# Feeding the Middle Classes: Taste, Classed Identity and Domestic Food Practices

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# Abstract

This thesis develops the insight that 'good' taste is associated with middle-class lifestyles (Bourdieu 2010 [1984]) by examining the classed links between food and the performance of identities. I focus on middle-class food practices to explore social meanings relating to the ways in which food choices reproduce class distinction. Engaging in a critical dialogue with Bourdieu's concepts of habitus, capital, practice, and field, I trace the complex ways in which class and identity are connected to everyday practices of domestic food consumption and provisioning. Based on research with twenty-seven participants in the North East of England, I draw on data generated from mixed methods: semi-structured interviews, food biographies, participant photographs, and exploration of participant homes. In doing so, I produce original empirical findings which extend and complicate sociological debates about class.

A central finding is that food practices are played out through classed ideas about individuality, diversity, and authenticity. The processes by which food comes to be domesticated emerged as significant: worthy of continual investment and active personal involvement. This entailed marking boundaries around the individuated self, especially in relation to, and working against, mass consumption. However, probing the minutiae of practices in the intimate space of the home highlighted that while distinction was enacted through social distance from the imagined mass consumer, participants collectively reproduced middle-class food choices and practices. They attached value to similar foods and modes of provisioning and displayed a strategic disposition to accrue and reproduce shared food knowledges.

Few studies have explored the subtle ways in which middle-class domestic food practices act as classed social markers. In addressing this gap, I offer a new understanding of a hitherto undertheorized dimension of middle-class reproduction. Through my specific focus on middle-class participants and the middle-class habitus, these findings make visible the classed relationships around valued food practices, which otherwise are naturalised as intrinsically legitimate. By marking themselves as knowledgeable and active consumers, participant narratives reproduce a rhetoric of individual choice which can pathologise others as actively making the wrong food decisions. The findings help problematize these narratives by offering a nuanced critique of the social distinctions participants both rely on and reproduce.

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# Chapter 1 Introduction

Fiona:   So yeah, parsley, smoked black pudding. I bought that. I don't even like it. But Michael does, but he hasn't eaten it yet. So, I don't know… hummus, cheese, grilled artichokes, um there's other cheeses, double Gloucestershire and then there's a funny one that I hadn't heard of before, so I bought to see what it was like. It's called Montagnulo. Eggs, butter, peach juice, sweet chilli stir-fry? Michael must have bought that. Butter, more cheese, yoghurt, champagne (laughs).
(Fiona, 65+, retired accountant)

Jane:   A bottle of wine, hazelnut milk, cause I try and avoid where I can cow's milk cause it just doesn't feel right. *Just the usuals*… lots of sauces and things to make things with. So satay sauce, mango pickle, em, the tahini for my hummus, just… I don't know what to tell you really about it. It's not that riveting. I can't stand the em gherkins… Branston, lots of em chutney cause I do like my cheese. Em let's see, natural yoghurt. I have natural yoghurt on my breakfast sometimes. What else is there? Tonic to go with the gin, lots of cheese, some fresh herbs, some cheese, cause I could just eat cheese really. I'm happy just to eat cheese. Em, my sour dough starter cause I like to bake. So that comes out every now and then, gets fed and goes back in again.
(Jane, 45-54, project coordinator; italics added)

Food is a biological necessity: we need to eat to live. But living through food extends beyond sustaining our bodies with the nutrients it provides. The materiality of food also sustains a range of social and cultural arrangements. While some things are naturally inedible, some things are culturally and socially disgusting (Falk 1991; Lupton 1996). What we eat, or not, carries social messages and is central to our identity (Lupton 1996: 1). This study argues that eating, a socially and culturally situated practice, is a productive lens through which to observe class and identity. My way into these dynamics is to take the middle classes in the North East of England as my focus. In so doing, I contribute an empirically-informed and theoretically-rich study to the fields of class analysis and the sociology of consumption.

The two narrative descriptions above come from two of the twenty-seven participants who contributed to this research. I had asked them if we could 'tour' the contents of their refrigerators together, and if they would talk me through the contents. At face value, they appear to be just that: lists of foods in a fridge. However, closer scrutiny of these descriptions lays bare a whole range of wider social and cultural processes and meanings. Starting with Fiona, we learn that she buys black pudding for her partner, despite her distaste for it, and that she is open to trying new foods. We learn that while her fridge

contains a number of global foods, which she confidently lists, she questions the presence of pre-packaged sweet chili stir-fry sauce. She concludes the narrative by jokingly pointing towards a bottle of champagne. With Jane, we learn that she differentiates between cow's milk, which 'doesn't feel right', and cheese, which she happily eats despite the obvious contradiction. We learn that she enjoys baking and spends time on it – the feeding of the sourdough starter is a continual process. What is particularly interesting is that the descriptions Fiona and Jane employ, position the foods listed as ordinary. They are 'just the usuals,' as Jane suggests. I start this chapter with these descriptions to draw attention to the taken-for-granted nature of everyday food choices. Throughout my fieldwork, I was shown a range of household foods, some of which were expensive and specialist, while others required specific culinary knowledge and commitment. But despite these foods being anything but ordinary, their positioning as unremarkable highlights the salient ways that classed food practices can be normalised.

## 1.1 The Contemporary British Foodscape

From concerns about food scarcity through to concerns about overeating, food is the subject of much political, media, and public discussion. The Trussell Trust, whose foodbank centres account for approximately two thirds of all emergency food provision in the UK, provided over 1.1 million three-day food supplies in 2016/2017 (The Trussell Trust 2017).[1] Alongside this, the latest 2015/2016 figures show that twenty-seven percent of adults and twenty per cent of ten and eleven-year-old children in England are recorded as obese (Baker 2017). At the same time, consumers are selecting foods from a marketplace which is positioned as offering an abundance of diversity, such as local, exotic, artisan, healthy, and ethical foods. We are invited as consumers to engage with the virtues of such foods. But the consumerist framing of foods is contradictory and continually shifting. For instance, UK food trends for 2018 list 'hyper-local food' alongside West African and Hawaiian cuisines, as well as 'craft butter' alongside nootropics (brain food) and 'gut-friendly' food (BBC Good Food 2018). These kinds of trends require that the individuals who access them have cultural and/or economic capital. I suggest that this is an ideal starting point to contemplate the classed locatedness of food. As Bauman and Johnston note, trends have the cultural authority to

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[1] Despite household food poverty being a major issue in this country, there is currently no routine measurement of food insecurity in the UK (Smith 2018).

attach symbolic value to certain foods and in so doing, circulate 'a repertoire of desirable food choices, while excluding the majority of available foods' (2007: 170). There are principles at work in the presentation of eclectic and contradictory foods alongside one another, which presuppose a consumer orientation to distinguish between the culinary options presented. These principles work on the assumption that some choices are legitimate and some are illegitimate. This has the effect of validating a narrow range of foods from the apparent endless possibilities presented to consumers. Food is an object of fashion, but the virtues of different foods are often short-lived. As they filter down to the mainstream, they are then reclassified as ordinary and unremarkable. Once in the realms of the masses, they become excluded and invalidated as a marker for distinction (Bourdieu 2010 [1984]).

It is in this context that narratives about 'good' food are constructed. Significantly, these narratives are also classed although not all are named as such. For instance, public and political narratives about food poverty and the obesity 'crisis' are clear in naming socio-economic deprivation as being key to preventing access to sufficient or healthy foods. Stories about 'good' food however, rarely consider how socio-economic and cultural inequalities are *enabling* access to 'good food' – or not. This is aside from the media's occasional ironic lamenting about middle-class obsessions with particular foods that often retrospectively acquire the 'healthy' label, such as porridge, quinoa, avocado and chia seeds.[2] Otherwise, consumers who engage with valued food are discursively and often unreflexively positioned as 'mindful' and 'health-conscious' (Bee 2018, *The Times;* Butler 2017, *The Guardian*; Thompson, 2017, *MailOnline*) and implicitly valorised. Additionally, media ways of talking about food are deeply individualised. While it is tempting to think about terms such as 'health-consciousness' or 'mindful eating' as harmless or banal, this fails to recognise that access to valorised foods is often the preserve of those who are situated in privileged spaces in a classed social hierarchy. As a result, exclusion from 'good' food becomes cast as the result of perceived personal inadequacies and an individual moral failure to invest in the body through food.

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[2] For example, see newspaper headlines such as 'Oat cuisine: how porridge got posh' (Salter 2016, *The Guardian*); 'To av and to hold: middle-class millennials now proposing with avocados in bizarre new trend' (Curley 2018, *The Sun*), and ''Posh' packed lunch in a glass jar challenges humble sandwich' (Morley 2016, *The Daily Telegraph*).

A wealth of research has sought to identify a correlation between socio-economic status and lack of access to 'good', healthy food (for instance, Burgoine et al 2017; El-Sayed et al 2012). But I argue that this problematically reproduces the idea that class only operates in relation to *lack* of access and exclusion. My aim here is instead to focus on how *inclusion* in the field of consumption is classed and enables access to 'good' food. Hence, I take the notion that 'good' food is code for 'middle-class' food as my starting point. In so doing, I am aligned with Reay's advice, originally offered in relation to thinking about middle-class success in education: '[t]he natural, taken-for-granted brightness of the middle classes [also] needs to be challenged, and particularly the assumption that it is natural and intrinsic rather than carefully constructed and intensively nurtured from birth' (2017: 141). In light of this, I seek to problematize the normalisation of middle-class food practices.

## 1.2 Research Aims

One of my primary concerns in this thesis is to explore the ways in which class works to mark identities as valued. Individual responsibility is at the heart of neoliberal consumer culture (Cairns and Johnston 2015). There is an assumption that what we consume is a result of individual reflexive choice and that what we 'are' is understood to be an embodiment of what we consume. But as Skeggs (2005, 2011) reminds us, neoliberal ideas of valued personhood operate around self-investment which requires economic and cultural capital. Taking a Bourdieusian lead, I start from the proposition that 'good' taste is associated with middle-class lifestyles (Bourdieu 2010 [1984]), and that middle-class practices are the norm against which other groups are compared (Lawler 2011). I focus on middle-class food practices so as to better understand these processes through which class relations are made, in particular the ways in which food works to reproduce class distinction. I pay particular attention to the knowledge and meanings that my research participants attach to food in order to understand the complex ways in which class operates to facilitate access to 'good' food and importantly, how food is simultaneously positioned as innately classless. In so doing, this analysis provides a framework for considering food consumption in a wider social context. I aim to problematize some contemporary social rules relating to good taste in order to highlight key aspects of the relationship between class and the normalisation of certain ways of being. Underlying this understanding is that we are positioned by what we eat. But our ability to attach value to our food practices depends on our access to resources to mark our ways of eating as legitimate. Importantly then, focusing on how the effects of

class enable the legitimisation of 'good' food can help disentangle how the practices of those who are excluded are devalued, and reproduced as illegitimate.

In recent years, the sociology of consumption has highlighted the classed aspects of modes of consumption by focusing on a range of cultural forms such as art, music, comedy, and eating out. My research builds on this body of literature by empirically considering everyday domestic food practices in order to examine the intricate connections between consumption, class, and identity. I follow Savage's advice that class analysis should adopt a subtle approach, 'a kind of forensic, detective work, which involves tracing the print of class in areas where it is faintly written' (2003: 536-537). I consider how class is configured in relation to individual identities by focusing on consumption at two of its most intimate points: in the home and on the body. Employing Bourdieu's toolkit of habitus, field, and capital to conceptualise how personhood is connected to the social world, the empirical material that guides this enquiry is premised on observation and talk. This is generated from spending time in my participants' kitchens on two separate occasions. The methodologies I employ in this study were chosen for the insight they could generate into my participants' positions and trajectories in 'historically dynamic' (Friedman and Savage 2018: 71) classed social structures. In so doing, I look to the processes by which domestic food is transformed from a necessary substance for survival to an object of cultural value and as a marker for reproducing class distinction.

With these aims in mind, I explore the following research questions. How is a classed identity performed through food consumption in the home? How do the different social meanings attached to the provisioning of food in the home relate to class? How do the middle classes accord value to and acquire knowledge about food? How do the middle classes justify their food choices? And, what are the wider implications of the social rules surrounding food on classed social positioning? In short, my aim is to look at the way class is performed and communicated through everyday domestic food practices.

## 1.3 Thesis Outline

This dissertation is comprised of seven chapters. Chapter Two critically outlines the bodies of literature which inform the conceptual framing of my research. Here, I work with contemporary reframings of Bourdieusian approaches to class and identity in order to explore how the middle-class identity is positioned and reproduced as legitimate. I situate

the importance of class analysis in relation to everyday eating by engaging with current literatures relating to taste and consumption. In so doing, I outline the ways that food tastes and practices can act as markers of distinction. I then use these ideas in conversation with literatures relating to the materialities of food consumption to get a closer understanding of the temporally and spatially situated doing of food. Together, these theoretical resources offer new ways of thinking through how eating relates to the reproduction of class divisions.

Chapter Three details the methodology underpinning this research, in which a consideration of power, positionality, reflexivity, representation, and ethics is central. I outline the means by which participants were recruited, the multi-faceted ways in which data was generated over two waves of research interactions, and its subsequent analysis. My first research interaction focused on listening to participant narratives about themselves and their households via interviews conducted in participants' homes. I wanted to capture the relationship between identity and classed positionality. Participants shared life histories which capture how habitus is continually restructured across trajectories of capital accrual. Leaving participants with a disposable camera and instructions to take some 'food-related photos', I returned some months later with the photos developed for our second interaction. In order to add a further dimension to the data, my second visit aimed to move beyond accounting for the reflexive ways participants articulated their food-related dispositions. Here my focus was on the 'doing' of food. By 'hanging out' in kitchens, I combined observation with talk in order to probe at the taken-for-granted 'practical logic' (Bourdieu and Wacquant 1992: 22) which informs participant approaches to food. We discussed their photos, rummaged through fridges, freezers and food cupboards, and participants told stories about food-related 'talking points' (Hurdley 2006: 720). Combined, these methods generated rich data about the meanings participants attach to their domestic food practices.

Chapters Four, Five, and Six present the empirical findings of the research. Chapter Four starts by analysing individual food biographies and focuses on individual experiences and identities. I offer a temporally-framed consideration of the relational ways in which the participants I worked with understand themselves through food. Thinking across the range of participants' narratives and generational differences, I note the absence of personal food traditions in their biographies. This I see as being related to class, because life histories highlighted individual moments of cultural and economic capital accrual wherein participants honed their understandings of 'good' food. In general, narratives aligned good

food with the expansion of taste, which was recurrently conceptualised by participants in relation to the increased *production* of variety offered by the global marketplace. But what came to light as fieldwork unfolded were the highly restricted ways that participants negotiated diversity. Narratives of *not* belonging emerged powerfully across the sample. Participants appeared to distance themselves from being a monolithic product of their upbringings or collective class categories, offering instead a fragmented and reflexive account of their individuality. But the preference to narrate identity via notional individualism, together with an orientation towards taste expansion and diversification, was repeated across the sample. Furthermore, the imagined figure of a working-class mass-consumer emerged in these accounts as a point from which to enact differentiation.

Chapter Five focuses on the material and symbolic ways in which participants chose and restricted the food which crosses the domestic threshold. Starting in one participant's kitchen, I then cast the net further afield to trace the complex processes by which food becomes domesticated. I look towards the consumer marketplace to consider how participants navigate across the abundance shops and products to select foods which can be infused with value. In this framing, processed convenience foods clearly emerged as lacking value: they cannot be individually infused with value. Yet data generated from actually 'hanging out' in the kitchen shows that there were processed convenience foods in all kitchens and that the dichotomous relationship between convenience and homemade is continuously reworked and contested. Furthermore, accounting for the temporal relationships between practices brings gender to the fore. The narratives of the female participants highlighted that they are responsible for the day-to-day doings of domestic foods. Integral to feeding themselves and the household is the synchronisation of individual time-space paths, and they appeared to actively reject convenience foods. I conclude the chapter by reading their justifications about using convenience in relation to broader food narratives in which classed notions of femininity circulate.

In Chapter Six, I explore the ways in which knowledge about food is embodied and reproduced. I begin by taking public health messaging as an example to explore how ideas of self-control operate as 'common-sense' knowledge. I map participant journeys from the past to the present to explore their ways of knowing about food. I note the centrality of feminised learning about practices of food provisioning, which is supplemented with accrued culinary capital (such as cookbooks). Together, this appears to produce a strategic

disposition to critically select from the diverse foodscape to enact a very particular and culturally-shared version of good taste. I then look to the household meal, as the end moment of the domestic sharing of 'good' food, to consider how these frames come together. I especially focus on feeding children to examine how these learnt and accrued knowledges about food relate to the intergenerational reproduction of middle-class taste and practice. In so doing, I note the active ways in which the parents in the sample prioritise instilling 'good' food tastes in children. This social training centres on delivering children a healthy and diverse spectrum of foods. Yet, there are tensions in participant framings of ensuring their children are open to all foods, and encouraging a disposition to make discerning choices clearly emerges as valued.

Finally, Chapter Seven offers concluding remarks about the theoretical and empirical ways this research contributes to discussions about class, consumption, and food. In the analysis that follows I hope to show that social boundaries, such as class, operate as a guide to the selection of food. Yet in an era of individualised identities and a neoliberal emphasis on personal choice and responsibility, political and public rhetoric focuses on marginalised individuals who are positioned as making the wrong food choices. There is a lack of scrutiny about how access to 'good' foods relies on the possession of multiple forms of capital. One of the effects of overlooking the processes by which good food is accessed is that access becomes dislocated from social divisions such as class and becomes normalised. I aim to redress this by offering a nuanced account of 'good' food and the valued identities configured through its consumption.

# Chapter 2 Literature Review

## 2.1 Introduction

This chapter will provide a critical overview of key perspectives surrounding class and consumption in order to set out the conceptual framework which guides this study. Everyday food decisions, at face value, can be read as a momentary reflection of our physical tastes. However, eating and feeding also draw on ideas related to identity, class positionality, and the use, and reproduction of, capital in all its forms. Eating can 'carry messages about identity and meaning but also reveal the structural dynamics of society and the operation of specific relations of power' (Jackson 2010: 161). Drawing on contemporary reframings of Bourdieu's ideas about the relationality of identity, my theoretical approach is complemented by work that focuses on the material-social practices of class around consumption. I take food as my primary concern to show how the processes of its consumption can act as a form of cultural capital which relates to taste and distinction. In so doing, this study contributes to contemporary class analysis by rethinking and unpacking the notion of middle-class reproduction through food – an area of classed practice which is relatively undertheorized.

I begin the chapter by engaging with debates about class and identity in order to situate Bourdieu's concept of habitus as an important analytical category for my research. Habitus refers to the 'circular causality' between classed social structures and the individual dispositions that they produce (Bourdieu 2001: 56). Recent debate draws our attention to the fragmentation of class and the multiple ways in which class becomes a reflexive project. Taking this idea as my point of departure, I primarily draw on feminist reworkings of Bourdieusian class analysis in relation to identity. In so doing, I navigate a path through Bourdieu's relational understanding of class and habitus in order to work through notions of authorised personhood and the ways in which middle-class identities are positioned as synonymous with authorised ideas of individuality. This research exclusively focuses on participants who occupy relatively privileged classed positions, and these concepts act as a lens through which to understand the processes by which middle-class practices are positioned as normal and as having value.

The following section of the chapter mobilises these conceptual tools in order to evaluate sociology of consumption literature and more specifically the consumption of food. Here, I

engage with the cultural omnivore thesis in order to locate food consumption within increasingly fragmented dynamics of taste. This is to explore how classed distinction operates around ideas of authenticity and diversity, the framing of which enables me to position consumption choices as related to classed ideas of reflexive individualism. With this in mind, the final section of this chapter engages with literature which accounts for the material and symbolic ways in which food comes to be incorporated into the home. Here, the concept of domestication is analytically important. Domestication establishes the active ways that objects of consumption are appropriated into the home according to socially-constructed standards which, as I will argue in the empirical chapters, operate around the valuing of classed individuality. I complicate this framework however by evaluating literature which focuses on the relationship between time and domestic practice as well as literature about gender and domestic feeding. This is to assess how eating and feeding others in the domestic sphere relates to classed and gendered performances of authorised identities.

## 2.2 Class and Identity Matters

In 1911, the Registrar General's office implemented the first formal efforts to empirically measure class in Britain. This classification schema focused on occupation to identify a main boundary between manual and non-manual employment (Savage et al 2015: 32-33). Relating to shared material position arising from employment in similar occupations, class was therefore conceptualised as a collective identity, expressed through shared interests (Abercrombie et al 2000: 146). While there is not the scope to provide a detailed discussion here, underlying these approaches was that collective class interests are generated by the position of groups in relation to the material processes of the mode of production. By the 1990s however, traditional approaches to class analysis which focused on the division of labour were increasingly posited as redundant; not least for their failure to take into account the fluid and complex ways in which class intersects with other social divisions, such as gender (Lovell 2004; Reay 1998). Sociology underwent a retreat from class. Some sociologists, for example Beck, argued, '[t]he notion of a class society remains useful only as an image of the past' (1992: 91). In addition, fragmentation associated with post-industrialisation meant that understandings of class composition were being transformed. With the apparent decomposition of stable, collective categories came theoretical ideas about reflexive individualism and the argument that structural moorings, such as class, were

no longer a relevant category of analysis for investigations of inequality. Instead, inequality was increasingly understood as an individualised project: 'the *inequality of dealing with insecurity and reflexivity'* (Beck 1992: 98; italics original).

Individualism has been useful for emphasising that static models of class analysis hold little relevance in contemporary society. But class inequalities are far from redundant, as I will go on to argue. In recent years there has been a move to reinstate the importance of class in mainstream British sociology. This has involved redressing the inadequacy of previous class analysis to incorporate the interplay between economic, cultural, and social resources. For instance, the Cultural Capital and Social Exclusion Project (Bennett et al 2009), and most recently, the BBC Great British Class Survey (GBCS) (Savage et al 2015) reflect and attempt to drive forward a multidimensional way of thinking about class. While the GBCS has been criticised for garnering disproportionate responses from young, white professionals (Devine and Snee 2015), particularly interesting is that within a week of its launch in 2011 seven million people clicked on the BBC's 'Class Calculator' (Savage et al 2015: 6). This overwhelming response rate suggests that class positioning is a keen point of interest to particular fractions of the British public. At the same time however, contemporary class analysis also highlights that class consciousness is not attached to notions of group belongingness in a straightforward way (Savage 2000, 2003). 'Class is a discursive, historically specific construction' (Skeggs 1997: 5). My understanding of class is in relation to a particular historical context in which theoretical assertions about individualism and fragmentation persist. My primary focus is on how class is experienced and understood at an individual level: to the *individualisation* of class. This allows for the inclusion of class within neoliberal shifts towards a more individualized form of sociality. This provides an ideal point of departure from which to think about class as a lived identity.

Identities are fragmented and fractured, 'multiply constructed across different, often intersecting and antagonistic, discourses, practices and positions' (Hall 1996: 4). Following this insight, I want to think about class as something which is subjectively experienced in relation to its objective structures. This allows for the complexities of class to be understood as 'process not position' (Reay 1998: 21), and in so doing allows for its consideration alongside other divisions, such as gender, as a number of feminist scholars have pointed out (see for example, Hebson 2009; Lawler 1999; Reay 1998, 2005; Skeggs 1997). This scholarship is critically important because it focuses on experiences, emotions, and attitudes

in order to understand how 'class is lived' (Hebson 2009: 27). It opens up the concept of class to account for the social and cultural frameworks within which individuals mediate their lives. As Reay suggests, widening our analytical approach to incorporate 'a psychic economy of class' is 'to recognise that class is always lived on a conscious and unconscious level' (2005: 912) through everyday practices and responses to practices. Accordingly, my research focuses on the subtleties of everyday food practices to provide an analytical site to investigate the ways in which class is dynamic, relational, and done (Lawler 2011: 5). To elaborate on this further, I now introduce Bourdieu's concept of habitus as a frame of reference to explain how practices and dispositions reflect the ways in which class is both embedded in the self and is constitutive of social relations (Lawler 2004: 111).

## 2.2.1 *Habitus*

Bourdieu's concept of habitus enables us to consider how social relations come to be embodied as practical knowledge which itself is related to an individual's position within a field of socially-distributed resources (Wacquant 2013: 296). Habitus refers to sets of dispositions which are an (often unconscious) practical logic, giving rise to 'sensible' perceptions and practices within fields of power (Bava et al 2008). In Bourdieusian approaches, fields provide the social context for individual practice. They can be defined as a particular social setting, as well as a broader and abstract space, where class dynamics occur (Silva 2005: 90). Crosscut with social divisions such as class, the stimuli of fields are structured according to the exchange and conversion of capital. For example, the consumer marketplace can be conceptualised as a field because it is a hierarchically-structured space in which practices of consumption occur, which themselves are related to an individual's position in the field. The valuing of and access to goods in the field of consumption is related to a person's possession of capital. For Bourdieu (2010 [1984]), there are three main types of capital: economic capital (financial resources), social capital (resources accrued from belonging to particular social networks), and cultural capital (forms of knowledge and competence). Bourdieu's argument is that the likelihood of accruing capital, as well as the ability to mark forms of capital as legitimate, is dependent on an individual's position in the field. An individual's position in the field, as well as their future trajectory, depends on the volume and composition of the different types of capital they inherit (ibid.: 118). For Bourdieu, the field is the site of power struggles over types of capital.

I draw on concepts of habitus, field, and capital to help unpack the relationship between food and class because the classed positions we encounter in the field mark our bodies and inform practice. Habitus is embodied and adjusted according to an individual's position and trajectory within fields (Bourdieu 1990a; 1990b). Being unconscious and tending to concur with its conditions of production, habitus captures social continuity. Referring to the imprint of history which lies within an individual, it is 'embodied history, internalised as second nature and so forgotten as history' (Bourdieu 1990b: 56). Everyday practice is accepted as common-sense and self-evident (ibid.: 58). As such, habitus is useful for thinking through how eating is a function of embodied class position whilst at the same time essentialised as a personal attribute. It provides a *relational* way to understand how class informs our access to food, as well as how we are individually positioned through our food choices.

Contrary to its critics (for example, Jenkins 1982), habitus is not passively inscribed on the Bourdieusian body. Rather, it is the result of a practical and mediating relationship between objective structures and everyday action, where the social world is understood through categories constructed by previous experience. These categories, or dispositions, are durable and generative but are reflexively realised (Calhoun 2008). Habitus 'is an *open system of dispositions* that is constantly subjected to experiences, and therefore constantly affected by them' (Bourdieu and Wacquant 1992: 133; italics original). It thus refers to an active, not passive, set of dispositions which through interaction with the field can generate subjective motivating structures that can override an individual's inherited attitudes and knowledges (McNay 2008). The importance of our trajectory across and within fields is fundamental for this research because it captures the extent to which learnt food dispositions change from place-to-place and from time-to-time, but are nonetheless related to a 'feel for the game' (Bourdieu 1990a: 63). Paying attention to an individual's feel for the game, encapsulates how habitus is informed by an individual's history but adapted in relation to their shifting positions in fields. It thus opens up the concept of class as something which is both a historical formation and individually realised.

Class is embedded in personal history but is continually disrupted as people move across class categories (Lawler 1999). Social mobility was given little empirical attention by Bourdieu asides from his reflections about his own experiences of upward social mobility (Friedman 2015; Friedman and Savage 2018; Lawler 1999). Yet following Friedman (2015), I suggest that

paying attention to the experience of social mobility is an ideal way to uncover the relationship between habitus and individual experience of social change. A number of studies have established the ambiguous and often painful ways in which the upwardly mobile experience a dissonance between their origin and destination tastes and practices (Friedman 2012, 2015; Lawler 1999; Mallman 2018; Reay 2013, 2018; Reay et al 2009). An important empirical focus of my research then is on how food practices relate to life stages and shifting class positions. I employ the concept of habitus as a way of understanding change and continuity as being related to the accrual of capital as well as categories of perception constructed by history and experience.

With this in mind, I adopt the position that classed identities cannot be 'read' as fixed to an objective position. Rather, they are processual and realised through practices which are 'responses to social positions' (Skeggs 1997: 94). Paying attention to everyday food practices lays bare the relationships between position and identity because practices act as a lens through which to see the lived and situated relations of class. They can be analysed as both products and reactions to the structuring processes at work (Ball 2003: 6). In this respect, I use the concept of habitus as a way to conceptualise how the social is reproduced in interpersonal relations through individual practice. Moreover, the practices of those situated in privileged classed positions can be analysed as an indication of the role that structures play in assigning and reproducing value to practices, as I will now go on to explore.

### 2.2.2   *Capital, Field and Practice*

Those with access to high volumes of multiple forms of capital have increased capacity to enact taste distinctions through legitimisation. The legitimisation of capital entails the conversion of objective differences between cultural objects, for instance food, into recognisable distinctions based on the status benefits they provide: '[a]ny difference that is recognized, accepted as legitimate, functions by that very fact as a symbolic capital providing a profit of distinction' (Wacquant 2013: 297). For Bourdieu (1991), the mobilisation of forms of capital into symbolic capital entails its reproduction as legitimate through misrecognition. That is, the process through which value is reproduced is misrecognised as natural, thus concealing the power of those who can legitimise cultural capital. It is in this way that middle-class practices become normalised. Investigations into the middle-class habitus can push against this process and problematise the reproduction and normalisation of 'standards of excellence' (Warde 2014: 291) relating to food. My understanding of habitus centres on

the multidimensional ways it relates to field and practice. Bourdieu has been criticised for abandoning the concepts of field and practice from the theoretical reasonings which form the basis of his study in *Distinction* (2010 [1984]), largely due to his overreliance on habitus (Bennett 2007; Warde 2004, 2008). In light of these critiques, my research accounts for practice as related to positionality in the field and in so doing, highlights how everyday doings of food can sometimes be misaligned with habitus and its associated preferences.

Part of my accounting for everyday practice has meant drawing on some aspects of theories of practice. This reflects a wider turn in sociology in recent years concerning conceptualising social action and social reality in terms of practices, habits, and everyday orientations towards doing the social that are simultaneously routinized and creative (for example, Reckwitz 2002; Schatzki 2009). These approaches have been taken up extensively in sociological work on consumption and specifically domestic consumption (for example, Evans 2012; Meah and Jackson 2017; Plessz and Gojard 2015; Shove 2003; Southerton 2006; Warde 2005). I have been particularly interested in approaches that start not with individuals or macro social structures but rather with how different sets of practices interrelate spatially and temporally. These interrelated components are understood to belong to the practice and not the individual (Warde 2014). By adopting this framework, practice theories have made important contributions to understanding food and eating, although there has been little attention on connecting practice with social position.

A recent study however employed theories of practice to consider how the practice of domestic vegetable consumption is connected to social position (Plessz and Gojard 2015). It focused on vegetable consumption in relation to other practices such as cooking and shopping. Alongside this, it analysed the 'teleoaffective structure' of consuming vegetables, taking the moral value attached to eating fresh or processed vegetables as its starting point. In doing so, the study identified that there is a hierarchy of engagement attached to vegetable consumption, and more 'high-status' individuals were committed to the idea that 'fresh is best' (ibid.: 16). These findings partly correlate with Southerton's (2006) research into people's experience of the temporal organisation of 'non-work' practices. By relating engagement in practices to education level, Southerton found that while education level did not affect a degree of commitment in practice, it did affect the types of practices in which his respondents invested their time. Participants with high education levels were more likely to engage in diverse and varied cultural practices. Together, these studies highlight that

modes of engagement can be connected to social position *because of* the internal logic of practices. But also, while practices are organised according to sets of norms, the extent to which individuals engage with a particular practice can reveal the different social attitudes and values which an individual brings to the practice, such as classed distinction or judgements of taste (Southerton 2003).

