 1991). Although we talk of the more private nature of life, at the same time it has become extremely porous in terms of technology.

These different 'types' of community produce different forms of social life and in this regard Bourdieu (1990 [1980]) sees life as a constant struggle, one that always requires improvisation that one plays out in the form of a 'game'. It is not enough to know the rules of the game, but rather people must have a "sense" of it, a "social sense" of how to play. We need to know what is going on in the field for the game to work and what is at stake – thus, in my chapter concerned with community, I refer to "unwritten social rules" that exist in the communities people are part of and that some people are able to play the game better than others with varying results. Whereas younger generations may readily embrace and possess the skills to be part of the 'virtual' community, older generations may struggle with the necessary technology and expertise needed to participate that may lead to rejection of, or exclusion from, this new mode of community life. Loneliness, particularly amongst the elderly, has become a pressing social problem – this is not voluntary solitude, but rather, unsought isolation (Bennett & Bowers, 2009). Although reflexivity and complexity may bring increased choice and opportunity to some sections of society, it can also bring to the surface a painful awareness of the lack of it. For example, differential access to groups and

resources within communities and the need or desire for social mobility, can exclude as well as enhance people's lives creating inequalities that are as marked today as they were one hundred years ago (Burnett, 1989; Dowler & Spencer, 2007).

I am not suggesting here that any society can fit neatly into the typologies of 'gemeinschaft' and 'gesellschaft', but, rather, they merely serve as useful tools to help describe particular local views and circumstances of a society's existence that involves both change and difference between groups (Parkin, 1997). In the phenomenological tradition I wanted to find out how my participants described the lived experience of their 'local' communities in view of the fact that the more positive notions surrounding community are considered to be vital components of health and wellbeing (Seedhouse, 2001; Blaxter, 2004; Philips & Taylor, 2009). Food has been brought into the frame by my older participants who believe that food practices conducive to health were once embedded in the communities in which they were brought up and raised their families, but did not think this was so today. My younger participants did not think so either reflected in their more individualised food practices informed by outside bodies. My attention was, therefore, drawn towards the nature of these changes in food practices and experiences.

Intergenerational changes in food practices and experiences

I began to ask myself whether the process of detraditionalization had impacted on the way food 'gets done', how it is practiced and experienced on a day to day basis from the garden, or point of purchase, right through to the final act of eating. Was tradition, as a common sense stock of knowledge, still being transmitted from one generation to another and if not, where did food knowledge come from? Did my participants still cook or did convenience food predominate? To what extent were food tasks and practices shared or gendered from one generation to the next, particularly from the point of view of 'paid' work outside the home versus 'unpaid' work within it, the idea of 'real' work versus 'non-work' (Oakley, 1974)?

I wanted to find out when, where and with whom people ate, particularly in view of the fact that the process of detraditionalization is seen to undermine the agencies of socialisation, such as the family and in particular family eating practices (Mintz, 1996; Hopper, 2003). Had meals become de-socialised to be replaced by highly individual modes of eating? With

the apparent decline in the family meal I was particularly interested in the idea that children's and adult food have become, particularly in terms of mass marketing, separate 'cultural constructions' both within and outside the home (James, 2008). Whilst I acknowledge that there is previous evidence of a dichotomy between adult and children's food, for example, the rich and varied abundant diet eaten by Victorian adults that stood in stark contrast to the ordered, controlled, 'plain' food given to children (Davies, 1989; Mars, 1993) and the protection of babies through the use of separate sterilised receptacles for 'age appropriate' food (Murcott, 2000a), nevertheless, current marketing strategies reflect a significant generational difference within my families in a move away from eating out of a 'common bowl' as in times past. The significance of this shift in relation to my study is that much of the food marketed towards children is unhealthy in nutritional terms (Blythman, 2006; Mallett, 2004) and the food choices and purchases negotiated primarily between children and their parents may be carried into adulthood and potentially impact on their health status in later life (Mei-Li Roberts, 2006). Massil (2001) describes how he has consistently taken components of diet, health, fitness and longevity from a childhood past that embodied the idea of the 'right' food to eat such as salads for tea, fruit as a staple, wholemeal bread rather than white, no snacking between meals, the 'evils' of processed food and excess sugar in the diet and the 'lasting fragrance' of fresh tomatoes from the garden – "the slightest remembrance of past tasting can remain in the mind, over time" (p. 172). This would indicate the power of embodied memory in making healthy food choices.

Embodied memory, food and health

Whilst social scientists stress the importance of food in the creation of social and cultural bonds between family members, friends and the wider community, they also point out that it needs to be consumed at regular intervals in order to maintain life and chosen carefully in order to maintain health over a life-time. However, within a consumer society, food choices are complex and far-reaching and even more so if we bring health into the equation itself a multi-faceted concept. Rather than health being seen objectively as merely the absence of disease that underpins the biomedical model, the social science perspective represents a broad holistic view whereby it is wrapped up in everything we do, where we live, how we play, feel, love, what we believe in and so on. Although most people would agree that health is something positive that allows one to function normally within society, the changing nature of our cultural and social worlds has inevitably influenced how we variously perceive the

notions of 'health' and 'illness'. How health may be sustained and protected, and illness avoided, is often encapsulated in the aphorism 'you are what you eat'. That would suggest that we are also 'what we *ate*', 'what we might *become*' and 'what we *do*' around food. In an obesogenic environment 'you are what you eat' is effectively saying 'you are the amount you eat', that leads on to, in terms of illness, 'you have become what you eat'. I believe food *in part* shapes who we are, for I would contend that food alone does not shape us, but rather all aspects of our socio-cultural background. Marx goes as far as to say that in a commodity culture we form our identities from commodities themselves, thus identity comes from the sum total of our many purchases of which food is just one (Antonio, 2003). Focusing singly on food in the aetiology of disease, as pivotal as it may be, runs the risk of stigmatising, for example, obesity and related conditions when there may be other compounding factors that contribute to their development. Health promoters do not imply that people are literally what they drink, or what they smoke or what they wear and yet they imply that food occupies this privileged place. Thus, across time, I wanted to discover the process by which food has moved from a more utilitarian substance, a natural resource that was once a taken-for-granted and embedded part of family and community life, to become a cultural icon against which we are continually being judged including health outcomes.

In view of these points, we increasingly find that in current discourses food and health have become synonymous – we rarely talk about one without the other, something we cannot escape from. Sociological explanations for this 'marriage' have come from the influential theories of Giddens (1991) and Beck (1992) who present a social world that is 'risky', insecure and uncertain. From a phenomenological perspective, Schutz (1970, cited in Bloor, 1995) contends that we draw on our stock of knowledge in our assessment and management of risk. One moves along a continuum of two modes of social action – between the 'world of routine activities' that spring from taken-for-granted understandings and do not require active consideration, and a world of 'considered alternatives and calculative action'. Schutz' provides a sequence of 'systems of relevance', whereby a person initially decides whether a situation is likely to be problematic or not (topical relevances); drawing from their stock of knowledge comparisons are made with their current situation (interpretative relevances) and a decision made as to the extent to which they pursue their interpretation, or to what extent certitude is necessary (motivational relevances). According to interpretation one selects a 'recipe for action' in order to manage risk. Within this framework volition and constraint are conceptually differentiated, for example, topical relevances may be deemed problematic by

the self or ‘imposed’ by significant others – one might decide for oneself whether a food practice is risky, or one may be told by family members or health practitioners that it is risky.

However, the cultural context from which different generations accrue a ‘stock of knowledge’ has changed. The emergence of a risky and uncertain world has run parallel with an ethos of individualism whereby people must be reflexive and create their own biographies without a clear framework of norms and values that were once provided by religion, the local community and tradition that I discussed earlier. At the same time we have seen the erosion, or weakening of modern institutions such as the welfare state, the patriarchal nuclear family and full employment that often meant a ‘job for life’ (Debevec & Tivadar, 2006).

These points direct us towards Marx’s notions of ‘alienation’ and ‘commodity fetishism’ that enable us to question whether the advent of modernity and ‘post-modernism’ has seen a shift from socialisation to desocialisation, connectedness to alienation, collectiveness to individualism (Antonio, 2003). These all serve to undermine the ‘givenness’ of identity, essential to both our health and food memories, that offers a template against which we make our choices; every coherent group has its own unique ‘foodways’ – behaviours and beliefs surrounding the production, distribution and consumption of food - the study of which contributes to the understanding of personhood across cultures and historical periods (Counihan, 1999). However, although the quotidian and everyday aspects of such ‘foodways’ may appear ordinary, they contain many powerful structures and meanings and in the modern era cultural change has made it harder to represent. As populations have become increasingly separated spatially, technologically and culturally from the food chain, and global foods marginalise traditional diets, alienated people may feel the need to consult food manufacturers, scientific experts, ‘health’ gurus, the media and government for information and guidance in relation to food choices (Dixon & Banwell, 2004) rather than relying on food knowledge and practices that were once embedded in families and communities.

Reinforced by the notion of ‘informed choice’ it therefore rests with reflexive individuals to make life choices and decisions, that is, create a ‘lifestyle’, for themselves and their families. However, how people conceptualise a ‘healthy’ lifestyle emanates from ‘common sense understandings’ and personal experience imbued with ‘professional rationalizations’ (Blaxter, 2004). Here I draw attention to Bourdieu’s (1984) notion of ‘habitus’, the attitudes, beliefs and behaviours that belong to particular groups of people, the cultural milieu that shapes

lifestyles. Habitus and thus lifestyle, influence any choices we make which are inevitably easier for some people than others; this includes the body and dietary practices that reflect our engagement and interaction with a complex social world, that is, our 'embodied' selves (Mauss, 1973 [1934]; Merleau-Ponty, 1962; Csordas, 1994). Bourdieu (1984) believes that the way in which people treat and relate to their bodies reveals 'the deepest dispositions of habitus'; our habitus is embodied in the mind 'inside' our heads and only exists "in and through the concrete practices of the individual as embodied agents, situated in time and space and their interactions with others and their environment" (Williams, 1995: 586). Nevertheless people often take themselves and their world for granted and practice is not wholly organised 'in consciousness'; families unthinkingly may transmit a whole range of behavioural norms, social aspirations, values, skills, world views and the like, bound up, for example, in parenting, religiosity and use of language, "resulting in the condensation of experiences characterising particular class groups" (Bertaux & Thompson, 1993: 2-3). Having said that, Bourdieu adds the proviso that sometimes our logic becomes 'fuzzy' and we improvise and break the norms and rules of our particular habitus. The work of Mars & Mars (1993) has shown that although one might belong to the same socio-economic group this does not necessarily mean that one constructs and presents similar social identities. In entertaining and cooking for guests Mars & Mars identified differences between 'suburban conformists' and 'urban individualists'; the former group tended to retain traditional dishes, accepted social norms and etiquette, whilst the latter group followed more individual, eclectic, tastes and styles that reflected the way in which they approached life in general. Appendix 1 illustrates the many components that influence, and thus produce, what has become a complex relationship between habitus, lifestyles and food choice.

This is the complex arena within which I have attempted to discover, from an inter-generational perspective, reasons why people may be well nourished or 'mis' or 'malnourished' in a 'land of plenty' and may, or may not, enjoy optimum health. Why, for instance, they may lack a sense of community identity or believe identity comes from what food they consume? Why they may have many, few or very different social memories of food practices that can be passed from one generation to another, and indeed, why food choices in terms of health may be problematic. In order to place these research 'problems' in context I will draw on the very different contributions that are offered by biomedicine and epidemiology and that of the social sciences in the promotion of health. Whilst the former sees health more narrowly as the absence of disease underpinned by a curative approach, the

latter takes a more subjective view whereby health is seen as an aspiration to self-actualisation and an integral part of life, life as it is lived. I have therefore adopted a phenomenological approach to my research that attempts to portray the 'lived experience' of food practices over time through the analytical tool of embodied memory. This questions the traditional 'top-down' health promotion approach to improving dietary health that seems to have a limited impact. Thus, I have turned to the 'food voices' (Hauck-Lawson, 2004) from 'below' that I feel can contribute to a deeper understanding about the relationship between food and health. My intention has been to write a thesis that provides 'food for thought' and will be of interest to all those involved in promoting health be it in the nutritional sciences, clinical settings or working on the ground in the community, as well as those who formulate and produce health strategies and policies at all levels. I also hope that the data I have collected will be of interest to food historians and writers, museum curators who are attempting to engage in a more meaningful and pro-active way with the community and of course, any member of the public who cares about food issues.

Outline of Chapters

Chapter one provides a review of the literature concerned with the problematic relationship between food and health taken from both a biomedical and social science perspective. I look at how this problem is addressed within public health policy, health promotion and health education and how influential social and cultural factors that affect food choice are brought into the frame that challenge current discourses. I follow this review with an illustration that represents an overview of my thesis and how it is framed by a range of processes connected with the concept of 'embodied' food memories linked to significant others and events that subjects recall or emotionally re-experience. It includes how a sense of historicity shapes cultural and social processes and meanings, invented traditions and nostalgia for a real or imagined past. Chapter two explains and justifies my methodological approach to research that is phenomenological in nature. Under the umbrella of phenomenology I explain how I carried out my study using ethnographic methods in Liverpool communities that included participant/non-participant observation, in-depth interviews with eight families, document analysis and natural conversations. Chapter three provides a 'thick description' that compares and contrasts family backgrounds, settings, structure and organisation and the context in which each separate household (that collectively make up the families) functions.

Chapter four is concerned with the notion of ‘tradition’ and ‘traditional’ food, what role it plays in local food culture and whether or not it has played, or continues to play, an influential part in food practices across and between generations of my families. Chapter five considers the changing nature of ‘community’ through the typologies of Tönnies ‘*gemeinschaft*’, the closely-knit community, that includes the notion of gifting and exchange, set against new modes of production and consumption, namely, ‘*gesellschaft*’, the more atomised community and how this shift has impacted on family food choices and practices. Chapter six provides a detailed exploration of a range of food practices over nearly a century that covers the production of food (the keeping of allotments and gardening) and the consumption of food that covers shopping practices, the process of preparing, cooking, serving and eating of food with a focus on generational differences and continuities. Chapter seven brings together the main themes to emerge from the preceding four chapters on food practices and the relevance these have to the problematic relationship between food and health. In this chapter I move away from individualistic approaches to food and eating and health conceptualised as an independent variable mapped on to food, or indeed food and culture mapped on to health, and, rather, examine the *encounter* between food and health. My concluding chapter forms a discussion of the key points that arise from my thesis overall, subsequent recommendations and how my research may be carried forward.

CHAPTER ONE

LITERATURE REVIEW

Introduction

My literature review deals primarily with the relationship between food and health and why this relationship has become problematic. A central tenet of my thesis is the poor uptake of health promotion messages with regard to healthy eating with a focus on inter-generational variance and consensus concerning food practices amongst and between families and subsequent implications in terms of health and wellbeing; it is within the family setting that changes in health are detected and dealt with (Helman, 2007). I will, therefore, draw upon literature from epidemiology and public health, the nutritional sciences and health promotion, much of which is underpinned by the biomedical view of health and an individualistic approach to behaviour, moving on to the contribution made by sociologists, anthropologists, and the disciplines of history and cultural studies that challenges this paradigm. Social science literature is concerned with how the notion of food and health is interpreted in terms of people's lived experiences and the context in which they make food choices and how meanings, beliefs and social structures shape everyday food practices within the family.

In setting the scene for this review my first section traces the emergence and influence of the role of food in relation to the nation's health in the formulation of health policies and strategies designed to prevent, or lessen the impact of, diet-related diseases. In consideration of the limited success in changing people's eating behaviour in line with these policy goals, I draw on literature that has attempted to pinpoint the problems that contribute to such failure in the areas of lifestyle factors, lay perspectives in relation to healthy eating, inequality and food poverty, intergenerational variance in cooking practices and skills, the use of binary oppositions in making food choices and how food choice has become a moral issue.

1.0 Setting the scene: the problematic relationship between food and health

Just as epidemiology has its roots in the positive correlation made by Hippocrates between health and the environment (Beaglehole et al., 1993), the contribution of food to living

‘healthfully’ can be traced back to the works of Galen (AD 130-201) who recommended a ‘discrete’ choice of food and drink, eating only when hungry that indicated the previous meal had been digested and what one liked, practices that would keep one ‘young, happy and fit’ (Howe, 1971). Indeed, Prakash (1961) has shown that ancient Indian food practices reflected a correlation between diet and health and well-being during the Vedic period (2000-300 B.C.) that remains embedded in Ayurvedic medicinal principles used today and Chang (1977) has found the roots of Chinese dietary practices in the ancient philosophical binary oppositions of Yin (female) and Yang (male) that need to be balanced in order to maintain wellbeing and health where food is seen as both nourishment and medicine. Dietary advice, passed down through the centuries that relied on particular food beliefs, was superseded by the discovery, in the first half of the nineteenth century, of ‘essential’ nutrients that could cure ‘deficiency’ diseases, thus establishing the role of food within the etiology of disease (Webb, 2002). Such scientific advances saw a shift towards the etiology of chronic degenerative diseases and the supporting role of food in their ‘prevention’ that now sits at the heart of the promotion of health.

Changes in western eating habits have had a profound effect on the nation’s health (Caplan, 1997). This now high profile relationship has subsequently become part of everyday discourse and has resulted in a burgeoning interest within medical, political and educative circles about ‘health hazards’ and how both the individual and populations can be suitably protected against them (Webb, 2002; Gedrich, 2003; Department of Health, 2005). Thus epidemiology has taken a central role in public health in that they share the common purpose of protecting and improving the health of populations and communities:

[Epidemiology studies] the distribution and determinants of health-related states and the application of this study to the control of health problems. Knowing the size of the health problems, who suffers from them and what causes them within a population is the basis for organized public health efforts to address them, as well as the means to know if the efforts were successful (Unwin et al., 1997: 1).

Further, epidemiological research has facilitated a preventative approach to food and health in that it has identified strong associations between the affluent western diet and cardiovascular disease (Hu & Willett, 2002; Pomerleau et al., 2003), osteoporosis (Ferrari, 2001), type 2 diabetes (Seidell 2000, Hu et al., 2001), elevated blood pressure (Chobanian et al., 2003), gall bladder disease (Alsaif, 2005) and bowel cancer (Berlau et al., 2004). Increased emphasis has also been placed upon the need to avoid obesity to preserve good health, itself associated with dietary habits (Schrauwen & Westerterp, 2000; The British

Heart Foundation, 2003; Cross-Government Obesity Unit, 2008). Writers have referred to an 'obesogenic environment' (Caballero, 2007; Kumariyika, 2007) in which people are encouraged to consume far more calories than they expend.

Epidemiology and the nutritional and medical sciences have informed public policies at a global, national and local level designed to improve the health of populations stressing the need for the body to consume sufficient, safe and nutritious food through the adoption of a healthy 'lifestyle' in order to prevent the onset of diet-related diseases (WHO, 2003; The Department of Health, 2005; The North West Food Action Plan, 2007). Public health information and the rhetoric of health education and health promotion, often in the form of mass media campaigns (such as 'Eat 5-a-day' in relation to fruit and vegetable intake) coupled with social marketing techniques, raise awareness in the lay population about the health risks and benefits associated with the ingestion of certain foods and the avoidance of others (Lupton, 1994). The individual is then expected to take responsibility for his or her health, suggesting that society will benefit from their enhanced health status (Lupton, 1995). Within public health campaigns a correlation is thought to exist between an increase in information and that of healthy eating that will lead to improvements in the nation's health (Webb, 2002), despite the fact that knowledge alone does not appear to lead to behaviour change (O'Brien & Davies, 2007). However, the government has persisted with the core principle of 'informed choice' expressing the belief that it enables people to make their own decisions about choices that affect health in that "the national engine for health improvement is to be found in the ambition of people themselves to live healthier lives" (Department of Health, 2005: 37). This trend has been perpetuated in a more recent report by Lord Darzi on the future of the National Health Service (The Department of Health, 2008b) that stresses the need for public engagement in health prevention, reiterated in the National Health Service Constitution (The Department of Health, 2008c) that lists not only patients' rights, but also responsibilities that are designed to encourage people to take control of their own health, such as avoiding obesity that alongside other diet-related diseases currently costs the National Health Service ten billion pounds each year (Russell, 2008).

However, although there appears to be an increasing public interest in the subject of food and health, and evidence shows that people are generally aware of current dietary recommendations (Robinson et al., 2000; Litva, 2004), the government's latest White Papers, (Department of Health, 2005; 2008a) admit that most people still do not follow current

advice. Writers explain that much of the problem stems from the overly simplistic assumption that given accurate information about ‘healthy’ and ‘non-healthy’ foods, coupled with a natural desire to live long and disease-free lives, the rational person will adopt healthy eating behaviours (Lupton, 1995; Wallace, 1998). Further, a large body of literature has challenged the epidemiological findings upon which such advice is based. For example, Yancy et al., (2003) refer to ‘best diet’ as conflicting, often incomplete and unscientific; Colpo (2005) has questioned the role of low-density lipoprotein cholesterol as a key source of heart disease and Ottoboni & Ottoboni (2007) found little evidence to support the role of a low fat diet in the prevention of heart disease or either breast or colon cancer. Publications aimed at the general reader have challenged conventional wisdom regarding the relationship between diet, health and disease; Kendrick (2007) believes cholesterol levels are determined by liver function and not by diet, Taubes (2007) sees high carbohydrate and sugar intake and its effect on insulin secretion and thus hormone regulation of homeostasis, rather than fat, as the main perpetrators of western diseases. Thus, working backwards from disease to crucial nutrients, medical research has revealed extremely complex associations and imperfect knowledge of causal mechanisms (McNamara, 2000; Meikle, 2004; Schatzkin & Kipnis, 2004) problematised further by ‘lifestyle’ factors.

1.0.1 *Lifestyle factors*

Lifestyles have been defined as “collective patterns of health-related behavior based on choices from options available to people according to their life chances” (Cockerham et al., 1997: 321). Utilitarian social practices, ways of living, the environment and personality, reflect personal, group and socio-economic identities that have been recognised to influence health (Giddens, 1991; Breslow, 1998; Gedrich, 2003). Food practices, as part of lifestyles also express individual and collective differences and similarities. ‘Taste’ in food is played out in class ideas about the body and the effect food has on it; whilst ‘working class’ concerns focus on body strength that requires cheap, filling but nutritious food, professionals focus more on body form that requires light, tasty, low-calorie foods (Bourdieu, 1984).

It is thought that major improvements in health and longevity are considered achievable through simple modifications to the way people live that includes the adoption of a nutritionally sound and scientifically researched ‘healthy’ diet (Department of Health, 2005). However, isolating important ‘lifestyle risk markers’ is problematic in that they may sit

amongst a number of ‘associated’ conditions (Webb, 2002; Michels, 2003), for example, a hectic job schedule and inactivity may, or may not, be implicated in the associated conditions of high blood pressure or ‘type 2’ diabetes in which diet may, or may not, play a part. Kendrick (2007) further questions public health campaigns that demonise certain lifestyle factors that displaces the notion of ‘common sense’ in any policy formation or how people look after their health. Thus Dew (2007) believes people can no longer judge what is ‘normal’; ‘normality’ has become ‘precarious’ which positions very few people in the ‘healthy’ category and everyone subject to criticism and surveillance. Problematising the normal in this way means that people rather than being asked to ‘conform’, are being asked to ‘self-regulate’. Thus, in considering the relationship between discourse and practice, Michels (2005) points out that recommendations from public health bodies are, in the main, embraced by people who believe they are healthy, rather than by those who need, or have been encouraged, to change (Watts, 2002; Harris, 2004; Rudolf et al., 2004); a healthy diet and lifestyle tend to go hand-in-hand (Michels, 2003).

1.0.2 Lay perspectives and healthy eating

Whilst lifestyle risk factors may be debated by ‘experts’ that involve the notion of ‘public accountability’, most people deal with risk at a local, private and everyday level (Lupton, 2000b) informed through the mass media that may support or challenge ‘expert’ views and findings (Lupton & Chapman, 1995; Pollan, 2008; Preston, 2007). As the dangers and merits of findings fluctuate, people become ‘sceptical eaters’ in relation to health (Davison, 1989; Draper & Green, 2002) and ‘trust’ becomes a key issue in behaviour change (Bleich et al., 2007). When people cannot decide who to trust they often fall back on acculturated belief systems or conceptual ‘strategies of confidence’ in order to avoid agonising over food choices (Sellerberg, 1991). Robinson et al., (2000) found that although older generations were aware of healthy eating advice that ‘fat is bad for you’, they put their trust in ‘old advice’ that ‘fat is good for you’, (particularly red meat as a source of protein and dairy products as a source of calcium). Research carried out by Keane (1997) revealed that often people did not lend any credibility to health messages, believing them to be irrelevant, a ‘minefield’ of ‘worthless’ information, particularly (according to more middle class participants), when choices sat within a complicated relationship between food and health. Not knowing who to ‘believe in’, trust is often placed in ‘lay knowledges’ that come, for instance, from families and friends (Lupton, 2000b).

Lay interpretations of healthy and unhealthy eating have been explored through a 'lay epidemiology' where people attempt to make sense of the notion of 'risk' in relation to their eating behaviours (Davison et al., 1991; Povey et al., 1998) that involves the notion of 'candidacy' described as a mechanism that

helps individuals to assess personal risks, obtain reassuring affirmation of predictability, identify the limits of that predictability ... devise appropriate strategies of personal behaviour that go some way towards explaining events which, by their very nature, are deeply distressing (Davison et al., 1991: 6).

Within this candidacy people may, or may not, believe health messages. The behaviours they subsequently adopt are seen as a matter of 'choice' but at the same time incorporate the notion of 'blaming the victim' if 'healthy choices' are not made. To counteract these elements and a sense of failure people may fall back on everybody's 'Uncle Norman' who lives to a ripe old age on a junk diet and cigarettes, and the element of 'chance' or randomness if, for example, they suffer a heart attack. In relation to factors that lie outside their control, such as genetic and environmental factors, people may draw on the fatalist idea of 'what will be, will be' (Davison et al., 1992). Ivry (2007) points to emergent genetic theories of health that represent an 'invisible blue print' whose agents are 'genes' and 'chromosomes' and over which we have little control. In this regard pregnancy can be seen as a 'fatalistic endeavour' in which one cannot 'make' a healthy baby, whilst at the same time expectant mothers are encouraged to privilege nutrition and curtail weight gain for the health of herself and her child.

In her work with a group of urban, socio-economically homogenous women, Pill (1983) found that understandings and attitudes between diet and health tended to fall into the separate categories of 'lifestyle' and 'fatalist'. Fatalists, who harboured a sense of predestination beyond individual control (that included personality type and inherited family characteristics) privileged the 'cooked dinner' (in particular a roast) as the essence of 'good food' and an ideal source of nutritional well-being, whereas those who took the 'lifestyle change' route demonstrated avoidance or selection of foods based on the idea that one can control individual behaviour and 'looking after oneself' through diet plays a part in the aetiology of disease. Murcott (2002) believes this area of research draws our attention to the naturalness of the body and the extent of its mutability that involves the notion of the "cultural conceptions of nature" that questions the degree to which 'nurture' can affect the given 'nature' of the body; this opens up the debate around the compliance and acceptance of professional advice on the one hand and resistance to it on the other, a coherent and internal consistency in attitudes that taken from another angle can be seen as "an irrational rejection

or simple misapprehension of modern scientifically informed dietary advice” (p. 32)

Within this ‘locus of control’ model, Wardle & Steptoe (2003) found that higher socio-economic status respondents thought about future health and accordingly were less likely to smoke, took more exercise and ate fruit and vegetables on a daily basis, whereas respondents from lower SES groups drew on the notion of ‘chance’ and thought less about the future. Further, the findings of Coveney (2005) revealed *different* types of parental lay knowledge exist between socio-economic classes; more affluent parents talked of food and health in a more technical way informed by contemporary ideas of nutritional and medical priorities, whilst lower income parents were more concerned with outward appearance and the functional qualities of food. Studies have shown that a variance in socio-economic status has a crucial bearing on food choice.

1.0.3 *Inequality and food poverty*

Inequality has long been recognised to impact upon health (Townsend et al., 1992; Acheson, 1998) and inequalities still exist in the nutritional quality of our diets (Department of Health, 2005; Dowler et al., 2007; North West Food and Health Task Force, 2007; The Department of Health, 2009). Whilst it has been recognised that poor nutrition contributes to the burden of disease (Wanless, 2004), studies have shown that being on a low income is a significant barrier to purchasing healthy food (Dobson et al., 1994; Dowler & Rushton, 1994; Food Standards Agency, 2007) and class influences lay beliefs in relation to a healthy diet (Calnan, 1990; Santich, 1994; Povey et al., 1998). Calnan (1990) found that amongst women from lower income groups, there was a disparity between what they believed or knew to be healthy and what they actually consumed. In particular, Green et al., (2003) found that the very young and uneducated in this group had the least interest in healthy diets that only increased with family responsibilities and the onset of health problems later in life. It has also been shown that significant differences in knowledge exist between socio-demographic groups, with men having poorer knowledge than women and knowledge declining with lower educational level and socio-economic status (Parmenter et al., 2000). Further, research by Drewnowski & Fornell-Barratt (2004) found that energy dense foods, high in refined grains, added sugar and fats, provide low-cost dietary energy for those on low incomes.

In contrast, Grigson (1992) dismisses the idea that people cannot afford good food:

In a country that spends the amount ours does on hard liquor, gambling, ice cream of a worthless kind, sweets, cakes, biscuits, this is nonsense. If people choose to spend it that way, fair enough. But let them not plead poverty as an excuse for bad food. And let people who provide the awful food not shrug off responsibility by saying, 'well it's what they want' (xvi).

However, government more recently has pointed out that 'food poverty' is not only caused by the inability to afford a healthy diet, but is also due to poor *access* to food that includes restricted local availability and poor transport facilities to large supermarkets. Further, if people are to be discouraged from eating highly refined and processed foods then 'food poverty' can also be defined as a lack of the necessary skills, knowledge and equipment to cook and prepare healthy meals.

1.0.4 *Cooking knowledge and skills: a public policy issue*

Cookery taught in schools was once an integral part of 'domestic science', that included needlework, childcare and health, incorporating ideas of cleanliness and thrift as part of home management (Davies, 1989). The British Nutrition Foundation (2004) believes that a universal provision of education in food and nutrition enables pupils to build their own reasoning and values in relation to food choices resulting in an improved sense of wellbeing. However, within the School Curriculum, 'Home Economics' was replaced by the 'optional' subject of 'Food Technology' that tended to get 'squeezed out' by the demands of compulsory subjects (Stitt, 1996). Despite the fact that the majority of teachers, parents and government feel young people should be taught practical cookery in schools, some do not, or are unable to (having limited resources and facilities) offer this option at all, or it may be offered piecemeal within other curriculum subjects or outside the curriculum itself. The replacement of 'domestic science' with 'food technology' represents a shift in focus from 'home, family and society' to one of 'science, technology and society'; the rationale for this shift is that "people are presented with challenges, choices and decisions about food on a daily basis and this happens within the context of a technological world" (Farrell, 2000: 2).

Writers have expressed the view that cooking as a 'life skill' has been marginalised (Stitt, 1996; Caraher et al., 1999) and is not only disempowering, but if we are to raise healthy citizens who have sufficient knowledge of food and nutrition to be able to eat and live healthily, then learning how to cook from an early age is essential. An attempt is being made to address this problem through the 'Food in Schools Programme' that includes cookery

clubs and food technology teachers working alongside their primary school colleagues in the area of practical food education (Department of Health, 2005) followed by a commitment from the Department for Children, Schools and Families that from September 2008 all children would have an ‘entitlement’ to cookery lessons to become compulsory in secondary schools in England from 2011. Apart from an already existing lack of teaching staff and facilities, Stacey (2008) points out that practical cookery alone may not be enough to encourage children to eat more healthily – there should also be an awareness of where food comes from and a need to capture their imagination. Early years education is important, argues Farrell (2000), if we consider that in our ‘time-compressed’ world we cannot assume that anyone is taking responsibility for the role of cooking in meeting daily needs. Lack of cooking skills and knowledge not only limits food choice but also the ability to classify and differentiate between foods in order to achieve a balance between what is deemed healthy or unhealthy.

1.0.5 *Achieving a ‘healthy balance’ in food choice*

Studies have shown that generally people level their behaviour by moving between the ‘healthy’, the ‘non-healthy’ or ‘not-so-healthy’ foods where the ‘right balance’ can be achieved by eating more healthy than non-healthy food (Lupton, 2005b) encapsulated in such phrases as ‘everything in moderation’, or, ‘all things considered, ‘reasonable’ behaviour’ (Charles & Kerr, 1988; Calnan, 1990; Keane & Willetts, 1996). People may make use of ‘binary oppositions’ that often include the notions of ‘good’ or ‘bad’ or ‘fattening’ or ‘slimming’, as well as safety/danger, natural/artificial and known/mysterious (Hamilton et al., 1995; Lupton, 1996), that can potentially be eliminated if less processed food is bought (the content of which people know little about) and replaced by food which is prepared and cooked at home. However, such classifications are not seen as straightforward behavioural decisions based on health promotion messages and health education in that we are always reluctant to give something up we enjoy (Kerr et al., 2005) and such decisions are often based on notions of status and class (Warde, 1997).

In acknowledging the changes that have occurred in discourses around how food is to be appreciated, presented and consumed, Warde (1997) identifies four ‘antinomies of taste’, which are governed by status and class and provide a systematic basis for these contradictory messages. These binary opposites of ‘novelty and tradition’, ‘health and indulgence’,

‘economy and extravagance’ and ‘care and convenience’ are values that legitimize choice between foodstuffs. Notions of ‘indulgence’ and ‘extravagance’ are linked to the idea of ‘health as release’ as opposed to ‘care’ linked to ‘health as self-control’, striking a ‘balance’ lying somewhere between the two (Williams, 1997). As far back as the 1930s, Grace Macdonald (1939) argued that whereas lower income families may eat poorly through strict ‘economy’, higher income families may also have unhealthy diets through ‘indulgence’ and extravagance, a view supported in a recent report published by the Foods Standards Agency (2007).

The danger in the use of binary opposites to achieve a ‘balanced diet’ is that the ‘bad’ ingredient can blind people to the remaining positive components, for example, vitamins and minerals (Oakes, 2004) or vice versa, for example, ‘live’ yoghurt with a high sugar content (Callaghan & Williams, 2005). Studies have focused on these ‘gains’ and ‘losses’ in terms of palatable, and non-palatable food; Kostas (1997) found that no matter how healthy a food was, unless it was tasty, people simply would not want, or choose, to eat it. Chauhan (1989) found that taste discrimination was a key component in acceptance of ‘healthy’ recipe alternatives to some traditional foods, that echoes the study of Charles & Kerr (1988) in which healthy food was frequently described as something ‘virtuous but not enjoyable’ that often stemmed from childhood when one was encouraged to eat disliked food because it was ‘good for you’. Food looked at in this way becomes a ‘functional substance’ that privileges eating for health over eating for enjoyment (Lupton, 2005b). People refer to ‘trying’ to eat healthily and ‘being good’, rather than indulging in ‘bad’ food that they know can satisfy emotions and ‘feelings’ in which food becomes a ‘moral issue’ (Coveney, 2000; Fox, 2003).

1.0.6 *Food choice as a moral issue*

In discriminating between foods, it is thought that people have become less concerned with the physical pleasure derived from food than with the good health that comes from dietary habits; “what we should and should not be eating [equates directly with] the emergence of nutrition as a science and a morality” (Coveney, 2000: viii). The anxiety, and often guilt, that comes from pleasurable eating is encapsulated in the once famous slogan ‘naughty but nice’ (Caplan, 1997). In lamenting the hearty male diet, Brown (2005) comments that “there was a time when lunch was bacon and two pieces of bread, now it involves glycaemic indexes, organic farming, health awareness and weight watching” (p.49). According to Fox (2003),

we now judge ourselves and others against the food we eat; we are conspicuous by eating too much or too little, eating well or eating badly – “by their food shall ye know them” (p. 20). Gustafsson & Sidenvall (2002) found the main health concern of older women was the fear of fat that they held in tandem with a guilty conscience about not following current dietary recommendations. Lupton (2005b) also found that fat was seen as the highest health risk, manifested in unwanted body fat and body image (both men and women experience embodiment in a cultural context in which an emphasis is placed on appearance) whilst other ‘risky’ foods such as high Glycemic Index foods were rarely mentioned.

Thus Crawford (2000) notes that there is an ever-present tension in society between denial and pleasure and self-control and ‘letting oneself go’, that is often translated into ‘moralised talk’ around issues of our health that we are required to ‘morally manage’ reflected in the tension that exists between the assumption that the individual can make rational decisions whilst being barraged with ‘outside’ advice and information. According to Blaxter (1990) part of the problem may stem from the fact that health promoters have assumed that health is privileged above all else by all sections of society; commenting on Jamie Oliver’s attempt to change the nature of school dinners, Preston (2007) concludes that “our taste bud titans assumed that kids would love Jamie’s vitamin-packed, dew-kissed, vibrant new menus. But they don’t” (p. 26). Health may be desirable, but does not necessarily ‘monopolize human intention’ and healthy eating may not be a priority for those who lead troubled and relatively tough lives (Blaxter, 1990, Pitts, 1996). We do not like giving up food that gives us pleasure or replacing it with something we enjoy less, even if it is deemed ‘good for us’. Martin (2008) contends that pleasure is unavoidable – we naturally seek it out and ‘a little bit of what you fancy does you good’. As van Straten (2002) points out, what one does most of the time matters in terms of health and well-being and what one does occasionally hardly matters at all.

Summary and conclusion

In making food choices a tension exists between the ‘public’ and the ‘private’, state control versus personal responsibility for health, ‘good’ versus ‘bad’ behaviour, played out on an unequal playing field in terms of resources, skills and the environment in which people live. Further, lay ideas about food and health may, or may not, fit comfortably with what people are being told by the various stakeholders of food. Consequently, social science writers have

posited various reasons why people may not comply with current dietary advice, that include, ambivalence (Keane, 1997; Lupton, 2000b), confusion (Gallagher & Allred, 1992; Campbell, 2007), suspicion of authority in general (Crawford, 2000), inconsistent information and resentment of interventionist policies (Preston, 2007) and what people regard as ‘bad news’ in relation to a ‘constant stream’ of medical knowledge that challenges how people are to live their lives (Backett, 1992).

Having set out the roots of the problem between food and health and its consequences, my next section looks at the different approaches that have been adopted to deal with these issues. Starting with the dominant reductionist scientific model that encompasses an individualistic approach to behaviour prioritised within the nutritional sciences, public health and health promotion/education, I then move to the contribution made by the social sciences that challenges this paradigm. The latter stresses the social and cultural context in which people live their lives and how food choices are embedded in what people actually *do* in terms of everyday practices. My ethnographic study challenges dominant frameworks and paradigms that need to recognise and understand these practices if the problem is to be solved.

1.1 Approaches to dealing with the problem of food and health

1.1.1 The reductionist scientific model

Contemporary ideas of health, illness and the body are embedded in the development of the biomedical model and the emergence of the natural sciences. Health, within this model, is commonly interpreted as the absence of disease that creates an ‘abnormality’ in bodies that are machine-like comprising various independent parts and separate from the mind (Aggleton, 1990; Annandale, 1998; Seedhouse, 2001). Diseases are identified through measurement and comparison against normal states of health – the causes and effectiveness of treatment are researched to increase understanding and allow for preventative, curative and educational measures to be taken (Seedhouse, 2001); the body, or its separate ‘parts’, is restored to health through improved treatments and a greater availability of medical services that include a range of therapies and ‘specialisms’.

1.1.2 *The nutritional science perspective*

Linked closely with the reductionist paradigm, within this perspective food and eating are considered instrumental whereby habits and preferences are linked to the anatomical functioning of the human body that in terms of physical functioning and development can have either a positive or negative outcome (Lupton, 1996). The aim of this perspective is one of prevention, reduced risk, or treatment of disease through medical directions and professional prescriptions to which people are expected to adhere (Harriss-White & Hoffenberg, 1994) and has traditionally dominated food research (Lupton, 1996). Foods are classified according to nutrient content for adequacy, whilst a 'balance' between food groups is sought in order to minimize the risk of chronic disease (Webb, 2002). Set against this medical paradigm, society conceptualises the healthy body as a social norm through the rhetoric of health promotion and health education, thus how we construct and view healthy bodies as part of who we are has become increasingly prominent (Caplan, 1997).

1.1.3 *The scientific model within health promotion/education*

The scientific model focuses on disease or disability informing people, for example, about the dangers of over-eating in relation to obesity, excess sugar consumption in relation to tooth decay, or 'high-risk' individuals being screened for cholesterol (Unwin et al., 1997) and is relevant to targeted, 'high incidence', diseases contained in healthy public policies (Department of Health, 2005; North West Food and Health Task Force, 2007).

Webb (2002) refers to a current wave of 'food evangelism' that has adopted a reductionist scientific model and applied it to food that is regarded as merely a "complex mixture" of nutrients that need to be combined in "optimal proportions" to meet both current needs and maximise health and longevity in the long term (p. 28). Eating is considered to be a flawed and inefficient behavioural mechanism used to select and consume a particular mixture of nutrients and assumes, therefore, that an awareness of optimal nutrient intake accompanied by full nutritional labelling of food, enables the consumer to select the ideal diet. Coupled with the belief within the nutritional sciences that people have an innate ability to choose foods that are physiologically good for them (Lupton, 1996), behaviours such as food preparation and consumption habits, as previously discussed, are viewed largely as rational

cognitive choices made freely by individuals (Lupton, 1994). Thus, if we take health promotion to be “a set of discourses and practices concerned with individual behaviours, attitudes, dispositions or lifestyle choices said to affect health”, then any protection and improvement would appear to be prototypical acts of practical reason and personal responsibility – a matter of common sense (Crawford, 2000: 218). It is both the notion of ‘common sense’ and everyday experience that are, according to Foucault (1976), taken away to ‘expert’ knowledge within bureaucracies and then fed back to the public. It is during this transfer that knowledge about food and eating acquires a supposedly superior status. Consequently ‘public health’ recommendations are based upon both this knowledge source and epidemiological findings.

1.1.4 *A critique of the reductionist scientific model*

Biomedical positivism suggests that illness and distress results from bodily malfunction that can be treated by experts using a curative, individualistic and interventionist approach. From a nutritional standpoint, Webb (2002) feels that because deficiency diseases have declined due to good nutrition, people may expect a nutritional ‘magic bullet’ in respect of the chronic conditions presently being targeted. However, the use of diet alone to reduce the risk of chronic disease rarely produces immediate benefits and long-term benefits may be small or even speculative; necessary changes may be complex and taxing and may decrease a liking and desirability for food (Gallagher & Allred, 1992). Although for health promotion to be effective people must believe that recommended changes will benefit them, studies have found that if costs are thought to outweigh corresponding gains then conservation of behaviour is likely (Gedrich, 2003) and dietary change is not considered to be worth the effort (Keane, 1997; Robinson et al., 2000). The latter study found a readiness amongst general practitioners and the public to accept, and expect, the ‘magic bullet’ effect of drug treatments that provide an easier option. General practitioners rarely offer dietary advice even when presented with dietary-related conditions that can be attributed to the fact that both they and practice nurses lack training, knowledge and confidence concerning nutrition (Buttris, 1997). Kendrick (2007) believes that administering drugs such as statins to reduce cholesterol ‘debunks’ any assumptions about what constitutes a healthy lifestyle and diet. Despite the rise in heart disease amongst the 34 – 44 age group, improved screening, diagnosis and treatments have induced a degree of complacency that perpetuates sedentary lifestyles, consumption of ‘junk’ food and an acceptance of health risks associated with

outcomes such as obesity (Parry, 2008).

This dualistic idea of the body as a separate entity from ourselves that can be screened, diagnosed and treated with a ‘magic bullet’ incorporates Turner’s (1992) idea of ‘having a body’ that separates us from a sense of self, an alien body with its own life, or a life that belongs to others. The body as a separate object offers an explanation as to why we readily accept ‘expert’ advice about how we treat, and what we put into, our bodies in order to maintain or restore health, viewed within this paradigm as a discrete variable. Consequently, Foucault (1976) sees an increase in the organisation and surveillance of our lives in which the body has become the ultimate site of political and ideological control, surveillance and regulation; in response to such discourses we ‘discipline’ our bodies and attempt to change our behaviour.

Writers have, however, given credit to epidemiology and the nutritional sciences for the decline in deficiency diseases that have been prevalent in times past (Gallagher & Allred, 1992; Webb, 2002). Through the ability to follow major and geographical trends, high quality information for research, planning and services enable us to deal with risk at a population level in a comprehensive and powerful way (Kerr et al., 2005). Crawford (2000) also records that millions of people have indeed changed their behaviour in order to protect or improve their health; however, the ‘problem’ with the latter is that few people lead consistently healthy lifestyles that include healthy diets. Whereas a certain ambivalence exists around health promotion messages, Foucault is supported in the work of Beck (1992) who sees a healthy lifestyle and body maintenance becoming increasingly salient along with an almost obsessive preoccupation with rational calculations of ‘health risk’. However, the problem with the highly visible and central concept of prevention (that of ‘risk’) is that it emanates from the transposition of epidemiological association derived from *whole* populations to the field of an *individual* life (Scott et al., 1992). This point is considered significant in that individualism views health status as a matter over which the individual has control denying the fact that “health is a social product [and] assumes free choice exists” (Rodmell & Watt, 1986: 19).

The government admits that its ‘Food and action plan’ (2005) is based on the *average* diet of the *entire* population and consequently does not take into account the differences, health complexity and inequalities that exist between particular groups and generations. However,

it does emphasise ‘action’ rather than target setting alone and recognition is given to socio-economic and environmental factors in its intention to work with all people and organisations that have an interest in improving food and nutrition in England, including local communities and authorities, Primary Care Trusts, the food industry, voluntary organisations and all policy makers in order to address the problem between food and health.

Although this does indicate a shift in thinking, the main thrust of the document concerned with healthy eating, leaves the ultimate responsibility with the individual to modify, enhance or change behaviour and make healthy food choices to avoid the onset of preventable diseases. Critics of the individual approach (Naidoo & Wills, 2000; Dowler et al., 2007) have pointed out the limitations of the ‘lifestyle choice’ model in which people are viewed as consumers exercising market choice between healthy and unhealthy products. Consequently, Wallace (1998) believes scientists, nutritionists and policy makers have little knowledge about what goes on in the daily lives of consumers in relation to their diets and food choices – they do not understand the context in which they are made, and moreover, they appear to assume that they are experts who can advise and educate the public who will automatically heed their advice. Writers have, therefore, stressed the need to incorporate people’s lay beliefs and ‘common-sense’ conceptions of diet and health into health promotion strategies that are relatively straightforward in their basic structure and easily understood by most people (Thorogood, 1992; Beardsworth & Keil, 1997). Such beliefs and concepts have been shown to play an important part in food choices that have become problematised by the conflicting and inconsistent views of nutritional science.

As there appears to have been little headway in securing a significant reduction in the incidence of preventative and chronic diseases such as cardiovascular disease, diabetes, cancer and obesity through the adoption of a ‘healthy diet’ in nutritional terms (The Department of Health, 2005), the social sciences examine the social and economic drivers responsible for such failure thus increasing our understanding of how and why people make certain decisions about food, their ideas about the relationship between food and health in which ‘healthy eating’ is contextualised as part of everyday food practices. Pollan (2008) argues that our knowledge and choice of food has been distorted by nutritionists and the food industry to the extent that we are more confused than any other animal in deciding what should, or should not, be eaten in order to enjoy maximum health. Reiterating Blaxter (1980), Webb (2002) points out that people do not eat ‘nutrients’, they eat ‘food’, and the latter is selected not only

for nutritional content, but is influenced by a host of factors that lie outside the realm of the nutritional sciences that need to be understood in order to make health promotion effective. This would indicate that we need to look at this problem from the broader perspective of the social sciences that deals with issues and sets of concerns that have not been covered in previous sections of this review. In stressing the importance of economic, social, cultural and historical contexts in the study of food, I will be drawing on literature concerned with family dynamics and structure, consumerism and marketing, food and the media and cooking as a cultural and social practice. Firstly, I contend that the biomedical view of health provides only a limited and partial view of health, presented as an independent variable, that is not comprehensive enough to address this research 'problem'. I will thus draw on alternative and what I consider more appropriate paradigms from the social sciences.

1.1.5 The contribution of the social sciences

The social sciences have attempted to correct individualistic approaches to eating behaviour that encompasses the traditional reductive view of health seen as the absence of disease. Although the World Health Organisation (1948) defined health in a more subjective way as "a state of complete physical, mental and social well-being", nevertheless it has largely remained a negative concept and disease-related research dominates (Kerr et al., 2005). Social scientists regard this view as restrictive and limited in that people's lives are complex and there exist social and cultural understandings of 'health' and 'illness'. Nietzsche (cited in Turner, 1992) contends that there is not a single all-encompassing 'health' of the body but many 'healths' depending on one's goals, horizon, energies, impulses, errors and the ideals and phantasms of one's soul. In addition, Fox (1993) believes that we can challenge powerful public health and health promotion discourses that lead to disciplines of the self and our bodies being 'territorialized' by the medical professions. Fox rejects the idea that grand narratives and theories can lay claim to unmediated knowledge, truth and reality concerning the way we are. We need to replace the biological, territorialized 'body-with-organs', with a 'body-without-organs' whose inscription is one of subjectivity that brings meaning to health and illness through interpretation, exploration, choice, significance, metaphor, a text or story, that all centre around a core of experiences, feelings and emotions. Various components of this more subjective view of health have been incorporated within sociological studies that centre on food practices. Such studies have shown that in making food choices and constructing meanings around food, people may be regarded as agents, and in expressing

significant relationships, may be regarded as social beings (Fischler, 1980; Mennell et al., 1992; Lupton, 1996; Caplan, 1997; Camporesi, 1998). Socially and culturally constructed knowledge leads to the development of identities, life histories and how people view and interact with the world around them.

An emphasis on culture can be seen in the structuralist writings of Levi Strauss (1964, 1970), Barthes (1975) and Douglas (1966, 1975) all of whom understood food as a cultural system (taste being culturally shaped and socially controlled) analogous to language, via metaphoric and symbolic meanings. Barthes saw food as a need and a signifier which was highly structured in that “substances, techniques of preparation, habits, all become part of a system of differences in signification; and as soon as this happens, we have communication by way of food” (p. 51). Douglas was particularly concerned with the structure of meals, not only their content, but how they fit into single days, weeks, the calendar year or the life-cycle, that subsequently determines social boundaries and meanings, what we class as food and how it is eaten according to its degree of importance. This is manifested in the fact that we only eat a small amount of the many foods that are available to us and regard certain foods as suitable for particular meals, for example porridge for breakfast but not salad.

Later studies began to consider power relations and social differentiation signified through food (Bourdieu, 1990 [1980]; Mintz, 1996), the upper and lower classes being neatly separated through control and access to food as well as distinguishing ‘tastes’. A more recent example of differentiation exists between children’s and adult food both in composition and presentation and is often eaten separately (Beardsworth & Keil, 1997; James, 2008). Differentiation and ‘tastes’ can also become central to our sense of identity (Fischler, 1988). However, whilst recognising that at one time identity came from the classic concepts of gender, class and ethnicity, Bauman (1995) believes that in our current ‘risk society’ identities are more likely to be formed from social lives that are fragmented, transient and uncertain. Foucault (1976) contends that we now have a surfeit of freedom, or at least, too many choices, and in western nations never before have we had so many ‘food choices’. Whether these choices help or hinder us in our quest for health and avoidance of illness, we are continually reminded that ‘we are what we eat’.

Writers further recognise that a sense of identity and differentiation is made against the backdrop of historical, socio-economic and political change at both the macro and micro

level of society (Goody, 1982; Mennell, 1985; Mintz, 1985; Burnett, 1989) that includes households and families. In view of the fact that eating is considered a social and cultural activity (Counihan, 1984; Fieldhouse, 1995; Beardsworth & Keil, 1997; Warde, 1997) the process of 'socialisation' that involves culturally valued norms of behaviour in relation to food habits that are passed from one generation to another, is continually subject to 'resocialisation', or 'de-socialisation' with normative influences playing a greater or lesser part. In addition, the value system of a culture (which contains many subsystems) reflects the way foods are used and thought about by both groups and individuals (Fieldhouse, 1995, see Appendix 2). It is in the home that this process of socialisation most often begins.

1.1.6 *Socialisation and the family*

The family may exert powerful influence in the shaping and maintenance of members' eating habits and food preferences (Rozin, 1991; Golan & Weizman, 1998) and dietary interventions that involve families enjoy a higher success rate than those that do not (Lytle et al., 1996; Sorensen et al., 1999). Boseley (2007) notes that the common medical procedure of singling out individuals with one risk factor, for example, high cholesterol, has not proved successful in the prevention or treatment of heart disease; however, by identifying shared traits such as smoking, overeating and inactivity within families there is more potential to prevent people developing heart disease in the first place. Intergenerational research has shown that similar nutritional habits may be passed down between family members (Stafleu et al., 1994), although changes in food consumption patterns may occur set against varying generational eating cultures (Dwyer et al., 1989; Garcia-Maas, 1999). In relation to healthy food and meals, older generations tend to privilege 'natural' food (meat, fish and vegetables) prepared in traditional ways, whilst younger generations prefer processed foods and stress the importance of fruit and milk rather than meat (Blaxter & Paterson, 1983). Transmission of eating practices may also reflect class and gender norms (Wallendorf & Arnould, 1991) and the shaping of relationships, for example, between mothers and daughters (Meyers, 2001). Moisio et al., (2004), stress that 'social reproduction', that is, "the creation and patterns of thinking and behavior that ensure the affiliation and integration of family members into the wider macro-social order" is influenced by food practices (p. 363).

1.1.7 The social and cultural significance of family meals

Ethnographic studies have shown the social importance and significance of shared family food (Charles & Kerr, 1988; Murcott, 1997); the 'family meal' is seen as a 'proper meal' shared with family members or close friends, home-made with 'natural' ingredients, prepared with care and effort. This is an environment where, it is thought, family members are most likely to be taught to be discerning about health enhancing food (Fischler, 1980) as well as being a catalyst that fosters unity and creates and reinforces family identity (van Straten & Griggs, 1994; Lupton, 2000a; Fulkerson et al., 2006). However, writers now debate whether the family has become a site of 'consumption' rather than 'production' (Campbell & Miller, 1995; Bell & Valentine, 1997) in which food may be losing its significance as a communal activity through a rise in individualised eating (Goften, 1990; Mintz, 1992; Falk, 1994; Chaney, 2002). Although the loss of the family meal is challenged by Murcott (1997), Mintz (1992) describes a process of 'desocialisation' or 'eating without meals' as the latter are destructured to form a pattern of ragged, discontinuous but frequent snacks, that offers an increase in personal choice and freedom. Fernandez-Armesto (2001) sees the introduction of the microwave oven and ready-prepared meals as part of a 'pap culture' that offers a plethora of instant choice that does not need reference to community, negotiation with significant others or deference shown to fellow diners. The individual body decides what is consumed, and it is this judgement of 'taste' that is crucial to self-formation. Wills (2005) found that young adults who continue to live at home follow this pattern in order to exert their independence and a sense of detachment, and outside the home, cooked meals with little eaten in between, have been replaced with snacking on pre-prepared food, primarily high in fat and sugar, associated with obesity and heart disease (Howard & Reeves, 2005).

These cultural changes are seen to undermine the daily functioning of the family as a respectful and close unit (Chaney, 2002) in that the sharing of bodily practices, particularly food preparation and consumption plays an important part in constituting and contesting household relationships and identities (DeVault, 1991; Bell & Valentine, 1997; Valentine, 1999) and the process of acculturation and socialisation (Goften, 1990).

1.1.8 Gender roles and food provision

Writers maintain that the family or 'proper' meal perpetuates and upholds the patriarchal

family (Charles & Kerr, 1988) and exposes gender roles and power relations between men and women within the nuclear family (Valentine, 2003). Research over time has shown that women have consistently been primarily responsible for the provision of food and meals (Oakley, 1974; Charles & Kerr, 1988; Warde, 1997; Bugge, 2003). This may be considered as part of female identity that is wrapped up in notions of responsibility, duty and care, within the family setting (Bugge, 2003), being a successful 'homemaker' (Warde, 1997). Whilst a study carried out by Kemmer et al., (1998) found that some women do assert the right to make food of their own choosing, other studies have found that men's food preferences remain dominant (Meyers, 2001) particularly in relation to the less educated and lower paid (Pill & Parry, 1989). Power relations within the family may be tested with the adoption of various diets in response to health discourses or media influence and between parents and children over meal choice (Valentine, 2003; Wills, 2005; Blythman, 2006). Favourite foods may not be kept in the house that are deemed to be 'bad' and memories are often of power struggles between what should, or should not, be eaten in these terms (Bell & Valentine, 1997). As the main 'gatekeepers' of food, women who 'seem to know' about all aspects of food and the family (Michels, 2005) often face the double-edged sword of maintaining domestic harmony, whilst trying to exact their agency in providing the family with food they believe, or know, to be healthful (Mennell et al., 1992).

The traditional 'housewife' who stays at home to look after her family, is now likely to be looked upon as an object of pity (Saunders, 1995), as women's roles have been redefined by opportunities in education and the world of work, rather than in the domestic setting. However, this change has not brought about a parallel shift in gender roles in relation to domestic responsibilities (Beardsworth & Keil, 1997; Gregory, 1999; Sullivan, 2000; Warde & Martens, 2000; Meyers, 2001; Lake et al., 2006) and women may work a 'second shift' or experience a 'double day' (Hochschild, 1989). This may reflect the adopted values of a 'post-modern' culture where "any woman not multitasking within an inch of her life is seen as shirking" (Frostrup, 2006: 53). Feldberg & Glenn (1979) point out the need to reconceptualise what is meant by 'work' that should include 'paid' and 'unpaid' work located in the context of people's whole lives. There exists a concept of work that arbitrarily separates paid work (that usually takes place outside the home) from other forms of work that centre around home life. The former is often classed as "real work" whereas the latter is seen as "non work" and as such does not contribute to the wider economy (Oakley, 1974). It is therefore easy to overlook much of the work that women actually do, particularly as work in

the home is often only recognised when it does not get done and, as Angelou (2004) points out, one seldomly receives compliments or praise for common practices or crafts. A conflict between identity and time may make women feel unable to live up to role expectations both inside and outside the home and in consequence any attempt to be a 'supermum' might be rejected, and food tasks may be compromised to the level of 'just keeping things going' (Scott et al., 2008). According to Lane (2009) the family is now made up of modest duties that we have come to despise rather than the lietmotifs for housewifely drudgery and repression being classed as enjoyable and satisfying when carried out voluntarily in one's own time without pressure and a stressed hand, particularly when it is 'what you're about'.

Food choice becomes more complex if we consider that people do not only negotiate food choice within the home and other domestic settings but also within a consumer society that imbues products with meanings to make them 'consumable', that is, they become 'significant' to the consumer (Sassatelli, 2007) whilst at the same time people are encouraged to eat healthily. Children, young people, parents and the older generation alike have to navigate through the complexities and competing elements that emanate from the market place when making food choices (Lang & Heasman, 2000; Nestle, 2002).

1.1.9 Food choice: the intersection between families, markets and consumption

Food choice and consumption is one element in a system of provision in which producers, manufacturers, retailers and government attempt to influence what we eat. Such choices are surrounded by an information system that emanates from health promotion messages, media advertising or family and friends (Fine & Leopold, 1993). In any event, nutrition, we are told, has now moved from the 'sidelines' of public health to the marketing of foodstuffs that are globally produced; although these meet the calorific requirements of most people, their nutritional content is often thought to be undesirable in terms of health (Lang & Heasman, 2000). Whilst 'healthy eating' is encouraged as part of 'consumer choice', there has been limited state intervention in relation to the nation's food supply. Supermarkets, having exploited the concept of 'healthy eating' with a huge, relatively expensive, range of healthy food 'options', often run campaigns in collaboration with government (Caplan, 1997). Concern has been expressed that even the newly introduced notion of 'functional foods', foods that lay claim to health enhancing ingredients, is driven by market actors rather than public authorities (Holm, 2003). In this sense, 'health' adds value to products in a

competitive market and helps create a feeling of trust between corporations and the public (Dixon & Banwell, 2004). Further, we are told, there has been a policy shift away from agriculture towards the agribusiness driven by retailing, food service and branded food manufacturers whereby value is added to raw food; not only do these factions have increased elbow power to influence food policy and agendas over public health movements, but such power is exercised in the market place (Lang & Heasman, 2000; Bevan, 2006).

1.1.10 *The power of mass marketing*

Stewart (2003) describes a post-production Britain where lifestyles and consumption patterns have changed over time producing a mass market of individuals, a burgeoning 'middle class', who have moved away from more traditional barriers. Modern consumption patterns show an increase in spending power across all classes that produces a surplus income (after the means of subsistence has been met) that can buy a huge variety of available foodstuffs and other goods; consumer culture has become a normalised aspect of our daily lives. Miller's (1998) ethnographic study of shopping revealed differences in how this pursuit is experienced based on gender, age, ethnicity and class as well as the location in which it takes place. The food industry is well aware of these aspects that include routine shopping, shopping for treats and shopping for leisure and pleasure, leading to marketing techniques that are both persuasive and extremely powerful. In asking whether people have moral and prudential obligations and responsibilities when making consumption choices, Crocker & Linden (1997) point to how individual liberty is set against paternalistic government and unfettered market practices. With regard to food consumption writers see a poorly regulated mass market where consumers are being manipulated by various vested interests to consume highly processed, high profit margin, foods. Blythman (2006) and Mallett (2006) cite the proliferation of ready-meals, for instance, that present an array of choice for those who are 'time-poor' or 'skill-poor', with little guidance as to nutritional value or the contribution they may make to health or physiological wellbeing. A body of literature is concerned with the way these foods (and 'processed', 'convenience' and 'fast' food in general) are aggressively and cleverly marketed that impacts on food choices and habits. Wardlaw et al., (2004) believe that two of the worst food-related trends of recent times that encourage people to buy and eat more than they need has been the introduction of 'BOGOF's' (buy one, get one free) and the introduction of 'super-size' servings of food, for example, 'super-size' McDonald's burgers. Klein (2000) refers to the 'corporatization' of space and 'cultural sensibilities' as

the public adopt 'global' brands such as 'McDonald's' and 'Coca-cola', whose products, when widely and frequently consumed, are detrimental to health (Gibson et al., 2000; Schlosser, 2002; Watts 2002; Ritzer, 2006).

Further concern has focused on the way the market now produces food that is specifically aimed at the young, the majority of which is processed and quick to prepare, high in fat, sugar, refined carbohydrates and has novelty value (Blythman, 2005). In considering the tenuous link that has been made between obesogenic food advertising and overweight in children (Lobstein & Dibbs, 2005) attention has been drawn to clever packaging and cartoon characters used to promote foods such as breakfast cereals that are high in sugar and contain more salt per serving than a packet of crisps (Lawrence, 2008) and the high fat and sugar 'Bon Bon Buddies Bratz Fabulous Biscuits' considered 'ideal' for lunchboxes (Smithers, 2007). Using food and soft drinks as a reward, 'media-savvy' children and young people are encouraged to visit websites and chatrooms, enter 'text 2 win' competitions and become involved in 'viral marketing'; not only are these snacks and drinks unhealthy, but these activities are able to evade parental control (Tokelove, 2006). Food items are marketed for consumption both inside and outside the home including pubs, public places of interest such as zoos and museums and educational venues (Moore, 2008). However, Christensen (2004) sees the heavy use of 'fast' foods, or so-called 'junk' foods, by children and young people, as having significant cultural and social implications. Eaten away from the gaze of parents, they incorporate notions of privacy and flexibility of choice coupled with a sense of belonging to a particular group. Although food as entertainment, for example 'McDonald's', might eventually lead to boredom and 'food fatigue' (Finkelstein, 2003), the influences of consumption, such as media messages and points of purchase, may reach into young people's beliefs and value systems, cultivating social and moral norms with far-reaching implications for society (Gunter & Furnham, 1998).

According to Nestle (2002) the above marketing and economic forces not only serve to undermine public health policy and create a population that is literally 'eating itself to death' but also create a dichotomy that confronts the consumer. On the one hand the food industry offers an abundance of food and information from which knowledgeable consumers can exercise their power to make appropriate choices, in other words, consumers are led to believe they 'reign supreme' (Cook et al., 1998; Lang, 2005), whilst on the other hand, the arena in which such 'choice' takes place has been revolutionised in the way food is grown,

sourced, processed and marketed where retailers have become the 'gate-keepers' between the suppliers of food and the general public with the power to ...

shape what food is eaten, how much is paid, the range of nutrients taken, the cultural meaning of food, and the ecological impact of the mode of production: in short the entire shape of nutrition that nutritionists monitor (Lang, 2005: 735).

Writers describe the development of a food culture based on fear as people attempt, with varying degrees of success, to work out what they are supposed to eat in nutritional terms (Gallagher & Allred, 1992; Pollan, 2008). Cook et al., (1998) point out that in order to be successful in negotiating food choice, the consumer must have an understanding and awareness of the forces at play and be able to respond appropriately. In some ways, they tell us, we 'need to know' the journey food makes from source to the final act of eating in order to be an 'informed' consumer, but in other ways we may wish 'not to know' about a food's 'biography' in which personal food choice is both a matter of individual taste bound up in household experiences and domesticity as well as a public choice linked to national and global citizenship.

Whilst there has been a growing interest in the 'traceability' of food, writers have shown concern about the way we have become particularly distanced from food (Colquhoun & Lyon, 2001; Sutton, 2001; Fearnley-Whittingstall, 2006), referred to by Terdiman (1993) as a 'memory disturbance'; "the enigma of the commodity is a memory disorder" (p. 12). Food is seen as less 'natural' as the journey from the grower to the table becomes more remote and complex and no longer serves as a 'benchmark' for the 'simple and traditional' (Wallace, 1998). All-year-round availability that is sourced globally, ensuring food security, appears to have been at the expense of novelty and an appreciation of seasonality that could be sourced locally (Colquhoun & Lyon, 2001); while millions go hungry, millions consume 'designer', 'fetishised', organic vegetables, "shuttled around the world in a sophisticated late twentieth century 'cool chain'" (Goodman & Watts, 1997: 3). We now rarely purchase 'health giving' food from within our own communities, with a loss of social meaning and community threads. Thus, Counihan (1984) comments, 'opulent' consumption has moved from the public to the private sphere where it becomes a "private, stratifying and individualizing act rather than a public, altruistic and communalizing one" (p. 54). Although we live our lives more publicly through the burgeoning practice of 'eating out', Chaney (2002) sees a more 'privatised' culture. Such privatisation has led to the media, in the form of the internet, television, newspapers and magazines, being increasingly used as a resource that helps shape how we view food and food practices.

1.1.11 *The role of the media: food on show*

According to Bell & Valentine (1997) within our modern culture, the role of the food media is one that promotes an array of food paraphernalia, celebrities, chefs, eating places and publications many of which are connected with health. Millions of publications are bought each year by authors who see themselves as particular ‘food reformers’ (Mowbray, 1992) and of these, the high fat, low carbohydrate diets are among the most popular that go against current government guidelines (Freedman et al., 2001). ‘Celebrities’ and ‘health gurus’ have written ‘best-sellers’ (reflecting both interest and anxiety amongst the general public about health matters) from a variety of perspectives; people are variously told that through a combination of good nutrition and changes in ‘lifestyle’ it is possible to thoroughly ‘de-tox’ (Vorderman, 2001; van Straten, 2003), be fit and shapely (Navratilova, 2006), promote their own nutritional and ‘social’ health (Holford, 2001; McKeith, 2008) or overcome disease through eating and cooking specific foods (Keane & Chase, 2007a, 2007b). There is not necessarily a consensus of opinion amongst a plethora of publications (that includes influential magazines) and questions have been asked about the ‘authority’ and ‘expertise’ on which their claims are based that only serve to further confuse the general public (Goldacre, 2008).

In addition, ‘star’ chefs on television feel they can personally show people how to become adept in the kitchen (Smith, 1998, 1999, 2001; Oliver, 2002; Leith & Waldegrave, 2003), cook ‘real’ food fast (Slater, 1992; Ramsay, 2007), eat ‘frugally’ but well (Smith, 2008) and sit down together and have Sunday lunch because only twenty per cent of people do (Ramsay, 2006), to name but a few. It appears that cooking has been transferred into the hands of the expert few and, as a consequence, become quite mystical. In some cases, the food empire that has been built around them, has been criticised for being elitist; for example, Rayner (2009) whilst praising Hugh Fearnley-Whittingstall for excellent work and publications, feels he has “attempted to turn what are basically a bunch of lifestyle choices for the affluent ... into part of a wider debate on public nutrition, which they are not” (p.63). Caraher et al., (2000) found that in the main it is women and professionals who respond positively to celebrity cooks rather than men (who cook far less than women) or lower income groups who eat a lot of processed food. Reading about how well people manage their health or watching cooks display practical skills of the highest order does not necessarily sit comfortably with people’s lived experience. With regard to the latter, social scientists would

argue that we need to take into account social and cultural dimensions when analysing the current state of British cooking (Short, 2006).

1.1.12 *Cooking as a cultural and social practice*

Short (2006) challenges the straightforward link that has been made between practical cooking skills and eating healthily that does not take into account social and cultural elements involved in food practices; cooking is governed by such things as beliefs, traditions, psychological and social influences, what we choose to eat, what meanings we give to food and what we think it is worth. A person may be described as an 'economical' cook who is careful in the use of ingredients and resources; a 'natural' cook who never has to measure anything, or, a 'grow-your-own' cook who produces, recycles, composts and cooks with passion (Slater, 2007). Cooking may be considered 'a practical technique' (for example, Levi-Strauss's (1964, 1970) 'culinary triangle' that represents the deliberate transformation of raw material by human hand that marks it off from natural transformations of ripening and putrefication), merely a chore, or conversely, a creative pursuit or leisure activity. Thus in this sense it may be regarded as a whole process (Short, 2006).

Whilst older people may have more traditional and set ideas about what defines 'a cook' or 'not being able to cook' based on such notions as 'a proper cooked meal', 'home-made' food or 'cooking from scratch', Short (2006) found that younger people may be less sure, or more flexible in their approach, as they draw on a whole spectrum of available foods from across the globe that may provide fresh, frozen, half-cooked, or ready prepared components with which to 'cook'. Combining 'convenience' and 'fresh' foods has not only freed up time spent in the kitchen, but has allowed meals to be chosen and prepared by capable members of the family. Whereas Blumenthal (2004) sees such food as 'second rate, mass produced food', Short (2006) found that whilst participants recognised that these foods were not as good as homemade, they nevertheless felt they had a place in our society for reasons such as variety, saving time, something to 'fall back on', that did not stand as a testament to one's skill or ingenuity. Thus Stead et al., (2004) feel that food skills should be redefined more broadly than 'cooking from scratch', arguing, for example, that if grilling is considered a culinary skill, then technically there should be little difference in grilling a fish finger and grilling a piece of fresh fish. Stead et al. also dismiss the oft made assumption that lower socio-economic groups lack cooking skills compared to others, arguing that much depends on

confidence, fear of failure, age, interest and experience.

This 'plasticity' of meaning has problematised the idea that 'cooking' is in decline (Short, 2006), although many consider this to be happening to the detriment of family life and health. According to Money (2001) we are witnessing a 'dumbing down' of culinary skills and food preparation that has been prized for generations. Sutton (2001) believes we need to observe, learn and experience the art of cooking in order to memorise and replicate it; this can be achieved through a kind of 'embodied apprenticeship' to a mother, father, grandmother, aunt and so on. Amongst elderly women, the principles of cooking have been learnt from their mothers; Robinson et al., (2000) and Caraher et al., (1999) found that mothers usually remain the most important source of knowledge about food and cooking skills across all social classes, compounded by the fact that one in five men say they cannot cook, or cook mainly for pleasure. With increasing commitments outside the home and the lack of cooking in schools, many people do not possess the knowledge, necessary techniques, (and thus ability and confidence) needed to cook a range of foods (ibid).

Short (2006) also makes the point that whilst individualism has tended to be applied to eating and consumption, it can also apply to a preference to cook alone. Cooking with children throws up safety issues in our 'risky' world coupled with a lack of time and patience even though many publications encourage us to involve children because, we are told, it develops their taste for 'real food' (Lawson, 1998; Blumental, 2004; Graimes 2005). Other writers have described their kitchens as a solitary haven from a busy, hectic world:

My kitchen is a fortress that would suit an ancillary pope; and there I may direct my attention only to the tapping out of baking soda and the slicing of olives. I can recede with impunity, arguing to myself about the importance of the home, my little papacy, the microsphere, in which what I can influence – and there is so little – is the physical nourishment of friends and family, which is much. You can't reach me in my kitchen, unless I let you ... My hands wrap greedily around an onion as though touch were something mislaid in a world of blinking, revving, shouting, and cash registers. I pluck a paring knife from the cutlery drawer and let silence, like a feather duster, brush the day from me (Seton, 2000: 54-55).

Whether cooking is seen as a set of practical skills, techniques or competences or as a social and cultural practice, it remains "an heirloom we bequeath to define the families we are part of" (Meyers, 2001: 123). There are those who feel there is something very powerful and fundamentally human about the transformation of raw food into cooked food; we are the only animals who cook, thus, it is not just a necessity, but also a symbol of our humanity and uniqueness (Fox, 2003). Whether we cook or dine alone or with others, we need to eat, we enjoy eating and it has the ability to make us feel good. Also, Ekstrom & Jonsson (2004)

point out that we do not have a fairy godmother to do our cooking – *someone* has to take responsibility for everyday planning, preparation and production of meals and other forms of food provision, all of which implies that some time has to be made available and some knowledge needs to exist as to what needs to be done and how, when and where we might go about it. People may very well have cooking skills and knowledge from whatever source, but those who *enjoy* cooking are more likely to make food they believe to be healthy (Meyers, 2001) and creative enjoyment itself is considered to be an important part of health (Fox, 1993).

Summary, conclusion and gaps in knowledge

This chapter has presented a review of the literature that attempts to find explanations for the discrepancy between healthy eating advice and what people actually eat. The ‘marriage’ of diet and health is reflected in the medicalisation of our daily lives (Foucault, 1976) that has evolved from an ever increasing emphasis being placed upon the prevention of food-related diseases and the need for ‘healthy’ eating by the nutritional sciences, pharmacology, biomedicine and related practitioners. Defined as a medical issue, the role of food in the creation and maintenance of health and the prevention or treatment of disease has tended to be addressed and resolved at an individual level. With the exception of the devastating consequences of the industrial revolution and the advent of war that increased the need for bodies ‘fit for purpose’, western governments have left matters of diet and choice to the individual rather than making it the concern of the state or industry. Health promotion messages aim to reduce the prevalence of certain targeted diseases through personal changes and modifications related to dietary intake and ‘unhealthy lifestyles’. Following such guidelines indicates rationality, a degree of self-control and autonomy, moral duty and qualities necessary for good citizenship (Lupton: 1996; Keane, 1997). However, despite these expectations such advice is often ignored resulting in growing inequalities.

Thus this review has shown a limited, but nevertheless confusing and often conflicting, view of health and food choice from a biomedical and nutritional science perspective, alongside the viewpoint of the social sciences that presents a number of economic, social and cultural variables that influence food choice. However, I feel we still lack an understanding of our relationship with food as a set of practices that are embedded within communities and the

lives of individuals and families across time. Williams (2003) believes that we lack an exploration of both the generative mechanisms that produce such variables and the complex intersection of structure and agency within the material world of everyday life. He believes this can be done through a more historically informed analysis of the relationships between social structure and health, using knowledgeable narratives of people in places as a window onto those relationships. My use of memory as an analytical tool within this study will show a strong relationship between cultural and social meanings, beliefs and practices that become 'embedded' in food; therefore, health promoters cannot make assumptions about what people may choose to eat even if they are armed with nutritional knowledge about 'healthy' food and possess the skills to prepare it.