Although these studies do account for class, by making use of habitus my research aims to provide a deeper understanding of the interrelationship between social positioning (and related capital), the logic behind practice, and social divisions which operate to constrain or assist preferred food practices. While theories of practice highlight that relations of production govern practices, the concept of field uncovers the social and economic determinants of food taste as being realised through positionality. Accordingly then, the concept of habitus denotes the extent to which an individual's position in a practice is associated with levels of competence and commitment (Warde 2004). Warde (2004) rightly points out that not all practices are reducible to the strategic pursuit of capital. Indeed, eating is necessary to survive, and paying attention to the intimacy of the domestic sphere shows how practices are not always aligned with preference and taste, which I will go on to explore. However, paying attention to practices which are valued and deemed appropriate for the pursuit of capital is important for understanding the socially divisive effects of the ways that legitimate food choices are recognised. It is on this note that I move to establish the conceptual importance of this research's focus on the middle classes. In the following section I position food as a means for culture and class to meet on the body and argue that particular ways of eating *are* reducible to the strategic pursuit of middle-classed capital, albeit in complex ways.

### 2.2.3  *The Middle Classes: Valued Identities*

So far my argument has been that class is individualised. In light of this, I will now consider the relationship between individualism and class. This forms a basis for thinking through how 'individualisation involves making claims to social distinction through a process of defining oneself in relation to the other' (Savage 2000: 105-106). Under the rhetoric of neoliberalism, politics and social self-understandings have been reshaped by discourses of individualism. As Reay et al (2011) point out, reflexive choice is central to neoliberalism and, to use the words of Tyler, a 'normative middle-class self is the neoliberal subject *par excellence*' (2015: 500; italics original). In light of this, I follow claims that individualism, the notion that identities are

the result of individual and reflexive self-making, universalises middle-class experience (Savage 2000; Skeggs 2004a). It works on the assumption that everyone can, and should, have access to (structural) resources which enable self-making (Skeggs 2005). Nonetheless, *because* reflexive individualism resonates with middle-class experience and is fundamental in the social construction of valued personhood (Skeggs 2004a), it is relevant for this research into middle-class identities as I will go on to explore.

One of the central objectives of this thesis is to address class reproduction. In relation to this, my argument is that class reproduction centres on the valuing and legitimisation of middle-class personhood. There is a lack of research which takes the middle classes as its primary focus. Rather, the middle classes appear in research as a background against which 'othered' practices are contrasted and the normal against which other groups are measured (Allen 2014; Lawler 2011; Loveday 2015). Research into middle-class practice is important because it sheds light on how systems of knowledge and representation assign importance to those perspectives which can be heard, rendering others invisible. As Savage (2003, 2015a) suggests, paying attention to the activities of the advantaged renders them open to critique, therefore making it possible to identify widening forms of inequality. My research therefore focuses on the claims to normality associated with the middle-class identity to provide a route into legitimate culture. In doing so, I aim to scrutinise dominant norms which position 'good' food alongside the middle classes, whilst at the same time presenting food as innately 'classless' (Johnston et al 2011). I argue that class is made and reproduced through individual selves responsible for living up to (classed) norms (Allen 2014). In order to conceptualise this further, I now turn to ideas of access and exclusion to expand on the ways in which middle-class personhood has become shorthand for the 'individual' (Skeggs 2005).

From this I want to flesh out how both individualism as well as the concept of habitus (even though it recognises that the self is produced in conditions not entirely of its own making), rely on ideas of investment and self-interest (Skeggs 2011). Here, Skeggs significantly reminds us that "proper personhood" is a resource in itself, and, constituted through exclusion. That is, valued personhood is broadly understood in relation to that which it is not: the working classes defined through their distance from individuality (the masses) and positioned as improper (through their lack) (Skeggs 2011). Following this understanding, then, is the idea that the working classes are constituted as the other to a middle-class norm (Lawler 2002: 103). For instance, interventionist policies which use terms such as 'raising

achievement' or 'widening participation' position working-class people as not knowing, not valuing, not doing, and not wanting the 'right' things (Lawler 2014). This does little more than fix 'working-classness' as something from which one must endeavour to 'escape' (Allen 2014; Jones 2011; Lawler 1999; Reay 2005) in order to accrue value to oneself. Investing in the self through access to resources is a central way in which middle-class identities are formed. Yet the consequence of this is the marginalisation and devaluing of the working classes (Reay 2017: 147).

The positioning of working-class selves as devoid of value has a long history. A number of studies have highlighted that the positioning of the middle-class habitus as desirable entails the marking of working-class identities and practices as negative (see for example, Gidley and Rooke 2010; Hebson 2009; Jackson and Benson 2014; Lawler 2004, 2005; Reay 2005, 2017; Reay et al 2011; Skeggs 1997; 2004b; 2005; Tyler 2008). Central to these studies is the finding that the working classes are axiomatically marked as pathologically failing to reflexively organise socially-valued resources to invest in middle-class identities (Lawler 2005, 2011; Reay 2005, 2017; Skeggs 2004b). The consequences of class are essentialised and individualised. For instance, Lawler's (2018) analysis of British government reports draws our attention to the individualised political rhetoric about social mobility. She notes that these reports focus on ensuring the socially immobile have the right skillset and character to be successful individuals. The emphasis is on accumulation of capital to the self in order to become a person of value. Yet none of the government reports in her study consider *how* cultural capital comes to be valued in the first place.

Furthermore, the valueless person is socially positioned as *refusing* to accrue value to themselves. Reay argues that the working classes are often blamed for their lack of social mobility: '[t]hey are presented either as 'decent and hardworking' – those who are engaged in trying to become middle class – or else as failures who are either not aspiring enough or not making sufficient effort to be viewed as successful individuals' (2017: 13). The media offers a number of further examples. Terms such as 'benefits mum' or 'chav' (Tyler 2015) refer not to a collective working-class other, but to individuals who are to blame for their diminished resources. Lawler's (2002, 2004) study into the media representation of women protesting against paedophiles living in their area demonstrates how working-class women were depicted in newspapers as ignorant mothers who adopted mob-type behaviour. Skeggs and Wood's (2008) research into reality television shows how working-class participants are

pathologised for being individually responsible for their lack of self-investment and lack of access to the cultural capital required for valued self-production. This positioning makes them ripe for transformation by middle-class professionals, and the viewer is invited to adopt the subject position that accruing middle-class value to oneself is a moral imperative. This is classed because the production of proper personhood requires both recognition of and access to legitimate capital. What these examples show is that, as Loveday (2015) suggests, there is a public narrative which concentrates on 'fixing' the working classes by making them like their middle-class counterparts. This, in turn, endorses forms of middle-classness as having value.

Following Skeggs (2004), I argue that in order to understand the ways in which class is reproduced, it is necessary to significantly extend class analysis beyond the exchange-value of capital and focus instead on those perspectives which accord objects with value, thus making them exchangeable. This means looking beyond strategic investment and exchange of capital to account for exclusion and access, because to ignore this reproduces the properties of an exchange-value self as having value. Moreover, deducing action to the strategic pursuit of capital offers no explanation of how those who occupy valueless positions in social space are denied access to the fields of exchange wherein they are able 'to convert, accrue or generate' (Skeggs 2011: 501-502) legitimate value to themselves. For instance, Skeggs' study (1997) demonstrates how working-class women exchanged resources, not as a means of accruing future value for themselves, but as a means of gaining respectability and defending themselves against misrecognition. In other words, the legitimacy that the women attached to their practices was based on different systems of value.

Skeggs shows how class is made through exclusion; that not everyone is encapsulated in Bourdieu's depiction of social space, and that habitus fails to draw our attention to how those who are denied access to the field can accrue value for themselves. Nevertheless, I take Bourdieu's concepts as my starting point because they highlight the strategic ways in which middle-class boundary-marking is conducted and therefore the ways in which the *middle classes* are made (Skeggs 2004a; 2011). Studies have noted that the middle classes share a strong commitment to their social reproduction, particularly through their possession of cultural capital. For instance, the systematic ways in which middle-class families ensure that their children gain access to the 'right' schools and universities are well

documented as being a central means of intergenerational reproduction of cultural capital (Ball 2003; Crozier et al 2008; Reay 1998, 2002, 2017; Reay et al 2011). It is for this reason that I employ habitus in order to understand how people are distributed in classed space as well as how it informs their trajectory through food moments. In so doing, I seek to lay bare the systems of exchange which exclude certain people by positioning them as valueless subjects. Placing analytical focus on valued identities therefore allows me to unpick otherwise unproblematised categories by looking at the conditions in which the categories are formed in the first place. By focusing on the ways in which class dissolves into individualised identities, the performance of 'good' food can be theorised through broader inequalities, rather than individualised notions of effort, strategy, and aspiration (Allen 2014).

Valued personhood requires classed consumption and display of capital. Moreover, by analysing practices alongside personal trajectories of capital accrual, I aim to examine how classed ideas about 'good' food are embodied and reproduced. With this in mind, I now turn to evaluating sociology of consumption literature which provides a starting point from which to consider what constitutes 'good' food and the processes by which it comes to be named as such. I engage with work pertaining to postmodern ideas of consumption in order to situate food consumption within a Bourdieusian hierarchical field. In so doing, I think through ideas of choice and reflexivity alongside the increasingly fragmented taste hierarchy and argue that ways of consuming are classed.

## 2.3 The Field of Consumption

There is widespread agreement about the importance of consumption in contemporary Britain (Warde 2017). There is also a growing body of sociological literature which elaborates on the role of consumption in maintaining classed social relationships. Some of this literature has taken the consumption of food as its primary focus. For instance, research in Canada established that while economic and cultural capital shape access to ethical food discourses, shoppers who are wealthy in capital are positioned as more reflexive and intellectually superior than their low-income counterparts (Johnston and Szabo 2011; Johnston et al 2011, 2012). Not only does this draw our attention to a stratified food system, but it also reminds us of the rhetoric of individual choice in consumerism. There is, however, a lack of research which deploys a Bourdieusian framework to investigate everyday domestic

food consumption. Recently in Britain, Atkinson and Deeming (2015) applied a Bourdieusian model to analyse the relationship between household food consumption and class. Deploying correspondence analysis of data from the 2010 Living Costs and Food Survey, the 2008 British Social Attitudes Survey, and the 2003 Cultural Capital and Social Exclusion Survey, Atkinson and Deeming found that economic and cultural capital influenced household food expenditure and preferences. Participants with rich stocks of capital were found to be more likely to emphasise quality, taste, health, and ethics in relation to their food habits. This provides a platform on which to build qualitative research that aims to describe and uncover the minutiae of consumers' relationships with existing food hierarchies. Doing so will contribute to understanding the social and cultural locatedness of everyday domestic food consumption and add to a growing body of evidence which demonstrates that class matters in relation to consumption (Tomlinson 2003).

With the flourishing of consumption studies, the somewhat persuasive figure of the individualised consumer has emerged as a symbolic representation of taste and lifestyle. Much of this stems from the highly influential work of Bauman, Beck, and Giddens who argue that in reflexive modernity consumption (of goods, practices, and knowledge) is central to the construction and communication of identity (Warde 1994). Importantly, reflexive consumption is understood as the means by which identity comes to be *realised* on individual bodies. For instance, Giddens argued that '[t]he body, like the self, becomes a site of interaction, appropriation and reappropriation, linking reflexively organised processes and systematically ordered expert knowledge' (1991: 218). To reiterate my earlier point, placing theoretical emphasis on mobile and reflexive selves carved out through consumption (Skeggs 2004a) situates practice as the outcome of individual reflexive, albeit 'precarious freedoms' (Beck and Beck-Gernsheim 2009: 13). For Bauman, the freedom of choice and personal responsibility implied in consumerism in 'liquid modernity' (the constant and restless shifting of social relationships) leads to anxiety (Bauman 2009). It also produces a spectre of failed consumers: those without either the material or cultural resources to even 'have' an identity in a consumerised world. In relation to this, I aim to develop Warde's (1994) focus on the cultural and social locatedness of consumer anxiety and reflexivity. Warde argues that anxiety about consumption is avoided through group identification and that the dynamics of consumption are related to social attributes. Furthermore, if consumerism constructs identity and is inherently anxiety-provoking then one would expect

high levels of anxiety amongst affluent consumers, since they have a greater choice of 'identity' options. Warde suggests that levels of anxiety are likely to be higher amongst members of those groups with the greatest investment in identity construction via (legitimised) aesthetic display: 'members of these groups would suffer the highest potential personal embarrassment from contravening the standards of acceptable taste through the making of inappropriate choices' (1994: 893). They are, however, less likely to make mistakes. This is because they are supported through sharing legitimated style (social capital), access to knowledge and economic resources, and having a clear sense of the rules.

Attending to the notion of choice is important for my research since food is selected from the consumer marketplace within which the rhetoric of individual choice circulates. Much research into food consumption has drawn our attention to the 'menu pluralism' (Beardsworth and Keil 1992) offered in the consumer marketplace as a result of globalisation and mass production. Mennell's (1985) thirty-year-old study argued that this increase in variety has resulted in the diminishing of social contrasts between classes. This claim has since been widely refuted (see Warde 1997 for a full discussion), not least for its correlation of production of variety with consumption of variety. Nonetheless, there still remains an idea, particularly in the public imagination, that globalisation has eroded traditional boundaries, replacing relatively fixed socially-recognised criteria with the free play of individual choice (Crouch and O'Neil 2000; Fishler 1988). There is little evidence of what these 'traditional' foodways of the past looked like in the first place (Warde 1997).

In Warde's (1997) sociological account of consumption, food, and taste he suggests that imagined food traditions are invented as a way to negotiate a tension around individual choice. Warde's work has made an important contribution to the sociology of consumption and food because he argues that the process of *selection* must be understood in relation to broader consumer frameworks which centralise consumption as a symbolic communication of identity. Warde's comparison of food magazines from 1968 and 1992 showed that in the 1960s an appeal to foreign cuisine became commonplace, but by the 1990s foreign cuisine was so commonplace that its novel appeal had declined in what he refers to as 'the routinization of the exotic' (ibid.: 61). In other words, the global marketplace was so awash with variety that it had now become the norm. However, the increase in production of variety does not suggest a decline in social differentiation (ibid.: 171). Now over twenty years old, Warde's oft-cited text has been an important counter-argument to theorising

consumption as a form of personal symbolic communication because he emphasises the social locatedness of consumption and also, its role in maintaining social relationships. He outlines that the food choices individuals make within routinized variety operate within four antinomies: novelty and tradition, health and indulgence, economy and extravagance, and convenience and care. These antonyms are socially and culturally located and can be used to make sense of contradictory public narratives about food selection. For instance, the opposition of health and indulgence reflects contradictory social concerns about excess, self-surveillance and resistance of abundance. Importantly, since the ideology of individual choice in consumerism offers little guidance around diversity, the ways in which consumers navigate these contradictory evaluations, is *read* as reflecting individual identities.

My research extends Warde's insights by offering contemporary data about the nuanced ways that the analytical antinomies he identifies play out in practice. For instance, the public narrative of austerity of the post-economic crisis (Potter and Westall 2013) draws our attention to the economy and extravagance antonym in which practices of thrift and discipline could be attempts to address. Furthermore, I seek to explore how class operates in subtle ways around the valuing of choices in the negotiation of these antonyms. For instance, if the quest for novel or exotic cuisines co-exists alongside a quest for security which can be found through the valuing of 'traditional' foods, then I would argue that class exists in the successful balancing of the two opposing ways of consuming. Likewise, the ways in which ideas about caregiving through food are understood to be compromised by the use of convenience foods relates to classed and gendered ideas about appropriate caregiving. I will develop this point about the classed and gendered nature of the care and convenience antonym in due course when I consider how temporalities impact on everyday food provisioning. Following Meah and Jackson (2017: 2067), while at the level of abstraction these antonyms are in polar opposition, paying attention to everyday practice can delineate the ways in which these oppositions can be reconciled. Furthermore, it is important to point out that these antonyms are themselves classed because the positioning of these categories in polar opposition relates to very particular classed perspectives about foods and ways of eating. Furthermore, the ways in which the navigation of these antonyms can be socially valued relates to legitimised ideas of taste and distinction. Importantly, socially-valued navigation centres on the successful presentation of individual choice. This is performed

through the critical discernment of *appropriate* food and food practices. In order to elaborate on this further, I now look towards the concepts of taste and distinction.

### 2.3.1  *The Boundaries of Taste and Distinction*

Bourdieu's work *Distinction* (2010 [1984]) provides a useful framework for understanding the central role that taste and distinction play not only in representing but also in demarcating class boundaries (Warde 2008). Based on ethnographic research conducted in Paris in the 1960s, the study aligns taste with classed dispositions, rather than individual preference and choice. Bourdieu argues that 'tastes of luxury' (an inclination for aesthetic presentation, for instance speciality foods) are defined through their distance, or distinction, from 'tastes of necessity' (an inclination for function over form, for instance economical foods):

> The true basis of the differences found in the area of consumption, and far beyond it, is the opposition between the tastes of luxury (or freedom) and the tastes of necessity. The former are the tastes of individuals who are the product of material conditions of existence defined by distance from necessity, by the freedoms or facilities stemming from possession of capital; the latter express, precisely in their adjustment, the necessities of which they are the product. (Bourdieu 2010 [1984]): 173)

The point is that 'tastes of luxury', belonging to the privileged classes, are legitimised as the antithesis to 'tastes of necessity'. Hence, food tastes carry social stakes, not least that they can be made and mobilised as a symbolic marker for reproducing class distinction. Taste reflects and maintains status and distance from other classes and class fractions. It is 'a class culture turned into nature, that is, *embodied*, [and] helps to shape the class body' (ibid.: 188; italics original). Through being well-positioned in the field, middle-class taste is legitimised and valued and therefore regarded as the criteria for normality. This is because with the acquisition of capital comes the capacity to draw boundaries (Reay et al 2011).

There is an emergent body of work which illustrates that cultural capital can be displayed through food choices (Cairns et al 2010; Cappellini and Parsons 2012a; Johnston and Bauman 2007, 2010; Johnston et al 2011, 2012; Mellor et al 2010). For instance, Mellor et al (2010) found that dinner parties were a means of exchanging and displaying capital via food for their middle-class participants, through engaging in shared understandings of taste. Much of this empirical work takes gender as its primary focus. For example, Cairns et al (2010) focus on the 'foodie' discourse, noting that it offers opportunities to both contest and reinscribe gender norms. However, class boundaries are reproduced since it requires economic and cultural capital 'to make every meal "count"' (ibid.: 599). Studies such as these are useful

because they analyse consumption at the level of a relationship of exchange and value. They therefore highlight the link between consumption and taste and its subsequent role in maintaining social relationships.

Bourdieu's theory of distinction has been criticised for being a rigid and unreflexive model about cultural preferences, particularly in their contemporary forms (Bennett 2007; Daloz 2011; Ollivier 2011; Warde 2008). The fast-moving pace of commodification means that there is an increase of cultural forms in circulation (Featherstone 1995). This is not to suggest that Bourdieu's toolkit is redundant however. Rather, contemporary understandings of taste ought to focus, not on fixed hierarchies, but on the ways in which the possession of dominant capital relates to tacit knowledge about the judgements of taste. As I will now go on to argue, the possession of capital facilitates both the confidence to pursue diversity, as well as the successful conversion of cultural selections into legitimised taste. To this end, as Warde points out, engaging with the notion of legitimate culture is critical (2017: 139). It is around this point that Bourdieu's theory holds explanatory power. My key aim then is to understand fully both how cultural capital can be transformed to enhance the status of its bearer, and how this relates to the conditions under which legitimate culture operates and can be reproduced.

At face value, engaging with variety could be understood as evidence for an increase in individual autonomy and a decrease in social and cultural hierarchies: the democratisation of the cultural field (Warde et al 2008: 150). In contemporary culture, the boundaries of taste are continuously redrawn, meaning that high, middle, and popular culture are up for grabs as symbolic resources to achieve distinction (Emmison 2003: 226). But the ability, and inclination, to reflexively 'choose' from the array of cultural forms is socially located. Individuals require a rich portfolio of capital to convert the crossing of boundaries into socially-recognised taste. With this in mind, I wish now to address the cultural omnivore thesis, which in recent years has received much attention in the sociology of consumption.

### 2.3.2  *The Cultural Omnivore*

The term cultural omnivore was coined by Peterson (1992) to describe the broad taste profiles of those who cross hierarchical boundaries of high and low culture. It has since become a powerful and important framework in theories of taste and consumption. In short, Peterson's study, based in the United States, posited that theories of taste which rely on an elite-to-mass hierarchy are inadequate. He identified the emergence of the omnivore as

denoting distinction. In the last twenty-five years a number of studies have demonstrated that rather than exclusively operating around highbrow tastes, distinction is now attached to variety and breadth of cultural consumption (Bennett et al 1999, 2009; Emmison 2003; Friedman 2011; Peterson and Kern 1996; Smith Maguire 2018; Warde and Gayo-Cal 2009; Warde et al 1999, 2008). The crux of the argument is not that the 'omnivore likes everything *indiscriminately*. Rather, it signifies an *openness* to appreciating everything' (Peterson and Kern 1996: 904; italics original). As such, omnivorous consumption has come to be associated with those in privileged classed positions because it requires high levels of capital to cross taste boundaries and critically engage with a variety of cultural forms (Warde et al 1999; Friedman 2011). As well as operating as a form of cultural capital, omnivorousness can be mobilised as social capital to expand social networks (Erickson 1996; Warde et 1999). The empirical validity of the omnivore thesis is not without criticisms. Ollivier (2008) suggests that the omnivore thesis is so popular because it resonates with middle-class experience. This is especially so since much research uses existing class discourses about what is desirable and undesirable, thus reproducing the taste hierarchy. By opening up the taste hierarchy, Ollivier found that 'lowbrows' are not 'closed', but are open and curious, albeit to domains which are not traditionally associated with culture. For instance, Ollivier's working-class participants expressed openness and a desire to learn about technical or practical forms which are useful in everyday life, such as using new tools, growing vegetables, or practising new sports (2008: 139). These domains however, have less symbolic value, meaning that 'lowbrows' cannot be recognised as cultural omnivores in the same sense as someone who has the right composition and amount of symbolic and material resources.

Other research has noted the prevalence of omnivorous taste profiles in the socially mobile (Coulangeon 2015; Daenekindt and Roose 2014; Friedman 2012; Peterson and Kern 1996). This is because taste profiles of the upwardly mobile include both their origin tastes and destination tastes, thus leading us to question whether boundary-crossing is entirely to do with markers of status. Yet to this Friedman's (2012) research adds that the omnivorousness of the upwardly mobile is more than a cumulative result of individual life trajectories. Through life history interviews, he established that for the upwardly mobile their combined taste portfolios left them unsure of their cultural identity. They lacked the learnt disposition to 'naturalise' their tastes as legitimate, especially the tastes of their childhoods, and consequently they were more 'culturally homeless' than cultural omnivores. The addition of

qualitative approaches then is important for deepening our understanding of the consumption of diversity. Much criticism has been levied at the overreliance of the omnivore thesis on quantitative methods (Hanquinet 2017; Warde and Gayo-Cal 2009; Warde et al 2008). Critics primarily argue that quantitative research leaves unanalysed the dynamic meanings of omnivorousness. As such, we need to shift the focus away from statistically measuring how much and what forms are consumed to a closer examination of people's relationships to both existing and emerging cultural forms and how they are consumed (Hanquinet 2017). I engage with the omnivore thesis through qualitative research in this thesis. This allows me to scrutinise the relationship between legitimate foods and power in order to examine how the ability to confer status on cultural products is related to social position. In addition, a qualitative understanding enables me to access the tensions involved in the traversing of hierarchies of taste.

Emmison notes that it is of strategic importance to be flexible and mobile in this complex and fluid era but the 'desire *and* the ability to participate in different social and cultural worlds, are far from universally distributed (2003: 227; italics original). The middle classes can make omnivorousness work for them because through access to recourses they can utilise a diverse taste portfolio to increase their exchange-value (Skeggs 2005: 150). By probing participants' relationships with food, my research enables questions to be asked about the extent to which omnivorousness operates around inclusion and openness, and the extent to which openness itself is classed. For instance, Warde et al (2008) found that there are limits to the omnivore's openness. By combining survey data and qualitative interviews, Warde et al found that omnivore dislikes were heavily orientated towards non-legitimate cultural genres, such as reality television and fast food. Much like Bourdieu's insights, for the omnivore distance is pivotal to processes of discernment. This works to keep the classed taste hierarchy intact because uniqueness is coded as such through its differentiation to sameness and mass. I now turn to consider omnivorousness in relation to food, in order to further engage with this theoretical debate.

### 2.3.3  *Omnivorousness and Food: From Kitsch to Cool*

There is an emergent body of literature which shows how openness to food which crosses taste boundaries acts as a culturally and symbolically important means of distinction. Much of this focuses on gourmet food culture (for example, Oleschuk 2017; Johnston and Baumann 2007, 2010). For instance, in their examination of American gourmet food magazines,

Johnston and Baumann (2010) found that there are conflicting ideologies of democracy and distinction which frame the contemporary foodscape. On the one hand, populism frames omnivorousness through recourse to inclusiveness. On the other hand, there is an obscured ideology of distinction which authorises a narrow range of food. This 'openness' is highly selective, and it is particularly around notions of authenticity which certain foods are legitimised. Ideas about authenticity circulate in trends for local foods, ethnic and exotic foods, and gourmet, speciality and artisan foods. But the fragmentation of formal boundaries of good and bad taste positions food as a 'classless terrain' (Johnston and Baumann 2010: 180). For instance, this is evident in the juxtaposition of 'kitsch' foods alongside gourmet foods or in trends to move away from the formalities associated with silver-service in the restaurant industry. Similarly, Smith Maguire (2018) looks at representation of Old and New World Wines in specialist wine magazines. Like Johnston and Bauman (2010), she notes that wines are presented as democratically equal, but at the same time a 'taste for the particular' (2018: 15) is made explicit in the choice-making process. She also argues that choice is legitimised by invoking ideas about authenticity, offered as such through frames of personal connection, geographic specificity, tradition, and so on (ibid.: 9). Social recognition then, rests on the ability to competently navigate conflicting frames of omnivorousness by attaching ideas of authenticity to foods. By paying attention to an individual's relationship to foods and the ways they navigate the taste hierarchy, it is possible to understand how certain foods can be repositioned and accorded status. To use the words of Bourdieu: 'nothing is more distinctive, more distinguished, than the capacity to confer aesthetic status on objects that are banal or even 'common'' (2010 [1984]: xxix).

In a parallel fashion, Spracklen et al (2013) draw on their research into real ale to argue that the urban, bourgeois classes' taste for real ale operates around ideas of authenticity and localism. It is a means of distinction from the 'lagerisation of the mainstream' (ibid.: 317), whereby lager is designated as a low-status class of beer. Likewise, Kierans and Heaney (2010) show how the traditional Liverpudlian working-class dish Scouse has been repositioned as a marker for distinction through recourse to authenticity. Importantly, it is not that authenticity is inherent in food itself, but it 'acquires its authenticity from the routines and practices which underpin it, bestowing some quintessential character and forming part of what can be verified as native, local, indigenous' (ibid.: 111). But if, as Zukin argues in relation to gentrification, '[w]e can only see spaces as authentic from outside of

them' (2008: 728), then consumers of authenticity are united in their shared vantage point of distance. Served from the working-class kitchen to the working-class family, Scouse is not up for grabs as a form of distinction, nor is it positioned as 'authentic'. Such families cannot culturally verify Scouse as having symbolic value because they have insufficient dominant capital to enable its conversion into a valued authentic dish. For Spracklen, 'the morality of authenticity elides smoothly into a Western, middle-class sensibility of culture: the authentic is good because it runs counter to the homogenising tendencies of globalisation, because it encourages diversity, respect and cultural heterogeneity' (2011: 102). 'Authenticity' then is a social and cultural classed construction. It operates through a play of difference between autonomy to encounter 'authentic goods' and passivity in the global marketplace. But to encounter 'authentic' goods and reappropriate them as legitimate requires the mobility which comes with possession of capital. As Anguelovski (2015) notes, the gentrification of traditional foods is often coupled with a price inflation resulting in the exclusion of groups who traditionally bought or made them.

Following Skeggs, I argue that uncovering how positioning, movement, and exclusion are generated is central to understanding class inequalities (2004a: 4). There is a classed skill involved in connecting with and appropriating particular cultural selections, which for the omnivore act as a marker for distinction. At the same time, the mobility involved in encountering multiple forms entails fixing the other in a position of exclusion; as a point from which the mobile self can enact selective distance. A number of scholars discuss how emotions of disgust in relation to the working-class other function to position the middle-class self (for example Gidley and Rooke 2010; Lawler 2005; Skeggs 2005; Tyler 2008). Disgust is a powerful, visceral emotion. As Probyn describes, it 'seems to turn on proximity, sight and the closeness of smell and touch: the over-whelming horror that the disgusting object will engulf us' (2000: 131). As well as proximity of the other, it is within concerns about ambivalence that notions of disgust can flourish (Skeggs 2005). Since openness to diversity is culturally valued, the boundaries of good and bad taste are ambivalent, resulting in the distorted proximity of good and bad. But while distinction rests on a form of individualism which marks an identity as unique, it nevertheless relies on a shared understanding of taste and distaste. This is because the successful marking of distinction through omnivorous consumption rests on the universalizing of a disposition which belongs to a specific (middle-class) location (Lawler 2005: 439).

For Lawler (2005), middle-classness *relies* on the expulsion of perceived working-classness. Class disgust 'provides collective reassurance that we are not alone in our judgement of the disgusting object, generating consensus and authorization for middle-class standards, maintaining the symbolic order' (Skeggs 2005: 970). Attached to taste is the antithesis of distaste, and if disgust hangs on proximity then those perceived as lacking taste need to be rendered disgusting in order to maintain the opposition. There is a lack of research which specifically explores how emotions of disgust operate in relation to food practices and classed identities. But paying attention to disgust, even if articulated in the subtlest of ways, can reveal how identities entail the marking of classed, albeit individualised, boundaries in relation to an other. In this way, foods and ways of eating which are positioned as disgusting are not just deemed unworthy of investment but signify a potential devaluing and contamination of the habitus. This could be particularly relevant to the omnivore since disgust occurs as a response to being in the realm of uneasy categories (Probyn 2000: 132). Accounting for disgust therefore can reveal the tacit knowledge which positions certain foods and ways of consuming as having no value and therefore those which need to be repelled in order to protect the self's interests. As Bourdieu's suggests, 'tastes are no doubt first and foremost distastes, disgust provoked by horror or visceral intolerance ("sick-making") of the tastes of others' (2010 [1984]: 49).

I have thus far focused on the connections between consumption and class to argue that there is a relationship between positionality and the ability to engage in practices of distinction through food. To this end, I have reworked theories of individualisation and reflexivity, which, while they fall short in acknowledging the importance of social divisions such as class, are important for identifying the fractured nature of contemporary society and its individualising tropes. From this, I take the position that class analysis needs to examine how particular modes of individualisation are related to class and that valued personhood entails the marking of the self with a diverse, yet selective, array of cultural forms. I now turn to look at the conditions in which food, as a material object, comes to be transformed into something which can be read as a cultural marker for class. The final section of this chapter aims to situate food taste and participation in wider social processes in order to lay the foundations of this empirical research which focuses on the how and what of domestic food practices.

## 2.4 Materialities of Food

I propose that accounting for the material processes through which people adopt domestic feeding practices and preferences can point towards the social and cultural environment which shapes ideas about which foods are edible in the home. In this section, I engage with literature and debate about the role that food takes in the making of the home to offer insights about how class emerges in the material processes of domestic food practices.

### 2.4.1  *Home and Domestication*

A number of cultural geography studies have sought to draw attention to how the concept of home refers to the multidimensional ways in which social relationships interact with place (for instance, Blunt 2005; Mallett 2004; Pink et al 2015). In this context, the home can be conceptualised as a 'place-event', a material and sensory context, which is lived and continually changing and constituted through its relation to everyday activity (Pink et al 2015). This extends beyond the physical boundaries of the home. For instance, the spatial design of the home reflects and reproduces cultural and historical ideas about forms of sociality associated with domesticity (Blunt 2005). This can be seen in the contemporary kitchen which has evolved from a backstage setting for mundane food work to a space for living (Hand and Shove 2004; Hand et al 2007; Meah 2016).

Each home operates as a unique site of consumption, since the meanings ascribed to goods are negotiated between those who live there and the wider world (Valentine 1999). For instance, Hurdley's (2006) research into mantelpiece displays denotes the intersection of the social and the personal. Hurdley's participants engaged in wider frameworks of social meanings as a means to represent domestic relationships and enact their identities through narratives about mantelpiece displays. In the same way, domestic food processes which (re)produce the home are related to external, as well as internal, social frameworks. Domestic ways of doing are connected to a wider symbolic order associated with notions of class and gender for example (Silva 2005; Woodward 2003). In light of this, I look beyond the physical boundaries of the home to account for the ways in which individuals negotiate external socio-spatial relations in their 'doing' of home. This permits me in turn to now address the concept of domestication as a means to embed domestic food practices in a wider social framework.

The concept of domestication encapsulates how things external to a private space can be appropriated through domestic processes. It blurs the public/private dichotomy by delineating the ways in which global processes are actively mediated, negotiated, and remade through their symbolic and physical integration into the everyday (Barkardjieva 2006; Berker et al 2006; Stenning et al 2010; Ward 2006). Much of the domestication literature focuses on technology and the conflicting processes by which it becomes mundane and ordinary in everyday domestic life (for example Dumitrica 2013; Haddon 2018; Michael and Gaver 2009; Morley 2003; Silverstone and Haddon 1996). Here, domestication refers to 'a set of practices (appropriation, objectification, incorporation, adaptation and conversion) to describe the introduction and integration of technology, physically and symbolically, into everyday routines' (Stenning et al 2010: 73). Thus far very little social science literature has used domestication to conceptualise household food practices. But it offers a useful framework for analysing how the marketplace is mediated in the domestic consumption of food. This is because domestication as a concept can shed light on how bringing the material object of food into the household involves its appropriation and active infusion with symbolic meaning. Domestication describes the processes by which food comes to represent the values of the home: '[t]he process of consumption and of embedding the object into the household is one of sense making, of transforming the alien object to ascribe it with meaning in the symbolic reality of the household' (Berker et al 2006: 7).

Silverstone and Haddon (1996) note that consumer commitment to and negotiation of processes of domestication act as a signifier of their participation in consumption. Particular forms of domestication then reflect and reproduce household capital (Berker et al 2006). This is because consumers are negotiating classed frameworks which both facilitate access to and position particular goods as worthy of domestication. This can be extended to the provision of food. Paying attention to the discerning processes through which food comes to be selected from the marketplace and transformed into a substance for feeding demarcates a process through which household identities are formed. Insofar as domestication involves resistance (to microwave meals for example) *and* accommodation (of culturally-valued foods from culturally-valued places) it is clearly related to class as I will demonstrate in later chapters. This is reflected in literature about cookbooks. Cookbooks are material and cultural artefacts, which, employed in the domestic kitchen, can act as manuals for the domestication of food. A number of studies have noted the changing focus of contemporary

cookbooks, which reflect and reproduce social frameworks (Brownlie et al 2005; Cappellini and Parsons 2012a; Gallegos 2005; Hollows 2003). Cappellini and Parsons (2012a) for example, note that the role of cookbooks extends far beyond the preparation of food in the domestic sphere to include advice on selecting the 'right' ingredients from the 'right' places. This means that cultural capital can be enacted through consumption: shopping skill and selecting the right products. Moreover, as I hope to show, paying attention to the types of cookbooks which individuals use in the process of transforming ingredients into meals can highlight the public narratives with which participants identify and the types of capital they deem worthy of investment. That said, domestication is a complex process which extends beyond class display. It is a process that is related to the material and social contexts of household lives. Given this observation, I will now turn to literature about time to provide a starting point for analysing how objects deemed to have little value come to be domesticated in contested ways. Paying attention to the temporalities of domestic consumption adds an another, important, layer to analysis because it can account for the material and social constraints under which domestication occurs.

## 2.4.2  *Time*

Food and time are inevitably connected: it takes time to source, prepare and eat food, and food and eating are also ways of marking and organising time. There is a range of sociological research about the ramifications of time in the domestic sphere. Some of this takes food as its empirical focus, and most of it centres on gender. Establishing a framework for understanding the relationship between the multiple temporal elements of food consumption in the home, requires a critical overview of these different approaches. A number of studies have quantitatively analysed patterns of domestic time-use (Mancino and Newman 2006; Sullivan 1997; Warde et al 2007). These have been useful for highlighting the gendered division of domestic labour, and when and how practices vary. For instance, Sullivan's (1997) research into the gendered experience of domestic time found that while cooking fell high on the list of domestic activities performed by men, this was generally done alongside their partner. The women on the other hand mainly cooked alone, suggesting that there is an element of 'gendered supervision' (ibid.: 227) in domestic cooking. However, whilst studies such as these are useful in explaining generic time usage, they fall short of probing the deeper meanings attributed to the activities they are intended to measure (Warde et al 2007). Moreover, a number of studies have established that time is not linear,

and therefore not breakdown-able into measurable, quantifiable units. Southerton (2006) argues that analysing time as a unit of measurement fails to grasp the ways in which social practices are related to time, and how different time constraints organise and construct the experiences of activities.

If we understand social action as practices, we can see that their temporality is better understood in terms of fluid and intersecting rhythms, sequences, and periodicities rather than strictly defined tasks with objectively measurable timings. Practices involve interwoven 'timespaces' (Schatzki 2009: 40). As well as being founded on body habits and learnt taste, the practice of eating, an everyday and routine activity, is connected temporally and spatially to other practices. Accounting for this highlights the ways that time constraints both organise the rhythms of domestic food practices and impact on how practices are experienced. The family meal provides a useful means of illustrating the importance of adopting a multidimensional approach to time for the analysis of domestic food practices. This is because the family meal requires that members of the household are together at a particular time in a particular place to eat. For instance, Brannen et al (2013) draw on the concept of synchronicity to analyse how dual earner households coordinate often conflicting 'time-space paths' of household members to facilitate family meals. My research critically develops these insights by accounting for the multidimensional ways in which everyday experiences of eating are connected with other practices (such as extracurricular activities, paid work and domestic labour). In so doing, I aim to show how particular modes of eating and feeding are prioritised and valued.

Several studies have identified the family meal as integral to the doing of family (Bugge and Almås 2006; Cappellini and Parsons 2012b; Charles and Kerr 1988; Devault 1991; Murcott 1982). At the same time, media, political, and even academic narratives indicate that the family meal is waning. For instance, research by Daniels et al (2012) starts from the hypothesis that the family meal is in decline and that this is cause for concern. And yet there is a lack of evidence that the family meal is in decline (Brannen et al 2013; Bugge and Almås 2006; Jackson et al 2009; Murcott 1997, 2012; Warde and Martens 2000; Wilk 2010). Most recently, Warde and Yates (2017) found that in Britain, of people living in shared households, ninety per cent of their evening meals were shared with others. Nor is there evidence that if such a trend were underway that this is cause for concern. Nevertheless, the family meal remains discursively reproduced as an idealised practice (Blake et al 2009; Daly

2001; Jackson et al 2009; Murcott 1997, 2012; Warde 1999; Wilk 2010). Southerton (2003) argues that the socio-temporal organisation of daily practices has changed because of deroutinisation and informalisation. In other words, the fragmentation of collectively-organised temporality means that the scheduling of domestic collective practices, such as sharing food, has become an individual's responsibility rather than a matter of wider communal traditions and conventions (dinner at 6pm after the male breadwinner's workday has finished, for example). It follows then, that household prioritisation of the family meal, despite changes which make eating together hard to achieve, is evidence of its ideological durability. For instance, while participants in Backett-Milburn et al's study (2010b) only ate together half of the time, they all indicated a preference for family meals. Importantly, the justifications around not eating as a family centred on other conflicting practices, such as work and sport. The shortcomings of not staging the family meal were offset by the appropriate balance of other activities that were also a highly valorised site of doing 'good' family and class.

Prioritising certain activities (such as sharing food or cooking from scratch) highlights two things: that some activities have more cultural value than others and that some individuals have an increased capacity to negotiate time constraints. Looking firstly at capacity to negotiate time constraints, Southerton (2006) found that participants with high education levels were more likely to create diverse temporal spaces to synchronise and coordinate a variety of practices than participants with lower education levels. While this suggests a correlation of temporal autonomy with dominant capital, it also highlights that there is cultural value associated with diverse cultural participation. Given that, as I have argued above, the handling of diverse cultural forms acts as a marker of distinction, then it seems fair to suggest that handling diverse 'time-space paths' also acts as a marker of distinction. Secondly, paying attention to which practices are prioritised amid conflicting and diverse temporal spaces indicates which practices are valued. Understanding the ways in which participants dedicate time to food is an important means of understanding the cultural value of eating and feeding in particular ways.

The consumption of convenience foods provides an interesting object of analysis to expand on the relationship between time constraints and the values attached to foods and ways of eating. Until fairly recently the consumption of convenience foods received little sociological

attention[3]. As Jackson and Viehoff (2016) point out, much of this research rests on contested and wide-ranging definitions of 'convenience': from fast foods, to mass-produced foods, to foods which are easily prepared. Convenience foods range from bagged lettuce, to filleted fish, through to frozen ready meals (Meah and Jackson 2017: 2066). What these foods share is that they provide a solution to problems of timing by enabling 'the relaxation of constraints on the individual's trajectory through time and space' (Warde 1999: 522). They allow food provisioning to be broken down into different processes and reassembled to fit complex and sometimes hurried temporal routines. At the same time however, 'convenience' has negative moral connotations and is frequently associated with laziness and unhealthiness (Harman and Cappellini 2015; Jackson and Viehoff 2016; Meah and Jackson 2017; Parsons 2016; Warde 1999). This is related to the opposition between convenience and care identified by Warde (1997), which I suggest is classed. For instance, while feeding the family with a ready meal may be an efficient use of time, this reliance on convenience can involve compromising norms of care around the provision of food cooked from scratch for some social groups (Thompson 1996; Warde 1999). Nonetheless, Warde's antonym of convenience and care can arguably also be reconciled and the relationship between the two is fluid and contextual. For example, Meah and Jackson's (2017) recent research shows how participants drew on multiple notions of care in relation to their provision of convenience foods to the household. These ranged from caring about reducing the waste attached to homemade, to using convenience as a strategy to facilitate the devotion of more time to care for family members. However, it is important to point out that there remains a lack of value attached to convenience foods. As such, accounting for individual experience of the temporal relationship between practices flags up how norms about convenience foods impact on their usage.

### 2.4.3  *Who's Cooking? Gender and Doing Family Through Food*

The extent to which practices such as sharing food or cooking are coordinated or prioritised is associated with cultural and social orientations towards eating in particular ways. Furthermore, the requirement to organise practices into particular slots of time as well as the ability to synchronise time with other household members, to share food for example, depends on household members' relationships to the constraints of time. Time constraints

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[3] See Jackson and Viehoff (2016) for an extensive critical review of research on consumption of convenience foods.

organise experiences of practices, but the ability to negotiate the temporal constraints of practices also relates to an individual's position within social relations. Different groups experience feeling 'harried' (Southerton 2003) in relation to different practices and their associated norms. This point requires me to factor gender as well as class into the analysis. There is a wealth of literature which establishes that, despite their increased participation in the workforce, women remain responsible for feeding the household (Bava et al 2008; Beagan et al 2008; Brannen et al 2013; DeVault 1991; Parsons 2016; Sullivan 1997; Yates and Warde 2017). This is important because families are continually reinforced by patterns of practices (for instance feeding) (Curtis et al 2009; Delormier et al 2009; Finch 2007). The prevailing responsibility of women to coordinate domestic practices, in particular everyday food provisioning, highlights their centrality in the production of family. These are the processes through which family identities are actively established and organised. These practices reflect hegemonic discourses about family, which combined, impact on how people organize family lives (James and Curtis 2010). For example, by paying attention to the invisible nature of feeding work (such as planning), DeVault's (1991) research reminds us that domestic feeding is socially organised and naturalised as feminine. DeVault also shows that through their responsibility for feeding the family, the women in her study were maintaining and producing the family according to classed and gendered frameworks.

Yates and Warde (2017) found that men are more likely to have their household meals prepared for them than their female counterparts. It seems reasonable to argue therefore that being responsible for feeding work, woman are disproportionately affected by time constraints. At the same time there has been a renewed emphasis on homemade food in recent years (Moisio et al 2004; Hsu 2015), which is often positioned against the increased availability of convenience foods. Returning to Warde's (1997) antonym of convenience and care for a moment, public narratives circulate which demonise convenience because it undermines spending time on preparing 'good', healthy meals from scratch (Parsons 2016: 385). Accounting for the temporality of practices highlights how classed femininity operates via feeding since the subversion of care for convenience in the face of temporal constraints is understood to contravene acceptable standards of (classed) femininity. For instance, the working women in Thompson's (1996) study talked of striking a compromise within this antonym by using pressure cookers, slow cookers, and microwaves. These 'time-shifting' devices enabled the scheduling of feeding within fragmented slots of time. Moreover, like

the women in Moisio et al's (2004) study, they also relied on convenience foods to feed their family in order to gain time and efficiency. However, given that women are socially positioned as care-givers through food, it is hardly surprising that using convenience foods was a source of guilt for many of these women. As well as being positioned as individual and distant from homogenised, externally-market-made food, the symbolic value of homemade food is intimately tied to gendered care-giving and domesticity (Moisio et al 2004). The provision of homemade food requires an active commitment to a particular mode of feeding as having value. In light of this, the concept of domestication provides a frame to understand why the use of convenience food is 'tinged with moral disapprobation' (Warde 1999: 518) because it requires few active practices of conversion.

The scant body of literature which focuses on men's experience of cooking (Klasson and Ulver 2015; Neuman et al 2017; Szabo 2012, 2014) establishes the nuanced ways that masculine identities are configured through cooking, and how these depart from the feminised forms I discuss above. Men are increasingly participating in domestic cooking (Warde et al 2017). But significantly, Klasson and Ulver (2015) establish how their male participants dramatize mundane domestic food practices so as to conduct a performance of hegemonic masculinity. Generally, women's cooking is seen as 'other-oriented responsibility' and men's as 'self-orientated leisure' (Szabo 2014: 18). Yet Szabo's male participants who have significant domestic feeding responsibilities present a more nuanced picture. Szabo argues that many of the men in his study drew on traditional 'feminine' care-orientated approaches to food, suggesting that the self/other dichotomy can be contested. This is a useful insight; however, it remains within a framework which conceptualises care-oriented foodwork as feminine and does not dismantle that.

A number of studies have shown that the provision of food acts as to produce a socially and culturally-acceptable feminine identity (Bugge and Almås 2006; Harman and Cappellini 2015; Haukanes 2012; Parsons 2014). This is not to suggest that norms around feeding are passively reproduced, rather to highlight that they are ever-present. For instance, women in Beagan et al's (2008) study discussed their feeding work, not in terms of gendered responsibility, but in terms of individual decisions, employing rationales such as wanting to feed the family healthy, high-quality foods. Bugge and Almås (2006) show how cooking dinner is not just an act of caring for the family as noted by Charles and Kerr (1988), but it also operates as a kind of identity work to position the female self via socially and culturally-

valid food practices. Whilst Bugge and Almås' (2006) research falls short in explaining how valued food practices relate to class, it accounts for the ways that participants negotiate socio-temporal limitations to prioritise valued ways of eating through the synchronisation of family schedules. Parsons (2014) research specifically accounts for class. She notes that for the middle-class mothers in her study a commitment to homemade was a means of differentiating themselves to the cultural symbol of a working-class mother who feeds her family convenience foods.

In this final section I have highlighted how domestic food practices are subject to a multitude of temporal constraints and pressures which act to prevent and enable preferred practices. The temporal and spatial ways practices connect must be understood in relation to the material and symbolic processes surrounding the domestic provisioning of food. In so doing, I offer a wider framework to consider the intimate ways that class and gender are made and reproduced through food practices.

## 2.5 Conclusion

Food is experienced and accessed differently along classed and gendered lines, meaning that food practices and 'choices' must be understood in relation to the cultural and social spaces within which people consume (Warde 2010; Warde 1994). I started this chapter by arguing for the salient existence of class, but noted that as a concept it needs to be mobilised in relation to individualism. In this framing, it becomes possible to investigate how food practices and perspectives link with classed identities which are lived in relation to other social divisions. By building on Bourdieu's concepts of habitus, capital, field, and practice I take the lived experience of food in the home as my point of analysis. Through the concept of habitus, I argue that via volume and composition of capital, the middle classes have the capacity to reproduce and engage with the hierarchies of value relating to good food. I have argued that despite the field of consumption being fragmented, hierarchies of taste and distinction continue to validate individual choices. By focusing on the materialities of food, I have established how everyday practices are interrelated and organised in socio-temporal contexts. In addition, I have worked with the concept of domestication to encapsulate the active process by which food is selected externally and embedded with symbolic value in order to make it fit for purpose. This is particularly pertinent when considered in relation to my earlier arguments which are that identities are valued in relation to reflexive and individualised involvement in

the consumption process. These ways of conceptualising everyday practices provide a means of gaining a more nuanced understanding of how good taste is reproduced, even when taste preferences are said to be increasingly fragmented.

Having set out the conceptual frameworks which underpin this research, Chapters Four, Five, and Six will draw on this theoretical foundation in order to challenge the rhetoric that 'good' foods can be accessed through the simple provision of knowledge and finance. Prior to this however, I turn now in Chapter Three to outline the methodological approaches of my empirical research, and I elaborate on how they can add to debates about the reproduction of class privilege.

# Chapter 3 Methodology

## 3.1 Introduction

> One cannot disassociate the construction of the object from the instruments of construction and their critique. (Bourdieu and Wacquant 1992: 30)

Method and theory are of course closely connected, but also, the process of 'finding out' underpins the creation of knowledge itself. Through the process of finding out, my claims to knowing have altered during this research. I uncovered ambiguities and complexities in the relationship between class, identity, and domestic food practices which unsettled some of my previous certainties and assumptions. These have provided invaluable analytical insights, producing knowledge which is situated and engaged with the process of production. This chapter aims to make visible the empirical processes which inform my analysis that follows in order to recognise the means by which my claims are produced and represented.

In Chapter Two I theoretically engaged with debates around the home and food, and identified the connections between the two as being classed and gendered. This chapter sets out how these ideas shape the methodology I adopted, from its design through to analysis, and relatedly what is knowable. I examine how the concept of habitus can be methodologically mobilised as a tool to investigate the interrelationship between position and identity via the lens of food. This, in turn, provides a starting point from which to scrutinise the processes, and associated challenges, involved in the recruitment of participants, the multifaceted means by which data was generated during the study, and the detailed analytical steps taken to produce the chapters that follow. Lastly, I examine issues of power, positionality, and reflexivity. These inform the research in its entirety: from its inception to my resultant claims of knowing which are based on data which is co-produced and situated within shared encounters about food. Being reflexively aware of the power dynamics within which research is conducted is important because to ignore them 'means that the mechanisms we utilize in producing knowledge are hidden, relations of privilege are masked and knowers are seen not to be located' (Skeggs 1997: 17). In order to ensure that the knowledge I offer is situated in the means of its production, my methodological approach is centred on a reflexive awareness of the power dynamics implicated therein.

## 3.2 Operationalising Class as a Methodological Tool

As the previous chapter outlined, there is little (albeit gradually expanding) sociological research which focuses on middle-class practices. There is thus also little empirical advice to tap into in terms of how best to approach participants as explicitly middle class. Moreover, since I suggest that class is relational and lived, this leads to the issue of how class can be defined empirically and, in practical terms, for recruitment. In order to address this problem, it is useful to briefly define class methodologically. Bourdieu and Wacquant argue that:

> [s]ocial groups, and especially social classes, exist twice, so to speak, and they do so prior to the intervention of the scientific gaze itself: they exist in the objectivity of the first order, that which is recorded by distributions of material properties; and they exist in the objectivity of the second order, that of the contrasted classifications and representations produced by agents on the basis of a practical knowledge of these distributions such as they are expressed in lifestyles. (2013: 296)

'Class is structural' (Skeggs 1997: 94), and likewise identities are classed. While identities cannot be 'read' as fixed to an objective social position, they are, however, 'responses to social positions' (ibid.). In other words, identities are reactive. They are reflexively articulated within classed structures. Experiences are not 'transparent concomitants of the social category they are allocated to' (Ball et al 2004: 481). As such, individuals do not belong to the category of middle class in a neat and straightforward way. This research does not have the scope to identify the multiple fractions and diverse intersecting fault lines within the British class system, nor is it driven to measure class, in order to identify a coherent group of 'middle-class' participants. Its focus, rather, is to identify participants who are loosely positioned in the middle to upper reaches of classed social space. The question is less: "how can this research speak about the 'middle classes'?" and more: "how does the possession of capital generate the capacity to enact legitimised classed identities in relation to food, and how does this relate to conceptions of the middle-class habitus?" Keeping in mind the ways in which identity relates to classed positionality, which itself is related to volume and composition of capital, a demographic questionnaire which captured resource-based categorisation acted as a useful means to identify participant resources and therefore their structural classed position.

### 3.2.1 *Demographic Questionnaire*

As well as asking about information such as age, ethnicity, and household composition, this questionnaire (see Appendix 1) adopted a simple class framework developed from

Bourdieu's use of capital. This was to contextualise those as having a rich stock of economic and institutionalised cultural capital as being appropriate individuals to take part. Robson and Butler (2001) identify that middle-class 'asset' deployment and cultural reproduction is within four core fields: housing, employment, consumption, and education. For the purposes of researching domestic consumption, a demographic questionnaire assisted in analytically identifying levels of affluence across a range of capitals in relation to these fields. This acted as an initial proxy for identifying the classed positionality of participants. Capturing the relationality of habitus to the field, the questionnaire was a starting point for understanding how possession of capital relates to the operationalisation or formation of class. The questionnaire covered occupational criteria, education histories, housing status, and household income. I will address here each of these criteria in turn.

While it is important to move beyond locating class in 'occupational blocks' (Savage et al 2013: 27), occupation can be a relevant proxy for participants' trajectory across social space (Friedman 2015). Bar one, all participants in this research were professionals or managers. These occupations can be associated with high volumes of capital: they combine education, income, and occupational status, which can then be exchanged for cultural and economic capital. Relatedly, all participants, bar one, held higher education qualifications. Fourteen had postgraduate qualifications, and two held doctorates. In view of recognising that there are mechanisms of accumulation and exchange other than those directly related to labour market, the questionnaire also asked about household details. These included property ownership, property value, and household income as indicators of economic capital, a basic summary of which is detailed in Tables 3:1 and 3:2. Whilst a household measure of economic capital carries issues of gender inequality and may obscure household divisions, it is a useful way of assessing the economic capital available to individuals (Savage et al 2013).

| Property Value | All participants | Participants in employment | Retired participants |
|---|---|---|---|
| Property not owned/did not answer | 2 | 2 | 0 |
| Less than £125,000 | 1 | 1 | 0 |
| £126,000 to £250,000 | 6 | 4 | 2 |
| £250,001 to £500,000 | 14 | 9 | 5 |
| £500,001 to £700,000 | 3 | 3 | 0 |
| £700,001 to £925,000 | 1 | 0 | 1 |
| **Total participants** | **27** | **19** | **8** |

*Table 3:1      Property Value as estimated by participants*

| Household income before taxes | All participants | Participants in employment | Retired participants |
|---|---|---|---|
| Did not answer | 1 | 1 | 0 |
| Less than £15,000 | 1 | 0 | 1 |
| £15,001-£30,000 | 2 | 1 | 1 |
| £30,001-£45,000 | 4 | 1 | 3 |
| £45,001-£60,000 | 7 | 5 | 2 |
| £60,001-£75,000 | 3 | 3 | 0 |
| £75,001-£100,000 | 4 | 4 | 0 |
| £100,001-£150,000 | 4 | 3 | 1 |
| £150,001-£200,000 | 1 | 1 | 0 |
| **Total participants** | **27** | **19** | **8** |

*Table 3:2        Household Income before taxes as estimated by the participants*

Participants were not selected on the basis of the data collected via the questionnaire, rather they completed the questionnaire during our initial research interaction, and the questionnaire was used as a tool to monitor recruitment as I will outline below. From the questionnaires, I established that participant's levels of capital suggest that they could be loosely categorised into various positions within middle to upper layers of social space. This provided an ideal starting point from which to proceed to uncover the subtle yet complex ways which the food practices of those in middle-class positions relate to legitimised identities. Prior to outlining how I initially set out to recruit participants who were affluent in capital, I will first look towards the issues around class subjectivity.

### 3.2.2   *Self-Defining Class*

The questionnaire identified a participant's structural class location as a starting point from which to explore the relationship between positionality and identity. As such, it did not ask participants to self-define their subjective class position. Exploring how people evoke perceptions of their class position has methodological difficulties (Payne and Grew 2005). A number of studies have found that respondents did not readily define themselves as belonging to a particular class (Ball 2003; Bennett et al 2009; Devine 2004; Payne and Grew 2005; Savage et al 2001; Skeggs 1997). Payne and Grew (2005; see also Savage et al 2001) found that participants were happy to discuss class in general terms but were reluctant to apply the concept to themselves. Instead participants invoked classed criteria to talk about class, without using the label 'class' (Payne and Grew 2005: 901). In Britain, class carries

ideological baggage (Savage et al 2015). For instance, Skeggs et al (2008) found that class positioning impacted on the extent to which respondents defined themselves in class terms, with those in working-class positions often disidentifying with class and those expected to be middle class defining themselves as such. On the contrary, Devine (2004, 2005) found that some British participants distanced themselves from the imagined characteristics of the middle classes: 'of being conventional, boring, suburban and apolitical' (Devine 2005: 150). Reay also notes that 'large numbers of professional people are claiming a working-class identity when they are objectively middle class' (2017: 7).

But whether or not an individual defines themselves in class terms, is, to an extent, irrelevant. This is because participants need not identify with class or even recognise the existence of class for class processes to operate (Bottero 2004: 989). Because of this, my research's recruitment flyer (see Appendix 2) did not specifically request participation from the 'middle classes'. Rather, it requested participation in a 'research project exploring social class, identity, and food consumption in the home'. Given that this study qualitatively explores classed identities, only recruiting those who explicitly identify with being middle class could have potentially produced a bias of only recruiting those who recognise the existence of classed subjectivities. It ran the risk of potentially eliminating rich data relating to the complexities of class identity. Indeed, a number of participants were recruited who possessed a rich portfolio of capital, yet did not identify with being middle class, often preferring to anchor themselves in a working-class history. One of the main points I seek to explore in my research then, is how the life trajectory of those who, through possession of capital, may appear to be middle class is complex and varied as the analysis chapters will demonstrate.

The subtleties of class identities cannot be measured through demographic questionnaires; rather, operationalising the concept of habitus can reveal some classed aspects of identities. This is because habitus captures 'an imprecise, fuzzy, woolly reality' (Bourdieu and Wacquant 1992: 23). It accounts for class as embodied in everyday practices, personal histories and dispositions as well as the multiple ways in which this relates to the social structures within which individuals are situated and move. Possession of capital does not determine class identity, but rather denotes the capacity to act, through opening up possibilities and increasing autonomy. Class identities come into being through talk and practice. It was through life histories, observations, and interview talk that the processes of

class became apparent through food dispositions. That said, participant's perceptions of class, and their senses of classed difference and similarity, were explored qualitatively at the end of our first research interaction. Following Savage et al (2001: 879), I had avoided specific questions about class before this point. This was to assess the extent to which the term 'class' emerged as relevant to the participants themselves in relation to the other topics covered thus far. Hereafter, in the concluding section of our first interview, participants were asked to talk about whether they felt they belong to a social class, and whether they felt like they belonged to a social class when they were growing up. It is important to be open to the fact that subjective class perspectives are different, because this in itself shows class is relative and multidimensional. Directly talking about class identity produced rich responses which could then be analysed in relation to participants' past and present food practices and perceptions. Particularly revealing is how participants articulated a reluctance and ambivalence to situate themselves as belonging to a particular class, yet clearly related to class in their life histories. Moreover, while actively avoiding belonging to the category of middle class, participants employed a number of classed terminologies and markers to in order to locate their food practices as distinct. These direct questions about class and identity were fundamental in highlighting the complex relationship between class identity and positionality.

## 3.3 Classed Spaces and the Identification of Potential Participants

Thus, rather than explicitly requesting participants who self-identified as middle class, a strategic and multi-pronged recruitment process was employed to recruit participants from within a twenty-mile radius of Newcastle upon Tyne. I secured a cohort of individuals with relatively diverse demographic characteristics whilst fulfilling the eligibility criterion that participants were rich in capital as was confirmed by the questionnaire in their first interview. Participants were interviewed soon after recruitment, enabling me to use information from the demographic questionnaire to continually monitor the sample for age, location, gender, household structure, and ethnicity. These personal details were securely stored on a password protected Excel spreadsheet.

In order to capture the extent to which food practices relate to life stage, age was a key consideration in recruitment. As such the questionnaire asked participants to indicate their age in one of seven age brackets. Similarly, household structure was asked about in order to

capture a range of family forms. It is important to note that as recruitment unfolded it became apparent that a diverse sample of participants was coming forward to participate for all of the above characteristics except ethnicity and gender. Based on 2011 census readings, ninety-five percent of the population in the North East of England identify as white (Office for National Statistics 2011). Nevertheless, I delivered leaflets to households in the West End of Newcastle, whose social geography has a concentration of non-white ethnic minority groups (Nayak 2016: 38), in an attempt to recruit non-white individuals. This, however, yielded no results. Given the predominantly white ethnic composition of Newcastle, further strategies for recruiting non-white middle-class participants would not have been straightforward. There is certainly scope to prioritise a diverse representation of race and ethnicity in future research. The inclusion of a more diverse group could help unpack the classed links between 'good taste' and ethnicity. This is especially so, since this and other research (Atkinson and Deeming 2015; Hedke 2013; James 1997; Johnston and Bauman 2007, 2010; Oleschuk 2017) has established that the performance of 'good' food often entails an assumed knowing and doing of 'ethnic' foods via discourses of authenticity. Gender emerged in initial literature searches as an important theme in relation to performances around food, hence I actively prioritised focusing on addressing the gender imbalance of the sample via additional strategies to recruit male participants. These additional strategies I adopted for recruiting more men were difficult and yielded modest results. Nevertheless, I persisted with securing more male participation since recruiting a mixture of male and female respondents was particularly important for analysis of potential themes relating to gender. Prior to introducing the participants, I will first discuss the different avenues I used for recruitment.