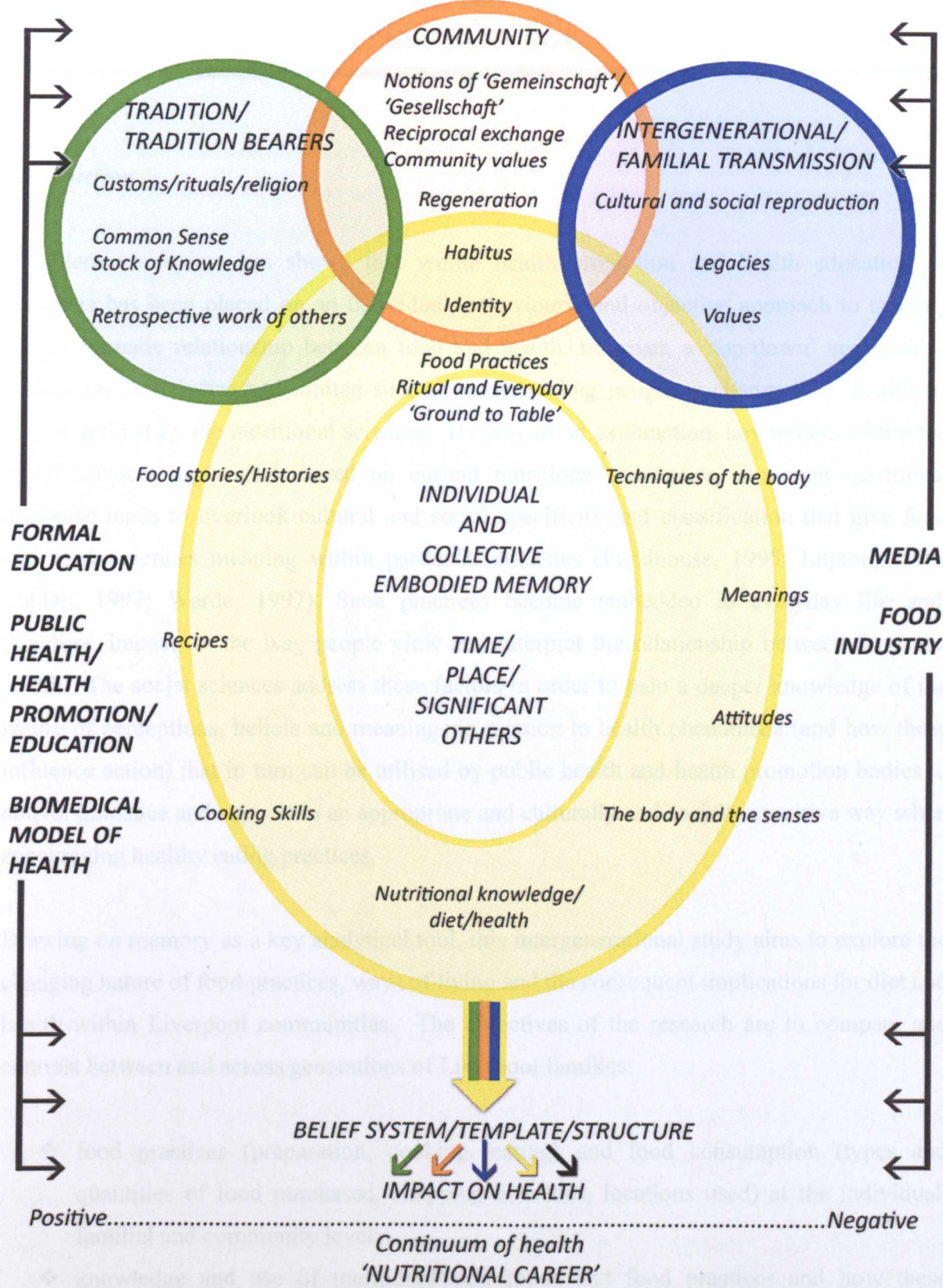
Whereas in previous studies, 'intergenerational' has involved only two generations, for example, the work of Meyers (2001) and Moisio et al., (2004), I have conducted an original study between and across three and four generations of families taking in a time-span of between seventy and almost a hundred years. Also the oft cited key studies concerning family eating practices (Murcott, 1982, 1983; Charles & Kerr, 1988), took place fifteen to twenty years ago that represents a specific period of 'working class' history when heavy industry still prevailed that relied mainly on a male workforce and offered limited job opportunities for women. Thus gender divisions of labour and role expectations were a product of occupational structures, and other studies have shown that class differences figure strongly in the former (Vogler, 1994). What I have been able to do is compare and contrast the food practices from this era with the periods that preceded it and the constantly changing periods that followed it. This has provided the rationale for my phenomenological and inter-generational study that is making an original contribution to knowledge. Lyon & Colquhoun (1999) believe that in a fast changing world it is becoming ever more important to develop an increased understanding of how we view the past, present and future, particularly as we claim to have hectic lives and little time in the present whilst engaging with 'slower' aspects of the past. Thus my study that examines time frames and societal changes in relation to family structure, relationships and food practices can make an important contribution to research and teaching.

Many studies concentrate on nuclear families with young children – a particular point in the lifecycle that fails to recognise more recent changes in 'the family' reflected in the number of 'extended families', 'one-parent families' and people living alone but still part of their

families (Giddens, 2001). Povey et al., (1998) have pointed out that men hold different food beliefs from women, but I agree that little research has been done with men in the context of the family. All these points underline the value of inter-generational studies that involve different family types, genders, lifecycle stages and historical contexts that allow comparisons to be made between traditional and contemporary eating patterns and practices. Although, as we have seen, there is a body of literature that deals with food provision in relation to gender roles, identity, cultural and social significance, there is limited work that deals with how cooking skills are acquired and transmitted within the family or, indeed, the level of cooking skills in the past compared with the present. I feel we cannot assume that there are either differences or similarities between generations in any of these respects.

The above gaps in knowledge around food and eating provided me with the rationale to carry out a qualitative study (a study that has not been undertaken within the Merseyside region) that had the potential to be more fruitful than a quantitative investigation. Facts and figures would not help me discover what people actually *do*, *think* and *feel* about food and how they construct meanings around food practices in relation particularly to tradition, community, the family and health. I therefore adopted a phenomenological approach to my research that incorporates the paradigm of embodiment and in particular the lens of 'embodied memory' to study food consumption and practices across and between generations. This has provided a greater understanding of food in relation to health and wellbeing and is, therefore, likely to challenge some existing health promotion paradigms. The following diagram provides the reader with an overview of my thesis illustrating my concept of the factors that relate to food, health and embodied memory followed by my next chapter that explains my methodological approach and study design that incorporated the research methods of participant and non-participant observation, document analysis, natural conversations and in-depth interviews with eight families.

FOOD, HEALTH AND EMBODIED MEMORY



CHAPTER TWO

METHODOLOGY

Introduction

My literature review has shown that within health promotion and health education an emphasis has been placed on an individual, behavioural and objective approach to tackling the problematic relationship between food and health; however, a 'top-down' approach to disease prevention has had limited success in persuading people to change to a 'healthier' diet as defined by the nutritional sciences. By way of an explanation, key writers within the social sciences argue that, based on current nutritional currencies, dominant nutritional discourse tends to overlook cultural and social specificity and classification that give food and food practices meaning within particular societies (Fieldhouse, 1995; Lupton, 1996; Caplan, 1997; Warde, 1997). Such practices become embedded in everyday life and, therefore, impact on the way people view and interpret the relationship between food and health. The social sciences address these factors in order to gain a deeper knowledge of the nature of perceptions, beliefs and meanings in relation to health phenomena (and how these influence action) that in turn can be utilised by public health and health promotion bodies to deliver guidance and support in an appropriate and culturally and socially sensitive way when encouraging healthy eating practices.

Drawing on memory as a key analytical tool, this intergenerational study aims to explore the changing nature of food practices, ways of living and the consequent implications for diet and health within Liverpool communities. The objectives of the research are to compare and contrast between and across generations of Liverpool families;

- ❖ food practices (preparation, cooking, eating) and food consumption (types and quantities of food purchased, shopping activities, locations used) at the individual, familial and community level;
- ❖ knowledge and use of traditional/local foods and food practices and how these contribute to a sense of identity;
- ❖ how food knowledge and skills are accrued/passed down/discontinued;
- ❖ the role of memory and the senses in food choice;

- ❖ examine notions of the relationship between food and health;
- ❖ how variance in social and economic status impact on food memories, health outcomes, and choices, attitudes and relationships around food and eating.

This chapter will describe the methodological approach I adopted to meet the above aim and objectives and deal with the subject matter of my thesis, one that would furnish me with both a knowledge and understanding of people's food and eating practices in a cultural, social and inter-generational context. In order to challenge current health promotion strategies, I have adopted an alternative epistemological stance to that of the natural sciences through the broad approach of phenomenology, the notion of embodiment and ethnographic enquiry.

My fieldwork will, therefore, be discussed accordingly: Firstly, I will provide an overview of the philosophical paradigm I have adopted and how a phenomenological approach unfolded as suitable for my particular study covering the key aspects of family history, a phenomenology of the body and the notion of embodiment, and the use of 'embodied memory' as a tool of analysis. I follow this with a discussion of the ethnographic methods I used for data collection, how I located my research participants, ethical considerations and the position and role of the researcher. The remainder of the chapter focuses on my data analysis.

2.0 Philosophical paradigm

A study's philosophy is a major influence on the design of the research in terms of method and data analysis. If 'methods' are considered central to research practices as the technical rules that define proper procedures, then 'methodology' is the broad theoretical and philosophical framework into which these procedural rules 'fit' (Brewer, 2000). The philosophy I have adopted breaks away from the scientific paradigm on which the biomedical model of health is based. The epistemological foundation on which scientific enquiry is built is one of careful, objective observation and measurement and the ultimate establishment of universal theories and laws that predict the real world. This view suggests that there is only one way of seeing the world and that science represents a superior form of knowledge, a paradigm of reality that has been most widely accepted and one that continues to underpin most health promotion strategies. However, in order to meet my aims and objectives I have

adopted an alternative epistemological stance and theoretical framework designed to deal with a number of realities that have emerged from people's lived experiences of food and eating and to further explore the social and cultural meanings given to food.

Classical sociologists attempted to explain and analyse society primarily in terms of social structure and how it largely determines human behaviour, for example, the functionalist theories of Durkheim and Parsons and the class struggle of scientific Marxists; however, a move away from such formal generalisations could be seen in the work of George Herbert Mead (1934) on 'symbolic interactionism' and Harold Garfinkel (1967) on ethnomethodology. These alternative theories focus on the 'everyday' and how we interact, communicate and create order and meaning in our daily lives; microscopic elements that make up society are used to describe and analyse life from 'within'. Both scholars had been influenced by the interpretive theoretical framework of phenomenology that began to question the assumption that the laws of nature can be applied to the social sciences in an attempt to explain not only how societies develop, but also the underlying causes and effects of social change so can be open to rigorous, objective and impartial analysis (Hughes & Sharrock, 1997). Phenomenological theory has been utilised to challenge the suitability and effectiveness of positivist thinking and scientific methods in social research (Moustakas, 1994) and in view of the fact that theories now attempt to synthesise, rather than polarise, the micro and the macro elements in sociological analysis (Fine, 1992), a broad phenomenological approach was deemed suitable for studying individual family lives and their nuances. This approach provided me with knowledge of particular ways of living and related eating practices, whilst at the same time looking at how these relate and interact with the prevailing social order.

2.0.1 *Phenomenology*

Phenomenology can be traced back to Kant and Hegel, but Edmund Husserl (1859-1938) has been lauded as "the fountainhead" of this philosophical method in the twentieth century (Vandenberg, 1997). Whilst Heidegger (1889-1976) and later Gadamer (1976) developed the hermeneutic strand of phenomenology that involves the art of reading a text in order to understand the intention and meaning that lies behind appearances, Husserl was joined by Alfred Schutz (1889-1959) in developing the idea of 'interpretive' sociology. This idea sought to challenge empirical science and its scientific methodology that viewed the natural

and social world as essentially the same. Schutz developed Husserl's ideas through an 'existential' approach to phenomenology that sought deeper understanding of the meaning structure that emanates from a constant 'stream of consciousness', an unbroken stream of lived experiences. This new 'science of being' represented the world as lived by a person, that is, a co-constructed dialogue between the person and the world rather than the world or reality being seen as a separate entity. Life and life choices are, therefore, unique to individuals and cannot be summarised adequately by scientific models. Within this paradigm it is important to look beyond the obviousness of everyday life to the 'essence' of what lies beneath by 'bracketing off' our taken-for-granted assumptions of the world thus leaving us with our consciousness (Schutz, 1972).

Phenomenology differs fundamentally from the natural sciences in the production of knowledge. Knowledge within phenomenology is relative; interpretation and communication are made possible through language, and common assumptions through socialisation (Slattery, 2003). Although the world is made up of individuals, most people can only function by working and existing with others. Generation of meaning is always social, arising in and out of interaction with a human community (Cresswell, 2003). 'Commonalities' and underlying assumptions that hold our social world together have been identified through three main intersubjectivities; 'common sense' described as a common 'stock of knowledge' about how to interpret and act in our own particular society or social group; 'typifications' that are common ways of classifying objects, such as food, and experience, such as eating, which build up into 'stocks of knowledge', and thirdly, 'reciprocity', common assumptions that others see the world in the same way that we do (Schutz, 1972).

All three elements of 'intersubjectivity' - common sense, commonalities and reciprocity - create a shared world, a common sense world, that orders everyday life. Although individual backgrounds, interests and motivations mould our identities and our view of the world, we can only execute them, only live as human beings, through co-operation with others using common meanings and assumptions. Social order for phenomenologists is a 'negotiated' order, a practical framework that forms the basis of most people's 'life world'; it is the primary task of phenomenologists to describe this 'life world', that is, "the world as given in immediate experience and independent of, and prior to, any scientific or other interpretation" (Hughes & Sharrock, 1997: 137). I have used the interpretive nature of phenomenology in

my study to explore food-related experiences and beliefs (and thus attitudes and practices) amongst families that might help inform (and challenge) health promotion policies. Similar food-related work has been carried out by Dibsdaal et al. (2002) amongst women in a low income group and this strand of phenomenology has been used to explore the feelings, emotions and moods around 'food acceptance' (Cardello, 1996) and the complex relationships between food and health, for example, the lived experience of hunger and food insecurity (Chilton & Booth, 2007). Food practices in relation to health have thus been considered subject to interpretation as well as subjective perceptions and feelings and as such cannot be observed, measured and tested. In a phenomenological study that looked at the concept of 'wisdom' in later life, Montgomery et al. (2002) found that, as it is lived, wisdom involves the essential elements of guidance, knowledge, experience, moral principles, time and compassionate relationships. In a similar vein, I have looked at the notion of 'tradition' as an accumulated and retrospective 'stock of knowledge' in my discussion concerning 'traditional' foods and practices – all facets of food and eating that are subject to interpretation. Thus whilst I considered, for example, the use of social surveys as a research method, these tend to yield quantifiable data amenable to statistical analysis such as the naming of 'healthy' foods and how often they are consumed rather than, in the interpretative tradition, the meanings given to food and the social contexts, differing subjective perspectives and social backgrounds affecting food choice.

Although 'life worlds' belong to particular socio-historical groupings, a phenomenological approach allows for adaption and alteration in the way we perceive the world around us as we move through different 'times'. This approach is pertinent to my inter-generational study that seeks to understand people's relationship with food over time, for example, adjustment to, and the influence of, war-time food rations, 'globalised' foodways, new patterns of consumption and so on. These factors have changed the way we think about, and behave within, the world in relation to food. Adopting this stance has also enabled me to challenge the philosophy of individualism in relation to food practices if we consider the latter are socially and culturally informed across time and place and part of the history of families.

2.0.2 Family history – a phenomenological approach

Family history has taken a phenomenological approach in that it no longer views the family as a 'static unit' but rather as a 'process' that takes place over the life-span of its members

(Hareven, 1994: 14). Similar to Bertaux & Thompson (1993), I am concerned here with the concept of 'family' as a network of individuals that are related by kinship comprising three and four generations, but at the same time these individuals come from a particular 'family culture' that influences and helps select what is transmitted. In this sense transmission is both individual and collective. Families may be seen as 'intergenerational systems' that comprise interlocking social and emotional relationships. In order to understand what is practiced and experienced today, it can be illuminating to look back elsewhere in the 'system' for an explanation (Thompson, 1993).

Tilly (1987) identifies two principles of social history, 'reconstitution' and 'connection'; the former is an effort to reconstruct 'a round of life' as it has been lived, whereas the latter attempts to link the micro aspects of life to macro social structures and processes – principles that should complement each other. The internal dynamics of family life and household structure cannot be divorced from social, historical and economic factors. Until the passing of the Children's Act, 1948, Holman (1988) points out that the lives of the Victorian poor and the following eras were largely fashioned by the conditions and attitudes created by the Elizabethan Poor Laws. Ayers' (1990) social history of Liverpool's dockland families during the depression turns to the 'hidden economy' and 'social networks' as barometers of study contending that it is not sufficient to rely on people's official wage packets or unemployment benefit. Pertinent to my study is that family dynamics may hinge more upon who cooks and eats together than who actually lives together under the same roof (Berkner, 1975).

In what may be termed 'historical collective consciousness' family histories can be used to trace the connection between processes of change and the actual experience of specific social groups; oral histories, with recorded accounts of those who are no longer with us, enable us to connect history and biography (Elliott, 1990). Oral tradition and its transmission enjoys a longevity unattainable from an individual life-span; we may talk to our grandfathers who in turn may have talked to theirs, and our grandchildren may listen to our stories or our children's stories – "in this way one becomes an interlocutor of more than a two hundred and fifty year span of word-of-mouth experiences" (Fletcher, 1994: ii). Thus family history can give an individual a stronger sense of a much longer personal lifespan which will even survive their own death (Thompson, 2000). Families can provide a solid and lasting 'social framework' in the fostering of memories (De Lourdes Monaco Janotti & De Paula Rosa,

1993). Schank et al., (1995) comment that it is easy to remember stories that give life, and provide strong connections, to the past, and stories that make events unforgettable to others and ourselves. However, whilst who we are and what we have become in a social and cultural sense may be perpetuated by the transmission of stories, it is also true that these stories may prompt a distinctive 'break' with family in terms of norms and physical presence that may, or may not, be permanent. We may be shaped by our rejection of the established and taken for granted employment, educational or domestic patterns of previous generations, or a foray or short interlude to pastures new before we 'return to the fold' so to speak (Thompson, 1993). This would appear to underline the shortcomings in the use of averages in statistical studies in that intergenerational influences may be underestimated.

Whilst my encounters with Liverpoolians may not have involved listening to entire life histories and related stories, Denscombe (2007) points out that in order to gain a 'thick description' of a person's life, the fine detail, the multi-layered facets that include their feelings, understandings and perspectives, we do not have to cover it in its entirety. Partial accounts of 'first-hand experience' can still reveal valuable new insights into life-styles and beliefs; in this sense, life histories can be considered phenomenological in nature as they help us to map the changes in life experience over time in a specific cultural, social and historical context. Reflections produce data that enable us to do this with the proviso that these reflections will be subjective, a point I address later in this chapter.

The focal point for phenomenology, therefore, is everyday life, the normality that "traditional" sociologists tended to take for granted in studying the more unusual or abnormal aspects of life; it attempts to capture and characterise the meaningful nature of social phenomena and indicate how such meanings are produced and used by members of society (Hughes & Sharrock, 1997). In relation to the study of food, it is the quotidian, the everyday, as well as the special and celebratory, that can reveal a myriad of symbols, meanings and structures that help explain the central role of food in our lives and our relationship to it (Sutton, 2001). I have, in this study, sought to develop a greater understanding of the 'problem' between food and health through my participants' lived experiences of food practices.

2.0.3 *Phenomenology and the notion of 'embodiment'*

The concept of 'lived experience' has caught the attention of those studying the human body within the social sciences (Merleau-Ponty, 1962; Turner, 1992; Csordas, 1994; Bendelow & Williams, 1995). Introducing us to the idea of our embodied selves, Merleau-Ponty (1962) does not see perception and the senses separate from our bodies. Phenomenology privileges the idea of the 'lived body', that is, we as conscious human beings are 'embedded' in our bodies; "the human being is an embodied social agent" (Nettleton & Watson, 1998: 9). However, embodied consciousness does not mean constant awareness of our bodies and their actions; for instance, we do not tell our bodies to chew and swallow food, or smell the aroma of soup or curry. On the other hand, we become very aware of them if we overeat and are sick or our bodies change shape. We move between being aware and unaware of our bodies.

Mauss (1973 [1934]) was one of the first writers to infer that society shapes the body, asserting that it is only through 'the social' that physiological and psychological matter finds its expression, a notion developed by Douglas (1973) who agreed that human behaviour is mediated by symbolic meaning and control of the body culturally learnt. For Mauss, the body is our most technical object; 'body techniques' such as marching, walking, digging, swimming and so on, rather than being individual and personal, are actually peculiar to nations or are acquired collectively with others and thus shaped by social norms and constraints. These techniques can be learned and passed on – they precede us and will outlive us – and involve a level of practical understanding (Crossley, 2007). However, they are not necessarily cast in stone demonstrated in the way swimming techniques have changed as has the way we dance. Relevant to my study is how we use our bodies in cooking and eating; whilst eating with fingers was once replaced with the formal use of cutlery, it has now become, once again, a sanctioned practice, and whilst a number of traditional techniques survive, new ways of cooking have been introduced from other cultures as well as through new technologies.

Carrying forward the work of Mauss and Douglas, the phenomenological and interpretive approaches of Merleau-Ponty (1962), Bourdieu (1984) and Csordas (1994) see the body as a locus of experience, 'an existential vehicle', a medium for being in a world of reflexive human beings. The body in its physical form gives expression to such things as political domination, cultural meaning, social values; the body and society come together in both a literal and metaphorical sense. The concept of 'embodiment' has thus become an important

area of discussion within the disciplines of anthropology, sociology and historical study. It is a concept that refers to

how we literally incorporate, biologically, the material and social world in which we live, from in utero to death, a corollary is that no aspect of our biology can be understood in the absence of knowledge of history and individual and societal ways of living (Krieger, 2005: 352).

This idea draws the body away from the naturalistic paradigm based on Cartesian dualism that separates the mind from the body, towards the phenomenology of embodied experience that regards the body as both objective and subjective in that the biological, sensual and perceptual body functions as one. In conjunction with works concerned with the body and the senses (Stoller, 1989; Howes, 1991; Classen, 1993; Serematakis, 1994), many of these perspectives have been applied to food and eating practices (Murcott, 1983; Mennell, 1985; MacClancy, 1992; Lupton, 1996; Bell & Valentine, 1997; Warde, 1997; Korsmeyer, 2005), as well as food and health (Fieldhouse, 1995; Lupton, 1996; Beardsworth & Keil, 1997; Caplan, 1997). Drawing on these works and the notion of 'embodiment' I will argue that the cultural and social meanings given to food are first made in the body as part of our 'lived experience'.

2.1 *Embodied memory as a tool of analysis*

The concepts of 'embodiment' and 'embodied experience' enable us to question some fundamental assumptions and traditional practices around food and eating as well as the link between the body and personhood and the cultural meaning of the human body as symbol, metaphor or artefact (Hamilakis, 1999). In adopting the notion of food as an embodied practice, I have been able to explore why people may adhere to, or reject, health promotion messages based on the findings of nutritional science. In making a strong link between a phenomenology of the body, food, and what Sutton (2001) refers to as the 'anthropology of the senses' I have moved into the realm of 'embodied' memory that I have used as a tool of analysis to unearth the changing nature of social and cultural food practices in Liverpool.

According to Sutton (2001) it is the embodiment paradigm that allows us a *simultaneous* consideration of food and memory that offers current anthropological theories that centre on visual and textual memories a dialectical partner and moves away from Cartesian dualism towards food as an 'embodied practice'. Whilst I acknowledge that food has the power to shape our bodies in a physical sense, my attention in the coming chapters will focus on the

act of 'incorporation' and how the memory of food is 'sedimented' in the body (Connerton, 1989). This notion has provided me with a way to think through my study in that it has helped me discover how food binds us to other people, to our families, friends and communities, not only in the present but also in the way it takes us back in time, linking us to recipes and rituals, stories and events of previous generations all of which may play a central role in our lives.

Memory has been referred to as the 'sixth sense' in relation to food and eating and in reply to someone who might ask why I decided to use memory as a tool of analysis, I would refer them to Sutton's (2001) finding that 'a world of food' lies therein. In talking about the Liverpool blitz, a participant recalled her most vivid memory as a totally undamaged tin of Tate and Lyle golden syrup sitting on top of the rubble that had once been her home; José Carreras recalled the late Luciano Pavarotti's love of Italian meats and apple crumble as more significant than his velvet voice, and the view of Ackerman (1995) that there is nothing more memorable than a smell, in that "smells detonate softly in our memory like poignant land mines; hit a trip wire of smell and memories all explode at once" (p. 22). Whilst we may wish to forget or 'disembody' the memory of certain foods, rituals or practices, for example, memories have been recorded that reveal how mothers keep feeding daughters when they are full (Meyers, 2001) or, indeed, cause eating problems and disorders that require a 're-learning' of embodied eating habits (Fuchs, 1989; Waterhouse, 1997), we all possess associations with smell, taste, sight and even sound, which trigger off the 'mental cinema' of memory, that 'round off' the rough edges of our food experiences (Fort, 2004).

Memory can be considered to be a phenomenological ground of identity in that we ourselves are shaped by the past, but we are constantly reworking the past, which shapes us; when we sift through our memories we come to know, and understand how we came to be who we are and we may wish to present stories about ourselves in order to create a certain impression (Lambek & Antze, 1998). In some ways, Rose (1992) believes, we 'reinvent' or 'recreate' our memories, whereby we take out 'internally filed snapshots' of our past and redevelop, reprint, crop and remould them, see them in glossy colour or matt black, then fit them into a new, current 'frame', to be once again internally filed. In this sense we can be selective in what we remember and how we tell our stories, and such memories are culturally mediated through 'vehicles', for example, codes, symbols, artefacts, rituals and narratives (Lambek & Antze, 1998).

Following on from the idea that the past and the present interact and inform one another, the Popular Memory Group (2002) deem it fruitless to discuss whether or not a particular event or process remembered corresponds to the actual past - for them all that matters are the specific conditions under which such memory is constructed as well as the personal and social implications of memories held. Indeed, Dudukovic et al., (2004) tell us that accuracy is not central to recalling events, rather, in real life “we have a goal in mind during re-telling that determines what event details are included, how they are described, and how we weave them together” (p.142). Further, minor exaggerations are seen as a natural result of recollecting and retelling a story with personal details being added for entertainment. Whilst I recognise that biased retellings of events will produce biased memories that may not be totally accurate, nevertheless, these are the memories, accurate or not, that influence food choice. As Jones (2010) comments, memories are ‘kaleidoscopic’ bits and pieces that are regularly remade but nevertheless reliable in the sense that they are our ‘own truths’. What the individual remembers tends to be what is of crucial importance in his or her experience of social relationships (Halbwachs, 1992). The value of my participants’ memories lies in the fact that my intergenerational study is being written ‘from below’ (Elliott, 1990) whereby the voices of unique men and women are heard in the historical record, making an important contribution to research.

Summary

This section of the chapter described the broad phenomenological approach I have adopted in relation to my research that incorporates the notion of embodiment applied to food, memory and the senses. In turn, this approach has furnished me with knowledge and understanding of people’s lived experience of food and eating practices in a cultural, social and generational context. Whereas the natural scientist develops concepts and theories to describe and explain ‘nature’ from the outside, the social scientist studies social phenomena in an attempt to understand the social world from within. Phenomenology is an interpretative approach to social inquiry that is ‘engaged’ and ‘committed’ to understanding social life; the researcher is at the heart of the process and uses and challenges his or her understanding to interpret the social world (May, 2001: 15). This approach has allowed me to challenge the scientific paradigm as applied to health promotion through a qualitative model that lies within human science research.

2.2 *Qualitative research design*

Whereas quantitative research generally converts observations into discrete units for comparison with other units through statistical analysis (focusing on explanation, prediction and proof), qualitative research generally examines people's words or actions in narrative or descriptive ways that closely represent their experiences. In qualitative work, 'truth' is not truth that needs to be proved, but rather, whatever people in a particular society and/or set of circumstances decide is the truth – thus such concepts as 'community' or 'kinship' that I examine here are not open to some kind of scientific proof but are a matter of 'social' definition (Parkin, 1997). Qualitative research has become especially relevant to social worlds that have been aligned to the concept of 'pluralization' that has seen the "dissolution of 'old' social inequalities into the new diversity of milieus, subcultures, lifestyles and ways of living" (Flick, 2001: 12). Grand narratives and theories have given way to 'locally, temporally and situationally' limited narratives – my study is from the viewpoint of 'local knowledge and practice' (Geertz, 1983) of specific, well defined, family groups.

2.2.1 *Interpretative phenomenology and ethnography*

The interpretative approach within phenomenology weds it to qualitative methodologies and methods that enable the researcher to understand, describe, make sense of and develop into theories, the socially constructed meanings (including lay accounts, beliefs and concepts) that emanate from actions, events and situations within everyday life (Blaikie, 1993). In order to carry out my phenomenological study I employed ethnographic methods – ethnography complements such an approach and was deemed suitable for my socio-cultural study of food in that it is a methodology that Robson (2002) describes as sensitive to the role of culture in shaping and ordering our everyday experiences. Ethnography is literally to 'write culture' (O'Leary, 2004) in that it offers rich and in-depth exploration of values, beliefs and practices of cultural groups, as well as the working nature of culture, symbols and norms. According to Geertz (1973) we need 'thick description' (i.e. detailed or rich data) from a particular domain involving real people in natural settings; many events are not reducible to simplistic interpretation. Hence, 'thick descriptions' are essential rather than reductionism if researchers are to represent the complexity of situations rather than offering simplistic explanations. Geertz provides a thick description of the Balinese cockfight that serves as a metaphor for both the norms and anomalies within Balinese society – the cockfight as an

exclusively male pursuit runs contrary to an otherwise 'unisex' society. Within the ring it is not only the birds that are fighting, but the men who own them; the cock is representative of manhood in sexual and non-sexual terms serving as an antidote to an aversion towards animality. In addition, the expert manner in which the spurs are fixed highlights the privileged place of ritual generally in Balinese society. The rules of the fight are passed from one generation to another, and whereas the umpire is never challenged, his status impenetrable, in other ways the fight exposes status rivalry particularly in the intricate system of gambling. Such hierarchy and status reflects how "the migration of the Balinese status hierarchy [enters] into the body of the cockfight" (p. 436). What Geertz shows us is that cultural events are symbolic, but at the same time interpretive – "it is Balinese reading of Balinese experience, a story they tell themselves about themselves" (p. 448). This fits well with 'doing phenomenology' in that one aims to capture 'thick descriptions of phenomena and their settings' that provide an insight into the world of others open to interpretation (Bentz & Shapiro, 1998).

Thus, within the study of everyday life, the researcher should be aware of both regularities and differences in obtaining in-depth descriptions and interpretations (Hammersley, 1993). In studying different contexts, comparing and contrasting various elements, new insights can be gained by researchers that enable them to transfer meanings and principles from one domain to another (Geertz, 1983). Thus as analysis and data collection are refined, the researcher moves from a broad conception of the field towards a more in-depth, richer, and thus 'thick' understanding and interpretation of multiple field realities. It is this type of field work that entails a certain way of knowing through immersing oneself in the social world of the research setting (Ruane, 2005). However, whilst ethnography has traditionally involved total 'immersion' in the field for long periods of time, I have done what Gray (2009) refers to as a 'micro-ethnography' which adopts a more focused approach on one aspect or element of a social setting, allowing for observation over several months. Thus whilst Malinowski (1922) spent two years living amongst the Tobriand Islanders, I have attempted to chart the 'situational embeddedness' of food practices within families (Atkinson, 1990).

Using ethnographic methods for carrying out my fieldwork I was able to describe what was going on in a particular setting, who or what was involved, when and where things happened, how they occurred, and why – at least from the standpoint of the participants. Ethnographic methods are suitable for studying processes, the relationship and organisation between people

and events, continuities and patterns over time, as well as the sociocultural contexts in which human existence unfolds (Jorgensen, 1989). Thus, all sources of data, whether they be of a personal or public nature are products of a particular period of history. In relation to the study of food, the human being has adapted both biologically and culturally to available food supplies permitting a variety of diets, not only between and within populations, but between one individual and another and through the 'times' in which they have lived (Harrison, 1998). In light of the fact that biographical factors are of central importance to sociological explanations (Roberts, 2002), my intention is to show that individuals, families and communities possess some kind of 'food history', or, 'nutritional career' (Beardsworth & Keil, 1997) an analysis of which provides a greater understanding of people's past and present food choices. My aim has, therefore, been to provide a richly detailed description of a segment of family lives.

In food studies it is important to recognise both the 'routine' and the 'ordinary' that are as worthy and valid as the 'special' and 'ceremonious'. As already discussed, ritual and everyday eating are mutually reinforcing in this study that involves food and memory. Food is a material source that is highly symbolic and this study explores the meaning people give to activities around food and eating. Mintz & DuBois (2002) point out that ethnographic food studies have proved to be an important arena in which to debate the relative merits of cultural and historical materialism vs structuralist and symbolic explanations for human behaviour and a way to refine our understanding of the variance that exists in the responses of informants to ethnographic questions.

2.3 Data collection

A qualitative research design that incorporates ethnographic methods cannot be broken into a series of hermetic stages, but is a process that takes the form of a series of actions that are co-ordinated in a flexible manner producing a naturalistic study of some aspect of social behaviour and meaning (Gregory, 1995). Responses are therefore not prescribed and flexibility allows the respondent to choose what to say and the researcher to direct the research during the course of interaction. Analysis and theory development are allowed to unfold during the course of data collection – the aim of the researcher is to build theories that

are 'grounded' in concrete human realities; data suggests the theory rather than the other way round (Glaser & Strauss, 1967). The researcher endeavours to produce a social scientific account of social life, moving from lay descriptions to social science concepts and theories, that is, through the process of 'abduction' (Blaikie, 1993). Ethnographic research should also be iterative in nature and data collection and analysis should run side by side as parallel tasks (Riley, 1990). Fieldwork gave me the opportunity to relate "insightful experience to theoretical analysis and perception to conception, back and forth, in a kind of weaving of the fabric of knowledge" (Junker, 1960: 10). I aimed to achieve this by employing a multi-method approach to data collection.

2.4 A multi-method approach to data collection

Multi-method or 'triangular' techniques in the social sciences attempt to map out, or explain more fully, the richness and complexity of human behaviour by studying it from more than one stand point, thus, methodological parochialism or ethnocentrism, the problem of 'method-boundedness', is avoided (Cohen et al., 2007). Reliance on one method may bias or distort the researcher's picture of the particular slice of reality being investigated. Each method informs the other and the more methods contrast with each other the more confident the researcher can be (Marcus, 1995). Denzin (1970) identifies several strands of triangulation that are pertinent to my study – 'time triangulation' that is cross-sectional, stretches across time spans, to consider factors of change; 'combined levels of triangulation' whereby more than one level of analysis is taken from the three principal levels used in social sciences, namely, individual, interactive (groups) and collectivities (organisational, cultural and societal), and, 'space triangulation' that looks at different cultures or, in the case of my own study, local populations. Although multiple data sources do not guarantee consistency or replication, an increase in validity or reduce bias, in adopting this approach I feel I have not only been able to record what people *say*, but also what they *do*, *think* and *feel* in recognition of the fact that people's expressed opinions and their apparent attitudes do not necessarily reflect their actual practices (Jordan & Dalal, 2006).

My next section is concerned with the methods I used in my study, namely, observation/participant observation, in-depth and informal interviews, natural conversations and document analysis. This approach enabled me to develop an understanding of the talk

and actions of my participants. Although I used each method at various times they would often overlap, for example, observation often resulted in informal conversations taking place, in-depth interviews also involved observation of family interaction, and conversation often led to the study of documents in people's possession. Networking was integral to the whole research process – one thing or person continually leading to someone else or something else of interest or relevance to my study that happened in a linear or circular fashion.

2.4.1 *Participant observation/observation*

Participant observation/observation is considered to be appropriate to study all forms of human existence (Jorgensen, 1989) and was used throughout the fieldwork process. Examination of social activity requires observation of phenomena within their *natural* setting, in that no one event can be understood outside its social milieu (Bryman, 1988). Participant observation is defined as “the systematic description of events, behaviours and artifacts, in the social setting for study” (Marshall & Rossman, 1995) and is about ‘seeing’ through the eyes of others, whilst the reporting of such observations leans towards theoretical explanations of such action and the contribution that can be made to social theory (Stark & Torrance, 2005). Observation can thus verify or question food practices that may be reported in interviews and conversations that are maintained and generated on specific topics. The ensuing interpretation of the gathered data constitute the fundamentals of interviews and interviewing that yield ‘rich insights’ into people’s biographies, experiences, opinions, values, aspirations, attitudes and feelings (May, 2001: 120).

My intention through observation, then, was to find out the meaning action had for my participants and to find out what people actually *do*. Within participant’s homes I observed social interaction, cooking practices (and with permission I sometimes looked in their cupboards and fridges), meal structures and eating practices. At times I also ate with them. My observations also took place in public spaces, such as supermarkets, local shops and markets in order to learn about shopping practices, and pubs, cafes and take-aways to look at food practices outside the home. This sometimes necessitated buying and eating food, some of which I enjoyed and some of which I hated. Observation also led me to public meetings, activities and gatherings, for example, the Garston and District Historical Society, Toxteth and Kensington community centres, parks, precincts and the waterfront.

Collecting data from participant observation can take several forms – a reliance on memory, taking field notes or keeping diaries, the use of recording equipment, taking photographs and so on. The choice of method influences the research process in that, how well would I remember? Would I manage to write everything down and how would people respond to being recorded? These practical issues needed to be addressed and decided upon. Consequently, there were times when: I could not record an important observation and had to rely on memory, a photograph said so much more than notes and note-taking was more practical than recording. What I might have missed on a first occasion, I noticed on a second, or an embodied memory was awakened by a prompt outside the field. As Okely (1994) comments, our data incorporates memory and what we embody through the senses – it is the total experience that goes into one's writing. This resonates with the aforementioned idea of 'sensuous scholarship' (Stoller, 1997). Importantly, I strove to be both accurate and honest through the prompt writing up of notes after leaving the field. These notes were not merely descriptive observations, but recorded how I felt about what I saw and my role as an observer. This process not only provided a background and a general 'feel' for each area, what was actually going on 'out there', but also helped to identify the main stakeholders of food that in turn helped me formulate the questions for my interviews. The primary purpose of both my interviews and natural conversations was to record people's experiences of food and eating.

2.4.2 *Interviewing and informal conversations*

Interviewing and informal conversations can offer a background to, and thus help to *interpret*, observations that in turn provide 'incidents' and 'excerpts' from daily life that can 'bolster' data from detailed interviews and conversations (Hobbs & May, 1993). In conjunction with observation, description can be checked against fact and bearing in mind that the researcher can never be sure whether participants are being unbiased or consistent during exchanges that may jeopardise the accuracy of the data, this justifies using a multi-method approach. Hobbs & May point out the importance of a flexible approach whereby methods are adapted to circumstance as we move through the various stages of the research process.

2.4.2.1 *Natural conversations*

I discovered my participants enjoyed chatting and story telling and little prompting or encouragement was needed – it was the speed of talk in often thick accents that was not easy to understand or record. These conversations tend to be qualitatively different to interviews in that they can be, to a greater extent, more co-constructed stories that flow more naturally than an interview in the form of questions and answers that needs to cover subjects that inform the aims and objectives of the research (May, 2001). Sometimes when an “interview” was completed conversation took over that revealed other food experiences valuable to the study and with the consent of the participants I was also able to use as data. One may only have limited chances (or even a single chance) to interview a participant, whereas conversations can take place at any time when one is amongst participants in the context of day to day living. I learnt never to leave home without a notebook and pencil and all these conversations were included in my fieldnotes that contributed richly to my data collection. I applied these ‘food stories’ to my generational theme, for example, older people’s narratives of war-time Liverpool, socio-economic class differences in food provision and people’s attitudes to convenience foods and health.

2.4.2.2 *Informal interviews*

I conducted a range of informal interviews with community workers both in an official and voluntary capacity and with those who run ‘food projects’ or provide services or teaching connected with food and eating. These may be thought of as ‘conversations’ that have helped to meet the objectives of my study. These have included local secondary school teachers, supermarket managers and small shop keepers, Primary Care Trust ‘Older Persons’ Nurse’ who promotes healthy eating and the Head Chef of Liverpool Marriott Hotel South who helps to run an annual cookery competition for GCSE pupils.

2.4.2.3 *In-depth interviews*

In-depth interviews were conducted with eight families to explore and examine key aspects of food practices and possible health outcomes across generations within Liverpool communities. My participant observation/observation, informal interviews and conversations

shaped the main topics for these interviews. As the age range and the 'times' in which my participants had lived varied enormously, I did not have a structured list of questions, but rather asked age-appropriate questions that covered the major topics, for example, I began by asking each participant to recall their earliest memories of food, memories that were embedded in particular historical times and from which the interview flowed.

The major topics under discussion in the interviews, designed to meet the objectives of the research, were:

- ❖ Memories of foods that have been eaten in the past, and how they differ from food that is eaten now;
- ❖ Meals and mealtimes, particularly their structure and social meaning;
- ❖ Identifying continuity or change in the way food is produced, purchased, stored, prepared, cooked and eaten;
- ❖ The relationship between local culture, food memory and health.

Permission was sought to tape record the interviews. According to Polgar & Thomas (1995), this method can provide full transcripts of discussion and independent analysis is possible. Each interview lasted for approximately one hour. Participants were de-briefed at the end of each interview; I sought assurance that they had nothing further to add after which I explained how the study would progress from this point, including a further assurance that they would have the opportunity to check and agree with the transcripts should they wish to do so.

Conducting the interviews in the participants' homes was not only convenient, but also such a setting "promotes the participants' self-disclosure through the creation of a permissive environment" (Marshall & Rossman, 1995: 84). This increases the 'ecological validity' of the research. All accounts are relative to the context in which they are given and are the product of social interaction (Silverman, 2000). This involvement in the choice of setting also helps to create a sense of equality between the interviewer and the interviewee thus

minimising any difference in status, knowledge or power and enabling a free flow of communication. A fully structured interview shifts the balance of power and expertise towards the interviewer, and when researching particularly personal subjects such as health, does not allow the participant to answer in terms of their own reference producing 'cloudy' data (Grbich, 1999). Interviews were conducted following the subject areas without any set pattern – this informality encourages interpersonal connections between the interviewer and respondent that allows meanings to be negotiated (Holloway & Jefferson, 2000).

My relative inexperience of interviewing meant that during the first few interviews I did not stray very far from the specific subject area I was covering for fear of not being able to bring the interview back on track and losing my way. I was more concerned with guiding the conversation than listening to my participants. However, during the course of the interviews I became more confident and allowed the subject areas to criss-cross and therefore flow more freely allowing greater latitude to develop ideas. I also realised that I did not have to ask each participant about every subject area because through the process of reflection I was able to adjust or broaden areas of interest.

I transcribed the tapes as soon as possible after the interviews whilst they were fresh in my mind, particularly hastily jotted down ideas that I needed to expand upon. One interview with a member of my third family had not recorded properly and from that time on, I used two tape recorders. I knew I would be nervous if I did not cover this eventuality. When I conducted the interview the second time I realised the responses were very similar to the first interview which validated my belief that people were, in as far as they were able, giving me honest accounts and memory could be considered a reliable research tool.

However, it is important to recognise that interviews constitute a complex social process that involves strengths and weaknesses. They are advantageous in that they can be conducted with a large cross section of people on a range of topics providing rich data that can be recorded. Leads can be followed up and points clarified that enable the researcher to explore understandings and meanings in depth, thus increasing the validity of the data (Denscombe, 2007). However, this method creates a large volume of data that needs skillful manipulation and 'decontextualisation' for data analysis (Coffey & Atkinson, 1996). By its very nature, the interview process involves social interaction that may be influenced by age, gender,

ethnicity, class and so on, and, therefore, necessitates cooperation and the need for social approval.

2.4.3 *Document analysis*

The foregoing methods can be further backed up by document analysis which refers to the collection, review and interrogation of various forms of text that together serve as primary sources of research data. Published documents that have been sourced include the National Curriculum for Food Technology, current regeneration documents, surveys, questionnaires, plans and reports concerning health, housing and social issues, and general literature from various projects and organisations that are involved either directly or indirectly with food in the Liverpool communities under study. Extensive use was made of biographies and autobiographies that Axelrod & Cooper (1996) tell us are both interesting and useful in that they provide an insight into what other people feel and think about important events and relationships in their lives. These individual accounts are not concerned with the trivial, but rather they show their particular importance and tell us the meaning they were given both at the time and on reflection. These thoughts and feelings help us to understand other people as well as ourselves. I also consulted local history books and publications with the valued help of the curators at the Liverpool Museum of Life, who allowed me to search their archives for relevant material. I also looked at recipe books and household accounts from private collections. Examples of the latter showed that whereas we do not know the extent to which people use the myriad of new generation cookery books, it is more discernable in second-hand cookbooks; through personal notes of experiences and personal recollections one can see whether recipes have been tried, tested, amended or added to and have not merely gathered dust on the kitchen shelf (Humble, 2005). One of my families allowed me to examine a series of small cookbooks produced by 'Be-Ro', which each generation had acquired as and when they were published, or were passed from one generation to another, that stand as testament to their use. Notes pinned to such books or scribbled in margins related to 'techniques' that had been developed and reflected personal variations and modifications to the recipes that stand as a testimony to skill and ingenuity.

My next section describes how I identified and recruited my participants for informal interviews and conversations and the eight families for in-depth interviews, ethical concerns around data collection and the position and role of the researcher.

2.5 *Study population and sampling strategy*

Whereas statistical sampling can offer the statistically significant generalisability of a randomly selected sample of respondents, in field research participants are selected “for their knowledge of a particular setting which may complement the researcher’s observations and point towards further investigation” (Burgess, 1984: 75). I made use of this ‘purposive’ sampling because I felt confident that such a sample would produce the most valuable data. Having located these participants I was able to expand the sample by using ‘snowball’ sampling (Robson, 2002); I asked participants to recommend others who might be willing to talk to me in any capacity about food, memory and health.

Although throughout the period of my research I purposely shopped, ate out, visited places of interest such as libraries and so on in order to collect data, numerous conversations happened purely by chance, or were opportunistic, for example, in hospital waiting rooms, cafes, waiting at bus stops and travelling on trains, local clubs, at family gatherings, parties, walking around the local market and street venues. It appeared that most people have *something* of significance to say about food, something that is important to them or they felt strongly about and I did not find it difficult or awkward to enter into a conversation about it. Such conversations centred on a number of topics including shopping venues, regeneration, family meals or, in particular, memories of the past.

I recruited participants for informal interview through a colleague who worked in the community of Garston and had numerous contacts with stakeholders and agencies. I followed these leads through telephone conversations and e-mails and personally approached the managers of local supermarkets. The first three of my eight families were ‘hand-picked’ through the same colleague headed by Susan, Margaret and Frances respectively. Friends introduced me to Mollie’s family. The families were identified as meeting the criteria for the study, that is, each family consisted of three or four generations (closely related) the youngest of which was not under sixteen years of age and all of whom were born and bred, and had continued to live, in Liverpool. I had hoped my fieldwork would be confined to Garston, however, it soon became apparent that only four families could be located that fitted the criteria for the study and where all members were willing to be interviewed. I therefore had to widen my net to other parts of Liverpool; a family member put me in touch with Lily and

her family from Kirkby (Family 5); a university colleague introduced me to Marion who hails from Allerton (Family 6) and friends introduced me to Elizabeth from Kensington (Family 7) and Rose from Stoneycroft (Family 8). My sample could also be described as one of 'convenience' – the families were easy to contact and reach and were 'hospitable' to my inquiry (Stake, 1995). It was difficult to find families that comprised four generations – only Susan's and Lily's families met this criteria. However, I considered myself lucky to have found them, and moreover, that each generation was prepared to be interviewed. I wanted to include male members of families to discover whether their relationship and attitudes towards food was different from that of women, particularly as male participants within family settings appear to be missing in food research. Six men from five families took part and fell into the age range 16 to 65. In total, twenty-two women participated in the age range 17 to 97.

In recruiting four and three generational families my aim has been to gain an insight into familial experiences from the turn of the twentieth century to the first decade of the twenty-first; through the longevity of members one is afforded the opportunity to study a longer period of shared lives between generations and a longer 'round of life'. This may reveal a significant role for older members, for example the relationship between grandmothers and grandchildren, but at the same time older members may suffer the loss of their own children. In the face of a diverse range of experiences and adjustments to societal change, economic status and historical events, family ties and support may be particularly strong and resilient bringing benefits to members. However, whilst changes in family structure, values and practices may have positive connotations, they can also cause tension between generations. Importantly, longevity within families enables the researcher to collect and analyse data across time 'from the horse's mouth', so to speak, rather than relying on historical records or biographical works. It is possible to study how participants identify with specific time frames from the past (that can range from one hundred years ago to the last few years) and how these interact with the present at every stage of the life-course.

My families are referred to as 'stayers'; for one reason or another they have taken up a long and shared residency in specific locales (Thompson, 1993). Having always lived in the same geographical location, my families partly define themselves in terms of 'place' - what a particular place represents, both culturally and socially, is reaffirmed by the enduring

presence of, and relationships with, family members and significant others. We may think we hold a similar relationship, or similar ideas in our heads, about the places where we were brought up, but these may differ between those who have remained living in such places to those who move away, or those who move in from outside the area, for example, commuters who move onto newly built estates within range of cities. Jack (2010) remarks about a rare return visit to Bolton, “[I] have kept memories like a small collection of photographic slides: The Sunday school “walking days” at Whitsun, the smoking mill chimneys, the bottles of dandelion and burdock fetched from the corner shop” (p. 20). Such memories remain untouched by physical changes, or influenced by the changing moods and social climate of the area.

Large families in particular tend to remain ‘rooted’ in a particular place as do generations of families who stay in the same occupation (Thompson, 1993). This ‘proximity factor’ within an urban geographical space is a decisive component in terms of family relationships (Giard et al., 1998). This loyalty to place has enabled me to track the shift from the ‘*gemeinschaft*’ to the ‘*gesellschaft*’ community – my findings reflect the impact these changes have had on individuals and families over time in terms of relationships and day to day living and thus food practices and experiences. The experience of being part of a ‘*gemeinschaft*’ community has produced a number of shared views - when older participants talk of ‘*we* cooked this way’ or ‘in the War *we* would do this’, ‘*we*’ does not merely mean the views of their immediate families, but rather the collective view of the wider community. Conversely, amongst younger participants ‘*we*’ is confined to the immediate family or circle of friends. This shift has produced very different memories between generations and families reflected in my data.

Over a time-span of one hundred years it is possible to explore both continuity and change in household composition and particular ways of family living. I have been able to collect data regarding the complexities of household arrangements where, for instance, the longevity of female family members has involved long stretches of widowhood resulting in a life lived alone or in the households of other family members. In addition, children may live with grandparents rather than their parents; children return home during troubled periods of adulthood; generations of families live in the same road and so on. In addition to a variance in family structures, I have been able to study differing models of family life. Whilst older

generations were more likely to follow the model of the family as a male breadwinner and an economically dependent female home-maker where marriage was considered sacred and large families unavoidable, shifts away from this model could be detected amongst younger generations, for instance, in their expectations and aspirations around education and employment especially amongst female members and the social acceptance of divorce, partnerships and single parenthood.

In order to provide a clear reference indicating the generational make-up and location of households (these families were not related to each other), a kinship diagram can be found in Appendix 3. Barnes (1967) refers to a genealogical chart as being part of the ethnographer's 'minimum obligation' for making fieldwork 'intelligible' to others and providing an adequate description of kinship. In order to contextualise my study, community and family profiles that highlight similarities and differences between and across generations will be the subject of my next chapter.

2.6 *Ethical considerations*

Certain issues needed to be thought through and addressed before an application was made to the Ethics Committee in order to gain the necessary approval for me to proceed with my research project. Whilst I recognise that the Research Committee is there to protect the well being of both researcher and participants, I agree with Hallowell et al., (2005) that research ethics should not rely on the independent scrutiny of a committee based on abstract principles, or merely the good intentions of researchers, but rather on what one *actually does* in the field. 'Procedural ethics' are not enough in that I needed to consider what was right or wrong, good or bad – one has to consider how "the research purposes, contents, methods, reporting and outcomes abide by ethical principles and practices (Cohen et al., 2007: 51). Key issues emerged during the research process that May (2001) argues are not simply theoretical or methodological inconveniences to be overcome, but rather, both the researcher's experience and reflection are "fundamental to the aims of understanding and explaining social relations" (p. 158). Reflection should, therefore, be an 'embedded' practice that takes place throughout the research process rather than at any one particular stage. Thus, throughout my fieldwork I not only questioned whether *what I was doing* was ethical, proper and appropriate, but also *why I was doing it*. I wanted to represent my university well,

particularly as reservations had been expressed about well-meaning ‘outsiders’ coming in to regeneration areas - as one Garston resident commented, “we’ve been researched, reported, interviewed, projected and schemed to death and then they’ve left”.

There is, therefore, a need to respect participants as subjects and not as objects of research to be used and then discarded. Of particular importance are the ideas of ‘non-maleficence’, to do no harm to participants (although harm can be considered an arbitrary concept); ‘beneficence’ whereby research carried out with human subjects should be able to show positive and identifiable benefit rather than research being done for its own sake; ‘autonomy or self-determination’ whereby the values and decisions of the participants should be respected, and finally, ‘justice’ whereby all people should be treated equally (Murphy & Dingwall, 2001). Therefore, I kept a check on all my families through my many returns to the field, phone calls or written correspondence in order to show my concern for their welfare (where appropriate) and allow me to find out whether they agreed with my interpretation of the data. I also sought clarification of explanations regarding the value of my findings through their criticisms and thoughts that would help me reflect on the research process.

2.7 The position and role of the researcher

Throughout the research process I needed to reflect on my position, role and participation, the nature of the interaction between myself and my participants and an awareness of the attention that needed to be paid to theoretical and methodological debate (May, 2001). There are certain principles and strategies for participating in everyday settings – different views and forms of participating are open to the researcher and it is how and where the researcher locates herself/himself in respect to the phenomena under study that will in turn both limit and facilitate the nature of the research. For example, the degree of participation raises the key issue of objectivity in that interpretative researchers regard observation as a process:

Direct involvement in the here and now of people’s daily lives provides both a point of reference for the logic and process of participant observational inquiry and a strategy for gaining access to phenomena that commonly are obscured from the standpoint of a non-participant (Jorgensen, 1989: 9).

One not only has to decide whether, to what extent, or in what instances, one becomes a

participant or non-participant observer, it is also about whether one carries out 'overt' or 'covert' research. Does the researcher fully disclose (overt) what he or she is doing to those under study or can one justify complete secrecy (covert)? The latter is often adopted in sensitive areas of research that provides an 'inside view' of what is being studied and where disclosure might lead to the researcher having a marked affect on those being studied, calling the validity and accuracy of the data into question. A covert approach was used by Humphreys (1969) in the study homosexual acts between strangers in tearooms – the justification being that the activities may have ceased altogether had his identity been known. I ensured that my observations remained unobtrusive and low key and I did not enter places that involved sensitive issues, or vulnerable people. To observe children cooking in Garston community centre I sought permission from the officer in charge and provided a background to my study. Out of courtesy and respect I talked to the cook in charge about issues concerning food in the community, my research project and why such observation would be valuable to my work. I did not consider my study to be of such a highly sensitive nature that I could not be open and honest about my research project that would call into question the validity and accuracy of my data. The interviews took place with the participants' written consent and consent from those who cared for participants under eighteen years of age (Appendix 4). In order to ensure that this consent was as informed as possible a participant sheet was given to each family member that ensured that we were aware of each other's expectations; together we discussed fully both the project and the research process and an assurance of anonymity (Appendix 5).

However, similar to Lofland (1973) I was able to carry out unstructured observation in public spaces, for example, observing shopping practices in large supermarkets by 'blending into the scenery', doing what everyone else was doing, not in a completely detached manner but neither becoming deeply involved in what was going on. The strength of a phenomenological approach using ethnographic methods lies in the capacity to study people in their everyday settings, describing their behaviour and understanding the meanings they use to arrange their lives that helps minimise the influence of the researcher's own biases in recording authentic accounts. However, within this context a tension between detachment and immersion may lead to 'going native', in other words, the researcher stops observing and becomes a participant (Malinowski, 1922). I had to ask myself to what degree I had been objective and whether, at the end of the day, it mattered. I counteracted this hurdle through

constant reflexivity, assessment and re-assessment of my research involvement, in other words, I observed *my own* participation. Over-familiarisation with the situation and the setting can lead to certain, often tacit, aspects becoming neglected or missed; consequently, I strove to regard the familiar as if through the eyes of a 'stranger' often by finding what was the exception rather than the rule or making cross-familial comparisons (Schutz, 1972).

Although the aim of collecting ethnographic data is to allow participants to expose their way of seeing things without the preconceptions of the researcher being imposed (McConway & Davey, 2001), a central issue in qualitative research is the problem of bias and how this can be overcome when we are involved in exploration of subjective meaning. Whilst Creswell (2003) recognises that it is inevitable that researchers' backgrounds help shape how they interpret or make sense of the meanings others have about the world, in 'positioning' themselves in the research they should endeavour to 'bracket' their experiences in order to understand those of the participants in the study. However, doing so is not as easy as it sounds. McLean & Leibing (2007) see a 'blurred' border, a degree of tension, between the personal life of the researcher and the use of formal ethnographic methods; 'life' and 'work' meet in the attempt to carry out a critical study whilst at the same time one strives to see the world through the eyes of others. In other words, researchers are not 'hidden from themselves' (de Laine, 2000) and ethnographic discourses are only 'partial truths' and the cultures that are portrayed are in part a product of the researcher's imagination (Clifford, 1986). In this sense, any personal sentiments that might be held by the researcher may be difficult to separate from the experiences gleaned from carrying out the study. There is always a 'shadow' that follows us through the research process – thus in recording people's life histories and their food biographies, I had my own food biography 'in the shadows' (McLean & Leibing, 2007). Rather than being an objective and emotionally detached activity, research can throw up emotional issues for both the researcher and participants at any point during the study (Hallowell et al., 2005). Apart from the emotions I experienced as a researcher – fear, loneliness, frustration, doubt, excitement, satisfaction and so on – emotions connected with my own relationship with food and food practices involving family bonds, intense interest and appreciation, resonated with those of my participants; thus empathy played a part in the research process. McLean & Leibing (2007) further comment that the knowledge and experience the researcher possesses may illuminate or obstruct what can potentially emerge from the whole research process. The production of knowledge is

one, therefore, that comes jointly from the researcher and his or her participants. In co-constructing stories around food I was able to make sense of my own and others experience of food and eating – I would draw on my own experience of food episodes in response to my participants' stories. I did not ask people to reveal their food stories without revealing anything of mine. I recognise that such stories are influenced by gender, culture, history, socio-political factors and experiences and feelings and although such contexts may have differed, there existed enough common ground to make comparisons and arrive at understandings.

In my consideration of the fact that researchers' values, position and notions of truth are integral to ethical concerns I realised that the research process is far from easy. For example, I had to tread a difficult path between an assurance concerning anonymity and confidentiality on the one hand and a true description of the field and my participants on the other. In close communities the barest descriptions can lead to instant recognition and I had to be very careful when using explicit, descriptive pieces of data for inclusion in my final thesis. A lot of data disclosed 'secrets' and hidden feelings about family members described as 'off the record' or "between you and me", referred to by Mitchell (1991) as the 'back stages' of people's lives, or by de Laine (2000) as 'guilty knowledge'. These could not be used even though they would have been extremely illuminating and explanatory in terms of food practices, relationships, beliefs, feelings and emotions. This need for confidentiality did create 'gaps' and 'silences' that I could not fill or explain to supervisors (or consequently to examiners). This was very frustrating, but unavoidable. I cannot, therefore, lay claim to revealing the complete picture concerning familial eating practices linked to the senses and emotions – I can only partially reveal what I 'know' of my participants. Thus it must be recognised that revelations are partial, bounded by what participants wish others to know, or conversely, not to know (Lovell, 2007).

The researchers' role can vary in how much time is spent in the setting or with the group on a daily basis (intensiveness) and the duration of the study over time (extensiveness). If the researcher intends to spend some time in the setting, or with the group, then prior to any data collection it is necessary to develop sustainable and trusting relations with the participants (Mason, 2002). Trustworthiness and its components can replace more conventional views of reliability and validity (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). I knew the time spent with families and

groups would be limited, but at the same time I needed to build a certain rapport with them in order to obtain the richest description possible of their lives in connection with food practices. The way people lived and how they conducted themselves differed, but no situation was alien to me. In my sixty years of living I have experienced both ordered and disordered households, the pristine and non-pristine, happy and sad, pleasant and unpleasant. Some I could equate with my own way of living and some not – I came to appreciate cultural fluency as well as cultural difference. I took my cue from my participants as how I should act or what was expected of me in terms of manners and codes of conduct. I recognised that there existed variations in the use of colloquialisms and vocabulary that I needed to adopt, and adapt to, in relation to the questions I asked and how I asked them. I made sure that what I wore would not offend or alienate me from my participants – I did not overdress in a formal suit, or choose anything outlandish that might serve as a social barrier, but neither did I wear overly casual clothes that might be seen as a lack of respect or reflect an ambivalent attitude. I ensured I was punctual and fulfilled any promises I made, such as to supply a copy of a recipe, bring special food to taste and share or find a photograph or newspaper clipping. I was careful not to outstay my welcome or make too hasty an exit. I was particularly aware of the advancing age of some of my participants and looked for signs of tiredness or discomfort set against their obvious desire to chat a while and tell me their stories. I felt privileged to have shared segments of their lives with them and I told them so.

I remained in the field for sufficient time that ensured, as far as possible, the careful presentation of myself as researcher; each family was visited at least three times, and I also continued to return to the field after my data collection to let them know that I not only valued their contribution to my research, but that I also valued them as people and cared about what was happening in their lives. My fieldwork site was not my home – the two had not ‘blurred’ or become indistinguishable (Weil, 1986). From being a ‘stranger’, I had built up an ‘acquaintanceship’ and whereas within some communities I would never be a complete ‘insider’, neither was I a complete ‘outsider’ (Parkin, 1997). If I saw my participants in the street or inside a shop there would be an instant recognition, a smile, a stretching out of the hand. In some cases where there was no expectation that our relationship would be more than an acquaintanceship contact slowly diminished as I withdrew over time from the field. In other cases, however, the acquaintanceship extended to an invitation for a cup of tea, a visit or even a meal and initiated a real and lasting friendship – participants moved from

being ‘subjects of interest’ to becoming part of my life. In many ways these friends changed me and challenged my approach to life; I have ‘learned’ and ‘learned to’ as well as ‘learned about’ including my own limitations and weaknesses (Lapadat, 2009).

The next section of this chapter explains how I analysed my data. This is important in qualitative research in that ‘showing the workings’ displays how subjectivity has been addressed and is a “major way in which rigour can be maintained, and makes the writing of the research a central element in achieving accountability” (Holliday, 2002: 47). If we adopt the stance that research constructs its own reality, then it is important to show how this reality has been constructed by the researcher.

2.8 *Data analysis*

This was the point at which I needed to put aside all knowledge I had gained from sources other than my own data and ‘immerse’ myself in the latter, that is, ‘hearing’ what my data had to say (Riley, 1990). My analysis, that is the ‘interpretation’ phase of qualitative research that produces understanding, followed on from the phases of ‘invention’ (the formulation of my research design and plan of action) and ‘discovery’ (the data collection that produces information), all of which needs to lead to the phase of ‘explanation’, communicating with others and producing a message (Kirk & Miller, 1986). In this case I wanted to send a message about the nature of what is ‘there’, the reality of everyday worlds around food and how it is practiced and experienced.

My field notes were organised (and initial analysis started) early on in the data collection period, for one is “faced with thousands of words: the experience written in chronological form” (Okely, 2004: 193). Qualitative analysis of interviews and field notes involves ‘decontextualisation’ whereby one codes and categorises data through a process of data reduction for management and retrieval, and ‘recontextualisation’ which identifies themes and relationships through a process of data complication (Coffey & Atkinson, 1996). In order to achieve this, word-for-word transcripts were made from the tape recordings (I believed this was the best way for me to familiarise myself with the data) and multiple copies made. The transcripts from each family were assigned a separate folder and labelled and this was repeated for each generation across the families as well as male and female participants.

In order to ensure that I was 'seeing' the responses in a way that could be shared by others (Grbich, 1999) and in order to guard against 'selectivity bias' (Gillham, 2000), the assistance of a colleague was sought to analyse independently a selection of my own field notes (clearly written up) and to write a summary of each of the interview transcripts. This proved useful in that my colleague identified certain 'leading' questions and questions that could be followed up. The meanings that emerged from the data were then studied and verified by the participants who wanted to be involved in the process and later by my colleague and I. We were able to pinpoint different attitudes, feelings and experiences around food and eating practices. The value of recording data became apparent when my fellow researcher interpreted a written script differently from myself with regard to emotion and memories. We felt this had arisen from the fact that she had a far more emotional attachment to food than I did. We played back the tapes to discuss and ascertain how the memories were expressed and to what degree they displayed emotion. According to Bernard (1994) "validity itself depends on the collective opinion of the researchers" (p. 43).

A thematic coding frame developed from the themes identified from the reading of the transcripts, and the key substantive points that emerged were put into core categories which were further split into sub-categories. Each theme was given a particular colour and this colour was used to mark instances within the transcripts of each family member. The page and paragraph number was then recorded in the relevant category within the coding frame. Space was provided for particular 'inter-generational' comments, similarities and differences. Working between the coding frame and the transcripts I was able to identify meanings that emerged from the most commonly occurring themes, words or ideas thus reducing the number of responses. Poignant phrases or sentences were marked with gold stars as the categorisation of direct quotations provides substance and meaning to the data and displays the range and character of responses (Gillham, 2000). Initial themes for my coding frame, examples of emerging categories, sub-categories and theories and how I used these in conjunction with transcripts, can be found in Appendix 6.

This procedure was repeated in relation to my data from participant observation/observation, informal interviews and conversations using an iterative process. Data accuracy can be more easily assured if it emerges from multiple contexts (Okely, 2004). Through a reflexive approach I kept returning to the data to question it, think it through, to open it up and see

what I had in the light of what I had subsequently learnt. This not only enabled me to recognise when I had reached 'saturation' point, that is, when nothing new was emerging that could contribute to the knowledge I had already accrued, but also ensured rigour.

New files were then created for each of the major themes and categories that emerged that would form my chapter headings and sub-headings. It was then necessary to test whether the ideas and interpretations that emerged from the data were robust as I searched between and across families for:

- (a) negative and contradictory ideas within the data
- (b) the limitation of ideas shown by the emerging data
- (c) patterns, similarities and ideal examples of the idea
- (d) contradictions from respondents
- (e) the emergence of new concepts.

Relevant pieces of data were cut from the transcript copies and put into the relevant files. I was aware this could be done, to a certain extent, by computer. However, as Okely (2004) points out "no computer can stand in for the ethnographer's discovery of emergent themes as fieldwork progresses, nor the final thinking and analysis" (p. 194).

Not only did I find a wealth of ideas emerging from the 'thick descriptions' contained in my field notes, but also some of my best ideas, a kind of 'bolt from the blue', a sudden clarity, came to me when I was not immersed in my data, going about some mundane task at home, out shopping or following a chance remark made by a friend or colleague or a quote in the media. At these times I would revisit my data to see if these constantly evolving ideas and interpretations frequently occurred, whether they were robust and could be used in my final analysis. Alternatively they sometimes proved useful as an exception to the rule or proved to be a weak idea and best dismissed. Revisiting the literature made it possible for me to see if I could expand, challenge or agree with existing theories and explanations, for example, Marx's theories of alienation and commodity fetishism, or what theoretical considerations emerged from the data during the analysis in relation to such concepts as 'routinization' and 'embodiment'. I would scrutinize my data anew if I felt a fresh take was emerging from an existing theory. In relation to 'embodied' memory I identified new themes concerning 'comfort' and

reconnection with the past in relation to traditional foods. In looking at the nature of changing food practices I would refer back to my historical account of Liverpool to see what particular contexts may have influenced those practices, for example, the lived experience of rationing during the war years, poverty and changing communities.

2.9 *The question of validity*

Following the recommendations of Meadows & Morse (2001) I believe I achieved validity through literature searches, adhering to phenomenological method, 'bracketing' past experiences (as far as possible), keeping field notes, using an adequate sample, identification of negative cases, interviewing until saturation of data was achieved, using a multi-method approach, and collaboration during data analysis that involved experienced fellow researchers with findings verified by participants and key informants.

How reliable and replicable is participant observation? For exponents of participant observation the key issue is rather that one gets close enough to people under study to understand and interpret their meanings properly without changing their behaviour. The most valid data are those collected *in* context – the strength of ethnographic fieldwork is that it studies issues within the situations in which they are played out (Ackroyd & Hughes, 1992). In relation to my study, Connor & Armitage (2002) argue that although sensory/biological influences are crucial to scientific explanations of food choice, "these processes are best understood in the context of the social world" (p. 12).

2.10 *Generalisability*

A criticism often levelled at ethnographic work is the extent to which the results of field study can be generalised. It is true to say that ethnographic findings cannot be generalised in a quantitative way and I therefore addressed this question in the same way as Jordan & Dalal (2006) by asking, how big a universe did I need to generalise my findings to? I believed this to be relatively small, being that it was a local study that pertained to the city of Liverpool. My findings revealed a *general* insight into cultural and social practices around food and eating (by nature transient and personal) within Liverpool, for example, the importance of traditional food and practices, the impact of war, lay health beliefs and changes within

communities. I have studied “general phenomena in a local social context” (Brunt, 2001: 86). Therefore, evidence that emerged from my *particular* data and findings might make the study *applicable* to other field sites, in which case, it may be considered valuable to carry out a similar study within a similar site or carry the research forward. As Kirk & Miller (1986) point out, ethnographers can only report what happened to *them* in the field at a particular time and how participants responded to *them* – they cannot account for life before they arrived or, indeed, changes that may happen in the future. As Blaxter (1990) reminds us, we can only make claims that our data can bear.

In view of the fact that phenomenology places great emphasis on the specific contexts in which people live, work and play, my next chapter provides a ‘thick description’ of my eight families that compares and contrasts, across time, their background, settings, structure and organisation and the context in which each separate family household or unit functions. My interest lies in the way various family members ‘place’ themselves in a particular area of Liverpool in relation to their homes, streets and communities, and their feelings and experiences of the many changes that have taken place over time.

CHAPTER THREE

EIGHT LIVERPOOL FAMILIES:

A sense of space and place, home, time and class

Introduction

This chapter is concerned with eight families who have resided throughout their lives in particular areas of Liverpool, apart from a few incidences of short-term residence in other parts of the city or evacuation during World War Two. Where one lives is important because places, we are told, make a difference to people's health; however, neighbourhoods, people's 'home ground', are complex systems (local, national and global) with which individuals and their households interact. Thus the relationship between place and health is not one of simple cause and effect that can be studied empirically from a mere geographical perspective (Blackman, 2006). In any phenomenological study of health, places are important because they form an integral part of the social world of everyday life (de Certeau, 1984). They are the common element within different social groups and the context of particular age groups affects lived experiences (Cuba & Hummon, 1993). A study of family and community life over three and four generations, therefore, needs to consider the impact of socio-economic, cultural, historical, political and environmental factors that are known to affect health (Ottawa Charter for Health Promotion, 1986; Seedhouse, 2001). Ethnography stresses the importance of 'thick description' in order for the reader to become familiar with the context of the study and the backgrounds against which participants go about their daily lives. Phenomenology stresses the need to understand life from the 'inside' and how people interpret the world around them that is influenced by how and where they place themselves in it. People also define the 'times' they have passed through in a number of ways. Although sociologists might refer to the transition from the 'modern' to the 'post-modern', people may express their experience of a changing world and their relationship to it in very different terms. Goody (1968) reminds us that in the study of customary ways of doing things that produce 'categories of understanding' within social and cultural groups (such as practices around food), these are only partly driven by verbal means. They are also accompanied by ideas of space and time, generalised goals and aspirations that all contribute to people's lived experiences.

This chapter, therefore, is divided into five sections in which I situate my families; a sense of place and a sense of home, a sense of time and a sense of class, followed by household structure and management.

3.0 *A sense of place*

Family identity in terms of how members place themselves in their immediate world is bound up in a certain sense of belonging wrapped up in the aphorism ‘home is where the heart is’ which can refer to a country, a region, a city, a street or a single residence. Although my families all hail from what is now the County of Merseyside, the differing locations in which they live have, over time, taken on a number of characteristics which make them distinct from each other – my participants do not regard them as *just* another collection of inner city areas or suburbs each melting anonymously into the other. The boundaries that separate places and create spaces may be actual or imagined. Official boundaries have been created according to electoral wards, areas of regeneration, Health Action Zones and so on where people have been grouped together with the implication that their shared residence within those boundaries has some kind of collective meaning. However, these boundaries do not necessarily correspond with each other and people may not be sure whether they are ‘insiders’ or ‘outsiders’ when it comes to location. Consequently a sense of place and community may be influenced more by family transmission, personal preference and cultural norms rather than by any official dictum. Thus families collectively, or individually, may prefer to be known as, or may say they are typical, Garstonians, Liverpoolians, Merseysiders or ‘Scousers’.

People may ascribe different meanings to the places in which they live; we are located in ‘space’ but we act in ‘place’ and such places are spaces that may, or may not, be respected or valued (Cuba & Hummon, 1993). As an observer, I may have a particular impression of an area, but this may be very different from the impression residents themselves hold. I may not have thought in the first instance that I would find supportive environments in either Garston Village or Kirkby until I studied families of ‘stayers’, families rooted in one place over many generations (Thompson, 1993). The home itself may be used as an expression of who we are, how we wish others to see us, and may reflect economic status, class, race or gender (Blunt & Dowling, 2006). Thus, homes are of symbolic significance in terms of ‘cultural capital’ and

a 'judgement of taste' where one explores and interprets what is consumed and how it is consumed; taste can be about aesthetics and style of objects as well as the evaluation of social practices and status (Bourdieu, 1984; Gronow, 1997).

I will focus here on what my families define as 'local'; the immediate area in which my families live, their homes, their 'hearth', in other words the 'embeddedness' of home. I offer a 'thick description' of the places and spaces my participants frequent as they go about their daily lives and the meanings they give to such places and spaces that help to explain why these families have remained in the same locale. I will compare and contrast family backgrounds, settings, structure and organisation and the context in which each separate household (that collectively make up the families) functions without compromising the anonymity of my participants. Factual data have been taken from the most recent 'Ward Profiles' (updated in August, 2009) provided by Liverpool City Council (<http://www.liverpool.gov.uk>).

The first part of this section focuses on Garston, my initial fieldwork site, where my first four families reside, three in the original 'working class' area of Garston headed by Susan (Family 1), Margaret (Family 2) and Frances (Family 3) respectively, and Mollie's family (Family 4) who live in what might be called the more 'middle class' area of Garston known as Cressington.

Older members of Family 1, 2 and 3 call themselves 'Garstonians' as their lives and memories are strongly rooted in 'the Village' that at one time could offer them everything they needed for day to day living without having to travel into the city. In its heyday, a period that extended from the mid nineteenth century to the start of the economic decline in the mid twentieth century, Garston was divided into two separate areas: the densely crowded High Street of St Mary's, known as 'the Village' and the area known as 'Under-the Bridge' (where one turns off the top of the High Street and passes under a stone bridge). The High Street, at this time, comprised a myriad of thriving small businesses and shops. Margaret can remember trips to the High Street on Saturday afternoons as being *the* social occasion of the week, something 'you got dressed up for'. 'Under the Bridge' consisted of hundreds of houses for local workers served by churches, shops and schools. A vast industrial and commercial area was covered by the docks and related industries including the gas and bottle

works, the bobbin and match factories, a tannery and a cluster of giant warehouses. These provided the bulk of employment for Garston and surrounding areas (Garston and District Historical Society, 2004). Susan's father came to Garston from a mining village in Wales in order to take up more steady and higher paid employment in the bobbin works and both Susan and her husband followed him there and later most of their children including Joy who commented "they churned you out of school at fifteen to be factory workers – that's what you expected to be". Margaret's father was a captain on the hoppers and he secured work for her brothers who in turn secured work for their children; Frances worked part-time in the matchworks and her husband in the bottleworks – Denise followed Frances into the matchworks. Thompson (1993) comments that transmission of occupation is the most widespread form of cultural transmission in families and often keeps them rooted in one place. Such work makes up the 'solidarity practices' referred to by Giard et al. (1998) that provide collective identities within 'working families'.

In contrast, Cressington, the geographical location of Family 4, whilst lying within the boundary of Garston, is marked separately on the district map. Such distinction can be observed by virtue of the leafy suburban landscape of the former and the terraced Victorian housing, industrial heritage and landscape of the latter. According to current ward statistics, Garston has a higher crime and mortality rate, lower mean household income, home ownership and educational standards and almost double the amount of unemployed people drawing 'Job Seeker's Allowance' than Cressington. Mollie has her own 'imagined' boundary that separates, in her memory, her family of shop owners and professional office workers from factory and dock workers; the Scousers from the 'Non-Scousers', each coming, as she sees it, from a different side of the track that is played out in different ways of living. Thus these two areas may be close physically, but are not considered to be close neighbours in a social sense. Whilst Mollie distances herself from Garston, she is happy to share a border with Aigburth, an area with similar characteristics to Cressington – "they are more like us ... we have more in common".