### 3.3.1 *Snowballing*

An initial nine participants were recruited by snowballing through personal and professional contacts. Additionally, at the end of every interview I left a project flyer with all participants inviting them to share it with any potentially willing contacts. Four further participants were recruited in this way. One of the drawbacks of using snowballing as a recruitment method is that it relies on other people's assumptions about who would be ideal to participate, despite my indication that having an active interest in food was not a prerequisite for participation. Nonetheless, only five of the thirteen participants recruited in this way indicated that their reasons for participation were because they had an interest in food. The other participants

recruited via snowballing cited their reasons for participation as being because they were asked or because they wanted to help the research community, having conducted research themselves in the past.

### 3.3.2 *Self-Selection*

Other participants came to this research via project flyers distributed in various localities in Newcastle upon Tyne. While residential locality cannot be used as a proxy for class, I targeted a number of locations which I identified as increasing the likelihood of recruiting middle-class participants. Project flyers were delivered to households on targeted streets. This method of 'door-to-door' recruitment, as outlined by the Morgan Centre's Real Life Methods Toolkit (Davies 2008), is an established means of recruitment (see for instance Evans 2012). This method was adopted so as to enable the strategic recruitment of participants residing in affluent housing in a range of areas across Newcastle. Housing selection was based on my own local and residential knowledge as a long-term resident of Newcastle and enhanced via analysis of housing prices data using the website Zoopla. I selected urban localities and semi-rural localities with a view to exploring the ways in which class is mediated by place (Jackson and Benson 2014; Robson and Butler 2001; Southerton 2002). Aside from a handful of studies which focus on inner urban areas (Cappellini et al 2016; May 1996), there is little current research which explores the relationship between areas of residence and how food tastes factor in middle-class identity formation. From the three areas of Newcastle I visited however, all of the four respondents recruited via this method came from the urban locality of Fenham. Local private schools were also contacted since they are likely to have a cohort of middle-class parents. While no parents were recruited via this method, two teachers offered their involvement in the project. A further participant asked to take part after another participant had placed the project flyer in their place of work.

### 3.3.3 *Recruiting Men*

The final seven participants were recruited via a specific strategy to recruit men. This was necessary since initially only three male respondents had been recruited and all via the method of snowballing. I tweeted a request for male participants which secured two additional male respondents. I also left flyers in off-licences and local butchers, which called for male participants. These specific sites were chosen following earlier interviews with female participants who noted that their male partners often bought wine and meat from

these stores. This secured the participation of a further two respondents and also led to an enquiry of another potential female participant. After learning that the project was now looking for male volunteers, she kindly put me in contact with her male partner and male friend. A final participant, Ian, was also recruited via this means. Ian was the only participant not to complete both waves of interviews. Rather than discount his contribution altogether, his narrative from our first meeting is included in the analysis, as a means to increase the male voice in this research. However, the data generated from this interaction is somewhat incomplete since it does not benefit from the added dimension of the practice-focused data which was generated in the second wave of interviews. A final point to make is that most respondents noted that they were motivated to participate in this research to either assist the research community or because they have an active interest in food. The only other reason cited for participation was by five of the eleven male participants. This was that they were asked by either female friends, their daughter, or their wife. The passivity of male participation extended well beyond the point of recruitment into the fieldwork as the analysis chapters will demonstrate.

### 3.3.4 *The Participants*

Using the recruitment strategy I have detailed above, I secured participation from twenty-seven people. The majority of participants lived in suburbs within five miles of Newcastle City Centre. While this study took place in the North East, it is not a North East case study in the sense that it focuses explicitly on local or place-specific aspects of class and food. Nonetheless, to provide a broader context for my research it is noteworthy that this region, previously dependent on heavy industries and manufacturing, has undergone transformation in recent years. This has resulted in what Hollands and Chatterton identified as 'a battleground between the old, industrial, and the newer, 'chic', face of a more diverse, post-industrial city' (2002: 293). These socio-cultural shifts have inevitably had an impact on classed *and* regional identity, and there is certainly scope for further research to specifically focus on the relevance of this particular locale to explore the relationship between regional class identities and food. Interestingly, only six participants originated from the North East. The remaining participants moved to the area either to attend university or for employment post-university.

Participant ages ranged from twenty-six to eighty-one years old and were fairly evenly spread across the seven age ranges I employed in the demographic questionnaire. There

were eleven male participants and sixteen female participants. While the sample had a slight gender imbalance towards female participation, gender is represented across every age category. All participants were white, yet not all were white British: two participants identified as Jewish and two participants were born in other countries (France and New Zealand). Aside from two of the female participants who worked part-time, all participants who were in employment during the research worked full-time in professional roles. The remaining participants were retired and had all previously worked in professional positions. Participant occupations included architects, teachers, academics, accountants, and senior managerial roles. Participants were from a range of household and family structures. These included grandparents, households with dependent or adult-aged children who were at university or had left home, blended families, lone parents, couples, and two participants lived alone.

This sample of twenty-seven participants certainly is not a homogenous set of people; they demonstrate as many differences as they do similarities. It is difficult to consistently discipline the use of the word class in this thesis because as I have argued it is complicated. Nevertheless, while I acknowledge that there are issues with referring to class as a collective, at times I refer to the 'middle/working classes' as plural. This is of conceptual significance since I argue that groups of people are positioned and constructed as classed on account of their capital. And, as the analysis chapters will show, middle-classness often *relies* on the negative construction of a classed mass. While I absolutely acknowledge that classed groupings are fragmented and non-monolithic, classed groupings do share similar levels of capital and to not acknowledge class in this way reproduces rhetoric which places the effects of class on to individual selves. I thus refer to this diverse collection of individuals as middle class and this is based on my interpretative reading of their income, employment positions, and education histories. Because of their relatively high volumes and compositions of dominant capital, I argue that while my participants might not identify as middle class, they can be positioned as objectively middle class.

For ease of reference, Appendix 3 details the demographic and household compositions of each participant. Table 3:3 below details their basic demographic information and pseudonyms to which, from this point on, I attach their stories. These stories were generated from the personal relationship we shared during two waves of research interactions and activity over twelve months of fieldwork. Fieldwork was conducted in

participant households, involving informal interviews, food biographies, participant photographs of domestic food practices, and shared exploration and visual documentation of domestic food spaces. I now turn to evaluating these methods of data collection, which combined, generated the empirical material I present in this thesis.

| Pseudonym | Age | Occupation |
|---|---|---|
| Carla | 45-54 | Artist |
| Charlie | 45-54 | Architect |
| Des | 55-64 | Retired medical professional |
| Ed | 65+ | Retired social worker |
| Elizabeth | 65+ | Retired teacher |
| Fiona | 65+ | Retired accountant |
| Grace | 65+ | Retired librarian |
| Gregg | 35-44 | Project manager |
| Harriet | 55-64 | Teacher |
| Helen | 55-64 | Arts Professional |
| Ian | 25-34 | Nurse |
| Ingrid | 25-34 | Graphic designer |
| Irene | 55-64 | Retired librarian |
| Jane | 45-54 | Project coordinator |
| John | 35-44 | Gas engineer |
| Julie | 35-44 | Occupational therapist |
| Juliette | 35-44 | Tutor |
| Layla | 35-44 | Teacher |
| Linda | 45-54 | Retired head teacher |
| Mary | 35-44 | Accountant |
| Maya | 45-54 | Senior medical professional |
| Neil | 45-54 | IT consultant |
| Peter | 25-34 | Project officer |
| Philip | 55-64 | Academic |
| Sara | 25-34 | Project coordinator |
| Steve | 35-44 | Business manager |
| Thomas | 65+ | Retired consultant |

*Table 3:3        Basic Participant Details*

## 3.4 Methods of Data Collection

No one can be 'totally known' (Hollway and Jefferson 2000: 69), and certainly not within the parameters of this research. Yet, in an attempt to gain insight into participants' food identities, practices, and class I employed a portfolio of mixed methods identified as generating rich and valuable data. This enabled the research to empirically explore the relationship between social position and food-related identities. While mixing methods is

not a guarantee to accessing more data, it offers a variety of angles from which to view social phenomena. It therefore enriches understandings of the multidimensional nature of lived experience and social relationships (Alexander et al 2008; Brannen 2005; Mason 2006). Research encounters were conducted in the home in order to gain as much insight as possible into the domestic world under study. In doing so, I accord significance to contextual observations as well as verbal interactions (Mannay and Morgan 2015; Kusenbach 2003).

I conducted interviews across both waves of fieldwork. These were audio-recorded and transcribed verbatim by me. All participants, people they mentioned, and some places were assigned pseudonyms during transcription. Interviews consisted of a mix of open-ended questioning and careful probing so as to generate rich and reflexive data. While they were closer in nature to conversations than formal interviews, they were not completely free flowing (Hammersley and Atkinson 2007). I aimed to probe into participants' social worlds and networks and projections of identity through food. Interviews provided the space for participants to articulate their orientations towards food as well as their life trajectories which had moulded the habitus. Nevertheless, interview settings have constraints. These include how the stories shared are a contextual product of a temporarily-situated relationship between the researcher and the participant. In light of this, in much of what follows I critically reflect on the interplay of power, location, context, and positionality as affecting the narratives shared within interviews. This is because the reliability of knowledge generated through interviews must be attached to a reflexive awareness of interviews as social-temporal spaces within which both the interviewer and the participant are located (Mason 1996; Payne 1999). Moreover, the interview data is premised only on the words and language which participants draw on to construct particular stories during these particular moments. Motivated to probe at what is said *and* done, I placed an additional emphasis on observation and materiality in fieldwork. This was to gain a deeper insight into the subtle and nuanced ways that identity is articulated through everyday practices, and the ways in which practices relate to, and reproduce, class. I now turn to reflect on the methods employed over the two waves of data collection.

### 3.5 Wave One

The first point of fieldwork involved interviews lasting on average between one and two hours (see Appendix 4 for Wave One interview schedule). These invited participants to describe the household, talk about their current food practices (the choice-making processes about food, how food is managed within the household, shopping, cooking, preparing food, and mealtimes), articulate some attitudes to food, and explore aspects of class and identity. In addition, participants mapped personal relationships and narrated their life story.

#### 3.5.1 *Food Relationship Circles*

After participants introduced the household and elaborated on their current food practices, they arranged meaningful social relationships conducted via food in the home onto a 'map' of concentric circles (see Appendix 5). Participatory social mapping (Emmel 2008) draws on Spencer and Pahl's (2006) research into participants' 'personal communities' and aimed to further understand the role of food in their relationships in their domestic worlds. Personal communities are 'the significant others who inhabit our micro-social worlds' (ibid.: 2) and act as a reference point for locating individual relationships in wider sets of significant ties (ibid.: 43). I asked participants to concentrate on people (or sets of people) with whom they shared food or provided with food in the home. The profile of each person plotted on the map and the forms the relationships took within the participant's 'personal community' was discussed one-by-one. This was to allow participants to elaborate on the role of food in their relationships, enabling me to trace the ways that relationships practiced through food are related to social networks and classed boundaries. Studies show that people we are closest to tend to be from similar class positions, and as a result, practices tend to be aligned with 'people like us' (Bottero 2004: 995). The map document was a useful tangible tool, not least for its effectiveness in prompting participants to consider relationships conducted via feeding or sharing food in the home. It elucidated further discussion around family meals, dinner parties, and eating alone for example. In order to avoid repetition, participants concentrated on *current* food relationships since later in the interview participants shared their life story, and in particular, the ways in which food is significant in their biographies.

#### 3.5.2 *Food Biographies*

Holtzman notes that food is an ideal site to explore memory, particularly 'the unconscious (perhaps embodied) memories of subjects, how a sense of historicity shapes social processes

and meanings, nostalgia for a real or imagined past, and invented traditions' (2006: 363). In light of this, I invited participants to share their life history, which I interpret as stories which social actors use to make sense of world, their place in it, and of their identities (Lawler 2008). This is because personal life accounts are linked with the present through a participant's interpretation of their trajectory through history as a means to reflexively situate and explain themselves in a given context (Jackson 2010; Lawler 1999, 2008; Yuval-Davis 2010). The chronology of a life history offers narrators a way of imposing order on disconnected experiences and to create continuity between the past, present, and imagined future (Ochs and Capps 1996). Moreover, tapping into a participant's memory situates them as the producer of knowledge and 'enables a perspective which includes the effect of time and the influence of change and continuity while maintaining the agency of the individual as the central focus of interest' (Bornat 2008: 352). Some participants, in particular the retirees, were unable to recall considerable detail about their childhood. However, my focus is not on the reliability of memory to reproduce the past as it was, rather, *how* the past is remembered and interpreted can highlight a person's experience and make sense of the present (Reissman 2005). I wanted to adopt an interviewing technique that would permit me to respond to and follow the order of participant narratives by allowing them adequate time to elaborate upon their life story, without interruption. On completion, prompts were used to draw out further relevant information. I used prompts to assist participants to develop and navigate their life history through dialogue (Bornat 2008: 350). Life stories are inherently context dependent, hence rather than 'distorting' the story, revisiting relevant parts of narratives enriched and fleshed out the data.

Life stories offer a means to understand everyday choices and associated constraints which structure individual's lives (Chamberlayne et al 2000: 22). As such, the life stories which participants shared via the lens of food were an important means of capturing the habitus by situating identity as something which is related to the social world through the process of personal history. I analysed life stories as a means to align class histories with classed identities expressed through food attitudes and actions. As Reay (2004) suggests, life stories provide empirical access to individuals' trajectories through space and time and the ways in which habitus is continually restructured through encounters with social space. Life stories capture the extent to which our practices and perceptions remain within the limits of our primary socialisation (Speller 2008: 3). Participant life stories generated data about the

capital which they inherited and their subsequent journeys of capital accrual. I have previously noted that Bourdieu paid little empirical attention to social mobility (Friedman 2015; Friedman and Savage 2018; Lawler 1999). Yet, in my research experience of food, biographies emerged as an important means of capturing the complexities of social mobility. For instance, from these stories I learnt of food-related 'moments of hysteresis' (Friedman 2015: 131) wherein the habitus became misaligned with the field, resulting in some participants feeling like 'a fish out of water' (Bourdieu and Wacquant 1992: 127), as I will discuss in Chapter Four. Accounting for participants' historical trajectories fleshed out the processes of inheriting and acquiring capital, the interrelatedness of continuity and change, and the ways in which food interests and practices align (or not) with the positionality of the participant during their life course.

A final point to add for this section is that across both waves of fieldwork, interviews comprised the main basis of each interaction. I place emphasis on analytically considering personal stories in relation to public narratives circulating in the social world, which constrain or add value to personal narratives. To tell stories we employ available cultural resources and symbols to provide order and sense of meaning. We position ourselves within public narratives (Somers and Gibson 1994). Furthermore, even if narratives do not explicitly mention social positioning it does not mean that the story is unaffected by positioning (Yuval-Davis 2010). There is always more than one version of a story, and personal narratives show our how sense of belonging is articulated through the stories we use to mediate the social world. In light of this, personal narratives are an important means of uncovering the relationship between the reflexive elements of habitus and field. Following Reay, using habitus as a conceptual tool ensures that the research focus is always broader than the specific focus under study (2004: 439). Yet, while interviews provided important data about the interrelationship between identity and the field, the static nature of the interactions conducted in Wave One only offers a partial picture of the relationship between household food practices, identity, and class. Building on aspects of an ethnographic perspective, interviews became more active in Wave Two in order to capture how participants draw on tacit knowledge in relation to food which cannot be so easily articulated. In addition, as the following section will elaborate, sequentially mixing methods allowed the research to be open to new questions and perspectives and further enrich existing data and emerging phenomena (Brannen 2005).

## 3.6 Wave Two

Interviews rely on reflexive accounts and explanations. They offer a limited and partial picture of an individual's embodied and presupposing nature of everyday practice. With this in mind, the proceeding section will outline the additional layer of data generation which I employed in order to access the tacit and taken-for-granted nature of domestic food practices: the doing as opposed to the narration of practice (Power 2003: 11). Bourdieu (1990b) argued that when embodied dispositions align with positionality in the field they operate as an unrecognised practical consciousness which is difficult to make explicit. Recognising this, Wave Two research encounters aimed to move beyond focusing on aspects of the habitus which can be reflexively articulated in an interview, towards attempting to reveal the predisposed nature of habitus and aspects of everyday practice which through familiarity often remain unsaid (Sweetman 2009: 493).

To gain a deeper understanding of everyday practices, I deliberately structured the second point of participant contact to probe into patterns which emerged during Wave One. The methods employed in this stage sought to stay close to the material aspects of food and food-related objects so as to examine practices and routines of feeding and eating. As such, the primary focus was observation together with dialogue to examine how domestic relations and identities are materialised through embodied relations with food. I loosely followed a topic guide (see Appendix 6) during these interactions, however these interactions were driven by mutual exploration and 'hanging out' in kitchens. This additional component of 'situated action' (Kusenbach 2003) combined observation with interaction, where the participants told stories about food 'talking points' (Hurdley 2006), which we discovered via kitchen 'go-alongs' (Kusenbach 2003). Combined, these research techniques tracked the flow of food into and through the home, highlighting the processes and dynamics of household food provisioning.

### 3.6.1 _Participant Photos_

On completion of the first interview, I gave my participants a disposable camera and asked them to take fifteen to twenty photos of 'food-related aspects of their lives'. Instructions were purposefully general, so that images were as participant-generated as possible. This was to encourage the provision of data which best described their own experiences of eating in the home. Visual methods are increasingly being used to study everyday domestic

practices (for example, Meah and Jackson 2016; Pink 2004, 2012; Waitt and Phillips 2016), and some studies into domestic food practices have generated valuable data via discussions around participant-generated photos (for example, Harman and Cappellini 2015; Klasson and Ulver 2015; Owen et al 2010; Wills et al 2016). My participants and I explored their photographs in order to uncover their meanings through a mutual process of collaboration. While photographs are empirical, they are not objective truths. Rather, I understand them as representations to be interpreted through accounting for the role of the image-maker and their reasons for creating the particular images (Mannay 2010; Robinson 2002). As Warren reminds us, a photograph:

> tells us more about the photographer than what he/she has chosen to photograph given that the particular visual cultures they are bound up with will shape their choice of subject, how they locate the subject within the frame and what they choose to leave out. (2005: 865)

Just like telling a story, the act of taking a photograph draws on shared cultural knowledge, which shapes a participant's choice of image and expresses 'the system of schemes of perception, thought and appreciation common to a whole group' (Bourdieu 1990c: 6). As Pink (2001) notes, the meaning of an image is constructed by the viewer(s) and the image-maker. Hence, in addition to accounting for the wider social relations within which the participant took the photographs, I interpret these images as co-constructed by the participant and me in the immediate research interaction.

With this in mind, participant-generated images acted as reference points and prompts for further discussion. By showing and talking me through their photographs, I was able to explore their unacknowledged, taken-for-granted, and shared assumptions relating to everyday experience (Mannay 2010; Packard 2008; Power 2003; Rose 2014; Sweetman 2009). Our discussions about these images enriched data generated during the first wave of fieldwork around themes of homemade, convenience, health, the management of time, and feeding families. For instance, photographs of the processes and end results of 'doing homemade' were popular and there was a lack of convenience foods photographed. Echoing Wills et al's observation (2016), most participants recorded aspects of 'front stage' behaviour as oppose to 'back stage' (Goffman 1959). For instance, as Figure 3:1 depicts, most participant-generated images show the final outcomes of what respondents perceive to be positive aspects of their food habits, as opposed to the more hidden aspects of food practices, such as dirty dishes. Lay photos tend to prioritise positive images as oppose to

negative images (Guell and Ogilvie 2015: 207). Considered in isolation, the lack of 'backstage' could merely suggest a preference to photograph aesthetically pleasing aspects of foods. Participant selection (or omission) of particular foods and food practices revealed 'which foods feel relatively uncomfortable and unfamiliar, and whether or not food is seen a significant venue for creative expression and the cultivation of an aesthetic disposition' (Johnston et al 2011: 297). However, listening to stories about the images facilitated an added layer of interpretation which moved beyond generating data pertaining to a shared recognition of aesthetically pleasing foods. Considered in relation to the narratives around photographs, it became apparent that my participants' understandings of 'homemade' were often expressed via feelings of discomfort around convenience or mass-produced foodstuffs. Ingrid's photo (Figure 3:1) and its accompanying interview excerpt illustrates:



*Figure 3:1        Ingrid's photo of fajitas*

Ingrid:        Another standard meal. Fajitas seems to be a regular thing for us as well, lots of vegetables and a bit of leftover… either some chicken but not too much, or leftover meat from a roast dinner goes into fajitas. Em and shop-bought guacamole there, probably because it was reduced (laughs), not because of any other reason. I wouldn't normally buy that kind of thing unless it was on

offer or reduced. Or we'd end up just having a yoghurt with it instead of something like that.[4]

Providing participants with disposable cameras acknowledges that they know more than me about their food-related worlds. It gave participants 'a louder voice' (Warren 2005: 865), since it offered more scope for participants to shape the research, giving them a sense of co-ownership over the research process (Richards 2001: 7). While this assisted with decentring my authority as the researcher, it did not necessarily neutralise the flow of power between the researched and the researcher, because ultimately visual interpretation rests with me (Robinson 2002). I discuss issues of power later in the chapter. But the process of participants sharing their images with me underlined the importance of collaboration in the generation of data, because in discussing the photographs the focus was on 'trying to figure out something together' (Harper 2002: 23).

### 3.6.2  *Kitchen Tours*

The added dimension of watching and listening extended beyond conversations about participant photos to include actively witnessing the ways participants negotiate and engage with food-related spaces. I saw these observational encounters as necessary to provide a rich understanding of how my participants perceive and experience the research context itself and therefore, provide a richer understanding of their food practices in the home. Not only did this enable me to listen to, experience, and observe participant judgements and knowledge about food, but it also enabled better engagement with the material and sensory contexts where their everyday lives are lived (Pink 2004; Pink et al 2015). By actually 'being there', I was able to observe how feeding and eating are so entangled with other practices. As with all ethnographic kinds of research, some of these observations were opportunistic. For instance, my interview with Layla was intercut with interruptions from her two young children, who she was helping cut out magazine pictures for a collage. In what Mannay and Morgan (2015) refer to as the 'waiting field', rather than intruding on the generation of data, these times when I waited for her to return to our conversation offered opportunities to engage deeper with her experience. Layla often spoke of the difficulties of preparing food while caring for her young children. The actual experience of having our conversation

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[4] Throughout the analysis, interview extracts are dealt with as follows: three dots (...) denote a pause; six dots with a space in the middle (... ...) represent the removal of words; brackets indicate non-verbal communication (for instance, laughter), or my observations of participant action (for instance, participant folds the washing).

interrupted acted to situate and enrich her narrative in these everyday moments of competing responsibilities. Asides from this, most of these observational research interactions were intentional. They took the form of quasi-domestic 'go-along' interviews (Kusenbach 2003), where I accompanied my participants around the home and kitchen as they cooked or carried out other domestic work. For instance, Grace was preparing crème caramels for a dinner party later that evening; Peter, having just returned from work, was cooking dinner for himself and his partner; and Harriet spent most of our second interview ironing. This added dimension of sensory observation 'thickened' the interview data by 'allowing for a focus on talk as part of situated action' (Evans 2012: 44).

In addition, I invited my participants to show me around their kitchens and food-related spaces. This provided a number of observational foci to enrich the verbal data. For instance, it was during these tours when I noted that many kitchens displayed items such as meal planners and shopping lists attached to fridges and notice boards. The observation of these visual markers of organisation strategies, together with participant-led tours through spaces where food is stored, prepared, and eaten, delineated the ways in which food practices are constrained and enabled by time and space. This in itself stimulated further discussions about the multi-linear processes of feeding, bringing to the fore aspects of participants' lived experience of food, which may otherwise not have been immediately visible.

Following Hurdley's point that 'domestic material cultural displays' (2006: 721) can be used as objects around which to narrate identities, I invited participants to share stories about food-related 'talking points'. This allowed me to garner a deep understanding about participants' relationship to the process of consumption and the complexities of domestication. For example, by making cookbooks, the contents of spice racks, or coffee machines the subject of stories, these stories then became illustrative of how objects are symbolically and physically integrated into everyday domesticity. This contextual focus on materiality highlighted the ways in which participants draw on embodied knowledge to enhance the materiality of food and food-related objects with symbolic meaning. In addition, I invited participants to show and talk me through food storage areas. Motivated to stay close to the materiality of food, these fridge, freezer, and 'cupboard rummages' (Evans 2012: 44) were another important means of identifying the embodied relations we have with food. For instance, when talking about expiry dates, it was through the process of looking through food storage areas that participants showed me how they discerned a

food's edibility. I was invited to smell an out-of-date yoghurt or take a closer look at packets of herbs which were years past their sell-by-date. Through this process of looking and finding, participants demonstrated the ways in which their practical logic operates via visceral and corporeal assessments of a food's edibility.

Finally, I invited participants to narrate their life stories via the contents of food cupboards. Most participants' cupboards contained no foods which were reminiscent of their childhoods. This is an important finding as the chapters to come will demonstrate because it highlights how participant food *tastes* can be disconnected from those of their childhood, regardless of their individual class histories. Aside from that, the act of looking often jogged participant memories and became a starting point for the recollection of childhood food practices. These life histories, spoken in situ and narrated with the props of food spaces, generated rich data to compliment the food biographies of our first research interaction. For instance, Linda discovered a bottle of vinegar in her cupboard:



*Figure 3:2        Researcher photo of a bottle of vinegar Linda found in her cupboard*

| Linda: | Oh and the vinegar. We always had one of those. I use that for cleaning the windows more than anything else (laughs). |
| KG: | Oh do you? Can I take a photo of that? |
| Linda: | That's kind of reminiscent of childhood. There was always salt and vinegar. What else is there? Oh and Bird's custard of course. Again, I mean that's right at the back which shows how often it gets used. But that reminds me of childhood and I think it's even the same picture. |

Finally, many of my own observations were photographed using my phone. While my observations are used to inform analysis, they are not always present in the form of a tangible image. The images I do use are not intended to objectify or to generalise. Rather, they represent my experience of these particular interactions and the 'context, negotiations and intersubjectivities through which knowledge was produced' (Pink 2001: 18). I discuss above how participant photographs act to visually produce and represent knowledge and experiences. These images are significant in terms of what they reveal about what the participants chose to represent, and what they identified as important for the research. As such, they act as a different sort of data to images produced by me, since my photographs are my interpretation of their world. While participants are excluded from the process of interpreting my photographs, there were a number of occasions when we engaged in interpreting aspects of food-related observations to share knowledge. The following section will elaborate on this further by accounting for reflexivity, positionality, and reciprocity in the production of the data which informs the analysis.

## 3.7 Reflexive Knowledge

All fieldwork occurs in a social space in which both the researcher and participant are actively located (Hammersley and Atkinson 2007; Holstein and Gubrium 1995). In the research moment, my observations were selective, as were the prompts I used to garner further information from our dialogues. Moreover, my conceptual framework guided my decisions to select methods and my interpretation of the data they generated. Likewise, participants selectively shared stories, made choices about what to photograph and show me, and above all, actively selected *themselves* for participation, albeit with different degrees of enthusiasm. This of course has consequences for the production of knowledge. Likewise, my role in making class in this research is significant. I brought to each interaction my own class history and position and associated volumes and compositions of capital. I mobilised these in order to gain initial access to participants and through the process of establishing a rapport during the fieldwork. While

there is no neutral space from which to articulate sociological explanation, it is equally important to abstain from narrating myself into this research as a means to neutralise my subjectivity. On the contrary, this would assume my centrality, resulting, not in the reduction of bias, but in 'eclipsing and de-authorizing the articulations of others' (Skeggs 2002: 312). It *is* important, however, to acknowledge the power dynamics in the research interactions and analysis and in the wider world. These dynamics implicate and frame both mine and the participants' ways of knowing and conceptions of the world. Given that ultimately the power to make meaning lies with me as the researcher, power dynamics can never be nullified. However, a reflexive awareness of their existence enriches the research process by situating knowledge in the conditions of its production (Skeggs 1997: 20). As I will now explore, it is crucial that I pay careful, reflexive attention to the relationships which were established during interviews, especially since ultimately as the researcher, I provoke and evaluate the story.

### 3.7.1 *Accounting for Shared Knowledge*

Narratives signpost, not just to wider socio-temporal structures, but also to the interactional context in which they are shared. This applies to visual methods too, wherein the meaning of objects is co-constructed by me, the participant, the interview setting, and the wider world. It is through drawing on communal language and shared interpretative frameworks that we make sense of experience and communicate to others through verbal and visual representation. This is important because a research environment is a social space where we are implicated and position take in a set of social relations akin to a Bourdieusian field. This delineates a need to carefully address the immediate power relations at work in the research, but it also speaks about the positionality of the type of respondent who may be more at ease in this kind of situation. Most participants appeared relatively comfortable with articulating their attitudes and practices, and no participant seemed uneasy when showing me through the privacy of their kitchen. This willingness displayed by the participants suggests that the nature of my presence was non-intrusive which in part is indicative of an established rapport. Building a rapport was important since I was expecting participants to spend time taking photographs and participate in two separate interviews in the privacy of their own homes. It is noteworthy that our final interviews felt markedly relaxed. In part, this is to do with the casual sociality enabled by the nature of hanging out in their kitchen. But also, whilst this was our second face-to-face meeting, prior to this we had had several email interactions. These included my thanking the participant

for their contributions in the first interview, confirming receipt of the returned disposable camera, and arranging an appropriate time for our second meeting.

As Pink notes, 'doing research in the home is not just about prying behind closed doors, but about entering the space where people work out issues in their private lives for themselves' (2004: 29). The home is a place which is associated with privacy and intimacy (Mallett 2004), which is 'invested in meanings, emotions, experiences and relationships that lie at the heart of human life' (Blunt and Varley 2004: 3). More often than not I was offered a cup of tea or coffee by my participants and we sat together and moved around their kitchen surrounded by a number of markers, such as family photos, utility bills, and medical prescriptions lying on benches. These all spoke of the intimate details of their lives. This is the environment in which participants shared their stories to me as a visitor. It is important to recognise that the knowledge that I interpret is from my experience of the dynamics of this intimate locality.

To some extent, I was 'studying sideways' (Plsener 2011:471). That is, the participants and I share a similar class position. At times, participants assumed I shared classed understandings 'as people like them' (Reay et al 2011: 171), which functioned to establish a bond and break down barriers. However, as rightly pointed out by Mellor et al, the idea of 'class matching' is problematic and does not necessarily ensure affinity (2014: 138). It is important not to assume the shared positionality of interviewees. For instance, as Kezar notes about elite interviewees, many elites see themselves as disempowered (2003: 408). A number of other factors intersect our class identity and experience, which function to locate me as both similar to and different from the participants (Edwards 1993). For instance, my age, my gender, my regional identity, and my status as a student and a mother impacted on the ways people related to me. Some researchers argue that a strategic performance of social position can elicit richer information. For instance, McDowell performed a range of identities during her interviews, from 'playing dumb', to being efficient, through to being 'sisterly' in an effort to build a rapport with her participants (1998: 2138). Some respondents recruited via personal and professional contacts had pre-existing knowledge about me, such as that I had two young children. However, I refrained from over-identifying with this as a possible shared experience with participants regardless of its potential of creating a sense of solidarity. I felt that to do so ran the risk of eliciting performances of a culturally-constructed version of motherhood, which is both restrictive and potentially places boundaries on narratives (Broom et al 2009).

With this in mind, I was conscious not to explicitly share information relating to my own personal biography. Nevertheless, on a number of occasions I shared food knowledge and performed recognition around food practices and food. One experience which is absolutely shared by myself and the participants is that we eat. But actually, what became apparent is that we also shared similar classed knowledge about food and ways of eating, as the two separate examples below illustrate:

Thomas:     (Thomas points to a packet of herbs) That's some er... oh what's that? Er... (long pause)?
KG:          Coriander.
Thomas:     Coriander, thank you (laughs).
KG:          Well flat-leaf parsley and coriander; it's always a gamble (laughs).
Thomas:     I was going to say parsley, but that's the thing. So er that's just hanging around.


Grace:       Now I went to a friends and she had a nice soup. But she said she bought the mixture and she gave me some. Haven't a clue what to do with it (Grace shows me a bag of mixed, dried pulses).
KG:          I've bought that before.
Grace:       What did you do with it?
KG:          I just made a vegetable soup.
Grace:       So what did you do? Put water in it?
KG:          I added that to the stock and things nearer the start. It takes ages though because there's... some of the pulses in there take a lot more cooking than other ones, so...
Grace:       It was really funny. I thought um... (gets her crème caramel out of the oven) I wasn't sure quite what to do with it (rinses bain-marie under the tap).

As is evident from these excerpts, the immersive interactions at the centre of this research involved a constant shifting of positions of both me and the participants. From these shifting positions, I learnt about the details of their lives and shared and recognised knowledge relating to food. The free-flowing nature of these research conversations suggests that there may be something very particular about food conversations. Had I been looking at middle-classness and other practices - education for example - these conversations may not have been so smooth. Class can be a difficult subject and some things are presented as more classed than others. But food appears to have allowed conversations to flow around potential obstacles. As one participant said: 'food is a social lubricant'. Though spoken in the context of bonding with and conducting social relationships with people via the sharing of food, it appears that talking about and looking at food produced a similar effect in my research encounters. As I have discussed in the previous chapter, the foodscape is *presented*

as democratised. Perhaps this apparent ordinariness and everydayness of food invoked a pattern of shareability that made it feel like a safe territory and ostensibly easy to talk about. This is of course indicative of a base line of knowledge that I have as a middle-class researcher and the capital which I brought to each encounter. I am aware of the important cultural, classed, and social dynamics that exist around food and I drew on this awareness methodologically and analytically. Together, the respondents and I drew on common sets of references and shared interpretations and experiences which functioned to establish taken-for-granted and shared knowledge about food and eating. This reciprocation of shared resources both helped overcome the hurdle of positionality and assisted the flow of the conversation. They passed by largely unnoticed in the moment. But that the majority of these interactions were smooth and trouble-free is in itself indicative of the classed ways in which knowledge about food operates at a common-sense level. Together we exhibited a whole series unproblematised (classed) cultural landmarks around items of food and types of food practices which work to create a good and comfortable domestic setting.

This is particularly methodologically interesting because it indicates how knowledge is co-constructed in the research moment through the mutual negotiation of common ideas relating to food. Far from denoting bias, it shows how the public language of food can be a prop to our personal stories signifying the relational and contextual nature of knowledge this research offers. It shows how knowledge was employed as a resource in the co-construction of data. This is important because it demonstrates that the validity of sociological concepts and explanations is not about 'travelling from the "inside" of sociology to an outside world' (Plesner 2011: 476), but about a reflexive awareness of the ways in which knowledge is intertwined in the research process, which itself is related to the wider world. Moreover, it is not merely that I and the participants are understanding food via the discourses from which we draw meanings, but these exchanges also act to (re)produce these meanings. As the examples above illustrate, the participants and I are implicated through a shared nexus of classed cultural food references.

Nevertheless, this raises important epistemological questions. On the whole, the cohort of participants who contributed to this study, at face value, performed knowledgeable food narratives. This knowingness is surprising when we consider the mixture of biographical narratives in the sample from people who have experienced upward socially mobility as compared to people who are from more established middle-class backgrounds. What

remains unclear is the extent to which this performance is a product of reflexive articulations within a specific shared exchange about food. That is, in the research moment by and large, food *knowledge* was spoken about with ease and confidence. However, as the empirical chapters will show, alongside their performance of being knowledgeable, participants often displayed defensiveness against failing (through the use of convenience foods for instance) and appeared to seek reassurance. Moreover, the empirical material reveals how acute awareness of 'getting it wrong' compels participants to micro-manage and invest heavily in theirs and their household's food practices. By this I mean that, while on the one hand, the cohort mostly presented themselves as knowing, on the other, they were not always entirely confident that they did know. Moreover, their awareness that their practices are sometimes mismatched with their performed knowledge is apparent in their justifications about processed foods or eating in front of the televisions, for instance. Mobilising my experience of food and feeding offered familiarity and, relatedly, the potential of a deeper understanding. But at the same time, this required that I be constantly alert to using my own understanding as a lens through which to understand participants' knowledge and experience (Berger 2015: 230). With this in mind, I now turn to evaluate the practical steps taken to reflexively analyse the data generated during the course of the fieldwork.

## 3.8 Analysis

Throughout the research process, I analysed and interpreted the data so as to ensure its significance remains embedded in the research interactions as opposed to extracted from the context of its production (Pink 2001). At a practical level, this meant that meanings were regularly scrutinized during fieldwork and beyond. I analysed research encounters as 'interactional performances' (Broom et al 2009: 61) which generated data. This involved paying attention to the particular 'conditions of production', such as participants' expectations about the topic, the structure of the interactions, and the agency and agenda of *both* me and the respondent in relation to the interview environment and the wider social context (De Fina 2009: 253). I have employed a Bourdieusian theoretical framework to interpret the interactions and observations and identify the themes and patterns which form the basis of the explanations in following chapters. However, it has been important to strike a balance between interpretation and assigning too much meaning. As Bornat suggests, this avoids 'over-interpretation which rather than emphasising the qualities of the original teller,

eclipses them and puts the interpreter in a position of authority and control' (2008: 353). There could have been other ways to interpret the data and I recognise the influence of both my experience and ontological position in the analysis. In the section that follows, I detail the operative stages I undertook to explore and represent the thematic and structural content of the interactions.

### 3.8.1   *Dealing with the Data*

Field notes and post-interview summaries were an integral strategy for keeping track of my research understandings and documenting aspects of research encounters which could impact on later interpretation and analysis. Written immediately after every interview and in other impromptu instances, these notes consist of less formal aspects of the fieldwork, moments unrecorded otherwise, and observations about my rapport with the participants and the research atmosphere. In addition, these reflections included sensory observations of the areas and homes in which participants lived. This added another dimension to the data by detailing my perception of the material and cultural structures surrounding participant's social worlds and the tastes characterising their habitus (Atkinson 2010: 211). These initial thoughts and observations have proved invaluable in making connections between my existing theoretical knowledge and my interpretations of what was happening in the field, as well as identifying patterns which were emerging empirically.

I employed a number of analytical operations in order to 'dissect, reduce, sort and reconstitute the data' (Spiggle 1994: 492). Rather than identifying and adhering to a predefined thematic structure prior to analysis, the process of arriving at the conclusions that follow has been open and continually revised. This involved paying close attention to the 'what' and 'how' of food is spoken about and presented to me, and to reiterate, this process has been ongoing. After both waves of interviews, I conducted a preliminary analysis, largely informed by reflections documented in the field notes. The first preliminary analysis was crucial in identifying emerging themes as well as gaps which would benefit from further investigation in the second wave of fieldwork. Following the completion of both waves of fieldwork, I systematically analysed the data in its entirety. This involved listening and relistening to the interviews, reading and rereading the transcripts and field notes, in tandem with looking and relooking at both the participant and researcher images. This process of reviewing the material has been an integral means of fleshing out the complexities of participant stories by identifying moments of hesitation, contradictions,

unspoken topics, taken for granted meanings, and changing points of view (Heyl 2001: 375). In some instances, a number of months had passed since the interviews. According to Berger (2015: 230), employing this kind of time-lapse in reviewing the research material can make visible aspects of my own experience which interfere with my interpretation and has the benefit of offering a new and fresh perspective towards the data.

I have systematically analysed interview transcripts and images according to a rigorous and methodical process in order to come up with a story which is loyal to the context in which it was produced. In order to make the data more manageable (there were 53 transcripts and over 850 research images in total), each participant has been assigned a participant number and allocated an electronic folder in which their associated data (audio recordings and transcripts of their first and second interview, interview summaries, and researcher and participant images) was stored. Transcripts were analysed vertically and horizontally. This entailed the mapping of detailed indexed summaries for each interview, which included reflections alongside pasted photographs and excerpts from the transcriptions. These chunks of data were then thematically categorised as belonging to, or being indicative of, themes and ideas identified in the initial stages of reviewing the research material. To facilitate retrieval, chunks of text and images were stored under headings and sub-headings in Microsoft Word. These themes were then connected with similar themes from other interviews, resulting in the empirical abstraction of data into something of theoretical relevance. For instance, the grouping of participants into household structure and the related horizontal comparisons across and within these groupings enabled the exploration of similarities and differences around the theme of convenience.

I am aware that the process of interpretation, representation, and selection of the data as a tool to inform the analysis can have ethical implications. For instance, my interview with John brought to the fore the decision-making process involved in transcription. John, a working-class participant, was the neighbour of a potential participant identified via snowballing. While John did not fit the selection criteria in terms of his possession of capital, I decided to include him in the sample since recruiting sufficient men was proving challenging. He had also kindly offered his time. As an outlier, his perspective has proved invaluable, not least for the added component of reflexivity this produced around issues of representation and the decision-making process involved in transcription. Oliver et al note that:

> '[t]ranscription is practiced in multiple ways, often using naturalism, in which every utterance is captured in as much detail as possible, and/or denaturalism, in which grammar is corrected, interview noise (e.g., stutters, pauses, etc.) is removed and nonstandard accents (i.e., non-majority) are standardized.' (2005: 1273)

Before transcribing John's interview, my approach to transcription had drawn on aspects of both naturalism and denaturalism. During transcription, I had noted substantial pauses and non-verbal interactions (head nodding, for example), transcribed utterances such as 'hmmm' and 'um', and vocalisations other than speech which could have been meaningful for analysis (for instance, laughter was noted, coughing was not). On the other hand, I had opted to 'clean up' participant words, for instance adding in dropped consonants and vowels (such as changing cookin' to cooking). John's case challenged me to reflect on the difference between 'cleaning up' and acknowledging regional and classed dialect. John often substituted whole words with regional dialect words. For example, he said 'wa' instead of 'my', and 'bairn' instead of 'child'. In the interests of consistency, while I 'cleaned up' his narrative by adding in dropped consonants, I opted not to change substantially different words in transcription. This process has highlighted the extent to which transforming verbal data into written data is itself a process of interpretation and representation, and that there are social and ethical implications of marking a regional accent as 'nonstandard' in transcription. Moreover, this process became metaphorically representative of the fundamental ways in which John spoke (and was heard/interpreted) from a devalued position. Probing into the daily lives of people comes with responsibilities and respecting the interests of the people who have participated in this research has, from the outset, been a paramount consideration. As an ethical researcher, it is important that the personal experiences that participants shared be treated with empathy, as the concluding section about ethics will illustrate.

## 3.9 Ethics

This research was approved by Newcastle University Ethical Clearance procedures. Participants came to this project willingly and in response to the project information flyer, which explained the basic aims of the research and what their participation would entail. In addition, my participants were fully informed about the nature of the research, including its aims and methods, their role within the research, and how it is to be disseminated and used through the provision of an information sheet (Appendix 7). It explained in clear, common-sense terms, codes of ethical practice such as anonymity, confidentiality, their right to

further information, and right to withdraw, as outlined in the British Sociological Association's Statement of Ethical Practice (2002). The information sheet was provided for participants ahead of each interview to ensure their informed participation throughout the fieldwork. Upon reading the information sheet and discussing any questions relating to the research, all participants completed an informed consent form (Appendix 8). Each participant was asked to indicate their agreement with each statement on the form and sign and date their agreement at the bottom.

While all data has been anonymised, with identifiers changed and pseudonyms given to participants and other people discussed during the fieldwork, the informed consent form clarified the difficulties in guaranteeing anonymity. This is due to the rich nature of data generated through qualitative research and its potential for revealing a person's identity. This research has employed multiple methods which combined, provide multiple lenses through which to observe participants and their households. Associated with this however, is the increased likelihood that households become more identifiable, especially through the use of visual data (Wills et al 2016: 480). As such, reflections around anonymity have been ongoing, meaning that the representation of words and images has been carefully considered, with some images cropped in order to preserve participant confidentiality as much as possible.

As Mason (1996) points out, ethical research is not just about following professional codes of practice and adhering to legal issues such as privacy and right to information. Being ethical is about ensuring the research will "promote respect, beneficence, nonmaleficence, and justice both for the participant and the researcher" (Aluwihare-Samaranayake 2012: 77). The participants who contributed their stories to this research appear to be a fairly homogenous group. They are highly educated, are wealthy in economic capital (to varying degrees), participate in similar lifestyles and voice similar values, especially, as it turns out, in relation to food. They share a similar middle-class position. That is not to say however, that this research has no potential for leaving them disempowered. In carefully unpicking the minutiae of their stories, it has been tempting to select hyperbolic statements as evidence of how symbolic violence operates through the normalisation of middle-classed food practices. However, to do this would be to misrepresent the participants as subjects. They all have complex biographies. For them class played a relatively small, albeit important, part in their sense of themselves. Nevertheless, my focus *is* class, and in investigating the (re)production

of distinction through food there is a risk of representing participants as nothing more than strategic class actors. To avoid the possibility of participants feeling as if their voices have been misrepresented, I have changed some participant's occupations in order to break links with their personal biography.

Finally, I occasionally present lengthy quotes. The rationale behind this is that sometimes longer excerpts are necessary to convey the unique biographical nature of participant stories, while also capturing the collective cultural and symbolic resources they employ in their evaluations of food. In doing so, this enables the reader 'to pay close attention to the fullness of personal narratives' (Nettleton and Uprichard 2011: no page number) as something which is articulated in relation to the socio-historical context in which we speak. Nevertheless, as much as I have tried to offer a reliable representation of the participants and their lives, the process of selection has meant that aspects of their identities and lives appear more prominent than others. All stories are unique, but as I hope to show, they also tap into collective memories and experiences thus providing insight into this particular moment in time in the North East of England.

## 3.10   Conclusion

The interpretations which form the basis for the conceptual explanations that follow are based on rigorous analysis of visual and verbal data co-produced in specific contexts as I have outlined above. Of course, had someone else with contrasting experiences and perspectives interpreted the data, a differently inflected story could have emerged (Reay et al 2011: 172). This is not an epistemological limitation however, since social research cannot claim to uncover a single objective and universal truth: there is always more than one version of the story. This sample of twenty-seven self-selected participants residing in in the North East of England is by no means representative of the British 'middle classes'. However, mobilising the concept of habitus in relation to this cohort offers a means of broadening the focus of interpretation beyond these small-scale research interactions and activity to offer sociological explanations about the structures of class and how they are reproduced. While the knowledge I offer is contextual and situated, it aims to provide insight into how dominant narratives about food are framed and legitimised at an individual level through everyday practices. Everyday food practices can then be interpreted in relation to classed social structures. In the empirical chapters that follow, I aim develop theoretical ideas about

the structural effects of class and lay bare the complex relationship between the possession of capital and the legitimisation of particular ways of eating.

# Chapter 4: Talking Food: Classed Narratives, Social Identities and Biographical Transitions

## 4.1 Introduction

This chapter speaks to debates around notions of individualism, reflexivity, and choice. It has two main foci. First, I read my data in relation to theoretical approaches which suggest that individual and reflexive consumption is central to the makings of identity in the postmodern world. I note that the centrality of individuality in participant narratives in this study replicates this perspective, which, as I have suggested in Chapter Two, is classed. To start, I focus on participant narratives about class and note a theme of *not* belonging to collective categories such as class, emerges across the sample. The repeated pattern of distancing from group belongingness I see as suggestive of some form of collective recognition which operates around the notion of being individual. Second, I place theoretical emphasis on practices and dispositions as a manifestation of a continual 'point of suture' (Hall 1996: 6) between the self and (classed) social position. From this, I suggest that participants' propensity to narrate a position of individuality can be situated within a broader discursive framework of consumerism within which notions of individual choice dominate. I consider participant biographical data through a socio-historical lens, noting that going to university, travelling and establishing households emerged as key moments in my participants' coming-of-age food stories. The socio-historical vantage point offered by life stories allows for an understanding of class as a continual process. Drawing on participant narratives of mobility, I note that personal transition points involving the acquisition of capital often go hand-in-hand with encountering 'good' taste.

Regardless of chronological age, what emerges from these stories is that expansion of tastes is understood as resultant from globalisation and relatedly, the increase of diversity, abundance, and choice in the field of food consumption. Considering participants' experience of taste expansion in a broader social context, I question the extent to which a consumerist ideology, which stipulates the centrality of individual choice, impacts on their orientations towards consuming diversity. Regardless of class starting points, participant narratives capture a conflict between proximity to and distance from their childhood food practices. By exploring these orientations towards selective taste expansion within a rhetoric of choice, this chapter provides the starting point from which to understand participant

relationships with 'good' taste, and from which to consider how the sample negotiates the concept of taste through household relationships.

## 4.2 Unique Identities

I have noted previously that class is a contentious concept. This is not limited to the conceptual realms of sociological debate, however. Participant narratives about class highlight and draw attention to its conceptual slipperiness and fuzziness, despite it being employed (or variations of the term) in everyday contexts as what follows will show. I asked about class at the end of the first interview and many participants offered lengthy responses. As Steve's reply below shows, these narratives provide a rich starting point from which to consider the complex and often conflicting ways in which participants reflected about themselves as classed. He elaborated on a recent conversation he had had with his partner, Gabe:

KG:        So would you identify as belonging to a particular social class?

Steve:      It's a funny question this because, you know, bizarrely we all… I had this discussion with Gabe because we both come from very much working-class families, em my family tradition comes from pit-yackers[5], you know from the pits as well. And Gabe's family's very much em, not necessarily from the pits, but they're very much working class. But if you look at… you look at you know our salaries, where we live, how we socialise as well, we are very much middle class now which is a bit… bit of a surprise for us really because we kind of… kind of… kind of think we're probably working class but we are probably very much stuck in that middle class I suppose as well.

KG:        Hmm-mm. What about when you were growing up?

Steve:      Em…

KG:        Did you feel working class then or…?

Steve:      I think because my parents were the first generation for around about six or seven years who weren't in the mines, er weren't from the mining stock… they moved away from the traditional pit villages where all my grandparents lived until they died. And they were the first generation who actually went into a career away from that. So my dad ran his own accountancy business from the age of 25 and whilst my mother took time out to look after us as… as… when she was young, she was… she was very highly skilled at the job she did at the university. Em, so if you spoke to them they would probably say they were middle class as well. But I still felt very working class because the rest of the extended family hadn't moved away from the pit villages.
(Steve, 35-44, business manager)

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[5] Pit-yacker is a Northern English colloquial term for coal miner.

Steve's expression of classed identity is suggestive of the complex and often conflicting ways in which class exists in both social structures ('our salaries, where we live, how we socialise as well, we are very much middle class now') and individual selves and emotional registers ('I still felt very working class'). He notes that he and his partner 'are probably very much stuck in that middle class I suppose'. His use of the word 'suppose' suggests his ambivalence about characterising himself as middle class especially when considered alongside his use of the word 'stuck'. This, together with the implication of distance in the word 'that' (as oppose to 'this') highlights his uncertainty about characterising himself as middle class. His narrative gives precedence to the durability of his working-class habitus, indicating the strength of gravity of class in his biography: he feels working class on account of his family heritage in mining. This is despite his parents never having been directly involved in the pit. By his own recognition, Steve can be positioned as middle class on account of his capital, his parents would claim a middle-class identity, and Steve has not experienced downward mobility. Nevertheless, Steve is reluctant to let go of his working-class heritage because of his extended family's attachments to the pit community.

Almost half of the sample drew on aspects of working-classness in relation to their own personal biography and like Steve, this often entailed eliciting a binary opposition of working class and middle class. My point here is not to dispute the diverse ways in which class mobility is experienced, but to draw attention to the limiting effects of conceptualising personal mobility by setting out working class and middle class as mutually exclusive. As the separate excerpts below suggest, it positions middle-class identity as either something that can be either had or not, leaving little space for anything in between:

Julie:      And you know we're both, is it white collar workers still? You know we're both professional so… I dunno, I'm not sure I do fulfil the middle-class bracket or are we still working class? I'm not sure. I wouldn't know, cause I'm definitely… we're both definitely working class. Well my dad with him being a policeman was a professional, you know, I don't know.
(Julie, 35-44, occupational therapist)

Sara:      I wouldn't say that I'm working class because… I guess it comes… you know kind of (pause) er… it probably does come down to money, like I earn a good salary. So I would say that if I was to class myself as working class, em, in the traditional sense, I guess maybe I wouldn't have gone to university. I wouldn't be on the salary that I'm on. But I don't… I absolutely don't see myself as middle class, at all. I mean I've got friends who perhaps might fit into that kind of box and I feel like they're different to me. So I… I feel like I'm in this weird space between… I dunno, it's a bit strange.
(Sara, 25-34, Project coordinator)

On the one hand, there is a sense of ambiguity and insecurity in these claims to a classed identity. It seems that asserting a middle-class identity, entails leaving behind working-class aspects of their habitus, leaving the participants uncertain: 'I don't know' they both say at the end of their response. These narratives suggest that it is difficult to narrate a classed sense of self via personal history when we are limited to speaking about class as a binary of being either working class or middle class. Resultantly, as Sara suggests, when participants find themselves in this 'weird space between', their sense of class belonging becomes less easy to articulate. Nonetheless, these participants appear certain about not being middle class: 'I absolutely don't see myself as middle class, at all' (Sara); 'we're both definitely working class' (Julie).

Many participants appeared driven to anchor themselves as distant from being middle class. Often, this involved drawing on a number of experiences, some of which were related to their parents' upbringings, in order to find a link, however tenuous, to working-classness. From being brought up in a single parent family, living on a council estate, through to parents' owning a small factory, a myriad of experiences and contexts was shoehorned into the category of working class. In these framings, working class appears to be shorthand for anything which lies outside of the narrow parameters of participant perceptions of middle class. The irony however, is that in marking themselves as distant from being middle class, these participants reproduce a hierarchical polarisation of a classed dualism. Despite being rich in economic and educational capital, Julie notes that she is unsure that she and her husband 'fulfil the middle-class bracket', suggesting that she is unsure whether she meets the requirements for claiming a middle-class identity. Yet conceptualising middle-classness as something to be achieved positions a middle-class identity as exclusive. This has the effect of positioning that which is not middle class as a negative other.

As the excerpts above suggest, *being* middle class could be understood as a limiting category from which many participants made a conscious effort to distance themselves. It is well documented that for those who are low on capital, to be working class carries little more than social stigmatisation (Lawler 1999; Skeggs 1997; Reay 2005, Reay et al 2011; Tyler 2008, 2015). However, I would like to suggest that with the possession of legitimised capital comes the capacity to traverse and play with conventional identity categories. This includes mobilising the category of working class as a positive marker of distinction. What is central to all these class narratives is the idea that participants *employ* identity categories, as

oppose to *submitting* to them (Crouch and O'Neill 2000: 183). Participant accounts which emphasised working-class aspects of their biography offer insight into the ways in which forms of distinction can operate around disidentifying with the privileges associated with being middle class. Being positioned on the higher rungs of the class ladder, one can legitimise identity categories which are not open to all as a positive. This involves resisting middle-classness in relation to the self, because to be middle class is to acknowledge that one is a product of social positions rich in capital. This in turn echoes a public narrative of meritocracy which reproduces the idea that working hard and taking advantage of opportunities leads to success as oppose to privilege or luck.

In the previous chapter, I discussed how people can be hesitant to claim a class identity and how questions about class can 'tap […] a nerve' (Savage et al 2015: 5). However, it is not that my participants appeared to distance themselves from class as such, but from belonging to the category of being middle class in a straightforward way. Participants appeared to recognise the existence of class, yet the ambiguous and lengthy nature of their accounts of class belonging suggests that thinking about class in relation to themselves is a complex process. Moreover, they seemed to actively and ostensibly mark themselves as *not* middle class. This supports arguments that class identities are expressed through marking boundaries of self and other. While participants rarely offered straightforward class identities, their narratives of class belonging contained many relational references. Thomas' account demonstrates this powerfully:

Thomas:     We were talking about this last night, Florence and I. We decided that…we
            probably… we think we're lower middle (laughs). I don't know quite how we…
            how we got there. We decided that… well if we ever… if we ever buy the
            Telegraph, we sometimes do buy the Telegraph on a weekend, or if we can't
            get the Observer, you know and they talk about the middle class and they
            always talk about the middle class going on skiing holidays and children at
            private school and all this kind of stuff. Well we don't do that stuff. My
            children didn't go to private school, you know they went to the local
            comprehensive. So we you know… I don't quite know how one defines these
            things and… but from the Telegraph's point of view we're definitely not
            middle class. Um, we've lived professional lives, we've been educated, we've
            got degrees and whatever else and had professional lives and things, so we
            sort of think, well we can't be… we don't think we're working class (laughs)…
            probably somewhere in the middle, lower middle (laughs).
            (Thomas, 65+, retired consultant)

Like Steve, Thomas had recently been talking about class with his partner, perhaps suggesting that he had been anticipating my visit. Furthermore, similarly to the accounts

above, Thomas appears reluctant to offer a simple class identity. Importantly, while he initially says 'we think we're lower middle', his explanation draws on relational identifications to others from which he distinguishes himself. He distances himself from a mediatised picture of middle-class practices of private education and ski holidays but at the same time says 'well we can't be… we don't think we're working class'. He eventually arrives at a class position which is 'somewhere in the middle, lower middle' (as opposed to upper working). Skeggs notes that distance from middle-class identities can act as means of avoiding the discursive positioning of the middle classes: 'the attack on the middle class often comes from itself – aware of its desire not to be pretentious' (2005: 975). Moreover, as later analysis will demonstrate, while many participants positioned themselves away from being plainly middle class, they embody a number of cultural characteristics which are discursively positioned as middle class. This is especially so when we pay attention to everyday food practices wherein classed categories emerge via the construction of a negatively imagined working-class other.

Whilst many respondents located themselves within a binary of middle and working class, some participants drew on other categories to offer a reflexive account of classed identity which implicitly worked to disrupt their classed positionality. Des' account illustrates this further:

Des:    Um yes I think um, that cause I believe that the… well clearly middle class and I know all about the… you know I'm what's it? A? Cause the professional, social… the different… so I know I'm in that professional… I also know that class is fluid so I know there's sort of the… you know I'm in the lucky position of being quite you know well off. Um the sort of Jewish aspect is er… that does muddy the water cause I know that sort of… the construction of things like you know ethnicity and… it's so odd that you know how people… how people are seen as Jewish. So our kids, because Joanne isn't Jewish, are not Jewish (laughs) according to the Müllers, but they see… they will see themselves as having a Jewish identity cause of having the thing of Seder nights and… Seder nights, bagels and humus. So I think… see a mix of things, so would think probably middle class, professional, um ethnicity is sort of white… see I always don't know… white British Jewish, I never know quite what to add in so I always write sort of I'd prefer not to… yeah.
(Des, 55-64, retired medical professional)

Des offers a somewhat sociological perspective about class, noting his awareness of its fluidity and its intersection with other categories, such as ethnicity, which 'muddy the water'. He moves from being 'clearly middle class' to thinking he is '*probably* middle class' which at first glance suggests that he is 'putting together, dismantling and rearranging'

(Bauman 2009: 10) his identity. To some extent, a reflexive distancing from collective groupings echoes the claims of postmodernism that as individualisation flourishes, established group categories, such as class, are no longer anchored to identities. For instance, Beck argued that 'processes of individualisation *deprive class distinctions of their social identity*. Social groups lose their distinctive traits, both in terms of their self-understanding and in relation to other groups' (1992: 100; italics original). As Des' narrative illustrates, identities are fragmented and fractured. As I will go on to argue, the ways in which my participants worked to displace class from themselves, is in fact indicative of wider class processes.

Des uses the example of food to illustrate the intersectionality of his identity. Food is widely understood to be significant in reinforcing and recognising ethnic belongingness (Harbottle 1997: 87) because it represents an everyday materialisation of ethnic identity (Cappellini and Yen 2013). Busker's (1999) research into Kosher practices in an area of Denmark which lacks a broader Jewish community found that eating arrangements acted as an important means to make visible participants' relationship to Judaism. While Des no longer keeps a Kosher diet, he retains aspects of Jewish eating traditions and practices such as Seder night. Similarly to Steve's reference to his family's connections to the pit, these appear to be an important means of maintaining a Jewish identity across the generations. Moreover, this appears to take precedence over reflecting on his classed sense of self. At other points in our interviews however, he explicitly marked some of the food he eats as classed. For instance, the following exchange occurred while he described the contents of the fridge:

Des:        This is wild garlic pesto. I mean how middle class can you get? (laughs)
KG:         (laughs) Can I take a photo of it?
Des:        That is… that was… so I got that from that um place in the Grainger Market.
KG:         Oh Mmm and Glug?
Des:        Mm yeah. Yes, so I said 'Give me your most middle-class condiment' (laughs).

*Figure 4:1        Researcher photo of Des' Wild Garlic Pesto*

This exchange reinforces the relationality of class between Des and I, since I, like him, understand that you can buy 'middle-class' condiments in the Grainger Market and that wild garlic pesto 'counts' as hyper middle class in the first place. Moreover, contrary to Des' rather unstable account of class identity, where he notes he is 'probably middle class', in this exchange he is clear in coding some foods as middle class. Importantly, these classed markers are positioned as external to himself. Moreover, that this account is framed with laughter suggested a mutual knowingness of the classed credentials attached to the pesto. Laughter can work as a form of 'ironic distancing' (Lawler 2005: 437) which Skeggs argues abdicates the speaker's responsibility for reproducing a stereotype (2003 in Lawler 2005: 437). While this draws attention to the symbolic capital attached to certain foods, it also highlights the complex dynamics of Des' self-knowledge. Des indicates that eating a wild garlic variation of pesto bought from a delicatessen is a middle-class practice. He appears aware that he is enacting a type of identity which could be conceived as pretentious and drew attention to his awareness through humour, by saying 'I mean how middle class can you get?'. The level of reflexivity he demonstrates about the classed aspects of the pesto almost situates middle-classness as a subjective performance which can be invested in during particular moments.

Boyne notes that expressions of class are marked by reflexive self-awareness (such as being 'rueful, ironic, envious, reflectively proud') in postmodern times (2002: 119). To this I would add that in an individualistic culture, there is *value* in actively finding multiple ways of maintaining one's sense of self as unique. Moreover, the ability to enact valued ways of being with recourse to reflexivity is an indicator of the resources one has to hand. As Skeggs notes, 'the imperative towards extraordinary public subjectivity' is central to the 'making of the exchange-value middle-class self', and it is through these processes that class relations are made (2005: 974). While it is through distance from, or multi-membership of, social groupings that participants carved a self which is unique, collective social groupings such as class were ever-present in participant narratives. This is in addition to their responses to direct questions about class. Contrary to Beck's argument above, this sample exhibit shared traits and practices suggesting that class *does* appear to operate around individual displays associated with desirable (middle-class) 'modes of individualisation' (Savage 2000). Moreover, while participants demonstrated a reluctance to articulate a sense of belonging to being middle class, an imagined (working-class) other often emerged in participant accounts and practices as a reference point from which to evaluate themselves and others, as I will now explore.