Cressington comprises, in the main, detached and semi-detached houses in leafy, grass-verged roads and cul-de-sacs. All the street lights work, the gutters are clear, the pavements and roads are in good condition and it feels comfortable and safe to walk around. It has an orderly feel about it – the gardens are neat, the hedges are trimmed, there is little or no litter,

bins are only put out on the right day and remain hidden or neatly placed in the driveways at other times and there is no graffiti. Modern cars sit in driveways – very few people walk around. It is relatively quiet, even peaceful, away from the main road. It is a suburb that has remained intact and undisturbed by redevelopment. People may, or may not, greet you in the road, but they do not look away or seem to view you with suspicion. Mollie and her daughter Grace tell me they both feel safe and comfortable here; this is the place they feel ‘at home’.

Mollie and her husband live in a semi-detached house built in the 1940s, as does Grace, her husband and young adult son – both families feel deeply rooted in, and attached to, the homes where they have lived throughout marriage. Both houses have a small, neat front garden, a garage and large well-kept gardens to the rear with a lawn, bird feeders, a garden bench and well-stocked flower beds. Mollie’s husband has continued to grow vegetables in a small patch at the far end of the garden – excess crops are given to family, neighbours and friends and I am offered beetroot and runner beans. I feel welcome.

Jon (Grace’s son), his wife and small daughter live in a smaller house that is rented and sits just off a busy main road. There is a very small front and back garden-come-yard where I interviewed Jon on several occasions. This is a temporary home – a starter home before the family can move on to something larger when they can afford a mortgage. It does not have an air of permanence or commitment about it – the walls need painting, the back garden is somewhat neglected and the front door keeps sticking. Jon recognises this feeling of impermanence and knows that “things need doing”, but that “it’s not worth it because we know we’re not going to be here long”. Jon’s house lies on the border between Cressington and the ‘working class’ area of Garston, the point at which the built environment begins to change.

Whilst Cressington has remained relatively affluent and unchanged, industrial Garston has taken the brunt of the economic decline and the transfer of trading which affected Liverpool and Merseyside during the second half of the twentieth century. Its long maritime history survives today through the Associated British Ports Garston Docks and the ship breaking yard of S. Evans Limited, but the sidings, coal drops, bananas and timber yards have all gone. Mechanisation has meant that the docks offer little employment (Lewis, 2003). The various works and related industries have all disappeared, leaving disused buildings and vast tracks

of empty wasteland; the Bryant and May match factory being the last to close in December 1995. This is reflected in the changing occupations (but not residence) of younger participants who, during the decline, began to move into car factories, shops and offices outside the immediate area because they offered better pay and conditions, for example, the 'Ford' car plant in Halewood. With these changes came a decline in the social affiliations people enjoyed through working in local industries. Margaret, who lives Under-the-Bridge, has seen the steady closure of all her local pubs (leaving just a social club where one can enjoy a drink in the evening) and the loss of the 'Gas Works Social Club' (which was open to non-members) that offered activities and amenities including Christmas and New Year parties, a bowling green and football club.' Whilst Garston, the place, was at one time defined by its docks, related industries and factories that created a 'working class culture' made up of 'working families', my interviews and conversations show that as people increasingly took up work outside the area this identity became somewhat lost and is now embedded in memories. Older people define Garston in relation to the past but the loss of the familiar make it difficult for them to describe what Garston "is about" - and all participants are not sure what its future might be.

In addition to this loss of a secure industrial base, the building of a bypass in 1984 (that offered a direct route to Speke and beyond) deadened the 'old' village heart in the sense that the lack of passing trade amputated St. Mary's Road and killed many small businesses (Lewis, 2003). Not only that, homes came under compulsory purchase order – Francis (Family 3) lost her little terraced house near 'the Bridge' and, ironically, the new home she then moved into is now due to be demolished under the current regeneration programme. Garston's main High Street only houses two shops that sell fresh food - a baker and a butcher. Empty shops are in a bad state of repair and boarded up to safeguard against vandalism. Surviving businesses are, in the main, those that provide a service such as hairdressers, tanning and beauty parlours, cafes and take-away food outlets. A "cut-price" supermarket stands at each end of the street and, in addition, a large out-of town shopping centre has been constructed a few miles away. Ritzer (1999) refers to the latter as a 'cathedral of consumption' where people are more likely to interact with the site and what it has to offer rather than with those who work there or with fellow shoppers. Garston has also lost restaurants, a local post office and banking facilities; these buildings, as well as a number of shops, lie derelict or unoccupied alongside new builds.



The New Economics Foundation believes this situation not only drives people away from their local shopping communities that may have been part of the community for generations, but may also cause a “mass extinction ... affecting the character of the places where we live and the diversity at the heart of our culture” (Conisbee et al., 2004: 3) as the following account suggests:

We were in the centre on Saturday doing things ... and we walked through the village and there was nobody there ... it was sad ... because I remember going to the shops when I was little and it was like a day out and you'd go into every shop ... it was like 'Are You Being Served?'¹ ... one of the shops had those little draws and all that ... but now everyone's got cars, so they go up to Morrisons², or Asda³, or Manchester, or the retail park ... so it's like ... and then they're developing 'Under-the-Bridge' and there's people moving out of the area.
(Denise, *Family 3 from Garston*, aged 44: Interview).

Garston is now a designated regeneration area and it is this programme of redevelopment, (boosted, so people have been told, by the 'trickle-down' effect from the Capital of Culture Year) that dominated many of my interviews and conversations with participants when we touched on the changing face of Garston and the future of the area, rather than, for example, changes in health services, the building of supermarkets or local elections. The following account sums up, in many respects, the shared view of the participants I spoke to, or opinions I heard at public meetings in Garston and Kensington. Rather than participants seeing any real benefits beyond the boundary of the city centre, the 'whole thing' is seen as a 'package deal' for people to make money that revolves around the retail and hospitality trades, and despite the fact that people are led to believe the man or woman in the street will benefit from this, it will actually be the large retailers and their shareholders ...

because all they're doing is creating another vice for people to spend their money on ... and employees are likely to come from a certain class of area in order to portray a corporate, designer,

¹ A British sitcom broadcast from 1972-1985 set in a large British Department Store

² Currently Britain's fourth largest supermarket chain

³ Currently Britain's second largest supermarket chain after Tesco and part of the American Wal-Mart giant

image, which will limit the number of people employed in that service industry ... and it won't have a 'trickle down' effect apart from casual labour employed in building business premises, student and private accommodation all priced outside the limits of your average 'Scouser'... more people will come into the city, and there'll be the student pound and taxis will benefit, but beyond the city centre I can't see anything – I can just see neglect, blighted areas, slums, where people are either unemployed or on low incomes that they won't be able to expend in the city. So they'll turn to the local economy ... businesses that provide a service, such as fast food outlets, kebab houses, chippies, hair and beauty salons, sunbed studios and not the butcher, baker or candlestick maker – they've been taken care of by the supermarkets ... there's no sustainable infrastructure in those little communities. So there's this boundary, not physical, but a social one, beyond which there will be no benefit. But when they see the lifestyle, the designer clothes that they cannot attain, they will turn to crime, the discontents ... so in reality the city gets richer and the poor on the periphery get poorer and more deprived.
(Anthony, Family 8 from Stoneycroft, aged 43: Interview).

Whilst I found widespread agreement with these sentiments, there were mixed views that voiced both the positive and the negative, hopes and doubts, summed up in the following account:

If regeneration leads to more lasting jobs, then that would be a good thing, because we need them ... erm ... I believe that will boost the economy, and if we compare it, for example, with places like Dublin that has been 'Capital of Culture' at one time, their economy was greatly boosted, they became much more cosmopolitan as a city, and that has remained way after the event as being a culturally recognised city that's thriving... and that's really good ... erm ... but when I say thriving I hate to think that business people come in from outside to kind of make their profit on the back of us and then disappear afterwards and leave us to it. Or, I don't like the idea of the greedy people preying on the local community ... so it would be nice to think that it was something of substance and lasting for people who have to continue to live here. I think it's a terrible shame because it's really affected people at the grass roots, but it depends what else is replaced there and it's not always as satisfactory ... but the fact is, we're a big population, still booming, and we need new and better housing and the refurbishment of properties and so on. So we've got to speculate to accumulate in a way, we've got to invest in that most basic thing of people's roof over their head. But, yes, it is a concern in other ways, because it's not always for the right reasons, and town planners don't always look at the people, they look at the plans and the money.

(Grace, Family 4 from Cressington, aged 51: Interview).

Maybe it is easier to rationalise and be more hopeful when one is not directly affected by redevelopment programmes - those whose homes are safe and whose lives are not being subject to disruption. As part of the on-going regeneration programme in Garston, homes are being demolished and families moved elsewhere with the option of returning, but not necessarily in close proximity to their families, neighbours and friends amongst whom they now live. The following photograph shows 'new builds' that have replaced property built as late as the 1950s that sit alongside a number of shops and services that once served Garston 'Under-the-Bridge':



The loss of these social networks is a cause for concern amongst families in the area:

I don't think people will come back once they go ... two or three years down the line and they'll be settled and they'll think, 'I can't be bothered with this, I've settled here now'. And then where we are, we're our own little community and we wanted to be by our neighbours, [but now] they can't guarantee it ... it's like they've strung us all up ... there's always been such a real, real, strong sense of community here and we're all related in one way or the other.

(Terrance, Family 2 from Garston, aged 55: Interview).

Although in some ways they are looking forward to having a “brand new house”, Terrance and his wife Ellen (Family 2) feel both resentment and sadness that their “perfectly good” family home for so long is to be knocked down (alongside similar homes) when there is “nothing wrong with it”. Terrance’s daughter Meryl is, in fact, quite heart-broken to think her bedroom and all the familiar rooms that connect her with a sense of family are to be reduced to rubble and she will never be able to go there again – she finds it all “gut-wrenching”. Going home to ‘the familiar’ is a source of comfort and provides her with a “security blanket”.

Family 3, (including extended family) is in a similar situation to Terrance and Ellen in that their homes are all due to be demolished. Their homes form a square with a common play area in the middle where everyone knows each other and there are communal barbecues, New Year parties and childminding all of which are “under threat” because their new gardens will be fenced and they will feel “shut off” from one another. This is the valued ‘space’ and ‘place’ referred to by Cuba & Hummon (1993) – valued by the residents but not by the planners. This group of houses, along with the old terraced properties put up during the industrial boom, have obviously suffered neglect, or are now empty and boarded up since being earmarked for demolition. Whilst some have already been demolished, in the

remaining properties gardens are overgrown, fences broken, bricks smashed and rubbish dumped in alleyways and back yards. It feels like an area condemned to be in a constant state of flux made worse by the fact that the development has dragged on for many years partly due to long protracted negotiations related to the amount being paid out under compulsory purchase orders – “we’re not going to just lie down and roll over” sums up the general attitude.

Garston, then, is losing the strong local links that strengthen community spirit and forms a kind of ‘social glue’ that holds communities together and plays an essential role in regeneration (New Economics Foundation, 2005). The places and businesses that historically have brought local communities together and kept them together are being ‘squeezed out’ despite their importance being recognised by the Government (Blacker, 2010). I did not meet many people who felt hopeful that cohesion will return once the community has been fractured. There have been many plans put forward and then hopes dashed. For instance, local residents had long been told that the derelict site of the old gas works was to be made into a play area surrounded by landscaped gardens, only to learn much later that the whole area is, in fact, contaminated. Blocks of new flats are being built on land that people had hoped would be utilised in some way for the good of the community and ‘safe’ cycle tracks that have been laid down for both children and adults abruptly end at busy road junctions. Ward & Coates (2006) believe that in deprived communities mistrust is narrated through a shared history of disinvestment and loss of services in the locality and ‘broken promises’ by a range of institutions and agencies, which precipitates feelings of social exclusion and disembeddedness. Disillusionment and mistrust in one area of ‘authority’ often seeps into other areas. This has certainly been the case in Garston reflected in comments I heard in public meetings such as:

The only thing that keeps me going here is a strong support network that exists between the various people involved at the ‘grass roots’ of the community ...

Politicians from wherever say one thing to your face, but then act differently ...

We get promised this and that but it rarely comes to anything ...

We’ve heard it *all before*.

Whilst national politics and policies debated by ‘elitists’ in Whitehall may seem remote to the people of Garston, local-level politics is often about a struggle by a number of agencies for some degree of power, a say in what is going on in terms of services and resources.

Seedhouse (2001) reminds us that in terms of health we need to experience a sense of community and belonging, a supportive environment in which we can place a degree of trust. However, participants are still reluctant to turn their back on the area. Whilst Melanie (Family 3) had originally intended to move out of the area to start a new life with her son and partner, more recently she has had a “change of heart” and has applied to buy one of the new properties. Melanie would like to give the place she calls ‘home’ another chance – it is, as she explains, where her ‘roots’ are, where she has been raised by her grandmother and to whom, she says, she owes “a debt of gratitude”.

In contrast, participants from Family 1 still live in the same houses that have been their homes since the start of their married life and are not in the redevelopment zones. Susan and her granddaughter Katherine live on separate estates built in the 1950s – Katherine lives on a private estate where people have personalised their houses with coloured front doors, style of porch, fencing and double glazing. Katherine knows most of her immediate neighbours because the houses around her have not changed hands. She has shared the birth of children, the school run, parties and bereavement with those around her. However, although she stayed at home for several years after the birth of her children, now as a ‘working’ mother (both inside and outside the home) she does not socially interact in the way she used to – “life is more hectic and you don’t share work with people like you do family life”. To partly remedy this loss, Katherine has helped to set up a local netball team which participates in the ‘Sunday League’. Social networks can thus be created in a number of ways.

Susan lives on a council estate and, similar to other long-term residents, has not opted to buy her house because she has never had the capital to do so and “anyway, we all rented in them days”. This is the home where Joy was raised. Joy describes how there was a division in Garston when she was growing up between the terraced houses that still had outside toilets and no bathroom, and their ‘new’ estate where people had ‘proper’ bathrooms, something considered to be ‘posh’. Consequently it became known locally as the ‘Hollywood Estate’. Joy particularly remembers how this estate created a social boundary – people were quick to “raise eyebrows” because her husband came from the terraced streets and she from the ‘Hollywood Estate’ (despite the fact that her husband held down a higher position and earned superior wages as a foreman at the Ford Motor Company than her father and other men on the estate who were employed in the bobbin works). Bathrooms and hot water aside, Susan had a “tough life” managing a family of ten in a three bedroomed home. However, she

explains that the street was as much a playground as individual gardens and children moved freely between neighbouring homes to run errands and to play – this represents the ‘common space’ where the urban working class lived (Gilleard & Higgs, 2005). In contrast, Meryl (Family 2), has lived alone in a similar house since 2001 and to her it is just another ‘corpy’ or ‘ex-corpy’ estate where one applies to be ‘housed’ if one cannot afford a mortgage. Outwardly, the estate seems a ‘grey’ place and the new builds make it look somewhat dated – there are no trees to break up the uniform rows and clusters of ‘grey’ houses and it backs on to the wasteland and demolition sites – in outward appearance, it seems the antithesis of Katherine’s estate and the houses that comprise the suburb of Cressington.

A few roads away from Susan and Meryl, Margaret (Meryl’s grandmother), lives in the same terraced house where she was born and raised until the age of six, the year the Second World War broke out. In the same year Margaret (along with her three brothers and older sister), was evacuated to a smallholding near Southport. Margaret loved this new spacious home, the hot water, the fresh air, gardens and home-produced food that stood in direct contrast to her former meagre diet, cramped living conditions and industrial air. Although her parents had kept in constant touch through letters and visits throughout the period of evacuation, Margaret did not want to return home at the end of the War – these were crucial years in her development and she talked more about this positive experience and period in her life than any other.

Margaret started married life in another part of Garston but returned with her family to look after her father in his later years. Unlike the home of Terrance and Ellen, Margaret’s home is not included in any redevelopment plans. The house is red-brick with neat windows, original oak front door and a scrubbed red door step. Similar to other rows of terraces in the area, the front door opens directly on to the street and a small back yard opens on to an alleyway that separates the house from the next row of terraces. Although the houses are close together, Margaret does not see much of her neighbours who are now, in the main, young, working, married couples who have bought their ‘starter home’. Years ago the street housed families and was a place of much social gathering, but in contrast, on each of my visits, I found it bereft of people except those I saw jumping into their cars and unloading children or shopping on their return. Margaret commented, “it’s just not the same”.

I have described here the contrasting environments of Garston and Cressington and the external styles of the homes of my participants. In relation to Family 1, I did not see Joy's house because I interviewed her in Katherine's home along with her granddaughter Jemma. It made sense to take up the offer to conduct these interviews at the same time due to individual and family commitments and busy life-styles. Consequent visits took place in the community where they work. In relation to Family 2 I did not visit Terrance and Ellen's house because I interviewed Terrance at the same time as his daughter Meryl in her home and I interviewed Ellen with her mother Margaret at their request, returning to see them during one of many shared lunchtimes. I interviewed Denise at her place of work (including subsequent visits) at her request.

The next part of this section will compare and contrast the settings in relation to my remaining families pointing out both similarities and differences with those who reside in Garston. I start with Lily and her family from Kirkby (Family 5), followed by Marion and her family from Allerton (Family 6), moving on to Elizabeth and her family from Kensington (Family 7) and finally Rose and her family from Stoneycroft (Family 8).

Kirkby is a town, rather than an area, within the Metropolitan Borough of Knowsley and was formerly part of Lancashire. Although industrial development had started before the outbreak of the Second World War, it accelerated after the War when the blitzed and historically poor housing stock within the city of Liverpool prompted the building of new estates in outlying districts. Hanley (2007) refers to these estates as 'people-depots' for, similar to the migration of people on to estates in Birmingham, people from some of the poorest areas of Liverpool were arriving in developing Kirkby in their thousands - the population grew at a phenomenal rate on each of four new estates (that included high-rise flats) way in advance of social amenities. Lily can remember the absence of shops or anywhere to go for entertainment when her family arrived. During the era of decline in Liverpool, Kirkby (similar to Garston) became a 'blot on the landscape' – in recent times it has been subject to redevelopment with its industrial base being replaced by service industries and the opening of a new sports centre that houses one of the main athletic and cycling tracks in the region. The family talked at length about the problems of large council estates where the population outstrips facilities and investment is low. On the whole, they think the majority of residents are "honest, law abiding people" who just want "a decent life

and standard of living”, but on the other hand it is common to see gangs of youths just hanging around, abandoned cars, a lot of rubbish and roaming dogs. Robert, Lily’s son, also holds a negative view of regeneration reflecting again this idea of the value of ‘place’ and ‘space’ as he recalls the compulsory move he and his wife had to make from their Liverpool home near the city centre in the 1960s:

Our Liverpool was destroyed in the 60s. They shipped us out to the suburbs ... well, me back to ... and we know we would have had a different life if we’d stayed in Liverpool. My wife cried for months when we first came out here – the life we knew was gone and we’ve never had it back. They let the city go to rack and ruin and now it’s being regenerated with fancy buildings for the well-off not for the likes of us or our children. They live on what was ours and it’s the suburbs where we are now that are in a mess.

(Robert, Family 5 from Kirkby, aged 65: Interview).

Although Lily and her husband reluctantly moved out of their terraced house when the estate was first built, nevertheless, she had welcomed the spaciousness, the bathroom, a newly fitted kitchen, hot water and the garden such a move offered – the nostalgia for the old became fused with the optimism of the new. The house (which Lily eventually purchased in the 1980s) is immaculate and has remained so with the help of Robert and his wife and other family members who all live in close proximity in similar houses on the perimeter of the estate. Being on the perimeter has obvious advantages – when I walked along the road it did not feel as if I was on an estate. The road is very well kept – all the houses are privately owned and are in good condition. Lily knows all her neighbours. However, Lily bemoaned the fact that when the M57 motorway was built in the 1970s through Kirkby (that runs a few yards from the bottom of her garden) people were not consulted about it. The busy road separated her from the open countryside and people she knew. Consequently her once peaceful garden has been increasingly affected by the sound of traffic, traffic I could see and clearly hear (particularly in the rush hour) through her neatly trimmed hedge.

Robert and his wife live further down the road from Lily, semi-detached from the home of their daughter Maureen and granddaughter Sally. Although the occupants are one and two generations apart, their houses are more-or-less identical inside and out. I noticed straight away an identical style of double glazing and on a visit around Christmastime the windows were decorated in a similar style; the same pot plants stand outside the front doors and the back gardens comprise a block paved centre with flower borders and garden shed. There are similar garden benches and ornate butterflies on the walls. Each house appears to be an extension of the other. On subsequent visits I learnt that the family shopped together, shared meals and leisure time together, passed sandwiches over the wall and shared a car.

In contrast to both Kirkby and Garston Village, Allerton is not a re-generating area and housing is more on a par with Cressington. Members of Family 6, although living in close proximity and sharing various aspects of their lives, are located in two different parts of Allerton and different styles of housing. Marion now lives in a purpose-built flat set in lovely grounds away from the main High Street in Allerton. The main advantage of this type of housing is that the maintenance charge covers the exterior building and outside space. Even though the decision to give up her family home was not easy, Marion recognises that “large houses have large mouths” in terms of upkeep, heating, gardening and so on. Similar to Family 1 and 4, the next two generations of Family 6 still live in their semi-detached, red-brick, family home built in the 1950s. Marion’s daughter Pamela Anne and her husband are both retired, but their home remains open to their daughter Katya who comes and goes depending on whether she is working at “home or away”. There is always room, too, for other family visitors to stay. The garden is slightly unkempt with a variety of established shrubs and trees, moss-covered stones and a rickety bench that all reflect the length of residency. To the front of the house there is a common grassy area with mature trees and daffodils (in full bloom during a spring visit) that add a touch of colour and gives a ‘soft’ feel to the area amongst the urban sprawl.

Similar to Cressington, I feel these areas of Allerton provide an ordered and comfortable environment. It shares similar socio-economic indicators with Cressington rather than Garston with whom it shares a border – again, a physical border rather than a social one. In contrast to both Garston and the town of Kirkby, Allerton is well served by a thriving and bustling High Street that runs through its centre comprising an increasing number of bars, cafes and restaurants, the rare presence of an independent butcher and fishmonger, a large supermarket, several greengrocers, clothing stores, charity shops, specialist food stores, take-away outlets, a cinema, estate agents, solicitors, dentists, florists and so on. In other words, this area continues to serve the needs for day to day living similar to Garston in its heyday. Allerton also has good public transport links to the city centre and affordable rents that makes it popular with students which no doubt helps to sustain the local economy.

Kensington, where Family 7 reside, is also an area popular with students, as it sits within easy reach of the city centre and offers relatively cheap accommodation in older-type properties. The main thoroughfare is a mixture of old and new shops, old-style public houses, an abundance of take-away outlets, betting shops and small cafes. Kensington, one of the most

deprived districts in the country, is being redeveloped under a 'New Deal Project' with an estimated budget of twenty-four million pounds which began in 2008 (<http://www.riverside.org.uk/riverside/community7>). The area is known locally as 'the Kenny', although Family 7 would rather say they come from 'Kensington' that separates their sense of place and space in one of the pockets of tree-lined avenues that lie outside the "troublesome" and neglected areas that are subject to redevelopment. Bernie explains that if you say you come from 'the Kenny' people automatically assume that you live in one of the "run-down" areas. Bernie's home, where up until a few month's ago Elizabeth lived and where Sophie and her son live at the present time, lies in a cul-de-sac that is made up of large, well-kept three and four storey Georgian houses with large extended back gardens that overlook a neatly preserved Victorian park. I feel this park serves as a signifier of a lasting prosperity that has survived from Victorian times and neatly separates this 'pocket' from the poorer areas that are also a legacy of this era and marked by regeneration.

Just as Family 7 live in a kind of residential 'pocket' within regenerating Kensington, Stoneycroft could also be described as a special 'pocket' that differs from the surrounding areas of Tuebrook. These two areas comprise the Ward that is the second most deprived quintile in Liverpool. Such a description is remarkable as, when I walk along the streets to visit the homes of Patricia, Anthony and Kieran and that of Rose (Family 8), the streets would not look out of place in an English country village. Just like the area of Kensington where Family 7 live, these few streets within Stoneycroft represent a hidden space and place that a passer-by might not discover unless on a special mission such as mine. Family 8 describe Stoneycroft as "a little gem", a "unique place" that they would never want to leave. The properties are now valuable and 'well sought after' according to local estate agents. The streets are linked to one another by a street running north, thus eliminating 'through' traffic. Red stone terraces and cottages line the streets with pretty window boxes, neat stone-walled gardens, small paned windows, as well as a couple of 'village' type pubs and weeping willow trees. Rose has one of the prettiest gardens I have ever seen with an abundance of flowers and shrubs that reflects her knowledge and love of plants. This represents the one positive legacy from Rose's "extremely unhappy" period of evacuation to a farm in Wales with only two of her brothers at the start of World War Two – a very different experience to Margaret (Family 2).

In this first section I have attempted to give the reader a 'sense of place' in terms of where

my families physically reside. I now turn to a 'sense of home' – what turns a house into a home and the similarities and differences amongst my participants.

3.1 *A sense of home*

As I step through somebody's front door, I form an impression of the home I am walking into, what makes this house into a home – maybe it is the style of greeting, the body language, the children, the dog, the light or dark wallpaper, colours, whether the plant in the hall is alive or dead, the smell, whether it is warm or cold. I hope it will tell me something about the people who live there – how they live, what they do, what they value. Within these family homes I try to find the things that connect them to other family members, not just in terms of what I can see, but how people act, what they say and how they say it. I also look for what separates generations, what makes them different or somewhat disconnected. When I leave I reflect on my visit and whether I have come away with something I did not expect, something good, or conversely maybe I feel I have not learned very much. I looked at my notes and re-ran my tapes before I began to write this part of my chapter. When I re-visit the homes of my participants I try to keep the purpose of this section firmly in the back of my mind.

The first things I committed to memory when I visited the homes of my older participants was the immediate offer of a cup of tea or coffee, a biscuit or more if I felt hungry, and that there were a lot of photographs, 'collections' of particular glass, pottery, silver, or china, mementos depicting milestones or events (a retirement plaque, a silver cup for sporting achievement, a certificate) and souvenirs from trips abroad or the seaside – in other words, their homes and what was in them told a story. In several homes it was possible to pick out the favourite child or grandchild whose photographs dominated, the state of the marriage through the abundance or lack of celebratory photographs, or the status of the family dog. Lily (Family 5) started to collect a "few nice pieces" of 'Ladro' china in later years because she had promised herself that when her family flew the nest that is what she would do – she would treat herself after years of struggling to raise her family. Mollie (Family 4) collects crystal ornaments because she loves things that sparkle, explaining that the many diamond, ruby and emerald rings she wears on every finger of every hand is a way of saying "I'm up there with the best of them". Thus whilst Lily's 'conspicuous' collection of china is more about personal satisfaction and being able to afford something for the first time in her life that

is aesthetically pleasing, Mollie is maybe wanting to show that she is 'a cut above' others equated with individuality and excellence, or at least being as good as others, that shows an awareness of what others have. On the other hand these collections could be an expression of what these two women value, a mark of self-respect, an avoidance of shame or a desire to be regarded favourably by others, that are all relative to the 'times' in which they have lived (Lichtenberg, 1997).

Since buying her home during the move from public to private ownership during the 1980s, Lily has invested in double glazing, central heating, modern furniture, plush cushions and glass cabinets for her 'Ladro'. However, Lily is my only older participant who has modernised her home. Susan (Family 1) tells me that the council put in double glazing, but otherwise she still has her home the way she has always had it. She has kept her original dining table and chairs, her three piece suite with a floral tapestry design and heavy oak sideboard despite her family's attempts to persuade her to renew them – her resistance is expressed in a stubborn way I have come to recognise "they say they're old-fashioned, but I like them and that's that". Margaret's home (Family 2) also has all the original features from childhood and similarly Mollie's home (Family 4) still has the original kitchen with wooden cupboards and formica tops, tiled fireplaces, picture rails, bannisters and bright turquoise bathroom suite. All these homes are 'as neat as a pin', warm and comfortable, welcoming, with smells of furniture polish and the most recent cooked meal. These homes are fit for purpose – if the chairs and carpets are not worn, the table or bath not cracked, then replacements are not necessary. Fashions can come and go but these homes are considered to be 'just fine' as they are. In terms of basic household needs, these family members do not indulge in 'conspicuous consumption' – they do not 'consume because others consume' (Lichtenberg, 1997).

In contrast, second generation (and third generation who are home owners) have all modernised their homes to one degree or another. Grace's home (Family 4) has a more modern feel to it, but is more chaotic in direct contrast to her parents' home; there is a mish-mash of furniture, odd cushions, scattered papers, books and piles of ironing and clean clothes that are waiting to be put away. In a 'higglety pigglety' fashion, bicycles, shoes, trainers, random boxes and carrier bags sit in the hallway. Grace will say 'manyana, manyana' until the day comes when she will blitz the whole lot and "knock it into shape". Grace likes 'unmanaged' clutter, the untidiness of it all, because for her it provides comfort

and a sense of relaxation, something she did not experience when she lived at home. It is certainly a home where I could put my feet up without fear of knocking something over or the Hoover coming out if I dropped some crumbs. On all my visits I felt relaxed and our conversation flowed freely in such an atmosphere as we shared food and memories together.

In contrast, Katherine's home (Family 1) has a black, white and beige theme running through it – the lounge has deep plush sofas, tassled cushions, black feathered flowers, Greek-style vases, smoked glass occasional tables and a black and white rug on a laminated floor. Along one wall there is a large plasma screen television in a black cabinet, a computer with a range of software in the corner, block canvas pictures and a few family photographs strategically placed in modern frames on the walls. There are large lamps in the form of gilded fish looking upwards to beige pleated shades. The bathroom has gold taps, black and white tiles and a black roller blind. Katherine and her husband have obviously invested a lot of time and money in this property over many years – “it wasn't like this when we moved in – we've changed it along with what has come into vogue”. Much to her mother Joy's dismay, Katherine is considering changing it again because she rather likes the 'rustic' look or “a bit of Cath Kidson⁴ rather than this more modern look”. Thus Katherine finds buying for the home as satisfying as buying personal items and likes to move between styles according to what is 'in vogue' or what might be considered 'tasteful' at a particular time – 'consuming what others consume' (Lichtenberg, 1997).

The home of Patricia, Anthony and Kieron (Family 8), displays a number of different 'tastes' from a variety of eras – an eclectic mix of Victoriana, French rustic and Cath Kidson with original fire places, wooden shutters, oak floors, door knobs and bathroom fittings – no fibre glass, smoked glass, plastic windows or artificial flowers here. I could see the influence that has come from Rose whose home, whilst not in the same style, nevertheless is very different to the homes of the other older participants. Rose has not remained in any kind of time-warped and just as she wears 'up-to-date' clothes with flair, so her home reflects her wish to draw from the various eras through which she has lived – there are a few antique pieces, candles, incense sticks, a habitat sofa with big cushions, throws and large paper lampshades. Clusters of photographs sit in modern frames. The walls are pale lilac and along with the view of her well-kept pretty garden I find it both attractive to the eye and relaxing as we sit drinking tea,

⁴ A chain of shops set up by the designer Cath Kidson that specialise in vintage-style goods, furnishings, clothing and textiles.

eating cake and talking about food memories.

Bernie (Family 7) continually refers to “my house” and it has a definite masculine appearance and feel to it. Bernie’s wife is in poor health and he is head of, and runs, this household. This is a very large Georgian house. The large rooms have original features that include mouldings, fireplaces and deep skirting boards. The furniture is large – ‘Chesterton’ style deep buttoned leather couches, an oak dining table with a huge wooden fruit bowl, a Welsh dresser, Indian rugs and velvet curtains to the floor that adorn Georgian windows. In the front room, Bernie has a photograph of his “beloved” grandmother (with whom he lived as a child) on the mantelpiece in an antique frame – it was the first thing he drew to my attention when I sat down. I notice large oriental ornaments and a huge cheeseplant sitting in one corner. The original floorboards are stained dark oak and highly polished. The bathroom is bigger than Rose’s front room. There seems endless space between the huge corner bath, the wash hand basin and the toilet. Although three generations live under this one roof, they are obviously able to do so with ease. During some visits I was unaware that Sophie, her son and Bernie’s grandson were in the house unless they came into the kitchen for food or drinks. Sophie has come to stay for a while (which is a regular occurrence) to get away from the inner city estate where she normally lives – although she is proud of her particular home, she does not like the area where there is a high crime rate, litter problems as well as other forms of anti-social behaviour.

Family 5 may not live under one roof but they all live in the same road. Whilst Lily lives a few hundred yards away, Robert and Maureen live next door to each other and if these two homes look identical from the outside, a look inside reflects further how much their lives are shared. Moving from one house to another I note the similarities. As Robert’s wife is a keen needlewoman the curtains are the same with pelmets and tiebacks, as are the cushion and duvet covers. Both homes have similar styles of furniture, small ornaments and picture frames. Maureen explains that when they are out shopping something will catch their eye (such as a candle holder, a waste bin, a vase or food stuffs) and both families will buy the same item. So these two families have developed a ‘shared taste’ – even if they are shopping separately they can gauge what the other one would like, or if they come across a ‘bargain’ they will buy one for each household, or split the cost of a ‘buy one get one free’ food item. I glean that they feel proud and comfortable enough as a family to do this – I sense a close relationship that indicates both reliability and permanence.

In contrast, Frances's home (Family 3) reflects a state of uncertainty related to the impending demolition of her home – she admits that “everything needs doing, but it's not worth it”. The décor is old and tired-looking, as are the carpets, the paintwork and even the furniture. Frances does not spend much time in the house during the day because she finds it depressing – she would rather be doing her voluntary work. It is a sort of ‘sad’ home because it is coming to the end of its life. Meryl's home (Family 2) also reflects a feeling of sadness because she does not have her son with her except at the weekends and her home reflects her lifestyle of endless shiftwork – coming and going at odd times. It is a small house with little inside it – a settee, a few chairs and a television with a ‘Sky box’. Little social interaction takes place in this house and it feels that way – for different reasons, I did not feel a ‘heart’ beating in either of these homes both of which felt strangely ‘unloved’.

3.1.1 *Kitchens*

As this is a study about food I have decided to describe kitchens separately. However, although I had been invited into people's homes to carry out interviews, this did not necessarily mean that participants were willing to open up their entire homes to me – some people undoubtedly value privacy more than others. Thus, sometimes it did not seem timely or appropriate to ask if I could see their kitchens and I used my intuition to guide me in this respect. In some homes I merely peeked into kitchens because I did not want to seem like an environmental health officer, whilst in other homes I was invited to sit in the kitchen and watch everything that was going on. This data has been extremely useful in writing my chapter on food practices in that kitchens can be ‘confessional’ places; stories abound from kitchens that can serve as repositories for memories (Avakian, 2005). The context of the kitchen provides a glimpse into the meanings embedded in relationships with food.

The kitchens of Susan (Family 1), Margaret (Family 2), Frances (Family 3) and Mollie (Family 4), reflect the general underlying tone of their homes – unmodernised, tidy and practical. Many of the utensils I am shown are many, many years old, for example, mixing bowls, whisks, pastry cutters, saucepans. Each saucepan is used (or has been used) for a specific purpose – scrambling eggs for children, making stew for workers, poaching fish on a Friday. Watching Frances and Mollie prepare and cook food, I notice the care they take with utensils – knives are not left immersed in the washing up bowl where their handles might swell and split and metal utensils are placed in a warm place above the cooker to dry out

completely to prevent rusting. The work surfaces have little scratches and chips and wooden chopping boards are rough and bleached. I observe these places as truly working kitchens (or have been working kitchens) in which participants feel comfortable around food. Everything has a place and a purpose. Fridges house a lot of fresh foods as well as leftover cooked foods in little dishes to avoid waste. Each kitchen has a table and chairs for both preparing food and eating food – the ‘family’ table and chairs, the set they have always had. All these things have a ‘social life’ (Appadurai, 1986a) and harbour family stories and histories.

The kitchens of younger participants have been updated but not totally modernised. Grace, Katherine, Bernie, Robert and Maureen have, at some time or another, installed new units, floors and work surfaces but they were not in any way following recent trends of minimalism, stainless steel, retro design and so on. Kitchen appliances remain basic - a fridge, a microwave, an electric kettle and a toaster. Bernie has a bread-maker and Patricia and Anthony a coffee-maker, but there are few ‘gadgets’ on show. On the whole participants express the desire to have a kitchen they feel comfortable working in rather than one that is aesthetically pleasing, a reflection of status or a fashion statement. One of the main concerns for Grace and Katherine, who do not have a dining room, is retaining a space for a family table if their kitchens are modernised in the future. The size of kitchens does not appear to determine whether families cook or not. Grace has a very large kitchen, whereas her son Jon has a very small kitchen; Patricia and Anthony have a tiny kitchen, but Bernie has a large kitchen, yet all these participants are keen cooks. There are racks of herbs and spices, food charts, bowls of garlic bulbs, onions, pepper mills, salt cellars, jars of preserves – the smells of a working kitchen. Those without a garden have a range of growing herbs on the window sill. The cookers show signs of wear, the tiles have little splatterings of sauce or oil and the odd bit of vegetable peeling on the floor. In contrast, Meryl’s kitchen is small and bare – little activity takes place here because she lives on ready-meals. Her fridge is practically empty. She admitted on my second visit that she felt a sense of panic halfway through the interview with her father, Terrance, because she had nothing to offer me in terms of refreshment except a cup of tea. Meryl does not have a separate dining area or a table of any description to eat from, there is no fruit bowl or stained chopping board and little in the way of kitchen utensils. It is quite lifeless in terms of food and cooking. Her cooker is unmarked as she heats up her ready-meals in the microwave. Meryl’s is the only kitchen that does not feel, in any way, like a working kitchen. Whilst it houses the basics that I found in all kitchens, nevertheless it did not seem to have a “beating heart”. Regardless of size and

content, all the other kitchens represented a sense of family that may be from times past or in the present – here I found a relationship between family life and the kitchen through various discourses and experiences in terms of food provision, preparation and practices linked to practicality or utility, the kitchen table and various kitchen items (Avakian, 2005).

Looking at kitchens completes an overall description of ‘house and home’. The next part of the chapter is concerned with the families themselves - what it means to be a member of one generation, what separates generations, what it means to hold a particular position or take on a particular role within a family and the extent to which similarities and differences exist between families. Families define themselves in varying ways and here I look at ‘a sense of time’, ‘a sense of class’ and ‘household structure and management’.

3.2 *A sense of time*

A degree of arbitrariness exists in trying to pin down where one generation begins and where one ends, what separates one from another, not merely in biological terms but also in social and cultural terms (Gilleard & Higgs, 2005). Ageing may be seen as ‘a process’ where lines become blurred between, for example, middle age and old age (Guillemard, 1982). In qualitative terms, there is a difference between ‘being old’ and ‘feeling old’ – one’s age can be merely a number. Different periods of the life-cycle do not abruptly end but rather they merge and a number of loose ends remain that are often reflected in people’s memories. Whilst ‘generation’ denotes a gap in age, these gaps are not homogenous between families and experiences, milestones and life events may happen at different times in people’s lifecycles (for example, transitions in family roles, in the work place and in health and care needs). The context of family life, social setting, cultural background, economic status and so on all have a bearing on family experience and attitudes at various life stages. For instance, my participants gave me wildly different definitions of what constitutes poverty or being ‘well off’ – whilst poverty is relative to a particular time period, older generations would often say to me “these youngsters don’t know what it’s like to be *really* poor” even though a number of younger participants felt they were “hard done by” in the current economic climate. A particular cohort shares a commonality fixed in time thus differentiating them from prior or subsequent cohorts, for example, older participants’ experience of World War Two is very different to the rapid development in information technology in the last decade (McMullin et al., 2007). Thus, whilst commonalities exist,

fixed 'lifecycle' categories have become blurred into a more fluid 'life-course' (Featherstone & Hepworth, 1991). Here I explain how my participants express time spans, social change and how their lived experiences differentiate one generation from another.

My study takes in a time-span of one hundred years, the first half of which covers the end of the First World War, the Great Depression of the 1920s and 30s, the Second World War and the extended period of rationing and austerity that ended in 1954. This is roughly the period that older participants refer to as "the old days", "in my mother's day", "in them days", "in my day" or collectively as "in our day", a period that covers childhoods, marriage and bringing up families. First and second generation participants recalled that life started to change around the second half of the 1950s and the beginning of the 1960s, for example, through increased incomes, women entering the job market and the dismantling of Liverpool communities, that cast adrift, so to speak, the 'old' days. Gilleard & Higgs (2005) refer to a 'generational fault line' that emerged at this time. All participants recognised that changes have taken place in each decade from the 1960s to the present day and their experience of, and attitudes towards, these changes have helped to shape both past and present food practices. The majority of my oldest participants have reacted to such changes by retaining practices from the 'old' days, particular ways of doing things they learnt and observed from previous generations, saying they prefer the 'old' ways rather than the way people do things "now", "nowadays" or "in this day and age". Teasing out 'real' concrete changes from 'growing up/growing old' can be useful to health promotion. The building of supermarkets represent the former, but reaction and possible change in people to this phenomenon may be different within the life-cycle. Influenced by age, a young mother with children might favourably consider time, convenience, multiple choice, parking and so on, whereas the elderly might reject this mode of shopping in favour of the friendly corner shop within walking distance of home. The young and the old have different priorities and needs. Thus, the extent to which second generation participants retained practices from previous generations, or more readily embraced change, varied, and in turn this variance impacted upon younger generations' practices and memories. The practices my older generations consider to be 'new' are considered to be the norm amongst younger generations, for example, the increase in the use of convenience and ready-prepared foods and the practice of eating frequently outside the home. Younger participants refer to the past in phrases such as, "the way they did things *years ago*", or "when me mum was brought up", or "in me nan's time", describing some food practices as "old fashioned" in the sense that these are practices

they would not adopt today or would do things differently. This would indicate that participants associate different foods and food practices with people of different ages who have lived in different ‘times’ which presents them with a way of making comparisons to the present day.

3.3 *A sense of class and status*

The families come from different socio-economic backgrounds and although I have described families as ‘working’ or ‘middle’ class, Luckman (1983) points out that the criteria upon which ‘class’ is now based and structured has a certain ‘looseness’ about it and class is not based solely on material wealth. Although class differences are as marked as ever, high rates of mobility, social as well as geographic, has meant that within the last few generations the middle strata have expanded blurring dividing lines that once separated classes and particular lifestyles. As Hattenstone (2010) remarks, there exists confusion about class and where people feel they belong; people may align themselves to, or feel part of, different classes at different times in their lives, for example, moving from a comprehensive school to university, from a terraced house to a semi-detached or from a low-paid to a high-paid job. Participants’ responses to questions of class were far from clear-cut. Susan (Family 1), Margaret (Family 2) and Lily (Family 5) are proud to call themselves ‘working class’ particularly as their husbands worked in heavy industry or factories that encompassed the notion of ‘the breadwinner’ as head of the household in the public sphere whilst they took up the role of stay-at-home wife in the domestic sphere. Participants whose fathers and husbands (and later themselves) had followed a profession, fostered the idea of being ‘middle class’ through the notion of an advantageous “good” education rather than level of income. Family 4, as a ‘teaching family’, felt this way. Whilst younger participants may *feel* a certain affiliation with the ‘working class’ because they have ‘working class roots’, they also see themselves as ‘middle class’ because they have “done well for themselves”, for example, Family 8. Frances and Denise (Family 3) would not put themselves in a class at all because they were taught that “nobody is better than you”. With the exception of Elizabeth (Family 7), who married outside her class, my participants did not feel they had moved down a class. Elizabeth married into a poor Protestant family, had twelve children (each two years apart) but was largely unsupported by a husband who spent a large part of his life in prison. Consequently, Elizabeth was shunned by her Catholic family of locally well-known professional musicians

who not only felt that she had married 'beneath her', but that she had also wasted her convent education, the purpose of which was to refine and nurture her to eventually take Holy Orders.

My findings highlight disparities between class and income that have been sustained over generations, disparities that are related to the times in which people have lived. Older generations in Families 1, 2, 3, 5, 7 and 8 talked of the low wages of the working classes, that ranged from £2.50 to £5.00, with which to raise large families. In the absence of any kind of welfare, Frances (Family 3) and Rose (Family 8) who both had five children entered the work place following divorce as did Margaret (Family 2) whose self-employed husband had an accident when re-roofing a property. Families may have managed from day to day but there was never anything in reserve. In addition to low wages, Family 3 and Family 8 also had a male breadwinner who drank heavily and Family 7 suffered through involvement in criminal activity by both father and sons. In comparison, Family 4, who were teachers, and Family 6, who were shopkeepers, had relatively higher incomes and buying food for the family was not problematic. Although poverty did not directly touch the lives of these families, this is not to say they were unaware that poverty existed. Marion recalled the Irish poor who ate 'scouse' and wore woollen shawls and Elizabeth remembered the poor who had to queue to use one toilet in the overcrowded housing whilst she went to school well dressed and groomed and lived in a household that had a bathroom and two parlours.

Mollie (Family 4) was also aware of poverty – she remembers going with her father to collect money owing to the shop and looking down the streets where the poor lived. Mollie felt a class and social boundary existed between Cressington and Garston and this has been transmitted in a number of ways in raising her daughters. Grace and her sister both attended elocution lessons from a young age to avoid picking up a 'scouse' accent. Although this was the motive for her parents paying for such lessons, Grace is more grateful for her subsequent love of poetry and reading which has remained throughout her life. Grace did not send her practical, sporting, talented 'cheffing' sons to elocution lessons and has allowed them to "follow their own compass". Whilst her sister took up a career in nursing, Grace's strict and deeply rooted 'middle-class' upbringing made her a "bit of a rebel" in not following through with her high school education and having a child with her "dark, handsome Sikh boyfriend". Grace worked from home when her children were little, only returning to college to complete an English Literature course when Jon started school. Grace is now a teacher of meditation,

yoga and elocution and is also a 'listening ear' counsellor and learning mentor at her local college – these, she says, represent her choices and aspirations that although 'grounded' in her background, have nevertheless materialised in her own time.

Although Marion (Family 6) qualified as a teacher, as did Pamela Anne and many other family members, Katya as the 'baby' of the family (the last of Pamela Anne's six children) has not followed the family path. Katya, too, admits to being rebellious *and* spoilt - she messed around in school and was expelled at the age of fourteen. Although she later returned to college and completed a business and accountancy course, she did not do anything constructive with it. Katya moves in and out of work, mainly in the retail sector, sometimes living at home and sometimes away in places like London and Newcastle. She has no clear direction as to what she wants to do or achieve in life – she loves wrestling and follows the sport both at home and abroad and knows, too, that this is something that does not "slot in" with the family". What she does know, is that she can 'dip in and out' of family life and the family home as she pleases in the same way that Sophie (Family 7) does.

Although my observations show continuing inequalities between families, there is also evidence that the middle strata has widened. Second generation workers began to earn more money when they moved outside traditional industry, for example, Joy's husband (Family 1) earned "good money" in Fords, as did Terrance (Family 2) and Robert (Family 5). Although Joy had five children, she worked part-time for "pin money" or the "icing on the cake". This included the opportunity to eat out occasionally and make trips abroad that introduced the family to new food experiences. Higher standards of living enabled younger participants who came from working class backgrounds to stay in school past the age of fourteen, fifteen and then sixteen that both nurtured higher aspirations and led to higher levels of education - for example, Anthony and Patricia (Family 8) became highly qualified Civil Servants and Katherine (Family 1) and Ellen (Family 2) hold qualifications in community work. Jemma (Family 1) will be the first member of her immediate family to go to university – for her this opportunity is 'a given', an automatic choice, an educational right. Kieran (Family 8) also sees higher education as a natural progression when he finishes his 'A' levels just as Sally (Family 5) did in obtaining her teaching degree spurred on by her desire to break away from the Kirkby estate and rise above a life on state benefits. These life chances were not open to great-grandparents, grandparents or even parents – these young participants "cannot imagine"

being in the shoes of previous generations.

Whereas the size of families prevented older women from going out to work let alone pursue a career, younger participants have been in a position to limit family size and continue working alongside rearing children. However, although the size of families and cultural norms prevented older women from working outside the home, nevertheless if they managed their households well, this increased their social standing within the family and the community. In the absence of state welfare, “you had to manage”. In contrast, amongst the younger participants who are single parents and rely wholly, or partly, on welfare benefits, for example Denise (Family 3) and Maureen (Family 5), there is a feeling that it is ‘the system’ that has let them down and they *expect* a higher standard of living. Denise describes her experience of poverty during the 1980s and 90s:

I had to get a washing machine once and I had nothing in; I’ve had weeks when I’ve had no food at all. I could tell you what was in me cupboards – a tin of macaroni and beans, a packet of rice, a jar of something else ... I had to get a loan to buy food because I had to have a washing machine ... When the kids were younger and I didn’t have much, I survived on digestive biscuits ... I felt terrible when the kids were coming in, you know, ‘what have we got to eat mum?’ ‘I haven’t got nothing’.

(Denise, Family 3 from Garston, aged 44: Interview)

Although these two participants feel somewhat disillusioned with their standard of living, being part of a close family network has made their lives easier – Denise’s eldest daughter Melanie has lived with her grandmother Frances since she was a young teenager and Maureen has had the support of her parents who live in the adjoining house. This support has included help with food shopping, sharing household resources and meal provision.

My study supports the view of Crompton (2000) that rigid boundaries have gone with regard to individual and social identity where people ‘knew their place’ with regard to specific roles through a life-time of common shared values, attitudes and behaviour in the separate worlds of home and work. Although work (or lack of work) contributes strongly to identity, lifestyle, age and gender appear to be more important than ‘class’. These differences are apparent in the way households have been both structured and managed in the past and in the present.

3.4 Household structure and management

The household structure of each of my eight families reflects, to a large degree, the ‘starting

point' of each generation revealed through the variance in family memories and histories. Memories of older 'working class' families centre on spartan, cramped housing conditions and the day to day struggle to provide for large families. It was, therefore, the norm for older children to leave school at an early age in order to contribute to the family budget. Susan (Family 1) and Rose (Family 8) went into service at the age of fourteen (as they were expected to do) to ease the family burden of providing for ten children. Early marriage eased poor economic conditions and was common in the absence of education and any career prospects. Both Susan and Rose married in their teens; Susan felt that for a girl in her position she was just "following the norms of the day" and Rose felt she married at a young age because she had received very little education due to evacuation and having to work in service and on farms – she had the first of her five children aged twenty. Margaret (Family 2) who was the youngest of five children, also married at a young age because "that's what was expected of girls from working class families". Frances (Family 3) was the eldest of four sisters whose father often could not work due to ill health and Lily (Family 5) was the second youngest of five children whose father suffered mustard gas poisoning during World War One and was invalided out of the army – in the absence of state welfare, both these families were economically disadvantaged.

Without access to, or knowledge of, contraception, the birth of children started soon after marriage. Susan had the first of her ten children (two died in infancy) at nineteen. Joy, as Susan's youngest child, holds memories of feeling "outnumbered" by her five brothers and two older sisters. Joy slept in the annexe of her parent's room until her two older brothers went into the army and she claimed their bedroom. Similarly, Margaret had the first of her four children at nineteen in a small terraced house and Ellen can particularly remember the house being "rather short of space" (particularly when they moved in with her grandfather in later years). Frances married at the age of eighteen and initially lived with her parents until the birth of her second child. Three more children were born in a little terraced house with an outside toilet and no bathroom or hot water. Frances relied on the public 'wash house' for her laundry and as her husband worked continental shifts, she was able to work part time in the local matchworks. Frances and Rose divorced their husbands when they were relatively young – both men had drinking and gambling problems. Frances's daughter, Denise, can remember spending a lot of time with her grandparents to escape her father's wrath. Patricia can remember a "tough" upbringing and a spartan home in terms of material things, shared

bedrooms and food provision – her older siblings left home at an early age and as Rose worked part time and also spent many hours on her allotment, Patricia often had to “fend for herself” at lunch and tea-times.

Like many working men in Liverpool, the fathers of Terrance (Family 2), Anthony (Family 8) and Marion (Family 6) made their living from the sea. Terrance’s father was a merchant seaman and each time he came home on leave there would be another addition to the family about nine months later – there were ten children to feed before he secured a land-based job on the local docks. Terrance’s father was not greatly involved in the lives of his children, or domesticity in general, and it was not unusual for him to forget, not know, or “get mixed up over” his children’s names. Terrance can remember sleeping six to a bed with his brothers using army coats as blankets. In contrast, Marion who also had a father who spent long periods away from home as a ship’s engineer, can remember how he “threw himself” into family life during his periods of leave. He encouraged his three children to follow a profession and joined in the running of the household to help his wife who was a milliner based in the city. However, in the absence of her father, it fell to Marion’s mother to manage the family affairs. Similar to the younger generations who are now able to control the size of their families, the relatively small size of Marion’s family enabled her mother to work outside the home. Similarly, Mollie’s parents (Family 4) both worked in their shop which provided a good standard of living for a family of four that included a secondary education for Mollie; however, the long opening hours (kept particularly by her father) did mean that the family spent little time together, for example, at mealtimes, during holiday breaks or on shopping trips.

Anthony’s father, who was of Irish descent, was also a merchant seaman and although Anthony’s mother also went to sea when he was young, she stayed at home when the first of his two younger brothers came along. Later his mother worked at ‘Macfisheries’ (a large chain of fishmongers) and his earliest food memory is eating crab sticks in his pushchair. Anthony can always remember plenty of fresh fish being served at home. His father was employed as a cook and when his ship returned Anthony can remember a large cooked joint of meat sitting in the middle of his wash bag – “you just took advantage of the situation you were in”. Anthony picked up a love of cooking from his father (who was a better cook than his wife and took on most of the family cooking when he returned to work on the docks) and

his brothers also trained as professional cooks.

All families (with the exception of Mollie who lives with her husband), are now headed by women who have either outlived, or divorced, their husbands. Susan and Lily have been widowed for over thirty years and Margaret and Marion for the last five years. Rose divorced her husband when the children were young as did Frances who lived alone until Melanie joined her as a young, rebellious teenager whom Denise was unable to control. Joy suffered the loss of her husband when she was sixty and also lives alone. Similar to Frances, Denise divorced her husband at a young age as did Maureen when Sally was a young child – both women have not re-married. These events have, to a large degree, shaped household structure and family interaction as well as influencing food memories and practices. Family support has been critical to the welfare of female members in their later years and those who are reliant on state benefits. Support for older family members includes shopping, sharing family meals, collecting pensions, household tasks, gardening and care during times of illness. A consensus amongst younger family members is “mum looked after us, now it is our turn to look after her – what goes round, comes round”. Elizabeth, for instance, struggled to bring up her twelve children without any family support. As soon as one of her children reached the age of two her husband would say “that pram needs filling” but was not there to help her raise the children. Bernie admits that he and his brothers were out of control and they drifted into crime like their father – “me mother didn’t know where we were half the time and she couldn’t control us”. Elizabeth’s husband died of cancer aged forty-eight leaving her with children that ranged from ten years of age to adult. She says it was hard work being a mother and father, but with her widow’s pension and many winnings on the horses (that she habitually bet on) she would always buy her children good shoes and provide them with good food. Not only has Elizabeth raised her children, but has also brought up several of her grandchildren. Whilst other families are supportive towards older members, Bernie and his sisters see it as their role to always take care for their mum in one or other of their homes ... “that’s what we do even though she moans a lot”.

Mother and daughter relationships across all generations appear to be particularly strong – close proximity allows younger participants to take on a supportive and caring role towards elderly relatives that help them to maintain a high level of independence in their own homes. It has long been recognised that caring carries a number of ‘costs’, not only in a financial

sense, but in terms of commitment, making oneself available, emotional investment and so on (Glendenning, 1992) and that it is women who do much of this 'care work' (Finch & Groves, 1983). Joy visits Susan most days of the week and they have Sunday dinner together; Grace visits her mum every weekend to help with household tasks and shopping; Patricia and Rose see each other regularly in each others homes, on shopping trips and on the allotment; Pamela Anne visits Marion most days, sorts out paper work and shares lunch in the same way Ellen does with Margaret. Although the degree of involvement is not as great, in these families sons and sons-in-law offer support (particularly things like home maintenance and repairs) and pay regular visits – Bernie visits Elizabeth for Sunday breakfast each week, Robert drops in to see Lily most days, Terrance is a regular visitor to Margaret, Anthony visits Rose and sons (I am told) support Susan.

Younger participants also share a close relationship with their parents but it appears to be the latter who care for the former rather than the other way round. First and second generation participants would often remind me that, illness or tragedy aside, once you left home that was that and you had to more or less get on with life. Although a number of third generation children have officially left home, support still comes from parents, for example, Terrance and Ellen help support Meryl, and Robert and his wife do the same for Maureen. The household dynamics in Families 6 and 7 change as Katya, and Sophie and her son, move in and out of their original family homes. With the exception of Melanie, who lives with Frances, the once common arrangement of children living with grandparents is no longer the case in my families – younger participants feel there is a huge cultural and social gap between any two generations. The general feeling appears to be "I love me nan, but I couldn't live with her". Grandchildren and great-grandchildren are happy to visit older family members, but not as often as previous generations – the actual caring, the 'doing', the 'hands on' is left to others.

Summary

Through 'thick description' I have described to the reader the varying contexts in which my eight families have experienced life and the people with whom they share, or have shared, the places and spaces they call home. According to social experience and interpretation, such spaces and places may be real or imagined through periods of change or continuity. The time

span of my study is set against the rise and fall of industrialisation and urbanisation and demographic changes in the twentieth century. The legacy of the great social divide that accompanied Victorian prosperity in Liverpool has persisted throughout the historical time under study – on the whole the more affluent and poorer areas have remained so despite years of regeneration (Pooley, 2006) a class distinction and inequality that has manifested itself in health disparities and foodways (The Department of Health, 2008a; 2009). Although cities, areas, communities and families may share certain characteristics and experiences, nevertheless the memories of my participants and their food histories contained in the following chapters reflect this persistent unlevel ‘playing field’. Participants’ memories recall very different ways of living amongst families according to space, place and time. However, through the good and bad times, these families have remained in their particular neighbourhoods and retain a strong feeling of belonging and loyalty.

Against this background I hope a deeper understanding will be reached in relation to intergenerational food practices and the attitudes, feelings, meanings and choices that shape them. Although human nature plays a part in who we are and who we might become, we are also products of our particular culture and the ‘times’ in which we live, for example, the move from the utilitarian nature of home-making to one of an ‘extroverted’ culture of consumption (Burch, 2000). Life histories, that include food histories, become ‘embodied’ and through the lens of embodied memory the next three chapters will be concerned with the notions of ‘tradition’ and ‘community’ that will be followed by intergenerational ‘food knowledge and practices’. In the fourth chapter I bring these notions together to show how these impact on the ‘health’ of families.

CHAPTER FOUR

TRADITIONAL FOOD AND FOOD PRACTICES

The ancient, gnarled, familiar, idiosyncratic, almost human olive tree survived in the place where the family had its roots. It gathered to itself all the connotations of peaceful constancy, historic continuity and unshakable dependability which were accepted as human ideals. Nowadays we cannot wait (Visser, 1986: 231).

[Making] the same breads on the same days of the week, the same way she's done them for twenty-five years ... I suppose it could also be called tradition. (Hendricks, 2001: 131)

Introduction

In order to understand the changing nature of foods and food practices over time I have explored the complex notion of tradition through the eyes of my participants. I have done this through particular food traditions; the Catholic ritual of eating fish on a Friday, special foods associated with Christmas and birthdays, the English breakfast and the Sunday roast, the everyday meal of scouse and the 'English cuppa'. I have not only been able to explore the changing symbolic and social importance of the relationship between tradition and food but also the way in which it is used to organise and structure food practices marking out daily, weekly and yearly flows and events in the lives of my participants and their communities.

In this chapter I have also explored the notion of tradition as a 'common sense stock of knowledge' that, combined with planning and improvisation, refers back to the work of others from a particular time and place (Schutz, 1970; Keller & Dixon-Keller, 1999). I explore to what extent such knowledge has been transmitted from one generation to the next through the changing times in which my participants have lived.

The main findings from this chapter will be taken up in my discussion on the relationship between food and health in chapter seven that includes the idea of tradition as a resource for health, the symbolic and social importance of tradition, and food and generational differences in food knowledge and practices.

To place the chapter in context, the opening section draws on my fieldwork that revealed the

practices Liverpudlians regard as traditional in the life of the city. Here I do not mean the series of cultural events that have been posited solely for the 'Capital of Culture', but rather, 'embedded' traditions that although may have changed in nature, nevertheless represent a connection with the past and a sense of continuity in a changing world.

4.0 Tradition and the city of Liverpool

Local musicians, playwrights, poets and authors write and wax lyrical about traditions that are unique to Liverpool many of which are retrospective stories and histories that are re-enacted in the present. Local history documents have shown that many traditions have now disappeared, for example, Thursday was once referred to as 'Welsh Day' when it was the tradition for Welsh women to come into Liverpool city centre to spend their housekeeping "wisely and well" (Brack, 1982: 6) and 'treacle dipping'⁵ has disappeared from the streets of Southport (Hird, 2005). However, my ethnographic observations, conversations and interviews show that Liverpudlians across all social strata still enjoy doing what they consider to be 'traditional' things in their city, in the sense that these traditions form part of its social fabric. I noted people singing and drinking in pubs on Saturday afternoons (karaoke replacing the sea shanties) interspersed by eating a takeaway of chips, kebabs, curry sauce or gravy in the street that might once have been a bowl of scouse; watching the 'footie' and grabbing a burger or hotdog at half-time replacing traditional 'pie eating' and shopping on the Friday market in Garston, merely an echo of the busy high street that once was. I observed the tradition of having a 'chippy' tea on a Friday, a practice followed by people generally, but one that grew out of the original pay day of the 'working classes'. Whereas many conversations described pay day as traditionally the day when your 'da' would bring you a treat, others recalled it merely as a reason to visit 'the bookies' and drink the evening away in one of the many local public houses, activities that would often swallow up an entire week's wages. These examples support the view of Hobsbawn & Ranger (1983) that traditions are socially shaped and reshaped according to the times and prevailing culture in which people live.

In conversation with people who designated their business as traditional or described

⁵ This practice involved coins being dropped into treacle that could only be retrieved using the teeth. Faces smeared in sticky treacle would be wiped with feathers that would amuse the watching crowd.

themselves as a traditional butcher, baker, fishmonger and so on, traditional stood for three things. Firstly, it meant that the business was being carried on in a similar way to those who traded before them, often members of their family, and secondly, they dealt with the food itself in a 'traditional way' in that they were involved with the whole process from source to point of sale. In other words, they knew their business and could be trusted. Not only did this mean that the seller was knowledgeable about food, but that this knowledge was shared with their customers who in turn came to 'know' their meat, fish or bakery products. Thirdly, the word 'tradition' neatly separated and distanced them from supermarkets who cater for the mass market and where the food product is processed and dealt with in an entirely different way and customer relations are not personalised to suit individual needs. Similar to the findings of Groves (2001) tradition is thought to bring transparency and an end product that can be trusted.

I also visited traditional-style pubs some of which advertise 'traditional ales' or cask ales that include Cains bitter, brewed in Liverpool since the 1800s (www.cainsbeers.com). When I asked bar owners and customers what they thought 'traditional' meant in relation to beer, they said, "brewed in the traditional way in casks", "proper bitter or ale of serious beer drinkers", "proper tasting ale", or simply, "not lager or any of that Stella stuff that they drink out of bottles". Being identified as a 'traditionalist' gave one credence as a drinker, someone who appreciated and knew their ale, different to lager drinkers, for instance, who literally drink to get drunk. Traditional pubs tend to serve simple traditional northern fayre like scouse, meat and potato pies or a few sandwiches that are not central to the life of these establishments; eating, I was told, was of secondary importance to "serious" drinkers. These people are not interested in the new retro-style, open plan, 'chic' bars because they feel they do not sit comfortably with traditional eating and drinking practices. In view of the fact that many traditional pubs in Liverpool, as elsewhere, have now closed attributed to high operating costs, cheap supermarket alcohol and the smoking ban (Bowers, 2008), it was the few that survive (those with a separate bar and lounge) that had become increasingly valued by both owners and customers.

Traditions that were once reserved for the wealthier classes in Liverpool are now enjoyed by a much wider spectrum of people – these can range from the indulgence of afternoon tea in

the famous Adelphi Hotel⁶ that consists of sandwiches, scones, cream cakes and biscuits served on a traditional cake stand (or its broader appeal through the additional facilities of a gymnasium, pizza bar and night club that may attract newcomers or younger guests), picnicking and fishing in one of the many splendid parks built by the Victorians, or a walk along the 'prom' on a Sunday afternoon with ice-cream in hand. This illustrates that the 'habitus' (Bourdieu, 1984) of various public places is not as strictly defined as it once was. However, my research revealed many eating venues that would still be out of reach of the average purse and I did not note many high-flying professionals or suited office workers drinking in the few remaining traditional back street pubs. Thus, tradition can create a dividing line between the perpetuation of the more 'working class' traditions on the one hand and tradition as a 'value-added' notion, a source of cultural capital, on the other. This division can be illustrated through the dish 'lobscouse', a seaman's stew, probably brought to Liverpool by Scandinavian fishermen.

Whilst it is possible to purchase a dish of lobscombe (known locally as 'scouse') in pubs and eateries made in the traditional way as a simple meat and vegetable stew (accompanied by red cabbage or beetroot and maybe a piece of bread or dumplings), it has also become a 'cultural good' (Klamer, 2004), served in 'up-market' eateries aimed at the tourist market and people from the professional classes. I have found expensive versions such as Posh Scouse which consists of best lamb cooked in a "good" red wine and Executive Scouse cooked with best beef both served in a contemporary style. In this sense scouse is being utilised as a potent cultural symbol and social marker situated within the notion of 'city regeneration' or 'capital of culture'. The process of 'neolocalism' whereby symbols are unearthed and recycled in order to create a fresh regional identity can be commodified by local elites through tourism, referred to as 'heritage tourism' (Shortridge & Shortridge, 1998). However, in considering the revival of scouse, Klamer (2004) might argue that it is being given 'cultural value' in that it has the potential to be endowed with meanings that mask its former utilitarian function in a city that re-engineered its culture in 2008, a kind of 'culinary cultural capital'. This is certainly true of scouse, in that it has always played a crucial part in the identity of

⁶ The Adelphi Hotel is the largest hotel in central Liverpool that enjoys international repute. Dating back to the early nineteenth century, it was rebuilt in 1914 and retains its Edwardian character that can be seen in the preserved solid marble floors and walls, wood panelled banqueting halls and chandeliers that grace public areas. The 'Sefton Suite' is a replica of the First Class Smoking Lounge of the ill-fated Titanic (www.bbc.co.uk/Liverpool/localhistory).

many Liverpudlians who have mainly come from 'working class' backgrounds, as one of my participants explained:

Scouse is more than just a dish of meat and vegetables because you've taken on the identity of the dish and I don't know of any other, but correct me if I'm wrong, of any other group or society that's known by what they consume ... if someone says to me, 'you're a Scouser', you automatically eat scouse, a pan of scouse, it's like they've been named after that dish and ... the dialect as well ... yeah ... scouse ... but the pleasurable associations we have with it get taken away when its changed or things are added to it ... it's not what you remember or been brought up with and how you identify with it. To a true Scouser its tainted by creating separate versions for different classes of people.

(Anthony, Family 8 from Stoneycroft, aged 43: Interview).

In the same interview, Anthony further points out that there are two sides to scouse identity that regeneration needs to address:

I think a bowl of scouse says a million and one different things; it says, meat, vegetables, a nourishing thick stew, but it also says 'Scousers eat this because that's where the word Scouser comes from and what do you think of when you think of scouse? ... When you think of Liverpool you think of the Beatles and football and the European Cup ... But also if you asked someone what the word Scouser meant to them, I know what it would be, an image of deprivation and a dodgy individual in a tracksuit trying to steal something – a stereotypical image ... but what you want to say is 'this is Liverpool, this is 2008 and this is what we're proud of ... our architecture, engineers, astronomers, museums, heritage, docks' ... and all they're promoting is new shops and apartments and reinventing the tourist wheel with no investment and so no benefit in the suburbs where the bad image a lot of the time comes from.

Survival of traditional food in the city may, in part, rest upon the desire of restaurant and bar owners to serve it. I have noted that some have created "nostalgia menus" that include "old favourites" such as liver and onions, lobscouse and pea soup. In addition, Keg Cains Bitter is served at '60 Hope Street', the most prestigious restaurant in Liverpool that stands between the two cathedrals (www.cainsbeers.com). In the long run this may help to preserve traditional foods in that it may be a consequence of, or a response to, the demands made by tourists for a touch of nostalgia, for things 'Olde English', 'authentic' and 'traditional', in order to 'sell' a regenerating city to its visitors (Bell, 2002). However, as part of the regeneration programme there is a far greater array of 'gastro-pubs', retro and continental style eating places that flourish in the newly created 'cultural quarters' of the city, as well as numerous take-away's that serve food from around the globe, all of which have become increasingly popular with Liverpudlians, students and tourists alike. Thus, traditional food being offered in the city may be more of a token gesture, a way to generate profit, rather than something deeply embedded and transmitted across time.

In the next section I turn my attention to whether traditional food still has a role within and between families and the communities in which they live and how, indeed, 'traditional' food and practices in these settings is defined.

4.1 *Generational notions of tradition, food and identity*

Although traditional scouse has remained highly symbolic and an integral part of being a certain kind of Liverpudlian, my participants identified traditional food generally from the repertoire of ‘olde English’ food for which Britain, as a whole, is renowned (Mann, 1956) and is not, in the main, being handed down through the generations. Such dishes included steak and kidney pie or pudding, shepherd’s or cottage pie, liver and onions, hot-pot, bacon ribs and cabbage, and puddings such as rice pudding, apple pie and trifle. Whilst very few of these dishes remained in the diets of younger generations, older generations who still ate them felt they contributed to their identities as “plain” eaters of “plain English food” that separated them from the more “fancy food” of today that included “foreign food”. Younger participants were quick to point out that ‘traditional’ could mean traditional food from other countries, such as spaghetti bolognese or pizza. Whereas the repertoire of traditional foods mentioned above has continued to serve as a solid marker of identity amongst older generations, this was no longer the case amongst younger generations. Thus, traditional food differentiates generations. My data indicated that dishes had been ‘indigenized’ (Appadurai, 1986b) in that spaghetti bolognese and pizza were regarded as everyday meals and no longer ‘foreign’ or even connected with another culture, and having “the usual” Chinese or Indian curry on a Friday was considered to be a traditional practice. However, Pamela Anne felt that although her family ate “a lot of pasta and stuff”, she would not call those foods traditional in that they were still regarded as relatively new additions to their diet. Margaret and Joy would occasionally eat a Chinese meal as a change from English food, but not as an integral part of their diets.

The significance of food and a sense of identity were often reinforced when people were on holiday abroad as this account of being a Liverpool Football supporter ‘away from home’ illustrates:

We were staying in Nice one year in an apartment and Liverpool were playing ... erm ... anyway my daughter and her boyfriend went off to watch the match in an Irish pub and I went to the market to buy stuff and I made a great big pan of scouse, and I decorated the balcony with red balloons and red banners ... and they came back and we sat on the balcony and ate this scouse in the middle of Nice!

Q. And did that make you feel Liverpudlian?

A. Yes it did ... my daughter’s boyfriend was Italian and he thought it was wonderful!.
(Pamela Anne, *Family 6 from Allerton, aged 65: Interview*).

The wish to eat English food abroad in preference to indigenous dishes was used as a way of

explaining what marked out traditional food:

Traditional food is like bangers and mash, that type of food ... you know, when people go abroad and they go purposely to all the English restaurants that serve English breakfast and Sunday lunch. I would say that was the mark of traditional food.

(Jemma, Family 1 from Garston, aged 17: Interview).

It has been noted that in many parts of Spain, English food is advertised more freely than Spanish food, fulfilling a need in tourists to embody 'home' whilst in a 'foreign' land (Andrews, 1999). I observed that larger supermarkets in Liverpool now cater for Polish immigrants and several Polish delicatessens have opened up in the suburbs, much in the same way that African seamen brought yams, plantains and jerk spices to Granby Street in Victorian times bringing a food culture from one part of the world to another.

On returning from any holiday abroad, Margaret commented that the first thing she wanted was a "nice cup of tea" and a bowl of scouse because that was a way of confirming "we're home". Thus traditional food can reaffirm the notion of 'home is where the heart is' or even 'where the stomach is'. Ellen would make a pan of scouse for her parents to return to as her way of saying 'welcome home'. Evans (2005) suggests that "familiarity" is central to the notion of 'home'.

The traditional English breakfast also had the ability to reconnect participants to their 'Britishness' and a sense of home:

... and if I'm away somewhere and I come back, it's just one of those things I do because they don't do it anywhere else.

Q. You mean it sort of connects you back to home and your family?

A. Yes, but I was really underweight for a long time and I ate beans and bacon and mushrooms and eggs and 'eggy' bread on a big plate, a big fry up everyday for a few weeks and I put on half a stone. I think other things helped, but, you know, I'd come home after a night out or whatever and I'd say, 'right, get the bacon out' ... the smell of the bacon sizzling ... yeah, that's one thing I really do like about the British tradition and being British.

(Katya, Family 6 from Allerton, aged 25: Interview).

This account would support the notion that in our more reflexive and changing world we need sensory experiences through synaesthesia that 'return [us] to the whole' (Fernandez, 1986). In Katya's account, the particular combination of the smell of the bacon, the sound of sizzling in the pan, the look of a full breakfast on the plate that warms you, are sensory experiences that are held in common within families and serve as an antidote to the sometimes fragmented mix of foods from around the world that diminishes the prominence, and threatens the continuance, of traditional foods.

Sally thought that the English breakfast, whether it was a “full fry-up”, or porridge or toast, reflected English ‘taste’ in food:

It’s our way of saying, ‘this is what we like’ ... yes, we may eat a lot of food from other countries but we still like our English breakfast in preference to a continental one ... we like our dinners and our puddings ... that’s our ‘taste’ and that’s part of who we are.
(Sally, Family 5 from Kirkby, aged 22: Interview).

This would support the view that people should not be ashamed of liking English food or make apologies for it because it may not be considered fashionable (Mann, 1956; Orwell, 2005; Bareham, 2006). However, my participants’ accounts show that ‘tastes’ in traditional food have changed. Generational differences within families were noted in relation to scouse which did not appeal to some younger members who thought it to be bland, colourless and unappealing. Whilst older generations referred to stew as a filling and comforting food, for younger generations a stew or boiled food in general had negative connotations, an “old fashioned ring to it”, something one’s grandparents ate. They certainly would not choose to eat it above a pizza or chicken and chips. Fort (2004) tells us that cooking is one of the most tradition-riddled of all human pastimes where we tend to brown meat or boil vegetables to death with masses of water laced with salt because that is way we have been told for generations to do it. As Ruane (2005) points out traditional knowledge tends to encourage uncritical and unquestioning acceptance of what is passed on and particular ways of doing things.

However, it was the cooking of traditional dishes by older generations, the “old fashioned” way of doing things, that contributed to their sense of identity and upheld their reputation as traditional cooks:

Ray, I’m very fond of ray and when I cooked that it wasn’t the same. You put it in the oven, not the gas, you stew it with a pint of milk, best milk ... all we have is ... erm ...

Q. Long life milk?

A. It’s like water ... you put an onion in and I forget what else ... but you can eat the bones, the bones are fantastic. You eat the ray ‘lumps’. I used to make them once a week in the oven ... and that was good food that my kids had all their life – they never turned their nose up at nothing.
(Elizabeth, Family 7 from Kensington, aged 85: Interview).

This account suggests that it is a combination of ingredients and cooking techniques that is important. To be truly traditional, participants across generations, felt that food needed to be home-made with fresh ingredients, “something you do yourself”, “something you cook yourself”, intimating that you needed traditional skills too. The Sunday roast, wherever or

whenever it is served, needs to be cooked in the right way, not “any old way” that might involve short cuts:

I mean, boiled, part boiled and then ‘chip panned’ potatoes... it’s revolting ... that’s not proper ‘roasties’. I’m not being awkward or rebellious when I say that ... erm ... it’s just not *right*. If we’re going to have traditional food then let’s do it properly.
(*Katya, Family 6 from Allerton, aged 25: Interview*).

I love Sunday roast, but the roasties have to be part boiled first so that you get the outsides crispy and they’re not tough and waxy ... and the gravy has to be made with the meat juices and fat with a bit of flour and gravy browning – if the gravy’s wrong, you know, the gravy makes it, not just making up a bit of ‘Bisto’. You watched your ma do it and then you knew how to do it.
(*Beatrice, elderly resident from Garston: Natural conversation*).