### 4.2.1  *Relations of Otherness*

As is suggested from my exchange with Des above, food that carries symbolic capital was often aligned with the middle classes. While subjective accounts of class identity were often ambiguous and fragmented, I now turn to data which suggest that markings of distinctions in relation to food and feeding operate in relation to a classed other. The processes and forms this distinction takes will be looked at in further detail in the next chapter. In evaluating this data, I employ sociological literature which posits that relational othering and the marking of boundaries is fundamental to the construction of the middle-class identity (for example Bourdieu 2010[1984]; Lawler 2005, 2011; Reay et al 2011; Skeggs 2004b, 2005). The three separate examples below, which are drawn from participants who identify with middle-class upbringings, expand on this further. They are responses to my asking the participants to reflect on the extent to which class has impacted on their relationship to food. I begin with a quote from Neil who works as an IT consultant; here he invokes class by referring to both his professional and personal qualities to talk about health and obesity.

| KG: | So um what about your food experiences, do they ever make you feel aware of being, or belonging to a class? |
|---|---|
| Neil: | I think… I mentioned Rotherham. So I did a project down in Rotherham and we worked for Rotherham Council and that's the… that's the most unrelentingly working-class area that I have ever been to and I mean Jamie Oliver did a food programme. It, yeah… and seeing… seeing fat people in wheelchairs… I'm quite fattist; that is a prejudice you know… so… so seeing grossly obese people sitting in wheelchairs with a fag in one hand and a bag of chips on their lap, wheeling themselves round the town. And seeing massive queues outside the chip shop every lunch time.<br>(Neil, 45-54, IT consultant) |
| KG: | What about food then, has that ever made you feel more or less aware of class? |
| Juliette: | Um, yeah probably. Because um (pause)… sometimes I look at my shopping trolley and I look at somebody else's shopping trolley and you know they'll have lots of… I don't know, crispy pancakes and pop and stuff like that and… and then their trolley looks very different from mine, because I'll have you know, lettuce and… fresh fish or whatever and er yes… and I'm very aware that it's… it's a difference in budget really.<br>(Juliette, 35-44, tutor) |
| KG: | Yeah, ok. Um, have your food experiences ever made you feel like you belong to a particular class? |
| Carla: | Yeah, I think they are really. Sadly… and that's obviously pretty clear up here still I think. It is an issue. I feel like it's an issue at school. I look at… I kind of… why do you have sweets every day after school? Why would you give your kids sweets *every day* after school? I don't understand it. It's so obvious and you watch them. I've watched these kids, they look a little bit tubby in year two and you get to year 6 and this girl is like this (motions fatness with arms). It's like, what planet are you on, parent? I don't understand it. I feel like schools should be actively engaged with that. It's a responsibility thing. I mean that poor girl, you know, it's tough. |
| KG: | Mm. Do you think that's to do with class? |
| Carla: | (pause) I don't know. I wouldn't say that's the only factor. It's unlikely to be the only factor. And you know, is it class? Is it just… some of its regional heritage, I think… |
| KG: | Yeah. Ok and then, um, do you think that belonging to a particular class has influenced your own food tastes? |
| Carla: | Tastes. I dunno, um… |
| KG: | Or your practices? |
| Carla: | Well yeah. I think it's just inevitable, you're around other people who are all doing it. You know, we all care about food, we all like to prepare fresh food, we talk about food, definitely.<br>(Carla, 45-54, artist) |

The accounts above vary in explicitness, but the main point I want to make here is that these accounts not only implicitly project negative value onto a working-class other but also clearly code the working classes as knowable. Rather than generate data about the extent to which

participants feel classed, awareness about class and class belongingness is articulated through the construction a negative classed other. Although somewhat hyperbolic, Neil's depiction of 'grossly obese people sitting in wheelchairs with a fag in one hand and a bag of chips on their lap' is a function of their being the product of an 'unrelentingly working-class area'. Interestingly, he is reflexive about his prejudice about fatness, but not about his class racism, despite openly marking the working classes 'as a race apart' (Gidley and Rooke 2010: 112). While not explicit, Carla and Juliette implicitly construct a classed other. The lengthy except from Carla demonstrates how she moves from answering the question about class belongingness with an example of other parents feeding children sweets, towards the ensuing uncertainty and hesitancy she articulates when asked if her example is to do with class and how class has affected her food tastes and practices. Likewise, Juliette juxtaposes crispy pancakes and pop with fresh fish and lettuce, but appears reluctant to use the term class when she concludes her response with: 'and I'm very aware that it's… it's a difference in budget really.' While Juliette and Carla appear hesitant to name class, their accounts nonetheless situate their classed existence as relational by projecting class onto a negative other. Considered in relation to arguments which suggest that this is *necessary* in order to situate the self as being the site of proper, desirable and responsible personhood (Lawler 2005; Skeggs 2005), these accounts do construct a working class which is knowable on account of not being like 'us'. As should be clear from the complex biographical narratives above and the arguments I have made earlier, the participants in my study do not represent a homogenous middle class. Nevertheless, there appears to be a recurrent pattern that thinking about class entails the construction of a relational group of people, who are implicitly marked as undesirable. This is particularly telling when considered in relation to participant accounts of class belonging which posit working-classness as that which lies external to the category of middle class. Articulated through distance and individualisation, participants voiced a shared understanding about taste, indicating a form of class allegiance and belonging. As Carla suggests, 'we [the middle classes] all care about food, we all like to prepare fresh food, we talk about food'.

The second point I would like to make is that not only is there an assumption that a working-class other can be coded, but it is coded as negative for the consumption of the wrong sorts of foods. Accounts about food and class implicitly constructed an imagined other whose consumption choices are vulgar, excessive and without taste (Lawler 2005; Skeggs 1997;

Tyler 2008). Again, the separate excerpts below are in response to my asking about the influence of class on *their* food habits:

KG:          What about food choices, or food, in your life, has that ever made you feel aware of class?

Fiona:       Yeah, sure. When you see people giving their toddlers Gregg's sausage rolls to eat in the pram followed by a can of Coke (laughs) you think, don't do it! (laughs)
             (Fiona, 65+, retired accountant)

Linda:       I think we're all quite snobbish in a way. I mean I think I'd walk past a pizza place or a take away and go 'oh that looks like a dive' or a em greasy spoon, you know all-day breakfast-type place and think 'oh I'm not going in there' (laughs), which can be unfair I know
             (Linda, 45-54, retired head teacher)

Harriet:     Um (pause) well yes again because food is classist isn't it? Because you tend to sort of look down on the people who just eat McDonalds or um processed food or whatever
             (Harriet, 55-64, teacher)

Food has always been a marker for class in Great Britain (James 1997; Warde 1997). Hence, evidence of participants erecting classed boundaries around certain foods is unsurprising. It is nevertheless important to spend some time unpacking how this played out in participants' narratives, since narratives of not being like 'them' seem to underpin so much of what participants say and do. This will be looked at in more detail in the following chapter, which specifically focuses on the complexities operating through food practices. But the point I want to make here is that Fiona's laughter, Linda's acknowledgement that her assumption 'can be unfair', and Harriet's rhetorical question that 'food is classist isn't it?', all demonstrate an awareness of a 'classing gaze' (Gidley and Rooke 2010: 95). This classing gaze which these participants both ostensibly observe and perform aligns devalued foods and ways of eating with an imagined classed other. The foods named are cheap, but it is not as Juliette suggested previously that 'it's a difference in budget'. These participants appear to produce relational judgements about *their* classed sense of self by drawing on cultural and moral aspects of consumption which function to produce a classed other who is feckless (giving children in pushchairs Coke and Gregg's pasties, or sweets every day after school), eats in dirty establishments ('it looks like a dive'), excessive and vulgar (grossly obese people with chips on their knee and a fag in their hand) and limited to *only* eating the wrong sorts of food ('who just eat McDonalds or um processed food'). In what follows, I consider how the taste hierarchy is maintained in the dialectical relationship between classed social positioning and food dispositions.

## 4.2.2  *Hierarchies of Taste*

In Britain, in the late 19th century class status and distinction were dependent on the adoption of French cuisine (James 1997: 75). Today it would appear that although the available ingredients and culinary reference points have changed, there is a continuation of marking class identities through food. I noted in Chapter Two that notions of authenticity are attached to claims to distinction, meaning that an array of foods can carry cultural value, so long as they can be verified according to frames of heritage, locality, and personal connection for example. Carla's quote below comes at the end of our exchange about taste in food:

Carla:      You can have your earthy Spanish big stew with a hunk of bread, that still looks nice, but you can also have a very, you know bit of food on the plate that's very careful and…

KG:         And for you is there a…?

Carla:      Oh well I think I like them all

KG:         Do you?

Carla:      Yeah. But, you know, I don't really want to see like a big pasty on… you know that's really greasy, um, with nothing green on it. But you know, if it's a really good Cornish pasty that's really freshly… then that's going to be great. So, I think you can have… in music I would say, for me there's kind of good quality, um, well you could call it good quality light music, or you know, sort of, fizzy mus… you know, it's kind of… it's not deep but it's still… it's well crafted. So you can have the same… you know, I love a good fry up, but it needs to be a good fry up. I don't want it to be like you know, all the egg to be dried and the… the sausages to be full of fat, you know. You want to have, you know, the nice fried tomatoes and your mushrooms that are really done well, and your really good black pudding, but I'm still going to enjoy a really good fry up. So you can have good quality bad food in inverted commas. But you couldn't eat that… even that good quality fry up, you couldn't eat that every day, because that's obviously going to be really unhealthy. But it's nice to enjoy it once in a while.

This account reveals two things. First is that by drawing on frames of authenticity and tradition, certain foods can be positioned as having value. Carla is specific that the pasty is Cornish and the earthy stew is Spanish. This implies that distinction is not about rejecting traditional British food in favour of 'classy' French food as it once was (James 1997), but is rather attached to the correct appraisal of authenticity. Second, Carla negotiates a tension between democracy and distinction (Johnston and Bauman 2010), suggesting that the taste hierarchy can be broken down and that different cultural forms can be appreciated equally. On one hand, Carla's account appears to be inclusive in positioning a fry-up alongside the 'earthy Spanish stew' or food which has been carefully arranged on a plate, implying that

different types of food are equal and can be offered as vehicles of good taste. On the other hand, the taste hierarchy remains intact, through the fine distinctions that the pasty is fresh, or that the individual components of the fry-up need to be done well in order to be appreciated. Moreover, she evokes an interesting comparison between food and another form of culture: with 'good quality light music' which is 'not deep' but 'well crafted'. This indicates how classed positioning around food occurs in relation to other forms of cultural capital. It also highlights the ways in which 'simple' or popular cultural forms (those which are 'not deep') can be positioned as valued by attaching ideas of skill to the processes of their production, whilst at the same time recognising their simplicity, thus attaching complexity to the process of appreciation. In this way, this narrative can be read as a demonstration of the ways in which a capacity to 'decode' the apparent ordinariness of certain foods (Cappellini and Parsons 2012a), can act as a means to showcase an ability to legitimise even 'bad food'. Finally, Carla appears to position herself as distinguishable from someone who might eat a fry up every day, by concluding that even though she enjoys 'good quality bad food', she nonetheless selectively limits how often she eats it.

Another account illustrative of the ways in which class location can be maintained through the construction of an other was made by Thomas when he was showing me the inside of his fridge during our second interview:

Thomas:     Ok. Alright er, so we drink er less milk than we used to and mostly what we drink now is almond milk, not rice milk because of the er arsenic in it and not cow's milk… the cow's milk we generally keep for… for visitors who come and want… workmen find almond (laughs)… the stuff… they can't cope with it in their tea (laughs). They're like 'what?'

*Figure 4:2      Researcher photo of Thomas' fridge*

The limits of this research are that I cannot know whether Thomas has offered any workmen almond milk or what their response might have been. But this exchange is indicative of how everyday food practices are embedded with assumptions about knowing an other. Once again, class remains unsaid. But it is signified in the distinction between the cultural value attached to the different milks, as well as the assumption that blue collar workers such as workmen could not 'cope' with almond milk. The word 'cope' implies a struggle. Hence, not only does it suggest that workmen would be *unable* to appreciate the aesthetic complexities of almond milk, but it also implies that enjoying almond milk is a struggle. Importantly, similarly to my exchange with Des about his pesto, this exchange between Thomas and I about almond milk is as much about himself as it is a classed other. The humorous tone of the exchange arguably parodies the fastidious detail he offers in his reasons for discounting rice milk and naming milk as 'cow's milk'. It suggests a self-knowledge that he understands his food habits could be interpreted as pedantic. However, this awareness is insufficient

cause for him to change his investment in particular foods such as almond milk, because drinking almond milk is important to him. This exchange highlights the dynamics around choice because Thomas situates his preference for only drinking a *limited* amount of almond milk within a list of different milks. That each milk comes with critical evaluation, suggests that his choice-making process is well informed. On other occasions he offered a well-researched narrative around his decisions to limit cheese, or only use particular olive oil for example. I will revisit the theme of choice later in the chapter when I cast a socio-historical eye over the data. Prior to this, I turn to the narrative of John to offer some further thoughts about the classed other. Importantly, having insufficient dominant capital a 'workman's' potential distaste of almond milk can only ever be framed as an inability to 'cope' since he lacks the legitimised capital to authorise his claim (Bourdieu 2010 [1984]; Skeggs 1997).

John identified as working class and compared to the other participants had low levels of economic and (legitimate) cultural capital. As I have discussed in the previous chapter, John fell outside of the recruitment criteria in terms of his demographics as it was my intention to only recruit participants high on capital. Nevertheless, John plays a key role in the analysis of middle-classed identities because he highlights the effects of being characterised as the imagined other conjured up in classed narratives. My research interactions with John were markedly different from the rest of the sample, which brought to the fore an awareness of my middle-class position. Reflecting on those encounters, I noted the various ways in which I negotiated and attempted to nullify a power divide to locate myself as having some cultural and classed affiliations with him. However, regardless of the fact that we built a strong rapport, John (and later in the research, his wife) positioned me as middle class and as a 'legitimate knower' (Skeggs 1997: 35). John delivers a robust and conscientious account of his household food practices below:

John:       We buy a lot of like ingredients, you know like we've got coconut milk and pasta and stuff like that, so we can have stuff. We wouldn't tend to buy like a ready meal-made thing. Em it would normally be the base ingredients and make wa own em… so it wouldn't be like buying readymade pizzas and stuff like that. It's mainly we would buy cheese and ingredients and make wa own dough, do it all waselves. Um which is probably a bit strange, but…
KG:         Hmm-mm, is there a reason why you wouldn't buy a ready meal?
John:       It's just… no we just prefer… we don't like… we don't eat much processed stuff as it is. It's not like a hard and fast rule but we tend not to eat the processed stuff… … Um we'll just cook something fresh. I mean it's not… I suppose it is a bit, not snobby, but… that's just what we like, so…
            (John, 35-44, gas engineer)

While a distance from processed foods was apparent in all interviews, John is by far the most insistent, and in our first interview returned to his point that they do not eat ready meals or processed foods on ten separate occasions. Working with John's narrative in relation to other participant accounts, the frequency and insistent nature of John's disassociations with 'bad' foods felt in retrospect as if somehow I needed convincing that he and his family enacted 'good' food; that he is implicitly aware that his working-class habitus is discursively marked as lacking. On my second research visit, when John was talking and showing me through the food storage areas, his wife, Kelly, interrupted and remained present for the remainder of the interview. The extended excerpt below about their food cupboard, illustrates the dynamics of the interruption:

Kelly:          You should probably be doing this with me (shouts from the other room).
KG:             (laughs) Right ok. So is there anything in the food cupboards that's like out of the ordinary?
John:           Em (pause)…
Kelly:          (comes into the kitchen) Em…
John:           She's probably best.
KG:             No cause that's the thing it's good to get…
Kelly:          I know… so there's the tamari, miso and all of that in there which would be… I don't know if he showed you this (figure 4.3).
John:           I didn't cause it was messy so I didn't open that cupboard (laughs).
Kelly:          So that cupboard like I say, that's got tamari and stuff which is an unusual soya sauce, and in that one there's Kashmiri chilli powder and stuff which isn't normally something that you'd always see… panko breadcrumbs in that one. (John; with wife, Kelly, hairdresser)



*Figure 4:3        Researcher photo of John's food cupboard*

The wives of Neil and Gregg also interrupted during the food tours in the second interview, suggesting a lack of confidence that their husbands could show me (as opposed to talk me through) the contents of the kitchen. This will be discussed in Chapter Six in relation to the classed and gendered aspects household 'good' food and the construction of the kitchen as a feminine space. But for the purposes of discussion here, I want to explore how Kelly's interruption centres on the notion of respectability. She appears to position-take through displacing stereotypes and distancing herself from lacking taste and knowledge. All other participants interpreted the question 'is there anything that is out of the ordinary?' to mean 'is there anything that is not normally here?'. Kelly however, shows me the unusual and exotic ingredients in her cupboard that demonstrate her good taste. Skeggs (1997) shows that working-class women must guard against being seen as disreputable and explains how feminised respectability often focuses on cleanliness. Indeed, while John indicates he had not shown me the cupboard because of the mess, for Kelly, showing me the tamari, Kashmiri chilli powder, and panko breadcrumbs takes priority over exposing the mess. This suggests that for Kelly the exotic foods carry more cultural value than having tidy cupboard. Later in the interview I ask John if the household is on a budget:

John:       Nah.
Kelly:      Definitely not.
KG:         Have you ever had to?
John:       No. Em I mean even when… when I was off…
Kelly:      I think we're probably what I would say a little bit of a food snob.

This answer is in sharp contrast with the rest of the sample, most of whom drew on narratives of thrift in relation to their spending, as I will explore in the following chapter. In this interaction however, my question felt like it was received as an accusation, and Kelly's definitive response suggests that as well as having good taste and knowledge about food, she does not curtail household expenditure on food. In other words, she does not fit into the imagined category of what working-class women are seen to be. Like the accounts of Des and Thomas, Kelly articulates awareness that her food habits could be interpreted as pretentious when she says 'we're probably what I would say a little bit of a food snob'. The difference however, is that Kelly lacks the authority to legitimise her performance of good taste because she operates in a social field which fixes the working classes as without taste. Being just one example, Kelly and John's narrative cannot offer a standalone indication of the ways in which the working-class habitus experiences 'good' taste. However, by drawing attention to their unusualness in relation to the rest of the sample, their narrative offers a

counter example of how attempts to confer value onto the performance of good taste are experienced when one speaks from a devalued position.

In order to illustrate this further, I turn to examples where participants indicated a capacity to play around with and transgress the hierarchy of taste. For instance, Jane jokingly suggested that she should have hidden a bottle of Coke prior to showing me the contents of her fridge:

KG:         Right can I take a photo?
Jane:       Yeah. Oh I should've hid the Coke (laughs), no I'm just joking (laughs).
            (Jane, 45-54, project coordinator)

Also illustrating this dynamic is Sara. Of the 343 participant photographs returned, there were only three images of take away foods. Sara provided one of these images (Figure 4:4), with the following description:

Sara:       Um that I thought was hilarious because it was… I knew it was probably likely to be the last picture that I was going to take and I thought oh how funny that it would be a takeaway. Um but yeah we obviously every now and again get a takeaway literally just from a place round the corner and em… and I always get the same thing. I always get sweet and sour chicken cause it's just really good, really tasty. But it looks like it's landed from another planet on that photo (laughs). To be honest the colour is quite like that anyway (laughs).



*Figure 4:4        Sara's photo of a sweet and sour take away meal*

Like Des and Thomas above, Sara and Jane use humour in their account. This has the effect of validating the presence of foods low on cultural capital in her household. Sara's image of the sweet and sour meal is hilarious *because* it is juxtaposed with a smorgasbord of other

wholesome and homemade foods she photographed. Moreover, its positioning as alien to the household alludes to both an awareness that Sara understands the taste hierarchy, and is confident in her capacity to play with its boundaries. Through mocking the Coke and sweet and sour Chinese meal, Jane and Sara's accounts highlight how embodied capital provides sufficient markers of middle-classness which in turn can provide the authority to reproduce and legitimise the hierarchy of taste. By contrast, despite the fact that John and Kelly know about the taste hierarchy, they are not authorised to play around with the rules in the same way. I argue that this is because their forms of personhood are marked in opposition to good taste. They are not authorised to speak therefore with humour and irony about processed foods. Eating processed foods is understood as a function of who they really *are*. To use the words of Bourdieu, this is having 'a pathological or morbid preference for (basic) essentials, a sort of congenital coarseness, the pretext for a class racism which associates the populace with everything heavy, thick and fat' (2010 [1984]: 173).

Having set out the ways in which participants displayed an awareness of 'good' food through its relational positioning, I have implied that through careful selection certain foods are coded as legitimate, and by negation other foods coded as illegitimate. Foods and ways of eating which carry no value appear to be implicitly marked as working class by the sample. I now turn to life history data to explore key moments resulting in the embodiment of competence to deploy recognition in relation to taste hierarchy. This is to explain how the majority of participants performed such apparent knowingness in their evaluation of household food tastes and practices.

### 4.3 Coming-of-Age Stories and the Expansion of Taste

Aside from John, all participants are higher-educated. Attending university and subsequently settling down into established households emerged as key moments in all participant food histories. This is unsurprising since for most participants, going to university was the first time they started feeding themselves independently. Following Serre and Wagner (2015), while university degrees provide institutionalised cultural capital, it is important to scrutinise the complexities involved in the process of capital acquisition. In this framing, going to university is not merely 'a simple objectification of an inherited incorporated cultural capital' (ibid.: 445) in the form of a qualification, but rather is a culmination of a prolonged interaction in the specific space of higher education. Going to university brings a host of

other knowledge and experiences such as adapting to different people and tastes, the conversion of which can help secure middle-class positions in adult lives.

Part of accounting for these processes of conversion involves paying attention to how early independent food experiences were lived. In doing so, it makes visible the complex ways in which the habitus embodies the marks of class through childhood and the extent to which the habitus is durable. Bourdieu argued that dispositions are so durable that mostly they stay the same (1977: 78). It is noticeable that for participants who identified with middle-class personal histories, reflections about class in relation to their personal experience of food remained relatively absent from their narratives about the transition from childhood to adulthood. Already positioned well in social space, they were accorded the ontological security that their practices were validated through inherited capital (Friedman 2012) during this transition. As such, participants mobilised their pre-engrained ideas of 'good' taste through a 'generative forgetting' (Lawler 2005: 440) of the processes by which these ideas were acquired. By contrast, for those who experienced upward class mobility, several moments of classed self-reflexivity occur in their coming-of-age food stories. For instance, I asked Mary, who was the first of her family to go to university and identified as working class, if she had ever felt aware of class. She recalled a time just after she graduated from university when she ate in one of London's high-end eateries:

Mary:       I felt totally uncomfortable, like I was going to open my mouth and… … I felt like a ten-year-old. I just felt like there were people in this place, like we just didn't belong in there at all (laughs).
(Mary, 35-44, accountant)

Mary's narrative reveals how she felt like a 'fish out of water' (Reay et al 2009: 1104), rendered childlike and afraid to open her mouth, despite her acquisition of educational capital. Her experience reminds us of the dialectical relationship between habitus and positionality, wherein 'moments of hysteresis' result when individual trajectories incur a 'mismatch between one's (primary) habitus and the habitus required in a new field' (Friedman 2015: 131). As Bourdieu argues, 'practices are always liable to incur negative sanctions when the environment with which they are objectively confronted is too distant from that in which they are objectively fitted' (1977: 78).

It is clear that Mary's awareness of the distance between the historical conditions of her habitus and the conjecture in which this particular food story was experienced, manifested itself in discomfort. Most participants who experienced upward social mobility recalled food-

moments such as this where their habitus was placed within the reach of their consciousness. More importantly, these occasions of disjuncture were recalled as anxiety-provoking, resulting in 'disquiet, ambivalence, insecurity and uncertainty' (Reay et al 2009: 1105). Illustrating this dynamic further is Jane. Jane strongly identified with her working-class upbringing, saying that in her 'heart and soul I'm a working-class girl'. She explained that she left her childhood home as an unemployed teenage mother and experienced a period of homelessness with her two young children. Through marriage and education, she acquired the economic and dominant cultural capital to be 'bunked up the class system'. Below, she recalls the time that her now-husband took her out for a Chinese meal:

| Jane: | You know when I said I went out for a Chinese meal for the first time? That certainly, I did feel very like (pause)... like I lacked so much knowledge and everybody else seemed to know what they were doing and I think that at the time I just thought, 'oh I'm going to... this isn't for me. This is not my thing.' But then the food came, I enjoyed it, do you know what I mean? So yes, a couple of experiences like that where I've been places. Not so much now though. But I think it's all about experience isn't it? Em, yeah... |
| KG: | Who were you with when you went to the Chinese? |
| Jane: | It was Richard, just me and Richard, hmm-mm. He surprised us, took us out for a treat (laughs), which was just like 'oh my God, this is awful!'. And I remember the first curry I went for as well (laughs). That was very much the same. Just like sweating looking at the menu thinking 'I haven't got a *clue* what any of this food is really, or what I need to order'. I think I had a little bit more of an idea with the curry, but em... but the Chinese, I was totally floored by it. |

Like Mary, Jane narrates a moment when she experiences a heightened awareness of her habitus due to the experience of being in an unfamiliar field. This seems to have produced feelings of inadequacy: that she lacked the knowledge, and confidence in her ability, to 'play the game' (Bourdieu and Wacquant 1992: 117). Jane goes on to suggest that she now rarely has these feelings of anxiety since she has become more accustomed to these types of experiences. Consider this experience in relation to her joke about the Coke in her fridge I documented earlier. Far from an expression of discomfort, her performance in relation to the Coke appears light-hearted and confident, suggesting her habitus is now secure within its objective conditions. That she has now learnt to play the game illustrates how the habitus can improvise, readjust itself and override its primary dispositions (McNay 2008). In other words, while Jane's class awareness was a direct result of her position in the field being at odds with her inherited capital, the capital which she has since accrued and acquired over

time has gradually become embedded in her habitus, suggesting that while primary dispositions are durable, they are not eternal (Bourdieu and Wacquant 1992: 133).

All participants said that their tastes have expanded throughout the course of their lives. Most participants noted this expansion as occurring in conjunction with the acquisition of capital via university or travel. Although, as I have noted, the upwardly mobile displayed a heightened awareness with regards to their lack of inherited capital during these times. My participants' experience of food at university varies across the sample. The older participants were more likely to talk about sharing food with fellow students living in same-sex accommodation. Many younger participants talked of sharing food with housemates, whereas others recalled living in chaotic environments, storing food in tiny individual cupboards in kitchens shared with up to eight other students. But while there is a variation in food experiences at university, participant accounts centred on the lack of restrictions they experienced in their food choices. Peter explains below:

Peter:      But like when I came to uni was when I started to experiment a little bit more with cooking and start doing things myself. Mainly because I was em buying my own food, so I could therefore decide what I wanted to make.
(Peter, 25-34, project officer)

Peter echoes the accounts of Lupton's (1996) participants who noted that their food tastes changed upon leaving the family home. Elsewhere, participants talked about early travel experiences being fundamental to the expansion of their tastes. For example, Helen, who travelled extensively during her twenties:

Helen:      I think those Asian experiences of food did perhaps alter my taste in food.
KG:         So what was your attitude to food or your taste in food before you travelled then?
Helen:      Well it's hard to look back and know that now. Um, but I don't know that my taste was much different. But I think my awareness of what I was eating is what changed. Awareness of um (pause) different choices you can make, different traditions about eating. I think it's more of an awareness of the traditions of eating. I think in New Zealand in those days it was very heavily meat and you kind of just ate what was in front of you. Whereas having seen these other possibilities, I became at least more aware that I could make choices and began to start doing so I suppose.
(Helen, 55-64, arts professional)

Helen's account is interesting because while she suggests she maintains the durability of her childhood tastes, she indicates that travel opened her eyes to the array of food choices on offer. Moreover, this first-hand experience of foreign Asian tastes accorded her with reflexive capacity around those choices. The subsequent widening of horizons in relation to

food following leaving home to travel or attend university was narrated by participants as a trajectory of moving from restriction and lack of choice to abundance and diversity. Regardless of age, these food histories can be anchored in the context of wider social change, as the following separate quotes illustrate:

KG:        Ok what about… do you see yourself as belonging to a particular generation?
Ingrid:    Em (pause) I suppose a generation with a very much more global approach to food. You know, I… I will go into Asian supermarkets, Chinese, Indian supermarkets and I will be quite adventurous with my choices of things that I will try and that I will eat. And in comparison to even my parents who you know think… it is that kind of like, 'oh pasta' and then you know various other… like it is a generation.
(Ingrid, 25-34, graphic designer)

Gregg:     Have my food tastes changed? Yeah I think… yeah I think they changed definitely. They changed… I suppose they changed with the… certainly with the availability of ingredients. So for example when I was growing up, you wouldn't have had coriander, but now you can get coriander everywhere. So like having Vietnamese or Thai or like Asian dishes that you would use coriander, you would be… or even making a guacamole, you couldn't do that properly without coriander really. So I suppose your… your tastes change because of the ingredients that are available for you to use.
(Gregg, 34-45, project manager)

Elizabeth: I'm one of the generation that grew up in the war and so was very influenced by rationing and all that sort of thing, yep.
KG:        What about your children, do you see them as belonging to a particular generation? And has that influenced their food habits?
Elizabeth: I'm sure the abundance of food and the choice in food now has certainly influenced them, especially my older one I think. Although no, the younger one… olives, anchovies, you know, garlic, never heard of in my young days (laughs). Yeah. They've travelled too. They've both travelled a lot since… as adults. So, I guess yeah, I guess it does. They've had all these choices, they can make these choices, which weren't open to my generation.
(Elizabeth, 81, retired teacher)

These accounts suggest that the participants imagine that the widening of taste is related to a 'generational effect' (Warde 1997: 72). That is, they locate their experience of taste expansion within broader social change, which in turn marks them as different from neighbouring generations before or after them. Over 60 years spans these participants, yet they all draw on narratives of choice (or lack of) and the increase of diversity in relation to theirs, their parents, or their children's food habits. My point is not to dispute whether or not their tastes have widened as a result of globalisation as Ingrid suggests. Rather, I would like to draw attention to the centrality of choice in these accounts and suggest that the broadening of choices is a *necessary* point of reference for participants to make sense of

themselves as consumers. Reay at al suggest, 'choice and the ability to make choices across a wide range of areas lies at the heart of white middle-class identity' (2011: 1). Moreover, emphasising choice is also a way of situating the self in the field of consumption which values, and requires, the notion of choice and relatedly abundant options from which to choose. This point is reinforced by Warde who posits that since variety is a function of commodification, 'the desirability of variety, for its own sake, has become a central ideological precept' (1997: 193).

Warde (1997) warns against exaggerating the extent of change in tastes following the 1960s, since his research found that since then much has stayed the same. Like Warde, I found little generational difference between participant tastes (except Elizabeth, whose childhood history dated to before World War Two and will be explored in due course). Nevertheless, all participants appeared to draw on the notion of choice in relation to a 'menu pluralism' (Beardsworth and Keil 1997: 68) which, as their accounts suggest, they understand to be offered by globalisation. Even in 1997 Warde was suggesting that there was a more diverse range of foods available to the average shopper in Britain and it seems likely that this has only increased since then. But the greater *production* of variety does not necessarily mean the expansion of individual tastes to include a more diverse set of foods. While, as Gregg suggested, he now eats coriander, at the same time, he rejects many of the foods of his childhood. Below he describes a buffet his mother used to host at Christmas time:

Gregg:      And then she would do… and it became more obvious as I got older what I thought was sort of older sort of types of food. Like she would boil eggs and like slice them and then put mayonnaise on them and stuff like that and maybe 70s sorts of dishes that were a bit odd and a bit unusual but everyone seemed to love them so it was fine.

While framed in terms of diversity and abundance, the adoption of new foods simultaneously appears to involve the rejection of old foods: Gregg clearly steers clear of the 1970s dishes his mum used to provide. As I will now go on to argue, the prevalence of choice and diversity in my participants' narratives about taste speaks more about that which it excludes than that which it includes.

### 4.3.1  *Restricting Choice*

All participants noted the particular life stage of settling down with partners and post-university relationships as being fundamental in their food journeys and as enabling an environment in which to cook and appreciate food. This is in line with Warde's findings that

differences in food practices are more about life stages than generational difference. As Warde suggests, 'as cohorts aged, they tended to shift their behaviours towards some norm for mature family households' (1997: 75). In relation to this suggestion, I would like to expand on this further by proposing that there is something very specific about these narratives of settling down. For most, a key moment of being able to actively appreciate and do 'good' food was through the forging of bonds within or just after the specific environment of higher education and with others who had similarly accrued cultural capital through university. A number of participants were operating within economic constraints at university. But, by subsequently having a 'proper job', they were then able to combine economic capital with their acquired social and cultural capital (university and graduate social networks and gaining a degree) to take forward a consensual recognition of the cultural value of good taste into their established households. In this way, the mapping of participant journeys specifically starting with university indicates how class can enrich our understanding of coming of age through food. These participants carried economic, social and cultural capital into their 'settled' households.

As we saw above, participants often mentioned coriander, hummus, olives, and avocado in their talk about the increase of choices. Coriander was mentioned by ten participants. Alongside the increased availability of coriander however, we have also seen an increase in the availability and range of junk foods and convenience foods, such as microwave meals, as well as the arrival of fast food chains in Britain (Spencer 2002). However, these foods rarely entered into participant narratives about food, except as a point from which to enact differentiation. The second wave interviews provide some evidence of convenience foods crossing the threshold into the food cupboards, but their presence was always defended against with justifications of harriedness (Southerton 2003) or indulgence. These justifications will be dealt with in the next chapter. The point I want to make here, is that while participants appear to understand that their tastes have expanded due to the abundance of choice provided by contemporary consumer culture, they only consume a relatively limited range of foods. In fact, participants tightly restrict which foods enter into their households. Participants often pointed out the increase in production of variety in the literal and metaphorical food markets around them. Yet they also appeared to provide evidence to the contrary in terms of their individual choices not to consume all of the

plethora of food options available to them. Fiona's account below illustrates how restriction and choice is conceptualised in relation to three separate generations:

Fiona:     Yeah, I mean I didn't have any food choices, when I was young I guess. I had to eat what I was given cause there wasn't anything else (laughs). Whereas I guess my kids um, it wasn't quite so strained, the circumstances they were brought up in. But they were expected to eat what I'd made them and if they didn't like it there was sometimes another option, but that wasn't the case for me. I did try to make them eat healthily, um as far as I could, um but then I discovered my son was swapping his healthy dinner for jam sandwiches (laughs) and something else (laughs). So that didn't always work. Um, I notice my grandchild, it's… they are extremely um particular about what he eats. Um, so in one way, they're… he doesn't have anything sort of unhealthy. He eats a lot of berries and fruit and so on, he's just one, so he's just… (pause)

KG:        Just learning to eat?

Fiona:     Just learning to eat. But he will eat what we eat. So if we're having, ah I don't know, if we're having… well, we were having… for breakfast we were having avocado (laughs) on toast and poached egg, he'd have that, just mashed up. So he'll have anything as long as it's reasonably healthy but he won't have cakes or biscuits or whatever else.

KG:        Is that because he doesn't like them, or they just don't feed him…?

Fiona:     They don't feed him that, which I think is great you know it's good. Um, so he will… he'll have pre-prepared kid's food um when he's here sometimes. That's sort of pouch-y Ella something

KG:        Ella's Kitchen?

Fiona:     Kitchen, yeah. Sometimes if there's something he really can't eat, but he is very easy and you know he'll sit and have hummus sandwiches and that sort of thing. He's very easy, but it's all quite thought about.

Grace makes a similar observation about her grandchild:

Grace:     When my grandson, the three-year-old comes, we'd bought him… well I'd bought Coco Pops and er… well he wasn't allowed to eat them (laughs)- too much sugar in. But then I had to buy fish fingers for him, which threw me totally cause why wouldn't they just give him fish? So… you know it's different fashions in food isn't it?
           (Grace, 65+, retired librarian)

Fiona, like other participants draws on choice as a way to understand her food habits. She notes she had no choice as a child. What she then goes on to say though is that her son and his partner are 'extremely particular' about restricting her grandson's choices to 'healthy' foods, such as avocado and hummus sandwiches. On one hand, she says he will eat anything, but on the other she concludes that her grandson's diet is 'all quite thought about'. Likewise, Grace observes the specific nature of her grandson's diet which is 'accommodated' for. She made the wrong choice in buying him Coco Pops when he came to stay. The notion that grandparents provide treats for grandchildren is widely recognised.

Curtis et al note that parents often attempt to reframe this as 'spoiling' as a way to soften the impact of their challenge to their own family's food order (2009: 90). Grace seems to challenge the rationale behind her son's highly specific instructions to buy her grandson fish fingers as opposed to fish. But what is particularly interesting here are the restrictions put in place with regards to Fiona and Grace's grandchildren's diets. While Fiona notes that she had no choice because there was nothing else when she was growing up, Fiona and Grace's grandsons have no choice *in spite of* the abundance of available alternatives. It appears then that the childhood food practices of both generations can be understood via a frame of restricted choices.

### 4.3.2  *Personal Food Histories and Mobility: Pomegranate Molasses and Other Preoccupations*

In order to consider the theme of diversity further, I now turn to concentrate on three individuals. My focus is on their life trajectory so as to understand their food experiences through a socio-historical lens and to explore the relational ways in which habitus occurs as a dialogue with the social world and an individual's life trajectory therein. I start with Elizabeth before moving to consider the stories of Maya and Des alongside one another. I begin with Elizabeth since her current food practices appear markedly different to the rest of the cohort. Like Fiona, she emphasised a lack of choice as a child. However, being born in 1934, she has clear recollections of post-war rationing, which she noted in her account about generation above. Elizabeth came from a 'very poor, poverty stricken' background. Along with her four younger sisters, she spent a year in an orphanage when her mother was dying of emphysema. After her mother's death, at the age of eleven, Elizabeth returned to the household and, being the eldest, was given responsibility for the housekeeping purse, until her father remarried a year later. He went on to have four more children. In both interviews Elizabeth talked at length about not having enough to eat as a child, except on Sundays when she ate a 'very, very thin slice of meat', potatoes, cabbage and sometimes carrots, followed by rhubarb from the garden. Being born pre-World War Two, Elizabeth falls into the generation identified by Warde (1997) who is distinctive from the generations following, who were in turn heavily influenced by representations of exotic and foreign foods circulating in the public imagination. This is reflected in her account about her everyday food practices below:

Elizabeth:     Cook for my dinner? Um, well meat or fish and at least two other veg and either potatoes, rice or pasta. I have those and I always have pasta and rice in stock because if I haven't got potatoes there, it's like a standby. Um, I some… Another thing I have in stock especially if family are coming, for a quick dessert, I buy the Morrison's crumble, readymade crumble to do a… and get the fruit from the freezer and make a quick crumble, because that… the children find it more interesting obviously, the grandchildren. Um, otherwise I don't always have a dessert except perhaps some fruit, or sometimes cheese and biscuits. But I try and have a bit of fruit, because I'm very keen on fruit (laughs). Um, and so again a lot of it you see is not bought, because I've grown it.

Sociological research suggests that the upwardly mobile are more likely to display diverse taste preferences (Coulangeon 2015; Daenekindt and Roose 2014; Friedman 2012; Peterson and Kern 1996). Elizabeth, now wealthy in cultural and economic capital, has arguably experienced the greatest upward mobility of the sample. However, she also displays the least omnivorous tastes of the sample, the rest of whom draw on frames of diversity in relation to their food practices. Tending to prefer 'meat and three veg', Elizabeth retains much of her childhood dispositions and there is an absence of 'exotic' and 'ethnic' in her dialogue. This suggests that Elizabeth does not prioritise diversity as being central to her tastes and preferences. Elizabeth's narrative underlines the importance of placing an individual's mobility in its socio-historical context, because her transition into adulthood occurred at a time when ethnic and exotic ingredients were not associated with good taste. Conversely, she talked often of growing her own vegetables, having things 'in stock' and not being wasteful implying that for her, good household food practices operate around the make do and mend value systems of the rationing era. While most other participants talked at length about not being wasteful, my observations in Elizabeth's home suggest that she is by far the most frugal of the sample. For instance, her kitchen is in sharp contrast to other participants' dine-in kitchens which display a range of prestige culinary artefacts. Figure 4:5 below shows Elizabeth's daughter's old microwave which, given to her in the early 1990's, is her most modern kitchen appliance. Also, note the dishes on the draining board. She had said she has no dishwasher because she does not generate sufficient dishes to use it economically, and prefers instead to only wash her dishes once a day so as to not waste water.

*Figure 4:5      Researcher photo of Elizabeth's kitchen*

Nettleton and Uprichard note that there is little literature about food and social change (2011). The data generated through my research interactions with Elizabeth illustrate the ways in which narratives embody specific socio-cultural eras, not least that her food-related dispositions established in the wartime and rationing period of 1939-1954 are hard to shake. Echoing Warde's (1997) findings about the generational specificities of women born in this era, the absence of diversity in her narrative marks her apart from the remainder of the sample. Interestingly, when I asked Elizabeth if her food choices reflect the type of person she is, she replied:

Elizabeth:     (Pause) (laughs) I wouldn't know (laughs). Um (pause) I… I mean I wouldn't call myself a foodie. On the other hand, I really do enjoy it and I like good food and I like going out to good restaurants and that sort of thing. But equally I could be happy with down-on-the-farm, plain food. As long as it has plenty of veg and fruit.

Again this response is contrary to the remainder of the cohort, who reproduced ideas of individualism in relation to their identity and practices, and suggests an absence of the importance of consumption in relation to her self-identity.

Keeping the concept of mobility in a socio-historical context at the fore, I conclude this chapter by turning to the narratives of Des and Maya to explore diverse taste preferences further. In so doing, this also allows the conceptualisation of consumption anxiety and the

effects of making mistakes on one's sense of (classed) self into the framework of analysis. Not all participants demonstrated an easy capacity to play with the taste hierarchy or mobilise their cultural capital to legitimise foods. The following comparison between Maya and Des illustrates how cultural competence around food tastes, in particular ideas of 'ethnic' and 'exotic', is as much about *cultural* mobility as it is about class. This is based on Emmison's (2003) observation that cultural mobility refers to the freedom to engage with or consume different cultural forms. However, as I will now go on to argue, while the capacity for cultural mobility is classed, having resources does not guarantee the possibility of cultural mobility.

In our first interview, I asked Maya if her food choices had ever made her aware of class. She became very upset recalling a time when she had overheard her dinner party guests talking about food:

Maya:    They started talking about ingredients and the sorts of ingredients that they bought were things that I had barely heard of and certainly wouldn't be buying myself and I was thinking, 'oh my goodness, they are going to be disappointed by what I've got cooking for them'. Um, and I felt very unsophisticated, and I still feel quite unsophisticated thinking about it. (Maya, 45-54, senior medical professional)

Maya has not hosted another dinner party since, indicating the long-standing effects of being acutely aware that she made a poor choice and this compromised her sense of value. Importantly, it is not that Maya 'got it wrong' but rather the lack of sophistication she felt about making the wrong choice, and her recognition that her guests would have been disappointed. Maya was aware of what was at stake through 'contravening the standards of acceptable taste through the making of inappropriate choices' (Warde 1994: 893). Following Skeggs (2005), when culture (food) is integral to increasing the exchange-value of Maya's volume and composition of capital, getting it wrong is likely to generate feelings of embarrassment and anxiety about not being sophisticated.

Maya appeared to display an uncertainty and anxiety around her consumption which theorists like Bauman might see as a consequence of the individualisation and fluid cultural milieu of postmodernity (Bauman 2009). In our second interview, she explained she was planning to cook a Persian chicken dish which she had seen in a relative's Waitrose magazine:

Maya:    I picked this up when we were at my mother-in-laws house. She's got Waitrose just down the road so it's really convenient for her to go. Er but

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we've got a lot of these things (she points to the ingredients in the magazine), but we didn't have everything. But I've never been able to find this pomegranate molasses. Heaven knows where you would get that. But I've managed to find…

KG:           Well you'd hope you could get it at Waitrose.

Maya:         Well probably but (laughs)… yes if they're putting it in their recipe (laughs).

In contrast, Des' comment below about his photo of his fridge (Figure 4: 6), is an example of

the levels of confidence and certainty he performed around his food tastes and preferences:

Des:          Oh inside of the fridge, um with all sorts showing. All my middle-class preoccupations. So I've preserved my own lemons and have got pomegranate molasses and loads of tins of tahini.



*Figure 4:6       Des' photo of his fridge*

Maya's lack of knowledge about 'this' pomegranate molasses is telling when read in conjunction with how Des identifies the molasses as one of his 'middle-class preoccupations'. This appears to support Maya's first comment that her lack of knowledge about exotic ingredients had made her feel aware of class through her lack of sophistication which was actually a very painful experience for her. She appears to be faced with the 'omnivore's paradox' (Fishler 1988: 277): an awareness of a (social) need for diversity, but an uncertainty about what to eat. The point I want to make here is that Maya, despite struggling to construct the self-inventing identity valued in reflexive individualism, *recognises* its importance. As her dinner party experience illustrates, there is a lot to be lost when your classed credentials rely on having good taste. Nevertheless, because of her classed credentials, people like Maya are less likely to make mistakes because they are supported through sharing style, access to knowledge, and have a clear sense of the rules (Warde 1994). Pomegranate molasses was talked about and presented to me in three other households. In addition, many other participants pointed out specialist ingredients such as Sumach, rose water, fresh horseradish, and so on. Des' and Maya's contrasting narratives are interesting because they share similar levels of capital and histories. Maya's household income and property value is amongst the highest in the sample, she works as a senior medical professional and obtained degrees from Cambridge and Oxford. She was brought up in what she identified as a middle-class household by her mother and Jewish father. Des, a retired medical professional, has household earnings and property value in the same bracket. He was brought up in what he identified as a Jewish, middle-class, kosher home, in a working-class area of London.

Above I note the importance of placing consumption preferences of the upwardly mobile in relation to their socio-historical context through my discussion of Elizabeth. The narratives of Des and Maya also allow for other forms of mobility as having an impact on consumption. Unlike Maya, Des' life trajectory has entailed multiple exchanges with contrasting social and cultural worlds. While both participants started their life journeys from similar starting points, Des noted that he moved (geographically and culturally) away from his Jewish upbringing, marrying a non-Jewish working-class woman and moving to Newcastle. He also pursued a career which was at odds with his family expectations that he would take over the family GP practice. Looking at class in isolation, both participants share an ability to pursue cultural mobility which comes in part from their starting point of high inherited capital,

which accords them with choices and autonomy to be 'active consumers' (Emmison 2003). However, Des, through his constant interactions with 'a variety of socialising spheres or agents' (Lahire 2008: 174), appears confident in his ability to mobilise and convert his inherited capital to display an orientation towards reflexive appropriation: 'through demonstrating competence in handling a diversity of cultural products' (Bennett et al 2009: 178). Maya, on the other hand, appears to have followed a conventional trajectory through life, such that the capital which marks her habitus appears insufficient and *limiting* to her disposition to display and do the omnivorousness associated with good taste. Moreover, *because* the display of a fragmented and unique identity has middle-classed value, this appears to have produced a sense of uncertainty and anxiety in Maya when she recalled her dinner party experience.

This concurs with Warde's (1994) suggestion that the structural location of consumption anxiety can be related to class. But it is important to point out that this can be developed further by accounting for mine and Maya's particular research encounter, which itself highlights the importance of individual biographies. Contrary to Maya's recollection of her dinner party experience in our first interview, it is notable that my exchange with Maya about not knowing where to find molasses was far from uncomfortable in our second interview. Indeed, my suggestion that you could buy molasses from Waitrose since her recipe was in a Waitrose magazine, was met with light-hearted laughter. This highlights how taste and consumption justifications are contingent to particular social settings, wherein certain social situations can be anxiety-provoking and others not. In interpreting the interview setting as a social setting, then it is possible Maya's performance of both anxiety, and lack of anxiety, can also be mirrored in other social situations. This in turn allows us to scrutinise the complex ways that consumption anxiety is related to distinction and status and factor in broader questions of social and self-identity (Woodward 2006) which can only ever be part-narrativised in the specific location of the interview.

## 4.4 Conclusion

I have so far presented data which is in line with current theories of class and consumption which argues that the individualising structures of class are central to class relations. Contrary to reflexive individualism which sees identity as untethered from social structures, I have demonstrated here that identity can be connected to social structures when we pay

attention to individual practices and dispositions. This is based on a Bourdieusian understanding that class exists twice: in the objective sense (through distributions of capital in social structures) and the subjective sense (habitus), and is therefore expressed and negotiated by individuals through everyday practice (Bourdieu and Wacquant 2013). My participant accounts of class identity show the complexities in class processes and the fractured ways that they experience class in relation to themselves. What emerges from this is the construction of individualistic identities through a play of difference to others. This entails evoking classed binaries and a negative other, which is implicitly marked as working class. However, the valuing of uniqueness demonstrated by the sample emerges as somewhat imagined. Their narratives implicitly contain a form of collective class belonging which operates around not belonging. As Savage argues, 'class is salient in terms of constructing an idea of difference, not in terms of defining a class which one belongs to' (2000: 113). The sample repeatedly displayed a recognition that they can be differentiated from an imagined other who consumes the wrong foods. But also, as the next chapter will explore, the types of foods participants select for their households are remarkably similar across the sample. Participant photos typically depict homemade meals involving fresh vegetables, salads, fish, pasta, rice, and couscous. Likewise, the types of foods participants restrict are also remarkably similar.

In order to understand these individualistic claims to identity, I have placed biographical narratives in the broader socio-historical context of globalisation, diversity, and increased choice. These appear to be the frames through which my participants understand their food practices. They all locate themselves by drawing on a narrative of change and choice. Choice requires access to and control over the range of resources which can enable desirable self-making (Skeggs 2005). This adds to theoretical debates about class, since food choice is not experienced in a social vacuum and instead reflects the fault lines of the participants' structural location. Through their class location, these participants are better equipped with the resources to engage with cultural forms to construct the valued individualised identities. Finally, I suggest that while this is related to classed positioning, it is also related to individual biographies and mobility, within which the hesitant and anxious narrative of Maya can be conceptualised.

Yet, Maya is not alone in her uncertainty around making the 'right' food choices for this particular social grouping, whose food identities appear to be built on not being like 'them'.

When I turn my attention to the minutiae of food practices, I hope to explore this in the following chapter. Friedman points out that the upwardly mobile experience a conflict between rejecting childhood tastes and acquiring tastes associated with high cultural capital (Freidman 2015). However, the narratives of this cohort suggest that many participants appear to reside in similar positions of precariousness, offering a habitus clivé (Friedman 2015) - although admittedly those with working-class histories demonstrate a fiercer rejection of childhood tastes. While all participants' palettes have expanded beyond their childhood, with excess comes the problem of selection. This leaves many participants apparently unsure about the ways to communicate their new tastes as adults as legitimate embodied cultural capital, *except* in in its distance from processed foods. As the next chapter will elaborate, in the process of carving an individualistic identity, there is an absence of belonging to a clear sense of food tradition, except in its distance from the masses.

# Chapter 5: Homemade Food: Individualised Processes of Household Investment

## 5.1 Introduction

The previous chapter explored how tastes (and distastes) in food can be ways of situating the self in relation to another. This chapter looks at the enactment of food choices in order to examine how classed identity is articulated through doing. Participant biographies drew on notions of abundance and diversity in relation to food availability suggesting that the processes of food choices warrant further analysis. In light of this, I examine the relationship between choice and the classed positioning of 'good' food within the contemporary food terrain. By focusing on practice, I relate the doing of choice to a complex and manifold set of routines, habits, preferences, and systems. I argue that the detailed ways in which participants choose from options to feed themselves and their households can act as a signpost to how they construct their sense of self, both individually and the household as a collective. Therefore, I explore the work done at a household level to manage choice, and the knowledge and skills which inform everyday investments. I scrutinise how these processes reproduce contextualised norms of middle-classness. This forms the basis for the concluding empirical chapter, which picks up on this relationship in order to analyse participant enactment of familial relationships via food in the home.

To start the chapter, I turn my attention to the ways in which participant understandings of 'good' food are grounded in an attempt to '*decommodify* food' (Wilk 2006: 20; italics original). That is, through the process of cooking and preparing food, participants infuse food with personal, cultural, and social value. The value of food however, stretches well beyond the immediate domestic work of cooking and preparing food, because it embodies a complex symbolic and material work of controlling and selecting the food which crosses the domestic threshold. I draw on participant experiences of the marketplace in order to explore these processes of domesticating food. I note that my participants' enactment and resistance of certain processes potentially constructs them as critical and discerning consumers. This is fraught with conflict however as the narratives of the most 'harried' (Southerton 2003) participants of the sample suggest.

## 5.2 The Kitchen

To start this section of analysis, I want to first pay attention to how the kitchen functions as a central domestic space for the makings of 'good' food. Most first interviews and all second interviews occurred in kitchens. Participant kitchens were often open-plan and hosted a range of material aspects, which act as visual indicators of the complex ways in which the kitchen, as a site for the domestic provision of food, is also intermeshed with other aspects of family life. These kitchens were clearly lived-in spaces in which participants also performed a range of non-food activities, for instance music practice, supervising children's homework, watching the television, ironing, and reading the paper. Below is an excerpt from my field notes after my second interview with Maya. It illustrates how material and symbolic aspects of the household can be observed in the particular domestic space of the kitchen.

> *Sunday 20/3/16*
> *Maya seemed a lot more at ease this time. She was busy in the kitchen while we chatted, so that took a bit of intensity away from the interaction. She was making a crumble with blackberries from the garden as a dessert for their family meal later. She explained that they were celebrating her son receiving an offer to study medicine at university. I sat opposite her at the breakfast bar while she peeled the apples using a strange steel contraption. The kitchen was a hive of activity: the dishwasher and washing machine were going. There was a clothes horse packed with washing in front of the Aga, which she offered to move so that I could take a photo of the blackberries softening in the pan.*
> (Maya, 45-54, senior medical professional)



*Figure 5:1        Researcher photo of the blackberries softening on the Aga*

My interview with Maya was punctured with sounds of the washing machine, the heat of the Aga was drying the previous load of washing, and the breakfast bar at which I sat enabled a casual sociality between us while she peeled apples opposite me. The breakfast bar bore signs of communal eating, highlighting that the flow of food in the kitchen extends beyond food preparation to include feeding and eating. During the interaction, I noted the weekly meal planner attached the fridge (Figure 5:2), which Maya explained also acts as an aide memoire for the household's evening classes and commitments. She explained the 'P' next to Tuesday refers to her being at her Pilates evening class, meaning that she has a narrow time slot to prepare and eat the family meal.
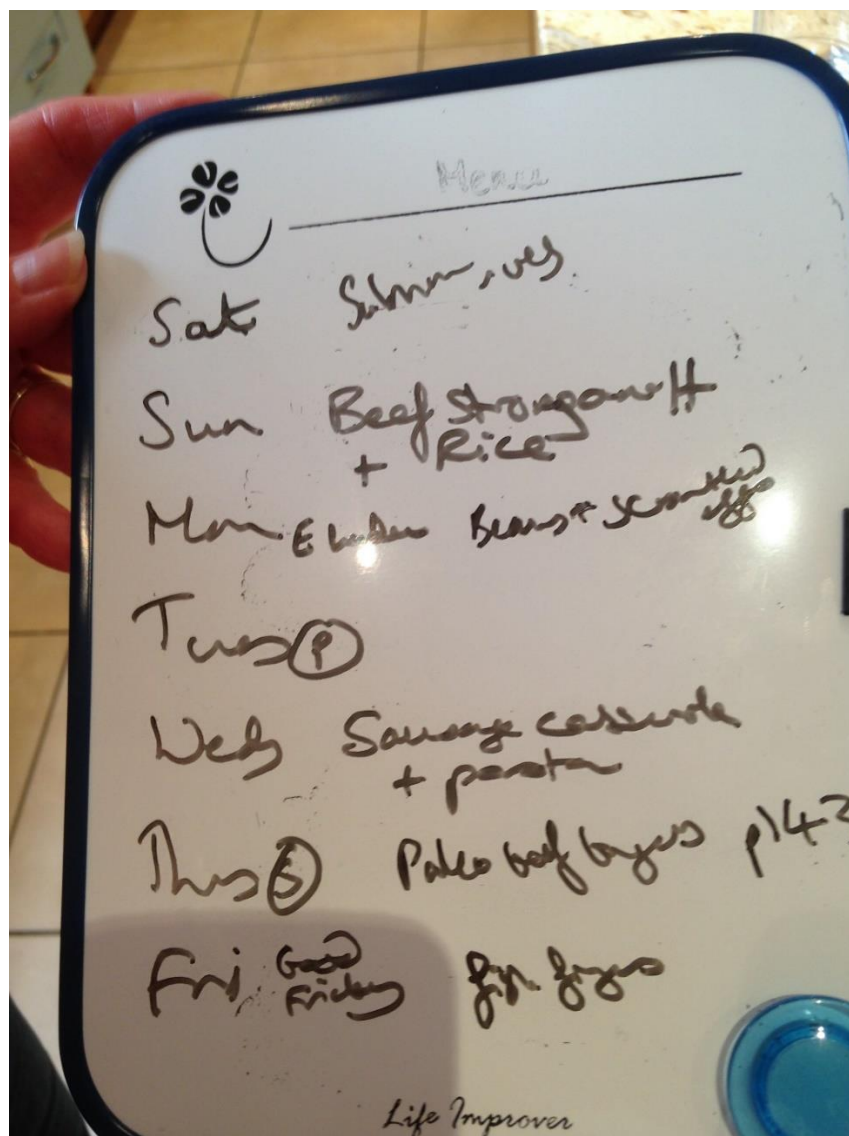


*Figure 5:2    Researcher photo of Maya's 'Life Improver' weekly meal planner*

I observed meal planners in six different kitchens, the presence of which shows how some participants organise and experience food in relation to theirs and their family's lives. Like Maya's planner, they often contained references to non-eating activities which would impact on eating. Also attached to Maya's fridge was a photograph of her extended family, which she explained was taken when she first cooked them Christmas dinner. I observed items such as family photographs, children's drawings and postcards informally attached to notice boards and fridges in most kitchens. These material artefacts act as visual reminders of the household's social connections to themselves and others. My observations of these non-food items highlight the multidimensional aspects of the kitchen as a space which extends beyond food preparation and acts 'to narrate the untold stories of lives being lived, those having been lived and those which are imagined' (Meah and Jackson 2016: 514). The social and cultural significance of this domestic space reaches far beyond the preparation of food and reproduces 'the *idea* that the kitchen constitutes the symbolic heart of the home' (Hand et al 2007: 675; italics original). As well as a place for food work, Maya's kitchen is a 'place for living' (Meah 2016: 49) and as such a space from which the household identity can be conducted. It is from within this symbolic and material space that homemade food emerges.

Within this scene of domestic efficiency and family unity, there was however evidence of Maya's frustrations. For instance, part way through her crumble she realised that her husband had bought the wrong oats for her topping. Later in the interview, she explained the domestic chore division, whereby, since her husband has not learnt to cook, she cooks and he takes care of the dishes. She complained that he often neglects his side of the agreement and pointed to that morning's dishes still on the bench. However, read against Maya's weekday food practices in which convenience often takes priority in her efforts to synchronise her 'second shift' (Hochschild 1997) of feeding work with her professional life, this Sunday afternoon scene provides a window into the importance of homemade for Maya. I have noted in Chapter Two that it is well documented that women are disproportionally responsible for feeding the household (Brannen et al 2013; DeVault 1991; Sullivan 1997) and I will return to this when I further unravel the conflict experienced by participants in juggling the antonyms of convenience and care (Warde 1997, 1999). The point I want to make here, however, is that on this particular Sunday afternoon, relatively free from demands of her professional working life, Maya was able to construct a positive household identity through enacting homemade. That is, she performed a culturally-valued

version of domesticity through the provision of homemade food. Moreover, this is via the making of a family meal in order to mark the significant middle-class event of her son's future transition into medical school. Domestic practices are integral to the construction of a household identity through establishing and reproducing the home through the fusion of social relationships in interconnected material and symbolic localities (Pink et al 2015). It follows then, that doing homemade can be read as an important way in which household feeders, like Maya, invest in the household.

The home operates as a multiple consumption site (Valentine 1999: 495) and cooking involves both production *and* consumption (Sutton 2012). This occurs, for most participants, in the kitchen. All participants prioritise cooking from scratch which, as Ian summed up, is 'just so you know what's going into it, so it's easier to keep track of and know what's in it' (Ian, 25-34, nurse). The concept of domestication provides a framework to understand how my participants convert food, as a material object produced externally to the household, into something fit to consume within the household. Domestication is:

> a process of bringing things home – machines and ideas, values and information – which always involves the crossing of boundaries: above all those between the public and private, and between proximity and distance, is a process which also involves their constant renegotiation. (Silverstone 2005: 233)

Understood via this framework, it is possible to see how cooking and preparing food, entails both the transformation of its material properties but is also a process of redefining, shaping and ascribing (Ward 2005: 148) food with meanings according to the values of the home. Participants provided a range of photos of homemade meals and the processes of their production. These can be interpreted as reflections of their active investments to physically and symbolically integrate food into their domestic space.

Neil's excerpts below about the photographs he provided of his packed lunch (Figures 5:2 and 5:3) show the multi-directional flow of this process:

Neil:     This is packed lunch, um (pause)… er so this is quite interesting because Carol gets up and makes my lunch every day, er which is quite unusual in this day and age I think, to have wifey get up and make lunch is er… and that's typical of what it is. Again it's quite healthy. So there's two bits of fruit, so I eat lots of fruit. There's a nice mixed salad. People often comment about these er at work 'oh aren't you being healthy?'. Um and to me that's almost an extension of home as well. And it's made at home and taken into work and it's… cause

it's part of a relationship as well. It's kind of… that's why it's quite important. Er it's very healthy as well. Full of pasta again, it's all kind of carbohydrates, stuff we think about quite carefully, or Carol certainly thinks about quite carefully what's in it…

(Neil, 45-54, IT consultant)



*Figure 5:3     Neil's photo of his packed lunch*

Neil:       More lunch, again prepared at home. Typical kind of stuff: pasta, a bit of sauce, nice mixed vegetables. That's got a four bean or a three bean salad in there as well, so really ah… you know quite healthy, um prepared with love.



*Figure 5:4     Another photo of Neil's packed lunch*

Unlike other participants, Neil provided no photos of the processes of cooking, since his wife is responsible for feeding the household. Instead, he provided photos of his packed lunch, which, as he suggests, is 'an extension of the home'. These photos highlight the complex and multi-directional flow of domestic consumption *and* production of food, which for Neil seem to establish and reinforce the boundaries of the home through its connection to his outside world of work. The packed lunch marks the home as a site where his wife transforms food through (gendered) emotional work to give it symbolic meaning which Neil then takes to his workplace as an object of material, emotional and cultural display. He positions the packed lunch as a symbol of his relationship to the home, but his reflection that it is unusual that his wife makes his packed lunch 'in this day and age' seems also to position his packed lunch as a product of a nostalgic and heteronormative familial connection to the home. Being homemade in this sense is tied to particular gendered roles which express close intimacy, the kind of intimacy which is unavailable in market-produced goods (Moisio et al 2004) or at least requires (feminised) investment in order to make that conversion. Neil positions the lunch as a healthy product of his wife's careful thinking ('stuff we think about quite carefully, or Carol certainly thinks about quite carefully'), which is intertwined with care (it is 'prepared with love') to produce a healthy end-product which he also recognises is open to public surveillance and scrutiny from his work colleagues ('people often comment about these at work').