These accounts suggest that ‘tradition’ infers a ‘stock of knowledge’ that combined with planning and improvisation refers back to the work of others from a particular time and place (Keller & Dixon-Keller, 1999). As points of reference my participants would draw on the cooking of previous generations that often included special recipes written on pieces of paper or a cookery book that had been “tried and tested” and had become an “old friend”. However, Mintz (1996) points out that it is not only recipes or foods associated with particular people and settings that make up tradition, but knowledge of food and ingredients, how it is made and what it should taste like. Whereas cooking ‘the way that mother used to do it’ remains a benchmark against which younger generations judge, compare and adjust their own cooking, participants nevertheless found it difficult to replicate the food produced by their grandmothers, mothers or fathers:

I’ve never been able to get the liver and onions like my mother ... I’ve tried all different ways, but I don’t remember ever standing and watching her doing it, you see, there was something about it.
(*Margaret, Family 2 from Garston, aged 71: Interview*).

My nana could make fantastic pastry and me mum, but I can’t seem to make it like either of them.
(*Sally, Family 5 from Kirkby, aged 22: Interview*).

I think the roast dinners tasted different than they do today, I could never make them the same ... somehow, I don’t know ... I always remember the roast dinners were so nice.
(*Rose, Family 8 from Stoneycroft, aged 71: Interview*).

However, it was through embodied memories that older participants were able to keep these foods as part of their diets, for example, the art of pastry making, the steaming of a steak and kidney pudding made with suet pastry that does not become stodgy and a perfectly set trifle. Although third and fourth generation participants enjoyed these foods they could only eat and enjoy them in their ‘home-made’ form if older members of their families made them. They did not possess these techniques (or chose not to continue using them), or “couldn’t be bothered”, often because they were no longer part of a social network that fostered transmission of skills and knowledge. Whilst we may recognise that tradition involves

cooking at home encapsulated in virtues of quiet enjoyment and generosity, there may not be another generation who can prove it empirically (Grigson, 1992). In bridging the gap between the desire to taste food of the past that was traditionally prepared with love and care, and the constraints of modern life (Warde, 1997), I found that participants were more likely to turn to commercial ready-made products.

4.2 Commodification of tradition: symbolism without practice?

As consumers seek foods that have been produced ‘the way they used to be’, food producers have filled this niche by selling food with an ‘imagined history’ as they market food that is wrapped up in ‘nostalgic’ packaging (Jackson et al., 2007). A traditional product is marketed as

a ‘representation’ of a group, [that] belongs in a defined space and ... is part of a culture that implies the cooperation of the individuals operating in that territory. From this clearly sociological definition it can be derived that in order to be a traditional product it must be linked to a territory and it must also be part of a set of traditions, which will necessarily ensure its continuity over time (Jordana, 2000: 147).

Thus, in sensing that many consumers do not have the time, motivation or necessary skills to make such foods, manufacturers and retailers have opened up the more lucrative market of prepared traditional dishes, ‘kits’ to make such things as ‘Aunt Bessie’s’ cakes, pancakes, Yorkshire puddings and breads (and the machine to make them), rather than stocking and promoting the ingredients that enable customers to make them at home.

Whether my participants thought that supermarkets undermined tradition rested upon its perceived importance in terms of family life or, for example, if an occasion had arisen where the necessary ingredients for a traditional dish were not available. Older participants, in their desire to eat traditional foods, bemoaned the lack of traditional ingredients and foodstuffs on offer in supermarkets; they wished to continue eating a traditional diet, one defined by our country’s geography and climate, one that determines when to eat and at what time of year. In particular, the first generation of my families and many older people I spoke to, almost without exception, did not eat, or like, spicy food. English food was sought after and ethnic or ‘foreign’ food was rejected:

Q. Do you eat food from other countries, like pizza or pasta or anything like that?

A. No, that’s their food.

Q. Do you think it matters that there’s a lot of that type of food available today?

A. Oh, I have many a row in the supermarket because I was looking for pudding rice ... it's a terrible price now at fifty odd pence for a small packet ... and each time I went I'd say, 'where's the pudding rice?' 'Oh, I don't know, we haven't got none'. So I said, 'oh no, you've got that there, there, there for all these foreigners coming in, but what about the English, what about the English food? We don't want all that food. Leave them to buy their own food, we want our food'. So now they just put three or four packets there ...

Just for you?
(laughter).

... up on the shelf, to make puddings and all that, you know, and there's cornflour and all that ... about three packets they put up there, so I know where to find it now and if there's none I play hell! ... and I don't like those peppers in a salad. I like proper English salad, English food. Like we used to get offal – all kinds of offal, even during the War.

(Susan, Family 1 from Garston, aged 96: Interview).

This account illustrates that our identity through food comes with the desire to express 'who we are not' as much as 'who we are' (Short, 2006), as illustrated here in Susan's wish to see traditional English foods on public display coupled with a concern that the same foods she needs to make traditional dishes, are being marginalised.

There were also instances of participants wanting to revitalise foods that had been eaten in the past only to discover that choice is now restricted to supermarkets (the only mode of shopping open to most people) and a handful of independent or specialised shops. Patricia wanted to make a rabbit stew because she remembered it being a very tasty meal; unable to find rabbit in any supermarket she turned to her local butcher who informed her that he no longer had a 'game man' and could only offer a frozen Japanese rabbit. On another occasion Patricia wanted to make a special dish for Kieran's birthday using halibut, but in the absence of a fishmonger in her neighbourhood she had to rely on her local Tesco store that does not, she discovered, stock fresh halibut or cater for personal preferences, or 'one-off' orders. To her annoyance she had no other choice but to use cod that tends to fall apart in the cooking process in a way that halibut does not. I would suggest here that we have lost in many inner-city areas of Liverpool such as Stoneycroft, shopping as a *practice* that was traditional, skillful, intelligent and enjoyable – a craft or an art.

The majority of my participants also feel that other special meal occasions and foods have become highly commercialised and market driven. They particularly mentioned those associated with Christmas, an occasion they feel has become more about buying an abundance of food and presents, a material rather than a spiritual pursuit that, whilst remaining symbolic, negate the *practices* that surround these special foods. Meryl could

remember how good traditional Christmas meals tasted at her parents' home and holds embodied memories of her mum's special cakes and the high regard others had for them in the family and amongst the community. Whilst Meryl laments this loss, at the same time she has become totally reliant on ready-made traditional foods because they are quick and easy. Thus an anomaly exists whereby we want everything to be faster, but we also look back to a 'slower' past that is treasured (Lyon & Colquhoun, 1999). On her return to the job market, Ellen had experienced 'time-space compression' and felt guilty and sad because she no longer took the time to serve her family an extra special Christmas meal with all the trimmings or make special birthday cakes:

I used to make Christmas extra special, laying the table nice and did three courses and wine, crackers, everything and I don't put that kind of effort in now ... and I always used to make the children's birthday cakes, but I only do it occasionally now ... I feel really bad because I've got six grandchildren and I haven't made any cakes like I used to. I used to do birthday parties and make everything from scratch, biscuits, cakes and I haven't done anything for them, I've just gone out and bought it all ... and I feel guilty about that ... it's not the same and the kids used to love it, coming into the kitchen to see what you were making and helping to decorate the cake and things.
(Ellen, Family 2 from Garston, aged 51: Interview).

Not only did changing family dynamics see the loss of traditional practices around celebratory food, but its replacement with market food was considered inferior to home-made versions:

I didn't make a Christmas pudding last year, and that's the first year I haven't made it ... but there's no children at home to stir it you see. There was quite a lot going on and I thought, 'well, I'll try ...' and I bought one ... well, I think I bought three in the end, one from Sainsbury's, one from Tesco and one from Marks and Spencer's, just to see ... but they weren't as nice as home made, but they were alright. But it's not just the pudding itself, it's that whole process of making the pudding early and putting the sixpences in and the children stirring it and making a wish and all that ... mmm ... that's what you lose as well. Last year was the first year I haven't done it.
(Pamela Anne, Family 6 from Allerton, aged 65: Interview).

... and it was only this last year that my grandson fell out with me because I didn't make a Christmas cake (laughter). I swore last year that I wasn't going to make one and I've not made one this year. I bought one and cut into it and tasted it and I said, 'I don't like it', so our Joy took it. It's not the same. I make my own mince pies and dinner though.
(Susan, Family 1 from Garston, aged 96: Interview).

Susan explained that 'in her head' she still has the desire to carry on this tradition – it is part of her identity and standing as a mother and grandmother - but it is the physical effort that she finds daunting. This was quite common amongst older participants who have discovered the convenience of market foods at Christmas and generally – increasing loss of mobility has led to a lack of incentive to cook, sometimes exacerbated by the loss of a spouse:

When my husband was alive we would occasionally have convenience foods, but I do have more now I'm on my own, yes. I have those 'meals for one' – they're not the same but they're alright.
(Margaret, Family 2 from Garston, aged 71: Interview).

Thus, these family members who are capable of cooking traditional foods, are not ‘culinary Luddites’ (Lyon & Colquhoun, 1999) or weighed down by food snobbery. However, in other families, commercial products are considered to be poor imitations of the ‘real thing’. Patricia has never found such products satisfying no matter what claims are made regarding their authenticity and quality – she could *always* produce something better. However, before one is tempted to champion what one might call ‘authentic’, Appadurai (1986b) reminds us that authenticity “measures the degree to which something is more or less what it *ought* to be” (p.53). Some of my participants mixed fresh and convenience foods in order to make traditional dishes, for example, ready-prepared sauces with fresh vegetables, ready-made pastry with fresh meat – a compromise between the traditional and the convenient.

Older participants who now live alone and younger participants who have left home, have come to appreciate that traditional food is not only symbolic and part of family identity, but that it also creates social bonding and keeps families and communities together. Prior to this, such food and food occasions had been an embedded and often ‘taken-for-granted’ part of their lives.

4.3 Tradition, food and social bonding

Amongst my participants tradition was not only equated with the naming of certain foods and their symbolic nature, but as a resource that created social bonding and maintained networks within the community and family. Scouse, whilst being an important symbol of identity, also provided a common pot from which many people could be fed:

It was quite simple food, it wasn’t complicated food, it was like if you’d got a gang of kids the chances are you’ve just got to put something in a pot and boil it. You might make a soup or something like that, or a stew so that’s where ‘scouse’ comes in ... scouse is like ... you chop the meat, you wack it all in a pot, in a ‘dixie’, put the lid on it and just leave it and you come back a few hours later and you’ve this thick meal, but a meal in one ... the thing was that because it had potatoes in it, the starch in the potatoes made it thick and you all sat round the table ... and prepared with it was bread and pickled red cabbage.
(Anthony, Family 8 from Stoneycroft, aged 43: Interview).

I remember me nan, me dad’s mum, she used to make ... erm ... there was always a pan and there’d be ... erm ... you’d go in and there’d be everything in it ... biscuits ... anything in it ... neck-ends or whatever they put in it ... it would always be there ... we’d all have it ... there’d be everything in it, potatoes, anything, you name it, barley ...
(Sophie, Family 7 from Kensington, aged 35: Interview).

The sharing of scouse was not confined to family but was offered to anyone who called; simmering on the back burner it was described in terms of “a well that never ran dry”. As

long as families were not living in extreme poverty, they could at least offer a bowl of scouse. Thus when no other wealth is available, the ability to offer food provides material and social capital (Collings et al., 1998). It has always been a Liverpool tradition for scouse to be offered to others and participants remarked that it is the smell when one enters the home, one that is instantly recognisable, that represents continuity, hospitality, unity, solidarity and comfort. It is the particular smell of scouse, along with the sight of the large pan, the 'dixie', that can be heard bubbling on the stove, that creates a 'synaesthetic experience' (Seremataakis, 1994) that is embodied and makes scouse special in the same way as the English breakfast.

Without exception the Sunday roast dinner was chosen as the favourite meal across all generations of each family regardless of class and economic status. The sociality of the Sunday roast dinner was highlighted by Terrance who, whilst accepting that his daughters might have wanted privacy when they were younger, would insist that they came together as a family for this traditional meal. The idea that a traditional meal brings and keeps this family together has endured:

When I go home to mum and dad I like my roast dinner to be the way it always has been, d'you know what I mean? Roasties made with lard not olive oil and your traditional veg, not glazed parsnips or red cabbage and apricots ... and then a rice pudding just made with milk, rice, sugar and nutmeg or a simple crumble. That's it, it's what you look for, maybe the comfort of it being the same, the same taste, smell and that. You look for that, like ... something repeated everytime you go home and you're all together.

(Meryl, Family 2 from Garston, aged 23: Interview).

This would support the idea that the need to feel nurtured, to feel safe, to know that 'all is well' should not be underestimated in looking at the relationship between food and health (Eisenstein, 2007). Familiar tastes have the ability to make us smile – "the tiniest perfection can make you believe that everything's going to be alright" (Kendricks, 2001: 42). Conversely, participants also hold memories of repeated imperfections:

We'd all sit round the table for Sunday dinner and we'd look at each other out the corner of our eyes and then to the overcooked cabbage, waxy potatoes and lumpy gravy – mum just couldn't cook really, but we still looked forward to sitting down together

(Ian, middle-aged resident of Kensington: Natural conversation).

Although not always as good as a 'home-made' roast (and eaten less frequently than in the past), the Sunday roast dinner was often mentioned in relation to eating out as a family, a way of keeping in touch in a busy world. Thus, writers who have contributed to the 'ethnomusicologists' cookbook' (Williams, 2006) highlight the idea that it is not traditional foods per se that create relationships, but that relationships, the gathering of people together, the sharing, being hospitable, following customs and so on, that blesses the food. Sally

thought it was the sociality, the sharing, of the roast dinner and the cooked breakfast that held the key to their importance and endurance. Roast potatoes in particular had become an ‘embodied memory’ in that as soon as she tasted the potato it reminded her of two friends, a kind of ‘Proustian’ moment. Sally explained that during her childhood she would visit her friend’s house on a Sunday and her mum would plate her up a dinner to share with the family, and during her university days a friend would return from a visit home with a roast dinner for her and she would think, “Wow! What a kind thing to do”. The full English breakfast was seen as an indulgence, a special meal one liked to share, but not something one would not have all the time like cereal or toast.

The significance of traditional indulgences and the consumption of traditional everyday foods also marked class differences between families and generations linked to socio-economic status.

4.4 Tradition, food and class

The importance of class to my discussion on tradition is significant in two ways. Across the time-span under study, there is evidence of a ‘working class’ culture that more or less represents a consistent set of values, attitudes, beliefs and behaviours that stands in contrast to ‘class’ as something with ‘added value’ where one may refer to someone who has got ‘class’, ‘good taste’, is ‘classy’ and so on. Some of my participants are very proud to be ‘working class’ and value being from the ‘working classes’ per se, even passionate about it. However, in some cases they have never had the opportunity to escape that reality, whereas others are proud merely because they have escaped and thus left their ‘working class’ status behind them and all it represented. These two notions of class are played out through the notion of tradition linked to celebratory food and events.

Amongst older participants from ‘working class’ families traditional celebratory food, such as birthday or Christmas food, was simply food that was different to everyday food. In the case of one’s birthday, it marked out a special day, ‘your’ day, a day you shared with your family and significant others. However, expectations were linked to the socio-economic status of families that also highlighted generational differences. Older participants who wished to mark family birthdays during the period of the depression and rationing remember how they attempted to make them special, albeit simple, when goods were scarce and money

was limited:

Well, you'd just rig a little cake up and you could buy fairy cake stuff then, it was just coming out and it was just the base ... erm ... and you could make butterfly cream cakes and little fairy cakes and all that, and make jellies and custard and all that, you know, or a trifle.

(Susan, Family 1 from Garston, aged 96: Interview).

Similar to Susan, Lily would manage to make a few fairy cakes and jellies for her children, which Robert recalls because anything 'extra' on the table was very rare. In conversation with a middle-aged woman who was brought up in a tenement block in Everton, she did not have anything for her birthday because it came soon after Christmas and it was considered greedy to expect anything. In contrast to these accounts, both Mollie and Marion recall having birthday parties with cakes, jellies and sandwiches laid out on a newly laundered tablecloth. Mollie and Marion provided similar birthday occasions for their own children, who then passed them on to the next generation – Marion to Pamela Anne to Katya, and Mollie to Grace to Jon. This was the way their families celebrated birthdays, a positive and enjoyable experience which they wanted, and were able, to pass on.

Whilst Marion, Elizabeth and Mollie can also remember "wonderful" Christmas celebrations during the 1920s, Susan, Margaret and Lily can remember a piece of fruit, a few nuts and one toy in a stocking and maybe a chicken or rabbit for Christmas Day dinner. The next generations in these families received a little more at Christmas as socio-economic conditions improved. Joy, Ellen and Robert can remember a few more bits and pieces in the way of Christmas fayre being added over the years. However, families did not expect anymore than what was available (the expectation and excitement came from the 'unusual', the 'not-expected') because provision was much the same in working families around them. One elderly gentleman can remember there being nothing on Christmas morning for any of his family but, nevertheless, his father sharpened a knife on the front door step to give neighbours the impression they were having a Christmas dinner. This indicates that tradition involved pride and reputation within communities, no matter how difficult it was to uphold it. Whilst in our daily lives behind closed doors we may not be seen by others, on special occasions both inside and outside the home, we are more conspicuous but not necessarily by the 'general public' but by others who are similar to us (Lichtenberg, 1997).

In contrast, Rose recalled that her mother "thought nothing of it" when she just prepared a few paste sandwiches for her and a few friends on her birthday:

Mum never made us birthday parties ... I remember inviting friends round once and she just put

these sandwiches out ... and it was really ... the shame (laughter) ... it was Shippam's meat past and that's what we had to greet us ... I thought it was going to be all cakes and jellies and ice-cream and stuff ... so that was horrible ... but my mother didn't think anything of it you know ... and we never had anything special for our birthday when we were evacuated either.
(*Rose, Family 8 from Stoneycroft, aged 71: Interview*).

Despite embodying feelings of disappointment and shame in front of her friends, Rose perpetuated this negative birthday experience when it came to her children's birthdays, as Patricia recalls:

We never had special birthday food, birthday cakes ... mum didn't seem to bother and we never had a birthday party.

In contrast to her mum, this disappointment and discomfort had caused Patricia to break this pattern within her own family, but, unlike Rose, she was in an economic position to do so:

I wasn't going to let my children feel disappointment or discomfort over their birthdays – I was determined that we would mark it as a special day with special food ... the traditional cake, the jellies, ice-cream and all that stuff ... and as they've got older it might be a special meal of their choice.

Having been invited to join the preparations for her daughter's birthday party, I noted that it was not only the food itself that was significant, but also the practices around it that involved notions of love and care. The cake was home-made and was iced by her partner Anthony after which her daughter helped in the decoration, carefully placing little iced flowers and sugar strands around the edge interspersed with the appropriate number of candles. Patricia made a variety of 'traditional' party foods mentioned in her above account, as well as a selection of more contemporary foods such as olives, breadsticks and dips. The table and the room were decorated in matching colours, thus creating a special ambience that reflected the significance she afforded the event.

I did not speak to anyone who was in a position where they could not afford to celebrate traditional events such as birthdays, Christmas or Easter in some way or another. Families were able to purchase a wide range of foods in supermarkets, either ready-made or in the provision of ingredients that were, in the main, within reach of the average purse. Celebratory foods and meal occasions had become 'taken-for-granted' and were an integral part of family life. Sally recalls a variety of special birthday food, especially her cake:

My birthdays have always been special, always been made to stand out somehow ... that was from the location, the activities and my birthday cakes that my nana made and she's special to me. She's a lovely warm and generous lady and I love her. There would be lots of birthday food and my birthday cakes were different from my friends because they were made with layers of chocolate sponge with fresh strawberries and cream on the top instead of buttercream or icing and jelly tots or something. I've got photographs of cutting the cake.
(*Sally, Family 5 from Kirkby, aged 22: Interview*).

However, children's expectations increased as birthday parties became marketed in varying novel forms both inside and outside the home – Meryl, Sophie, Jon, Sally and Melanie had all experienced, or their children had experienced, parties held at 'McDonald's', pizza parlours, the bowling alley, or at home that involved the hire of a bouncy castle or fancy dress. Participants also mentioned how they had adopted various Christmas 'themes' and 'styles' based on colour, fashion or past eras – the nostalgic Christmas taken from the Victorian era, the more simple Scandinavian look, the more contemporary colours of black and white or purple and silver that took over for a time from the more traditional red and gold. Alongside traditional British Christmas food they mentioned buying foods from Germany and Sweden (for example, spiced biscuits), the Mediterranean (Greek dips and olives and Turkish delight) and Italy (the round yeasted fruit cake known as Panettone traditionally eaten at Christmas). Whereas older participants can remember some food traditions changing, for example, duck and goose being replaced with turkey from the United States, they do not remember any other strong influences from abroad or changing fashions. Certainly the turkey was not prepared with garlic, or sprouts with chilli and caramelised lemons. Whereas Christmas items were packed away each year and brought out again at the appropriate time (which participants found comforting in its familiarity whilst at the same time invoking a sense of anticipation and excitement), this was no longer the case as participants became tempted by more and more ostentatious, even outrageous, displays that have little to do with traditional ways of celebrating, and meanings attached to, Christmas.

I refer back to the notion of 'conspicuous consumption' (Lichtenberg, 1997) discussed in chapter three. Whereas in times past it would be the type of food that separated the 'special' from the 'mundane', it is now more likely to be a commercial, media driven package, theme, location or 'style' of the occasion that reflects a sense of 'taste'. Lichtenberg would suggest that putting on 'a good spread' encompasses, to some degree or another, the need to be as good as others or even better than others, equated with individuality and excellence, for example, Patricia's birthday spread for her daughter. This appeared to serve as an antidote to the sense of shame and disappointment Patricia felt about her own birthdays. Celebrations reflect what is valued in terms of family and the wish to be regarded favourably by other family members and the wider community. The notion of 'conspicuous expenditure' helps to account for the observation that traditions mutate, change, become fluid or are re-invented or unearthed from one generation to the next (Hobsbawm & Ranger; 1983). Unlike traditions that are passed down in written form and become 'fixed', such as religious traditions, (or

those that are not written down but are deeply personal within families and communities and not commercially exploitable), these are open to such exploitation and thus 'malleable' in their construction (Goody, 1968). These changes can be a welcome addition for those who have the means to pick and choose what kind of birthday or Christmas celebrations they would like, but for others it can also make them painfully aware of their lack of choice.

Adding value to foods and meal occasions now underpins market strategies that include the commercialisation of ritual introducing novel ways to celebrate including foods that reflect the notion of 'taste'. Freedom of choice and the cultivation of taste and discrimination has been shaped by marketers who 'segment' the consumers they wish to target along class and generational lines (Roseberry, 1996). The traditional birthday fayre of a few jellies and fairy cakes with a few simple games are now a thing of the past as expectations become greater and parents strive to provide "the best party possible" that comes from peer pressure and 'keeping up with the Jones's', fuelled by the media and the desire not to 'let your child down'. I suggest that a 'good' celebration is now associated with material, commercial provision involving a high degree of extra expenditure, the usual habitual excess consumption – it is media driven rather than driven by the 'old' imperatives. Younger participants on low incomes felt the social pressure to match up to others from their already stretched budgets. Having been invited to birthday parties I would observe tables laden down with party food, most of which would be deemed by health promoters as 'unhealthy' (for example, sausage rolls, pork pies, crisps, sweets, chocolate biscuits) that families found expensive to provide.

Thus celebratory traditional food enters the consciousness reflected in a sense of class and taste. However, we may be less aware of the role tradition plays in marking time in ritual and everyday practices.

4.5 Tradition as a marker of time in ritual and everyday practices

Ethnographic studies have revealed the important link between ritual and tradition in that the latter is upheld through the mutual reinforcement of ritual and everyday eating (Meyers, 2001; Sutton, 2001). Sutton also reminds us that both mundane and special meals and partaking of drinks serve to structure the day. Gusfield (1987) uses patterns of alcohol consumption to highlight the dichotomy between work-time and leisure-time; drinking

confined to Friday evenings and weekends and not during the working day reflects the 'ordered' nature of the workplace as opposed to the 'less ordered', less restrictive home. Work and leisure are kept in separate time zones. I observed the extremely busy pubs in the business quarter of Liverpool on Friday nights offering 'happy hours', 'cocktail hours', that mark the end of the week and serve as a gateway between finishing work and going home.

The English tradition of tea drinking came up in numerous natural conversations I had across all generations and classes:

I can't do anything 'til I've had a cup of tea in the morning - that starts my day ...

As soon as we get in from anywhere the first thing we do is have a 'brew', you know, it's like, 'aah! Home again' ... and then I get on with whatever needs to be done.

I always stop what I'm doing mid morning and have a 'brew' ...

Although not surrounded by the meticulous preparation and serving associated with the ritualistic 'Japanese tea ceremony' (Kakuzo, 1956), I would suggest that tea drinking, as a British tradition, is nevertheless highly symbolic and provides a time to reflect, make amends after conflict and cements or indicates friendship. As Evans (2006) suggests, in awkward or uncertain situations the serving of tea makes things 'manageable' even if nobody actually drinks it. As soon as I entered participants' homes across all generations I was met with the traditional greeting, "would you like a drink of tea or coffee?" or, "would you like a brew?" or "a 'cuppa'?" that instantly made me feel welcome and comfortable. I noted that there were marked differences in the way generations served tea. My older participants warmed the pot first, added loose tea or two tea bags, covered the pot with a cosy and allowed the tea to 'brew' on a neatly laid tray. Milk was added first from a milk jug that matched bone china cups and saucers and sugar bowl – I was asked 'how do you like your tea?' Do you like it 'weak, middling or strong?' In contrast, younger participants used pottery mugs, dropping a teabag into each one to which milk was added – the teabag was left in the mug until the right strength was reached and then passed to me. This was a much quicker process and more casual.

Tea, on the whole, remained the main beverage of my older participants (Mollie had always drunk more expensive China tea) that was nearly always consumed in the home. Younger participants were just as likely to drink various coffees, hot chocolate or fruit drinks both inside and outside the home. For instance, a coffee in 'Starbucks' whilst out shopping or an afternoon cup of tea at home or in the local café, were drink interludes that helped structure

their day, thus creating new traditions and rituals. However, despite the popularity of coffee, tea was still considered to be *the* 'traditional' English beverage and part of English identity. To older participants, this was traditionally plain, "none of your fancy stuff", a reference to the ever-growing types and flavours of coffee and tea that are now served. Although popular, Strinati (2004) points out that the main 'players' serving coffee and hot beverages on the High Street (such as Starbucks, Costa Coffee and Café Nero) offer an homogenized 'global culture' that compete for brand loyalty. Although some drinks on sale are simple traditional beverages, there has also been a move towards more 'speciality' drinks (for example, gourmet, organic, fair-traded or environmentally friendly varieties) sold at higher prices because they purportedly possess qualities of taste or are more ethically produced (Kenworthy & Schaeffer, 2000). In terms of health, the more complex drinks become the greater the likelihood that the calorie content will increase. Considering that a range of speciality teas and coffees are available in supermarkets for home consumption, Roseberry (1996) suggests that it also the ambience of these venues that attracts the customer. In some ways, they are the modern form of the traditional pub – the daily pint of beer being replaced by the daily cup of coffee (www.allegrastrategies.com). I noted the easily observed interiors with sofas, soft lighting, internet access and reading materials that made them 'conspicuous' sites of consumption that encourage people to buy relatively expensive food and drinks vis-a-vis the 'traditional' local café. Whereas the 'local' café in Garston, Kensington or Allerton open approximately from half past eight in the morning until five in the evening, where people are inclined (and encouraged) to eat breakfast, lunch and snacks at traditional times, coffee chains have extended opening hours where food and drinks are indiscriminately served throughout the day.

Turning away from the interplay between food and drink occasions, I found an example of how weekly and everyday meal occasions can be 'mutually reinforcing' (Sutton, 2001) in accounts of the Sunday roast dinner and scouse. As I have discussed in earlier chapters, (lob)scouse is *the* traditional dish of Liverpool and played a major part in the diet of the working classes. The Sunday dinner and scouse structured the weekly meal patterns of my participants in that the meat used in the latter would often be 'leftovers' from the former. Scouse, therefore, as a form of stew, would be served on Monday and what was left (if there was anything) would then be used to make 'scouse pie' (the scouse mixture encased in pastry) on Tuesday. Elizabeth, Susan, Lily and Margaret all remember scouse in these various forms being eaten on most days of the week when they were young and how they

made scouse last throughout the week when feeding their own families, often until Friday when the traditional Catholic tradition of eating fish (and pay day to buy fish and chips) replaced meat. Whilst scouse is now more likely to be made with fresh meat, in the homes of my participants it remains a meal that is extensively served on Monday. The next section shows how these patterns of eating arose from religious practices and rituals that served as markers of time in the lives of my participants.

4.5.1 *Religious practices and rituals as markers of time*

My interviews with first and second generation participants recall Sunday as a special day through their memories of church attendance, separate from the rest of the week marked by the midday roast meal followed by a traditional tea:

After we'd been to Sunday School, when we got home me mum would have made fairy cakes and cheese and crackers and fruit with evaporated milk and that would be special on a Sunday. Sunday would always be roast dinner after church in the morning, and there'd be rice pudding and occasionally we'd have ginger cake and custard ... mmm!
(*Ellen, Family 2 from Garston, aged 51: Interview*).

We nearly always had a roast dinner on a Sunday – the joint would go in before we went to church and then you could smell it when you came in ... mmm! ... and then me mum would just have to do the veggies and make the gravy. I don't go to church now but I can still reconnect with that when I smell a roast dinner ... and then you'd go to Sunday school and have tea when you got back and it wasn't a tea you'd have on any other day of the week so that made it special for us as a family.
(*Frances, Family 3 from Garston, aged 65: Interview*).

Sunday tea often comprised a sandwich (sometimes made with cold roast meat), tinned fruit and evaporated milk served with bread and butter and some form of cake with a cup of tea. This practice appeared to remain in place until about the 1960s when a much wider range of foods was introduced into people's diets and meal times were starting to move away from being strictly governed by church attendance patterns. Older participants remembered Sunday being traditionally a day of rest from paid work and household chores, a day devoted to spiritual rather than practical matters (although the best meal of the week was also expected to be served). These participants believed this changed when people were able to go to the pub, gamble, attend sporting events and shop (following the Sunday Trading Act, 1994) seven days a week. This suggests that the power of the church has been replaced by that of the market place and shows a fundamental change in value systems (Hopper, 2003). In addition, more women entered the job market (that sometimes included Sunday working) and increased income allowed for the uptake of more weekend activities. Margaret felt that the main changes and differences in family life between the older and younger generations

was a direct result of women entering the job market. Nearly all the women she knew in her generation (and previous generations) stayed at home after the birth of their first child, something considered to be both expected and honourable, whereas subsequent generations of women, almost without exception, continue to, or dip in and out of, work outside the home. In fact, Grace, Katherine and Patricia often use Sunday as a 'catch-up' day, whereby they undertake a whole range of household tasks before the start of the working week that include shopping, washing, ironing and tidying up. Weekend family activities include shopping trips, bowling, swimming, watching 'footie' in the pub, eating out and visits to places of interest. Thus weekend food practices, rather than following tradition centred around church attendance, are now potentially negotiable and interchangeable and Saturday and Sunday are no longer such special or very separate days. Consequently the significance of 'the weekend', particularly Sunday as a separate day, a holy day, that was ordered by a set of 'accepted' ritualistic and symbolic practices has changed (Hobsbawm & Ranger, 1983). Such changes in the lived experiences across generations indicate that societal structure and cultural change impact on traditional food practices (Counihan, 1984).

It is the role of the church in family life that has changed over time, particularly in terms of marking life events and milestones. My older participants can remember that regular church attendance intertwined with traditional church rituals played a key part in family life. Susan gave an account of her confinement, that is, the period surrounding the birth of each of her children:

When I was confined my husband would do everything ... he wouldn't even let me cut a piece of bread for the children ... I could cut my own, but I daren't cook bread ... I daren't touch a thing until I'd been to church, you know, that's thanksgiving for the birth; my mum wouldn't let me in the house, she used to take the baby off me at the door and I used to go and get 'churched'. That would start your commitment to your child and love it and bring it up properly.

(Susan, Family 1 from Garston, aged 96: Natural conversation).

'Churching' was both a Catholic and Church of England ceremony whereby mothers were 'cleansed' and blessed four to six weeks after birth that incorporated them back into normal life. Within communities, not being 'churched' was frowned upon and seen as being 'deviant' (Shorter, 1992). Struggling to bring up ten children, Susan found solace in the fact that her local priest gave her this blessing and praised her indomitable spirit and commitment to her family reflected in her memories:

When you get older you do go back ... I'd do it all again ... I wouldn't change it. It was worth it ... Without those memories I'd go mad ... it's just like reading a book and you're turning the pages back.

Lane (2001) sees 'thanksgiving' as "uncomplicated and whole-hearted praise" that is an important component of contentment, an acceptance of things "as they are" (p.99).

Susan felt that her commitment to her family that this tradition symbolised, was missing amongst young mothers today especially in relation to feeding one's family well. Whilst she had managed to give her family plenty of nourishing soups, stews and dinners made with fresh meats, fish and vegetables, she saw a lack of commitment in mothers who she saw walking home after dropping their children off at school, sometimes still in their pyjamas, often smoking, eating sausage rolls with bags "full" of processed convenience foods, snacks and sweets from the local supermarkets. To Susan, this behaviour did not constitute a commitment to family life, describing these mothers as "stupid" in that there was no need to be struggling one-parent families on benefits because "you don't have to have children these days". Although Susan gave thanks for the birth of each of her children, for her generation there was more-or-less no choice about the size of families and she wished birth control had been widely available to her, commenting "we wouldn't have chosen to have ten or more children on the wages that were coming in". This was a common sentiment I found amongst older female participants that they did not have choices in many areas of their life and young people did not value the choices they now have. As a campaigner for the universal right of women to birth control, Margaret Sanger (2000 [1922]) contended that a woman could not call herself 'free' unless she could make a conscious decision whether or not to become a mother.

In contrast, I found very little evidence of regular church attendance amongst younger generations and none of 'churching'. Although younger participants recognised that a blessing for the mother and child could be a positive thing, they rejected the idea that a woman after childbirth was 'dirty' and needed to be cleansed before she could join society again. However, I found it still a common practice to mark milestones in the form of christenings, marriages and funerals – using the church to be 'hatched, matched and dispatched' but little else. I also found another example of following a religious ritual without necessarily matching it with regular church attendance. Part of my observations involved attending a local dinner party in Toxteth with fifteen women (around 60 years of age) from varying socio-economic backgrounds that coincidentally fell on Good Friday to which everyone was asked to contribute a dish of food. I was interested to find out whether the women would follow the penitential ritual of eating only fish on a Friday, itself of

religious significance. The ‘Code of Canon Law, 1250, 1251’ designates penitential days and times in the universal Church as every Friday of the whole year and the season of Lent, thus traditionally Catholics refrain from meat on a Friday in order to make reparation for their sins (Foley, 2005). According to Mazzone (2003) abstaining from meat meant that it became synonymous with feasting and gastronomic pleasure whilst “fish evoked bodily discipline and thus had to be imposed” (p.179). Although a few women still attended Catholic church, the majority had lapsed, or did not have any strong views about religion. I noted the complete absence of meat dishes and when I questioned the women it appeared that *no-one* ate meat on a Friday, particularly Good Friday and this had become an embedded practice, something their families always followed and generations before them. There was a consensus of opinion that it “wouldn’t feel right” if they broke with tradition, a constant ‘unwritten rule’ in their head, an embodied memory so powerful that they “just couldn’t bring themselves” to eat meat whether they were religious or not.

Whilst non-Catholics across generations also followed this tradition because “everybody did”, my participants were at pains to point out that this did not mean they were Catholics:

I wouldn’t dream of saying I was a Catholic and had to have fish, it’s just that we’ve always had fish on a Friday.
(Mollie, Family 4 from Cressington, aged 88: Interview).

We weren’t Catholic, we were Protestants, but we still had fish on a Friday because that’s what everybody had and me dad had salt fish on a Sunday.
(Margaret, Family 2 from Garston, aged 71: Interview).

Similar to Jews eating the Sabbath meal on a Friday evening rather than at lunchtime (the main meal on every other day is taken at lunchtime), eating only fish on a Friday demonstrates that religion had the ability to impose a pattern of eating habits on whole populations (Baldwin, 1977). However, the tradition of eating salt fish (mainly cod) on penitential days and Sunday mornings that served as a cheap, readily available, food (Kurlansky, 1998) is now rarely followed because, I was told, “you can’t get it anymore because there’s no fishmongers”. My observations also showed that it is no longer available in any of the major supermarkets. Several participants noted that fish is very expensive now compared to years ago and Joy thought fish was something you had when you got bored with meat and thus of little significance. Salted fish no longer appeals to younger generations either – it is considered to be smelly, too salty and looks bland, denoting a generational change in ‘taste’. These are interesting points in the context of health promotion that encourages fish consumption (The Department of Health, 2008a). However, the majority of

my participants, across classes and generations, did perpetuate this weekly tradition through the regular purchase of fish and chips. According to Adair (1986), fish and chips do not belong to the 'culinary ideology' of fish served alone

... whose reputed bloodless insipidity makes it fit only for pious Catholics ... and effete gastronomes who ... alter its taste and consistency by covering it with rich sauces, as distinct from honest, proletarian sauce from out of a bottle (p. 48).

Older generations mentioned the regular consumption of fish and chips from an early age in that it was a cheap, tasty and nourishing meal that was high in calories for manual workers. Fish friers have been recognised as the 'pioneers' of the fast food industry and records show that in 1927 they nationally numbered 35,000 (Walton, 1989). This indicates that 'take-away' food has long been with us as a convenience – frying fish in small kitchens for large families was not easy – and as Friday marked the end of the working week, this was the day it was most affordable. My observations revealed that Friday is still the most popular day for a 'chippy' tea as queues appeared much longer on those evenings than any other. I discovered that across all generations and classes fish and chips remain both comforting and enduring and when hunger strikes nothing tastes better. Orwell (1986 [1937]) describes this meal as a luxury item that makes life bearable. Fish and chips were described as "British through and through", "truly traditional", something one had always had, or something one always looked forward to on a Friday with the family. Thus, this meal not only serves as a force for family unity, but as "*the* culinary sign of Britishness, nationalized more than socialised where sociocultural distinctions are suspended in that rich or poor people eat the same dish ... a force for national unity" (Adair, 1986: 49-50).

However, my youngest family members found the restrictive practice of eating a particular food on a particular day, such as fish on a Friday, an alien concept that held little or no religious significance. They expected to eat fish at anytime and anything they fancied on a Friday. Whilst they felt food was socially significant they did not see it as a means of accruing spiritual capital in the sense that food serves as a marker of religious discipline and devotion. The Harvest Festival in particular seemed an odd concept to them because foods are available and plentiful all year round and one does not need to give thanks for foods that now defy nature and the seasons. This loss of seasonality, writers tell us, has come from a now taken-for-granted global food supply (Blythman, 2005; Mallett, 2006).

4.5.2 *The loss of the seasonal calendar*

Although my participants believed traditional *events* retained their significance, they felt a number of foods associated with such events had lost their “specialness” with the year round availability or early marketing of such items as turkey, mince pies, tangerines, figs and dates associated with Christmas, “Ginger Parkin Cake” and toffee apples associated with Bonfire Night, and chocolate eggs associated with Easter. Younger participants in particular purchased these items at any time without thinking about it. A group of women of mixed ages in a Garston community centre expressed the following opinions:

It doesn't bother me having things in the shops all the time and you can pick up some bargains afterwards – you don't need Christmas cake on Christmas Day and it doesn't matter to us if we have Easter eggs early in the shops because you can buy one a week and put them away for the kids.
(*Young mother, aged 21: Natural conversation*).

We always used to associate tangerines and nuts with Christmas; you wouldn't see them at any other time and that's how you knew Christmas was coming so they were special.
(*Elderly resident, aged 81: Natural conversation*).

As soon as Christmas is over the hot cross buns are out and Easter eggs and then in September the Christmas stuff is in the shops before the Halloween and Bonfire stuff – so time-wise everything's mixed up and you're fed up with seeing things by the time Christmas arrives ... mind you, most people used to make their own and didn't buy shop Christmas cake or puddings or mince pies or anything like that ... it was traditional to make your own.
(*Elderly resident, aged 85: Natural conversation*).

Thus the *anticipation* of buying and eating special foods as traditional calendar events approach has been somewhat lost and many people I spoke to thought the long period that retailers market Christmas in particular (that seems to them to start earlier each year) almost creates an “anticlimax” - “you're sick to death of it by the time it arrives”. Participants felt they are continually tempted to buy, rather than make together, special food that was once reserved for traditional celebratory feasting at holiday and religious festivals that ‘connect and reconnect’ family and community (Sutton, 2001). In the settings I have described here, food struggles to retain its ‘communicative’ role apparently lost in the ‘anomie’ of the hypermarket (Bell & Valentine, 1997) as produce is sourced globally and forms continuous, homogenised (but predominately Americanised), ‘nature-defying’ displays (Blythman, 2005). My participants agreed that the fruit and vegetables they would have traditionally bought and eaten at certain times of year, that included both mundane and festive food, have become incorporated, to some degree or another, into their diets all year round and are, thus, no longer markers of time. Not only did accounts show that seasonal eating had largely been discarded in that salad, strawberries and root vegetables were eaten all year round (even though it did not “feel quite right” to eat out of season) but also the tradition of eating certain

meals at certain times of the day had changed.

4.5.3 *Changes in traditional meal times*

My data showed that older participants were more likely to stick to traditional meals and mealtimes – they would consistently eat their roast meal on a Sunday accompanied by a rice pudding, fish on a Friday, their main meal at midday and a snack at tea time or vice versa and would rarely eat late in the evening (something younger participants tended to do particularly if both parents were working). Older participants appeared to be comfortable with situating their lives within the notion of what they considered to be traditional. Of course, it could be argued that it is much easier for older people to follow traditions when they live alone or through increasing immobility or health problems their worlds have become much smaller (maybe less complex) and less busy. Younger participants generally adopted a more flexible approach to mealtimes - it was not unusual for a roast dinner to be eaten as a mid-week evening meal and the ‘all-day-breakfast’ at any time both inside and outside the home:

We usually have what you’d call a traditional cooked breakfast as a tea, we’d class it as a tea, we wouldn’t have it as a breakfast.

(Katherine, Family 1 from Garston, aged 40: Interview).

I wouldn’t eat a full English breakfast at breakfast-time – I’d eat it for lunch. I couldn’t eat all that grease in the morning.

(Jemma, Family 1 from Garston, aged 17: Interview).

Mum and I might have an all-day breakfast late morning and the ‘all-day’ tag is right – that lasts you all day because you don’t need lunch. I know my nan wouldn’t eat like that – she would have porridge at breakfast time and then lunch at one and then tea at six; that’s what she does everyday.

(Sally, Family 5 from Kirkby, aged 22: Interview).

Further, accounts related to the ‘traditional’ breakfast showed that it is often limited to a holiday or weekend tradition as this interview with Family 5 shows:

On holiday would be the only time we eat it now or at a weekend – but even at a weekend it’s egg and bacon on toast, which wouldn’t exactly be a traditional English breakfast.

(Robert, aged 65: Second generation).

[We have an English breakfast] some weekends, but not every weekend. When we go on holiday, we tend to have an English breakfast a lot. We usually go to Scotland to a log cabin and we’ll have a ‘brunch’, lunch and breakfast combined, and that’ll keep us going ‘til we have a late tea.

(Maureen, aged 42: Third generation).

I wouldn’t normally eat cooked breakfast because I never feel hungry first thing in the morning and it’s usually a rush to get out anyway, so I’d rather have something later on or miss breakfast altogether. I’ve had cooked breakfast at a weekend or when we’ve been away on holiday though.

(Sally, aged 22: Fourth generation).

Whilst these accounts indicate that the make-up of the cooked English breakfast still enjoys a

special place in eating practices, the once exclusive morning ritual has been transferred to other times of day or is reserved for ‘high days and holidays’ that reflects the increased reflexivity of people’s lives and thus eating practices. Along with other traditional practices already mentioned that have become somewhat reflexive, it could be argued that the original significance of tradition can become somewhat lost when they cease to be attractive or dynamic which begs the question, ‘should we be concerned whether traditions survive or not within families and communities?’

4.6 *Will tradition survive?*

Whereas first and second generations continued to follow the traditions of their era in relation to food practices, this tended to change when women started to enter the job market, particularly if this involved full-time work. For example, the following account indicates that influences may be lost to the necessities of modern living to the detriment of the family:

Q. Do you think there is a place for home made traditional food in our ‘modern’ society?

A. Yeah, but it’s only there on a Sunday for me because that’s the only traditional meal. I mean, I know the history of the traditional meal is because your family was always working and a Sunday was the only time off that all the family could get together and have a hot meal ... erm ... and I think now, the way society is, you’re always rushing and trying to keep up with everything and you still go back to that Sunday dinner as your traditional family meal.

(Katherine, Family 1 from Garston, aged 40: Interview).

Katherine has not passed on cooking skills and techniques to her daughter Jemma or to her son since taking up full time employment. In trying to “spin all those plates” and “being all things to all people” the process of ‘social reproduction’ (Moisio et al., 2004) that is needed to perpetuate food practices has ceased between the third and fourth generations of this family and traditional food is only tenuously surviving through the shared Sunday roast dinner and the making of scouse.

However, families still retain their own traditions that have been passed down from one generation to another as part of their family history and identity, supporting the idea that tradition is a ‘social construction’ (Hobsbawm & Ranger, 1983). These may not have been deliberately started, but have taken on a life of their own whether real or a fondly remembered feature of the past. In Marion’s family there has been a long tradition of taking regular picnics that are quite lavish affairs, with a table cloth, crockery, cutlery and a range of ‘transportable’ foods. Pamela Anne always holds a special family celebration of Chinese

food (originally chosen because it was the most affordable food to eat out) on the 27th of December that marks her wedding anniversary. Sally and her mum have a special tea of sandwiches and oven chips on their laps whilst watching television on a Sunday that the family refers to as a 'picky tea' and some families use their own particular set of ingredients for scouse. I refer back to Muxel (1993) who describes these particular food episodes as 'anchoring points' in the creation of a common family identity. I found that this does not only apply to food per se, but also to particular family objects connected with food preparation and consumption that have consequently acquired a 'social life' (Appadurai, 1986a) in that they carry and perpetuate memories of significant others and food events:

I have a beautiful stoneware dish that I've acquired from mum and that my boys like ... things are made in it and I think, 'Oh God! This is grand!' and you think, 'that's quite impressive' because the stoneware hasn't changed, it's as old as Methusala and a continuum of the family line ... and I've bits of cutlery and utensils that have been passed down and try not to be too 'precious' and sentimental about it ... it's nice to actually get practical use out of them and when I do memories come back to me of food and cooking with mum.

(Grace, Family 4 from Cressington, aged 51: Interview)

Denise also described similar objects:

I still have a couple of plates that were me nan's that she used for bread and butter and putting cakes on and I know mum's still got nan's bakestone – it sort of keeps people with you.

(Denise, Family 3 from Garston, aged 44: Interview)

Davidson (1982) makes the point that the homogenisation of food can result in local words for utensils and dishes being lost – during the course of my study I was more likely to hear and see the universal word 'griddle' rather than 'bakestone', or 'heavy-bottomed pot' rather than 'dixie' and 'pea soup' rather than 'peawack'.

This is not to say that the wish to perpetuate tradition 'for the sake of it' is a universally held view across families as the following comments show:

It's nice to break away from tradition as well, and I admire people when they go, 'well, this time at Christmas, we are ...', and I think that's great too. Traditions are there to be broken as well as upheld.

(Grace, Family 4 from Cressington, aged 51: Interview).

I think having food from all these other countries is good because it adds to our culture. Why be traditional? What is traditional? Just meat and potatoes and bread? That was all we ever had, that was our staple diet. No, I welcome it.

(Terrance, Family 2 from Garston, aged 55: Interview).

Roseberry (1996) suggests that compared with the "stolid, boring array of goods available two decades ago [I can] consume a bit of Sumatra, Darjeeling, France and Mexico in my home, perhaps at the same meal" (p.10). For one of my younger participants, Katya, the senses come into play in her particular rejection of traditional foods in favour of more

recently introduced ethnic foods:

I don't eat much traditional kind of foods 'cos they seem to boil lots of things and things are a bit watery and not 'flavoury'... traditional food is boiled food and I hate boiled food because it just looks horrible, the colour of it ... it's sloppy ... it's revolting! I like lasagne, vegetable lasagne with courgettes and aubergines in it ... ratatouille ... moussaka ... hummous and pitta bread ... all things like that, tasty and colourful.

(Katya, Family 6 from Allerton, aged 25: Interview).

Here I would argue that tradition does not offer a protective shell for the discerning eater; it does not matter what ingredients one uses - anything can taste horrible or the presentation of food can be unappealing (and consequently rejected) if something is cooked badly or not 'properly'. Patricia also thought that people have lost the taste for simple, traditional food as our tastebuds have increasingly come to expect highly flavoured, salted, sweet and additive-laden food that often overrides the 'true' tastes of food. As Anthony pointed out, the 'traditional' food from around the world that we are presented with in this country is not the simple, flavoursome food that is served "back home", but rather falls within the bounds of our cultural expectations rather than staying true to its origins, referred to as 'food creolization' (Groves, 2001). 'Tastes', I was reminded, often did not come from 'food' but "other unmentionable and unpronounceable things" (for example, monosodium glutamate in Chinese foods) that are added to ethnic foods to make them appeal to British tastes. I would refer once again to Appadurai (1986b) who reminds us that authenticity is merely a *measure* of what something *ought* to be depending on who you speak to. The 'authentic' scouse recipe is hotly contested amongst Liverpool families!

Although younger participants ate a wide variety of ethnic foods, sometimes they hankered for, and wished to return to, the taste of traditional food:

We always go to a restaurant from a different country, like an Italian or a Chinese ... but sometimes, you know, I don't know why, I just want traditional English food, you know, just a bacon butty, some lard ... and my friend hasn't got any bacon or any normal sliced bread and that's just what I want.

(Katya, Family 6 from Allerton, aged 25: Interview).

Sally also remarked that whilst she might choose a main course of Chinese or Italian food she would often "go for a traditional pudding like apple pie" because this emotionally tied her to other family members who also loved this pudding and triggered memories of her nan's cooking. However, the recent death of her grandmother also meant that an old happiness can become painful when foods are revisited and it was likely that she would avoid these foods and dishes for the time being. Nevertheless, she believed it was positive associations and feelings that highlighted the importance of 'tradition' in relation to food.

Summary and conclusion

This chapter has discussed the notion of tradition as an embedded 'common sense stock of knowledge', transmitted from one generation to another which enables people to carry out specific food practices, as well as replicate 'traditional food' that carries social and cultural meanings. The 'embeddedness' of tradition and traditional practices in family and community life, that included the church, served as markers of time that influenced eating patterns and the structure of meals, for example, special Sunday food and the practice of eating fish on a Friday. With the decline in church attendance, reflected in more individualistic modes of living, and the global food market that has suppressed seasonality, the nature of tradition has changed from the growing and buying of food and its preparation and cooking, through to the final act of eating.

Changes on a domestic level, including time constraints on working mothers, lack of cooking skills amongst young participants, the rise in individualised eating and preference for ethnic food, appear to have driven changes within the food industry with the introduction of 'traditional' ready prepared food, a range of ethnic foods and the commercialisation of ritual events (notably Christmas and Easter) and the year-round availability of food stuffs. I would argue that tradition has become appropriated as a commercial enterprise, encouraging over-consumption (everyday is Christmas) - the food market has introduced new ways and 'styles' of celebration, where foods are targeted at particular members of classes and generations, paying lip service to tradition, that generally could not be described as healthy in terms of current nutritional discourse.

Whilst ready-prepared foods enable my participants who are time or skill-poor to keep traditional dishes alive within their families, this nevertheless negate the *practices* that accompany tradition. Here I refer back to stirring the Christmas pudding, preparing and decorating birthday cakes and the fun of making pancakes. Sutton (2001) refers to the *techne* and practical judgements that make up traditional cooking practices. In the absence of spoken and written words (that may at best play a supportive role), traditional cooking and its transmission is literally embodied in the hands, what Mauss (1973 [1934]) refers to as 'techniques of the body'. Our body in this sense is our first technical object and technical means and as such an action needs to be related to the 'effective' and 'traditional', in other words, there cannot be technique or transmission in the absence of tradition.

Traditional food practices can also contribute strongly to identities expressed through local patterns of consumption that also perpetuate social and cultural solidarity and difference, that is, 'habitus' (Bourdieu, 1984). I pointed to the significance of locality and the various arenas in which Liverpudlian, or adopted 'scouse', identities 'get done'. Participants saw themselves as Liverpudlian through, for example, the eating of traditional scouse, or a different kind of Liverpudlian through not eating scouse. An important point to note is that the eating of scouse, rather than being a dynamic tradition, originated out of the need to make foods go as far as possible to feed large families, much in the same way that Lent became a way of coping with annual food shortages until the next harvest. It became apparent to me that younger generations did not feel a strong connection with former traditional items of domestic and routine consumption, the 'old proletarian hunger killers' (Roseberry, 1996).

However, participants believe that tradition remains part of who you are and reflects what you value, an enduring repetition of the past, distant and/or recent, from the small to the elaborate. Families in particular thought it was important to perpetuate tradition as a unifying and social force both inside and outside the home, particularly the Sunday roast dinner, that has been described as *the* number one British culinary 'shibboleth' (Cutler, 2006). In addition I noted that the 'full English breakfast' to be the most promoted meal in Liverpool during its Capital of Culture year. Amongst older participants, eating traditional English food was seen to reinforce identity and 'taste' and, when coupled with the rejection of 'other' foods that were classed as 'foreign', was as much an expression of who they are not, as much as who they are. Whilst older people like to be known as 'traditional' or 'plain' eaters linked to 'Olde English foods', younger people consider them bland and unappealing and have thus embraced food from other cultures that are not seen as a threat (as many older participants thought of them) but were considered an interesting and welcome addition to their diet. Amongst students, for instance, I was told it has become traditional and the cultural norm – "it's what everybody does" – to regularly buy pizzas, kebabs, burgers and deep fried chicken. Thus new traditions are becoming embedded in modern British culture alongside old traditions that have been modified to suit modern British tastes. The 'new' generation is creating its own traditions, for example, Sunday lunch in the pub, McDonald's for children's birthday parties, which, no doubt will be challenged by their offspring and so ad infinitum. It was not long ago that McDonald's had dropped out of favour with the British public, it was no longer 'cool' and needed to create a fresh image.

However, although participants had embraced new modes of eating and food items, across the social spectrum, the once predominately working class tradition of eating fish and chips on pay day has remained a cultural norm between and across generations. With the exception of vegetarians and vegans, I did not meet one person who did not eat fish and chips either as a late-night extravagance, a regular ‘chippy’ meal or as part of religious observance. With many everyday foods becoming homogenized and indistinctive, I found evidence that we like to replicate certain pieces of the past; we like things to be faster, but also look back to a ‘slower’ past that is treasured (Lyon & Colquhoun, 1999). In this regard families had created traditions that were unique to them and served as a way of preserving kinship.

The above points indicate that the lived experience of food is complex and through the notion of tradition I have reflected on the differences between generations that can help us to understand food choice and the immense difficulties health promoters face in changing food habits. Challenge eating fish and chips on Fridays and you challenge someone’s individual and community identity in wanting them to be ‘different’ and set apart from others. Tradition and traditional food appeared to remain a resource wrapped up in such notions as emotional comfort, a kind of strategy for coping with life and nurturing the soul, identity, family connectedness and the remembrance of repasts bound up in the senses. Thus tradition forms part of our ‘historical consciousness’ (Sutton, 2001) producing meal occasions that carry *meaning* that become ‘sedimented’ in the body and part of our ‘embodied’ identity. We cannot assume, therefore, that we can tell people what they should be eating and expect them to blindly follow recommendations when food is of such cultural and social significance and deeply embedded in family life – merely being asked to eat healthily as defined by the nutritional sciences is not the answer to the ‘problem’.

Whilst tradition may be considered a social construction that may endure, mutate or be lost, customs may also be seen as an expression of the perennial need to reinforce a sense of community. Indeed, past traditions have sedimented sensory and emotional experiences in the body, evoking subjective memories, especially the ‘ideal’ kind that generate what Sutton (2001) refers to as ‘narratives of *gemeinschaft*’. However, tradition is now played out within new forms of community - contemporary social and environmental conditions reflect their ever evolving and changing nature (Sykes, 1977). The experience of community life within and between generations is the subject of my next chapter.

CHAPTER FIVE

CHANGING COMMUNITIES AND FOOD PRACTICES

Introduction

Far ranging economic, social and cultural changes have taken place in Liverpool communities from thriving Victorian times to the present day regeneration programme against which I have contextualised the notion of tradition. In this chapter, I turn to the intersection between families, food and the wider community that centres on the lived experiences of ‘community’ reflected in the notions of ‘*gemeinschaft*’ and *gesellschaft*’ and changing social relations across and between generations. Have the Liverpool communities under study been ‘detraditionalized’ and if so what are the implications of this shift in terms of food and families? The findings from this chapter will be carried over into my discussion on the complex relationship between food and health in chapter seven.

5.0 The ‘gemeinschaft’ community and the embedded nature of food

5.0.1 The ‘gemeinschaft’ community: the familistic society

The data I gathered from my participants reflect the ‘times’ in which they have lived. Those who were brought up (and still live) in what are usually referred to as the ‘old working class’ areas of Garston, Kensington and Kirkby, described particular social and cultural contexts and unwritten rules that created the kind of communities in which they believed food and food practices became embedded. Within these communities people felt a sense of belonging and ‘community spirit’ that drew generations together, thus generating ‘social capital’ (Putnam, 2000), often mediated through the church. As discussed in my previous chapter, Christian traditions served as a cohesive force and markers of time and in a similar vein older participants recalled the role of special church calendar days in the life of the community:

I can remember Easter, the Harvest Festival and Christmas being very important and going to church for them with my family as well as with school. Everybody went in those days. It reminded you of what these stood for and we never missed those ... we liked to go because you’d have pop and biscuits in the vestry afterwards and that was a real treat for us.
(*Lily, Family 5 from Kirkby, aged 90: Interview*).

Food, in this instance, appeared to serve as a kind of reward for church attendance and the adoption of Christian values by young people. After the Harvest festival, the food would be distributed amongst the needy in the community. Older participants recalled that the church played a pivotal role in community life in that regular social events provided a means for people across generations to come together, to mix and enjoy themselves. There was no generation gap or separation of groups in terms of socio-economic status, thus these events, that included the serving of food, became an accessible resource that generated social capital:

Anyone could go, that was the best of it. You didn't really have to go to church to be able to go 'cos someone would invite you or get you in. We'd never have had a social life or a night out like that if it wasn't for the church socials. Me mum and dad wouldn't have been able to take us anywhere or go out themselves, you know, you looked forward to them.

(Stewart, resident of Allerton, aged 70: Natural conversation).

Hospitality is my middle name and a lot of that has come from being a member of the church.

(Marion, Family 6 from Allerton, aged 98: Interview).

I can remember when I made my first Holy Communion and we went in the hall afterwards ... and much to my amazement, we had jelly and we got cake and it was a real party ... so that was a surprise!

(Pamela Anne, Family 6 from Allerton, aged 65: Interview).

Familiarity between people meant that front doors could be left open, the elderly were more likely to be cared for (or kept an eye on) by the whole community, children played in the street where it was the norm for older children to look after younger children and people would often mind, feel free to discipline and feed each other's children. Within the community it was considered to be an acceptable and taken-for-granted arrangement to send each other's children on errands, or ask them to do a little task. This appeared to emanate from a basic tenet of trust, identified by Fukuyama (1995) as an essential factor for people to work together for common purposes:

You could leave your front door open, you wouldn't have to lock your door. And the woman up the street had a lot of kids and she used to send them down to me for a bath – she had little children and no bath ... that's what you did and if you could give 'em a bit of supper with your own you would.

(Elizabeth, Family 7 from Kensington, aged 85: Interview).

In a conversation with Robert's wife she presented an account of elderly women or men who were "poor as church mice" putting a penny in her hand for a few sweets without asking for anything for themselves - she described these as "just random acts of kindness" that did not arouse any kind of suspicion. Participants said familiarity with those around them made them feel safe and secure on the street and in each other's homes – "there's safety in numbers" I was told.

Domestic tasks were also communal in nature. Elizabeth can remember preparing bread with

her stepmother and then taking the loaves to a little back-street bakery run by a Jewish family. Taking and collecting loaves for families would be one of the tasks children would be asked to do with the possible reward of a cake or a few pennies. The public wash house was as much a social venue as a place of work where women caught up on the weekly gossip. Child minding, washing and drying were all shared tasks that enabled one to “nip out” to the shops or “slip home” to prepare the evening meal. Denise recalls that as a child she would sit on top of one of the clothes’ dryers that felt “lovely and warm”. She was often given a jam buttly whilst women conversed over the noise and steam and the older women would show the younger women what to do. Counihan (1984) describes communal bread-making in similar terms, where lives, loves and losses, as well as skills, could be talked about whilst ‘good bread’ was being produced by ‘good women’ through ‘good work’.

At times of illness, childbirth, or if mothers went out to work, social interaction was crucial to the management of day to day life. In order to keep above the poverty line, women would dressmake and repair clothes or cut down unwanted adult clothes to make school clothes that were passed around the community, and men would make wooden toys for Christmas or repair broken cookers. Thus, people were in daily social contact with each other and skills and resources, as forms of ‘social capital’, were pooled that ensured survival and made for an easier life. Ohmagari & Berkes (1997) found that knowledge and skills accrued through participant observation and apprenticeship were more likely to survive within Cree Indian communities if they were essential for livelihoods. My participants recalled a similar climate in which a ‘stock of knowledge’ could be accumulated and skills passed on as young people watched and helped with cooking, dressmaking and other tasks in exchange for a ‘sugar buttly’, a bowl of scouse or a few penny sweets. Thus knowledge was not necessarily being passed on in a linear fashion within my families, but from various ‘others’ within the wider community.

Although more ‘middle class’ participants did not recall this degree of social interaction or inter-dependency, nevertheless, they knew their neighbours well, fostered close family ties and enjoyed a social life. Thus, regardless of class, ‘the family’ in these community contexts represented a ‘unified interest group’ (Fischler, 2008). Mollie was the only participant whose family did not have close social ties within the community, her parents being preoccupied in the shop they owned that was open six days a week for twelve hours a day. She felt she was privileged in material and educational terms, but not socially privileged, whilst participants

from working class backgrounds felt that what they lacked materially they made up for in the idea of 'social good' generated within their communities in which food and food practices became embedded that included gift-debt and reciprocal exchange.

5.0.2 *Gift-debt and reciprocal exchange*

An underlying consensus about the unwritten rules that made the community 'tick' involved Mauss's (1970) idea of reciprocal exchange, the gifting and sharing of food, expressed in the deep-seated aphorisms of 'kindness comes back to you' and 'what goes round, comes round', the latter generally taken to mean that not only good deeds, but also bad deeds, can rebound on you. However, these were unspoken words, an underlying natural cycle within the community, something that 'just happened' rather than something that was contrived or measured:

My step-mother sent me across the road to Mrs. L.... when she had her little girl with a bowl of gruel and something else ... and then when I had one of my kids she came over to me with a little matinee coat and gown ... wasn't that amazing?
(Elizabeth, Family 7 from Kensington, aged 85: Interview).

Well, if you gave somebody something or helped out, you didn't do it thinking what you'd get back because sooner or later that person would do something for you and if they didn't, well, they didn't. It was no big deal, you know, and that would go for your family, friends, or neighbours.
(Pauline, an elderly resident of Kensington: Natural conversation).

In order to maximise the benefit to the community as a whole, rather than just single families, neighbours would enquire what others intended to grow in their gardens to avoid any duplication that would ensure a range of produce to exchange and share:

Oh, it was a joy to see a proper dinner! ... meat, potatoes, vegetables ... the veg would have come out of everybody else's garden ... the neighbours used to go, 'what are you growing? What are you growing? So they'd always grow something different.
(Frances, Family 3 from Garston, aged 65: Interview).

Thus, when individuals have limited resources in the form of, say, 'economic' capital, they can build 'social' capital by joining social networks that produce resources that will bring them some kind of profit or benefit (Bourdieu, 1990). Reciprocity and trust can amass this form of conventional social capital forged through groups with shared interests and concerns; a group working together can achieve far more than individuals working alone (Putnam, 2000). Bernie, Elizabeth's son, thought that altruism in his community simply arose from the fact that people had "nothing" materially and it was the only way to survive from day to day. Thus 'social good' in this sense was also 'common good' springing from 'common needs'. Common need that sprung from deprivation also meant that the breaking of societal rules was

an acceptable way to improve people's lot. When Bernie arrived home after 'a job' with a van full of tinned salmon it was shared out amongst the community without qualms. People 'closed ranks' and showed solidarity when the police tried to locate the stolen goods – "you never told". Another example of a sanctioned practice that emerged during conversation was the 'black market', the clandestine market of regulated essential goods or goods that were not freely available, that existed during the years of war rationing. Food shortages crossed all class barriers that created a degree of social levelling (Burnett, 1989). The challenge to survive the War fell to everyone. The black market flourished in these circumstances and my participants can remember bartering, exchanging and letting others know the source or location of goods:

We were all in the same boat, so there was a sort of special closeness ...

Everybody did the best they could for their families and for others ...

The 'black market' helped us to survive – everything had a value. You could buy or exchange.

In the unique circumstances of war, close community ties were fostered through an increased sense of patriotism, having a 'common enemy' and the need to win the War "no matter what". With the majority of men away who were traditionally the main breadwinners, many women had to take on the responsibility for running the household that included food provision and distribution. Although a difficult time in so many ways, women said that "strangely enough" they enjoyed the War if they were lucky enough not to suffer casualties. The change in family dynamics had led to 'a sense of autonomy and control' amongst women, hence their reluctance to share responsibilities with their menfolk after the War (Oakley, 1974). The War also provided an opportunity to do jobs in the community that they would never otherwise have done (such as driving an ambulance or doing 'firewatch duty'), and, for the first time, to wear trousers. This is not to say they did not feel frightened at times, but it was a fear that was eased by the fact that this was a shared experience:

We used to know everyone. During the War we women used to gather underneath the street light and watch the sky and we all looked out for each other. If anyone was poorly or if someone had had a baby you'd do what you could to help. If you were lucky enough to get something you could share, then you would.

(Lily, Family 5 from Kirkby, aged 90: Interview).

Marion and her daughter, Pamela Anne, felt that this 'communal self-efficacy' and social cohesion was fostered by a sense of patriotism across all classes during the War and set a precedent for neighbourliness that was to endure:

I can remember the street party celebrating the end of the War and everybody contributed and they

had flags out of the windows ... it was wonderful ... Community spirit made it because there were people in the avenue I didn't know, but that day we knew everybody, and then hitherto we'd say hello. I've been very fortunate to live in such a wonderful neighbourhood, everybody's been so good.
(*Marion, Family 6 from Allerton, aged 98: Interview*).

During the time Pamela Anne was raising her family, she remembered a neighbour who would regularly bring round "a great big pan of soup [that] tasted lovely", a gift emanating from a sense of friendship and 'neighbourliness' rather than through any economic consideration. Pamela Anne did not consider this to be a gift-debt because the giver did not have any children at home and the recipient had six and limited time. Meyers (2001) would describe this as a 'pure gift' of food that does not necessarily involve barter or incur debt. However, Mauss (1970) would say that whilst something may not be reciprocated in kind, gifts always imply reciprocity and obligation in some way or another.

However, amongst the less well off there were unwritten rules of behaviour in that there was a sensitivity to stigma when giving to anyone in need:

You wouldn't do it in a patronising way like, 'we know you haven't got much so here's some stew or whatever' ... er ... you'd say, 'God, we've made far too much of this and it'll only go in the bin (which it wouldn't like, but ...) so could you make use of it?' And they'd probably know it wouldn't go in the bin but you could tell they appreciated the way it'd been offered.
(*Robert, Family 5 from Kirkby, aged 65: Interview*).

However, this was not an indication that there existed a universal acceptance of gifting in that any form of interaction is open to interpretation:

I resented other women feeding my children because I felt they were questioning my competence as a mother and exposing the fact that as a family we were struggling on low wages.
(*Frances, Family 3 from Garston, aged 65: Interview*).

Other accounts illustrated that people were sometimes reluctant to adhere to accepted practices around gifting and exchange because it did not always even out in a kind of natural cycle envisaged in the notion of gift-debt:

People would borrow off you, like tea or a bit of sugar, but sometimes they could abuse it and not pay you back when you were struggling yourself ... but you didn't like to refuse because you knew how hard it was ... and you didn't want people saying, 'God, she couldn't even lend us a bit of this or a bit of that', you know, it might reflect on you, like, people would think you were cold-hearted or mean.
(*Margaret, Family 2 from Garston, aged 71: Interview*).

You couldn't get away from people, really you couldn't ... you never seemed to have a moment to yourself ... it would be, 'could you lend me ma a bit of this or a bit of that' and you'd think, 'God! We haven't got much of that ourselves', but you wouldn't not lend, you'd lend.
(*Maggie, resident of Toxteth, aged 90: Natural conversation*).

These accounts indicate that people felt a certain amount of pressure to protect their reputations and standing within the community by maintaining the status quo, that there was

something important at stake here that was an underlying feature of successful community life. According to Bourdieu (1986), the more one's reputation and standing remains intact, the more one can develop and use social ties. I found evidence that showing love and care through food in the absence of material wealth, became embedded in practices that fostered respect and perpetuated kinship ties:

I fed everyone who come ... my three nephews used to come to me ... they'd go to me sister's and she'd say, 'oh, hello' (posh accent) and she'd give 'em sixpence and send them on their way ... and then they'd come to me and I'd have no money but I'd give them a feed, a meal ... young lads are always hungry ... and they've always come ever since ... they still come to me even now.
(Elizabeth, Family 7 from Kensington, aged 85: Interview).

Terrance also held memories of his mum offering food as a gift, which he referred to as "a nice touch", especially if it was a homemade cake or a dish of scouse. Such acts of sociality were remembered with pride and have been embedded in his own life:

If you were to come to our house I'd offer you a cup of tea and I'd say, 'do you want a sandwich or a biscuit?' It's hospitality more than anything. Me and Ellen have kept that going. Even if someone catches us eating we'll share ... you just include people don't you?
(Terrance, Family 2 from Garston, aged 55: Interview).

Thus the giving of meals in their many forms can last over a life-time, whereas the giving of a coin is momentary – thus the latter can be described in a single sentence, but as Douglas (1971) points out, a 'food sentence' takes a lifetime to complete underlining the potential inadequacy of linguistic analysis in relation to understanding meals.

However, not all households fostered an 'open door' policy within the community as the following account illustrates:

I don't know why but my father didn't like anyone coming into the house, so my friends didn't come here often ... but my friend in her house anyone could come in. The atmosphere was totally different. She was rough and ready with newspaper on the table and a bottle of milk, not a jug, and a sugar bowl and she'd say, 'are you hungry?', cut you a slice of bread and put marg on, dip it in sugar and say, 'there you go' ... and they're the things I remember ... our door was always shut, but their door was always open ... and it's been the same with my kids because of the way I was brought up ... funny isn't it?
(Margaret, Family 2 from Garston, aged 71: Interview).

Margaret's account illustrates how one's upbringing influences future practices that show continuity even if they hold negative connotations, similar to the lack of birthday celebrations described by Rose in chapter four. Both accounts suggest that we always remember how we are made to *feel* and the importance of making others feel included and welcomed through the sharing of food (Angelou, 2004). Grace pointed out that for her reciprocal exchange, gifting and acts of hospitality were not merely a question of simple exchange or a mere token gesture, but signified something that had a much deeper meaning:

I couldn't imagine a time when I couldn't put a meal together for unexpected visitors, some sociable repast for people. In fact, I'd make some excuse and dart out to the shop if I was short of something because I realise food is very much about pleasing people as well as a social pleasure and honouring all your friends by doing something loving and kind is very important ... something that makes you proud and others proud of you ... we like sharing everything we've got, so that's cool with us.

Grace's account indicates that the giving of food for her is not just a question of putting anything to hand on a plate in some random fashion, but something that is a pleasure to give and a pleasure to receive and full of 'symbolism' for both giver and recipient (Douglas, 1973). Not only that, food is often deeply social and communal in nature.

5.1 *The communal nature of food*

Older participants' memories convey a sense of pride and 'community spirit' through the recollection of food practices. For Susan, Margaret, Mollie, Lily, Marion and Elizabeth, food served as a device for social standing in that pride and reputation were described in terms of "keeping a good table", "feeding your family well" and being "willing to lend a hand". A sense of belonging was strengthened because families remained in the same location – families were known to each other throughout the community and the lives of different generations both within and between families were often entwined – encapsulated in the phrase, "you never fall far from the tree". It was very common for participants to be brought up by their grandparents across all classes, supported by 'aunties' and 'uncles' (who were not necessarily blood relations), particularly if they came from large families. Whereas other memories may have been lost over time, these memories remained strong:

I lived with me nan because I was always in trouble with me mum and I was better off there ... I was born there and I got all the attention there ... one of me cousin's was dumped there by her mother because they had a pub ... and she had to sleep with me and when I see her husband I say, 'I used to sleep with your wife!'

(Bernie, Family 7 from Kensington, aged 62: Interview).

Everybody was everyone else's auntie or uncle ... if you were sent home from school poorly there was always someone who'd say, 'c'mon girl, come into ours and I'll make you a cup of tea and have a rest on the sofa 'til your ma gets home'. That's the way it was, they were great, really, you were never alone and you just trusted everyone because you'd never been given a reason not to.

(Pauline, resident of Kensington, aged 65: Natural conversation).

My grandparents were special ... I don't think you have a relationship with anyone else like you do with your grandparents.

(Denise, Family 3 from Garston, aged 44: Interview).

Close connections with grandparents often ran in families. Frances was close to her grandparents and this was also true for Denise who referred to her grandparent's home as "a haven" and whose daughter Melanie has lived with Frances since she was a rebellious

teenager. It was quite common for participants to say they listened to, and respected, their grandparents more than their parents. In the many conversations I had with people across all generations, grandparents were remembered with respect and fondness and were often used as a reference point that extended to particular food items, meals or special events that provided a sense of continuity.

Food events provided a cohesive force within the community, especially the rare occasions when street parties were held that involved everyone in the immediate neighbourhood in setting up tables, putting up bunting, organising games and food provision. The latter included items which were not readily available to many families on tight budgets such as ice-cream and cakes. A strong link was thus created between food memories, people and places:

I can remember the 'Victory Day' party ... everybody was there from all the surrounding streets ... I must have been four and a half ... I remember being in a queue for ice-cream and not being sure what it actually was because I'd never had any. There was so much food, so much food all around on the tables like you'd never seen ... well ... we never saw it again like that for a long time.

(Robert, Family 5 from Kirkby, aged 65: Interview).

[I remember] the Queen's Silver Jubilee ... everybody was in red, white and blue and we had a street party ... all the mums joined together to do the food and we had jellies, cakes and sandwiches all on big tables out on the street. It was a community gathering where everyone made an effort.

(Maureen, Family 5 from Kirkby, aged 42: Interview).

The communal nature of food was reinforced in that everyone shared the same food that would be put out on large tressle tables or served from the kitchens:

Everyone had the same food ... they'd get it ready in the kitchens and everyone would muck in, enough for everyone ... erm ... a pan of scouse, sausages and trifle and some sweets for the kids.

(Stewart, resident of Allerton, aged 70: Natural conversation).

Further evidence of social cohesion that is all about 'getting by' and 'getting on' at the more mundane level of everyday life was revealed in accounts of childbirth that prompted acts of kindness that included food items:

If you were confined the older women who'd finished having their babies would come in and swipe all your clothes up and take 'em home, wash 'em, iron 'em and bring 'em back ... and they used to make little puddings and a bit of fish and bring it upstairs to me and all that. There's none of that now.

(Susan, Family 1 from Garston, aged 96: Interview).

I can remember when any of mine were born that the neighbours were really kind and they'd bring you a bit of soup or they'd see to your other kids because it was very hard, you know, very hard ... and his mum, or me mum, would be round and they'd lend a hand ... yes ... everyone was good.

(Betty, resident of Toxteth, aged 76: Natural conversation).

Sutton (2001) refers to these accounts of foods past as 'narratives of gemeinschaft', that claims that people were once more neighbourly and did not treat each other as strangers.

However, he cautions us, as he makes reference to Herzfeld's (1990) notion of 'structural nostalgia', talk that centres on an idealist past that does not include regular transgression of these ideals, for example, the 'black market' during the war years that could be sinister and discriminatory (Ayers, 1990). Murcott (2000b) reminds us that what may have happened (and what we may have observed had we been there) may be very different from what people recall; lives may seem better in retrospect from any given point in time. Expectations and aspirations of community and family life may be shared but in reality these are images and ideas rather than what may be actually practiced. Two participants remember the same area of Liverpool during the 1940s and 50s very differently – Ernie recalls his 'lived experience' of early childhood as one spent in an impoverished 'hell-hole', whilst Pauline, who lived a few streets away, recalled (and strongly defended) a close-knit, caring, community where in her little cul-de-sac everyone looked out for each other. As Belcham (2007) records in his history of the Liverpool Irish, there were those migrants who banded together in order to offset the affects of grinding poverty, whilst others were unable to rise above it.

A criticism of recording "memories of 'gemeinschaft'" (Sutton, 2001) is reflected in the oft used saying "people see past lives through rose coloured spectacles"; however, my 'working class' participants certainly recalled a far from easy and ideal community life:

The workhouse was still going when I was a child and if ever a girl had a baby she had to go in there. My sister had a baby and I was married and I lied and said it was mine ... she would have had to go and you were lucky to get out once you were in. They cleaned the hospitals on their hands and knees scrubbing ... but people lived didn't they? I had it hard, so hard I can't sit still now ... it was tough ... you couldn't always stay in your community ... the people I went into service to, a doctor, he was an 'old git', a wicked old sod ... I got up at five in the morning and light the fires and everything and it would be nine before anyone would say anything ... then it was, 'you can have your breakfast now', that was bread with 'connie-onnie' milk and the bread would be all curled up ...ugh! And me mam said, 'you're not working for that either, five bob a week'. But you see you couldn't get work then, it was so hard. It was after the First World War then there was the Depression and then the Second World War and there was no work.

(Susan, Family 1 from Garston, aged 96: Interview).

It was all hard work ... all I've done all my life is wash and cook with no help from family because they'd turned their backs on me, or neighbours because they weren't coping as well as I was and it was me who was asked to help them and I had a bunch of children and a drunken husband to deal with.

(Elizabeth, Family 7 from Kensington, aged 85: Interview).

Bernie (Elizabeth's son) believed that the poverty and family circumstances of his childhood (and those of others who were brought up alongside him) led to a trap of disadvantage within communities that thwarted any future aspirations ...

Real poverty it was, yeah, but I never thought about that, because you had nothing and you wasn't going to get nothing and there wasn't a great deal you could do about it was there? Nothing. The poor people get poorer and the rich people get richer don't they? Me mum never had any money but

there was never a shortage, we always got something to eat ... you might have fancied something better, but you wasn't going to get it, you know. The food was gone in seconds with twelve of us ... a pan of curry would be gone there and then, there'd be no, like, 'we'll have some for later' ... and we'd only had the 'leccy' put in the house in, like, 1960 ... just a bloody gas mantle ... it was unbelievable ... imagine me mum, she had a boiler in the back kitchen and the toilet was still at the bottom of the yard ... twelve of us ... you can't blame her for what happened to us, she couldn't handle us ... and they say they were the good old days!

In comparison, participants from families with higher incomes had a different and more secure life created through superior living conditions with 'private' gardens for the family to enjoy, amenities that included heating, bathrooms and well-equipped kitchens, ownership of white goods such as fridges and purchasing power that allowed for a far more adequate amount, and wider range, of foods. These families were not dependent on others to survive and had increased leisure time and income to participate in community activities. Middle class families were aware that poverty existed, but it did not appear to touch their lives:

There was poverty up the side streets ... you knew it was there, but we never had poverty and I don't suppose we appreciated what we had because we'd never had anything different ... we'd never known poverty.

(Mollie, Family 4 from Cressington, aged 88: Interview).

We knew there were poor families in the Scotland Road area and places like that, but, you know, we didn't live in that kind of area so it was looked at from afar ... we felt sorry for them though when you saw children in Liverpool without shoes on and in rags really.

(Marion, Family 6 from Allerton, aged 98: Interview).

The above accounts indicate that differential access to forms of capital (human, economic and social) can exclude or improve (and hence help to shape) people's worlds (Bourdieu, 1986; Zohar & Marshall, 2004). However, although 'working class' participants were aware there was a class division in Liverpool, in all my many conversations it was very rare to find anyone who felt really bitter, or apportioned blame about the hard times they had endured. A consensus emerged that everyone 'did their best' under the circumstances, and in the absence (or paltry amount) of government help one could not expect any more than that. Although life was not described through 'rose-coloured spectacles' my data revealed a feeling of loss with the passing of what they described as 'community spirit' and a 'sense of togetherness' that existed in 'the old days':

The old days were the best ... you fought with and for each other ... you just did that and we were all close in our little streets around Scottie Road.

(Nellie, resident of Everton, aged 90: Natural conversation).

Families were very close, but that spirit has gone, it's gone. There's no neighbours now ... nothing's like it used to be ... houses, neighbours, our little community and, you know, the food we ate. It's a good job we're able to look back like this and enjoy our memories.

(Susan, Family 1 from Garston, aged 96: Interview).

If to a degree, these are 'memories of *gemeinschaft*', lived experiences that reflect the notion

of 'structural nostalgia' (Herzfeld, 1990) and sadness about a way of life that has been 'lost', then I needed to find out what has brought about change within Liverpool communities and how such changes have impacted on food practices. Between the time of the Queen's Silver Jubilee in 1977, that had been marked with communal celebrations, and the Queen's Golden Jubilee in 2002, that had failed to inspire any interest or desire to celebrate in similar ways, could I tease out an explanation that would help health promoters to understand more fully generational changes in the nature of food practices?

5.2 *Changing communities and the notion of 'gesellschaft'*

Tönnies (1951 [1887]) felt a sense of sadness and loss at the passing of what he called the affective and closely-knit community of 'gemeinschaft' towards 'gesellschaft', the more rational, atomised and contractual modern society or association. Davidson (1982) notes the loss of communality as amenities were brought into homes such as piped water and electricity that negated the need to collect water from a standpipe or the use of communal ovens and wash houses – domesticity had moved indoors and neighbourliness waned. One of my older participants described her lived experience of 'community' over her life-time in Garston:

Community spirit was much stronger, much more neighbourly and, I mean, you could always rely on a neighbour to watch your children while you went to the shops. I only see my neighbours now and again. They're mainly young people, couples, or young families. You just wouldn't go and ask them for anything, I'd feel uncomfortable I think; things are just different now.
(Margaret, Family 2 from Garston, aged 71: Interview).

Margaret's granddaughter, although a regular visitor to her grandmother and her family, expressed sentiments that would underline a change within her family from a more communal way of living towards a more private and individualised life:

I don't go out ... I don't go round socialising or anything ... I don't have visitors ... erm ... not many people come here now, but with working shifts I haven't really got the time.
(Meryl, Family 2 from Garston, aged 23: Interview).

Younger participants living in other areas of Liverpool expressed opinions that fell in line with Abercrombie's (2004) notion of 'privatism'. Whereas Mollie had expressed the enjoyment of group activity that offered solidarity and 'belonging', her grandson, Jon, expressed a need and desire for more privacy:

People prefer to be more private now in their lives. Life is far more complex in general, you know, people are more busy in general and have smaller groups of friends to years ago and they socialise with them ... Yeah, I don't feel the need to get massively involved with neighbours and their lives or anything like that – it's more private. I don't even go and see my grandmother very often.

Here I would refer back to Bourdieu (1990) who likened social life to ‘playing a game’ and argue that younger generations, rather than having a social sense of how to ‘play the game’, are more likely live by their own rules through a lack of, or little need for, a *gemeinschaft* community. Unlike older people, who were born and bred in the same area or street and had maintained social ties throughout their lives, the younger age groups I talked to had a smaller but more eclectic mix of friends that they had made on social networking sites, ‘nights out’ in the city, sporting interests, travel and various places of work that formed a wider social circle. Whilst this has broadened their outlook on life, in line with the thoughts of Hattenstone (2010), it also makes them less sure of their identities in relation to class and status than previous generations, for example, whether they should call themselves Scousers or Liverpudlians, Liverpudlians or Garstonians, ‘working class’ or ‘middle class’ that results in a tentative ‘sense of belonging’ described by Abercrombie (2004). Coupled with an increased choice in terms of social mobility, they do not necessarily have an inborn or unshakeable loyalty or affiliation to the area in which they live, nor a particular wish, or need, to contribute to the community as a whole. Indeed, they spoke of aspirations to move away, at some time in their lives, to other or “better” parts of Liverpool, the country or even “giving abroad a try”. Living in the present was variously expressed as “getting on with your life”, “doing the best for yourself and your family” or “not getting involved in all this community stuff”. As Ohmagari & Berkes (1997) comment, the nature of communities and how people live their lives change when value-systems change. These, afterall, are the generations born in the years of ‘Thatcherism’ and the individualistic approach to family life and her infamous denial of the existence of society. In terms of community, Loughlin (2000) cites fragmentation and a decline in the notion of ‘common good’ as the main consequences of this paradigm shift as well as the creation of an underclass in the cities and an increasing gap between rich and poor both individually and geographically.

Maureen provided an example of this social shift within communities in relation to food. She explained that whereas she had enjoyed street parties when she was younger, remembering in particular the Queen’s Silver Jubilee, she had been unsuccessful in motivating anyone to do something similar for the Queen’s Golden Jubilee. One of the main reasons given for this lack of enthusiasm was that people just did not know each other or just had a ‘nodding acquaintance’ with others and would feel ‘embarrassed’ in the company of people they did not know. These sentiments were echoed by others, particularly Garstonians as I discussed in chapter three, who felt that as soon as developers started to “board up” houses in the terraced

streets, the community began to ‘fracture’. Hence the cohesiveness was lost that had encouraged social and kinship ties that included reciprocal exchange and the gifting of food.

5.2.1 *Reciprocal exchange and the gifting of food – a thing of the past?*

In relation to food and reciprocal exchange, Bernie was the only participant who still used it rather than currency, for example, in exchange for an MOT on a car he had been happy to accept a whole salmon. This was in direct contrast to Terrance’s daughter, Meryl, who thought this kind of exchange was ‘old fashioned’ and did not imbue these acts with meaning or sentiment and neither did she feel any sense of social obligation, in fact, she rarely had anything to offer:

Even if someone did something for me I wouldn’t offer them food in exchange ... erm ... and if someone called I might have fresh bread and a bit of cheese, but a lot of people don’t like cheese butties ... normally I wouldn’t have anything to offer ... I have ready meals in the freezer, but I couldn’t offer someone that ... I don’t feel I should have to ... I’ve never really thought about it and that might be because I never cook so there’s nothing here.

Whereas older people said they would be “mortified” if they had nothing to offer, younger people did not feel particularly guilty if they were “caught out” and did not buy extra food “in case someone called”, or take food to someone as a gift, except maybe a box of chocolates or sweets. They liked the idea of it, but it did not seem to be an integral part of their social interaction with others, particularly if they could not cook. Thus, Testart (1998) has challenged Mauss’s notion of the ‘gift-debt’ which he believes exaggerates the obligation created by social pressures; although people feel they should reciprocate fuelled by a sense of social obligation in order to protect their reputation, they are unlikely to do so. This stands in direct contrast to the ‘embeddedness’ of gift-debt amongst Kalymnians – the importance of giving and exchanging *your own* bread, cheese, olives and tomatoes (Sutton, 2001). These are ‘personal’ gifts from one’s kitchen, garden or orchard rather than ‘purchased’ gifts. Sally mentioned that a gift of food is soon eaten and disappears and one is not reminded of any social obligation, unlike flowers or a plant both of which are more acceptable, affordable and enduring. It appeared to be the more-or-less universal affordability of the gift as a commodity that did not incur a gift-debt, whereas in times of poverty reciprocal exchange served as a vital ‘social vehicle’ that at the very least offered respite from, or staved off, destitution (Belcham, 2000).

However, involvement with neighbours did still exist in various forms and participants made

reference to 'neighbourhood watch schemes' and how they "looked out" for people when they went away:

Years ago people had more time and they produced more food themselves ... and they saw each other more, it was a small kind of community where you passed each other and say what you'd got ... I know my neighbours but we certainly don't do exchanges of much like that between us ... erm ... we're more likely to exchange favours, help each other out if need be ... erm ... walk the dog, mind the cat, bring something in if they weren't well ... erm ... take in a parcel, keep an eye out at the back, that sort of thing, yes, more practical things.

(Grace, Family 4 from Cressington, aged 51: Interview).

Mollie (Grace's mum) echoed these sentiments. Having lived in the same road for most of her married life, she believed 'community spirit' had waned (something she regretted) as soon as homes rose in value and began to exchange hands at a frequent rate or older residents had either left or passed away. She commented that people "kept themselves to themselves" and there was little social interaction (apart from 'watching out' if one was away) between neighbours particularly as most women now go out to work. These sentiments confirmed those expressed earlier by Jon (Grace's son) who preferred a more private life without being involved with neighbours and confirms the idea that there has been a shift in community dynamics over the past two generations (Putnam, 2000).

5.2.2 *Changes in the communal nature of food*

The more communal nature of food practices and the high level of social interaction within communities recalled by my older participants ensured that the elderly were not isolated and were cared for by family, friends and neighbours with the church playing a complementary role. In the more atomised communities that exist today accounts showed that the elderly rely more heavily on groups run by voluntary agencies and, in some cases, church groups. Margaret, Lily and Mollie, although not a regular church-goers, have found churches in their areas that provide activities. Mollie attends a weekly gathering for a cooked lunch that she clearly sees as a catalyst for providing solidarity and affinity with a particular group:

Elderly people go to the Bridge Chapel on a Friday and they do very good meals ... fish, chips and peas, steak and mushroom pie and always with boiled potatoes and two veg ... and the sweet is trifle ... it's all home-made and it has to be ... that's what people of our age have and we don't eat differently ... if we go to a café where there are young people, we feel 'out of it', if you know what I mean.

Mollie felt the church group was an important social resource, something she needed, particularly as she had lost friends and neighbours in her immediate location, and although she would like to see more of her family in general, Grace's busy life restricts her to a

fortnightly visit and her second daughter lives in the Isle of Man. In this family, the grandchildren are not frequent visitors, not through lack of love, but because of the development of lives that are more private and individualised. Grace's two sons thought they should, maybe, go more often, or maybe speak on the phone, but they did not feel a pressing need to do so. They did see their grandmother frequently when they were young and shared a close relationship with her, but over time that bond became weaker, particularly since Jon now has a young family of his own to care for. In contrast, older participants described how close bonds with parents had instilled a sense of loyalty and compassion that led them to believe that it was "the natural course of things" to care for them in their later years or to the end of their lives.

Marion's children care for her on a day to day basis, whilst she still enjoys the benefits of church membership in the form of social gatherings and celebrations and social calls to her home, that often include gifts of food such as a bowl of home-made soup or cake. She feels "heartened" by these acts of kindness that coupled with support from her family enrich her life and maintain social networks. Similar to her mum, Pamela Anne, accrues 'spiritual capital' (Zohar & Marshall, 2004) through the shared practice of her Catholic faith and the attendant social life that the local church offers. However, the continuity of church practices no longer applies to her children. Her daughter Katya's social life revolves around individual friends, or groups of friends, who come from varying backgrounds, some of whom share her love of American wrestling. Although these groups do not provide spiritual capital in a religious sense, Katya enjoys socialising with groups of friends because they have shared interests. Church going was a 'one-off' event on significant days in the church calendar that she felt she *should* attend to please her family and the local priest, but was of little social or spiritual significance. A lot of young people I spoke to felt the church was irrelevant to their needs, that it had not moved with the times, or they were simply "not religious" or "religious enough" to attend regularly. Similar to the view expressed by Katya above, special church services, including Christmas and Easter, were considered to be an obligation to please significant others.

Older participants regretfully noted that church attendance had dropped dramatically in recent years, confirming the view of Durkheim (1954 [1912]) that the church has a function in creating social solidarity as well as providing collective identity; however, it is cohesion within the community that becomes manifested in religion, rather than religion itself

producing cohesion. Whilst young people now feel they should have a choice in spiritual matters, church attendance had once been an unwritten rule, a taken-for-granted force for good, an unquestioned part of community life, a tradition that was less malleable than many others as I discussed in my last chapter.

If the church no longer plays a central role or serves as a resource for young people, then what community resources can young people tap into, both inside and outside school, in order to learn skills, accrue knowledge and enjoy food practices and meal occasions? In relation to the wider community, the government has stressed the need for community-led initiatives that involve partnership working such as 'Neighbourhood Renewal and the New Deal for Communities' in order to tackle ill health and reduce inequalities. This they believe can happen by unlocking the 'energy' that exists both within communities and within groups of young people that can be channelled into meaningful activities that lead to a better diet and healthier food practices (Department of Health, 2005). This has resulted in a number of schemes being set up in Garston that includes 'Youth Point', a project currently funded by Garston Urban Village Partnership, South Liverpool Housing and the National Lottery, designed to provide out-of-school activities for young people. The Youth Workers asked the children in two age groups (7-12 years and 13-18 years) to choose their own activities and cookery came top of the list with both girls and boys. An experienced cook from the community centre volunteered to show the children how to make a dish each week from six different cultures. At the 'Mexican' evening I observed the enthusiasm with which the children went about the task – cooperating with each other in a relaxed atmosphere, chopping, stirring, tasting and smelling the food. Authors tell us that this is what the enjoyment of cooking is all about (Slater, 1998; Oliver, 2002). At the end of the session other staff members at the centre came to taste the food heaping praise on the children, which obviously delighted them. Fox (1993) has pointed out that health comes from a range of experiences and emotions that includes that of self-esteem and a feeling of self-worth. At the end of the course the group would be taken to a restaurant to sample the most popular cuisine. The children were also allowed to take the completed dishes home. Did the cook feel that these skills would be transferred to the domestic setting? She doubted it and felt schools still had a key role to play in teaching and sustaining good food practices.

I asked teachers at two local secondary schools in Garston whether the curriculum remained theory based with little 'hands on' cookery, particularly as school provided a sound

knowledge base for older participants if this was lacking in the home. 'Food Technology' is, in fact, a very popular 'optional' subject in these schools and both teachers make room for 'hands on' cookery where dishes are prepared 'from scratch'. Although there is a lack of classroom assistants, this was still possible because the children enjoyed the subject and were generally well behaved. Although recipe sheets are taken home, the teachers could not say to what extent cookery skills are encouraged, or put to use, in the home environment. Both teachers felt cookery is especially appropriate for the many pupils who are kinaesthetic learners - the preparation of food 'from scratch', the baking and then the tasting of the finished product. Cookery provides a sense of achievement, especially for those who are not academically motivated. In addition, the Marriott Hotel, on the Garston-Speke border, has been running a 'Young Master Chef' competition for local secondary schools for the past five years. Two or three pupils who catch the eye of the judges are offered a scholarship with the Marriott, working locally in the first instance and later in London. Most are offered employment at the end of eighteen months. The Head Chef believes that this scholarship moves away from the heavy theoretical bias of GCSE to the more 'hands-on' cooking in a true working kitchen; this is where "you learn to be a real cook and all the skills that go with it" that echoes the idea of 'body techniques', certain ways of doing things that cannot be merely orally transmitted.

Both the cook at the community centre and local secondary school teachers felt that cookery was enjoyed by young people once "they got into it". Staff at the community centre felt it "kept the kids off the streets and from causing trouble". I was told that outside this kitchen environment and the centre generally many of them misbehave. Why might this be? Melanie, who became a mother at eighteen, thought that her community had changed because young mothers have tended to move away from the knowledge base, love and care that is provided within families, in order to secure their own accommodation and individual freedom. Whereas she had received support from her family with whom she still lived which had enabled her to return to work and carve out a career that offered her a secure future, her friends had drifted into drink, drugs and poor eating habits:

... these are the people you see queueing outside the chippy, you know, sending the kids to the chippy every night for their tea ... they've kids they can't control, kids who want everything but have got nothing; they end up with a house and a lifestyle they hate.

(Melanie, Family 3 from Garston, aged 21: Interview).

I observed this pattern frequently in the early evenings when I noted that night after night it

would be the same groups of children hanging around the streets and buying food from the chip shop, or sweets, crisps and drinks from the supermarket. At lunchtime some young mothers would buy sausage rolls, pasties or doughnuts from the local 'chain' bakery or supermarket that youngsters ate in their pushchairs. I frequently observed very young children eating crisps, sweets and fruit drinks, but only occasionally did I see a banana or an apple being eaten or plain water being drunk. However, I also noted that young mothers frequently called into cafes on their way back from school for a coffee and maybe a bacon sandwich or toast, confirming the view that socialising within and between people's homes has been replaced by eating outside the home creating 'social networks of companionship' (Warde & Martens, 2000). Whilst this might not include the consumption of healthy foods, nonetheless conviviality creates a feeling of social belonging that can contribute to human happiness and serves to reduce the social isolation thought to be bad for health (Seedhouse, 2001).

5.3 Family and friendship groups as organisers of social relationships

Whilst my data showed that significant food events and reciprocity had tended to wane in the more recent 'gesellschaft' communities, the strong family networks that had been created in 'gemeinschaft' communities had survived. This confirms the view of Bauman (2001) that whilst in more recent times people may not need the wider community consisting of friends, work colleagues, church goers, neighbours and so on, they do still need their families. Family food events took the form of barbeques, the traditional Sunday roast, birthday parties and Christmas celebrations as discussed in my last chapter, where family members 'mucked in' and contributed various dishes, all of which Counihan (1999) believes serve to 'enlarge social groups'. Older participants really enjoyed these occasions because it was very rare for all family members to be together in the same place at the same time and they felt a great sense of pride:

I look around the room and they're all there, even the little ones, and it feels really good. Everyone's so busy these days that that rarely happens. They were all there for me 80th birthday and it was great it really was. It makes your life seem worth it and you sort of look for that ... erm ... when you get older you ask yourself, 'what have I done with my life?'
(Elizabeth, Family 7 from Kensington, aged 85: Interview).

Where families have remained close to each other, in both a geographical and emotional sense, food events served as a signifier of family solidarity and connectedness. However, it was not just special occasions that were important. Bernie visits his elderly mum, Elizabeth,

every Sunday for a cooked breakfast to which I was invited and shared with his cousins, brothers and sisters, nephews and niece. It was obvious that Elizabeth's family enjoyed this food ritual that perpetuated family bonds. Other participants visited elderly parents on most days of the week, taking food with them, for instance, Susan and Joy ate Sunday roast together every week (cooked by Susan!) and Sophie regularly cooked a Sunday dinner for all her family or helped her dad Bernie. Younger participants would also give other family members food that was excess to requirements or take food to a family 'do'. As mentioned earlier, eating out together as a family was also common and for younger participants this seemed to be how they maintained 'networks of sociality' (Warde & Martens, 2000). Such occasions often took place within their own locality where chance meetings with their wider family or familiar others was always a possibility. Whereas younger participants and those on higher incomes saw this as a 'taken-for-granted' aspect of modern life, some older participants (none of whom ate out when they were young) and those families on lower incomes, regarded as a treat, but not a rare treat. Giard et al. (1998) describe this as an 'inertial force of habit' whereby what was experienced as an exception, slowly becomes the norm within families and new traditions are formed. There was a consensus of opinion that if it was not for these special and mundane food events, families would probably not keep in close touch. Although there was a *probability* that they would see each other, such events *ensured* that they did so and this was comforting to know.

Summary and conclusion

My ethnographic observations and accounts of food experiences within 'working class' Liverpool families, show that in 'old' Liverpool strong social connections and cohesiveness were forged within communities through eating only to survive that in turn created a sense of belonging to family and place and what one might call a 'fixed' or 'given' identity (Giddens, 1991; Bauman, 1992). The common need to survive or 'get by' from day to day was assured through what I have referred to as a sense of 'common good' underpinned by a series of unwritten rules and ways of behaving such as the gifting of food without being patronising, reciprocal exchange that included the notion of gift-debt, and a general sense of altruism in looking out, and caring for, each other. Communal eating in the form of church socials and national celebrations such as V.E. Day, strengthened community ties. A high degree of social interaction, strong kinship ties and neighbourliness meant that food preparation, cooking and household skills were communal and subsequently could be observed and a 'common sense

stock of knowledge' (Schutz, 1972) transmitted within and between generations. However, communal living and the presence of so many people in small terraced houses in narrow streets without gardens resulted in an almost complete lack of privacy and personal space and an obligation to help others. Although many accepted this as part of life with few signs of regret, others did find it stifling at times and described 'tough' and 'hard' lives that offered little hope for a better future.

More 'middle class' families also felt a 'sense of community' through neighbourliness, the gifting of food and the social and spiritual support offered through religious belief and church attendance. Although food was more than just a question of survival, nevertheless, conditions such as rationing brought with it an appreciation of its value and drew people together in a common need to "get through" trying times. In fact, many older people I spoke to talked more about the war years than any other period, such had been the impact on their lives. For many women it brought the first taste of autonomy within the home and employment and activities outside the home. It also brought out a deep sense of patriotism that crossed the social divide with a common goal to win a war they believed was justified; an enemy that needed to be defeated.

The dismantling of Liverpool communities during the 1960s weakened social connections under the banner of redevelopment and regeneration that saw a mass exodus to the suburbs. At the same time, the loss of connection was exacerbated by increased disposable income across generations and a lifestyle where people became less reliant on social interaction. Whilst older participants tended to trust what they knew, what was close to home, a sense of community amongst younger people was fostered as much, if not more, through friends (rather than family) that included membership of virtual communities. Although I did not explore in any detail other aspects of life away from food that might have been shared within and between families, interviews and conversations did make reference to family shopping trips for clothes and household goods, voluntary work in schools and within the community as well as formal and informal support and activity groups. The latter included mother and toddler groups, support for the bereaved, environmental groups, facilities for children of working mothers and sporting activities. Whether or not one judged the 'Capital of Culture' celebrations to be successful or justified, the public gatherings, festivals, musical celebrations, markets and cultural displays that took place were aimed at bringing the people of Liverpool together in common celebration.

Although food practices at a community level have changed in nature, within my particular families food events still take place on a regular basis, particularly if extended families have remained in the same locale. Such events included special and mundane meals and the gifting and exchange of food. These appear to provide an emotional anchor, a continuation of family traditions and a bond and reconnection with previous generations, particularly grandparents. This provided a unique family identity that evoked a sense of pride. However, my data show that generally younger participants now eat in a more individualised and less routinised way without the need to be highly social as part of a style of living that offers new levels of social mobility, personal choice and freedom. Older participants, however, mourned the loss of sociality within the community and often felt lonely and cut off from others, living in 'unsought isolation' as referred to by Bennett & Bowers (2009). Younger participants had found other means to regularly socialise through joining social websites or through the medium of 'eating out'. The latter food occasions ranged from having coffee and cake with friends to celebratory family meals. Café culture, in particular, has become extremely powerful in that it provides new style 'hubs for socialising' (www.allegrastrategies.com). Both these media have, to a large extent, replaced the ways participants shared food within the 'gemeinschaft' community.

Whereas a 'common sense stock of knowledge' in relation to food practices may have been accrued through both school and the community in 'old Liverpool', the break up of communities and more private lives makes this more tenuous and is compounded by the fact that cooking in secondary schools at the present time is optional. However, local teachers are offering 'hands on' cookery in their lessons and together with community led projects, motivated children are being offered a modicum of skills. Funding for such community projects remains precarious and many have been 'on the drawing board' for an interminable amount of time.

This chapter has shown that creating and maintaining social networks is not a trivial pursuit if we consider that being social, experiencing a connection to others, makes people 'feel sociated' – food in this sense is a concrete, shared experience (Symons, 1994). This is important to all generations – what is important to health promotion is understanding the sometimes new, and sometimes different, forms in which people accrue 'social capital'. This is particularly important as there has been a move away from the importance of accruing 'social capital' towards a modification of individual risk factors (Lomas, 1998). Changing

community life is often mediated through food and together with my assertion that tradition and traditional food play an important part in both ritual and everyday eating, I argue that food choice is a complex arena from which people develop a relationship between food and health. At the heart of tradition and community lies the idea of a 'common sense stock of knowledge', embodied knowledge, that refers back to the work of others in order for it to be passed on for the future. Similar to Hopper I argue that if we do not 'pass things on' as the older generations have done, we will lose a sense of history, love, connection and meaning in a technological world that enables people to operate in a 'virtual' world. Whilst we insist on being individuals, we often fail to fill the void that has left some people vulnerable through a loss of community. However, having been encouraged since the Thatcher years to be economically selfish, maybe it is unfair to expect people to be both socially aware and socially responsible.

Having discussed food in relation to the notion of tradition and changes in community, my next chapter discusses intergenerational food practices 'from production to consumption'. What do people actually *do* around food? What kind of knowledge, and how is knowledge, transmitted from one generation to another? I take the reader along a 'chain' of practices beginning with the production of food from gardens and allotments or, for most people, the purchase of food, through to the serving and eating of meals. The chapter explores the practices that both preserve this chain, or through their absence or changing nature, break it, and discuss how such practices differ within and between families and generations.

CHAPTER SIX

INTERGENERATIONAL FOOD PRACTICES: FROM PRODUCTION TO CONSUMPTION

Introduction

I have shown the central role within families of tradition and ‘traditional’ food in identity formation and the marking of time through ritual and mundane meal occasions, and how differing forms of community life are mediated through food. I now turn my attention to practices; what people actually *do*, how they use their knowledge of food, in day to day living. The chapter moves through a series of themes concerned with production and consumption from an intergenerational perspective that involves a range of skills and practices from the growing and purchase of food to the eating of meals. I explore continuity and change in relation to cultural and social reproduction (particular ways of doing things from one generation to another) and how the ensuing food choice has implications for health and well-being.

In the first section I consider the changing role of gardens and allotments that have moved from playing a pivotal role in family food provision and the transmission of knowledge amongst the ‘working classes’ to one that supplements a plentiful supply of food and has become more of a leisurely social pursuit, a hobby, primarily amongst the ‘middle classes’. Consequently it is the food items that are purchased rather than produced that form the ‘foundation stone’ from which a series of practices take place in the home that ultimately lead to the serving and eating of food, that may, or may not, be classed as healthy. I will, therefore, discuss the nature of shopping over time in terms of skills, gender roles, modes and venues. Access to healthy food and the skills needed to prepare and cook it have been linked to the ability to make healthy meals. However, whilst food practices were once considered a set of valued skills primarily under the auspices of women (except production of food from allotments and gardens), skills that were passed from one generation to the next, the domestic world has undergone great change. Women have been able to embrace educational and employment opportunities outside the home that has thrown up questions about gender roles

and sharing of tasks, and alongside new kitchen technologies, the food industry has introduced a wide range of foods that require little or no preparation for those who are both skill and time-poor. With the introduction of a range of pre-prepared ingredients, the definition of 'cooking' or being able to 'cook' has become contested and problematic (Short, 2006) thus I wanted to discover whether my participants classed themselves as cooks, or thought it was important to be able to cook. In relation to the acquisition and transference of cooking skills what kind of practices from the past still survive? Are they still gendered? Which practices do my participants privilege?

If what we grow or purchase influences what we cook, then what we cook inevitably influences not only the content, but the practices we follow around mealtimes. I, therefore, follow on with a section that discusses whether sociality lies at the core of mealtimes, or has the availability of technology and ready-prepared and highly processed food led to individualised eating? I look at generational differences in that mealtimes as part of routine practices have tended to move towards more flexibility in terms of where, when and how food is eaten.

In considering people's lived experience of food and what they actually *do* around it, this chapter draws on the phenomenological approach of Schutz (1972) and his idea of a 'common sense stock of knowledge', as well as the works of Csordas (1994) and the 'embodiment paradigm', Sutton (2001) and his ideas of 'embodied memories' and 'historical consciousness', and Mauss's (1973 [1934]) 'techniques of the body'.

6.0 *The role of gardens and allotments*

6.0.1 *Gardening as a utilitarian/social practice*

Amongst the older generations in my study the garden and allotment often played a pivotal role in feeding the family, particularly between the two World Wars when it became an essential asset that was needed to supplement poor wages and periods of unemployment and sickness before the coming of the welfare state. The growing of food incorporated the notion of 'gift-debt' and 'reciprocal exchange' (Mauss 1970 [1950]) that I discussed in my chapter on changing communities as a key way in which families survived. Gardening practices were

also actively encouraged by government as part of the war effort and played a vital part in coping with the lengthy period of rationing. Participants recalled family meals that were determined by whatever was produced and harvested in the garden or allotment:

My earliest memories are soups, stews, hot pots and roasts and plenty of veg. Mind you, my husband had two allotments so we always had plenty of veg and we had our own chickens. We had all fresh food, nothing frozen.

(Susan, Family 1 from Garston, aged 96: Interview).

My husband had an allotment and he grew all the seasonal veg, and we ate whatever he brought home for that time of year.

(Margaret, Family 2 from Garston, aged 71: Interview).

This was the first practice along the food chain that older participants considered to be the work of men – men grew and women prepared and cooked. An allotment often housed chickens and accommodated a pigeon loft. The latter was regarded as a masculine enclave and a haven from domestic pressures. It became part of the fabric of local communities which included betting on races in the form of sweepstakes and staking food and drink on short-distance races (Johnes, 2007). Susan recalls that one of her husband's allotments was shared – whilst he did the gardening, his co-tenant kept pigeons that provided high quality manure. Johnes contends that men needed to be part of this masculine world, where men could be “men”, where they could prove themselves amongst peers and where their authority would not be challenged by their wives as the primary carers within the home. The wish to be amongst peers away from the hustle and bustle of family life meant, of course, that the transmission of skills to younger generations often did not take place for these were not ‘inclusionary’ places as far as the family was concerned. Older participants did not remember spending much time on the allotment with their fathers except to help harvest and transport produce home.

On the downside, this did mean that one could be ‘bored witless’ eating the same vegetables for weeks on end, but on the other hand Joy pointed out that gardening provided foods that might otherwise have remained outside the scope of the family budget, for example, strawberries and other soft fruits. Fruit was regarded as a ‘treat’ when she was growing up – half an apple and orange on a Saturday night after bathtime was the most one could normally hope for.

On my recent visits to allotments I discovered that allotment holders still exchange knowledge and share and exchange produce, implements, seedlings and so on – although not

as a means of survival, but rather as social acts of concern or kindness. In contrast to gardening as a pragmatic and essential practice, in conversation with allotment holders I found evidence to support the view of Milligan et al., (2004) that allotments are now considered to be primarily a pastime by many people rather than a serious pursuit that has become increasingly popular amongst the middle classes. For Oldenburg (1999), they provide ‘third places’ outside work and the home that serve as a place to escape to as they did for previous generations, and my conversations with allotment holders mirrored this view. Patricia explained what her allotment meant to her:

I liked being outdoors ... in the rain, pottering around, fiddling with things, not necessarily producing anything, that wasn't necessarily the idea for me, it was me having this piece of land I could work on as well as being part of a little community.

If we consider sociality to be a key component of health (Fox, 1993) and one of the ‘foundations’ we need for a healthy life (Seedhouse, 2001), many gardeners I spoke to believed that their good health and longevity was down to fresh produce, exercise, a sense of achievement and this important sense of solidarity and ‘belonging’ to a group or community with shared interests. Although my conversations with allotment holders revealed a certain competitiveness, the ‘allotment community’ works in much the same way as communities generally that involves the idea of ‘unwritten rules’ that incorporate reciprocal exchange and gift-debt that create a sense of ‘common good’. This ‘mutually supportive environment’ (Milligan et al., 2004) combats social isolation and creates social networks particularly in the case of older people. Having visited Rose on her allotment, it felt like an oasis, a place to find peace away from the traffic and general hubub of the city amongst like-minded people; allotments can create ‘inclusionary spaces’ (Milligan et al., 2004). Rose did not only use her allotment to grow food, but also used it recreationally in the form of a miniature garden that comprised a small lawn, a pond, flower beds, several bird-feeders and a bench where she would enjoy a flask of tea or coffee, a sandwich or cakes and the newspaper. This would confirm the view of Lane (2001) that gardening is not just a question of “horticultural skills”, but also “aesthetic deliberation” (p.95). People would often pass by for a chat, enquire how her plants were doing and about her health. Rose, in fact, enjoyed her allotment so much that Patricia commented that her mum would often spend a disproportionate amount of time and money on her allotment rather than the home. This showed a measure of resistance to the norms of the day that a ‘woman’s place was in the home’ (Oakley, 1974) and allotments were primarily a male enclave (Johnes, 2007).

The importance of gardening as a source of *enjoyment* as well as a food resource came across very strongly in both Bernie's and Sophie's recollections of family life. Bernie explained it as "a skill that brings reward ... but you enjoy it and it's like you've achieved something isn't it?"

I was not only interested in the pragmatic and social side of gardening across generations but also whether and how skills and knowledge were generally passed between the allotment community and whether these were transferred to families. If this is no longer the case, then are there alternative ways that people can learn about food?

6.0.2. *Transmission of knowledge and skills*

I found strong evidence that within 'gardening families', gardening knowledge had been passed from one generation to another, for example, being able to discriminate between tough and tender runner beans, the avoidance of 'green' or 'sprouting' potatoes, the amount of time to boil beetroot and the need to 'pick over' produce to reveal caterpillars or grubs. Gardeners also needed to know how long (after picking) certain salads, fruits or vegetables would last in order to avoid waste in the absence of fridges or freezers. Gardening techniques and methods were also observed, practiced and handed down; digging trenches for potatoes, making 'wigwams' (canes made into a wigwam formation) for runner beans, learning to space seedlings, the best ways to deter predators and so on. Such techniques and gardening knowledge came from years of experience. Similar to Mauss's notion of body techniques, habitualised practices (in this case within the culture of gardening) become normalised and naturalised. Bernie explained how he grew onions and the rewards of gardening:

We'd go through each plant ... onions, how to grow the best onions ... dig down three foot and put your manure in and everything else ... and they'd be massive, really lovely ... you'd eat them as you grew them and you enjoyed them ... and I grew all my own tomatoes in the greenhouse ... cucumbers, marrows, courgettes ... lovely, there's nothing like it.
(Bernie, Family 7 from Kensington, aged 62: Interview).

Bernie had learnt from his difficult upbringing in a poor area of Liverpool (a father in and out of prison and a life in the care of Dr. Barnardo's and correctional institutions), that people needed to work together and help each other to 'get on' in life, manifested in his management and love of gardening. Along with her siblings, Sophie (Bernie's daughter), learnt gardening techniques from a very young age; helping out was something each family member was expected to do. Sophie talked about the 'techniques' of growing she had learnt from her

father and what fresh food from the garden meant to her:

It was because we used to plant all our own ... I remember doing twenty-seven holes and seeds on each tray and my sister would put them under the light in the greenhouse for growing ... it was all of us who had to do it ... make sure of the compost, checking everyday, the ripeness of the tomatoes, knowing when to take them off. I was only five or six and that was the only food I remember ... even the mint ... we were always in and out of the garden at teatime ... strawberries, gooseberries, blackberries, raspberries ... everything ... green beans ... potatoes ... we learnt how to dig for potatoes ... there was nothing we bought into the home ... I just never knew any different ... I knew school food was different because it had all been prepared beforehand ... I hated it ... our food, it was good, and I think that's the way it should be.

Sutton (2001) refers to the need to serve some kind of 'apprenticeship' in relation to food practices from someone close to us in order to gain skills and develop techniques. Sophie's embodied knowledge of plants and gardening techniques that she gleaned from her father was carried through to the kitchen:

Growing the veg and then bringing it in was just the start, 'cos then you had to wash it all and prep it and know how to cook or store different types of fruit and veg. We all had to help, me dad was strict about that ... he did most of the actual cooking, but we were there right alongside him, you know, and that's how we learn even if it was just chopping the mint when we were younger and making sauce, custard, stirring things right and stuff like that.

Whereas Sophie had learnt from observation backed up by 'hands on' experience, learning solely from observation did not appear to produce sufficient skills and knowledge to successfully run an allotment or garden. Rose did not involve Patricia in gardening practices because she felt the allotment provided her with time and space to herself, "it's doing what you want to do with your own time ... it's your own back garden". These were things she did not have in the home setting when bringing up her family. This stood in contrast to the utilitarian way Bernie managed his garden that involved help from, and the transmission of knowledge to, the whole family. Patricia did not benefit from this kind of 'apprenticeship' and knew little of the skills and knowledge required to garden successfully. Patricia learnt through 'trial and error' and the knowledge and techniques she picked up from fellow gardeners:

[When I got my allotment] I didn't know what grew, how you plant things out and how you look after it and what have you ... it's not that easy ... I didn't realise it was going to be that much hard work. I didn't have the knowledge to grow things like my mum did; I do know now from my own experience and other allotment holders, but I didn't then.

However, Denise believes that anyone can be involved in growing food; her small back yard proved to be sufficient as a source of both enjoyment and knowledge which could be shared with the family:

It was only a little plot in the yard so my husband did the biggest window box in the world and along the brick wall we had flowers and veg and the kids loved it and got to know the names of things and what they tasted like.

(Denise, Family 3 from Garston, aged 44: Interview).

A strong 'connection' with food was reflected in the interviews with Rose's family in that

knowledge can be transmitted from one generation to another. Rose had been brought up on a farm as an evacuee and had learnt gardening skills and accrued knowledge of plants which in turn she used when she acquired an allotment. Both Kieran (Rose's grandson) and his eight-year-old sister, through spending considerable time on the allotment with their grandmother, had gained a sound knowledge of fruit and vegetables. Rose shares excess food with her family, thus fresh food has always been central to food provision. Rose's daughter, Patricia, has extended this knowledge to include a range of other foods and practices that she has introduced to her young daughter and Kieran:

I want my children to see food in its natural state and where it comes from and not just from the allotment which they are naturally familiar with. My daughter can tell you all the different fish and on Friday night we made mussels with linguini and saffron and she stood and helped me wash every mussel, take all the beards off and scrub off all the little barnacles and stuff from the outside of the mussel, and I thought 'that's really good because she knows where things come from'. It's a similar thing to preparing the vegetables my mum brings straight off the allotment covered in earth, maybe a few creepy-crawlies and all the tops on.

Significantly, Kieran, Rose's grandson, was the only teenager I spoke to who had a sound knowledge of seasonal fruit and vegetables and he, in turn, told me that none of his friends possessed this kind of knowledge, or were aware of the origin of food generally:

I've got friends who couldn't tell the difference between a carrot and a bean, or something that was grown on an allotment or was processed, like processed food. Like, I had a mate that thought 'turkey ham' was a strange type of animal!

A cross between a pig and a turkey?

I was like, come on!! It's like they have no knowledge at all about food. It's scary because they don't know what part of an animal stuff comes from.

Similarly, Meryl told me that her young son had very little knowledge of fresh food or its origin because she lived on ready prepared meals and processed food and she felt "ashamed" when he could not name vegetables or asked where meat came from (being unaware that it came from an animal).

New allotment holders too did not always have the benefit of the skills and knowledge that had been passed down through generations of families and had to rely on the goodwill of fellow gardeners or resort to 'trial and error'. For example, common mistakes my inexperienced participants made included planting seedlings too close together or failing to harvest lettuces at the right time, allowing them "to go to seed" or allowing radishes to become too big and "woody". Although the allotments provided an environment in which one could learn both old and new techniques, (Mauss suggests, body techniques are not necessarily set in concrete), some new gardeners I spoke to used books to help them or

watched a number of television programmes to pick up tips, but most commonly I was told “you have to learn from your mistakes”.

Both Sophie and Denise believe that schools can play a part in putting children “back in touch” with food. Children can be educated about how food is grown that can be developed through the shared activity of gardening:

I think they should have a plot for each class and maybe grow their own food because it's a form of housekeeping really isn't it? They could learn what I learnt and it doesn't cost anything.

Schools should grow veg with the kids, especially in Garston where people haven't got gardens ... look how easy it is to grow potatoes and they taste so much nicer, and they could have tomatoes and fruit.

However, both Sophie and Denise believe this would take commitment and determination on behalf of children, parents, teachers and the education authority. Initiatives have, in fact, shown that gardening clubs, particularly those that involve parents, lead to an increase in children's consumption of vegetables (Ransley et al., 2010). Families who have been involved in gardening point out that it is both time consuming and hard work and that gardeners, no matter how experienced, can have failures as well as be successful. Whereas Rose and Bernie have both passed on skills and knowledge to children and grandchildren, they both readily admit that it would have been easy at times not to bother, particularly in view of the fact that there is an ever-increasing abundance of fresh and processed food within the retail food market. They are inspired to continue in the belief that fresh food is ‘good for you’ coupled with their experience of what they consider to be the superior quality and taste of the food they produce; “there's nothing like ... freshly dug potatoes and carrots ... freshly picked tomatoes, peas, runner beans ... that you're eating an hour later”. Kieran was able to compare the organic fruit and vegetables grown by his grandmother on her allotment, to those on offer in supermarkets:

[People] see the Tesco ones and it's clean and it's been washed and you see me nan's and it's dirty and it's different shapes and they sort of see it and think it's not nice ... but it's natural. The natural order is chaos! They think it looks better because it's straight and it's perfectly round and the vibrancy of the colours ...

Kieran highlights the idea that food has become ‘aestheticised’ in that it needs to look good, pleasing to the eye rather than the palate, before people are tempted to buy it. I found amongst my participants that it was rare for comparisons to be made between mass produced food and garden produce, for, with the exception of Rose, (who, although struggling, loved her allotment too much to give it up) none of my participants were currently involved in

growing their own food. The reasons given for this were advancing age, lack of time (or reluctance to set aside time) for gardening, insufficient knowledge, and the fact that fresh food is so readily available in convenient form in supermarkets. In contrast, older participants could remember produce from the allotment dictating the nature of food provision rather than food purchases. For example, if there was an abundance of root vegetables then scouse, stew or soups would be made with or without a variety of meats, cabbage would accompany bacon ribs, or soft fruit such as raspberries would need to be dealt with quickly in the form of bottled fruit or jam. Salad in the summer would be packed into sandwiches with “a nice bit of bought ham or cheese”. This was simple food, a simple diet “without goodies”, fresh and unprocessed. Thus gardening practices and shopping practices were interwoven, but in today’s consumer society I was to discover that much has changed over time.

6.1 Shopping practices: continuity and change

6.1.1 Shopping practices in context

At the present time all my participants, without exception, do the bulk of their shopping in supermarkets as these are, on the whole, the only retail food outlets readily available to them. I did not speak to anyone who was not within walking distance or a short car ride away from a supermarket. If participants did not possess a car, they used taxis. Whereas older generations may have been able to walk round to a local shop, they were unable to take a bus or walk longer distances to supermarkets and had to depend on others. Older people tended to be ‘excluded from out-of-town facilities’ (Seth & Randall, 2001). They recalled a time when there were only small local food shops which they used everyday – butcher, baker, fishmonger, green-grocer, grocer – and where everyone knew each other. I observed that there are now few independent or specialist shops (of these, most are ethnic shops) in the neighbourhoods under study here. My interviews with families and in general conversation with people around the city revealed that most participants would use small shops if they started trading again with the proviso that they would need to match quality and be reasonably competitive price-wise in relation to supermarkets. Family members bought fruit and vegetables from both market and street stalls and used the few remaining independent butchers scattered around the suburbs and the only fishmonger that survives in Allerton High Street. Some had tried the local farmers’ markets, but found them very expensive:

... I'm not giving two pounds for a loaf of bread or pay five pounds a pound for meat. I know it's good stuff, but, no, that's too much ... I think in some ways we might be being conned because it's become trendy now to eat 'organic' or 'local' stuff.

(A young family from Toxteth: Natural conversation).

Although my observations showed that these alternatives to the supermarket were well patronised, they still only accounted for a small number of my participants. The markets were held in relatively affluent areas and when I questioned stall holders why this was the case they said they would not feel secure or "comfortable" in "the middle of a council estate" or "a run-down area" and apart from the fact that people in such areas would probably not be able to afford to buy the produce, they believed an "appreciation" of the goods they sold was more or less confined to the middle classes and above. Kenworthy & Schaeffer (2000) suggest that the 'middle-classes', the 'yuppies', purchase from farmers' markets not only to obtain quality products, but also to 'rehumanize' their connection with producers who are unknown to them as consumers within the global market.

All my areas under study reflect a rise in the number of supermarkets, both large and small, and in conversation with local supermarket managers, it did not seem to be of concern to them that their presence has eclipsed local business forcing a large number of closures. To them, food retailing is about fulfilling the 'needs' (as they see it) of consumers and competition is inevitable within a 'free market economy' in which there will always be casualties; supermarkets are all about offering the consumer choice. Interestingly, participants do not see 'choice' as choice exclusively within the supermarket setting, but rather choice is seen as something that should include other modes and locations in relation to shopping, which they no longer have. Many participants I spoke to find supermarket shopping boring and tedious, something one 'has to do' despite the array of 'choice' that obviously exists in pleasant surroundings. Many wished for a return to the busy high street that once housed a myriad of little shops and market stalls that offered a choice and style of shopping that encouraged social interaction, particularly for women who spent a great deal of time at home with their families. Although one might see familiar others in the supermarket where (if there was room between the aisles) one might stop for a chat, participants felt ambivalent about this mode of shopping; "it just isn't the same", "you feel in the way", "everything's so rushed and busy", "you're not on home turf". Whereas men treated the anomie of the supermarket in a positive way in that you could "get the job done faster", women complained about the loss of a 'social space' where it was not possible "to have a proper 'gab' [gossip]". This was a specific gender difference noted in relation to shopping

practices.

6.1.2 *Shopping and gender*

Within my families gender roles varied in relation to shopping practices. Older female participants recalled being solely responsible for food shopping whilst they were bringing up their families, commenting “that’s the way it was ... he went out to work and that was that”. There was a consensus of opinion that their husbands would have been “clueless” anyway because it was not deemed to be part of their ‘territory’ or their responsibility even if they had done shopping errands when they were younger. The older women I spoke to felt it was just easier for them to take charge of shopping, pointing out that it was an everyday practice that more often than not took place whilst their menfolk were in work.

For my female participants who were bringing up young children alone there was no choice about who did the shopping. However, if the children were asked to help it was more likely to be daughters than sons. In my two-parent families the women did the bulk of the shopping with men playing a supportive role, for example, if women could not drive or there were excessive work commitments. There was also a strong feeling amongst both female and male participants that whilst women did not enjoy food shopping particularly, men disliked it even more unless they were on some kind of special mission, for example, to cook a family curry. Male participants were more likely to buy, and enjoyed buying, meat or fish, referring to these foods as the ‘centre’ of the diet, something that ‘had to be right’ and in some way they felt they were the better judge of these things than women who could be ‘fobbed off’. On the other hand my female participants noted that men could not manage budgets often returning from shopping trips with “a whole load of extras”, “things I would never buy”. However, it was not unusual for men to do the bulk of the shopping in certain circumstances, for example, if family members were in poor health or had mobility problems – Susan’s son helped her with shopping and Bernie, Terrance and Robert shared the family shopping and had all helped their widowed mothers. Terrance pointed out that if men and women shop together, they are able to negotiate purchases and “learn where the money goes”. Also, Terrance had come to realise how one needs to be aware of, and become somewhat hardened towards, aggressive marketing that encourages overspending or impulse buying. However, my findings support those of Coltrane (2000) and Davis & Greenstein (2004) that the overall responsibility for ‘household management’ or ‘family work’ continues to lie with women.

Such ‘unpaid’, ‘invisible’ work (Oakley, 1974) comprises tasks such as household labour, food provision, emotional work and caring for children. I discovered that it is the *nature* of such management, that includes shopping practices, that has undergone change.

6.1.3 *Shopping practices as part of household management*

Older participants recall that shopping practices were part of overall household management or home-making. Amongst ‘working class’ families low wages had to be ‘managed’ in order to keep large families. At the end of the working week, in general, men would “hand over” their pay packets to their wives who would give them “pocket money” or “spends” and the bulk of what remained would form the weekly housekeeping. This was the weekly challenge that faced my older participants who had married in their late teens. Whilst marriage and children at a young age had brought them out of service or factories, these could be seen as the type of marriages Fay Weldon describes as “a commercial exchange in which a woman swaps ‘services of a domestic and sexual nature’ in return for her keep”; it is only when a woman can keep herself that she can marry for love (Thorpe, 2010). Love was rarely mentioned in connection with marriage – marriage was something that was expected within working class cultures of the period. If you did not marry then in later life you were referred to in negative terms as ‘an old maid’, someone who had been ‘left on the shelf’.

Susan had two pounds and fifty pence to keep her large family:

You shopped from day to day, you know, in them days. Well, you couldn’t do it any other way because you didn’t have the money. But it was easier to control everything that way; you could keep a handle ... and you never wasted anything.

Davidson (1982) comments that being financially dependent on one’s husband meant that there was a degree of expectation that a wife would be, or try her best to be, a good manager by keeping out of heavy debt, stretching the budget, shopping cannily and so on. This involved a range of fairly high level skills that included arithmetic. It was common to write a shopping list of items that would be needed each day throughout the week, particularly as few people had fridges. Food shopping contained basic items such as flour, margarine, sugar, porridge oats, milk, bread, oxo cubes, custard powder, pudding rice and jam. Various cuts of meat, maybe a little cheese and fish for a Friday would be bought on the day of cooking. Lily could still remember her list off-by-heart that she made week-in and week-out when she was

bringing up her family, commenting that “there wasn’t that much to choose from anyway, not like today”. Whereas working class women faced a weekly challenge to feed their families, middle class families found food provision much easier and did not have to function on such tight budgets thus allowing for a wider range of foods that included butter rather than margarine, more meat and fish and a few sweets.

However, for ‘working class’ women, the power that being in charge of household affairs gave them, was welcome; they felt they had little power over the direction of their lives in the sense that nearly all their time was taken up caring for their families with little chance to devote any time to themselves. Despite these shortcomings, they were at pains to point out that whilst their domain was hard work and often exhausting, “at the end of the day” it was *their* domain, a place where they could prove their worth, demonstrate skill (particularly as they had received little education) and be recognised for “a job well done” and that mattered a great deal to them. Tillotsan (2004) comments that during the 1950s the kitchen emerged as the ‘housewife’s’ “sacred space” – advertisements became the ‘embodiment’ of women who provided her family with ‘three square meals’ each day. This was in contrast to younger female participants who felt that the running of the household today is not often recognised as a skill and is taken for granted until there is no milk in the fridge, biscuits in the tin or clean socks, which usually implied some kind of oversight regardless of how many other commitments one might have. This would support the view of Oakley (1974) that recognition of the ‘invisible’ work in the home only tends to surface when it does *not* get done.

It was during the World War Two, in particular, that women across all classes recalled having a degree of autonomy, a sense of liberation, being left in charge without “the old man being at the back of you”. Although household management continued in much the same way, women told me that practices did not have to be so rigid and strictly in deference to men. When their men returned, participants described how difficult it was to let go, share responsibilities and accept once again the status of men as head of the household. In fact, some women told me that “he didn’t get his own way in everything” and that “things definitely changed” with many women, for instance, continuing to work outside the home, findings that support the work of Ayers (1988) in her study of Liverpool households.

For those who brought up their families, and those who grew up during the war years that involved the long period of rationing, a lasting legacy was the abhorrence of waste which

older participants considered to be a sin:

I hate waste, I think it's criminal. We never wasted anything and I mean *anything*; you wouldn't find anything in our dustbin that could be eaten or made use of. Everything had a value or a use and if you didn't need or want it then somebody else did. I think that's what the War taught us and being poor generally, so it wasn't such a bad thing in that sense was it because I don't waste things now? ... and I feel terrible throwing a perfectly good paper bag away.

(Martha, a resident of Kensington, aged 82 years: Natural conversation).

Participants felt that higher incomes and the introduction of 'white goods' following the War was instrumental in changing shopping and eating practices, that in many respects was welcomed within families:

It was good that we didn't have to shop everyday and had a bit more money – you got sick of trying to get by all the time, you know, hand to mouth. You know, a little bit of bacon, loaves of bread, a bit of milk, some potatoes and pot herbs – trying to eke it out and always being in the kitchen. I saw me ma do without many a time and I've done the same.

(Lily, Family 5 from Kirkby, aged 90: Interview)

Food could be kept fresher for longer and I think the changes in how you ate came with the wages people got, which went up because there were plenty of jobs. A lot of people were emigrating and that left more jobs. Whereas my mum's generation had to work for what they could get, our generation woke up and said, 'sod that! I'm not working for that!' and you packed in that job and got another job that paid more money. That's when the changes started, in my opinion anyway.

(Robert, Family 5 from Kirkby, aged 65: Interview).

However, whereas the introduction of white goods were regarded as 'labour saving devices' (washing machines, hoovers, fridge-freezers, fast-cooking electric ovens, oven to tableware), housework became subject to 'Parkinson's Law' whereby "work expands so as to fill the time available for its completion" (Parkinson, 1957: 33). The time saved on one task is merely transferred to a new task, and thus the 'scope' of housework expands. Whilst the 'drudgery' of housework lessened, participants did not seem to have any more time. They did not necessarily take on new tasks, but spent more time on existing tasks, such as meal provision. Patricia commented that if she manages to leave the office early she will prepare a more elaborate meal rather than take an hour to relax.

Whilst, on the whole, older participants felt that higher wages and white goods did indeed make life easier, it was the transition from weekly to monthly paid salaries that made household management more difficult:

I've always been used to weekly money and that's still the same – I haven't had to change over to monthly money that might have changed me. [People] are used to monthly money and the way they use supermarkets has sort of changed things. I don't think you can control your money or budget as well on monthly money.

(Joy, Family 1 from Garston, aged 60: Interview).

According to the Payments Council (2010) the way we are paid and manage money has

changed dramatically in the last decade. Fewer and fewer people are paid in cash or make cash purchases – people increasingly use bank cards, direct debit and on-line banking. Joy described how, like Susan, she would spread the weekly wages out on the kitchen table and every penny would be accounted for and put into pots or envelopes labelled gas, electricity, insurance, food and so on – “you could see where your money was going”. According to the Payments Council, unconstrained by the cash in our wallets, we spend more freely with bank cards. In the main it is the elderly, the poor and the very young (who do not have bank accounts) who make cash payments. Joy’s daughter, Katherine, uses debit cards for her shopping and describes how in the last few days of the month the family eats what she terms “cupboard meals”, that is, meals are made from whatever is left in the cupboard. This includes tinned fish, spaghetti and beans, or packet food such as pasta mixes, supplemented with frozen vegetables. Katherine does not find monthly management easy because during the month there may be visitors, family members spending time away, unexpected purchases for the home and so on and she rarely puts any money aside. Another mother explained the difficulty of managing monthly pay:

You have to be careful on monthly money – it’s easy to go mad in the beginning and be left short at the end of the month. The trouble with supermarkets is that you’re tempted to buy too much all the time and some of it’s just not essential, but I think they’re cheaper than the small shops.
(Middle-aged mother, a resident of Kensington: Natural conversation).

According to the Payments Council, supermarkets take fifty-five pence in every pound we spend in shops and the figure is likely to rise as supermarkets force independent retailers out of business with a never-ending string of stores (my observations show this applies throughout Liverpool) offering an ever increasing range of goods and services. Participants admitted stocking up on food at the beginning of the month, particularly with BOGOF’s (buy one get one free) and ‘buy one, get one half price’. This often resulted in over-buying because at the time participants felt it was a good idea and they could afford it, whilst, in fact, fridges and freezers became over-stocked, rotation “went out the window” and “stuff month’s old sits in the bottom of the fridge or freezer” and “you land up throwing it out”. Unlike older participants who had lived through rationing, waste, while not necessarily welcome, appeared to be an accepted and inevitable part of younger participant’s management of food, which they owed in part to the introduction of the marketing techniques mentioned above, coupled with the introduction of ‘sell by’ dates. Waste has now become an environmental and ethical issue, as it has been estimated that consumers throw away a third of the food they buy in the United Kingdom (www.lovefoodhatewaste.com). Generational differences in

attitudes toward waste is described in this account:

I look at youngsters in my family and other families and see how many hours they work and a lot of it's for nothing because they buy so much they don't need and waste so much ... and what's worse is that it doesn't seem to bother them. My mother wouldn't throw away a safety pin, a hair clip, or piece of cotton or a crust of bread and I don't waste things, I can't waste things it runs that deep in me.
(Dorothy, a resident of Kensington, aged 70 years: *Natural conversation*).

I would suggest that changes in the management of waste across generations has seen food move from a once valued and precious natural resource, to an affordable and, thus, disposable commodity. Although accounts suggest that shopping as part of caring for families is not necessarily a straightforward activity but involves good housekeeping and home management, I wanted to find out between and across generations, to what extent it can be regarded as a skillful practice.

6.1.4 *Shopping as a skillful practice*

Studies have shown that food handling as part of everyday life provides an opportunity to demonstrate thrift (Miller, 1998) intelligence, integrity and shrewdness (Sutton, 2001; Herzfeld, 1990) that runs through families. Older participants noted that it was not unusual for children of large families to do shopping errands from a young age:

I was only a nipper when me mam sent me to do the shopping ... I had to go everyday because there were that many of us ... I can remember we used to buy ten loaves a day and eight pints of milk ... she had to everyday.
(Terrance, Family 2 from Garston, aged 55: *Interview*).

Not only did Terrance remember children running shopping errands for their own mothers, but for relatives, friends and neighbours. These activities helped participants from a young age to accrue a 'stock of knowledge' and to be trusted, regarded as essential in large families on low incomes. Children were expected to shop with a keen eye in the same 'canny' way as their parents – ignorance was no excuse. Wasted food cost money. Shopping enabled one to accrue knowledge of food (much the same way as gardening) from childhood through to adulthood and to be a discerning shopper, to be able to recognise both "good value for money" and when one was being "ripped off" or "fobbed off" by shopkeepers and market traders. Terrance explained that you would not buy the first produce you came across – you would pass from one market stall to another and back again, or "weigh up" the produce outside shops and then make a decision what to buy and from whom. Participants explained

that an intelligent eye would know the best part of salted fish that had the 'Lord's thumb'⁷, when old meat had been reddened with liver blood, when mutton was being passed off as lamb and whether fruit and vegetables were at their best by their skin (bananas being best when the skin started to 'freckle') or the hardness or softness of the flesh (pressing each end of a melon for ripeness; selecting small strawberries that were sweeter for a fruit salad) with special attention being paid to bruising and "bad bits". Not only did one feel pleased at getting some good buys, but participants would tell others that "so-and-so's" had some lovely apples or "a nice bit of fish" or freshly killed rabbit.

In comparison to the above accounts, the children of my participants today could opt out of shopping, or at least, were not *expected* to help. More often than not, it would be the intended purchase of non-food items that would tempt them to accompany parents. Shopping was not regarded as a skill, but more of a pass-time. Some parents preferred to shop without their children because food choices created arguments, whereas others liked them to go with them because they could choose what to buy for their meals thus avoiding arguments later on. This would confirm the view of Grieshaber (1997) that children now actively engage in contestation and negotiation of power relationships within the family and my study has shown that this starts at the point of purchase.

Sophie was the only participant who took her child with her in order to learn "what to look for" when shopping. Sophie expressed an appreciation of 'hands on' knowledge picked up during her childhood and the fact that she ate a diet plentiful in fresh ingredients; she was brought up with the idea that fresh food was the best 'foundation' for health and this has stayed with her. Although she does not possess a garden now, she prioritises fresh food when feeding her family. She describes herself as "very fussy", "very picky" when it comes to buying fresh produce and makes a special trip to a particular street stall in the city centre where she 'knows', through the knowledge she has 'embodied' from her past encounters with fresh food, what she is looking for.

However, although Margaret, Terrance and Ellen had all been brought up with similar knowledge and skills which they still used when shopping, Meryl did not use these skills because she "lived on" ready prepared, processed and convenience foods; continuous

⁷ The fleshiest, and best, part of the fish would have an indent that resembled a thumbprint that was referred to as the 'Lord's thumb'.

shiftwork that made her tired and irritable had fostered an ambivalent relationship with food. Sometimes Meryl would buy vegetables fully intending to make a scouse or a chilli, but they would often wither away in the fridge before she felt motivated to cook. This made her frustrated and cross with herself and she would vow not to let the same thing happen again, but it often did and she would buy a pizza or a tea from McDonald's.

Kieran made the point that people have come to accept the standards of quality and taste that are set by supermarkets because "they don't know any different", whereas those who had tasted freshly produced food from the garden use a different yardstick:

... so people might say they're 'discerning' when they shop, but they don't really understand what to look for ... older people like me nan would know and people who were familiar with gardens and allotments ... and if they tasted the difference ... well ... it means that if you buy from shops you won't be fobbed off with inferior stuff.

Many people I spoke to felt that one of the main differences between generations was that skill was no longer needed, or used, in shopping practices:

You see people just dash around the supermarket and pick up things in plastic bags, or pre-packed meat and ready-prepared food and they hardly look at it ... and kids just choose what kind of pizza to have or tinned soup and that's as far as their shopping skills go. The trolleys are laden with stuff that isn't proper food to me. My grandson and his wife shop off the computer so how can you know what you're buying is alright?

(Martha, an elderly resident of Garston: Natural conversation).

Choosing between six different brands of tomato sauce, or two dozen varieties of cereal, crisps or biscuits was considered neither challenging nor interesting because they were "much of a muchness" and the decision to buy was often determined by the packaging and how the product was "sold to you". This would confirm the view of Sassatelli (2007) that products are given meanings to make them 'consumable' and thus 'significant' to the consumer. There is also a degree of 'consumer fetishism' whereby such products as wines, oils, breads and cheeses are positioned in the market place to encourage one to cultivate and display 'taste' and 'discrimination' (Roseberry, 1996). Participants commented that you could rarely try things, or smell things or feel the texture of goods that was all part of the shopping process that drew on a 'stock of knowledge'. Showing intelligence, bartering skills and 'common sense' in shopping were aspects that earned one a favourable reputation and recognition amongst the community expressed by one of my older participants as, "you were known for knowing", which younger participants felt they did not have the time or inclination to do.

Thus food in relation to shopping has moved from a socially embedded resource and a means of accruing 'social capital' (Putnam, 2000), to a set of commodities that are bought and sold in the market place in much the same way as other household items. For the majority of my participants, rather than a skill, a social activity or a labour of love and care, shopping is now just another task that has to be fitted into busy working schedules and family life. It is the supermarket that provides the means to do this because everything is under one roof and one can shop at anytime of the day or night (depending on the chosen venue) with few car parking problems. It is about quickness and convenience and about "keeping those plates spinning" as one moves from one activity to the next during the day. As Seth & Randall (2001) comment, food shopping as an experience is an acceptable chore that is clinical, unexciting and undifferentiated but where convenience overrides this negative experience.

Whereas shopping involved skill in choosing fresh food and managing the food budget as a whole, choosing between brands of non-perishable food was often guided by previous generational choices, such as, baked beans, soap powder, type of biscuits and so on. This was particularly true if generations of families shopped together. When I asked participants why they chose particular brands, some simply said they liked to eat particular foods because they reminded them of certain people in the family, like a dad who had always eaten 'custard creams', whilst others thought they "just tasted better". However, for the most part participants could not answer definitively, intimating that it was "kind of automatic", "just one of those things", a habit, or in the back of the mind they did things the way previous generations had done, or it was a kind of inbuilt trust that certain brands were better. Few participants looked at labels in regard to making healthy choices – they found them tedious to read and the print was often too small. They would, however, buy the 'healthy options' accepting the claim at face value. Seth & Randall (2001) point out that leading retailers have 'strong' brands or 'brand strength' in the sense that consumers know and trust them that indicates the power and success of sophisticated marketing techniques. At the same time, in a world where food choice has become so complex, brand loyalty becomes a way of avoiding irrational purchases, minimising uncertainty and easing decision-making, referred to as the 'routinization' of food choice (Ilmonen, 2001).

Participants who cooked for their families were more likely to shop 'with their heads in the kitchen' (Giard, 1998), particularly if they had a good idea about what meals they would be making for the family. My findings support this view in that participants who

cooked very little had only a vague idea of what to buy, and my observations showed that this led to impulse buying and a reliance on ready prepared food, particularly frozen products. Older participants felt that having a weekly menu and a shopping list gave them a degree of control counteracting the sense that supermarkets are “pulling all the strings” that encourage people to buy more products. Thus they avoided, to a large extent, being the ‘victims’ of marketing strategies, whereby shopping as a pleasure is replaced by the consumer becoming a ‘slave’ to goods, exacerbated by trying to get the ‘best deals’ (Gabriel & Lang, 1995). In contrast, younger participants often bought heavily advertised foods, particularly if they had been newly introduced to the market, in particular novelty breakfast cereals and dairy products aimed at children. I also found that across all generations ‘Flora’ margarine was purchased as a ‘healthy’ alternative to butter which Unilever has spent millions of pounds advertising (Lawrence, 2008). Lawrence suggests that without advertising we would probably be unaware of the existence or the supposed ‘qualities’ of such foods and rather than eating fancy cereals we would still be eating porridge and plain toast. My older participants pointed out that shopping was a much simpler practice in ‘their day’ with a very limited range of products and what they regarded as ‘small-scale’ advertising compared to the present day.

Elderly participants expressed the wish to return to the day when food choice was simple and, in particular, found supermarkets overwhelming in terms of sheer size and volume of goods. It was not unusual for family members to do their shopping for them because they found shopping stressful, commenting that it was “all too much”. Whereas a neighbour or a child might go to the shop for them years ago, this was now very rare. Not only do younger participants lead more private lives, but there appears to be a perceived ‘safety issue’, a ‘risk’, with regard to traffic and abduction, that was thought about far less years ago – this reflects the shift from the ‘*gemeinschaft*’ to the ‘*gesellschaft*’ community discussed in my previous chapter. Across all generations, I did not speak to anyone who found food shopping to be a source of enjoyment unless they were on holiday or they were browsing around a market or speciality shop.

This section has looked at intergenerational differences in shopping practices. Whilst older participants saw shopping as a way of showing discernment and intelligence that came from a ‘stock of knowledge’ accrued through families and negotiation and a high degree of social interaction with knowledgeable sellers, shopping is now considered to be a ‘must do’

purchase of commodities in the anomie of the supermarket. My youngest participants could not comment on these differences because they had been brought up in a “food world” dominated by supermarkets. Either way, the content of shopping baskets inevitably influenced cooking practices.

6.2 *Generational differences in cooking practices*

Cooking practices do not present a straightforward area of study in that people may possess various levels of skill, may love it or hate it, value it or reject it, see it as a chore or a pleasure, be inventive or conservative. The following accounts show that my participants held differing ideas about what is meant by ‘cooking’ or ‘being a cook’ and what constitutes a ‘meal’. This makes research into cooking a complex area of study if we are looking for evidence that suggests cooking is in decline or is thriving (Short, 2006). Pertinent to this study is that generational similarities or differences in cooking practices often represent changes in culture, political climate and family values.

6.2.1 *Generational differences in defining cooking abilities*

Descriptions of cooking practices and choices often confirm the notion that food highlights age and generational differences (Short, 2006) revealed here in the binary oppositions of ‘plain’ and ‘fancy’. Older participants described their food purchases as ‘plain’ or ‘run-of-the-mill’ groceries and frequently described themselves as ‘plain’ cooks, they could cook what was needed, playing it safe, “nothing out of the ordinary”, as opposed to the ‘fancy’ cooking of today:

I don’t do fancy dishes ... I enjoy doing rice and I do do pasta on the odd occasion, but other than that I don’t go for the Italian or Spanish cooking and all that carry on. I don’t do anything like that ...

Researcher: You look well on it!

A. Well, this is what we’ve said, we both say, what they do today and all this fancy business, and look at us, and we didn’t have anything special, you know, just plain cooking ... and I’d make a rice pudding for the sweet and that was it ... we were brought up like that and didn’t have anything exotic like today.

(Mollie, Family 4 from Cressington, aged 88: Interview).

‘Fancy’ cooking was not necessarily seen as something elaborate or ‘fussy’, but something quite simple, such as adding garlic or ginger that had been introduced through the purchase of ethnic foods:

What are you eating? What are you tasting? Everything you put in it kills another taste doesn't it?
It's not for us, it's not us.
(Susan, Family 1 from Garston, aged 96: Interview).

This would support the view of Ilmonen (2001) that when practices are repeated over and over again they become part of us and it becomes difficult to 'do otherwise' even when we are presented with a range of options. Our 'life-world' is also a 'habit-world', a world of experience structured through our habitual ways of perceiving, understanding and acting in it (Schutz, 1972) and I would argue that food practices that include cooking are no exception to this.

Younger participants did not class themselves as 'fancy' cooks as older participants inferred, but did describe their older relatives as 'plain' cooks, who cooked them 'plain' food when they were younger and only taught them how to make these particular foods. However, with all the various cuisines that are available to cook in today's global market-place, most participants cooked a relatively narrow range of dishes in day-to-day cooking. Variety appeared to be synonymous with the *enjoyment* of cooking because it then moved away from being an essential task to a pleasurable and more interesting and fun activity – "you can start playing around with tastes and textures". In younger participants the narrow range of dishes they cooked did not come from a rejection of ethnic foods, but rather a lack of knowledge about buying the ingredients and how to cook them. In this case they would hesitate somewhat and finally say "I wouldn't call myself a cook because I could cook a simple curry, or maybe a casserole, but I couldn't cook samosas or a lamb kofta". However, if a participant could cook a variety of foods, would have a go at trying something new until they mastered it, or their family said they enjoyed their meals, they were more likely to call themselves 'a cook' or say "yes, I can cook".

6.2.2 *The acquisition of cooking skills*

Giard (1998) believes cooking not only involves the mind and the memories we store there, but that these work in tandem with 'bodily rhythms' that may include the use of tools, the hands or indeed the whole body as it works with the food. Older participants spoke of cooking 'techniques' that needed to be mastered in order for one to be efficient and competent; it was necessary to develop a 'craft', for example, in the making of pastry and sponge cake that turned out "as light as a feather", or scones and Yorkshire puddings that

“rose like mushrooms”. Cooking skills were not regarded as “difficult” or “complex”, but were a matter of “getting it right”. Papineau (2008) tells us that these skills and knowledge come from embodied memory or ‘procedural’ memory that retains practical information that is rarely forgotten, such as playing the piano or cooking. Here we can refer once again to a ‘stock of knowledge’ and the transference of skills that took place in the earlier part of participants’ lives that involved more than one generation:

I learnt from me mum, but I learnt from me nan too because she only lived across the road and she was always baking or cooking something.

(Margaret, Family 2 from Garston, aged 71: Interview).

[Being able to knock a roast dinner together] I put down to my mum ... I can’t remember making a roast dinner in school ... because mum did that so consistently, week by week by week, even though we weren’t there for the whole process I must have absorbed that knowledge.

(Grace, Family 4 from Cressington, aged 51: Interview).

These skills in turn were then passed on to their children:

Me mother taught me everything, everything, and then I taught mine.

(Margaret, Family 2 from Garston, aged 71: Interview).

My mum taught me the basics and I taught me kids the basics ... they could put their own slant on it if they wanted, that was up to them.

(Elizabeth, Family 7 from Kensington, aged 86: Interview).

Across generations, much the same as gardening ‘techniques’, observation and knowledge needed to be backed up by ‘hands-on’ experience. Here I refer again to Sutton (2001) and the idea of serving an ‘apprenticeship’ that is reflected in Bernie’s account of making bread that involves the preparation of yeast, kneading, the length of time to leave it to rise and judging the temperature of the oven. He then tried these things for himself in prison kitchens with someone beside him, techniques that he then perfected and embodied in the movement of fingers, the hands, the wrist, described by Kendricks (2001) as having a ‘feel’ for the dough; a ‘baker’s touch’. Whilst several younger participants had never made bread in this way, they praised the introduction of the ‘bread machine’ for ‘convenience’ and ‘versatility’. However, Hendricks explains that a bread machine does not give one the particular ‘feel’ of bread, as she and Bernie describe, embodied in the act of kneading:

“You forget what it is to get lost in the rhythmic fusion, the way you can tell by touch the exact moment when the dough comes alive, when it’s ready to rise up and grow. This is what it means, the part about “You are breadmaking itself” (p.99).

Bernie points out why an ‘apprenticeship’ is important:

If you use good stuff you try to get it right the first time, but you feel a bit nervous ... but if they show you, it’s better than you doing it by yourself isn’t it? ... I mean, I like to make my dumplings with the yeast of the bread mix ... I’ve had to few disasters making them with suet. I like to do them in water and let them rise a little bit and then put them in ... they’re lighter and better like that ...

that's the value of experience.

(Bernie, Family 7 from Kensington, aged 62: Interview).

My data show that an apprenticeship was not something one could take for granted within families where cooking was practiced. Participants noted that it was not a matter of "today I am going to sit you down and show you how to make so and so". In many instances although they were aware of food preparation and cooking taking place around them and undertook small tasks, when they were faced with cooking on their own they went through a process of 'trial and error' and thus, to a certain extent, were self-taught:

[I learnt to cook through] trial and error because helping out in the kitchen with me mam was just to stir the gravy, but how that gravy was put together or anything ... erm ... she still does the same to me now actually ... my husband was a cook in the army so he helped me a lot.

(Joy, Family 1 from Garston, aged 60: Interview).

Whether the man or the woman cooked in the kitchen, my data supported the notion that individualism can be applied to cooking (Short, 2006). Participants (both male and female) preferred to cook alone, especially if it was for pleasure. They might start to cook with the children until there was an air of chaos or frustration:

If I cook, I like to do it alone ... I can't bear anyone fussing around me and when the kids were small I was worse ... five minutes and that was it ... out!

(Lily, Family 5 from Kirkby, aged 90: Interview).

When you've a large family and a small kitchen, it's easier to do things yourself – you develop a way of doing things, of getting everything organised in a particular way, you know, the timing and that.

(Terrance, Family 2 from Garston, aged 55: Interview).

I did have the intention of making something every week, but it just hasn't happened .. so maybe once a month I'll say, 'pick something and I'll get the ingredients and youse can do it' ... but with the fighting and that I had to stop and then ... ach! ... So I had to give them their little jobs and say, 'you do this', 'what do you want to do?' I had to do it that way.

(Denise, Family 3 from Garston, aged 44: Interview).

Observing and having little jobs to do did not give one the skill of timing different components of a meal – this skill only came with experience. Although older female participants may have observed cooking more than actually gaining 'hands-on' experience at home, they could still rely on cookery being taught as part of a broader set of domestic skills in school that they were able to incorporate into their everyday lives. Such skills were considered to be a requisite of the era and were held in high regard. Older participants needed to be skilled in that they had large families, a tight budget and often small kitchens with few facilities. An elderly lady I spoke to described how her mother had to cook twelve meals in a tiny kitchen with just an old cooker and a small table that necessitated the use of

the floor, that did not allow for more than one person to be in the kitchen at any one time. In all generations (except current) children (mainly females) were expected to cook (or at least prepare food ready for cooking) from an early age to ease the burden of manual work in large families or because mothers went out to work. Katherine, Grace and Patricia recall food preparation and cooking from the age of about eight. Necessity overrode any issues about health and safety and help from children ensured the smooth running of the home. As Luard (1996) comments, the kitchen is a 'high-risk zone' where accidents can happen, but on the whole 'many hands make light work'.

In contrast, one of the main complaints I heard from present day parents was the lack of help from children who did virtually nothing in relation to domestic tasks and on the few occasions they did help it was done grudgingly or some kind of reward was expected. However, the inability to pass on food practices to children in the home was blamed on mothers working long hours:

When my kids were little and I wasn't working I would say, 'go on you peel the spuds and you peel the carrots' and there was that family thing of helping and preparing ... and you could go to them, 'you can eat that carrot', or, 'have a taste of that', or, 'you can change the shape of that and use it for painting' ... there was always the fun aspects in food ... and I think that culture is slowly being taken away from kids now ... we'd always do scones and gingerbread men, and mince pies and chocolate log at Christmas ... but kids aren't learning those skills anymore ... it's very sad. If I had time I'd still do it, but it's trying to spin all them plates, being a wife, being a mother, being this and that, and it's just so hard.

(Katherine, Family 1 from Garston, aged 40: Interview).

Whereas older participants might do a few hours work outside the home for "a bit of pin money" or to supplement very low wages, aspirations grew to the extent that women worked to provide 'extras' such as a meal out or holiday money. Katherine, for instance, started working life on the same basis, but as her expectations grew, so did the hours she worked until they reached full-time to provide 'luxuries' that she considered the family could not do without. To Katherine this meant sky television, the internet, white goods, fashion clothing, meals out and holidays abroad. In terms of feeding the family she felt she was now 'time poor' and relied heavily on pre-prepared food that went against her better judgement, but something she felt the pace of modern living had 'forced' her to do as she tried to "spin those plates", providing an apt description of "time-space compression" (Harvey, 1989). This was not an isolated case, as many conversations I had with women revealed the same scenario, dilemmas and ensuing guilt. Katherine also feels guilty because she has not passed on cooking skills to her daughter Jemma in the same way that her grandmother and parents passed them to her:

Me mum and dad and me nan taught me how to cook. With me nan it was a Christmas cake, she taught me how to prepare it and the process of creaming and mixing and leaving it to mature for a month because it tastes better ... and all the memories I have of being able to cook and make good choices, I go against them most of the time and I feel guilty about all this frozen and convenience food ... everything I've learnt and been passed down from me nan and me mum and dad I've tried to pass down to me kids, tasting food and ... but I know they're probably not going to cook later on in life because I'm guilty of not passing on what they need to know.

Katherine discouraged her daughter from taking Food Technology as an optional school subject because at the time she reasoned that she did not need it - all Jemma had to do was take a ready meal and put it in the oven. Now this is barely all that Jemma can do around food and Katherine regrets the advice she gave. This transmission of negativity and ensuing guilt is wrapped up in the idea that food provision involves a juggling act in terms of responsibilities as well as a series of moral judgements – what to do for the best (Coveney, 2000).

This guilt and sense of loss in terms of family cooking techniques and knowledge that had previously been handed down from one generation to another, evoked strong emotions in many participants. Such memories were now bathed in nostalgia rather than incorporated into day to day food provision that involves familial innovation and 'personal signatures' (Sutton, 2001). Here I refer to the many ways that families prepare scouse which are closely linked to the history of this hybrid dish. Many mentioned little 'tricks' that had been handed down from one generation to another – a little bit of sugar added to carrot and turnip, cooking a fowl upside down to prevent the breast drying out and the 'secret' ingredients to make a dish taste better than 'Mrs. so and so's'.

However, there were instances of 'ways of doing things' that had been passed down through generations. Grace, Denise and Patricia mentioned being able to make 'a meal out of nothing' or from 'a bit of this and a bit of that'. Having the confidence and ability to do this meant a virtually empty cupboard did not phase them at all. Grace and Denise both said this came from observing their grandmothers during hard times. Grace recalled;

... and my grandma would see what was in the cupboard, as I can, and just go, 'o.k., I'll do this, this and this with it' ... and I can do that, just ad lib, without a plan ... so it was nice watching her do that.

Patricia was also able to 'make something out of nothing' and she did this for me making a lovely pie out of an odd piece of feta cheese, mushrooms, a couple of over-ripe tomatoes, garlic and some herbs. This was not a dish she had made before, but felt confident enough to make it for a guest based on her previous experience and knowledge of mixing flavours and

textures. It was because Patricia kept a good store cupboard, (a reaction to the empty cupboards that confronted her as a child), that she felt she could always make “something”:

I always have a good store cupboard ... I'll have lentils, tinned tomatoes, kidney beans, fish, flours, mixed beans in a tin, pasta, rice, stock cubes, herbs and spices ... so if all else fails I'll do a broth or risotto ... so whether my fridge is full or sparse it doesn't matter because I have the confidence and ability to make something.

The act of transforming food as if by magic impressed Grace and created an ‘embodied’ memory:

If there was ever milk that had turned sour, [my grandma] would go, ‘don't throw it away, it makes the best scones!’ ... and she'd make the most beautiful scones, you wouldn't believe ... you'd think she was a magic woman ... she'd transformed that stinky milk into these lovely little cakes ...

This ‘magical’ transformation of food, experiencing “the first science of domestic science”, fuelled Grace's interest and enjoyment of cooking that she also wanted her sons to experience. As Kendricks (2001) comments, although one might understand the chemical process that takes place during bread making, it is impossible to dismiss the magical quality of a freshly baked loaf anywhere in the world. Cooking for Grace was not just a science or set of practical skills, but something that was both pleasurable and had the potential to boost self-esteem:

I remember how proud I was to be the one who made the Christmas cake that actually saved my mum ... there was no question that mum would go, ‘well, I'll make mine too’; it was mine that took pride of place and it was almost too special to cut into because you'd done it, but at the same time wanting them to try it and approve ... there's a lot of approval stuff around the preparing of food as well and wanting to please people ... gaining approval when you'd achieved something that you actually thought you couldn't and it came out alright ... they were good blips to have in life and good memories ... sort of nurturing things, things that do bring you together ... make you sort of seem worthy, or capable, or whatever, yes, that's good. I think that is what I tried to convey to my sons when they became interested in cooking.

Grace's sons have indeed picked up on these aspects of cooking and are excellent cooks. They demonstrate cooking techniques in an easy, confident manner, moving around the kitchen working with utensils and ingredients and crucially ‘getting the timing right’ – I was lucky enough to taste their food and praised them for it. Jon and his brother felt that ‘getting things right’ was down to practice and repetition, but you have got to be allowed to ‘have a go’ and the kitchen has to be a ‘shared space’ and Grace had facilitated that. Grace thought such appreciation and recognition made every hour she had actively spent with them in the kitchen worth it – that was “what it was all about”. However, participants also thought it was as easy nowadays to ‘opt out’ of cooking as to ‘opt in’.

6.2.3 'Opting out' of cooking

All participants acknowledged that food provision was part of family care and cooking a desirable skill. For older people, who had brought up their families during the depression and the war years, cooking was functional and certainly not an option – you cooked for your family using fresh ingredients supplemented by some processed food, for example, corned beef, baked beans and tinned fruit when they became available. This was the only way, as far as they were concerned, that you could provide 'good' and 'sufficient' nourishment for your family. Several participants remembered the first dehydrated ready-meal in the form of 'Vesta' beef curry designed for working women to prepare quickly at home, a precursor to the billions of ready-meals we now consume. Younger participants believe that we now have the option not to be 'cooks' in what they describe as 'the true sense of the word'. People who cannot, or will not, cook, can rely on processed, ready-prepared or convenience meals because "it's made so easy for us now *not* to be cooks". As Terrance remarked, "this is what the supermarkets have provided, and cooking has been taken away from people". Stitt (1996) contends that 'food capitalists' expand profits by de-skilling consumers. Participants described an eclectic food culture within the ready-meal market:

You can have anything you want, anything you fancy – Thai, Greek, Chinese, Mexican or English without having any cooking knowledge at all except how to heat them up. I wouldn't know whether they're as good as home-made 'cos I've never tasted them home-made, but they're good enough.
(Meryl, *Family 2 from Garston*, aged 27: *Interview*).

Meryl explained that not only did she not need cooking skills, but ready-meals did not take up shopping time, preparation or washing up afterwards; what she thought was missing was the sense of achievement that comes from 'doing' cooking and how 'doing' involves others. Grace describes the two sides to this coin:

I think convenience foods have a place in 'modern' society because women work more and more and can't be expected to be all singing, all dancing, and cook. And if men are working too, they don't necessarily want to have to come home and cook. Certain things you can share, and I think maybe we need to learn how to share preparation more and teach our kids from younger ... to all muck in so that it is actually a joint effort, and then you can bring that provision to the table and enjoy sharing it and maybe be a bit more simplistic about that.

These practices from the past that involved the whole family would serve families well today (particularly working mothers) who say they are continually pressed for time and rely more and more on processed food. Many writers have also pointed out that the use of, and over-reliance on, convenience and pre-prepared foods denies people across generations the sensory experience we derive from cooking practices (Slater, 1998; Meyers, 2001; Sutton, 2001; Lupton, 2005a).

6.2.4 *Cooking, the senses and embodied memories*

As I have discussed in previous chapters our encounters with food and cooking are particularly wrapped up in the senses, emotions and memories. Even people who view cooking as a utilitarian activity will undoubtedly use their senses during the process through touch, smell, texture and taste whilst not being acutely aware of it. Conversely my accounts show that the senses are a recognised component of the cooking process for those who see it as a pleasure, fun, an enjoyment and even a passion. Definitions around cooking often mentioned emotions and the senses:

I don't bother with bottled sauces or ready-made, not because they're all bad but simply because I love that interaction between the physical and the mental and all the touchy-feely pleasures cooking brings. I find the time spent in the kitchen an enriching experience.

(Patricia, Family 8 from Stoneycroft, aged 37: Interview).

Sometimes it's a bit of a pain when the kids keep going, 'when is it ready, when is it ready?' when I'm making home made lasagne, but at the same time it stirs something in you that gives you pleasure and you know you are going to give pleasure to them.

(Denise, Family 3 from Garston, aged 44: Interview).

Grace and Patricia described themselves as 'sensual' cooks – cooking through a sense of touch, smell, sight and sound tied up with being 'emotional' cooks involving approval, self-esteem, giving and nurturing. Female participants often mentioned comfort foods, the 'feeling' of 'being comforted', linked to a sense of history and 'embodied' memory:

I love food and I love to cook food and I do think it plays an important role in the family and I know my kids feel comforted by food ... not necessarily what's in the cupboards or the fridge, not in that sense, but they feel comforted by a nice meal. I know my favourite food is something that you'd come in and go 'that makes me feel comforted'. It needs to be something with taste, it has to have taste ... and I love anything that's custard-based and I do like semolina and rice pudding and stuff like that ... I would never crave a plate of salad because it doesn't give you that same feeling of comfort, the warmth of a meal ... something that as a child you'd come into the house and you could smell the meal and know what you were going to eat – I think that's lovely.

(Patricia, Family 8 from Stoneycroft, aged 37: Interview).

Smell was often mentioned by my participants when talking about cooking and "using one's nose". It is suggested that we never forget a smell (Baddeley, 1982; Cohen et al., 1986; Sutton, 2001) and smells, such as freshly baked bread, provide an antidote to feelings of depression (Badal, 1962). My data show that smell 'embedded' in our memories can have a positive or negative affect on our food choices. Joy could not remember the actual foods she ate as a child, but recalled that there was always the "smell of cooking" when she came home and that represented security and comfort in that she knew she would be fed and her hunger satisfied. These sentiments were echoed by Kieran (Patricia's son) who singled out a sense of smell that he equated with a sense of 'family':

When I come home and smell the tea cooking, it feels nice ... it's the sort of thing that makes you feel close to your family.

I found analogies with Proust and his famous Madeleine cake that evoked memories of people and places; there existed a common desire to recreate the pleasure of food participants experienced as children when they embarked on a cooking or baking interlude. Similar to Proust, memories had been 'embodied' and participants expressed a desire to recreate the embodied memory of a certain texture or smell that they associated with particular people:

These foods connect me with my grandparents and times we enjoyed together – the smell of scouse simmering all day and the special texture of raw cake mix that we'd scrape round the bowl with our fingers, all squishy, when she'd filled the tin. When I do that now it takes me back to me nan in the kitchen and it's a sad feeling but it's sort of good as well.

(Denise, Family 3 from Garston, aged 44: Interview).

I always, always, think about holidays in Wales when I make Welsh cakes or pikelets, you know, drop scones – my Auntie letting us sprinkle the currants on to the pikelets before they 'set' on the griddle and the smell of mixed spice in the Welsh cakes. Those holidays were special because they were the only holidays we ever got and I think about them while I'm cooking. Special times, yes.

(Lily, Family 5 from Kirkby, aged 90: Interview).

These accounts support the view of Warmesley (2005) that sensory associations embedded early in life evoke "visceral responses to tastes and smells" that may persist throughout a person's life and through which they can identify with the "cultural environment" in which they grew up (p. 44). Participants pointed out that it was not necessarily the food itself that was so important, but the 'whole' memory in which the food played a part:

Food choices become special memories that you're savouring of the whole person and the place, not the actual food itself, although that's an integral part of them – it's the things you talk about in the family. If I talk about my little grandma now when I make scones, I'm not that bothered about them, I don't particularly like them, but it was very special that she made them and that they were there ...

(Grace, Family 4 from Cressington, aged 51: Interview).

Conversely, some foods were avoided because they reminded people of unhappy times that they had 'embodied' and that they would rather forget. Participants commented on how powerful these memories were and the emotions they could evoke. The following accounts show how the senses, such as smell and texture become bound up with people and events;

My earliest memories are of liver, mash and onion gravy and me mum and dad were having an argument (laughing) and I never liked liver and I don't like it now, the texture raw or when it's in your mouth ... and the smell ... ugh, it's horrible!

(Katherine, Family 1 from Garston, aged 40: Interview).

Me mum would cook things for me dad and he'd come in and lash it against the wall because she'd made it before in the week ... and I'd have to go to me nan's out the way. It took me a long time before I could eat those foods again, particularly the smell, you know, like a fish meal.

(Denise, Family 3 from Garston, aged 44: Interview).

Avakian (2005) suggests that whilst cooking is something that still tends to be imposed on women and may perpetuate oppression, it can, nevertheless, become a vehicle for artistic

expression, sensual pleasure and form a creative part of everyday life. We undoubtedly use our senses to cook and participants who cooked “from scratch” told me that the more you cooked the more keen and highly trained your senses became. This in itself, they said, increases one’s confidence and one becomes more skilled, more creative and more deft at preparing meals. I was granted the privilege of observing Patricia, Anthony, Grace, Robert, Maureen, Bernie, Frances and Jon as they prepared meals for me, continually smelling, touching, listening and tasting whilst stirring, mixing, pouring, frying or baking. Although participants agreed that cooking comes easier to you if you have been introduced to it at an early age, they believe it is still possible to become a good cook, a self-taught cook, at any time in life:

I do believe *anybody* can cook, it’s not difficult, there’s no mystery to it and I think that’s what separates the generations – somehow, and I’m not sure how this has happened, people have been made to think that there’s some mystique to it whereas I don’t think people thought that way years ago or maybe it just wasn’t an option not to cook.

(Patricia, Family 8 from Stoneycroft, aged 37: Interview).

I would contend here that it is the use of the senses that we employ alongside appropriate body techniques that de-mystifies the act of cooking. My observations confirmed that the participants who cooked for me had developed a heightened awareness of the senses and particular ways of doing things. Lane (2001) suggests that ‘unspectacular’ tasks such as cooking can be rewarding and creative through engagement with the senses. I would describe them as competent cooks, good cooks, intelligent cooks, but most of all they appeared totally comfortable and relaxed around food at every stage of the cooking process. This was apparent in both men and women, but there were preferences concerning the type of food used and the dishes produced and it is these gender differences that I wish to discuss in my next section.

6.2.5 *Cooking and gender*

Older female participants accepted that they were the main gatekeepers of food and it was their job, more or less, to feed the family in the best way they could. It would take an illness or a confinement to provide an interlude. Although children were expected to help generally, especially in large families, there was more onus on daughters:

You’d have ten pounds of potatoes, a ham shank and a cabbage, so all that needed preparing for your ma. You couldn’t just do what you wanted, particularly if you were a girl.

(Elderly resident of Garston: Natural conversation).

Interestingly, Mollie, who came from a small middle class family, was not expected to do

household chores of any kind because she was brighter than her sister and so was left to her studies. It was accepted that her sister would be the one to help in the house. Mollie admitted that domestic work had not come easy to her when she had a family of her own – she had to teach herself how to cook and run a household.

Joy (Susan's daughter) spoke of having different expectations from her mother particularly as she found her father's attitude appalling in that he left everything domestic to Susan:

I couldn't have stood a man that took his role as just working and coming home and not sharing. Me dad was like that and he wouldn't even let us make him a cup of tea, me mam had to do it ... he was awful.

(Joy, Family 1 from Garston, aged 60: Interview).

Katherine spoke of having similar expectations to her mother with regards to shared household tasks, but described a 'process' that was far from easy because her husband had come from a family where everything had been done in deference to the male members of the household and this 'mind-set' had been hard to break. As Freeman (2004) suggests, "patterns of power and control in adult domestic partnerships are commonly the outcome of a series of apparently minor negotiations regarding relatively small issues" (p. 107). Although these can be complex, a measure of reciprocity of activities can be achieved from a 'tacit' acceptance by men of the degree of skill and time that women invest in the home.

Men cooked for a variety of reasons. Marion's husband did a large share of the cooking because "he was good at it ... actually, he was better than me" and was happy to share the load; similar to Terrance, he helped because he actually *enjoyed* cooking. Men also cooked because they had done so in the army in the case of Joy's husband, or were chefs or cooks in their own right in the case of Anthony's father, passing cooking skills on to their families. Katherine had been taught by both her parents, but felt that her father had more patience with her because he was not cooking all the time and picked his moments to teach her. Female participants commented that men could cook when they felt like it and treated it more like a hobby or interest – if they didn't want a 'double day' (Hochschild, 1989) they could opt out. Patricia would often feel let down because on the rare occasion when she did not feel like making a meal in the evening, Anthony would not reciprocate the task, but would just make a sandwich for her, or collect a pizza on his way home. Patricia found this hurtful because she knew he was capable of turning out a decent curry or something similar – "I make the effort, but he doesn't ... maybe I should make them sandwiches or a pizza sometimes!".

Rather than doing 'run-of-the-mill' cooking, it was common for men to confine their skills to a particular signature dish that would bring recognition and praise:

... and Uncle Bill used to make the most wonderful trifles and he was famous for these trifles which he'd do in a great big glass dish with thick cream, thick custard and all kinds underneath, and this was a kind of 'piece de resistance' when he brought it out ... I remember the trifle.

(Pamela Anne, Family 6 from Allerton, aged 65: Interview).

More often than not it would be a curry or chilli because this was described as a 'man's' dish, 'the hotter the better' in the sense that you were a 'real' man amongst peers if you could polish off the hottest 'Madras'. Men also opted to organise and run the barbecue. The latter was described as

a man thing, cooking meat on the fire like a caveman... they wouldn't dream of being responsible for making and serving the salad or accompaniments that go with it and leaving the meat to women.

(Grace, Family 4 from Cressington, aged 51: Interview).

Men who helped with the cooking, tended to help with other food practices and the running of the household in general. Marriage, to them, was considered to be a partnership. This was sometimes a continuation of the way their own fathers had been helpful, or if they had been brought up to share in household tasks as children, it just "came naturally" to them. In some cases it was a reaction to fathers who were unhelpful as Terrance commented, "shall we say my mum was 'put on' and consequently I've always been 'hands on'".

However, despite the fact that these accounts show there has been a move towards more equal partnerships in household management, older female participants continued to express a deference to men in what they cooked. Talking of times past, Elizabeth simply thought that if you cooked well for your man then he would never leave you, referring to the aphorism 'the way to a man's heart is through his stomach'. There was also the idea that women felt they *should* cook a meal for their men, particularly when the men came home from work; men with hard physical jobs *needed* a hot dinner. They did not deny the fact that when they had the chance not to cook, they took it, for instance, when Joy's husband worked a late shift, both she and the children would have banana 'butties' in front of the television. Similar sentiments were expressed in conversation:

I think with having a man to look after that has had a lot to do with it [how much I cook], you know, because if I was on my own, I wouldn't do one half of what I do, I'm sure I wouldn't.

(Mollie, Family 4 from Cressington, age 88: Interview).

I do it for him, not for me, but I've always done it ... it would just mean a huge change and it wouldn't be worth the hassle ... he'd probably just look at me stupid, you know ... no, you can't teach an old dog new tricks. Mind you, my daughter says to me, 'don't do it ma, give him a bit of this or that, it won't hurt him' ... but, no, I've always cooked for him. It's what we were taught to do.

(An elderly resident of Stoneycroft: Natural conversation).

Changing these practices was very difficult if one had been used to “routinized practices” (Ilmonen, 2001), practices that had become embedded in married life as Mollie explained:

[I know] what’s in the meal and if he’s going to like it, because I don’t do anything that he’s not going to like. I wouldn’t make separate meals even if I really fancied something else. I say to him, ‘what would you like?’ and whatever he says he likes, I do. I don’t say, ‘well, I would prefer ...’ I do what he likes, because I can eat it, because he’s only the same as myself, a plain eater ... if he says, ‘shall we have salmon?’ well, because he likes it, tinned salmon, I’ll say, ‘yes’, but I’ll only have a little bit and I’ll give him the rest because ... erm ... but I don’t say, ‘no, we won’t have it’.

Q. You wouldn’t give him tinned salmon and maybe do a little fresh salmon fillet for yourself?

A. Oh no, I wouldn’t dream of doing that! Because he would look on my plate and say, ‘why haven’t I got that?’

(Mollie, Family 4 from Cressington, aged 88: Interview).

Mollie’s daughter, Grace, has adopted a different stance and pointed out that if she was *expected* to cook she did not enjoy it, but if she chose to cook, she enjoyed it immensely. Her account highlights how emotions are tied up with expectations in relation to food practices:

If someone has a certain expectation or demands something, I feel under pressure to perform and that takes the shine away from it ... if I’ve offered, you are welcome to whatever ... I enjoy doing it because I don’t have to do it everyday now ... I mean, it was a chore, I guess, when the kids were little ... you’d bring the boys home from school and you’d have an hour’s tidy up and do the uniforms, or whatever, and then you were expected to get up and get on ... and I think I’ve held a lot of resentment as well when I haven’t had the help I’d have hoped for, particularly at times when your partner isn’t working the same hours, and is around, but doesn’t always help. So, yes, I think I am a very emotional person around food.

My youngest participants all expected to be in relationships where there was equality and equity in food preparation and choices. However, if a participant had vastly superior cooking skills then one expected one’s partner to compensate for this by taking on other household tasks. It was all a question of “swings and roundabouts” ... “give and take” ... “whoever gets home first starts the tea”. Younger married participants tended to “muck in” or “turn their hand to anything” because household chores were shared and had a much broader remit. However, older women did point out that although they had always been responsible for cooking practices, at the same time, they did not expect, or were not expected, to carry out household maintenance or repairs, gardening and so on, practices considered to be firmly the province of men. I would suggest that my findings show that the definition of what constitutes ‘housework’, or what it entails to manage a household, has not changed to any great degree, but there has been a measure of ‘boundary crossing’ that once firmly separated ‘women’s work’ from ‘men’s work’. Susan was appalled to hear her son’s account of a recent ‘falling out’ with his wife; “when I asked her what was for tea she replied, ‘do you know what? I don’t know and I don’t care’ ... He landed up with beans on toast ... Imagine! ... That would never have happened in our day!”.

Grace thought it was important to teach both sexes how to cook because cooking was about a sense of achievement and self-esteem which are not gender specific. Cooking, Grace believes, is also part of being able to look after yourself:

The crossing over and sharing of roles gives your children, both male and female, the opportunity to also try things and, therefore, to be empowered and independent and free. I know my lads can cook, and wherever they go in their whole lives they'll be able to knock a meal together for whoever they're with, or anyone they want to have round ... and that's a nice thing to share between people, it's part of our social set-up ... and to understand the elements of food and the components of it and the different values.

This account would indicate that cooking is not just wrapped up in practical skills and that gender roles have never been totally cast in stone. However, defining cooking skills and household management as 'women's work' at home and in the classroom did ensure, to a great extent, that skills were learnt and passed on. My data showed that maybe cooking skills are now falling between two stools in that cookery classes are not compulsory in schools and there may be little food work taking place in the home. Did, then, the media have a part to play?

6.2.6 The use of the media in the acquisition of cooking skills

There is no doubt that the media has spread information about cooking more widely than ever before (Seth & Randall, 2001) and my participants watched a lot of cooking programmes or 'star' chefs who have taken up social issues concerning food. However, cooking programmes appeared, in the main, to be a source of entertainment and to merely serve as a useful medium for picking up tips, such as a particular combination of spices or a novel way of cooking vegetables. Occasionally participants cooked a meal they had seen, adapted their own recipe or prepared a piece of meat or fish in a different way that had positive and pleasing results. The personality of the chefs carried a certain weight when leading campaigns, for instance, Denise mentioned that Jamie Oliver had alerted her family to the content of chicken nuggets and similar processed products that they no longer ate. However, although participants found celebrity chefs entertaining, the whole scenario they created felt rather remote in terms of their own lives – "we like to watch, but not to cook". A one-off demonstration was hard to replicate and chefs showing upmost skill, creativity and speed was daunting rather than inspiring. Here again we may refer back to the idea of 'body techniques', 'hands-on' cookery, an 'apprenticeship', that are needed to make cooking a 'meaningful' activity and part of a person's 'lived experience'. In other words the media might be helpful, but is 'disembodied' (Sutton, 2001) and with regard to the senses, people

are expected to judge and replicate dishes that they have been unable to taste or smell.

Consequently few participants bought any of the books that accompanied television series; however, they made a welcome gift or were given as gifts. These were felt to be part practical, part entertainment. As previously mentioned, most people had what they referred to as their 'bible' or 'old trusted friend'. Cookbooks offered inspiration when none was forthcoming – cookbooks can act as a 'foil' and create a dialogue of sorts for the "lonesome cook" (Seton, 2000). Participants attached more importance to books that may have been their mother's, or grandmother's than any new additions, for they felt comforted to think that pages had been turned before them marked with little bits of pastry, fat, spices or food colouring. To participants, such books represented a little bit of family history and a reconnection with the past – mothers and grandmothers who had passed away were missed most of all in the kitchen. Cooking, in this sense, came from the heart.

There was a consensus of opinion that whether you cooked "off the tele", 'off the top of your head' or from a recipe book of any kind, the main meal of the day was of utmost importance when it came to feeding the family.

6.3 Meals and meal times: continuity and change

With increased food choice, women working longer hours outside the home, pre-prepared meals and increased snacking, meals and meal times have undergone considerable change over the last one hundred years (Mintz, 1992). In order to find out what practices took place around meals and mealtimes I needed to find out my participants' definition of 'a meal'.

6.3.1 The definition of 'a meal'

Across and between generations, participants almost exclusively considered a 'proper' meal to be something cooked and something hot, consistent with the findings of Murcott (1982) and Charles & Kerr (1988). For older participants in families this meant meat and vegetables in some form or another, whereas younger participants introduced other foods into the equation highlighting generational differences, as these accounts from Susan, Joy and Katherine illustrate:

Meat and veg, potatoes and gravy ... These pizzas and burger things, they're not 'proper' meals.

Although there was poverty, there was always a dinner on the table at night time ... because I mean, we were all workers ... we worked on the docks and the bobbin works in the winter and needed a hot dinner.

(Susan, Family 1 from Garston, aged 96: Interview).

[It's] your main meal of meat and potatoes and a veg. I don't think I'd be able to do a dinner if I didn't know what meat I was having. Everything goes around the meat ... I enjoy meat because I've been brought up on meat.

(Joy, Family 1 from Garston, aged 60: Interview).

I would see a sandwich as a meal, a lunchtime meal and a dinner in the evening as a 'proper' meal, but that could be pasta, meat and veg of some kind or a salad with quiche or pizza.

(Katherine, Family 1 from Garston, aged 40: Interview).

The idea of what constituted a 'proper'(and therefore, hot) meal was not necessarily in the context of the present, but rather drawn from memories of times past and 'significant others' within the family:

I think a 'proper' meal is your meat and two veg and I think that comes from my grandparents, because I remember they always had meat and three veg ... erm ... they had other things and that, but, I think with me nan having such a large family it had to be something substantial for the men, I mean, they were all workers on the docks and that and all six foot four.

(Denise, Family 3 from Garston, aged 44: Interview).

A proper meal was one 'properly' cooked, which meant using fresh ingredients and 'cooking from scratch' and ideally eaten at the table and certainly not eaten 'on the hoof', agreeing with the notion that we have become a 'nation of snackers', rather than eaters of meals (Mintz, 1992).

Meal practices and patterns have undergone several changes through the generations. The main meal in the earlier part of the twentieth century was taken at lunchtime and children came home from school for a meal. Joy can remember lunchtimes of one and half hours which allowed time to walk to and from school. Participants brought up in the 1950s and 1960s can also remember coming home from school for their lunch and eating with their mother and other siblings. When school dinners were introduced, participants can remember this meal being regarded as their main meal of the day and they would just have some bread and jam or a biscuit when they came home. I had a long conversation with Jean, who was brought up in a tenement block in Everton with her nine siblings where she recalled often leaving home in the morning without breakfast and having merely a cup of oxo and a piece of bread for tea which constituted a meal. Nine to a bed, Jean recalled that as children they would pretend a section of the eiderdown was apple pie, an 'imagined' part of their tea, that they would share out between them, commenting, "people think they have it hard today and I just have to smile to myself". However, she stressed that for every meal her mother would

call each of their names in full to sit down for whatever was being served that maintained a sense of 'a family meal' eaten together, highlighting its social importance.

6.3.2 *The sociality of the meal*

In meeting for meals we cement our loves and domestic life, and through food we care, we exploit, give pleasure, hate, argue, fight, oppress each other, but also express loyalty (Lang, 1996). The sharing of meals appeared to be of the utmost importance to those who possessed a strong sense of 'family' and my participants who grew up in families where this existed believed it was embedded in their past and present lives. Susan's family through the generations felt the practice of eating a meal together created family cohesion and perpetuated family ties :

We always sat at the table as a family and I've still got it and the long forms that go either side – I wouldn't let them throw it out.
(Susan: *First generation*).

I think a meal signifies family – nurturing, caring, loving – all of those things that you do for your family; a meal that satisfies them ... all that satisfaction from putting your time in and cooking it and everything that goes into it ... I don't think you ever lose that ... this is what they're losing out on ... it's part of family life, you know ... they're speeding up family life too much. You need to sit down and have a nice meal and it brings everybody together.
(Joy: *Second generation*).

I think sitting down for an evening meal around the table is the most important part of the family ... you can ask, 'how was your day? What did you do?' It's the final part of the day when you unwind and you have a moan or you have your laughs ... it's so important.
(Katherine: *Third generation*).

A proper meal is when we sit down every night at the table and have large sized plates with portions of maybe chips or chicken, meat or something with veg ... filling your plate and sitting down together.
(Jemma: *Fourth generation*).

Terrance can remember sitting on the stairs with his brothers and sisters because there was not enough room for them all at the table. Bernie too can remember standing up to eat with feet propped up against the wall or perched on the edge of a chair. However, both men pointed out that although difficult, the family was together and this was important in relation to meals. Terrance took these sentiments forward to his own family:

It's very important – I can't emphasise that strongly enough. It's that bond between you. We started losing it when our girls started growing up and they started going up to their bedrooms a lot, which is only to be expected. But we always made sure that they came down and we ate our meals together. We insisted on it so that eating together kept us together as a family. I think it ensures that you don't lose touch with your kids.

Lane (2001) designates 'the table' as a place of conversation, kinship, thanksgiving and renewal ... a place of comfort and solace ... "the ceremonial heart of the house" (p.92). My

participants believed sitting at the table was the best way to eat and as far as young children were concerned you could control any potential mess and teach table manners. Table manners were considered an important component of social eating. You were also more likely to 'focus' on what you were eating because you were at the table for a purpose, what Heldke (1992) refers to as 'mindful eating'. This is important if we consider that if people are not aware (that is, 'mindless') of the food decisions they make and how the environment around them influences these decisions, this can result in over-serving and over-eating (Wansink & Sobal, 2007). Patricia remarked that when you are aware of what you are eating you relish it and the food itself becomes a topic of conversation. This is when your family are likely to tell you if something is a bit too salty, sweet, spicy, overcooked and that is how whoever cooked the meal learns about family tastes. This was an important dimension in the serving of food that was mentioned by Patricia and Grace – feeding people was about pleasing them, knowing exactly how they liked something to be, gaining respect and affirmation as a cook, all of which raised one's self-esteem and confidence as a person.

In contrast to the meal as a signifier of family cohesion and enjoyment, some embodied memories of meals were far from happy. Many of these memories recalled being forced to eat disliked foods, particularly amongst participants brought up in the 1950s and 60s. Terrance, Ellen, Patricia and Denise can remember feeling sick or 'baulking' over foods they were forced to eat and "swore" they would never force their own children to eat disliked foods, but rather encourage them to 'try' new foods. Joy remembered not wanting to sit next to her father at the table because "he was so strict he made you jump" and Grace recalled "uncomfortable" memories of mealtimes:

This was due to the Victorian attitude of my parents around the table ... it wasn't a social event, it was a horrible, miserable event ... you weren't supposed to speak ... never with your mouth full .. you had to sit bolt upright in your chair and if you didn't my stepfather would come behind you and put his knee between your shoulder blades, not to hurt you, and then threw your shoulders back and say 'that is correct, now stay like that' ... and particular etiquette around knives and forks ... I dreaded meals, it was stuffy and about control and behaviour, being measured and monitored. I thought it was madness and pinickity then, but now I can see my parents were trying to teach us manners and I do expect a certain degree of good manners from my children ... they were never messy and could use cutlery and serviettes and so on.

This would suggest that memories may become 'sedimented' in the body and can influence future behaviour (Connerton, 1989). Grace's account further suggests that we may select what to take forward from such memories; whilst she did not perpetuate strict practices, she did recognise, on reflection, the social value of sitting at the table which she followed in a more "easy-going" manner.

Following cultural norms expressed by older participants, cooked evening meals on the whole (if budgets allowed) were prepared with the working men of the family in mind (most of whom were involved in heavy manual labour), both in terms of content and the amount served. In contrast, children are now more likely to be shown deference and often choose the content of meals, rather than deference being shown solely to men. Giving children this power was a 'sore point' between older and younger generations that had often led to tension within families:

We *had* to eat the food we were given, because we wouldn't get nothing else and mum didn't *have* anything else to give us ... it was that or nothing ... and I'm trying to say that to my kids, 'you either eat it or do without' and they say they'll do without because they know I won't stick to it because I'm stupid ... but I don't want mealtimes to turn into a battleground and make them food they don't want because that's a waste of time and energy ... and I can't let them go to bed with nothing ... I'd have to cook something for them or give them a snack even if they didn't eat their tea.
(Denise, Family 3 from Garston, aged 44: Interview).

When the kids were younger I used to make the meal, put it on the table and they never had a say and they sat there and ate it – they had identical food and meals to us. But as they got older and I started working, I would ask them what they wanted. Whereas me mum (Joy) would say, 'they're your kids and you don't ask them. You put the meal on the table and they eat it'. ... I think asking your kids is a 'get-out route' for not cooking – if you ask and they say 'pizza' you think 'great!' because you haven't got the time, energy or the forethought of what you'll cook for the tea ... you start involving the kids and they start changing your views in that you start eating what they want instead of eating what you've put in front of them because you've asked them.
(Katherine, Family 1 from Garston, aged 40: Interview).

I think we have too much choice, but I'm not calling anyone about their personal choices because we have that option, you know, if you want to be a vegetarian, if you want this or that, but personally I think we should be grateful that we've got enough food to eat.
(Patricia, Family 8 from Stoneycroft, aged 37: Interview).

Here we have to place these scenarios in context. Offering choice about where, when and how food is eaten has been made possible through higher incomes, white goods, technology and ready prepared food. Not offering choices was set against the depression, unemployment, low wages, war rationing, little processed food and limited facilities - in order to 'get by' there were set days for particular meals that were an integral part of household routines.

6.4 Meal times as routine practice

Whereas rituals are forms of collective memory that follow relatively strict rules (Connerton, 1989) and are thus easily controllable (Ilmonen, 2001), routines are incorporated into our everyday lives with little awareness or reflection:

[Routines] are 'our second nature', too close to us. Habits are enduring features of our being – 'remembrances of the body' – which express our individuality [whilst at the same time] they are social features (ibid, p. 14).

Routines reflect social categories, such as gender and age, as well as affective attitudes, such as aversion and liking – these together comprise what Bourdieu (1984) refers to as ‘habitus’. In addition they include ‘body techniques’, those particular ways of doing things, rule-supporting behaviour that is incorporated into our daily gestures. Routines, thus, are not only coping mechanisms in relation to everyday life, but transformed into a particular habitus, they provide us with a feeling of normality and, as they are predictable, offer a template against which we develop trust (Ilmonen, 2001). In terms of household management, many of my participants believed that routine was crucial to the smooth running of the home in terms of daily tasks that included set meals and mealtimes. However, routine was far more prevalent in the lives of my older participants. Whilst younger participants were more open to change or rebelled against routine, older participants to a large extent were prisoners of it to the extent that change proved extremely difficult, or almost impossible, for them. These consumption routines at a micro-level represent the unseen consumption practices that occur in everyday life and are the subject of this section.

My data support the findings of the Vauxhall Local History Project (1994) that days could be tracked through the meals eaten, for example, fish was eaten everyday through lent, scouse was eaten every Monday and Tuesday, Wednesday it was a rice meal, Thursday meant a meal of stew and Friday fish. Sunday dinner (if there was one) might comprise beef or pork, whilst rabbit, or occasionally chicken, was eaten for Christmas dinner. All my participants who remembered similar set meal patterns, accepted them without question. Those families on lower incomes were glad to have any meal at all put in front of them and knowing that they were going to eat and what the meal comprised of, that is, the predictability of the meal, offered them a sense of security:

Q. Did you ever question what you ate?

A. No, it was there on the table and you ate it.

Q. How did that make you feel?

A. I felt secure ... it wasn't boring because when you're a kid running around and you were playing and your mum called you in for tea, you'd have the meal and then you'd go out to play.

(Anthony, Family 8 from Stoneycroft, aged 43: Interview).

Routine remained a major factor in relation to food practices amongst older participants, adding structure and purpose to the day. Such ‘consumption routines’ (Ilmonen, 2001) can be used as mechanisms to avoid complex decision-making in an increasingly reflexive world, thus creating for oneself a safe, habit-driven (thus normal) world:

[Cooking] has to be organised ... always on time. It's got to be started at twelve o'clock on the

weekday if I'm at home ... we go out four days a week for lunch ... on a Sunday, the lunch has got to be ready for one o'clock, and at night time I start my food every night at five o'clock ... when he was in work, I used to have the evening meal on the table at half past five; it's just routine, that, and if I'm late I get all het up and I get too excited wondering whether I've got it right or not, you see, whereas if I work by time, time means a lot to me.

(Mollie, Family 4 from Cressington, aged 88: Interview).

Mollie has followed this 'consistent' path throughout her life. Older participants have also carried on eating the same foods and following the same meal patterns, not feeling the desire or the need to change, commenting:

I think about what I've always been used to ... I still make a Sunday roast dinner of three veg and potatoes and make me own rice pudding ... or an apple pie. I'm not going to change ... I've got my dinner in there today – I did three dinners yesterday and one goes in the oven today and my rice pudding ... tomorrow I'll cook mince, potatoes, carrots and turnips, or, if I've got cauliflower, I'll cook that. I cook and eat what I've always cooked and eaten. And we had certain days for our work, like, Monday was washing day, it was a hard day and I'd put a pan of stew on, an easy meal for me.

(Susan, Family 1 from Garston, aged 96: Interview).

Older participants did not express any anxiety or insecurities around meals and mealtimes basically staying within the limits of what they knew; what they were familiar with. As Lupton (1996) comments, "food preferences may be acted upon in a totally unthinking way, as the product of acculturation and part of the habits of everyday life" (p. 155). These routines sometimes became totally embedded and 'ritualized' in relation to family food practices that did not allow for any adjustment or compromise:

Oh yes, we always had a roast dinner ... they always had a roast dinner on a Sunday, yes, always. It's always what I've done, yes, a regular thing.

(Mollie from Cressington, aged 88: Interview).

My mum used to be a whizz-kid at making pancakes and I'd be shown, but seriously it was only a once-a-year day [and] Sunday morning mum would get up, put the joint in the oven, because dinner had to be ready for one o'clock, dong!!

(Grace (Mollie's daughter), from Cressington, aged 51: Interview).

Margaret's daughter, Ellen, explained that she followed her mother's pattern of eating and set meal patterns, until Terrance asked if they could have something different, such as rice or pasta dishes. It was his desire for variety and to taste new foods that sparked off his interest and love of cooking. It was also this same routinisation that did not allow for flexibility or difference, the feeling of being 'imprisoned', that caused Grace to reject this way of living and adopt an alternative way of doing things:

I think it was lack of deviation in anything, I mean, I know I can look back and think, well, that was fine, consistent, and I can appreciate what they were trying to do ... but I went in the opposite extreme of always giving my sons choices, so that they would make decisions for themselves ... and what I ended up doing was making a rod for my own back because they would choose different things which landed up being a bit chaotic ... in retrospect I think I would have planned things more and had more routine and been more like mum ... I went too far the other way because I rebelled ... Although I admire my mum absolutely for sticking by her guns and being so consistent, at the same time I see this huge tie .. where is the flexibility? Where is the negotiation in all that? When could she ever go,

‘well, guess what? Just this once, I’m not doing it that way,’ or, ‘you can all wait an hour, it’s not the end of the world’ ... it was unheard of.

Thus although Grace had ‘broken away’ from the ‘ritualised’ routine practices of her parents, at the same time, in retrospect she recognised that a total reversal and complete autonomy in relation to her sons’ food choices had created problems and somewhere along the line there is a need for compromise between routine and chaos.

Other younger participants also acknowledged the value of routine and how this affects eating practices:

Lately our routine’s been haphazard because I’ve been getting mixed up about who’s out and who’s in and if I don’t have it ready before five or at the latest six they’ll go past it and won’t want what I’ve cooked because they’ve waited too long and got fed up. Then they’ll be snacking and want something before bedtime and they don’t do that if the tea’s ready when they come in from school. And my weight’s been creeping back on too because I’ve got out of good eating habits.

(Denise, Family 3 from Garston, aged 44: Interview).

Although households of younger participants generally did not follow the kind of strict routine adhered to years ago that reflects the idea that we now lead more reflexive lives, it did still play some part in maintaining order. Jon (Grace’s son) had put a routine in place when his daughter was born. Whilst his life had been more haphazard before this event, he felt routine was important for young children and this included meal times. When I asked people when they thought routine became more lax, such change was attributed to women going out to work, an increase in leisure activities and children making their own food choices. Family members often came in and out of the home at different times, making routine practices around food very difficult, often to the point where parents ate separately from children, or each person catered for themselves. However, although older participants were more likely to follow routine, those who lived alone did like the fact that they could eat what they liked, when they liked, after years of catering and caring for others. For Margaret this included the use of ready meals because they “made for an easy life” and her life had not been easy in the past. Many people I spoke to would have welcomed the availability of ready prepared food now and again that would have allowed a degree of flexibility, particularly during very busy periods of their lives such as the birth of a new baby or in times of sickness. “Everything”, I was often told, “has its place”.

Summary and conclusion

Interviews with older participants paint a picture of ‘the old days’ (approximately before they felt things started to change in the 1960s) when money and luxuries were scarce. Food practices were learnt in school or from grandmothers, mothers (sometimes fathers), aunts, neighbours or friends that served as an ‘apprenticeship’. Coupled with a strong work ethic this provided them with a template and the necessary skills to care and provide for their families at both a mundane and celebratory level that involved routine, consistency and ingenuity. This was the role that was *expected* of women in a culture where men’s and women’s roles were clearly defined. Generally, men undertook paid work and took care of the allotment, garden and household maintenance, whereas women took care of the day to day running of the household to which children were expected to contribute. It was a life goal to look after and feed your family well, that earned you love and respect both in the home and in the community and was considered to be a valued skill.

The source of food was generally known, vegetables and salad often being grown in gardens and allotments that dictated the content of meals; other fresh foods were bought locally from small shops on a daily or weekly basis. Meals were rarely, if ever, eaten outside the home. Those on higher incomes, however, were able to use food events to introduce a limited number of new foods and etiquette. Food came across as utilitarian and more about sustenance and ‘getting by’, a lived daily challenge was how my participants saw it. There was little margin for error or waste – one had to show intelligence, knowledge and shrewdness when shopping and ingenuity when cooking.

A major coping mechanism during this time was the adoption of routine practices in household management that included set meals in terms of content and the order in which they were eaten during the day and through the week. Food intake was restricted to mealtimes that followed a set pattern, with very little in the way of snacking. If children ate a school meal, they did not have another meal in the evening – evening meals were for the workers of the family. However, the family ate from the same pot when it came to family meals – there were no choices. Women and children showed deference to men and workers, the ‘breadwinners’, who had the ‘lion’s share’ of the food.

Routine ensured the smooth running of the home and a sense of control within large families

that would otherwise have been in chaos. Routine also made participants feel secure in the sense that they knew they would be fed. It also meant that such practices could be readily and consistently observed and so children could learn. However, at the same time, these routines were often so rigid and inflexible that young people found them frustrating as life after the early part of the 1950s started to change with increased incomes and the introduction of new foods.

Eating practices, both inside and outside the home, now show more flexibility, are less formal and disciplined. They are facilitated by new technologies and appliances that lessen or negate the need for cooking, thus creating the time and opportunity to pursue other activities. There is no doubt that one of the main catalysts for change between generations has been the entry of married women (or those in a partnership) into the job market which has changed the way food 'gets done'. The number of hours women work outside the home appears to have increased from one generation to the next and my participants believe this hampers attempts to pass on cooking skills to younger generations. Older participants felt that food practices lacked discipline, children too often dictated food choices; parents were *all over the place* and there was too much reliance on ready prepared and fast food. Cooking skills had thus become devalued and people more alienated from the food chain.

With the introduction of white goods and convenience food and the plethora of food choices available in supermarkets participants felt it has become easy *not* to cook. For older participants this was not an issue because they have continued to cook and eat the way they have always done – their practices have not only become embedded in their lives but have become part of who they are. However, younger participants admitted that they buy what individual members of the family want and this has meant cooking several meals at the same time which creates extra work and often involves the use of more processed food. In contrast to previous generations, even if children have had a meal in school, they are still given a meal in the evening.

Whereas food practices amongst the older generations was considered a utilitarian affair, younger participants who had the ability to cook using fresh food, did so through a heightened awareness of the senses and emotions as they took the opportunity to experience a range of foods in a variety of social and cultural settings both inside and

outside the home. Enjoyment of cooking and the desire to give pleasure to others through food provision was more likely if it was not an *expected* activity. Although men did help in a range of food practices across all generations, ultimately such practices remain the responsibility of women whether they like it or not as part of 'household management' that carries little prestige and is often unacknowledged. This is an important point in light of recent research that shows couples are less likely to divorce if husbands share housework, shopping and childcare (London School of Economics & Political Science, 2010). It also appears that in many cases children have been allowed to opt out of, or do very little towards, food related work. Whilst older participants were not concerned with popularity when feeding families, it appeared to be a priority amongst younger generations. I would suggest that unless children contribute to food work they will not be able to appreciate how much work and skill it entails. Coupled with the fact that children often eat separate food at differing times and places to their parents, or eat outside the home, eating has become more individualised.

Whilst younger family members did not necessarily agree with views of older members, they still regarded their opinions with respect (even if they did not now practice what they preach). If younger members had stayed close to older family members, such members remained an important source of knowledge that contributed to their confidence when it came to shopping and choosing foods and meals to give their families. This would confirm the view of Lewis (2006) that the older generations have something of value to say and contribute and should be listened to. In addition, certain foods, recipe books and artefacts reconnected younger participants with older generations, particularly those who had passed away, that illustrates the power of 'embodied' memory.

I have argued in this chapter that practices at the micro-level, the chain of practices carried out in everyday life, are of utmost importance in the study of food choice. Marriage or co-habitation, family care and provision and maintaining and running the home are inextricably linked. My next chapter is concerned with how the nature of these practices and the notion of tradition and community can help us address the 'problem' between food and health, as discussed in my literature review. Through the lens of embodied memory I have learnt much about how, where and when people eat, what they know or do not know about food, and *why* they eat what they do and, in some cases, do not eat what health promoters feel they should. In other words, I have revealed some of the basic elements that influence the food choices

people make in terms of health and the insights that can inform health promotion.

I will draw on data from my in-depth interviews with families as well as observation and conversations in the field including stakeholders in the community.

CHAPTER SEVEN

THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN FOOD AND HEALTH: GENERATIONAL DIFFERENCES IN KNOWLEDGE AND PRACTICE

“Food folktales are not just fairy tales”
(Kritchevsky D., Wistar Institute, Philadelphia).

Then there would be as much of a strange substance called calf's-foot jelly as I could eat and which, Nan promised, was very good for me and would make me big and strong (Tulloch, 2006: 14).

It's a privilege for us to eat the way we want to and in the West we should be grateful while people are starving ... and young people don't appreciate or value food, and until they do, then health promotion messages are just being wasted and falling on deaf ears.
(Patricia, Family 8 from Stoneycroft: Interview).

Introduction

My previous chapters have traced, over twelve decades (from the late 1900s to the present day), wide-ranging structural, cultural and social changes that have contributed to a shift in the way people experience and practice food. During this time Liverpool, the city, has moved through the thriving industrial Victorian era that created both wealth and poverty, the Great Depression following the First World War, the exceptional circumstances of the Second World War with an extended period of food rationing, the social upheaval of the 1960s, the rise of individualism and the breaking up of traditional industries during the Thatcher years and, following a period of stagnation, the development of a number of regeneration programmes. The most recent phase of the latter is an attempt to both improve the lives and health of people by renewing disadvantaged neighbourhoods, whilst at the same time building and creating a new cosmopolitan 'Capital of Culture'. However, although most participants welcomed the idea of Liverpool being a "Capital of Culture", this is seen as a city centre project to create a cosmopolitan capital for visitors and residents who can afford to enjoy it. I have noted the recent opening of the prominent new shopping complex named 'Liverpool One', a wide range of cultural events and the opening of more and more eateries in the heart of the city, whilst there remain run down or partly regenerated areas that ring the city – the promised 'trickle down' effect does not appear to have happened.

Tracing these 'times' in the life of the city has both contextualised and enriched the meanings and interpretations of the food stories I have been told; previous chapters have discussed the differing ways in which food practices have been organised and re-organised within and between generations of Liverpool families. In taking a phenomenological approach to research I have written about food from the participants' perspectives. This provides an 'inside' view of changing practices that are imbued with meanings that are created and recreated across time. My study reflects that culture is not static, that it exists on different levels and cultures exist within cultures; differences have been shown to exist between social classes, men and women, the elderly and the young and between families and communities, all of which have implications for the relationship between food and health and how it is interpreted.

This chapter focuses on the key points raised in my previous chapters that are particularly pertinent to the problematic relationship between food and health. I begin with discussing my participants' lived experience of the shift from the 'gemeinschaft' to 'gesellschaft' type community. This has produced differing views of the role played by the 'community' in terms of nurturing or harnessing a sense of 'social well-being', or accruing 'social capital'. This is an important area of study if we consider such factors to be conducive to health, whilst being excluded or isolated socially is not (WHO 1986; Putnam, 2000; Seedhouse, 2001; Blaxter, 2004; Zohar & Marshall, 2004). Changes in the built environment of communities have produced a number of changes in the way people live and function in their day to day lives. For example, the demise of the 'local' high street and the social nature of shopping within the immediate community have been replaced, to a large degree, by out-of-town supermarkets that trade globally. Such changes have been welcomed by some, particularly for their convenience and choice, but not by others who question their dominance and find them impersonal. Whichever way they are viewed, they have played a key part in changing food cultures. A worrying trend is that relatively poor, or regenerating, communities (such as Kensington and Garston) tend to attract 'lower-end' supermarkets that sell a great deal of unhealthy food thus exacerbating inequalities (Dibb, 2004). Inevitably these changes have impacted on family food practices that, for the most part, appear to be market-led rather than emanating from the community.

A major development within a market driven food culture has been the emergence of a range of ready prepared foods that negate the need for domestic food preparation and cooking. Not

only has the food industry created a mass market, but such 'value-added' foods encompass separate categories for children and adults, rather than the previous norm of food being 'common to all'. This has given rise to more individualised eating, and given children the means to choose the foods and meals they wish to eat. This has caused considerable friction and division between generations. However, by insisting that children 'ate everything that was put in front of them' in the past, food was not necessarily an enjoyable experience for my participants and thus my next section looks at both the social nature of eating, eating as a shared and 'thoughtful practice' (Heldke, 1992), and the role of the senses in making food choices that may, or may not, be healthy.

Family food experiences are often governed by a number of factors concerned with intergenerational cooking practices that involve cooking methods, using skills in creating healthy food and the amount of time allocated to cooking for the family. A major finding of my study has been the comparative ease of transmission or 'social reproduction' (Moisio et al., 2004) of the embedded, traditional, routine practices of the past compared with the more fragmented, individualised practices of today. In terms of health, older generations feel that these routine practices have been their 'bedrock' and ask why, considering their longevity, their diets have come into question. By way of an explanation, I argue that the knowledge base people draw upon has altered the way food is dealt with in relation to health. There has been a shift from a 'common sense stock of knowledge' (Schutz, 1970) that was once embedded in close-knit communities and families to new forms of disembedded 'expert' knowledge emanating from a range of public health bodies often through social marketing techniques from which people are expected to make informed, rational choices. In view of the fact that health promotion and education work towards the prevention of certain targeted diseases that pose a risk to the general population, I discuss which forms of knowledge my participants draw on and how, or whether, such knowledge is transformed into practice in terms of managing health 'risks'; what my participants find relevant or realistic in terms of their day to day lives around food and what the consequent implications are for health promotion and health education strategies.

7.0 Food practices in changing communities: communal to corporate food

7.0.1. Community as a resource for health

There is nothing new in the idea that a person's health is inextricably linked with the environment and the communities in which they live – this was well known in the Victorian era and the passing of Acts for 'Promoting the Public Health' in 1848 and 1872 were recognised to be needed to curtail infectious diseases and improve urban sanitary conditions (Clarke, 1962) despite the ignorance of their causes. In this regard, Liverpool witnessed some of the best and worst social and environmental conditions of the late 19th and early 20th century (Midwinter, 1971). Whilst public health policy now focuses on individual lifestyles and making healthy choices easier in order to improve the health of populations, the notion of 'community health', or 'social health', debates the extent to which people are either included or excluded in terms of social support, solidarity, trust, networks, reciprocity, neighbourliness, a sense of belonging, group activity and having a say in community decisions and policy (Putnam, 2000; Blaxter, 2004). These social aspects of life, it has been argued, are key factors that help provide a solid 'foundation' for health (Seedhouse, 2001) through the creation of 'supportive environments' (WHO, 1986). However, power and resources within communities are not necessarily distributed fairly that often impinges on the workings of community groups and voluntary organisations (Lomas, 1998). Whilst the more middle class area of Allerton (see Appendix 3) has a thriving high street (albeit with few food shops), a secure housing stock and a number of community groups that include food provision for the elderly, in regenerating areas such as Garston demolition of housing and subsequent re-housing breaks up social networks and a certain trust in authority may never be rebuilt. Community funding and regeneration initiatives (and pledges) in Garston have not lived up to expectations – much of the high street remains derelict or unused, promises to deal with industrial wasteland have not been kept and local groups concerned with healthy eating (particularly for the elderly) have closed or remain under threat.

Although my participants' sense of place and community has, to a large extent, a geographical basis (that may be based on present or past boundaries), my data shows instances where the community is seen 'symbolically', a shared community of like-minded people, that makes identification more complex than a 'simple city map' (Brunt, 2001). In this regard, social capital may not be a positive concept in that 'social bonding' within groups

may lead to exclusion for some. Consequently 'bridging social capital', that attempts to build ties between groups, fails to take place perpetuating inequalities (Putnam, 2000). This has important implications for health promotion policy in that health promotion is often driven geographically and, in the main, towards deprived areas. Mollie, for instance, admitted that she would not consider joining a luncheon group in Garston village, considered to be the 'old working class' area, even if it provided good food or she felt in need of company - she liked the fact that "people like myself" (the 'middle classes') attend the local church for social lunches. Denise, who is involved in community work in Garston, remarked that "Speke and Garston people don't get on - it's some sort of deep-rooted thing, maybe estate warfare, just accepted ... if you ask people they can't really tell you". This has made it difficult, she says, for the various agencies who are working at the 'grass roots level' to implement joint community projects. Thus, social boundaries may become 'unbridgable' if one considers the city to be "a mosaic of little worlds which touch but do not interpenetrate" (Park, 1925: 40). Community life is thus fluid and complex reflected in my interviews and conversations with participants - the changing nature of city and community life proved to be one of main concerns expressed across all generations.

In chapter five I discussed changes in the make-up and functioning of community through the typologies of 'gemeinschaft' and 'gesellschaft' that help explain the shift from closely-knit communities to the more atomised communities of today as described by my participants. The importance of the environment has been expressed in terms of how it makes people *feel* about their daily lives. My older participants who have always lived in Kensington and Garston spoke of taking a pride in their community by scrubbing their steps daily, often brushing pavements and clearing gutters in their street. This made them feel more comfortable in their immediate surroundings and consequently about life generally. Both Susan and Margaret believed a "nice" environment comprised neatly kept gardens or window boxes, a clean street and close interaction between families and neighbours. In contrast, younger participants welcomed a 'nice' environment but saw it primarily as the responsibility of the local council (through the Council Tax) rather than individuals - whilst they complained about litter in the street and debris in the gutters, they nevertheless "wouldn't dream" of doing something about it themselves.

The conditions and organisation of daily life, that is, the circumstances in which people are born, grow, live, love, work and age, impact both directly and indirectly on the food *practices*

they adopt. As Susan remarked, feeling good about one's surroundings, as "humble" as they might be, is more likely to encourage one to think, "I'll make a nice casserole today", or, "I'll bake a favourite cake for my family when they come home from work" than in the Garston community of today. Susan describes the demolition of homes where people have lived all their lives, large areas of wasteland, litter "swirling about everywhere" and people who barely say 'hello'; an environment she finds "depressing". Older participants feel that once the environment reaches a certain level of deprivation, people become disillusioned, apathetic and uncaring which is perpetuated in the behaviour of younger generations. Whereas respectful disposal of waste was once an integral part of food practices (although participants did recognise that in "their day" there was a relatively small amount of food packaging), Terrance told me that as part of his job in keeping a clean environment in Garston he and his colleagues fill "endless bags" with crisp packets, sweet papers, soft drink cans and water bottles. One of the main gripes about take-away food outlets was more about the amount of litter they generate than the food itself.

In conversation with a mixed group of Garston residents a consensus emerged which the appearance of the community may create the impression that local people are uncaring, that they are "dirty", "ignorant", "poor" or have been "dragged up". This is reflected in the following account concerned with shopping venues:

I think they look at areas like these and think, 'that's pretty run down and deprived' and we get all the cut-price shops ... It's like we're not worth anything better and there's a stigma attached to us.
(*Eleanor, a resident of Garston: Natural conversation*).

Many local residents I spoke to in regenerating areas felt they have, in the main, been forced into, or have to rely on, what they describe as "lower end" supermarkets, grocery chains and clothing retailers, particularly if the "better" shops were located in out-of-town retail parks:

When you think of old people or if you haven't got a car you've got to shop in the cheaper supermarkets because they are the only people making use of those spaces the little shops occupied.
(*Anthony, Family 8 from Stoneycroft, aged 43: Interview*).

In view of the fact that we spend over three quarters of our food bill in supermarkets that promote twice as much sugary and fatty food than fresh fruit and vegetables (Dibb, 2004), the Commission on Social Determinants of Health (WHO, 2008) argue that healthy eating should be promoted through designing urban areas that make it easier for everyone to buy healthier food. In fact, there is no evidence to suggest that the presence of large supermarkets increases healthy choice or changes occur in fruit and vegetable consumption (Cummins et al., 2005). However, the supermarket machine appears to be marching on to the extent that

supermarkets have been vilified for ‘bullying’ small retailers and destroying provincial high streets (St Mary’s Street in Garston being a prime example). Government is not blameless in this for they are the regulators of these rules of engagement (Bevan, 2006). I observed that in the scramble for more locations, supermarkets have bought up convenience chains, opened smaller versions of their large stores and even installed themselves as part of petrol forecourts and rail stations throughout the city. As Patricia comments:

Big supermarkets have the monopoly and eventually they’ll be telling us what to eat – if they didn’t stock fresh fruit and veg what would we do because there aren’t any greengrocers? They *could* do that ... think about it.

(Patricia, Family 8 from Stoneycroft, aged 37: Interview).

However, on a more optimistic note, I found a growing number of independent ethnic shops (often open until late in the evening) that are revitalising smaller run-down shopping areas offering a wide range of fresh meat, fruit and vegetables and basic ingredients for cooking both British and foreign dishes. In addition, in a notable backlash against supermarkets, there has been the growing trend towards food-buying cooperatives that are not for profit and cut out the middle-men between consumers and producers; one of the main gripes people have about supermarkets is that they overcharge for healthy food and cooperatives attempt to provide ‘good food’ at more ‘affordable’ prices (Moggach, 2008). However, I only discovered one cooperative in Liverpool about half a mile down the road from Allerton, a lone alternative venue virtually sandwiched between two large competing supermarkets. The latter offer the main shopping “choice” since the steady closure of many other food outlets in the immediate area, a point taken up by Anthony:

They should be policed and regulated more and I don’t think they should be allowed to trade in cities and dominate high streets – there should be planning laws against it so that the small shops can survive.

(Anthony, Family 8 from Stoneycroft, aged 43: Interview).

This would support the idea that in order to provide more choice for the consumer, such choice should not necessarily come from supermarkets that are currently being built at an average rate of two per week, thus reducing a diverse retail mix (Food Magazine, 2008).

If reducing the retail mix is a worrying trend, then the future relationship between the giant supermarket, Tesco, and the community is causing further concern. Although Liverpool has not yet been targeted, Tesco has plans (both existing and future) to develop sites of ‘mixed use’ that will involve entire districts where homes, schools and public amenities will be built alongside the inevitable supermarket. This has invoked fears that Tesco will be at the centre

of regional cultures and communities where the individuality and identity that make places special, will be lost (Minton, 2010) that would almost certainly have implications for health.

7.0.2 Communal to corporate food – implications for health

I discovered that food, rather than being a communal endeavour, is now organised around supermarket chains used by individual families who purchase a range of foods, both processed and fresh, as well as more luxury goods such as chocolate, cake and chilled desserts. In a world that is perceived as busier and more pressured than ever before, I observed office workers in the city rushing from one meeting to another, grabbing a sandwich on the way and individuals and couples picking up a bit of shopping from their local ‘Metro Tesco’ apparently on the way home – a bagged salad, a ready meal (that would probably be heated in a microwave) and a bottle of wine. This saves them cooking or preparing food for the following day - working a ‘second shift’ or ‘double day’ (Hochschild, 1989). Katherine described ready-made pizzas, or quiche and oven chips that she picks up from the supermarket as a “God-send” (a phrase that suggests such foods are something to be grateful for), the essence of convenience, when trying to make tea before an evening workplace meeting, admitting that she often prioritises convenience and quickness over health concerns. Thus, based on experience, people continually improvise and exploit what is on offer in response to the particular social and cultural structures in which they find themselves. These kind of time-saving practices and lifestyles have implications for health in that they indicate food is regarded as a chore rather than a privilege or pleasure, and as Heldke (1992) suggests, often do not allow people to pay attention to, or be ‘mindful’ of, what they are doing.

Patricia saw a number of forces at play that belie what may seem the simple act of food shopping as people attempt to make ‘good’ choices amongst an array of food in supermarkets where the public are being ‘forced’ to shop because there are few alternatives:

There’s too much choice thrown at us by clever marketing people and companies that target the vulnerable ... I think food manufacturers and supermarkets have a lot to answer for ... if the crap wasn’t there people couldn’t buy it or eat it ...

Joy described supermarkets as “manipulative” as they continually “pull strings”. As a consequence people find themselves in a culture where they are encouraged to eat and drink all manner of things excessively and use more convenience foods, whilst at the same time being encouraged to eat healthily to avoid diet-related diseases. This highlights the

conceptual opposition between ‘convenience’ and ‘care’ (Warde, 1997) that is “tinged with moral disapprobation” (Carrigan & Szmigin, 2006). Within a ‘blame’ culture such as exists today, Williams (2008) comments:

If we are to blame anyone, then go to the industries and not to the consumer who is barraged, cajoled and manipulated into buying unhealthy food (p. 33).

Although I observed the balance between healthy and unhealthy foods was more evenly balanced in the German discount supermarket chains such as Aldi and Lidl, nevertheless ‘unhealthy’ food predominated and this was reflected in people’s shopping trolleys. Supermarket managers I spoke to argued that they respond to customer demands – they give customers what they want. I noted a relatively small section for fresh fruit and vegetables compared with areas selling sweets, biscuits, snacks, tinned and packet foods, refined bakery products, fizzy drinks and so on. Sophie and Patricia agreed that you only had to look in people’s shopping trolleys to “see what they live on and it’s scary”:

I’ve visited houses and the family are in and out of the fridge all the time eating junk and I’m thinking, ‘don’t buy it!’ But they’re getting this and that, the coke, getting the other ... Don’t buy it! ... You’re just making a rod for your own back really ... sweets, crisps and all that ... Don’t buy it, because they’re going to eat it, they’re going to binge, and they’re going to eat out on the street and I can’t stand that, kids eating in the street ... ugh, it’s disgusting!

In ‘rating retailers for health’, Dibb (2004) found that supermarkets catering for low-income group families fared badly in key areas of a Health Responsibility Index that measured nutritional content of own-label foods, labelling information, in-store promotions and customer service and advice; she concluded that retailers’ practices “are contributing to, or exacerbating, the inequalities that exist between the diet and health of more affluent and less affluent consumers” (p.2). Middle class participants explained that they would not buy ‘value’ low-priced food, that they would feel “shamed” if they were seen with a trolley full of these goods, preferring the ‘finest’ range from Tesco that reflected their status even though they noted this range was often higher in terms of calories and salt. Thus these participants indulged in ‘conspicuous consumption’ admitting to a degree of snobbery, preferring to stay within the comfort of their ‘habitus’ by choosing ‘up-market’ supermarkets in preference to those at the ‘lower-end’ that were situated in less affluent areas.

However, my data showed that low-income families tend to choose cheap, refined, processed food that is high in calories and filling, because this is how people “get by”. In supermarkets it is easy to see that such things as frozen chips, processed meat and biscuits are cheap alternatives to broccoli, fresh meat and wholemeal bread. Whilst the working class diet of

previous generations also contained starchy, filling carbohydrates such as bread, dumplings and pastry, the organisation of such a diet involved skill and ingenuity in the production of homemade food as well as a communal distribution of produce from the allotment, negotiated purchases of fresh food from independent businesses and reciprocal exchange.

Supermarkets virtually control the food chain in that they hold an unassailable position between the supplier (and often the producers) and the customer; there appears to have been a fundamental shift within the community from a shared organisation of food production and consumption, to one where food culture is dominated by the food industry in terms of availability, price, locality and choice. Rather than negotiations taking place on a personal level between the seller and the buyer, the consumer is now caught up in a 'food war' between the key players in the food industry (Lang & Heasman, 2000; Bevan, 2006). I discovered inter-generational food practices within families have undergone considerable changes in line with this shift.

7.1 Changing family dynamics and practices

Whereas families once formed a community within a much larger community to which everyone felt they belonged, my younger participants regarded their particular families as social units in their own right rather than being part of, or dependent on, the wider community. Thus, in terms of making food choices, I found that family members are now more likely to be guided, and their practices shaped, by market forces rather than community and family tradition. Food has lost some of its use-value and is more likely to be chosen for its 'style' and 'taste' rather than any health components.

7.1.1 Changing generational tastes and the implication for health

Older generations recalled a time when food was a resource common to all. Keeping adults and children well was not about sentiment or emotion where one pandered to different tastes, but the controlled and practical task of providing adequate and necessary nourishment. However, whilst family food was a shared activity and not a site of contestation, this arrangement did produce both positive and negative outcomes in relation to health and wellbeing. As discussed in my previous chapter, at best it created sociality and a sense of

togetherness, whilst in the strictest of families it could be divisive and over-controlled (particularly if children were forced to either eat food they did not like or go hungry). In terms of health this has had a lasting effect on food consumption. Participants recalled that if they had been forced to eat certain foods such as rice pudding, liver or a disliked vegetable, regardless of any known health benefits, they have been unable to bring themselves to eat them again in later life. However, I did find examples of foods participants found unpalatable or 'disgusting' in childhood being reversed in adulthood, for example, sprouts, cabbage or tomatoes. Conversely, those foods participants enjoyed as children such as brawn or gravy over hot chips, banana and jam sandwiches and fish fingers, were later rejected.

Bourdieu (1984) and Warde (1997) suggest that class, taste and style play a major role in food choice. In terms of class, it was poor economic circumstances that did not allow 'working class' participants to develop food tastes or preferences - they aligned themselves with the food they could afford such as scouse, liver, hotpot and tripe. My research revealed that, tripe and offal represent generational changes in taste in that the use-value of food in terms of energy provision and nutrients has, to a certain extent, been 'infected' by aesthetic considerations:

Tripe was popular too ... soft and easy to digest and its bland that's best when you're ill like steamed white fish I don't know whether you can get it now ...
(Fred, a resident of Kensington, aged 80: *Natural conversation*).

Tripe! Oh God, no, I couldn't eat that, it looks disgusting, the colour – even if it was good for you I'd rather chew me own arm off!
(Emma, aged 17, shopping on St. John's market, central Liverpool: *Natural conversation*).

I don't like the look of liver or any offal ... ugh! No ... I don't like eating things that don't look nice even if they're supposed to be healthy. I think they're sort of 'old fashioned' foods and I just don't find them appealing.
(Sally, Family 5 from Kirkby, aged 22: *Interview*).

Thus we distinguish between tastes (whether real or imagined) in order to identify with, or distance ourselves from, various groups; in this case 'disgust' is used as a 'distinction of taste' (Bourdieu, 1984) that separates one generation from another. Older generations too, described certain "modern" foods as 'disgusting', such as, "burgers from McDonald's", "those kebab things" and 'mocha' drinks where "one taste cancels out the other". It is a feeling of disgust and the very 'conservative' diet of older generations that appears to offer a certain amount of protection from eating unhealthy food. Conversely, there was a degree of obstinacy towards trying any of the 'new' healthy foods that have become popular in the past decade such as avocado pears, hummous and various kinds of salad leaves. Eating familiar

foods with shared tastes created an unconscious unity within peer groups and families. Differences in ‘taste’ between generations are now catered for within the family for according to Seiter (1995) the market has created a separate culture for children with which they identify and wish to share with others. Having created this culture, it has now become an important goal to make children happy based on the premise that it is easier to take care of happy children than discontented ones. Thus food served to children is not a smaller version of adult food but is placed in an entirely different category that opens the door to value-added products that ‘tickle children’s taste buds’, are aesthetically pleasing, but have little to do with healthy eating. Should we, then, pander to children’s wishes?

7.1.2 Privileging children’s food choices and tastes – a compromise too far?

An area that marks generational change more than any other is the separation of adult and children’s food in the market place and in family food practices; ‘children’s food’ is a ‘cultural construction’ that marks adult-child differences (James, 2008). The reason proffered by younger parents for giving children food choices is, in the main, to avoid conflict at mealtimes and maintain the status quo within the household – Katherine, Denise and Meryl all voiced this view, reasoning that if children make their own choices then they are more likely to happily eat their meals and less likely to nibble on unhealthy snacks. Offering choices was about time, or rather the lack of it. Katherine felt that employers now demand more and more from employees and that “you give the best of yourself to work rather than to the home”; Denise felt it was easy to become drawn into more and more voluntary work within the community “because there’s always more you can do” and Meryl often accepted overtime “to provide more treats”. Children were perhaps offered choices to ease the guilt that parents felt about working long hours outside the home. As Seiter (1995) comments, the growth in the market for children’s convenience foods depends as much on a parent’s vulnerability as that of their children. Offering choices was an “easy route” to popularity that could be exercised everyday and unhealthy, processed foods were the foods that children, given the chance, would mostly opt for. Seiter contends that hedonism in children takes the form of immediate bodily pleasures that come from such things as sweets and fatty snack foods, as well as a range of foods that are designed to be fun with the promise to defer conflict. In the current climate, much ‘junk food’ targeted towards children has become a ‘social problem’ manifested in the rise of obesity (James, 2008). In addition, many of my participants admitted that they often ate children’s choices that included chicken

nuggets, fish fingers, tinned spaghetti and so on, rather than taking the time to prepare what they considered to be 'adult' meals for themselves such as steak and garlic roasted vegetables, prawn curry or Caesar salad. I suggest this may have arisen from the unconscious desire to experience being a child again or, in some small way, to be part of their child's world.

However, not all younger participants wanted to eat separate foods, for example, Kieran does not believe there is, or should be, such a thing as 'children's food':

I think they label crap and force it towards children because it tastes nicer and has nice shapes – I don't think it should be 'adult' food and 'children's' food, it should be just healthy food that everyone should eat ... I was fed everything ... I didn't not like anything because I ate everything my mum and dad ate from being a child ... no baby foods or chicken nuggets and stuff. I can remember being about six and being offered a 'child's menu' in an Indian restaurant with the usual crap on it and the waiter being gobsmacked when I asked for chicken tikka-masala, with pilau rice and some poppadoms.

(Kieran, Family 8 from Stoneycroft, aged 16: Interview).

Thus the idea of 'children's food' has become the cultural norm outside the home that includes a range of novelty (and often unhealthy) foods that the catering trade perceives is the kind of food that matches children's tastes separate to that of adults. This splits what was the once taken-for-granted common ground of food into two distinct groups. I observed in Liverpool that commonly, shared food outside the home is more often to be found in venues such as McDonald's or pizza chains that serve a lot of processed 'junk' food, rather than more 'up-market' restaurants and café-bars that are, on the whole, dominated by adults eating 'proper' food. James (2008) comments that in this sense a distinction has been created between establishments that serve junk food to 'junk food eating families' and 'proper' meals that are served to 'proper food eating families', a class distinction in that the former is most often cheaper than the latter.

Kieran is the only member of his peer group to go home to a family meal in the evening cooked by his mum or dad. His friends eat something from a take-away while they are out, take something home, or cook something in the microwave when they get home. Kieran prefers to go home because he loves the taste of home cooking and believes it is pivotal to eating healthily. He points out that many of his friends rarely taste home cooking (from scratch) with which they can make comparisons. In other words, Kieran and his friends do not share the same 'socially situated judgment of taste' (Bourdieu, 1984). Our dispositions in terms of taste, then, are formed from a young age and such tastes may include a range of

ready-prepared, processed food that contain “added” ingredients and flavourings. Patricia explains that she feels forced to cater for these tastes in the young because her daughter does not want to appear openly different from her peers:

If my daughter has friends round for tea I have to go out and buy a bagful of rubbish because that's what they eat and that's what my daughter wants me to give them to be social and not for there to be a marked difference in her and their 'tastes' if you like.

Patricia feels that this early development of certain tastes in food is detrimental to health in that once ‘embodied’ people are unable to discriminate between ‘good’ and ‘bad’ food because they are only familiar with the latter:

[People's] tastes aren't developed, so they don't know if things don't taste nice. If I buy Tesco 'Finest Selection' it tastes bloody awful and I can make better ... people haven't got 'clean' tastes anymore and can't appreciate plain food, just plain vegetables, potatoes, little pieces of grilled fish ... everything's with sauces, sugars, salts, flavourings, additives ... their taste is not for plain and simple food that's quick to prepare, you know ... let's face it, a child will be more satisfied with a 'Pot Noodle' than sardines on toast if you rushed home from work, because of the way it tastes.

Marchand (1985) points out that the market recognises that parents are unwilling to coerce children into eating essential nutrients. Vegetables, for instance, are disguised amongst other ingredients in tinned food (often high in salt and sugar) and chocolate preparations are added to plain milk that might otherwise be refused. These foods are chosen in preference to the simple foods described by Patricia – Marchand refers to this technique employed by marketers as ‘the parable of the captivated child’. Here I refer back to the ‘plain’ diet referred to by my older participants that was fed to the whole family. Plain food did not mean tasteless food, but rather ‘plain’ meant ‘simple’ food that had not been “fussed with” or laced with “all sorts of sauces and flavourings” that often came out of packets. In other words, simple food meant you knew what was in it. You knew what was in it because a simple fresh salad or vegetable soup or stew, was uncomplicated to prepare and cook. Thus ‘simplicity’ emerged as a key factor across generations in relation to healthy food.

Taking up her grandmother's idea of simple food, Katherine felt that ‘healthiness’ is achievable by adopting a number of simple measures that can help train taste buds at an early stage:

I always brought them up, like, I wouldn't give them lemonade, or I'd water it down. I never brought them up with sugar on their cereal or in their tea, and when they started to form their own taste buds they didn't do those things. It's the same with salt, not to add salt to food because there's salt already in it and you only need a bit of pepper maybe. They're aware of those things as well.

These practices have been embodied by Katherine’s daughter, Jemma, who does not add sugar or salt to food, following the example set by her parents, and fully intends to “do the same thing” with her own children. This account would support the view of Massil (2001) that a family food ethos set down early in life may be carried through to adulthood. The idea of *guiding* children from a young age in their food choices that would prove to be sustainable was also voiced by Patricia:

You are there as a parent to show your children what’s healthy to eat and what they should be eating, not letting them make choices – they’re too young. If you’d said to me when I was a child “what do you want on your plate?” I wouldn’t have had cabbage, or carrots, or half the meat, just potatoes. If you gave a boy the choice he would probably choose a pizza every time. You educate a child because that is what a parent is for, not forcing but encouraging. My daughter doesn’t like coloured vegetables, but I put them on her plate each time and I believe that she will eat them in time.

Patricia indicates that she is firm but fair, rather than rigid. She feels the rigidity adopted by Rose can be self-defeating – it can turn children away from foods completely, whereas encouragement and patience can bring a positive end result in the form of healthy eating habits. Patricia is exacting discipline, but at the same time her daughter is retaining some of her independence in terms of choice. In this sense the parent and child enter into a partnership, a negotiation, rather than a battle:

Discipline with food is important – as a parent you’re trying to give your children nutrients, you know, a meal should be partly nutritious and partly enjoyable.

Alongside nourishment, enjoyment of food and meals was seen as an important factor in eating for health.

7.1.3 *Meals as a health resource*

A consensus of opinion emerged that eating should be enjoyable and that the social side of eating is conducive to health. The idea of food being a shared family activity was something that had been passed down in families, for example, Rose had fed her family in this way and Kieran had taken his lead from his parents, Anthony and Patricia. Participants felt that ideally shared meals should be eaten at the table where one could “keep a handle” on the content of food. Even if separate meals were eaten it was easier to see how much, and what, was being eaten (and what is being left, particularly vegetables). In line with the thoughts of Lupton (1996), family meals contributed to the development of social virtues such as control and eating moderately. In view of the fact that many meals are timed around television programmes (Bell & Valentine, 1997), Fischler (1980) points out that eating at the table without distraction encourages discussion about the healthy side of eating. Sally commented

that she is more likely to accept changes, such a reduction in salt and sugar, if she understands the reasoning behind them, that is, the 'source' of risk to health. For changes in behaviour to be sustained they need to become part of everyday life rather than family members being constantly aware of them (Research Unit in Health and Behavioural Change, 1989).

Although there appeared to be a shared ideal of the family meal around the table, in practice this often did not happen. This appeared to be the result of eating different meals at different times (particularly with the introduction of the microwave and ready-prepared meals), eating in front of the television, children eating in their bedrooms, increased snacking and the fact that living spaces are designed in such a way that there is little or no room for a dining table:

I don't have a table anymore because there's no room and I hate sitting with my meal on my knee, I hate it. It's uncomfortable and you can't enjoy it ... I invited me mum and dad round for tea a couple of weeks ago and I actually managed to cook a chilli and we were sat watching the tele, we weren't talking or nothing and I started to miss that I haven't got a table and chairs to sit on. When I go round to them for Sunday roast we'll sit round their table and it's comfortable, it's nice. I used to enjoy my meals at home and I miss that when I look back ... I appreciate that now and now I'll just throw something in the microwave with all those preservatives and spices in and I think I'm not getting all the nutrients I should.

(Meryl, Family 2 from Garston, aged 23: Interview).

Ellen shares this view with her daughter, pointing out the importance of ambience, feeling 'comfortable' and sharing food with others all serve as key factors in 'eating healthily' or eating something 'properly' together with the idea of "letting your food go down" (an oft heard quote amongst older generations). However, she also noted that eating away from the table is no longer confined to the children in her family:

It's nice to sit round the table and eat together and I think it's good for children because if you're just going to allow them to sit with it on their knee they're not going to eat it properly ... erm ... they're just going to watch the tele and they're not aware of what they're eating and don't talk or communicate even. I've noticed it's different for me and Terrance too if we have food on our laps and not at the table – he's engrossed in the football so we don't talk and I sometimes think he could be eating anything.

(Ellen, Family 2 from Garston, aged 51: Interview).

Heldke (1992) believes that in order to appreciate food one needs 'foodmaking' to be a 'thoughtful' practice that demands one's full attention. As well as being a thoughtful practice one should also be aware of the total eating experience through 'synaesthesia', the crossing over of the senses, that makes it pleasurable (Seremetakis, 1994; Meyers, 2001; Sutton, 2001).

7.1.4 *The role of the senses in eating healthily*

Whereas one may recognise that ‘ethnocentrism’ around British food habits (Fieldhouse, 1995) often involves the senses, for instance, emotions that lead to an abhorrence towards eating cats, dogs and horses, my data show that at a personal level the senses play a decisive role in food choice. These ‘embodied’ senses have clearly led to generational differences in the acceptance or rejection of what is considered to be healthy. For example, Sally did not enjoy eating meat on the bone because it provided evidence of the bird or animal she was eating and a number of younger participants did not like to eat a piece of fish with the head still attached (the eyes were particularly off-putting). On the whole, older participants were not sentimental about such things because food sold in its natural state was once commonplace – participants remember abattoirs in the back streets, rabbits and pheasants hanging up outside food shops, as well as pig’s heads and trotters, oxtails and cow’s udders on display in windows and various animal parts in buckets. Dealing with food was primarily a practical endeavour in which emotions and sentiments were put to one side. Skinning a rabbit or preparing a pig’s head may not have been relished, but families had to be fed.

The texture of food also played a part in food choice. For example, Sally described her experience of both unpleasant and pleasant textures:

I don’t like mangoes because the fibres get between your teeth, or the furry skin on peaches ... I don’t like the feel of it in my mouth ... but I love avocado pears because they’re smooth and velvety like good chocolate.

(Sally, Family 5 from Kirkby, aged 23: Interview).

Whilst spinach is praised for its health properties, Sophie described the “sliminess” or “bitterness” of cooked spinach in her mouth. In relation to food and the senses, it was not unusual for participants to say they loved “everything” (for example, chocolate) or hated “everything” (for example, offal) about certain foods. Chocolate products in particular were described as “blissful” as they experienced a mixture of textures and flavours that literally “melt in the mouth”. Female participants felt that chocolate was a ‘sensual’ food, a food they craved that was “sometimes better than sex”. These descriptions embody, to a great extent, the language used by companies to market their products. Ellen admitted that she could eat chocolate “for breakfast, dinner and tea ... I absolutely love it ... there’s nothing else like it”.

Whilst the smell of food was often comforting, for example, soup on a cold day, the Sunday roast or freshly baked bread, Sally hated the smell of chips, bacon, burgers and sausages hanging in the air in cafes, kitchens or take-away food outlets – “you come out and your hair and clothes just smell; I can’t bear it”. This, she said, had more bearing on the fact that she did not eat these foods, than any health promotion messages. Katya liked fish, but could not bear the smell that lingered in the air after cooking, a familiar smell in her grandmother’s flat ... “me nan doesn’t bother, but smoked haddock ... you can smell it for ages afterwards and its horrible!” These sentiments, I would suggest, reflect more modern notions of hygiene and attractiveness that have come from advertising.

It was the *way* food was cooked too, that had a particular bearing on how food and taste influenced healthy food choices.

7.1.5 Cooking skills; tasting the difference

Patricia thought that basic cooking skills are all one needs to cook healthy meals and to introduce children to healthy food at an early age. However, my data showed that the reality of fresh, natural food did not extend to being able to deal with particular foods from source. Although older participants could joint a chicken or piece of meat, few could gut a fish and younger participants ‘cringed’ at the idea of doing either:

I like salmon and tuna, but I don’t like fish to look like fish – I don’t like scales and fins and things or the head left on that makes me feel sick. I couldn’t gut a fish. I’ve pulled the bones out of a salmon and it was horrible and I was washing my hands for about half an hour afterwards. It was all slimy and my sister was laughing at me because I was getting all wound up with this stupid fish ... ‘just pick it up!’ ... ‘I can’t!’

(Katya, Family 6 from Allerton, aged 25: Interview).

Whereas Marion could deal with live crabs and shell fish, Katya could not bring herself to eat a lobster that had been boiled alive even if it was deemed to be the “healthiest food in the world”.

Frances thought that the actual foods we eat have not changed that much, rather it is the way people prepare them that has changed. For instance, we may make foods healthier by grilling with a smear of olive oil rather than frying in lard, or less healthy by putting fatty dressings with salads. Older participants could not remember having anything with a salad of lettuce, tomatoes and cucumber except occasionally salad cream. However, Mollie preferred boiled

cabbage whereby most of the vitamins are lost, rather than steamed cabbage tossed in a dash of olive oil, garlic, herbs and freshly milled black pepper cooked by her daughter Grace. Mollie liked what she was used to; what she had been brought up with, whereas Grace was happy and confident to “ring the changes” and was prepared to make a little extra effort.

Kieran thought that a key factor in how or whether people cooked, enjoyed family meals or preferred “scattered” individual eating, was very much about the changing expectations of parents who are now both likely to be working outside the home:

People work that much now that they just want to relax when they get in and that's why a lot of people are eating processed microwave meals because they'd rather come in and stick something in the microwave, rather than slave away over an oven, you know, they just want to sit down in front of the tele and eat ... even though supermarkets sell healthy foods, they're choosing the easy way out. ... food's lost its relevance as something to enjoy as a family.

(Kieran, Family 8 from Stoneycroft, aged 16: Interview).

In conversation with Garston residents I found that young people and parents do expect to have leisure time that enables them to watch television, films and have a night out with friends that they often privilege over other pursuits such as cooking and household management. Meryl admitted that she should be cooking instead of browsing the internet, watching television or reading magazines. Whilst she wanted to cook, she also wanted to “chill out”. Curtin & Heldke (1992) describe present day expectations around food as ‘easy, speedy and efficient’ in which food preparation as an activity has no value in or of itself (p. 208). In contrast, older participants expected the raising of a family to be hard and, more-or-less, full-time work that included “putting a proper tasty meal on the table”. Susan described healthy food as “something you cook with proper fresh food ... you can't beat a nice cabbage or cauliflower ... I love the taste of fresh veg”. Repetitive cooking practices meant that skills could be learnt through observing family members and thus picking up techniques and measurements. These ‘embodied’ practices were used to produce what was considered to be ‘good’ family food passed from one generation to another. Parents often act as a model for health and thus influence the way younger generations live and the practices they adopt. Susan followed her mother's food practices and Susan's daughter, Joy, has followed Susan's practices that had become embedded in her life:

I live the same way as my mother and my grandmother actually and we've brought kids up the same ... simply, I suppose ... regular cooked meals, meat and vegetables ... regular sleep ... I keep my home nice and stay close to my family ... and have a holiday now and again. This is the healthy life me mum showed us.

My data showed that a ‘proper meal’ is still seen as a ‘cooked meal’, often in the form of ‘meat and two veg’ as Susan describes and this is reflected in promoting healthy food. In reports carried out for the Food Standards Agency and the Department of Education and Skills, the provision of school meals (in both secondary and primary schools) is still based on the obligation to provide *cooked* meals (Nelson et al., 2004; Nelson et al., 2006). A cooked meal in Susan’s generation was deemed particularly necessary for people who carried out hard physical work in factories, heavy industry and working on allotments – as Susan said, “we were workers and we needed a hot dinner”. In view of the fact that there is no nutrition in heat, I would suggest that an adequate school meal could be a sandwich made with wholemeal bread, a low-fat protein and salad filling, followed by a yoghurt and a piece of fruit that would provide a more easily produced but, nevertheless, tasty healthy option. I also base this suggestion on findings that highlight the limited budget allowed for school meal provision, the difficulties in recruiting adequately trained catering staff, the lack of food knowledge within schools and the home and the fact that pupils choose less healthy meals (ibid, 2004;2006).

Taking up the last two points, Patricia feels that there now exists a general feeling of apathy in families towards eating healthy food and there is little understanding of the important link between food and health:

Food is no longer important to families in terms of health, it’s being pushed aside and it’s seen more as something they’ve *got* to do, a drain on their time, an inconvenience so they use processed food in one form or another without knowing, or understanding, what it’s doing to them ... or maybe they know but they don’t want to know ... they don’t *want* to think about it.
(Patricia, Family 8 from Stoneycroft, aged 37: Interview).

Whilst Meryl would argue that ready prepared food makes it “too easy not to cook” and one “no longer has to *think* about food”, Patricia argues that this ‘alienation’ from food not only means people are unable to make the connection between food and health, but also they are missing out on the pleasurable experiences of cooking.

Thus, I would argue, there has been a shift in the way food ‘gets done’- a move from a ‘mindful’ set of practices from production to consumption to merely consuming the end product about which people have little knowledge. This difference indicates a generational shift in attitudes towards, and methods of, family food provision, particularly in the area of cooking skills. Patricia posed the question, “if people haven’t got basic cooking skills and knowledge, how are they going to have nutritional knowledge?” For Patricia there was no

great mystery about cooking healthily, but she felt the situation has become problematised by the fact that people desire meals that they do not have the skills to make:

Ready meals and processed foods are being bought, so that's showing you that people haven't got cooking skills, and nutritional knowledge is one step up from cooking knowledge because it's a bit more complex ... I think it's confusing the whole situation of food ... people don't have basic cooking skills, but on the other hand they want the fancy meals they're eating out but can't recreate them so they buy them ready-made, shop bought ...

Cooking was also seen as integral to life, an asset in keeping well and providing a healthy diet:

I think it rules out a whole facet of your life if you can't cook, you know, definitely you'll get left out in the cold, because it's not always going to be the substance you need, and I think people actually get sick and are unhealthy because they're not getting the full nutritional value of food and aren't getting back to basics ... and let's face it, you can cultivate whatever habits you like with food, you may not always know you can, but you can ... you can cultivate the habit of not preparing anything and not having fresh foods and you're missing out ... how sad, you're not getting basic minerals and vitamins and trace elements.

(Grace, Family 4 from Cressington, aged 51: Interview).

Most participants agreed that being able to cook and being knowledgeable about food was an asset in terms of eating healthily. This ensured one obtained the “right” nourishment from food because one knew what was in it. A key point that has emerged from this study is that if one is happy, confident and comforted in relation to what one eats then these good feelings can be passed on to others in the family along with the food. However, participants also thought that in order to cook well one also needed to be “in the mood” or “on top of your game”:

I can't get into cooking if I'm in a bad frame of mind worrying about bills or life is out of kilter and all that ... we're more likely to eat out of tins or have frozen stuff, or even fall back on convenience foods when I'm like that. I'll make crisp butties when I can't be bothered to prepare a 'proper' meal.

(Denise, Family 3 from Garston, aged 44: Interview).

Older participants in the past did not have the choice of many convenience foods and cooked each day whether they liked it or not. However, across all generations cooking was described as “something you do for your family”, sometimes a chore but “something you had to do” - the necessary but ‘invisible’ work carried out within the family (Oakley, 1974). Whilst older participants maintained this pragmatic point of view, younger participants equated cooking and health with ‘boosting self-esteem and confidence’, factors considered to be conducive to health (Seedhouse, 2001). Grace believed this could be achieved by “putting part of yourself” into cooking, the embodied practices discussed in earlier chapters. It also meant being able to make something just the way people liked it, being praised and feeling good about oneself. In many conversations, people told me that they got “a kick out of cooking”

and nothing gave them more pleasure than to see people enjoying what they had prepared. Once again the idea of ‘simplicity’ came into the frame as this did not necessarily have to be a lavish meal, but something quite simple such as a garlic and tomato sauce with pasta or grilled fish and vegetables. Keeping things simple also cut down the possibility of failure – failure when alone was just part of learning by ‘trial and error’, but was not desirable in front of others. Praise and compliments were much preferred.

An increase in self-esteem and confidence meant one could start to “relax around food” that encouraged “creativity”, an important component of health (Fox, 1993). One could start to have fun and be imaginative:

... Oh yes, yes we had fun, it was part of our lives ... I can remember rolling biscuits out in the garden and putting stones in for currants and mixing grass in with it and it must have looked awful ... but my mother would put it in the oven, ‘quite good’, and then these lovely biscuits would appear! It was years before we twigged! ... But yes, I think it’s important to be able to cook, although not as necessary because you can just buy ready-made food and stick it in the microwave, bang and it’s ready ... but it’s creative to be able to cook isn’t it and fulfilling? ... And if we don’t cook we’ll lose the skills and joy of making something ... and apart from that you know what’s going into it.
(Pamela Anne, *Family 6 from Allerton, aged 65: Interview*).

Moreover, it is food experiences such as these that become embodied memories that can contribute to our health and sense of wellbeing. Sutton (2001) tells us that we consciously repeat the past when we want these good experiences to come once again to the surface and this often involves a feeling of comfort. Older participants in particular found comfort in routine practices around the home which they felt contributed to their longevity.

7.1.6 *Routine practices as an embodiment of health*

Habit-led or ‘routinized’ practices are not done ‘in consciousness’, but rather are ‘embodied’ and done almost without thinking (Ilmonen, 2001). This ‘world of routine practices’ (Schutz, 1970) appeared to be integral to the everyday lives of older participants and was reflected in their diet. Their longevity provided a rationale for “sticking to a plain diet”. What other reason did one need? For them, keeping to regular, plain, meals negated the need to snack in between meals that they felt has now become commonplace to the detriment of health. This supports the view of Mintz (1992) that we have become a nation of ‘snackers’, we ‘eat without meals’ – in other words, meals have become ‘desocialised’.

Participants recalled, as children, eating their meals and not even “trying to look” for snacks or goodies “because there weren’t any”. Rose believed that the improvement in the nation’s

health during the Second World War was due to the scarcity of ‘goodies’ and snack foods rather than lack of food generally. The argument put forward by a number of older people in defence of their diet was usually in pragmatic terms, food being seen as a ‘functional substance’ (Lupton, 2005b). For example, the long period of war rationing proved to them that it was possible to survive and remain healthy on the most basic foodstuffs and this point was reflected in comments about their lives generally:

We lived didn’t we?

(Susan, Family 1 from Garston, aged 96: Interview).

We cooked, we were fed and we’re still here ... you ate to live, not the other way round.

(Ursula, an elderly resident of Toxteth: Natural conversation).

At least we valued food; we’d eat *anything*, we were glad just to be eating.

(Fred, a resident of Kensington, aged 80: Natural conversation).

It was the same food, plain but adequate, you know, your ma did her best.

(Doreen, an elderly resident of Toxteth: Natural conversation).

Both ‘working class’ (with a steady income) and more ‘middle class’ families held memories (outside the rationing period) of foods such as roast meats and potatoes, pies, pastries and traditional puddings, whilst at the same time, regardless of socio-economic status, sweets, snacks and “shop-bought” ready prepared or processed food, remained a rarity. Participants who are now in their forties, fifties and sixties, across all classes, could remember sweets being a treat and snacks, generally, almost non-existent. The only crisps participants could remember were “plain crisps with the little blue bag of salt” and the lack of treats extended to trips out or ‘going off for the day’ on your bicycle:

We went to Chester Zoo and all we had was ‘Dairylea’ cheese spread butties, and I mean it, we ate them with relish because we were starving because we did such a lot of walking around.

(Terrance, Family 2 from Garston, aged 55: Interview).

Me and me friend used to borrow me brothers’ bikes and we’d ride to the prom and back with just a bottle of water and some bread and butter, and we were happy. Can you imagine kids today if you sent them off with that? I’m not a big snacker now because we didn’t have it, but my kids want it because it’s everywhere and they expect it.

(Denise, Family 3 from Garston, aged 44: Interview).

Participants remember exercise, alongside regular sleep, being an integral part of routine family life that they felt was conducive to health. In addition to doing household chores, children played outside in the fresh air. Older participants did not recall this routine life as boring (a frequent criticism of younger generations), but rather it felt “easy”, uncomplicated and comfortable and to them it was, and for many remains, their ‘bedrock’ in terms of health. My younger participants felt that a certain amount of routine was important in terms of health, but were not rigid about it. Adult working commitments outside the home, children’s

activities after school and during the holidays and a reluctance to cook a 'proper' meal each day were reasons given for not following routine. However, they recognised that life was easier when they were organised and the more organised they were around food, the better the family ate.

None of my older participants felt they had suffered any ill effects as a result of growing up on a limited diet (many were poor, but not destitute). However, the point was made that whilst this diet was acceptable at one time, it is being questioned now:

Now we're looking back and all the things I mentioned to you that we ate, why are they bad for you now, but they weren't then? I mean, I was never ill and now I've never ailed so much since I've eaten all different types of foods that are supposed to be 'good for you'.

(Frances, Family 3 from Garston, aged 65: Interview).

What has happened, I contend, is that the embedded 'common sense stock of knowledge' (Schutz, 1970; Keller & Dixon-Keller, 1999) that once informed family eating practices has now been 'disembedded' and reframed as 'expert' knowledge in the form of public health rhetoric and health promotion messages.

7.2 *Changes in knowledge base*

7.2.1 *Embedded knowledge: tradition as a health resource*

In my chapters concerned with traditional and family practices and the notion of 'community', I referred to tradition as a resource, a 'common sense stock of knowledge', that was passed down and across generations of families. Similar to Pieroni & Price (2005), my participants recalled childhood memories of those who cared for them that involved food as sustenance, 'medicine', nurturing and comfort and thus I became interested in tradition as a health resource.

According to Howe (1971) the idea that certain foods can preserve and restore health has been embedded in our culture stretching back at least to the time of the Romans; horseradish, lettuce, garlic and onions have been recorded as having these properties. The Victorians set aside special 'light' food for 'invalids' and people with 'delicate' constitutions (Black, 1985) and the endurance of this thinking is reflected in the fact that Frances was taught by her mother that one should avoid "heavy foods" in favour of "light foods" such as tea and toast before going to bed or if your stomach was "off". Having something 'light' meant that food

was easier to digest and did not “sit in the stomach” or “rot” during the night. Frances still followed this rule, and her daughter, Denise, also mentioned that her family avoided “heavy” foods before bed and in times of illness. Whilst these descriptions are unlikely to be used in medical circles they are supported elsewhere - the idea of food ‘rotting’ in the stomach if it is not soon digested is used to explain the ills associated with indigestion (Partsch, 2009) and in Traditional Chinese Medicine eating late in the evening is believed to put stress on the digestive system because circulation slows down as the body rests and prepares to restore and repair tissues (Eliopoulos, 2009).

My older participants recalled that it was common practice for kitchens and gardens to be used as pharmacies, for example, comfrey for bruising, fresh mint tea to ease the stomach and a hot potato inside a cloth to treat a boil. Bicarbonate of soda was used for “everything” – it was made into a paste and applied to burns, stings and used to treat heartburn. In the absence of antibiotics salt was gargled to cure sore throats, cloves to ease toothache, olive oil rubbed into the back of the ear to ease aching or infection and goose grease on the chest for bronchitis. Although not all remedies proved affective, they formed a necessary part of care within many working class families, as sick pay was non-existent and many families were too poor to use the Health Service.

Many families, therefore, had to put their trust in the stock of knowledge that had been passed down and between families and communities from one generation to another. Even today Margaret used a salt gargle that was a family remedy for a sore throat rather than buying a product from the chemist, and could remember ...

There was a shop on Window Lane, a sweet shop, and they used to sell all bottles of things like Indian brandy – you’d go in and ask for ‘two penneth’ of Indian brandy for your tummy and you’d take it home and your mum would mix it with a bit of water. I remember they had jars with all sorts of liquids. And they worked too.

Tradition played a part in Susan’s family in that using particular foods for health became embedded in family practices and this ‘common knowledge’, was passed on with confidence from one generation to another:

I learnt from me mother and then that’s how I brought my kids up and they never ailed and we never ailed as kids ... so that’s what you did ... you give ‘em cabbage water and fruit when you could and a proper cooked dinner ... porridge for breakfast ... they had everything there that they needed and they never complained.

(Susan: First generation).

Me mam taught us everything about what we ate, and if we didn’t want to eat it she’d say, ‘that’s your vitamins’. She always put the cabbage juice into a jug for us to drink and she’d say, ‘have a little

drink of that' especially if I wasn't eating my veg and she'd say, 'have a little try of that' ... and I did the same for my children.

(Joy, Second generation).

I miss me nan's cabbage, I mean, I have cabbage, but it doesn't taste like me nan's though, and I used to drink the juice off the cabbage as well like she told me to for the goodness in it. I mean, I didn't *know* because it didn't taste that nice, but I trusted me nan.

(Katherine: Third generation).

I discovered a wealth of documentary evidence in local autobiographies (McDowall, 1998; Tulloch, 2006) recipes (Rothwell, 1988) and the accounts of my older participants, that knowledge of special foods was handed down from one generation to another in the belief that they contributed to the quest to stay well and the need to recover from illness. Margaret remembered her father making 'egg flip', raw egg beaten up with a dash of sherry, and saying, "go on, drink that". In turn, Ellen (Margaret's daughter) remembered Margaret beating up an egg in milk with a dash of brandy and sprinkling it with sugar if she (or any of her siblings) were ill. Traditional sayings and 'folk-wisdom' would also be used to encourage children to eat their food, for instance, Pamela Anne can remember being told that she would get curly hair if she ate her crusts, which she religiously followed. Such sayings were used to encourage reluctant eaters; "it'll put colour in your cheeks and hairs on your chest", "eat your carrots and you'll be able to see in the dark like a rabbit", "feed a cold, starve a fever" and "an apple a day keeps the doctor away". When Rose fed her children with pilchards and fresh fruit she was not aware of the specific properties these foods possessed in terms of health. Within my data there emerged a number of foods that were given to family members from one generation to another because 'they say it's good for you'. Liver was the most prominent example of such a food. Participants knew it contained iron because that is what they had been told by their mothers and grandmothers, but they were unaware that it contained B vitamins, vitamin A and zinc. Scouse that was traditionally thought of as a basic, filling meal also served as a revitalising food:

Me nan's scouse would be lovely and thick, like a pan of scouse should be – and I was dead pasty and pale me, and she'd say, 'you need a good pan of scouse down yer neck!'

(Sophie, Family 7 from Kensington, aged 35: Interview).

When I asked Elizabeth how she 'knew' Sophie needed a bowl of scouse she told me she "just knew" she needed iron by the colour of her face and "that's what you were given when you needed iron". Margaret, now in her seventies, named a range of dairy foods that were needed for strong bones and teeth. These foods were described as healthy and wholesome alongside fresh fruit and vegetables. Margaret felt these ideas stemmed back to her time on the farm where she was evacuated during the War from the age of six and where all this food

was freshly available, an association that remained a very strong, positive and happy memory. In following tradition whereby 'food and health' was interwoven into daily life, older participants could not recall this relationship as a "big thing" when they were younger - they simply equated healthy food with what they had been raised on. In this sense, food was a 'given', nothing specific in nutritional terms but described as something everyone 'knew' was good for them. Scientific research has shown that many of these examples hold credence, thus Aronsen (1991) concedes that the results of such research is often "identical with what most people 'know' to be true" and that "conventional wisdom is often based upon shrewd observation that has stood the test of time" (p. 59). Thus a shared understanding had arisen from an acceptance of tradition in terms of knowledge and practice.

However, the notions of 'traditional knowledge', 'folk' wisdom and 'common sense' wrapped up in sayings and proverbs have their detractors – when investigated or tested they do not hold true or may only be valid within certain cultural and social contexts (Carr, 2003). Ruane (2005) has suggested, traditional knowledge can be followed without thought or question - older participants can remember that the common practice of using a boiled potato in a sock as a treatment for boils did little else than burn the skin, but, nevertheless, remained a common practice. On the other hand, new knowledge can supersede traditional knowledge in that Ellen and Margaret no longer use bicarbonate of soda on burns because they have read that "it has now been discredited" and 'over-the-counter' remedies from the chemist (the effectiveness of which they sometimes doubted) have replaced herbal potions for indigestion, toothache and so on. Also my data show that participants made use of books on family health and household management (referred to as "my bible" or "trusted friend" similar to cookery books) that included a guide to healthy eating and foods recommended during times of illness. For example, The Good Housekeeping Institute (1958) cites special recipes for 'invalids' using fresh foods, to be cooked and then served "immediately". These include milk and milk products, fresh fruit and vegetables, steamed fish or meat, chicken broth and egg custard, all considered to be easily digested. Barley water is recommended as a drink on the invalid's tray that should "always be daintily laid with a fresh pretty cloth and attractive china" (p. 299). This practice suggests that a response to illness is not merely pragmatic but involves the wish for the invalid to experience the care and concern of the giver, to be comforted, through the serving of food, illustrated in the following account:

Me mam would let us lie on the sofa if we was poorly with a blanket and tea with sugar in it ... you didn't often get sugar ... she wouldn't let you lounge about at any other time like that. But she'd say, 'I'll give you such and such' and it would be just what you wanted, you know, a drink of tea, or hot

oxo and a bit of hot toast and 'scrape' or a bowl of scouse when you were a bit better. It was funny how me mam just seemed to know ... well ... it was the same as me nan, she knew what you wanted, you know, what you needed, if you landed up at hers.

(Ursula, an elderly resident of Toxteth: Natural conversation).

Across and between generations I found evidence that traditional food provided a feeling of comfort, or the need to 'be comforted' in relation to illness, feeling unwell, or feeling 'down in the dumps'. Participants would want fish and chips, a roast dinner or hot buttered toast. The role of food in providing comfort during these times remained an embodied memory and participants deliberately sought out particular foods:

Yeah ... you'd be on the settee and you'd have the duvet over you and you'd have soup, and I'll do that for my kids as well.

(Katherine, Family 1 from Garston, aged 40: Interview).

Funnily enough my earliest memories are of when I wasn't well, and when you were not well that was the one time you got a choice of what you wanted – either if you'd not been well or if you had had your teeth out, and mum would walk you home and go, 'ah, what would you like?' ... And I would always choose mushroom soup ... funny little things like that ... and I've loved mushroom soup all through my life, it's like nurture food, comfort food ... in fact, I just love soup.

(Grace from Cressington, aged 51: Interview).

Conversations revealed that participants were unconcerned about the nutritional aspects of foods they "fancied" when they were not well, the very time when one would expect participants to privilege the health properties of foods (and in some cases participants themselves were surprised this did not happen) when, in fact, the foods they chose fell into the 'unhealthy' category. In these cases, food was serving a separate purpose to nutrition:

When I'm not well I don't want to eat, but when I pick up I like macaroni cheese and I think it's the texture of the tubes and the sauce together ... there's something about it ... and I don't think about it being fatty or processed or too much salt or anything which I normally do ... not being well sort of makes it alright to eat 'naughty' food, like when I was pregnant and I remember thinking, 'well, I'm eating for two' when you fancy a second helping of something that isn't particularly healthy.

(Kirsty, a young mother from Toxteth: Natural conversation).

If I feel a bit down it's just got to be a bit of buttered *white* toast or crumpets and a cup of tea – thick butter that melts and I don't care ...

(Sally, Family 5 from Kirkby, aged 23: Interview).

If me stomach's 'off' then I'll have a cup of hot chocolate and some 'Rich Tea' biscuits dunked in it – not healthy I know, but when you're poorly you just want what you fancy or tinned 'Ambrosia' rice pudding or Devon custard ... and that's it ... and I think of my mum.

(Ellie, a second-year university student from Toxteth: Natural conversation).

The idea of food that 'slipped down' seemed to be synonymous with the idea of 'comfort food'. In this sense, everyday foods changed in meaning and were experienced differently in times of illness such as porridge, rice pudding, custard and hot chocolate. Bread in warm milk, sprinkled with sugar, referred to by Rose as "pobs" or by Frances as "feg", was a common breakfast food that also provided a feeling of comfort.

Across all generations eating these foods constituted a wish to reconnect with the past, or with significant others, that had positive connotations in terms of restoring health. Margaret talked at length about her evacuation (along with her brothers and sisters) to a smallholding in Southport run by two sisters. Margaret remembers food being plentiful and fresh alongside kindness and care. Even now, she associates her favourite meal, the Sunday roast dinner, with the sisters and this time in her life. She particularly enjoyed the ‘warmth’ of the room in which the sisters cooked – warmth coupled with the smell of cooking together provided a source of comfort and deep sense of security. Ellen has inherited this love of the Sunday dinner from Margaret, a traditional meal she believes, like no other, provides her family with a sense of security and comfort. Unlike Margaret, Rose held sad and painful memories of her war-time evacuation to the farm in Wales that have “haunted” her ever since in that she has always had difficulty reaching out to people, to be affectionate and nurturing. She claimed she was mentally abused and made to work long hours with little food. When her parents came to visit she was warned not to say anything about her treatment and longed to go home, particularly if she was not feeling well. Participants would often say that they “wanted their mum” in times of illness – if she was there they would ask for comforting foods, and if she was not, then eating them served as a kind of substitute.

Frances thought that if you are irritable because you are not eating the right food for *you* these feelings could easily be passed on to other members of the family. Female participants felt that women tend to put the needs of others first and do not “look after themselves” or pay attention to “feeding the soul”, “treating yourself” and “nurturing your body”. Although cooking is seen as ‘women’s work’, women rarely cook to please themselves (Oakley, 1974). Sophie described having a glass of wine, some ‘nibbles’ and a facial as a way of “feeling better in myself”, having an hour away from the house where batteries could be recharged “in a bit of peace”. Older participants described how they “sensed the need” for a little bit of “me time” at the end of the day when the children were in bed and the house was peaceful. Mollie has always done a little bit of knitting or sewing with a cup of tea and a piece of toast at the end of each day. She felt that if you end your day on a positive note then you sleep better and wake up in a positive frame of mind the following morning.

This first section, concerned with changes in knowledge base, has discussed a time when tradition served as a resource for health; passing from one generation to another the idea of feeding one’s family well that kept them well. Food knowledge was embedded in families

and communities, a ‘common sense’ shared knowledge in which the relationship to health was holistic – food as sustenance, comfort and healer. However, my research has shown that there has been a shift away from the embedded nature of food knowledge towards an ‘expert’ knowledge base that draws on a number of sources that are fed to the public to increase awareness of preventable diseases in the general population. Participants told me that “everyone knows” what foods are considered healthy and “everyone has choices”, but for whatever reason, this is not proving to be easy for people in their everyday practices around food. I wanted to find out whether my participants were able to incorporate both lay knowledge and ‘expert’ knowledge, whether they used one or the other, or neither. As a consequence did their chosen knowledge base translate into practice?

7.2.2 Disembedding knowledge with the ‘expert’ view

Within the now dominant biomedical model, health may be seen merely as the absence of disease and the aim of the nutritional sciences as the prevention or elimination of disease through medical directives and professional prescriptions to which the individual is expected to adhere or accordingly make changes to, or modify, behaviour (Harriss-White & Hoffenberg, 1994). In conjunction with the information provided by health educators, health promotion attempts to offer help and support that enables people to make rational, informed, healthy food choices based on the findings of the nutritional sciences. However, participants pointed out that dietary and nutritional information or advice had not been directly forthcoming from general practitioners even when participants sought a consultation about dietary related complaints. Leaflets had been provided by practice nurses, that whilst helpful, did not include advice on how to apply the information to complex commercial food labelling. Rose who has a mild heart condition and diabetes had found it difficult to transfer information about cholesterol and sugars to current food labelling. She discovered that ‘low fat’ was not particularly ‘low’ and when a low fat element was promoted in certain products they “slyly” slipped in a large amount of sugar. I was constantly reminded that “at the end of the day” it was not the ‘expert’ who had to assimilate the information, but the recipient of such information.

Time and again during my interviews and conversations I was told, “everyone knows” what healthy food is - participants cited ‘healthy’ food as fruit and vegetables, lean meat, fish, whole grain cereals, as well as food that was “natural”, for example, fish or eggs, foods that

were not “full of fat or sugar”, or contained “harmful additives”, indicating that lack of basic knowledge is not at the root of ‘the problem’. When I asked participants where knowledge about ‘healthy’ food came from, they found it difficult to actually pinpoint the source of information. For older people healthy foods had simply been staple components of their diets that had been passed down from one generation to another. For others it was information that was “around all the time”, something one was being constantly reminded about in some way or another without being conscious of it, or it was “just there”. Consequently, a variety of sources were cited that participants felt they may have internalised, for instance, a poster in a health centre, a leaflet from the supermarket or a range of commercial advertising:

Once I got married I stopped putting salt in food when it was cooking, whereas me mum would put a handful of salt in and then salt after. I don’t put salt in at all ... because of things I’ve read about salt and how it can do damage to your heart and things like that and articles in magazines and views on the tele ... and I try for 5 a day from the poster in the health centre at work ... I have a banana most mornings and we’ve always got fruit in.

(Ellen, Family 2 from Garston, aged 51: Interview).

Grace pointed out that as well as using these sources she also consulted books, the internet and specialist organisations, all of which she used for cross-referencing. She would then feel confident to pass on new information to family and friends. Meryl remarked that she very much relied on her family to inform her about developments in relation to healthy eating and all my families “kept an eye out” for each other in some way or another. Whereas my participants are aware of health promotion messages, these are ‘translated’ and ‘reconciled’ alongside other areas of life and “assessed against alternative sources of information” (Bury, 2005: 7).

The above suggests that information is used to encourage family members to maintain a healthy lifestyle; health professionals may use various forms of social marketing to persuade people (defined on the basis of health ‘risk’) to voluntarily adopt a new health idea or behaviour in exchange for personal resources such as commitment, energy and the acceptance of new ideas or changes in personal belief systems (Winett & Wallack, 1996). Our life-worlds have become complex and thus fraught with ‘risk’ (Beck, 1992) that also needs to be weighed up when making food choices for health; however, such risk is actively interpreted within ‘specific social contexts’ (Alaszewski & Horlick-Jones, 2003).

7.2.3 *Healthy food choices and the notion of risk*

Health risk in the context of older people's lives was concerned with accidents in the home when cooking, avoiding eating food that had "gone off" or "keeping flies away" (before the introduction of fridges) and practising "good hygiene", such as washing hands before preparing foods and before eating meals (the latter being something I rarely observed). In today's climate, risk linked to lifestyle, has become a major issue for the lay person, experts, journalists and government (Beck, 1992). Food linked to health has become a 'risky' business - we are told we are 'at risk' if we eat too much salt, fat, or sugar, drink above 'safe' limits, spend more time sitting than being active and are overweight (Department of Health, 2008a). In order to reduce risk we are set 'goals', for example, eating five pieces of fruit or vegetables each day, reducing the intake of the above food items and exercising more. Such advice is given, therefore, on the premise that we can exert personal control over such risk.

Whereas my young participants had not thought too much about the notion of 'risk', the main catalyst for changing a diet or eating patterns in older participants (or at least thinking about what they were eating in relation to health), was the lived experience of ill health. Before that, although participants were aware of healthy eating, it was not a huge priority. Frank (1997) tells us that people's stories change, or are interrupted, with the onset of illness. Embodied stories of illness (in the sense that stories are not just *about* the body but are told *through* it) have two sides. On the one hand they are personal and give voice to the body itself, and on the other they are social because stories are moulded by rhetoric that has been internalised from such sources as the media, public health messages, family and friends. Stories of illness are used by people "to construct new maps and new perceptions of their relationship to the world" (ibid, p.3). Health is often in the background, taken-for-granted and unconsidered until events or information bring its importance to the surface:

To be perfectly honest with you it's only been these last few weeks that my diet has started to change because I've been to the doctors and they're telling me I've got high blood pressure and high cholesterol so I've got to change my diet ... so I've been forced to do that now and it never bothered me before.

(Terrance, Family 2 from Garston, aged 55: Interview).

I worry about it now because I've just been diagnosed with diabetes ... I knew I didn't feel too good and carried too much weight and liked me beer and always ate a pudding, but I didn't worry that much. You don't feel you're at risk from anything because what does risk feel like?

(Bernie, Family 7 from Kensington, aged 62: Interview).

Whilst Terrance and Bernie have managed to address related conditions and understood the need for new behaviours to reduce 'risk', accounts show that the situation becomes more complex when a change in behaviour creates an added condition:

You see, you give up smoking because they say you have heart disease, but then you start eating more because you want to be doing something with your mouth. In my case it was sweets and chocolates that I turned to and loved as much as the ciggies and the next thing is I've got diabetes. So I've got all these things to think about and you're being asked to give up all those things you like.

(Margaret, Family 2 from Garston, aged 71: Interview).

Participants often find giving up what they like in terms of food is difficult as these are often the "feel good", "nothing else will do", "what I always reach for" foods that give pleasure but are not deemed to be nutritionally healthy. Margaret's account above sees one 'risky' pleasure substituted for another. She describes cigarettes as "one of life's little pleasures" that are a "quick fix", instantly gratifying, in the midst of what she describes as a "hard life". She had not deliberately started a second risky behaviour in eating a lot of chocolate and sweets, but this came from her on-going need for a "little bit of pleasure".

In trying to incorporate health promotion messages into everyday life, accounts of food practices show how participants attempt to reconcile the use of different foods through the notion of 'binary oppositions' (Lupton, 1996; 2000), or 'antinomies of taste' (Warde, 1997) as well as the idea of a 'balanced diet'. My participants used binary oppositions to distinguish between foods that are 'healthy' and 'unhealthy', 'good' and 'bad', and what Grace described as 'wholesome or empty':

That would be more it, because some foods are just a waste of time and money and it's a waste of space to eat them. They're not serving you, so what's that all about? Whereas some foods will be enriching, not only on a daily basis, but in the long term, you will be served better health-wise, physically and mentally ... and emotionally, because food feeds your nerves as well ... and our nerves are actually a reflection of our emotional state, so I think food and beverages are affecting all of that too ... and I think some foods are definitely 'aggressive' foods and some are more 'edgy' and some have 'softer' effects on you ... that's important.

I do a tally in my head between good and bad, well, yes and no because I've usually been bad! ... But no, subconsciously you do it.

(Pamela Anne, Family 6 from Allerton, aged 65: Interview).

The 'balance' between the 'good' and the 'bad' formed a kind of 'trade-off', that is, one 'good' food for a 'bad' food. Although participants used binary oppositions in this way, the ensuing choices were not always straightforward or logical. For instance, Terrance classes sausages as an unhealthy 'bad' food and although he avoids them in supermarkets, he nevertheless buys them regularly from the local butcher who he has known most of his life (because he believes he uses "better" ingredients) and similarly feels it is "fine" to give his

grandson sausage rolls from the local bakery. Terrance also avoids beef burgers and similar processed foods, believing, as does his wife Ellen, that fresh, unprocessed food is far healthier. However, their daughter, Meryl, recalls her earliest memories of food that in nutritional terms would not be described as 'healthy':

When we were little, in junior school, we'd come home for dinner, or lunch, and we'd have sausage rolls that were made in the bakery on the Lane – they were always lovely, dead tasty ... er ... and an iced square, a piece of cake with icing on the top. We'd have that for our dinner and on a Friday me mum and dad would go to the chippy and we'd have chips, chip butties, and that was our treat on a Friday.

Food bought outside the home often fell into what is considered to be the 'unhealthy' categories of foods, but which people are constantly exposed to in a myriad of outlets; 'good' practices are thus often overshadowed by the temptation to buy these foods. I found that in addition to being convenient, instantly gratifying and affordable (particularly amongst the young), these foods have become part of the process of 'socialisation' within particular groups. Jemma's peer group have the disposable income that enables them to easily purchase sweets, crisps and cakes:

I'm sure we wouldn't eat them half as much, but they're in your face all the time, wherever you go. You try to be 'good', but a lot of the time you end up being 'bad' and eating the wrong things when you really didn't intend to. But it's just what we do as a group.

Kieran also mentioned peer pressure in that he would be laughed at if he told his friends on a trip to town that he was going to buy an apple and some raw vegetables from one of the stalls rather than buy a pizza slice or pasty from a shop. He goes along with the group's wishes (admitting that he does enjoy these foods) and attempts to balance his 'bad' practices with 'good' practices that he has learnt from his parents - for example, he eats plenty of fresh vegetables, oily fish and nuts. Even though Terrance and Ellen worried about Meryl eating a lot of fast food with her friends, they did not attempt to stop her, recognising the importance of the connection between sociality and food. Meryl said this meant she could be part of a social group that went to McDonald's after school and bought burgers, fries and milk shakes. However, she has carried on a similar pattern with her own son, whom she takes regularly to fast food eateries because she enjoys it as a social space and is tired and 'too lazy' to cook – "I know I shouldn't do it all the time, but it's convenient for me and we enjoy it".

This is in direct contrast to Sophie (Bernie's daughter) who was brought up on fresh food from the garden and gave the following account of her eating habits that she is passing on to her son:

I've never eaten junk food and I don't now ... I never take my son to McDonald's or nothing like that ... I just remember eating fresh food, nothing ... we never went out to eat, or anything out of the chippy, we couldn't eat nothing like that ... me dad wouldn't let us anywhere near a chippy and we couldn't have cans of coke or anything like that ... it would be water or milk, you know, and I'm like that with my son now, I won't let him have any of this junk. He'll eat steamed salmon and vegetables like me and he doesn't have a sweet tooth either ... he'll be happy with fruit because I don't eat sweets or chocolate or nothing except maybe now and again.

Sophie's account further supports the view of Massil (2001) that the embodiment of 'ground rules' that prioritise 'good' food over 'bad' food during childhood plays a significant part in generational eating habits. Sophie "counts herself lucky" in that she spends a lot of time at home socialising with her parents where her dad, Bernie, still applies the same 'ground rules'. The same fresh 'wholesome' food he has always given to his children he is now passing on to his grandchildren. However, Meryl's account stresses the importance of sociality forged through food that takes place outside the home. She feels she needs social food occasions to combat what she describes as "a sometimes lonely and strange life through working shifts and being without my son". Rather than the health components of food being privileged in this instance, it is the 'symbolic' nature of the food eaten that carries important social meanings for both children and adults (Counihan, 1984).

All my families eat out from time to time, a practice that is seen as an occasional 'indulgence' and forms part of what they describe as a 'stable' or 'balanced' diet as they move along a continuum of 'healthy', 'not-so-healthy' and 'unhealthy' meals. Finding the 'right' balance between certain food 'groups' within those meals is also recognised as an effective way of achieving a degree of 'healthiness' through food:

I see 'healthiness' as the right proportion throughout the day, the right nutritional food. I mean, sometimes we do have ... I'll say to the kids, 'it's a cupboard tonight, whatever's in the cupboard, that's what we're having' ... erm ... like spaghetti on toast which is a 'cupboard meal' ... but, we have fish once a week, so I try to balance the meals out with protein, carbs and salad or veg ... but every now and then it'll be a quick meal thrown in like a 'pizza night' watching T.V., a 'junk night', but the rest of the week I'll try and balance it out and for the kids to be aware of it.

(Katherine, Family 1 from Garston, aged 40: Interview).

Thus in our day-to-day lives Warde (1997) believes we are pulled between a number of 'antinomies of taste' that include the notions of 'health' and 'indulgence'. Health in this sense is seen as a matter of 'self-control' over health as 'release', the difficulty being that one needs to find a 'balance' that lies somewhere between the two (Williams, 1997). Thus, Grace comments that in our present food culture, the reality is that we are "a whisker away" from swapping 'healthy' foods for 'unhealthy' foods. Schutz (1970) suggests that action following interpretation, rather than being a measured calculation, can happen in a flash.

In line with Schutz's (1970) 'systems of relevances', participants said they got "fed up" with trying to find a "happy medium" between 'good' and 'bad' foods, and although they might have showed constraint some of the time by not eating 'bad' foods, at other times they turned this 'label' into something positive in terms of wellbeing:

I don't want to take notice of what's bad for me, like, I'm not supposed to eat cream cakes but I'll go and get one – I know it's bad for me, but I enjoy it, so I'll eat it ... it's sort of looking after myself, nurturing myself ... and I still cook a roast dinner even if it's just for me. I can eat it and fall asleep afterwards and then Sunday becomes a real rest day and I feel comforted by that meal.
(Frances, Family 3 from Garston, aged 65: Interview).

I think it's everything in moderation, you know, we go to the chippy occasionally and then it's a treat for us. You just don't let it become a routine thing.
(Denise, Family 3 from Garston, aged 44: Interview).

As Blaxter (1990) reminds health promoters, people do not necessarily prioritize health over all other things – some participants said they would prefer a more "risky", shorter happy life than a more "risk-free", longer but more miserable one.

Frances gave an account of how she felt when, she believed, health professionals had not provided her with an adequate explanation of the risks she faced in dealing with a number of conditions:

When you're diabetic and you've got irritable bowel, you eat this for your diabetes, but it kicks into your bowel, so you don't eat it ... erm ... and you eat that, but you can't eat that because of your diabetes ... so getting your head round what you can and can't eat, I just say, 'sod it', you know. I mean, I'm supposed to do me blood three times a week, but I don't do that anymore because if it's high I don't know how to get it down, I don't know what to do to get it down to the level it should be.

Q. So you just worry?

A. No, I just don't do it ... I did ask at the doctor's one time and they said, 'oh yes' ... they were doing this session in Garston Hospital and they said, 'go along', and I went along and I got, 'there's a diet, follow that'. That's the amount of support I got.

This account illustrates the need for support and reinforcement to follow on from information to sustain behaviour (RUHBC, 1989). This is necessary if we consider that out of control eating (that is often in the form of pleasurable foods), indexed by the presence of disease, requires a return to healthy eating in order to stay well. However, our patterns of eating change according to context. For instance, Margaret admitted that she fell "by the wayside" at times in relation to her diabetes, particularly at Christmas or at family celebrations when there were more 'goodies' around. This necessitated a return to behaviour that would get her "back on track". Margaret said she constantly tried to eat better and take note of the sugar and glucose content in foods, but found this difficult because she felt she had received little support from service providers in diet 'management'. Having been brought up with the idea

of food being “just food”, Margaret had little experience of managing her diet. Ferzacca (2004) uses a model for food selection and eating based upon a judgment of taste forged out of ‘necessity’ citing Bourdieu (1984) and his notion of ‘taste cultures’ whereby “necessity imposes a taste for necessity, which implies a form of adaptation to, and consequently acceptance of, the necessary” (p. 372). Our lived experience in relation to the ‘judgment of taste’ may involve liberty, choice and agency, whereas, this notion of ‘necessity’ implies that for those with diabetes there must eventually be a ‘resignation to the inevitable’ if they are to remain well.

Margaret’s family support her efforts to “keep on track” by bringing her sugar-free products, any new health promotion literature or new information that might be helpful to her and catering for her when making family meals. Ellen and Terrance help her with her shopping and Ellen drops in to see her every day, either to share lunch or to have a cup of tea after work in the local health centre. Ellen does not like to “preach” because she feels “on the whole mum has done really well” to give up smoking and does her best to practice what is ‘necessary’. In contrast, Frances’s family have “given up on her” in the sense that they no longer “had a go at her” for constantly breaking the rules – “she just won’t listen, she just keeps reminding us how she and other members of the family ‘get away with it’ so we think, ‘oh well, get on with it then, you know what the rules are, so it’s up to you if you buy a cream cake or skip breakfast’”. Frances has shown resistance to doing what is regarded as ‘necessary’ to keep well. In so doing Frances says she feels more in control of her life, even if this means she is not always in control of her diabetes. Frances does not want her life to revolve around her diabetes or to be known as ‘a diabetic’ - she did not want to focus on the negative, ‘stigmatizing’, consequences of her illness (Goffman, 1963), but rather to be known as an effective community worker that has accrued a certain standing in the community despite her diabetes.

Elizabeth had also shown resistance to change - she did not believe the recent discovery of her high blood pressure had anything to do with smoking. She felt that eating “good” food throughout her life was enough to protect her against any smoking-related diseases. She had no intention of giving up because she *enjoyed* her cigarettes and had always enjoyed them and it was her *choice* to smoke. Would she give them up? “At eighty-five? No way!” Elizabeth had not resigned herself to what many would see as ‘the inevitable’ - giving up the pleasurable practice of smoking in order to stay well. Elizabeth’s family did not challenge

her views even though they recognised the connection between smoking and blood pressure – for them, age came with concessions. Smoking was part of her ‘world of routine practices’ and for the time being she was not entering the world of ‘considered alternatives and calculative action’ described by Schutz (1970). Certainly my data show that first generation participants felt that longevity negated the need to be ‘risk assessors’ and although they valued health and realised that the ‘health capital’ they were born with was diminishing (Blaxter, 1990) they were not about to privilege health over routine pleasures.

As I concluded in chapter four, traditional practices and occasions, as part of our ‘historical consciousness’, carry meanings that become ‘sedimented’ in the body and part of our ‘embodied’ identity (Sutton, 2001). In this sense, tradition can also play a part in people’s lived experience, and attitudes towards, health, illness or disease. It was not unusual for me to be told that such things as heart attacks, diabetes, blood pressure and depression were conditions that people expected to have ... “well, my father had it” or “my family suffer from it”. In other words, in some areas, such conditions were a local tradition and consequently people were ‘fatalistic’ and had ‘low aspirations’ in terms of their health. Rose and Frances, to a certain extent, were not surprised that they had developed health problems because these were experienced by many others in their age group and, more significantly, other family members. They often ‘broke the rules’ because those around them did and they could cite examples of people who, despite such resistance, “get away with it”. In contrast, Bernie’s diagnosis “came out of the blue” and without any family tradition, experience or understandings to draw on, he followed the advice he had been given by his doctor that included dietary guidelines. Hence Bury (2005) suggests that contexts and lived experiences, that may undergo change at any time, mould attitudes towards health and health risks. Being knowledgeable and, therefore, our own risk assessors, can be both a blessing and a burden as people try to incorporate health promotion messages into their everyday lives that include food practices. Grace suggests that it is easy to get obsessive about trying to weigh up food in terms of health whereby “we might land up making it a life-time mission and in the process deny ourselves everything we enjoy”. Nevertheless she feels people need to be aware of those things that are known to be detrimental to health:

I try not to get too hung up on things ... it doesn’t do for us to always take a sharp intake of breath and go, ‘ooh, this is bad for us’ and if we cut out everything you’d be miserable and you’d never really have anything and sometimes you’ve just got to take your chances as well because that’s part of being healthy ... but just be aware and say, ‘well, I’d rather not have that’, and occasionally we’ve made differentials about things, I mean, there was a time when I said, ‘right, nothing with aspartame in it, it’s a known carcinogenic, why would anybody want to give that to their kids?’ These things are

available in children's foods and drinks so we are indoctrinating our kids to use stuff, foods that are not only not good for them, but are bad for them, empty foods, addictive foods, as per canned drinks, coca cola and the like.

(Grace, Family 4 from Cressington, aged 51: Interview)

However, particularly for women, in a culture that is obsessed with body image and maintenance, the binary oppositions of 'good' and 'bad' and being aware of the content of foods are seen from a new perspective and given new meaning with the emergence of health as a 'commodity'.

7.3 Health as a commodity

Blaxter (2004) recognises that the concept of health has been subject to cultural 'distortions' in recent times through the commodification of health in the form of products that, amongst other things, are aimed at body maintenance, dieting and slimming. There is a slim, 'ideal' body image that is widely touted through the media and aggressive marketing, that reflects a fit, healthy body that in part can be achieved through self-control and self-discipline with regard to food intake. As the antithesis of 'thin', fat is now thought of as 'ugly', unhealthy and something that 'slows one up' and 'weighs one down', despite the fact that many people who are statistically overweight are, in fact, perfectly healthy (Klein, 1997). 'Healthy foods' are marketed, for example, as 'light choices' (referring to fat content) and 'count on us' (referring to calorie count) and some are exclusively produced for weight maintenance programmes, for example, 'Weight Watchers' meals and those suitable for the high protein 'Atkins Diet' – these are products that are 'allowed' and 'sanctioned' for use by those who are dieting. These 'health' products provide an example of 'commodity fetishism'; 'value-added' foods that are typically very expensive (Blaxter, 2004).

Female participants across all generations are, or have been, on some kind of diet at sometime in their lives (particularly the above mentioned diets) although it is a more common occurrence now than in the past. Susan, born in the early 1900s, had never worried about her appearance or weight, despite the fact that in latter years her weight had risen considerably through less energy expenditure vis-à-vis food intake. Body image, as far as she was aware, was not an issue when she was younger:

No I don't worry, not myself, I've never worried and you didn't have all that when I was younger ... and besides you had too much to do looking after your family to worry what you looked like and you didn't have the money to indulge in things ... I think the kids today with

crisps ... but we never had those things in our days, sweets, chocolates and all that – they were luxuries in our days.

Once again we come back to the issue of snacking and how this is seen as a key factor in generational differences in food practices and body weight. Older participants claimed to rarely snack – when they were young there were very few snack-foods, such as sweets, crisps, biscuits, cakes, bars of chocolate and so on, and they were certainly “like gold dust” during rationing. The most one was given in between meals was bread with margarine with maybe a sprinkling of sugar or jam or a single cake. Robert said he had always been the same weight because he only ate his meals and never ate anything in between. This is the way he was brought up and the way he had brought his own children up. Although Maureen does have an occasional snack, Robert saw a generational difference in his grandchildren who were allowed to snack that often meant they did not want, or could not finish, their meals. Robert felt this has become the norm in families – “you see kids walking around and in buggies eating all sorts, but we never allowed our children that”. My observations showed that people are snacking all the time, particularly in the street that is a prime cause of litter. As Pollan (2008) comments, with an increase in disposable income, people are now encouraged to eat 24/7 and a large part of that is snacking.

Elizabeth had never worried about her body image or weight because, similar to Susan, with a large family to “run around after” she did not have time to worry about such things. Mollie, who came from a more middle class background where food was more abundant and she had a professional job that involved eating restaurant meals, had always thought she was fat and still felt the same way. She slapped her thighs and said, “I hate these ... they’ve tormented me all my life”. Older working class participants noted that they had far more physical tasks to carry out around the home and “nobody had a car in them days” and one could not rely on, or always afford, public transport - one had to use “shank’s pony”, “your own pins”, “what your legs were made for” and “you walked everywhere and your children did too”. They felt that exercise, embedded in their daily lives, “naturally” kept their weight down and therefore they did not have to worry about it. As Klein (1997) reminds us, in any debate about the body and health it always comes down, and gets back to, the fact that we eat too much and exercise too little. In our sedentary jobs and virtual worlds muscle and bone have lost much of their ‘traditional utility’ and people are generally getting fatter.

Katherine felt that the current obsession with what our bodies look like from the outside deflects our attention from what is happening inside our bodies. She thought that every woman worries about her weight, “it just comes natural, it’s just part of our lives”, whilst at the same time she recognised that the media plays a large part in creating the ‘ideal’ body image that women are constantly ‘trying’ to aspire too. Although media representations of the ‘ideal’ body has increasingly focused on the physical attributes of men (the ‘fit and toned’ body) and their clothing ‘style’ (Wykes & Gunter, 2005), none of my male participants appeared to be concerned with body weight in terms of image. However, most of my female participants were constantly thinking about weight issues and body image that guided food choice. Sally, born in 1985, feels that you cannot “escape” the ideal body image that is fed into the psyche from a very young age. Research carried out by Byely et al., (2000) found that body image, the slender body shape, and dieting go hand in hand amongst teenagers. Foods that were classified as ‘good’ or ‘bad’ became ‘fattening or slimming’ that were translated into a number of food practices. When Sally shops with her mum she singles out foods that are healthy in terms of “not being fattening”. However, she would buy a few goodies that she felt prevented her from getting “overly obsessed about body size and image”. Sally describes her mum, Maureen, as “health aware” and thus they cook with a minimum of oil, steam vegetables and bake rather than deep fry foods. Sally eats slowly and has a mountain of vegetables to “make her feel full” that she trades off for one of her ‘goodies’. Despite all her efforts, Sally is slightly overweight, not because she eats “rubbish food”, but rather she loves “good food” and is faced with the same problem as Jemma in that she has the disposable income to buy food that is “literally everywhere you look”. Both Jemma and Sally feel pressured not to become overweight because “people think you’re weak, that you’ve given in or given up”. Whereas fat and middle-age tend to be an acceptable part of ageing, thin is to be young and “the prestige of the young in our culture needs no commentary” (Klein, 1997: 33).

Although binary oppositions, such as ‘good’ and ‘bad’ formed much of the rationale for food practices in connection with health, including specific messages such as the reduction of saturated fat and salt to prevent obesity and heart disease, they still remained a problem with conflicting information “out there” telling one to “eat this, then don’t eat this, eat that, then don’t eat that”.

7.4 Inconsistencies and conflict in health promotion: misunderstandings and unintended consequences

Inconsistent messages and conflicting information was one of the prime reasons for participants across all generations to question “this whole health thing” and to continue eating food that was familiar to them regardless of whether it was considered healthy or not. Morgan et al., (2001) stress that however diligent people might be they still need comprehensible and trustworthy information on which to act. It was, therefore, common for participants to turn to alternative sources for guidance. Denise, for example, follows advice from ‘Weight Watchers’ (a weight reduction programme) rather than public health campaigns and Maureen, who suffers with lupus, finds her local support group more helpful because health promotion messages are aimed at the *general* public and do not “cater for” specific diseases. There is also a wealth of ‘health journalism’ that can be well informed and useful, but on the other hand often sensationalises issues by ‘plucking out’ certain statistics and findings to use more as entertainment than for serious scrutiny (Williams, 2010).

It is a far from easy task then to explain to people what they should be doing, or for people to make sense of the relationship between food and health. Patricia explained it thus:

If I stood in the school playground and said to mothers whom I know love their children, absolutely adore them, ‘the way you treat them, why on earth are you giving them chicken nuggets and chips, do you not know that’s bad for their health?’ ... erm ... they would look at you blankly, because they really just don’t understand ... ‘well, it’s got calories in, it’s got chicken in, it’s not fried it’s done in the oven’.

This account would suggest that health promotion messages are not necessarily translated into practice in the way health promoters intend them to be. As Morgan et al., (2001) comment, we need messages that are ‘understood as intended’ or there can be ‘unintended consequences’ detrimental to health. With the rise in childhood obesity, giving children separate ‘unhealthy’ foods is seen as having an unintended adverse consequence that reflects on parenting (James, 2008). The giving of information upon which people are expected to act may seem a simple exercise, but this is not to say it will slot neatly into people’s ‘life-worlds’ that are cultural, social, historical and economic in nature. Where, then, is health promotion failing people?

If people are tempted to do nothing at all, then somewhere along the line health promoters must be missing some important factors concerned with why people eat the way they do. When Patricia and I left Rose’s home after her interview, Patricia turned to me and said “it

looks as if my mum's given up on food doesn't it? I find that really sad". Rose has certainly wrestled with the notion of 'risk' in relation to the complex link between food and health described in her account of shopping practices:

Sometimes you're frightened of what to eat ... I've stopped eating chicken because I'm scared of salmonella and I don't eat too many eggs now, maybe two a week and that's because of the cholesterol too, and I won't buy farmed salmon because the omega 3's not in the farmed salmon is it? ... It's only in the wild salmon so I'm buying that now ... I'll probably end up dying (laughter). Sometimes you feel as if you're going mad and you think maybe you should be like those who don't care. I've gone right off food, I don't enjoy food anymore.

This account reflects how food knowledge built upon tradition, a common sense stock of knowledge that was relatively simple and unproblematic to assimilate, has moved to more complex information about health that is often conflicting and where the 'goal posts' are subject to change resulting in the worst scenario described by Rose above. One of the problems participants highlighted in their quest to find some kind of 'balance' between foods sprang from the feeling that "there's no way of knowing what's in processed food", a situation that applies to take-away, restaurant and processed food purchases from the supermarket. For this reason older participants eat little processed food because "you don't know what's in it" and "I like to know what I'm eating". Participants do not find food labelling particularly helpful, as ingredients are often not identifiable as 'food' from the often lengthy and "meaningless" labelling. Such labelling often makes participants depressed at the thought of what could be in favourite foods. Sometimes labelling leads to a rejection of foods, but often participants "can't be bothered" agonising over it all and think "what the hell, I'm going to eat 'such and such' anyway because I enjoy it". In these cases not only has food and eating been lost as a simple pursuit that includes notions of pleasure and enjoyment, but there is also a danger that participants will just give up altogether trying to make sense of food and health. In other words one becomes 'fatalistic', 'what will be, will be' (Davison et al., 1992) about health and not draw on health promotion messages or traditional sources of knowledge.

In relation to Rose's account, Patricia thought that maybe food has become "too important", it has been given "too high a profile" and has just "got out of hand" particularly in the way it has invaded the media. Amongst my participants there seemed to be a consensus of opinion that food was constantly being written about, had become a prime subject of entertainment – food was literally "everywhere", it was "invading our lives" and a lot of this food was "not healthy" whilst we are being told to "eat healthily". In other words, there is contradiction and

conflict everywhere that makes food choice so problematic. Patricia also thought that health promoters should be thinking about these things before they start blaming and targeting people for making unhealthy choices:

... I don't think people out there should be blamed all the time for what they eat ... there are bigger influences out there and it's more political than people think. There's all these 'do-gooders' with health promotion messages telling mainly the poor, the under-privileged, what they should eat rather than fixing on the bigger picture and the food industry ... they target the poor who then eat poor food because they know people don't want a high food bill so they have money to spend on other things ... and they're not as educated to understand health promotion messages, and don't have the means to make choices, and then they're blamed for creating this unhealthy, obese, generation of people when, in fact, it's nothing to do with poor people ... their lives are bad enough as it is and sometimes not happy ... they are just getting on with their everyday lives whilst being influenced by supermarkets and food manufacturers.

(Patricia, Family 8 from Stoneycroft, aged 37: Interview)

Dowler et al., (2007) also believe that we readily target the disadvantaged telling them what to do in a way that we would not dream of doing in relation to other social groups. Here I would refer back to Bourdieu's (1984) idea of 'habitus' as the cultural milieu that shapes lifestyles and frames class-based positions; "lifestyles are the systematic products of habitus" (p. 172). I would argue that health is wrapped up in one's 'habitus' that is surrounded by limiting 'boundaries' and structures, some of which are described by Patricia in the above account - "if we ask too much of people, then they just switch off".

Putting advice into practice, then, involves constraints and uncertainties of one kind or another, but it also necessarily involves a notion of trust, who and what to put trust in, that produces the right kind of knowledge and confidence to act.

7.5 *Re-embedding trust and knowledge*

In following tradition there existed trust within communities and families and thus Richardson (1995) points out that embedded folk sayings such as 'eat up your greens' and 'an apple a day keeps the doctor away' could be useful in promoting an increased intake of fruit and vegetables because people are familiar with these notions and more likely to trust them than present discourses. Further, although 'Mother Nature' has been described as the world's oldest and greatest pharmacist, Carper (1993) believes modern medicine has neglected the medicine in everyday foods, viewing it as folklore, lacking proven scientific validity; it is therefore interesting to note that more recently, interest has been shown in substantiating or

refuting the basis of these beliefs that have been embedded within families and communities where there is not necessarily any knowledge of chemistry or anatomy (Hajar, 2002).

Concern has also been expressed about the loss of traditional foods that have been deemed to be 'unhealthy' in line with current nutritional discourses. At a local level, pastry for 'scouse pie' is high in fat, as are meat puddings; traditional cakes such as 'wet nellies' (a local cake soaked in syrup) and ginger cake are high in both fat and sugar. In addition, traditional salt fish, Manx kippers, piccalilli and Lancashire relish have a relatively high salt content. Key concerns in terms of health do not only lie in the fact that people may have rejected so many of these foods that are part of their culture and identity, but also what types of food have replaced it. Intergenerational studies have shown that when communities replace traditional food with market food the level of vitamins and minerals drop, and saturated fat, sucrose and sodium increase with a marked decrease in dietary fibre (Receveur et al., 1997). Although people in Liverpool ate a range of traditional pies and puddings in the past, they also ate a lot of fresh vegetables in one form or another (Bridge, 2001) and, as already mentioned, my participants often described diets that were practically devoid of sugar, fat and salt-laden snacks.

Grace pointed out that proof is far from robust when claims are made that challenge the diets of older people and that we should be wary of such claims in the sense that 'the proof of the pudding is in the eating'. Her parents (Mollie and her husband are now both over ninety years of age and in good health) she feels are a living embodiment of that:

There are contradictions and I think anything that makes a radical claim, be suspicious of it ... look at our older generations, the things from the past worked for some of them and have a look at what they were doing. My own parents are a classic example of consistency, routine, regularity, harmony and balance, and it has served them, you know ... they've always had a measure of regular food, fresh air, constitutional walks shared in the park, a regular bedtime ... so they've done the routine things that have worked for their health ... sometimes what's being said is belied by the evidence.

(Grace, Family 4 from Cressington, aged 51: Interview).

Although much health promotion calls for changes to the diet of previous generations, particularly the intake of saturated fat, I would refer back to the work of Yancy et al., (2003), Kendrick (2007) and Taubes (2007), who, amongst others, have challenged current thinking on diet and disease. The above account not only suggests that longevity in older generations serves as a marker of a healthy diet and lifestyle in the eyes of younger generations, but that people's diet formed part of a set of embedded practices that they believed were positive in health terms.

Although Grace had rejected a routine that she saw as “starchy and rigid” since leaving home, nevertheless, she now feels that there are remnants of this in the way she lives her life now. In reassessing a life that has been more radical, as she gets older she has begun to think about her own health and that of her family in relation to her parents’ longevity:

I think somewhere in there, it might not be quite so precise, but there is some routine and regularity ... erm ... we tend to go for our walks, get our fresh air, I’ll try and catch up on sleep, we do have some balance to our food intake, if not at the same regular intervals and stuff.
(Grace, Family 4 from Cressington, aged 51: Interview)

How people conceptualise and experience health and how they feel it can be sustained, may be subject to change according to the contexts they move in and out of during a lifetime. Health promotion cannot, therefore, be just a simple matter of telling people what they should do in order to improve health, but rather one has to believe change will be beneficial and sustainable in everyday life (Keane, 1997).

Summary and conclusion

Set against the historical, social and cultural contexts discussed in my previous chapters, this chapter has discussed how generational differences occur in the way health is conceptualised in relation to food and how participants draw on various sources of knowledge that produce a range of food practices that may, or may not, be healthy. As Bury (2005) asserts, health from a social perspective can be seen as ‘dynamic’, changing across biographical and historical time. Here I would point to Bourdieu’s (1984) notion of ‘habitus’ that moulds our lifestyle and makes healthy choices far easier for some than for others, in that practices, that include food practices, mediate between habitus and the social world that change over time. In making decisions I have drawn on the phenomenological work of Schutz (1970) and his idea of ‘systems of relevances’ that work on a continuum between what is routine (and often unthinking) in a person’s world and what are ‘considered alternatives and calculative action’.

I firstly discussed the notion of ‘social’ or ‘community health’ set against the shift from ‘gemeinschaft’ to ‘gesellschaft’, and how this shift has impacted on food practices at both a community and familial level. Older participants described the ‘gemeinschaft’ sociality of the larger community where people’s lives were entwined through the production of food,

church attendance, neighbourliness and kinship ties that produced 'social capital' (Putnam, 2000). Lay knowledge and skills were embedded in this daily flow of life on which people were reliant in order to create a trusted, solid foundation in terms of family health. We now live in a very different culture that has seen the community evolve into more individualistic and private ways of living. In terms of health, traditional knowledge has been superseded by 'expert' knowledge that is passed on by the media and government designed to help people make 'healthy' choices in respect of food. Health promotion messages give information and advice on what to eat and how to live in order to prevent the onset of particular prevalent diseases. In trying to make sense of the notion that they are at 'risk', participants made food choices through the binary oppositions of 'good' and the 'bad', 'fattening and slimming' by female participants, 'health and indulgence' and the idea of a 'balanced diet' encompassing the idea of nutrition as well as the meanings afforded to foods.

However, whilst the public is told their health is 'at risk' if they do not eat healthily, at the same time information is often conflicting and inconsistent, foods promoted one minute and demoted the next. In addition, what is being marketed does not equate with public health rhetoric. It is within the family that these problems have to be wrestled with and decisions made. In line with a food culture that is now dominated by the food industry from production to consumption, the household has changed from a site of production to that of consumption as families buy end products in the form of ready-prepared processed foods. Although the shared family meal was seen as conducive to health, in reality family members were more likely to eat individual meals or snacks at different times in different locations. A major generational difference has emerged in the production of 'children's food' that has marked a distinct separateness from adult food. Rather than food being common to all within the family, children have been allowed to develop their own tastes (often for processed food) rather than there being shared family tastes.

The number of hours my families spend on shared food practices has thus declined, particularly with the expectation of more leisure pursuits. However, I agree with Short (2006) that there is not, for instance, a simple link between practical cooking skills and health – we need to consider both cultural and social dimensions. The transmission of cooking skills and cooking practices can depend on how one feels, life experiences, economic considerations, work pressures, whether people need to follow special diets or are dieting in line with the 'ideal' body image and so on. I discovered cooking for health not only involved

skills and techniques, but also elements of love and care, fun and creativity that were good for the soul and one's sense of self-esteem. Some participants did not cook at all because cooking knowledge was no longer embedded in family life and it is so easy not to do so with the proliferation of ready-prepared food.

Whilst much health promotion rhetoric is in the form of nutritional guidance I have shown that food meanings are guided by the senses, emotions and feelings, both positive and negative, that are incorporated in people's quest for health and wellbeing. My participants talked about traditional foods that nurtured the soul and comforted them in times of illness - these were foods they loved for their smell, texture or appearance, or foods that reconnected them with those who had cared for them in the past. Good memories, it seems, bring the past into the present and contribute to our sense of wellbeing. Food and eating is now very much connected with pleasure and there is no doubt that a lot of foods that are not particularly healthy in nutritional terms are those that people find most enjoyable and comforting that have restorative properties, so why should people want to give them up?

In an attempt to move away from a more individualistic approach to health promotion, work is currently being carried out in the community, for example, in Garston as part of the regeneration programme. However, once again support is patchy and funding does not appear to be sustainable; rhetoric in government White Papers does not appear to translate easily into action. Is it, then, down to individuals within families and communities to do what they can to spread the word? Can informed individuals help other people to eat a little more healthily, or acquire the skills and knowledge to do so that may have a 'knock-on effect' in relation to the bigger picture? Grace suggests that

we need to pass things on by word of mouth to each other and we have to hope that we are passing on the right information ... so I guess it's down to the minority to keep a watchful eye on all of that and then to try and influence and inform the majority ... erm ... and I think quite a few people are taking some responsibility for that ... people in industry and commercially, and people through science, and we really do need to know how things are getting from 'a' to 'b' as to what is going to happen with us in respect of our physical and emotional welfare.

(Grace, Family 4 from Cressington, aged 51: Interview).

There may very well be improvements in health if people follow this line of thinking. Maybe because the public are 'fed' information from official sources, people think there is nothing they can do on a personal level to change things or make things better for the majority. However, as Grace suggests, "watchful eyes" can make a difference even if this only extends to family, friends and acquaintances. In view of the fact that a series of public policy

initiatives (both past and present) designed to address social and lifestyle issues that include healthy eating have failed (Dowler et al., 2007; WHO, 2008), at the very least we have to try. The health of future generations may depend on it.

This chapter has shown that food is highly symbolic when linked to the complex notion of health; people's experiences of food and eating are not universal and whilst there may be merit in rhetoric aimed at whole populations this does not cover embedded generational or familial cultures from which people draw knowledge. Different cultures produce different needs and lived experiences and people may have difficulty working out which particular health issues apply to them. Furnishing people with information without support or guidance does not necessarily turn into practice or encourage change in the name of nutritional health. Rather than traditional knowledge being used to guide food choices, 'healthy' food choice is now defined by the media, government, and the various agencies that exercise surveillance over it as well as those with commercial interests who turn it into a commodity.

In other words families and communities have moved from 'embedded' to 'disembedded' food practices within everyday life to the detriment of health and my concluding discussion will centre on this argument that will draw on key points from my previous chapters from which I will make recommendations, address theoretical concerns and point out opportunities for further research.

CHAPTER EIGHT

CONCLUDING DISCUSSION, RECOMMENDATIONS, REFLECTIONS

I really don't see a bright future in terms of how people deal with food, family, cooking, anything ... I can't see how we can turn it around ... it's slipped too far and there are too many influences ... we can't have these extreme poles pulling away from each other and expect it to be healed in the middle ... all these supermarkets provide all this rubbish ... we've got some people who are really poor ... some who've got no knowledge ... some who are time-poor, loads of money but no time [and those] who've got loads of time but no money ... people feel too tired to cook or they don't have the skills or confidence and then don't eat properly ... I don't think we're going to fix it.
(Patricia, Family 8 from Stoneycroft, aged 37: Interview).

Introduction

This chapter draws on the main points from my previous chapters that have particular implications for health – I have focused on the changing nature of community through the typologies of 'gemeinschaft' and 'gesellschaft' and the move from communal to corporate food, the significance of traditional food and food events (both celebratory and mundane) and intergenerational changes in food practices and values and the extent to which these are reproduced and knowledge transmitted. In relation to the latter I have discussed how the once 'embedded' nature of traditional knowledge as a 'common sense stock of knowledge' (Schutz, 1970) within families and communities has, to a large degree, been superseded by 'expert' knowledge. The latter emanates from public health bodies and agencies that promote health through the notion of 'risk' in relation to specific targeted diseases. In making 'healthy' food choices I have discussed the implications of the much used aphorism 'you are what you eat' that has taken up a prominent place in our modern food culture.

Taking a phenomenological perspective has shown that food and health is informed by a whole range of discourses and debates that are played out in everyday lives; shifting social, economic and cultural markers of change across and between generations have been related to me in the stories I have been told. These include how people experience a sense of community, work patterns, domestic roles, built environments, the emergence of the agribusiness and food markets influenced by events such as the two great wars, the depression, regeneration, the rise in free markets and so on. If the essence of my fieldwork has been to "render daily lives socially intelligible and meaningful by keenly observing others as well as reflecting on [my] own experience" (Singleton et al., 1993: 316) then the

overarching point of my argument here is the need to understand the embedded meanings and practices given to food within families and communities and how this can contribute to current, if transient, discourse. I have discovered that there are sometimes independent, family or community views and experiences as well components that constitute a 'national', 'regional' or 'local' culture around food. In turn, these are influenced by beliefs, such as religious affiliation, as well as such factors as education, economic status and how people place themselves in a particular class, or maybe not a class at all. Bound up in the whole research process is my subjectivity as researcher and that of my participants that has produced knowledge and data leading to the interpretation of food meanings and practices.

The notion of embodied memory has proved to be a robust tool of analysis in understanding continuity and change in food knowledge that is socially and culturally constructed within particular contexts that partly form the ground on which familial identities are built and life histories created. This 'embodied' or 'traditional' knowledge, together with the concept of Marcel Mauss's 'body techniques', those cultural and social ways of doing things that render the world meaningful to us, has drawn meaning and embodiment together in a 'researchable manner' (Crossley, 2007). In addition, I have employed Bourdieu's (1984) notion of 'habitus', a structure that is both structured and produced by, and structures and produces, the differing social worlds people inhabit. Through the notion of 'tradition' and 'traditional' food I have provided examples of how social and cultural solidarity and difference is perpetuated through food consumption and practice. In my attempt to analyse why some people, within and between generations, eat more healthily than others, the notion of 'habitus' has enabled me to think about the relative merit of assigning chance (structure) over personal choice. Schutz's (1970) 'systems of relevances' have helped explain how we move along a continuum between 'worlds of routine practices' and 'considered alternatives and calculative action' and Warde's (1997) 'antinomies of taste' has highlighted the constant dilemma surrounding food choice. Patricia's opening account does much to reveal the complex scenario that has emerged from my study and one which illustrates the problem that sits at the heart of any current attempt to promote health. However, whilst Patricia does not think 'we can fix things' I believe that by using the phenomenological ground of my participants' food experiences and practices and a subjective view of health I have provided a greater insight into how we may be able to 'turn things around'.

8.0 *Health and the community*

Social researchers who employ ethnographic methods acknowledge the importance of context and it is the community, whether 'real' or 'imagined', that provides as good a context as any (Brunt, 2001). In debating whether, and in which way, the different forms of community my families have experienced across time can serve as a resource for health, I have drawn on Tönnies' typologies of 'gemeinschaft', the familistic type of society, and 'gesellschaft', its contractual opposite. The former has enabled me to explain how previous generations managed to 'get on' and 'get by' in life through a number of 'unwritten rules' involving the ideas of reciprocity and the 'gift-debt' (Mauss, 1970 [1950]) which included mutual support and activities that contributed to the 'common good' of the community from which 'social capital' could be accrued (Bourdieu, 1986; Putnam, 2000). The notion of 'gesellschaft' has helped to explain new ways of living that has seen a move away from these roots of social capital and a sense of solidarity and belonging, towards a need for increased individuality, autonomy and privatism. This shift is reflected in current health promotion strategies that encourage the individual to take responsibility for his or her own health and the resulting political empowerment, rather than harnessing social or community capital as an embedded resource for health. Thus health is treated as an independent variable devoid of the context in which people develop a relationship with, and experience, food.

8.0.1 *Commensality –v- individualism*

Social capital in the form of strong social bonds and networks enabled older participants across all social classes to become part of, or belong to, something bigger than their immediate family circle. I found evidence of 'collectivist survival' (Fischler, 2008) amongst 'working class' families that appeared the best way to 'get by'. This was borne out of necessity based on reciprocity, the notion of the 'gift-debt' (Mauss, 1970 [1950]) that fostered community ties, for example, the growing and exchange of garden produce. Participants were able to 'slot into' this kind of community because there was an understanding (that had been passed from one generation to the next) of the unwritten rules, a social awareness of 'how to play the game' (Bourdieu, 1984), what made, or was needed to make, the community 'tick'. In this sense, these relationships involved caring *for* people rather than merely caring *about* them (Fox, 1993). Within such a community if one lacks 'economic capital' one is still able to build up social capital (Zohar & Marshall, 2004).

Although the middle classes did not need the community to 'get by' in economic terms they still felt connected to those around them which they described in terms of 'community spirit'. Participants experienced 'neighbourliness' that involved acts of kindness and social interaction – doing bits of shopping, passing on magazines, conversations over the fence and so on. Social groups were an important part of life particularly those connected with the church. These served as a major social resource that often included both celebratory events and weekly 'clubs' where participants could share food and meals. Whereas 'working class' communities tended to be geographically placed (where the work was), 'middle class' participants 'imagined' a social community of people, a symbolic community of shared tastes (Anderson, 1991). Anderson points out that, in fact, most communities are in some way 'imagined' for we will not actually come face-to-face with many people around us who feel they belong to the same community. In light of the fact that health promotion is often geographically driven, maybe it is more pertinent to find out the qualitative differences between these 'social areas' and 'natural areas' in terms of people's needs and allegiances and what they actually want from their communities.

Although older participants had varying life experiences that resulted in a diverse collection of memories, nevertheless, a number of similar attitudes and practices had survived throughout the life-cycle. Whilst working class participants had endured far harsher economic circumstances, participants regardless of class and status had endured the hardship of war and its aftermath. I heard extraordinary accounts of ingenuity and pooling of resources, and hardship, rather than weakening many families, actually made them more determined to survive. This economic and social climate produced a life-long appreciation of food as a precious natural resource that should *never* be wasted. Thus, amongst older generations food is thought about in relation to past experiences that are reflected in practices that encompass such notions as thrift, ingenuity and good household management, rather than measured against present circumstances. A criticism here could be that these are selective memories in that people record those things that will create a 'certain impression' (Lambek & Antze, 1998). However, my participants felt that harbouring negative memories was a pointless exercise in the sense that what happened, or did not happen, cannot now be changed, "what's passed is the past" – their accounts expressed little concern about what might have been, rather, they stressed the fact that they had all survived when others had not (and there was always someone worse off than you) and in that sense they invariably described themselves as "lucky".

Whilst younger participants expected to be able to rely on, or expected to be cared for by, the welfare state when needed, amongst older participants the barest welfare system meant my families had experienced insecurity, poverty, poor medical care, food shortages, low wages and inadequate housing. Attitudes had much to do with how people coped. In the main, my older participants voiced the opinion that “you just got on with it”, “you had to cope”, there was “no choice”, so there was “no point moaning about it”, rather than expressing any political point. In poor families, or during times of food shortages or rationing, if scouse was eaten all week, porridge eaten at every meal during the day, or there was just a cup of oxo and bread for a meal, this did not appear to harbour resentment towards food providers, rather, it was always followed by “but your ma did her best”, “I loved me mum, I wouldn’t say anything ... you couldn’t expect anymore”, “me ma never had money”. One’s expectations were set at the level of everyone else’s expectations within a given community – without the media there was little knowledge of what was the norm elsewhere.

I recognise that it is easy to become nostalgic about reciprocity and working class networks and I do not dismiss the recorded accounts of persistent poverty, neglect and malnourishment. Joan, who was brought up in a tenement block in Everton in the late 1940s, early 1950s, recalled her mother going out to play bingo when there was little or no food on the table for nine children and her brothers and sisters all praying that their father would be run over because he spent most of his meagre income on drinking in the local pub. Joan can remember many other fathers doing the same thing. Bernie recalls how his father turned to criminal activity to escape poverty and how he and his brothers followed him – Bernie’s memories were of what he called “real poverty and terrible deprivation” rather than accounts of social networks or reciprocal exchange. He felt that “in the end” people look after themselves – although people knew that crime was wrong they were “quite happy to take stuff off you when they had a chance”. As they paid for anything they took there was no sense of obligation. (I am not suggesting here that crime was the preserve of the poor, as the recent M.P.’s expenses scandal has shown). Robert recalls that families were so poor they were rarely *able* to share or exchange food because there was just “barely enough” for each family to survive let alone help others.

Amongst younger families there appeared to be a certain detachment from the people around them; less need to be involved and thus little sense of obligation. It is now socially acceptable to follow one’s own goals, compass or star, but it has not always been so. In her

description of a married woman who finds love elsewhere and turns away from convention and social obligations at the end of the twentieth century, Chopin (1993 [1899]) writes of her main character, Edna, “each step which she took toward relieving herself from obligations, [such as managing the household, throwing dinner parties and ceaselessly caring for the family], added to her strength and expansion as an individual. She began to look with her own eyes; to see and to apprehend the deeper undercurrents of life. No longer was she content to “feed upon opinion” when her own soul had invited her” (p. 94). Chopin was bitterly criticised and ostracised from mainstream society for her writing and for kicking against the conventions of the day and the expectations of women – not only what they were expected to do, but also what they were expected to say both in public and private. Thus my older participants described family life in terms of the importance of roles, duties and relationships within and between families and how intergenerational kith and kin networks have always been considered important.

Older participants welcomed the chance to present accounts of their lives regardless of whether they considered they had merely ‘survived’ hard times, being the “under-class” as Bernie put it, or felt that *despite* poor circumstances they had achieved much. Whilst this was easier for the middle and upper classes, working class participants merely thought it was a harder, more challenging task but not outside their capabilities. In view of the fact that they had larger families and less money and could not pursue interests outside the home, it was considered a full-time job and on reflection “a job well done”. Rather than presenting an account of ‘wifely self-sacrifice’ female participants felt they were carrying out, to the best of their ability, “best practice” that was basic but dependable. Although not essential, the embedded nature of food within communities and families produced shared memories, practices and goals, in other words, people were able to look beyond themselves and their immediate families that nurtured a shared sense of values and the idea of “being in something together”. Stories of this part of their lives did not relate bitterness and resentment about poverty but centred on the need to cooperate with each other. It was not unusual for older participants to say that whilst they did not necessarily appreciate their lives when they were younger they certainly did now because life had changed so much and not necessarily for the better.

8.0.2 *Changing communities and families: the 'disembedded' nature of food*

Amongst older participants there was a feeling of sadness at the passing of the 'gemeinschaft' community that had helped shape their lives. The dissolution of 'old' communities and a weakening in community ties marked a shift from the 'gemeinschaft' community towards 'gesellschaft' that brought new trends in the way people began to live their lives. In changing economic circumstances many of my participants became more affluent, less dependent on others, more insular. There were no more 'unwritten rules', but rather participants set their own rules by which to live. Younger participants did not recognise aspects of the 'gemeinschaft' community - if food was offered to others, it was out of choice rather than an underlying sense of need or obligation. Similar to Phillips & Taylor (2009) I noticed examples of self-interest as a ruling principle; kindness and concern for others, rather than a virtue, were seen as a rather unnecessary part of life. I would argue that turning our kindness and concern inwards to our immediate families, rather than outwards, we are losing the art of giving and are denying ourselves a pleasure that is an integral part of wellbeing. I come back to the idea about the shared goals, knowledge and practices that produced social memories and the ability to see the bigger picture. Rather than the resilience and a kind of 'steeliness' that I found in older participants, younger participants appeared to be more discontented, restless, apathetic and much more likely to complain about their lot in life than older people. I feel one of the reasons for this was that younger participants were unaware of what people around them were doing or what they had or how they coped, they just measured their lives against what they saw from an array of media sources – tangible experience had been relegated in their world.

However, whilst I found that community ties do not necessarily survive at a day-to-day level where lives are intertwined, I did find them surviving in smaller communities. I found this firstly amongst allotment holders who had formed their own community based largely on the rules of 'gemeinschaft', and secondly within the family that I consider constitutes a community in its own right. Although older generations mourned the passing of the 'gemeinschaft' community, nevertheless shared experiences and commensality that emanated from family life and the now common practice of eating out produced a new range of collective embodied memories. These memories, I would contend, are no less powerful or meaningful than those of previous generations – they are just different. Families represented a sense of belonging that was enough in terms of social ties for young participants – what

they shared with their families they did not particularly want to share with the entire community. However, whilst privacy can mean keeping people at a distance, it can also represent isolation and loneliness. Following their most recent report, “Lonely Society?” the Mental Health Foundation (2010) have launched a media campaign to heighten awareness of loneliness that is threatening people’s mental and social health. The Foundation point out that whilst one can have a hundred friendships in the virtual world of ‘Facebook’ that one can dip in and out of, who is going to miss you for a few months if there are ninety-nine others to communicate with? Whilst virtual worlds have broken down barriers in communications (particularly for those who find social relations difficult), they have also created new ones in that people may judge or compare themselves with others in much the same way as before. The report found that more people than ever are suffering from loneliness and are losing touch with friends and family because they feel they should be “productive and busy” and, contrary to general opinion, it is children and young people aged between eighteen and thirty-four who are more susceptible to anxiety about being isolated than older adults. However, Leader (2010) has criticised the report in that it asks people to ‘invest in’ friends and family which turns loneliness into a commodity. Maybe this accounts for the fact that amongst my participants, “family” involved a sense of continuity; doing things the way they had always done them, for example, eating traditional food or creating new modes of tradition and traditional practices that remain both symbolic and meaningful.

8.1 *Health and the notion of tradition*

In chapter four I turned to the notion of tradition that included firstly ‘traditional’ food and food events (both mundane and special) situated within the context of city life and, secondly, within the context of the family wrapped up in ideas of sociality, comfort, identity, status and class. I also discussed tradition as a ‘common sense stock of knowledge’ (Schutz, 1970; Keller & Dixon-Keller, 1999) transmitted from one generation to another, that helps guide food choice and practice. Using this concept, food is not consciously thought about in terms of healthy or unhealthy, but rather diet is guided by embedded knowledge and practice and an intrinsic need to nurture one’s family through ‘good’ food. Based on tradition, older participants provided foods to keep families well and to aid recovery during times of illness. Tradition forged a deep relationship with people’s nutrition, in which individual preferences within particular social settings played an important part. Nutritional methods involved particular ways of preparing, cooking and eating food, and food habits, likes and dislikes

played an important part in the structure of everyday life. Passing knowledge and practice from one generation to another reinforced the idea of the lived experience of 'being at home', being confident and comfortable around food.

However, such knowledge and practice was less likely to be embedded in the lives of younger generations who appear to challenge and question the place of tradition in family and community life. This is reflected in changing tastes and the ability to draw on a wider and more varied knowledge base. My findings revealed that in the rise towards individualism, embedded knowledge wrapped up in the notion of tradition has been 'kidnapped' and superseded by the 'expert' view of public health bodies based on nutritional science that has seen the emergence of the now high-profile relationship between food and health. Food that was once 'just food', a taken-for-granted embedded resource, is now viewed as a matter of individual choice influenced by the notion of 'risk' from targeted diseases. In line with this new way of thinking about food, younger participants attempted to rationalise their choices through a constant endeavour to achieve some kind of balance between binary oppositions, such as 'good' and 'bad', and high and low fat, salt and sugar. In other words, health promotion is based on the idea of risky behaviour or 'lifestyle', the 'do's' and 'don't's', so to speak, of 'healthy' living compounded by increased pressure from the media that has created the 'ideal' or acceptable body image and size which for many is unobtainable and of itself risky.

8.1.1 The importance of the social and cultural meanings of food

Over generations the connection between food and sociality has long been recognised; "good fellowship passes around the table like a mystic cord binding people together with jest and laughter" (Chopin, 1993 [1899]). I discovered that traditional food was still embedded in my participant's lives to varying degrees across all generations suggesting that food remains a medium imbued with extensive social and cultural meanings. In terms of health, this finding confirms that food is not solely about nutrients and that subjective components of health can be satisfied through eating certain foods. Traditional food stood for comfort, 'being comforted' in times of illness or when one felt sad, uncertain or just plain fed up. It signified being loved and cared for by the giver; it fed the soul and offered continuity and security. It was a connection with the past and significant others and represented the familiar, like an old slipper, or served as an antidote to the strange and the unknown in a more 'reflexive' world

(Giddens, 1991; Bauman, 1992). Younger participants, I noted, also sought comfort in traditional foods when they were unwell and connected these foods with significant others who cared for them and past events. The desire to feel nurtured and to feel safe should, therefore, not be under-estimated in looking at the relationship between food and health (Eisenstein, 2007). This phenomenon problematises food choice in that traditional foods often do not fall in line with what is considered to be 'healthy' food, but these so called 'bad' foods, such as apple crumble and custard, ice-cream, a full English fried breakfast, fish and chips, feed the soul.

Although traditional foods retained shared meanings within families, in contributing to a sense of identity, differences existed across generations reflected in a sense of 'taste'.

8.1.2. *Food and identity: generational differences*

My study revealed that taste varies between generations and such taste is wrapped up in identity. Our 'habitus' reflects our taste that in part is governed by who we think we are, how we 'class' ourselves (measured against 'others') or how we want others to see and judge us (Bourdieu, 1984; Warde, 1997). This also involves the notion of 'conspicuous expenditure', consuming what others consume to show we are as good as others, or consuming more to make us feel better than others (Lichtenberg, 1997). Different generations share different tastes; habitus is not necessarily static unless we make it so. Older participants were happy to be known as 'traditional', 'plain' eaters, 'nothing fancy', that consolidated their position in their peer group with whom they shared food. This also distanced them from what they thought of as the 'fancy' food or 'foreign' food, widely eaten today. Whilst both younger and older participants still enjoyed traditional foods that reconnected them to their sense of identity, for example, being English through a full English Breakfast or Liverpudlian through the eating of 'scouse', younger participants also embraced new foods, new tastes and not 'plain' food that they saw as: boiled, boring, tasteless and colourless in comparison. Of course, for many older 'working class' participants, poverty did not allow for the cultivation of new or different tastes and experiences around food – food was there to provide energy and nourishment for workers and active children. In addition, different 'manners' and styles of tableware (for example, cutlery, tablecloths and so on) helped to demark classes, for example, the lavish picnics recorded by Marion and what her family referred to as "gran's standards".

However, whilst eating this embedded diet made older participants feel comfortable and confident around food that omitted a range of foods and practices that were not conducive to health, they were also trapped by them in the sense that they were sometimes unable to step out of their comfort zone and even try new tastes and new foods from around the world as younger participants had done. However, it is this more eclectic food choice that has given food and identity a new twist in terms of health.

8.2 *'You are what you eat' – the 'double-edged sword'*

My discussion takes up the idea that this continual pressure to choose between different foods (particularly in view of the fact that there is a myriad of unhealthy foods around) has come to reflect who people are and has consequently helped to problematise the relationship between food and health. I argue that whilst health promoters have successfully put food at centre stage in the quest for health by telling us 'we are what we eat', at the same time it has become a double-edged sword. This notion centres on claims and counter-claims about 'good' and 'bad' foods that can be mobilised in decision making, to express an appreciation of food and to position one's practices in moral and ethical terms. As Fox (2003) suggests, we now judge ourselves and others against the food we eat in that we are conspicuous by eating too much or too little, eating well, or eating badly. In turn, these filter into our relationship with health discourses and how we deal with health promotion messages – do we discipline the body or pamper the soul? Although 'we are what we eat' provides an important marker of whether one is eating well, such a high profile can also burden people with the idea that food is responsible for everything that may be going wrong in their lives, including ill health, or may distort their sense of self or self-worth. Through the ideal, slim body image fuelled by the media, fat is rarely regarded as aesthetically pleasing or desirable (Klein, 1997). This identity creation has turned food inwards, embedded in the individual but dislocated from socio-economic and cultural contexts, feelings and emotions and so devoid of meaning and practice.

My field notes suggested that people often felt that in a dietary sense they had failed in some way, even if their complaint was not necessarily diet-related, expressed in such phrases as "I don't know why I've got this because I eat well" or "I don't eat fat, or sugar, or junk foods and I've got high blood pressure". This suggests that people have a high expectation of food and by using the term 'you are what you eat' liberally, generically and glibly I believe food

has been given such a high status that it has become too important, too central to life and immediately puts undue pressure on people in how they perceive the relationship between food and health. 'You are what you eat' and the notion of "risk" that has been integrated into public health policies and health promotion messages, had been embodied by my participants in the use (sometimes constant) of binary oppositions such as good and bad foods, or phrases such as 'I try to be good' (suggesting moral judgement), seeking a 'balance' between good and bad foods and foods being 'naughty but nice' (as the advertising slogan says) to the extent that food was no longer enjoyable or choice made from the basic notion of common sense or necessity. It appeared that my participants were so busy trying to manage 'risk' that they were no longer thinking about prevention. This would indicate that the complexities surrounding messages are more than the 'non-expert' can fully understand – they become simplified to the point, perhaps, of being worthless and even counter-productive.

The relationship between 'you are what you eat' and health becomes further problematic in that participants more recently have had to make choices in a period of history when food is a commodity; plentiful and varied and is literally *everywhere*, produced and marketed to cater for every need and in a myriad of forms; food has now become fetishized, value added, a fashion accessory, a marketing challenge and a source of profit. It is extremely visible. 'You are what you eat' is bandied about in an obesogenic environment – in Liverpool city and its surrounding communities I observed more and more supermarkets, fast food outlets, eating places, food in newsagents, petrol stations, chemists, cathedrals, clothes shops, book shops and libraries where it never used to be. Kieran described food in schools that was being passed off as 'healthy options' and machines that dispense crisps, sweets and fizzy drinks can be found in local swimming venues, universities, places of work, bus and train stations and hospitals. Thus people are continually being encouraged (or even manipulated) to eat foods that health experts say they should not be eating, or certainly, not to excess.

At the same time society has now become obsessed with a very slim body image that has been absorbed by my female participants who see themselves as 'a fat person', 'an overweight person', and, almost without exception, wished they were 'a thinner person'. The danger here is that with the current wave of concern about obesity this is how people will be solely judged, or how they will be judged no matter whether they are an intelligent person, a kind person or an active person and this condition will become 'stigmatised' and they will have a distorted view of who they are (Goffman, 1993). What, where, when, how and with

whom people eat has become so central to identity that it is in danger of indicating *literally* who they are, rather than merely forming *part* of who they are. In this sense food loses its use-value in terms of nourishment as food choice becomes more and more a marker of status, style and taste. I feel this is an important issue if we consider that young people are constantly probing the boundaries of their identity and the influences of consumption may permeate their belief and value systems that in the long run cultivate social and moral norms within society (Gunter & Furnham, 1998).

Older generations tend not to view themselves and their bodies in terms of media images although they can remember health being promoted in magazines and the svelte figures of movie stars (Marilyn Monroe and Diana Dors, for example) being something to admire or even aspire to. The media was less prominent when they were young or during the time they raised their families (some 'working class' families did not own or shared a television and advertising did not start until the 1950s). There has been a change in emphasis from; food that signified a body well nourished, a fit and healthy body needed to fulfil a person's role within the family and the wider community, to food that now signifies a fit, healthy body that adheres to the recommendations of public health bodies and a culturally accepted 'ideal' body image. There has emerged a desire for 'eternal youthfulness' – people are using time to get more time, to have more life years – thus life itself has become a commodity in the same way as health and the body (Leader, 2010). This represents an important intergenerational finding in that within a 'food-centred' society younger participants have now become very 'conscious' about food and eating, described as "in your face all the time" (an issue for both male and female participants) which differs from previous generations whose dealings with food were an embedded part of life that was not 'in consciousness', so to speak, those common sense 'routinised', 'habit-led', practices (Ilmonen, 2001) that have endured.

8.3 *Generational food practices: implications for health*

Differences in the way food knowledge is internalised and produced, have inevitably impinged on the way food is practiced as reflected in the findings from my chapter concerned with bringing food from the ground, or from point of purchase, to the table. For example, I discovered that gardens and allotments that were once a much valued (even essential) resource to feed families on low incomes, in more recent times have become more of a pastime or social hobby that complements food provision increasingly amongst the middle

classes. Food shopping that once involved purchasing fresh food with an 'intelligent eye', as well as constituting a social activity amongst the community, has moved to the anomie of supermarkets that dominate the high street but, nevertheless, offer a huge choice of foods coupled with a high level of convenience. Families are encouraged to purchase more end products in the form of refined, processed and ready-prepared foods – these 'convenience' foods "transfer the time and activities of preparation from the household manager to the food processor" (Buckley et al., 2005: 7) and allow the nurturing mother to provide 'proper' food in a "time-squeezed" world (Carrigan et al., 2006). My findings suggest that changes in family practices have, to a large extent, arisen from the increased hours women now work outside the home that has brought with it a discussion of gender roles within the family over time. My findings support previous research that 'housework' remains, for the most part, the province of women with a varying input from men (Oakley, 1974; Hochschild, 1989; Coltrane, 2000). Whilst older generations spent most of their time in the home where they passed on shopping, cooking and general household knowledge and skills to younger generations, such 'social reproduction' (Moisio et al., 2004) is now less likely to take place with the result that younger generations are becoming both skill-poor and time-poor. These shifting practices have inevitably influenced food preparation, cooking and both the content of meals and structure of mealtimes.

Together with the increased use of ready-prepared food, eating has become more haphazard, fractured and individual. A major finding has been the emergence of 'children's food', a 'cultural construction' (James, 2008) that has debunked the idea of food served out of a common pot that encouraged family unity, towards the idea of children's 'separateness' in terms of food choice and taste both inside and outside the home. Such novelty foods have health implications in that they are often highly processed and contain high levels of fat, salt and sugar, the very components the public are encouraged to avoid. In contrast, I found a sustained continuity in eating habits amongst older participants. In order to form a protective shell against complex decision making and changes in food practices, they have adopted a common strategy in the form of an embedded 'world of routine practices' (Schutz, 1970; Ilmonen, 2001). These are performed without conscious deliberation and sit amongst a series of practices that participants believe are conducive to health and ensure longevity.

Older participants had embodied food practices, knowledge and meanings from a young age. They had been involved in the growing, shopping, preparation, cooking and serving of food

alongside their grandparents, parents and significant others. Everything they knew about food came from the community (including school) the family, a few favourite cookery books and government pamphlets released during the War. Food practices sat amongst a simple shared set of social practices conducive to health. Although Susan, Mollie, Elizabeth and Marion ate such things as full fat milk, roast potatoes cooked with lard and home-made cake, a diet that has been critically assessed by health promoters, they had always been physically active, slept well, enjoyed peaceful moments, fresh air and social support within their families and the community. It is this *set* of practices, of which food was *one*, that they believed had ensured longevity and thus served as a marker of good health, whilst at the same time providing a template that informed the way they lived their lives and how they raised their families. This way of life ‘suited’ them and, significantly, they showed no anxiety or discomfort around food or food choices – they appeared to be confident about using the knowledge that they had accrued. Except in the event of developing certain diseases (such as diabetes) they did not feel under any pressure to change or conform to what they considered to be ‘new’ ideas (those that came from health promotion bodies or scientific findings in the media and so on). They referred to a past that to them was a familiar, safe and dependable place to return or refer back to. When I reflected on my history section, I realised the massive changes that this generation have lived through and why they expressed the need to draw on the past.

Amongst the first and second generations the view of the family was more unified in that members’ interests and needs were similar. Poverty and rationing, in particular, had made people creative alongside the need to be thrifty. Participants mentioned the ability to ‘make something out of nothing’, make do or mend’, or ‘a little bit of this or that’ could be made into a meal. Again, this ability had been passed down by watching and cooking with grandparents and parents. However, although there is much talk around the idea of ‘frugal’ cookery based on these skills and limited resources (Smith, 2008) my interviews, observations and conversations revealed that relative poverty today saw participants turn to cheap, processed food such as chips and curry sauce, sausage rolls or hamburgers, rather than making a cheap meal from fresh food such as lean mince and vegetables. These ‘new’ meals, to older participants, were not “proper” meals, not just because of the ingredients, but also because they felt a meal was something you made for your family with love and care. A poignant memory recalled by Robert was watching his mother prepare a meal for him that stood as confirmation of her love and care. A proper meal was defined as a cooked meal

made with fresh ingredients, such as 'meat and two veg', a hot plate of scouse or fish on a Friday, needed for growing children and working adults - food fit for purpose shared according to both need and status. As I noted in my previous chapter, this historically situated ideal of the 'cooked' meal being a 'proper' meal has remained and still plays a central part in the provision of school meals, although hot food has no nutritional advantage over 'cold' food (for example, roast beef). A generational difference lies in the fact that older generations would only have, for instance, a piece of bread and butter with jam, a few biscuits or one cake for tea if they had a cooked meal in school, whilst younger participants felt they should give children a hot meal for lunch and tea providing a higher calorie intake.

My findings revealed that gender roles amongst older age groups were more clearly defined across generations - men went out to work, women stayed at home when the children arrived and the latter, when old enough, helped in the home. As head of the household and the 'breadwinner' deference was shown to the husband and father in matters of food choice. Reinforced by previous generations and the education system, female 'working class' participants were groomed for work in factories, or 'service', and ultimately to be 'housewives', whilst more 'middle class' participants with higher standards of living and thus aspirations, received a full education that secured a profession, but even for them, the world of work was left behind with the arrival of children and they also became 'housewives'. The common goal amongst my participants in the older generational groups was to nurture their families to the best of their ability and if they could help others to do so, all well and good. A point to bear in mind is that these families lived in the shadow of the 'Workhouse System' that operated until 1929 (Crowther, 1981) – the difference between poverty and destitution was not great as those who fell on hard times could testify. As previously mentioned, Susan claimed her sister's illegitimate child to be hers to save her going into the workhouse, demonstrating that survival for working class families could be tenuous. The struggle to survive filled up each day in terms of energy and activity; work was embedded in the home and there were no split loyalties between home and work. If participants took up a few hours work outside the home (or inside by taking in washing) then children, according to age, were expected to cover their duties. This ensured a continuation of family care and how they learnt to raise healthy families.

In contrast, younger generations were able to control family size and the post-war economic boom that brought higher wages, white goods, a greater choice and variety of foods, coupled

with a greater number of female participants entering the job market. The goal of looking after the family well had not changed, but did not often show up in the form of shared food practices. Whilst participants initially worked for ‘pin money’, ‘the icing on the cake’, or just for a few ‘extras’ whereby earnings did not form a major part of the household budget or the hours worked impact greatly on the running of the household, in more recent times, my participants worked greater hours outside the home that further raised ‘standards of living’ (in terms of material possessions) and changed household dynamics. Women seriously taking up job opportunities represented a major generational change in my families. Whilst currently working mothers told me that they find life difficult and are constantly pressed for time, older participants, with a wry smile, would answer that they brought up ten children in a ‘two up, two down’ with no modern facilities and they managed to get everything done including washing, ironing, cleaning and cooking fresh food everyday for the family. It was hard work, but they expected it to be hard work and this was in line with the norms of the day; looking after one’s family was simply ‘what you were about’. However hard work also brought rewards in the sense that they felt they could congratulate themselves for “getting through another week” successfully. Whereas younger participants constantly derided themselves for not being at home when they felt they should, missing school events, not cooking ‘proper’ meals and so on, older participants carried no such guilt. Life may have been hard, but there was always that gleam in their eye that said ‘but I did it’, ‘I did the best I could’, ‘I rose to the challenge’. For this reason alone I felt a deep respect for this generation of participants – they seemed almost regal, proud from the satisfaction that they had stood alone, maybe stood out from others, in raising ‘good’, strong, kids that “rarely ailed” and “ate everything that was put in front of them”. Self-reliance and self-esteem are seen as important parts of health and to older participants it appeared to be important that they felt their lives had been of value. The accounts of young participants showed that in caring for older family members they also valued what had been done for them by both parents and grandparents.

I discovered marked differences in expectations amongst younger generations, but these did not necessarily come from the participants themselves. Whilst older participants had been expected to stay at home to manage the household, younger participants felt the pressure to work in some capacity outside the home. As Katherine noted “I found myself having to justify being at home with the children to whoever I spoke to, because women are *expected* to go out to work”. Housework began to be seen as a hindrance to doing other things, including any expectation to cook when they could not or did not, often cook (even though at times

they wished they could, or still did). As Lane (2009) has suggested, “family is made up of modest duties we’ve learned to despise” (p.1). Here I found the consequence of youngest participants not being shown how to cook at home because their parents worked, or at school because, for the last two decades approximately, it has no longer been a compulsory part of the school curriculum. I began to question why young people did not cook because I discovered that not all my older participants learnt *everything* about cooking at home or in school, but rather by trial and error as the many people I spoke to did. Apart from the fact that they resented the idea that they were expected to cook, I found the answer in a remark made by Meryl, who came from a family who had always cooked; it has been made ‘too easy’ for us not to cook. Of course, she was referring to the food manufacturers ‘taking the place’ of food production in the home (Buckley et al., 2005).

In interviews and conversations I discovered that many participants, and significant others around them, having given much of their energy and thought to work, want to relax or enjoy other pursuits rather than spending time preparing and cooking food. The food industry recognise this scenario and they offer to do it all for them; these are lucrative ‘value-added’ products from pre-prepared vegetables to a ready cooked banquet, from ethnic to traditional food (Lang & Heasman, 2000). These are an anathema to older participants who have always cooked - they see them as second-rate, tasteless, expensive and a sign of laziness. However, I did find that the less mobile or widowed welcomed these products from time to time and I would contend that they serve much the same purpose as the meals women would bring to new mothers during their ‘confinement’ mentioned by Susan, or buying fish and chips on a Friday – food that offers respite and I would say we all need respite now and again. ‘Culinary luddism’ (Lyon & Colquhoun, 1999) only serves to make people *feel* bad and inadequate and that is not good for health. Younger participants who are working mothers find these a ‘boom’ – grateful for a pizza to put in the oven when they have to dash out for a meeting, or ready-made sauces for a quick Bolognese or casserole, but at the same time, this puts ‘nutrition’ in the hands of others, for example, the amount of salt. However, a major generational finding that has arisen from these changing practices has been the fragmentation of meals and meal occasions that has led to the cultural construction of ‘children’s food’ as a separate category from food eaten by adults moving away from the concept of shared food common to all and to some extent abdicating responsibility for what children are eating.

8.3.1. *Children's food: a 'cultural construction' and practice*

The use of more processed food has led to individualised eating and a dichotomy between adult and children's food that symbolises children's 'separateness' (James, 2008) that has enabled adults to make several meals at once or even showing deference to children's food choices. Such a dichotomy and practice stood out as another major difference and a 'bone of contention' between generations in the move away from food being common to all, to one that 'pandered' to tastes. Working parents served foods that appealed to their children (created by the market) to assuage guilt, enhance popularity and maintain equilibrium in the family; older participants felt that this did not equate with nourishment or nurturing the family. Patricia expressed the views held by those who did not feed children separately by emphasising that this is where parents have lost sight of what children are eating and control has been lost with regard to health, particularly as the greater the choice offered, the greater the use is made of processed food. My data revealed that more fragmented food practices inhibits the transmission of the aforementioned 'common sense stock of knowledge' (Schutz, 1970), or 'social reproduction' (Moisio et al., 2004) that produce collective memories within the family. An exception to this was the strong memories and present close relationships with grandparents who were held in high esteem by participants. However, whereas bonds and knowledge had enjoyed continuity, perpetuated through consistent food practices and meal patterns, doing things the way grandma used to do it – fragmentation had made replication more uncertain.

With parents being hard pushed to cook shared family meals, somewhere along the line it seems that love has dropped out of the parent child relationship involving food – household management is now described as 'spinning plates' as full time working mothers juggle with work and home commitments. There has been a strong reproach from The Children's Society (2009) that parents are making the most of their own lives rather than contributing to the good of others and that work comes before children for material gain (in the misguided belief that this brings happiness), the pursuit of success and intellectual satisfaction. However, amongst my participants (having become accustomed to a certain income and standard of living), it had not proved an easy task to limit or cut back working hours in order to nurture their families through food as Patricia and Grace had both made a conscious decision to do. My findings suggest overall that it is never easy to give up one thing for

another when there is benefit, albeit of a different nature, to be gained from each – another antinomie to wrestle with alongside food choice.

However, I did find evidence that shared family practices retained their importance whether women worked or not - these remained a precious part of family life. Sharing a roast dinner, scouse and Christmas food had survived as traditional, shared practices that kept families together – such occasions were often the *only* time when families were in one place at one time when food retained its role as a ‘catalyst for family unity and identity’ (Mintz, 1992; Lang, 1996; Fulkerson et al., 2006). Those participants who did not see their families or members of the community often pointed to the loneliness of food occasions when “eating just wasn’t the same without others”. This finding confirms the idea that food still retains social and cultural dimensions that families still value and should be heeded by health promoters.

8.4 *A critical approach to health promotion*

Health policies are still predominantly organised around the assumption that improvements in health will largely come from new and improved treatments and from the greater availability of medical resources. However, I would contend that public health campaigns need to incorporate the idea of ‘habitus’ that structures and is structured by the social world in which we live. When people are walking around supermarkets that are laden with unhealthy products, return tired after a stressful day in work and do not feel like doing anything, have tastes, or lack tastes, that do not fall in line with what is considered to be ‘healthy’ food, have little social contact with those who live around them and seek comfort in food, health promotion must seem remote and irrelevant. It also suggests that manufacturers should produce healthy alternatives. Maybe this is why I discovered people listen to Jamie Oliver who they feel is at least trying to reach out to, and work alongside, “real people” on the ground in dire situations by offering them practical solutions to their problems around diet.

Maybe this should suggest to local government that it should pay attention to the somewhat invisible communities as well as the high profile, very visible, cities of culture. After the millions of pounds that were spent in Liverpool during the ‘Capital of Culture’ year, people in the suburbs to whom I have spoken, cannot see anything to indicate that it has left a lasting legacy for them. However, even if there has been little structural change, nevertheless in

Garston, for example, there exists a wealth of knowledge and skills that could be harnessed in order for intergenerational work to take place. I met people who were willing to do work on a voluntary basis if funds were made available and community cooking has already proved to be popular with young people because the production of a tasty healthy meal made them *feel* good. Seedhouse (2001) points out that it has become easier to acknowledge factors that impact on health than design effective interventions to address them; it is easier to develop a 'healthy eating' project than deal with community health issues. Crucial to health is the importance of what one can do in, or make of, life. According to our experiences, how does life make us feel? How we feel influences our practices. Practices, according to Reckwitz (2002) are behaviours which consist of several elements that are interconnected and include forms of bodily and mental activities, 'things' and their uses, background knowledge in the form of understanding, know-how, states of emotion and motivational knowledge.

How people are made to *feel*, I would suggest, should be a key consideration of health promotion. We are still confronted with this gritty problem of why many people are not responding to health promotion messages. During my document analysis I came across the leaflets put out by the Ministry of Food (1945a and 1945b) during the years of rationing and noted the tone of the message. The starting point was to give housewives credit for what they already knew, and were doing, in order to feed their families well and saw the information they were providing as supplementary to this knowledge and practice. They were not dictating to the initiated, rather they were providing added new knowledge about vitamins and minerals and the function of foods within particular groups. I would contend that the starting point for health promotion today is the assumption that people do not know what healthy food is and are being told they should eat it. However, my data overwhelmingly showed that people *do* know what healthy food is and they are not being given credit or recognition for that, and it has been suggested that it is 'a waste of money' informing people of something they already know (Fischler, 2008).

Throughout my many interviews and conversations there appeared to be general resentment about being told what to eat, particularly in view of the fact that my participants felt there is increased surveillance in all areas of life. Across all generations and classes participants did not manage to eat five portions of fruit and vegetables every day, a goal they felt was unrealistic - it was too much to carry if you did not have a car, too much to keep fresh if you only had time to shop once a week, too expensive if you liked more exotic varieties, one

portion was too much if that meant half a cucumber and so on. Excuses maybe, but what looks good on paper does not necessarily translate easily into people's lived experience of food practices or what they are prepared to do in the name of health. The point I want to make here is that my participants so often feel they have an inadequate diet despite the fact that they are 'trying' or 'doing their best' to follow the guidelines. I did not meet or talk to anyone who purposely set out to eat unhealthily and they certainly recognised the risks associated with doing so - if they did eat unhealthily it was more to do with comfort, a feeling of uncertainty about housing arrangements under regeneration, a 'weak' moment in the supermarket when they have grabbed a chocolate bar at the checkout and so on. As Frances (Family 3) pointed out, when you cannot envisage the future and are being forced to think of the 'here and now', have been through times when you have had almost *nothing*, then you wouldn't want to give up the things you have grown to love now ... would you? This is about the lived experience of food and how we embody everything around us.

National guidelines are for the whole population based on *average* health that does not take account of local conditions or particularities. What does *average* health really mean to anyone? We cannot give people generic information and then expect them to just get on with it – we have to follow up credible information (I recognise eating five portions of fruit and vegetables a day come from epidemiological findings) with adequate support in order to keep people on track and maintain good practices. Whilst both good and bad habits can be embodied, it is often the latter that trip us up and we need someone to catch us when we fall. As Frances pointed out in talking about managing her diabetes, we are attracted to foods that are unhealthy – they look and taste nice, it's that simple. Familiarity appears to breed pleasure. As Mark Twain said, 'old habits cannot be thrown out of the upstairs window; they must be coaxed down the stairs one at a time'.

Neither do I think we can lay the blame at people's feet when health promotion messages are inconsistent and conflicting – scientific research (particularly when it is picked up by the media) does not show a consensus of opinion and this only serves to confuse people. I see evidence in publications aimed at the general public that make a genuine attempt to keep messages simple and realistic - this makes them a little more robust against changing findings within the scientific world, for example, eat a handful of almonds, dried apricots, an apple and banana each day to keep the doctor away (Hicks, 2005) or 'eat food, not too much, mainly plants' (Pollan, 2008). The latter recommendation is, in fact, the basis of many

‘working class’ diets and meals during the war years described by my older participants, particularly those who lived on mainly vegetable laden soups and stews. I would suggest that as the idea of ‘bad’ foods in relation to health are also equated with pleasure and ‘good’ foods with restraint, maybe a move towards using ‘wholesome’ and ‘empty’, as Grace described them, would be more useful. I feel these would avoid the moral connotations that have grown up around choices and link up more positively with the idea of ‘nourishing’ the families that are cherished.

I feel one of the key points to emerge from my study is the different *value* generations place on food. For older generations, the hard work involved in growing food or earning sufficient money to buy food, the careful planning needed to feed families (particularly in times of scarcity or rationing), the time invested in preparation and cooking, made food a precious local resource. The value of food lay in its necessity for, and ability to help ensure, the survival of the family. Food is now a global concern, a more-or-less taken-for-granted commodity in the western world that is presented in a myriad of forms at a range of prices – people have come to expect cheap food, but they can also indulge in very expensive food. People can make endless choices about where, when, what and how to eat – food is a form of convenience, entertainment, display of status and a reflection of the self. The culture that surrounds food has changed and is changing. Whereas families were once preoccupied with getting enough food, there now exists an obesogenic environment that includes a wealth of nutritionally useless foods. One way to avoid these foods is to make your own and it is only recently that the importance of being able to cook is really hitting home and those in authority are waking up to the fact that nobody is taking responsibility for teaching young people how to cook. My data revealed that this age group want to be able to cook and given the chance they enjoy it – it makes them *feel* good. Young people need to know they can develop body techniques, skills and knowledge and replicate what they see in order to become competent cooks. If they do not see cooking being done within the family, in school or amongst the community, an assumption cannot be made that information alone will lead to practice. People need to engage children’s interest in food. In constantly trying to make children happy maybe there is now a fear of children failing when presented with a challenge. However, I would suggest that cooking serves as a social ‘enabler’ much in the same way as playing music or sport and as Grace commented, one misses out on so much in life if one cannot cook. It is almost universally available for anyone to do. I would also agree with Short (2006) that ‘cooking’ needs to be redefined so that people do not *feel* bad or inadequate

about using ready-made sauces, tinned vegetables and ready prepared garlic, for example, as my participants did at the end of a stressful day, particularly if they encourage the use of fresh food in varying combinations. Food is not only about making good choices, it is also about compromise.

Although food has an important utilitarian function, I suggest that health in relation to food should also be about pleasure for both the giver and receiver. This can come from making a cup of tea just the way someone likes it or dishing up a full roast dinner, the favourite meal of my participants. In this thesis I have discussed both celebratory and everyday food in the context of people's lives and how these can be 'mutually reinforcing' (Sutton, 2001) – the roast dinner and scouse, for instance, that together have structured many a 'food for the week' in the lives of my Liverpool families.

8.5 *Methodological concerns*

Each generation has been faced with challenges with regard to food provision and it is my belief that we can learn something from the past that can contribute to the present in order to make things better for the future. The importance of intergenerational work and my own study is that we need to preserve food histories if we consider that the social structures in which food practices take place are forever changing. As Mintz (1985) discovered in his study of sugar, meanings given to food are not set in stone and neither do they provide a blueprint of any particular group's world-view. Whilst we are still able to read the varied preserved stories, accounts and recipes from previous centuries, we need to bear in mind that current technologically stored data can be lost at the touch of a button. This brings to the fore the importance of tradition that can offer a sense of continuity - without the transmission of stories, practices and knowledge, young people will feel little connection with foods past, or a sense of comfort, and therefore will not see its relevance to their present or future lives and sense of identity. Tradition in this sense carries meaning conveyed through meals and those who prepare and make food for those around them, both special and the mundane. Food embodies memories of emotional comfort and discomfort and the five senses that connect or reconnect us with time, place, people and events (Sutton, 2001; Meyers, 2001). There appears to be a loss of the tangible everyday experiences that evoke shared memories on which identities are formed, leaving just a few rituals such as the Sunday roast dinner and Christmas food that people share. End products do not carry that same meaning that

furnishes us with knowledge or understanding of its value or content; similar to Fearnley-Whittingstall (2006) my data show that unlike previous generations who grew their own food and shopped locally with a keen eye, prepared and cooked their own food, younger generations are becoming 'alienated' and 'distanced' from food processes and practices. In a world that is becoming less and less tactile with the growth of technology, maybe this is not surprising.

Family research can provide valuable intergenerational data. My research found little evidence that the children today are involved (or expect to be involved) in food practices – they are not being taught to be discerning shoppers, to chop vegetables, to taste sauces or to lay tables, all part of nurturing and creating a sense of family. I would suggest that only by 'doing' can children appreciate, and place value on, the time and trouble that goes into managing a household. The lives of the 'working classes' I have described in this study may appear to have been hard, routinized, simplistic and the food boring and plain measured against what is on offer today, but control of eating and feeding the family was firmly in the hands of those who immediately cared for them. Whilst children are now likely to question all spheres of life that includes food provision, we should not lose sight of the importance of laying down good dietary practices for their future health. Rozin (1991) has emphasised the influence of food tastes introduced within the family and rather than the taste of over-flavoured and processed foods there is a need to reclaim simple, clean, tastes experienced from a young age. We are told that children are the future and we should nurture them as such, whilst at the same time we are surrounded by cheap, empty foods that are targeted (even aggressively marketed) at these same children in the name of commercial profit.

Intergenerational debate and sharing of knowledge, I believe, could make a difference in the way health is promoted within the community. My research has confirmed the view of Lewis (2005) that we often 'other' older generations when they could make an important contribution to health promotion within the community. Whole stories can be told around food, for example, 'this is the way my grandmother did it, she did it this way, that way and I do it the same way and you can do it too'. Whilst this would have to be done with care in order not to create confusion between old 'wisdom' and new knowledge, at the same time, it might take away some of the 'mystique' that has come to surround cooking practices (for instance, top chefs and whole television programmes seem to be necessary to tell people how to do it) - thus food can be talked about in a very personal way.

8.6 Recommendations

A positive template is needed from which families can carry out food practices that help to maintain health and avoid illness and disease. I do not mean healthy food *per se*, but enjoyment, sensuous relationships with food, connections with and through food that produce positive food memories. These kind of embodied memories are not merely recollections of what we have eaten, but represent a deep desire to consciously repeat the past because past foods, food events and practices carry positive meanings. This involves what I have referred to as a 'stock of knowledge' and a 'common sense' understanding of food that becomes embedded in families and communities, and from this solid and dependable knowledge base it is less likely that we will produce a nation of the 'worried well' (Helman, 2007). 'Good food' should be the basis of all diets, a basic human right, but we have to know what good food is, what it tastes like and how to cook it, to make this a reality. Interventionist strategies, therefore, aimed at improving the diets of populations ought to consider the embodied meanings and sensory pleasure response to foods in addition a wide range of demographic and socio-cultural variables. My study has shown that we cannot ignore history and culture in the study of food practices; to do so would be to ignore the roots of such practices and only look at what lies on the surface. Anthropologists have long recognised that food choices and modes of eating reflect many symbolic, affective, familial and gender-specific associations. Modifying dietary patterns is particularly challenging given the highly ritualized nature of eating and food selection and the meanings encoded in foods and food-centred events. When health promoters understand the historical and social shaping of food patterns they can work in partnership with people in order to shift cultural norms towards more healthy ways of eating. The obstacle to understanding is not ignorance but the presumption that we already have all the answers and unless we talk to people we will not discover what they actually *do* and how they *feel* around food. Surveys that inform public policy will not tell us these things and it is the reflection of differences over time that can serve as reference points and help us to understand the situation that is evolving around food.

8.7 Conclusion

My chapters and themes provide evidence about how food 'gets done' that has revealed a greater insight into food practices across and between generations of Liverpool families. My

findings challenge orthodox health promotion models of consumption and choice that involve eating nutrients, personal responsibility, the management of risk and maximum choice. Health has come to be defined by governments who exercise surveillance over it and by commercial interests who turn it into a commodity rather than human beings who form their opinions according to their lived experiences.

We have witnessed decades whereby communal cooperation has been substituted for the divisive forces of competition and individualism reflected in the current recession. The ‘boom’ time, the ‘nice’ decade of rising house prices, falling unemployment and budget deficit has turned ‘nasty’ as these factors have been reversed (Elliott, 2010). It is not known what the effect of the longest and deepest recession since the Second World War will be, but in some way or another, it will affect everyone. For example, creating ‘free schools’ no longer controlled by local authorities may let global food giants in through the ‘back door’ of nutrition and health education. Rather than being seen as philanthropy, it will merely assist the corporate agenda.

By setting up a dialogue between public health issues and my data, informing one against the other, I have highlighted food and eating as a cultural and social practice involving the pleasure of sharing, learning from previous generations and commensality (he who takes his share) that has enabled both myself and, I hope, the reader to learn more about the relationship between food and health. Habitus and knowledge undoubtedly have a bearing on food practices that are influenced by culinary traditions, a sense of community, the food industry, time-space compression, food skills, personal preferences and values. Lived experiences have shown that the value placed on food differs between generations born out of differing food cultures, but on the other hand there has emerged a shared view that stresses the need for ‘simplicity’ in relation to ‘healthy’ food – “clean tastes” from food that has not been ‘infected’ by additives and flavourings, “uncomplicated food”, “simple” ingredients and methods of cooking. Whereas older participants did not have fridges in which to prolong the life of food that necessitated shopping and cooking everyday whether they felt like it or not, younger participants are able to pick and choose what they eat, opt out of cooking if they feel like it, eat out on the spur of the moment, because food can be kept fresher for longer. These changes have been embraced and welcomed by many families.

Food experiences can be coloured by our enjoyment or dislike of food and cooking and whether people are able to make the connection between ‘the healthiness of our diet and an active, socially engaged life’ indicates that health is more than a physical independent variable separate from ourselves: Rather than being merely the absence of pain or discomfort, health is a dynamic relationship between the individual, friends, family and the communities in which people live, love and work (Belton & Belton, 2003). I suggest that a move away from a focus on individual acts of eating and incorporation that involve a certain degree of loneliness in decision-making is needed to one where health promotion embraces the social and cultural embodiment of family and community.

8.8 Opportunities for further research

The relationship between food and health is a complex one and if we rely on generalisations without reflection then we can be led down a ‘blind alley’ (Seedhouse, 2001). The information here was obtained from a relatively few number of families in one city at a particular time. The challenge for health promotion is to engage a high proportion of the population in such reflection on its food culture and to pose such questions as: why do we eat this? Is there something better? Why not eat together more often?

I believe my research can be carried forward to look at ways of making food interesting enough for both adults and children to become engaged with the idea of food and health without it being afforded such a high status that makes it both intimidating and a burden as people try to reconcile lay knowledge and professional prescriptions. Therefore, strategies for future ‘food work’ need to re-embed food as one of the ‘taken-for-granted’ aspects of daily life rather than a self-conscious part of it.

My ethnographic approach to cooking has revealed much and Short (2006) has pointed out that there has been little research into the transmission of cooking skills in previous eras and cooking practices only formed part of my study. Whether the transmission of such skills lead to better eating habits and “health” is unknown - my interpretations have been culturally and historically specific and it would need further research at different times and places to establish whether my analysis may be generally applicable. Such research could once again employ the embodiment paradigm and the notion of embodied memory.

My thesis has shown that food memories endure - whether they are good or bad, happy or sad, they remain, waiting to be told. There are many stories to be told through and around food and food itself can tell stories. Indeed, we can record life histories through food for it is an acceptable medium through which other life issues and experiences can be discussed. However, memories that are carried by Liverpudlians, or indeed anyone, are not indefinite and we need to capture them before they are lost.

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APPENDICES 1-6

Appendix 1: Habitus, Lifestyle and Food Choice

Appendix 2: Socialisation

Appendix 3: Kinship Diagram

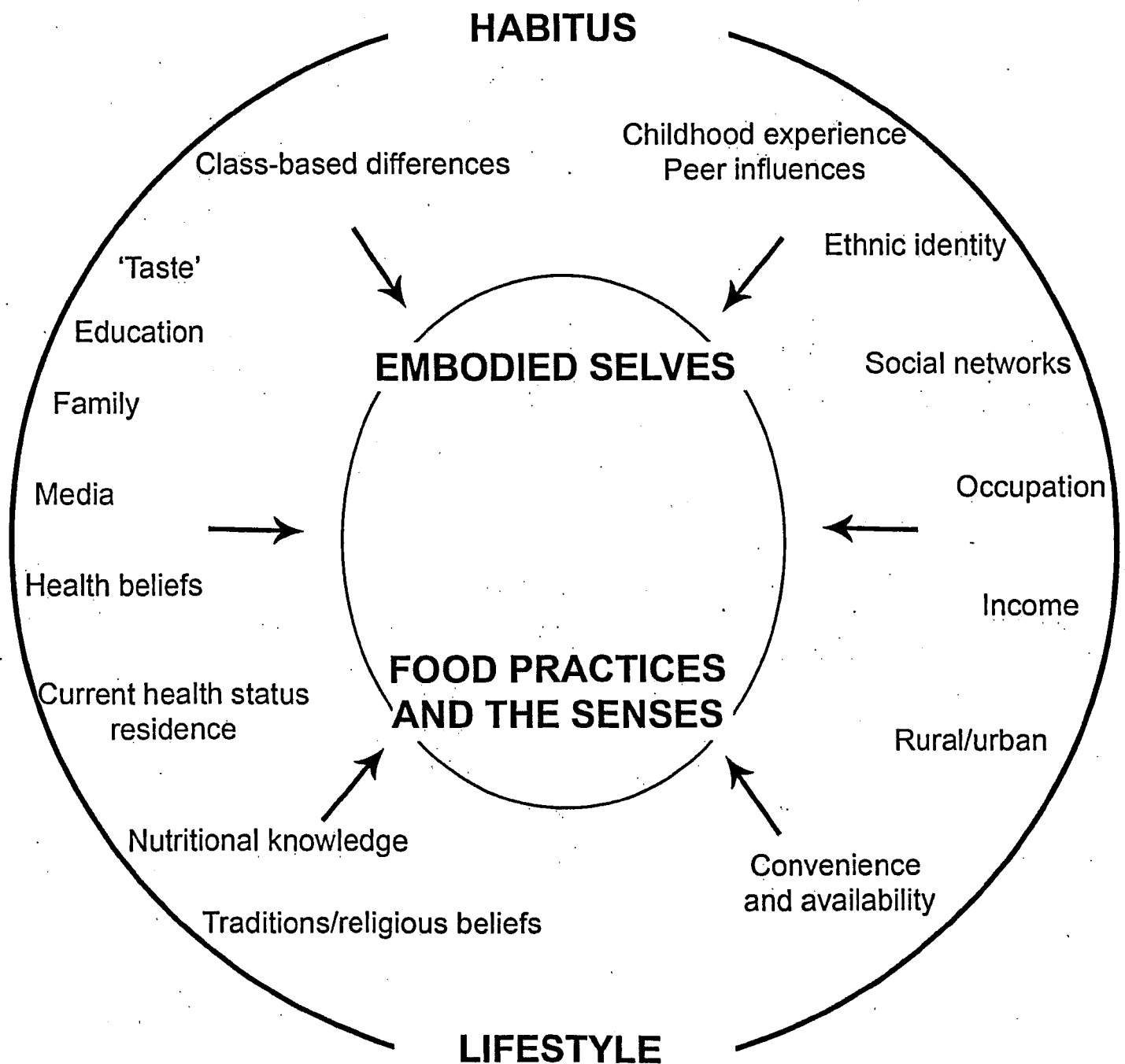
Appendix 4: Consent forms

Appendix 5: Participant Information Sheet

Appendix 6: Data analysis workings

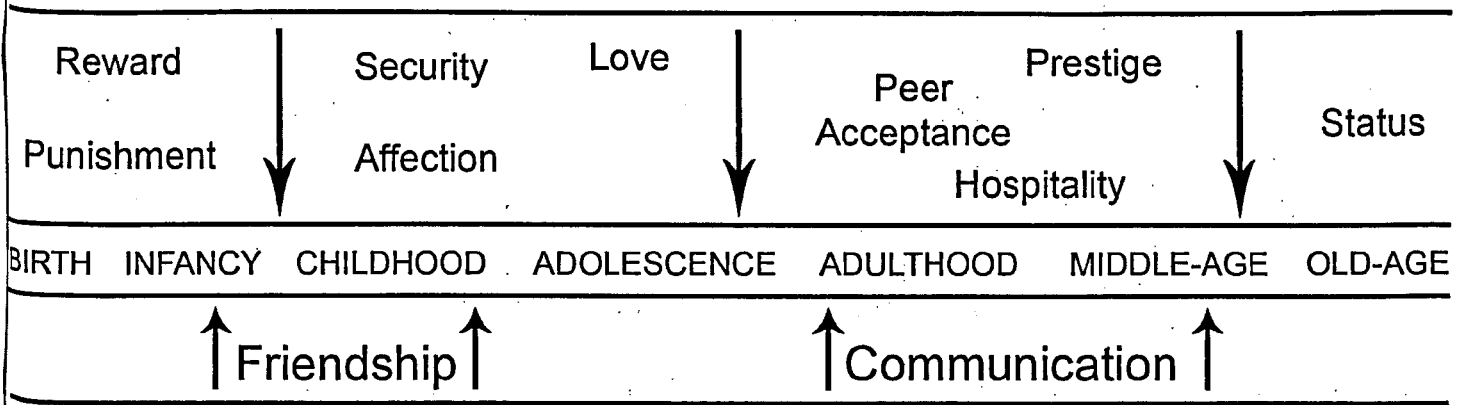
APPENDIX 1

HABITUS, LIFESTYLE AND FOOD CHOICE



APPENDIX 2

Socialization and Food Usages



While the learning of various social meanings of food is a continuous process, particular values or usages may be emphasized at different stages of the life span. The role of food in friendship and communication may be considered to be a 'normative' meaning, operating most of the time.

Impact of cultural subsystems on food values

Ideological	Humans have the right to control the earth's resources to their own ends. It is good to feed the poor and underprivileged.
Technological	Humans can solve the world food problems through the application of ever-more sophisticated technology. Greater energy inputs are needed to produce food.
Economic	Food is treated as a commodity with a specific monetary value. Food supply and distribution occurs independantly of actual human need.
Education	Food knowledge, beliefs and attitudes are transmitted from one generation to the next. Research efforts are directed to improving the food supply.
Political	Government regulations affect production, trade, distribution, safety and quality of food.
Family	Each family member directly influences the food habits of others. Changes in the diet of one family member has repercussions for the rest of the family.
Mass Media	Food habits are shaped by a powerful socialising agency. Food products are promoted selectively on a non-nutritional basis.

APPENDIX 3

1. Allerton & Hunts Cross

2. Anfield

3. Belle Vale

4. Central

5. Childwall

6. Church

7. Clubmoor

8. County

9. Cressington

10. Croxteth

11. Everton

12. Fazakerley

13. Greenbank

14. Kensington & Fairfield

15. Kirkdale

16. Knotty Ash

17. Mossley Hill

18. Norris Green

19. Old Swan

20. Picton

21. Princes Park

22. Riverside

23. Speke Garston

24. St. Michaels

25. Truebrook & Stoneycroft

26. Warbreck

27. Wavertree

28. West Derby

29. Woolton

FAMILY 1
From Garston

SUSAN aged 96
Great-grandmother

↓
JOY aged 60
Daughter

↓
KATHERINE aged 40
Granddaughter

↓
JEMMA aged 17
Great-granddaughter

FAMILY 2
From Garston

MARGARET aged 71
Grandmother

↓
ELLEN aged 51
Daughter

↓
TERRANCE aged 55
Son-in-law

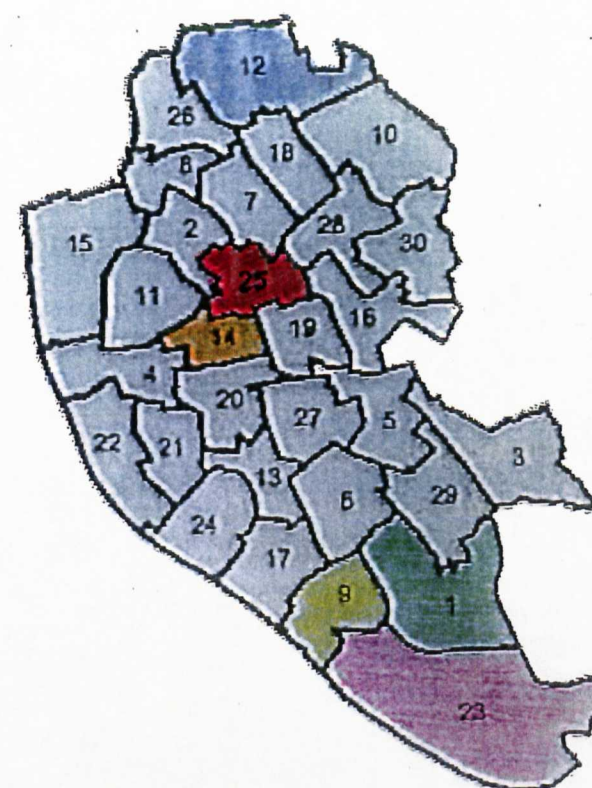
↓
MERYL aged 23
Granddaughter

FAMILY 3
From Garston

FRANCES aged 65
Grandmother

↓
DENISE aged 44
Daughter

↓
MELANIE aged 21
Granddaughter



FAMILY 4
From Cressington

MOLLIE aged 88
Grandmother

↓
GRACE aged 51
Daughter

↓
JON aged 28
Grandson

FAMILY 5
From Kirkby
(Fazakerley)

LILY aged 90
Great-grandmother

↓
ROBERT aged 65
Son

↓
MAUREEN aged 42
Granddaughter

↓
SALLY aged 22
Great-Granddaughter

FAMILY 8
From Stoneycroft

ROSE aged 71
Grandmother

↓
PATRICIA aged 37
Daughter

↓
ANTHONY aged 43
Partner

↓
KIERON aged 16
Grandson

FAMILY 7
From Kensington

ELIZABETH aged 85
Grandmother

↓
BERNIE aged 62
Son

↓
SOPHIE aged 35
Granddaughter

FAMILY 6
From Allerton

MARION aged 98
Grandmother

↓
PAMELA ANNE aged 65
Daughter

↓
KATYA aged 25
Granddaughter

APPENDIX 4

LIVERPOOL JOHN MOORES UNIVERSITY

FORM OF CONSENT TO TAKE PART AS A SUBJECT IN A MAJOR PROCEDURE OR RESEARCH PROJECT

Title of project/procedure:

I, agree to take part in
(Subject's full name)*

the above named project/procedure, the details of which have been fully explained to me and
described in writing.

Signed Date
(Subject)

I, certify that the details of this
(Investigator's full name)*

project/procedure have been fully explained and described in writing to the subject named above and
have been understood by him/her.

Signed Date
(Investigator)

I, certify that the details of this
(Witness's full name)

project/procedure have been fully explained and described in writing to the subject named above and
have been understood by him/her.

Signed Date
(Witness)

NB The witness must be an independent third party.

* Please print in block capitals

LIVERPOOL JOHN MOORES UNIVERSITY

FORM OF CONSENT (B) (CARER)

Title of project/procedure:

I, the undersigned being
(Carer/parent/guardian's full name)*

the carer/parent/guardian for ** having read and
(Subject's full name)*

understood the protocol presented to me hereby give consent for the subject named above to take
part in the project/investigation as described in the protocol.

Signed Date.....
Carer/Parent/Guardian**

I, certify that the details of this
(Investigator's full name)

project/procedure have been fully explained and described in writing to the carer/parent/guardian**
named above and have been understood by him/her.

I, certify that the details of this
(Witness's full name)*

project/procedure have been fully explained and described in writing to the carer/parent/guardian**
named above and have been understood by him/her.

Signed Date.....
(Witness)

N.B. The witness must be an independent third party.

* please print in block capitals

** delete as appropriate

APPENDIX 5



Centre for Tourism, Consumer and Food Studies

PARTICIPANT INFORMATION SHEET

NAME OF RESEARCHER:

Jane Haeney

SUPERVISORS:

Professor Peggy Maxwell,
Centre for Tourism, Consumer and Food Studies,
Liverpool John Moores University.

Dr. Allan Hackett,
Centre for Tourism, Consumer and Food Studies,
Liverpool John Moores University.

Dr. Ciara Kierans,
Faculty of Health and Applied Social Sciences,
Liverpool John Moores University.

TITLE OF STUDY/PROJECT:

Culture, Food and Memory – an intergenerational study in Liverpool

PURPOSE OF STUDY

It is hoped that the findings of this study will highlight the significance of cultural changes that are affecting our relationship and attitude towards food and eating. It will focus on the production, purchase, preparation, cooking and eating of food now and in the past. I am particularly looking at this from a local point of view, concentrating on things you remember about food that are relevant to the Garston community of Liverpool.

If you agree to take part in the study, I would like to interview you about your earliest and most significant memories of food. Such memories are important to our health. Such findings would hopefully be of interest to those who are involved in the many aspects of food and health, not only academics and those interested in our 'food culture', but also people who live within the 'everyday world of food'.

PROCEDURES AND PARTICIPANT'S ROLE

The researcher will invite participants to be interviewed on a one-to-one basis, with or without other family members present, depending on what you would like. The questions will generally cover such areas as:

- Foods you may have eaten in the past and how they differ from the food you eat now;
- The way food is produced, purchased, stored, prepared, cooked and eaten – now and in the past;
- Traditional English/local food and foods from other countries;
- Meals and mealtimes – how, when and where you eat and who you eat with;
- The influence of health promotion messages;
- Your own views about health in relation to food and eating.

I need your permission to tape-record the interviews. This will help me to record the discussions honestly and accurately, thus safeguarding you against misinterpretation. I will give you feedback to ensure accuracy in the translation and interpretation of what has been said before a final report is submitted. You will be welcome to read the entire report, which will serve as an acknowledgement of your valued contribution and involvement with the research project.

Any information will be stored safely and will be destroyed by me at the end of the study. This will ensure that confidentiality is maintained and participants will not be identified, or be identifiable, from the final report.

You have the right to withdraw from the study, without prejudice, at any time.

APPENDIX 6

THEMATIC FRAMEWORK FOR DATA ANALYSIS
WITH EXAMPLES OF CATEGORIES/SUB-CATEGORIES

THEME 1

FOOD MEMORIES
(assigned colour: red)

Category: *The senses*

Sub-categories: *Taste; smell; sight; sound*

Emerging theories: *Synaesthesia; embodiment*

THEME 2

FOOD AND IDENTITY
(assigned colour: dark green)

Categories: *Food 'tastes'*

Sub-categories: *Plain/fancy food; ethnic/English*

THEME 3

FOOD AND COMMUNITY
(assigned colour: brown)

Category: *Communal eating*

Sub-categories: *Church, street parties*

Theories: *'Gemeinschaft'; 'social capital'; reciprocity; gift debt*

THEME 4

PREPARATION AND COOKING OF FOOD
(assigned colour: yellow)

Category: *Cooking knowledge*

Sub-categories: *Transmission; use of cookery books/recipes*

Emerging theories: *Alienation, 'Time-space compression', 'frugal cookery'.*

THEME 5

TRADITIONAL FOOD
(assigned colour: purple)

Category: *Scouse*

Sub-categories: *Function; ingredients; identity; class.*

Theories: *'Habitus'; 'distinction'*

THEME 6

FOOD AND CULTURAL CHANGE
(assigned colour: blue)

Category: *Processed food; ready-meals, fast food*

Sub-categories: *Generational differences in usage; family practices*

Theories: *Time-space compression*

THEME 7

CONSUMPTION PATTERNS
(assigned colour: pink)

Category: *Meals and mealtimes*

Sub-categories: *Family meals; snacking; deference; 'children's food'*

Theories: *Routinization; socialisation/de-socialisation*

THEME 8

FOOD AND HEALTH
(assigned colour: pale green)

Category: *Knowledge base*

Sub-categories: *Common sense; health promotion messages*

Theories: *Lay epidemiology; notions of 'risk'*

THEME 9

FOOD AND EXPERIENCE
(assigned colour: orange)

Category: *Food as comfort*

Sub-categories: *Restorative foods; traditional food; love and care*

Theories: *Embodiment*

THEME 10

REGENERATION
(assigned colour: black)

Category: *Liverpool re-generating*

Sub-categories: *City centre/suburbs/Garston*

.....

THEME 4

PREPARATION AND COOKING OF FOOD

Domestic

Skills passed down

p.8. pg.2. p.8. pg.10.
p.11. pg.5. p.8
p.13. pg.7. p.12. pg.8.
p.13. pg.7. p.18/20/22. pg.8.
p.17. pg.7.

Use of cookery books, recipes

p.6. pg.8.
p.8. pg.8.

School

Curriculum content

p.2. pg.8.

Class distinction

p.13. pg.7.

'Hands-on' cookery

Nutritional science

Celebrity

Impact

p.2. pg.10.

Take-up of ideas

p.4. pg.10.

Opinions

p.2. pg.10. 'I'm not keen on ...'

Intergenerational comments

p.5. pg.6. 'we didn't go....'
p.16. pg.8. 'well, I think....'
p.16. pg.9. 'she does different..'
p.8. pg.10. 'oh yes, I think....'
p.8. pg.10. 'I mean, if you've...'
p.10. pg.10. 'but I think....'
p.10. pg.10. 'we didn't have...'
p.9. pg.11. 'yet dutiful... [etc]'
p.21. pg.16. 'Now, you see...'

Q. So could you gut one?

A. Yes, oh yes.

Q. How do you buy it now?

A. Oh no, I buy it by the fillet and we buy mostly cod, or haddock or something like that. Something plain, it's only plain what we eat, we don't eat anything fancy. Oh, we've had prawns today, we've had prawns and ... erm ... er ...

Q. Sauce? Cocktail sauce?

A. No, more like sticks, he gets them at the fish market in St. John's (city centre).

Ah, crab sticks.

Prawns and sticks we have, that's what we call them, anyway, that's what we have. We'll eat any kind of fish, any kind, tuna or ... I'm not keen on tinned salmon, I love fresh salmon.

Q. Do you like cooking or do you find it a chore?

A. I don't find it a chore and I don't enjoy it, but I know it's got to be done.

It's just something you do ...

It's just something you do and it's always on time. It's got to be started at twelve o'clock on the weekday if I'm at home ... we go out four days a week for lunch, but if I'm at home it's got to be started at twelve o'clock. On a Sunday, the lunch has got to be ready for one o'clock, and at night time I start my food every night at five o'clock.

Q. So you are quite set in your meal patterns and your timing?

A. It's got to be on time ... everything with me ... I'm not like Grace. Grace ... I don't know where she gets her timing from, but Grace has no idea of time. Whereas, I am so different, I have to.

↑
Q. Why do you think that is?

↓
A. Well, I think with having a man to look after, that has a lot to do with it, you know, because if I was on my own I wouldn't do one half of what I do, I'm sure I wouldn't. I mean, on a Sunday, I mean, it's like one mad work day, you know, I mean, I don't cook his breakfast, but if I got up earlier, well, I'm not saying I get up late, I get up about a quarter past eight ... but he gets up every morning at a quarter to seven and he does his own breakfast, whereas, I don't do breakfast ... if he wants breakfast, he can get on with it. He knows how to do bacon, so that's it ... but it is a very busy day for me, Sunday, very busy, and lunch has to be on the table at one o'clock.

Q. A roast dinner?

A. Yes, and it's only my doing, it's nothing to do with him, it's only my doing ... and when he used to come home from work, I used to have it on the table at half past five, evening meal, on the table at half past five. It's just routine, that, and if I'm late I get all het up and I get too excited wondering whether I've got it right or not, you see, whereas if I work by time, time means a lot to me ... it doesn't to Grace, time doesn't mean a lot to Grace. They all do their own at their house and they can all cook,