Having introduced the home as a site in which the material object of food is mediated and invested with symbolic meaning which can be read as reflective of individual and household identity, I now turn to consider the processes by which food is brought home. I look towards the marketplace as the starting point for a series of social processes involving resistance and accommodation and consider this in relation to the consumer rhetoric of individualism.

## 5.3 Beyond the Kitchen

All my participants value homemade food. I have so far suggested that the domestic space acts as a hub for the conversion of food into a vehicle for 'family display' (James and Curtis 2010). This is through a process of investing symbolic and cultural meaning into food, in the kitchen, understood as a 'symbolic heart of the home' (Hand et al 2007: 675). But the process of doing homemade stretches well beyond the parameters of the kitchen to incorporate modes of consumption outside of the home. The meanings attached to

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'homemade' therefore can be read against the commercial interests of the market. Read in the context of participant narratives which centre on abundance and the globalisation of food, it seems that homemade food must embody the symbolic and material work of making choices and controlling what kinds of food come into the household from the marketplace. Understood in this light, this could explain the positive associations expressed by many participants about home-grown food. Across the sample, a number of participants were eager to talk about and show me home-grown food. This ranged from garden produce, such as fruit bushes and vegetable patches, through to allotments. Since home-produced foods enable participants to bypass the marketplace altogether, home-grown can be interpreted as carrying more value because it embodies a personal connection with the production of ingredients. The value of home-grown lies in the location of the self in the entire process of production and conversion from soil to household plate.

Participants source food from a range of places: from independent retailers to large supermarkets, and as the following sections will illustrate, their purchasing decisions are motived by health, diversity, and quality. This, I will suggest, situates the participants as 'privileged shoppers' (Johnston and Szabo 2011). On account of their classed social positioning, their choices are situated in their freedom from necessity (Bourdieu 2010 [1984]: 173). As a result, participants are able to construct an identity around navigating choice by drawing on classed skills and knowledge relating to cooking and feeding the household. In order to elaborate on this further, I consider in turn themes of thrift and navigation of shopping spaces.

### 5.3.1  *Thrift: Strategic Deployment of Economic Capital*

A number of my participants drew on discourses of thrift and austerity in relation to their consumption habits, for instance buying foods close to their sell-by date, bulk buying, and checking labels. Many participants reflected that they do not have to economise, but that they choose to nevertheless. Moreover, while cost was important in relation to shopping decisions, quality was framed as the primary concern. Jane's quote below is an example:

Jane:     For some foods I think it's worth spending a little bit more. Like you know, I don't particularly buy cheap bread, do you know what I mean? But like cheap cans of tomatoes, I'll always go for the cheapest ones, cause it's just a can of tomatoes so… so in that sense, yeah cost does guide what I buy, but not to a massive degree I suppose… …Do you know? There's money in the bank, it's not that I *can't* afford it, I just choose not to buy it if it's really expensive. (Jane, 45-55, project coordinator)

This quote draws attention to Jane's economic and cultural capital which enables her to selectively take part in discourses of thrift: 'there's money in the bank' she reminds us. But Jane mobilises her knowledge about food to suggest that there is little variation in quality in differently priced tins of tomatoes, and it is these evaluations about quality which drive her decisions to economise. Within these fine distinctions around value, there are some items, bread for instance, where price does matter and therefore she is not prepared to make that compromise. That Jane chooses to economise on certain things and not others indicates her relative economic freedom as compared to shoppers with fewer economic resources. Furthermore, in making these economic choices, participants appear to make judgements about what constitutes quality. This varies across the sample. For instance, Peter (24-34, project officer) said that he buys frozen Tesco Value chicken breasts since he only uses them in curries, but that he always buys premium brand coffee. Irene (55-64, retired librarian) said that she buys venison steaks in Aldi, but that she buys sugar snap peas elsewhere because Aldi's are 'stringy'. I will discuss tendencies to 'shop around' for quality below, but the point I want to make here is that whilst participants articulated varied interpretations about quality, their orientations towards the importance of quality is rarely compromised. Quality is the yardstick by which they measure their food purchasing decisions suggesting that motivations to bargain hunt have little to do with necessity. In fact, very few participants said that they actively budget with food and the thriftiest shoppers were often unable to recall what they spend, despite demonstrating that they are economical and clever with prices. Take Julie for example:

Julie:        So yeah, going back to your other question, I've never had to budget per se, but I consider myself a savvy shopper when it comes to food, so I can afford to get something because I've kept an eye on other things, if you know what I mean.
             (Julie, 35-44, occupational therapist)

Prior to this I asked Julie how much she spends on her shopping:

Julie:        Um (pause) oh, I'm trying to think how much I spent today. I spent 18 pound in Waitrose and then I went to Tesco's as well and I spent about twenty pound there, so that's… what nearly forty already today? During the week, it's probably five pound here and ten pound there (pause). 130? 150?

There is a disconnection between Julie's claim that she can afford other things because she has 'kept an eye' on her food shopping and her hesitant recollection of her recent spend at Tesco and Waitrose, a supermarket well known for being expensive. She then adds a further 'five pounds here and ten pounds there' to come up with a vague total spend. That she

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appears unsure of how much she spent on food again suggests that there is an absence of economic necessity involved in her decisions to be frugal. However, Julie accounts for her economic freedom, not by reflecting on her economic privilege, but by suggesting that she is a 'savvy shopper' ('I can afford to get something because I've kept an eye on other things'). Yet, the performance of efficient and dexterous economic management implicitly reproduces the idea that it is possible to consume good food without high levels of economic capital. In addition, the practice of thrift itself carries cultural capital, especially when read in relation to public narratives of austerity, because it draws attention to an individual's ability to control the excessive consumption inherent in capitalism.

Many participants expressed a distaste for excessive consumerism. Charlie's account below invokes his propensity for strategic consumption through juxtaposing getting a bargain at a farmer's market with 'Buy One Get One Free' (BOGOF) supermarket offers:

Charlie:     We were at a farmer's market, em a Christmas farmer's market and there was a guy selling game there. We got three tur… three pheasants for a tenner. I thought 'well I know I can freeze two of them and eat one of them' so that was like yeah. That's was kind of a bit of a 'oo there's a bargain. We'll have that rather than just buying one', cause we knew we could use it. So maybe that kind of thing, but em I wouldn't… you know the BOGOF and stuff like that doesn't kind of… you know unless it was something I was going to buy anyway. So if I'm going to get a Lurpak Spreadable say, and it was on buy one get one free, yeah well why not, cause I'm going to use it. So… but I wouldn't buy something else just because it's cheap, yeah (laughs).
(Charlie, 45-54, architect)

Like other participants, since Charlie has economic capital and storage space, he is able to stock up and take advantage of bulk buying. However, this is an example of how participants are able to reproduce their economic privilege since they have the economic means to make these types of future-investing purchasing decisions. They are able to capitalise on and mobilise their resources in order to participate in the practice of bulk buying. But in positioning buying 'three pheasants for a tenner' alongside 'BOGOF' and buying 'something else just because it's cheap', Charlie seems to attach cultural value to the strategic element of his consumption choices and his critical reflexivity to see past the marketing messages of BOGOF.

Many participants frequent various shops in order to get what they identify as the best foods at the best cost. Aldi and Lidl were mentioned by many participants as places they shop, or as an acknowledgement of the growing trend for shopping for *certain* goods at these places.

This is in line with media reports regarding the growth in popularity of discount supermarkets with affluent shoppers (for example, Shubber 2015), who are 'luring more and more middle-class shoppers with cheap but award-winning wines, dry-aged steak and cut-price lobsters' (Armstrong 2016). Given the media framing of these stories, I would like to argue that shopping practices which involve dipping into budget spaces, such as Aldi, are a means of performing distinction. Like taking advantage of *certain* bargains, it communicates strategic management of economic capital to make clever choices about what kinds of foods ought to be brought into the household. In the quote below Thomas directly aligns Aldi and Lidl with Waitrose:

Thomas:     But the fact of the matter is that there are some… a lot of things we eat you can't always get at the German discount stores…. some marvellous pâtés that Waitrose do which we like, we just stay with those. So there's that kind of luxury item split. Um and I think er Florence would say if she goes to do a big shop at Lidl she'll come out with about 60 per cent of what she rather wanted. So yes they're great, they're cheap, er and they're fast, but I guess for… we sort of need to go somewhere different to keep up items er… Florence uses a lot of herbs, fresh herbs for example, and they aren't always easy to get at Aldi and Lidl so you can go… er you come back from town from Waitrose with a stack of packaged herbs for example. It's er… it's a bit pick and mix in that respect.
(Thomas, 65+, retired consultant)

Although Thomas 'needs' to top up his shop with Waitrose goods, economic necessity plays no role in his decisions to shop at Lidl. Moreover, his comment that 'it's a bit pick and mix' denotes his freedom to navigate between shops, which can be found at the polar opposite ends of the economic spectrum, to select appropriate foodstuffs, and to discern 'the luxury item split'. What is notable is that Thomas, like many participants, articulates a complex process of combining foodstuffs from different places. At face value, practices of oscillating between budget spaces and more expensive spaces span the conventional divides of the taste hierarchy identified by Bourdieu (2010[1984]). Classed distinction is still apparent however, since Thomas has the economic freedom to roam between spaces to display cultural competence over a variety of cultural forms and attach value to the selective food choices he makes in the budget supermarkets.

Like discussions about identity, there appears to be a recurrent theme that the process of food selection in the marketplace is via individualistic and strategic decision-making, and by implication differentiation from being part of a 'mass'. Literature which focuses on local or alternative consumption practices has explored the ways in which notions of authenticity are

embedded in the exchange between production and consumption (Spracklen 2011; Weiss 2012; Zukin 2008). Furthermore, as I have suggested in Chapter Two, authenticity is marked as such in its distance from homogeneity (Spracklen 2011). Cappellini et al draw our attention to the 'wider (largely middle class) negative discourses of supermarkets as multinationals providing standardised foods for the mass market' (2016: 1100). An interesting line of enquiry to pursue then, is how ideas of authenticity play out within and between the homogeneity of supermarkets.

Constructing identities through practices which engage with the idea of autonomous critical selection, enables the presentation of the self as authentic as oppose to being influenced by mass-marketing messages. For instance, Des said:

Des:        Oh we've always liked going to Lidl, we think it's a bit like going on holiday, but now everybody's cottoned on to it.
(Des, 55-64, retired medical professional)

Des' quote is telling because he acknowledges the trend for shopping at Lidl, but by pointing out 'we've always liked going to Lidl', he positions himself as untouched by the trend. In the same way that Charlie positions himself as unaffected by consumerist marketing messages such as BOGOF, his quote implies a critical judgement around consumer trends. His analogy of going to Lidl with 'going on holiday' before 'everybody's cottoned on to it', can be read as an appeal to authenticity through the provision of himself as an 'intrepid explorer' (Cairns et al 2010: 602), who discovers an exotic other, in the form of the budget supermarket space. This suggests that the food he finds there is valuable, not because 'everybody's cottoned on to it', but because it is a product of his adventurousness and willingness to explore across boundaries and seek out new tastes. Lidl has always been popular with shoppers who are low on economic capital. Hence the suggestion that 'everybody' has just started going there, appears to only refer to other middle-class people, which has the effect of normatively positioning middle-class practices. But it is *because* of their freedom to roam across diverse shopping terrains that shoppers who are rich in capital are able to mobilise their 'pick and mix' consumption choices to demonstrate consumer competence by legitimising *certain* products in the budget shops. Distinction appears to operate around shopping skill and innovation to select the right products for the middle-class household. Moreover, this strategic attitude towards investing in good food through identifying with being critical and complex consumers has the effect of locating the self as distant from the mass. It is through the individualisation of the experience of selecting particular foods from particular places

that the performance of authentic subjectivity can be enacted. Choice and agency are central to ideas about authenticity through their play of difference to passivity. Yet, across the sample participants deployed shared classed knowledge about quality in justifying these practices. Moreover, while careful selection facilitates the performance of 'decommodified authenticity' (Woodward 2006: 275), choices are made within spaces 'that are defined and bounded by hegemonic interests of commerce' (Spracklen et al 2013: 306). As I will now go on to show, this extends to independent marketplaces, too.

### 5.3.2 *Diverse Shopping Spaces*

I have so far suggested that economic principles are not the sole operators driving participant consumption preferences. As well as performing distinction through economic skill and innovation to select foods, how participants discern places of consumption can shed light on the classed influences operating behind the ways in which they navigate across the wealth of options offered in the marketplace. Many participants either frequented, or expressed a preference for, 'local' and independent stores. These stores appear to offer an opportunity to avoid mainstream consumerism and therefore, the investment of authenticity into shopping practices. Helen's story below about her trips to the West End Store is in response to my commenting on the bulk bags of spices and nuts in her food cupboards:

Helen:      Whenever we do go over there we would always buy… you know they have the best spinach in Newcastle and you know other nice vegetables, beautiful coriander and stuff like that… …

KG:          Yeah um what is it about the store that you like?

Helen:      Er I guess it's the fact that it's owned by… I mean he's a bit of grumpy old man, but the old guy who's been there forever, um is always there behind the counter, behind the till rather. Um people seem to… er I just… I like the diversity of the customers there, er it's kind of… kind of friendly, um beautiful fresh produce, I just think it's a nice… a nice er… a nice sort of… a nice thing to have so I like to support it. I'm a rather foolishly loyal customer (laughs). (Helen, 55-64, arts professional)

Helen says, the store is 'a nice thing to have so I like to support it. I'm a rather foolishly loyal customer'. I am not disputing that individuals exercise their social and environmental responsibility through conscientious consumption (Johnston and Bauman 2010: 22) and make sustainable food choices for altruistic reasons (Brown, Dury and Holdsworth 2009: 184). There is however a tone to narratives about alternative modes of consumption that seem to stretch beyond merely exercising social responsibility. Like Charlie's recollection about the farmer's market above, there is an implicit suggestion that frequenting

independent stores is also about individuality and differentiation from the homogeneity of mass consumption. Helen's description of this particular setting appears to act as a means to invest authenticity in her personal connection with the process of consumption: the 'grumpy old man' has been serving her 'the best spinach in Newcastle' and 'beautiful coriander' 'forever'. Putting a face to the food that she buys appears to provide her with a sense of intimacy, longevity and tradition. As such, the food that she buys from this setting is beautiful *because* of her first-hand connection with the diversity and the imagined authenticity therein. Furthermore, that she is loyal to the grumpy old man appears to suggest that this experience is worthy of perseverance. In other words, there is work involved in differentiating the self from a block of consumers who passively buy mass-produced foodstuffs.

Other participants talked about shopping in Newcastle's city centre Grainger Market. Almost 200 years old, the market hall was originally divided into two sections, housing a butcher's and greengrocer's market (Grainger Market, no date). Since then, the market has changed considerably. Although the market is still well-known for its affordable prices, alongside the veg displays and animal carcasses hanging outside of butchers, there are now 'street food' outlets, delicatessens, vintage clothes shops, and so on. I now turn to focus on Ingrid as an example of how authenticity and distaste of the mass plays out in one participant's narrative. She described in detail the kinds of foods she purchased from the Grainger Market:

Ingrid:     I think when we first started doing it we were a bit suspect about how much we could get but actually, you know, the veg and stuff is so cheap and fruit, especially this time of year. It's a bargain… …we tend to get quite a bit and now they have spread out, it used to be much more bog standard basics but they've got a lot more deli stuff in there now so it's quite good. Like there's Mmm and Glug, the nice deli place, so they help if you need random stuff, cause we both like cooking so we have… we do tend to buy random things, sort of posh bits and pieces from there as well. But I think we tend to shop in the Grainger Market because it is so cheap… …they've got a lot better I think. There's a lot more understanding of the… I think they've understood more of like what the market is and the Grainger market has got a bit more upmarket in what they should be offering. So, it's got a much better mix now.
(Ingrid, 25-34, graphic designer)

Like Helen, Ingrid notes the first-hand personal connections involved in shopping in the Grainger market and draws on ideas of intimacy in her experience of consumption. She recalls her original scepticism that the Grainger Market would not be able to cater for her

food preferences, but through the actual experience of going, she discovers that it has evolved from only providing 'bog standard basics'. Moreover, these gentrification processes are for the better, she suggests. The stall holders have 'got a lot better' because they understand now that the Grainger Market 'has got a bit more upmarket in what they should be offering', which is 'posh bits and pieces' alongside cheap fresh produce. The idea that the Grainger Market has improved by catering for middle-class tastes has the effect of concealing classed inequalities (Jackson and Benson 2014; Potter and Westall 2013). This, in turn, implicitly devalues working-class tastes (Paton 2010: 147). Now, the long-standing working-class stall holders sell bunches of coriander alongside their cauliflowers. However, it is the middle-class deli owners selling 'middle-class condiments' (Des, Chapter Four), such as wild garlic pesto, at extortionate prices (despite taking advantage of cheap retail space) who are hailed as being responsible for urban renewal through the attraction of middle-class customers. And while a new batch of market-goers savour 'posh bits and pieces' alongside an imagined nostalgic connection with working-class local history, this 'culinary gentrification' (Potter and Westall 2013: 163) implicitly results in older market-goers being increasingly priced (economically and culturally) out of the market.

The fine distinctions made around shopping in particular places suggests that these participants attach value to a food's point of purchase. This was often done through emphasising a personal involvement in the relationship between exchange and value, in relation to the mass market. However, staying with Ingrid for a moment, I want to highlight some of the tensions inherent in people's search for local and intimate market exchanges. These tensions operate around a commitment to shopping local and the resistance of aspects of local which fail to offer a meaningful connection with the purchase of food. For instance, Ingrid then went on to say that the working-class urban area which is local to her cannot provide her with 'good' food:

Ingrid:      we try to use the local shops cause that's again what we're trying to do, but the local shops around here are pretty poor.

While she recognises the inconsistency in her commitment, Ingrid appears prepared to sacrifice her commitment to shopping local, if the local independent store does not meet her expectations of good food. Instead, she went on to explain that she travels to the other side of town to independent delicatessens and ethnic stores, which offer the experience of making complex and exotic selections.

To recap, discussions around modes of sourcing food for the household appear to centre on demonstrating capacity through personal involvement in the consumption process. It seems conceivable to argue, then, that these participants make discerning judgements about what to buy, and where, as a means to limit the possibilities offered by excessive consumerism. This has the effect of producing individual displays of competence around good food. As such, investing in the consumption process is a means to imbue the food with subjective understandings of value and a means to offer up an authentic self, which is untarnished by consumerist values. For instance, I then asked Ingrid about her understanding of cultural taste, she gave me the following reply:

Ingrid:     You know good taste is about knowing where your food comes from and *putting some effort* into where your food comes from, I suppose is what I classify as good taste. Not necessarily just buying the poshest thing off the shelf, you know, it's probably about actually knowing… *making some effort* to find your food I suppose and supporting local… yeah supporting local farmers and things like that is good taste for me because it's like, it may not be the prettiest thing in the world but it's… it's got some history behind it or some background and I think that shows a bit more… good taste is like *making the effort* to find local stuff.
(italics mine)

Conversely she defined bad taste as:

Ingrid:     Bad taste for me would just be taking the easier option out and just, yeah buying a really cheap lasagne and not knowing where it sort of comes from, or not putting the effort into actually trying to make something.

The contrast set out is between 'making the effort' to know and find your food against not making the effort to be reflexive about the processes involved in consumption. Moreover, although the other who 'doesn't make the effort' to know or try to cook from scratch, is not fully unpacked, Ingrid's mention of 'a really cheap lasagne' implies she is referring to those who are low on economic capital. And, while the suggestion that it is 'not necessarily just buying the poshest thing off the shelf' has the effect of moving the narrative away from class, the emphasis on 'knowing' is highly classed. It presupposes a classed competence and commitment to being able to decipher the symbolic codes that can be found in foods which 'may not be the prettiest thing in the world', as compared to the homogenised mass-produced foods offered from the supermarket shelves.

Sometimes explicit, sometimes not, the idea of 'making an effort' runs through so many of my participants' reflections on food practices, as I will now go on to explore. I have so far suggested that for these participants, processes of investment into 'good' food extend

beyond the household into the market to control and ensure that valued food crosses the threshold into the domestic space. Keeping the idea of 'making an effort' in mind, I will now turn the analysis towards the conflict between processed and homemade foods. This is because the idea of 'making an effort' has ramifications for the participants of the study who experience 'harriedness' (Southerton 2003) in the context of feeding the household.

## 5.4 The Processed/Homemade Conflict

The negative positioning of processed food emerges as a comparison against which 'good' homemade food is valued. While expressions of taste operate as distinction, expressions of *distaste* for my participants appear to be an equally, if not more, important means of distinguishing themselves. It was certainly not unusual to hear participants actively distance themselves from convenience foods, suggesting that people who feed themselves and their families convenience foods are a powerful image from which participants work to detach themselves. During the food cupboard tours participants often pointed out a lack of convenience food, as the two excerpts below demonstrate:

KG:    Can I take just a picture of the whole cupboard? Right ok, so just briefly talk me through it.

Mary:   All my baking stuff I tend to keep at the top for some reason. Then I guess condiments and cereals are probably at the bottom and then the middle bit is herbs and tins of tomatoes and beans and packets of things really. Yeah, that's probably about it. There's not much else that I buy to be honest, like I don't buy a lot of ready meals. So it's more ingredients like chopped tomatoes and beans, rice, pasta that kind of thing, rather than anything readymade. Like… like even soup, I don't really buy soup. I'd probably… if I fancied soup I'd probably try and make it.

(Mary, 35-44, accountant)



*Figure 5:5  Researcher photo of Mary's food cupboard*

Juliette:    So we've got jams and preserves. We've got chutneys and mustards here as well. Um and we always have a good stock of er rice, pasta (laughs), um noodles, couscous, um polenta, that kind of stuff. Um cause we usually have carbs in one form or another um with… with our meals and er… and tinned food. We haven't got a lot of um… of readymade food if you like. We've got er frozen pizza because that's quite handy for a… for a quick dinner, but mostly we tend to cook from scratch because er well cause I don't… I don't like the amount of salt and sugar and stuff that they put allegedly to make it taste authentic (laughs). Um but we've got, yeah tinned vegetables and tinned fish and pulses and things like that.

(Juliette, tutor, 35-44)



*Figure 5:6     Researcher photo of Juliette's food cupboard*

Within these food cupboard descriptions, both Mary and Juliette note the absence of readymade food, which appears to be a reference point for enacting distinction around the 'good' food. At the mention of tinned food, it is almost as if Juliette needs to clarify that she

has tinned ingredients, not tinned meals. The tins act as a prompt for her to remind me of her distaste for readymade food and that she tends to cook from scratch. As well as offering few opportunities for conversion, readymade foods offer instant gratification. To use the words of Bourdieu, readymade represents 'the basely material vulgarity of those who indulge in the immediate satisfactions of food and drink' (2010 [1984]: 195). The presence of convenience food devalues the symbolic representation of the home because it removes the possibility of building a household identity of 'making an effort' to be personally involved in producing the household's food.

Meah and Jackson found that all the households in their study used some form of convenience foods (2017: 2078). Similarly, there were processed convenience foods in *all* households in my research. To some extent, this contests the participants' ideological rejection of these foods. It suggests a disconnection between their construction of a household identity based on a homemade ethos and the reality of their everyday practices. This is evidence of the complexity and situational meaning of 'processed'. While there is negative value attached to processed foods, its presence in kitchens can be used to understand how participants negotiate everyday conflicts which impinge on their ability to do homemade. This is because, within the extremes of a polarised dichotomy, homemade and processed foods interconnect in complex ways, and as such, the real action takes place in between. Furthermore, not all processed foods were rejected, indicating how participants appropriate and invest in food as commodity to render it fit for household purpose. Again invoking Bourdieu, participants appear to value foods understood as having the potential for the display of 'aesthetic disposition' (2010 [1984]: xxvi). In contrast, processed foods which offer no means of investment carry no value because the value lies in a food's potential for the performance of individualised investment. In our first interview, I asked Thomas which foods he never buys:

Thomas:     We don't buy a lot of dairy, um we very rarely buy a processed meal… very occasionally. I mean I can't remember the last time we had a frozen pizza or another other type of prepared meal, sort of… we don't buy packaged meals. Um we buy pulses, we buy oils, um we avoid can… no we have a fair bit of canned food in, you'll see in the cupboards there. We have canned beans of various kinds and canned tomatoes and sort of stocks and stuff like that. So we do buy packaged sauces, er typically on stir fries or… we tend to stick to certain brands when we do that. Er we don't buy sort of the… a lot of sort of the ethnic stuff, like the Tex Mex stuff or the spiced-up stuff. So we tend to add our own spices, and do it that way. Um we don't buy… we don't buy many biscuits. Er we like to have one occasionally but we have… there's some

in now but we don't always have them in the house. We don't buy… ah, we do buy crisps, but they're you know, the expensive kind (laughs). Hand-cut, you know the kind. So, we don't have great packets and bags of crisps lying around the place.

Starting from his comment that does not buy processed meals, Thomas follows by telling me that instead he and his partner buy pulses and oils as if to provide a direct contrast with the effort required in using pulses as oppose to eating pre-prepared meals. Like Juliette, Thomas' specificity that he had tinned *ingredients* suggests an awareness that I could make false assumptions about what kinds of tins they were. He then goes on to say that they do in fact buy *certain* packaged sauces, but not the 'spiced up stuff', since they add their own spices. This suggests that he is able to justify his buying of packaged sauces, because the household is still able to maintain a connection with the sauce by adding their own touch in the form of spices. His conclusion that they buy 'hand-cut' crisps adds value to the crisps since being hand-cut denotes some form of personal touch, but his accompanied laughter suggests he recognises the irony of being hand-cut in the process of commodification. Finally, that the crisps are not 'lying around the place', conjures up an image of laziness and vulgarity associated with processed foods; an image he firmly positions himself against.

During the food cupboard tours, when processed foods were evident, participants provided justifications for the ones which required little or no work. Take Ed for example:

Ed:　　　　Well again, fish products, a reserve tin of soup, ham and pea soup, fish… fish products, Melva, atun, that's… er again tuna. Spanish tinned mackerel, caballa. Um some olives, but I'm… I'm averse to olives now... …spices, baked beans, tinned tomatoes, baked beans, usually for when the grandchildren come. I can always give them that. Tinned anchovies and then seasonings for my oriental stuff, coconut milk, noodles, pre-done rice cause it's… you know I prefer to do it but it's… it's the quantities if you're on your own type of thing if you make… I think that's probably just um… the difficulties… it's portion sizes and stuff like that.
(Ed, 65+, retired social worker)

*Figure 5:7        Researcher photo of Ed's tinned fish*

Ed identifies the tinned soup as a reserve, the tinned beans are for his grandchildren, and his rice is pre-done because of portion sizing. However, he provides no elaboration or justification for the tinned, processed fish, which he names in Spanish terms. Like Juliette and Mary's distance from readymade foods above, the tinned soup, baked beans, and pre-done rice require little labour and carry little opportunity for symbolic and material investment. As such, they have little exchange-value and are insufficient vehicles for the performance of taste. In contrast, Ed's tinned fish can be positioned as acceptable since it does not remove potential for doing homemade.

Ready meals, imagined or present, emerged as a powerful image in this research. I would like to argue that this is because they are the epitome of the corrosion of real (homemade) food. Being the product of mass production, ready meals require no individual touch. They offer no potential for investment, and therefore, no opportunities for conversion into an object of symbolic value in the home. They carry implications of passive, as opposed to active and reflexive, consumption. Given the overall distaste for pre-prepared foods, when participants acknowledged that they ate pre-prepared meals, they were clearly acknowledged as not requiring any effort. For instance, Gregg (35-44, project manager) noted that occasionally as a treat or because it is quick and easy, he might 'sling' a pizza in

the oven. Likewise, Sara (25-34, project coordinator) admitted that if it were a 'dire emergency' she might 'throw a frozen pizza' in the oven. Through emphasising that pre-prepared foods are out of the ordinary, and using words like 'sling' and 'throw', Sara and Gregg communicated the lack of care, time, and effort required in cooking a pre-packaged pizza, thus keeping its devalued status intact.

Elsewhere, prepared foods emerged as objects around which participants could perform distinction through offering a series of justifications. Two participants mentioned that on occasion they would purchase a Charlie Bigham ready meal. Stocked in Waitrose, Charlie Bigham meals are expensive and marketed as being handmade using fresh ingredients in a small commercial kitchen (as opposed to a factory) (Burn-Callander 2015). Ed noted that while he would never buy a 'Tesco Value lasagne' he might buy a 'premium' ready meal, such as Charlie Bigham, but that he would enhance it nevertheless:

Ed:            Well if it was a curry or whatever, I would slice up some fresh ginger… um I
               haven't got a pestle and mortar here, but I would kind of grind up some
               coriander seeds or… and cumin seeds and you know put those in as well to
               kind of (pause) revitalise it.

In acknowledging his consumption of ready meals, Ed offers two claims which enable him to perform distinction. First, he juxtaposes a Value lasagne with a Charlie Bigham meal, displaying his reflexive cultural knowledge around his choice of ready meal. Second, although he has no pestle and mortar, he imagines himself grinding spices to 'revitalise' the meal and paints a picture of himself adding his own creative and personal touch to maintain his meal provisioning standards. Even though Ed is eating a premade meal, he still offers a narrative about making an effort (to enhance the meal) and being a critical consumer, which can go some way towards dispelling any associations of laziness attached the ready meal.

Pre-prepared foods require little effort aside from being 'thrown' into the oven or microwave. Homemade food is distinguishable from homogenised market-made food because it is invested with personal work conducted in the intimacy of the domestic sphere (Moisio et al 2004). I have thus far suggested that the justifications evoked by my participants about the presence of pre-prepared foods in the kitchen denote a reflexive awareness of the importance of making material and symbolic investments into the food they provide for their households. I now look towards the most harried of the sample in order to better understand the ways in which participants negotiate investing in food amidst conflicting household responsibilities.

### 5.4.1 *Care and Convenience: Gender and Time*

Convenience foods bypass modes of investment. For my participants, it appears that convenience foods cannot be used to maintain 'healthy family foodways' which require work, time, and commitment to a particular set of cultural values (Parsons 2014: 385). The individual process of investing meaning into food for the household must be understood in relation to a complex web of time pressures. In view of this, it seems to make sense to focus on the female participants, many of whom juggled feeding the household with a host of other commitments. These participants echo previous research findings that women take more responsibility for domestic feeding (for example, Brannen et al 2013; DeVault 1991; Sullivan 1997), and consequently that working women are disproportionately affected by time shortage (Hsu 2015). This gendered distribution of domestic labour is particularly evident in households where there are children. This is unsurprising given the socio-cultural association of motherhood with feeding the family (Cairns et al 2013) and the idea of care-giving through food (Devault 1991). Before concentrating on the gendered work done in the kitchen to invest in food, I would first like to revisit participant preferences to frequent diverse shopping spaces. Many of the working women in the sample noted that shopping is necessary and time-constrained work, a practice which does not encompass the perusing of multiple shopping spaces as articulated by some of the participants above. Layla's comment below is fairly representative of this group of participants:

KG:             Do you enjoy food shopping?
Layla:        Not really.
KG:             No. What is it about it you don't like?
Layla:        (laughs) Well it feels like a chore now cause, you know, I usually have the kids with me or something (laughs). Em it feels like it's something I have to do rather… you know I would love to do the kind of food shopping where you potter round little shops and the market (laughs) and pick up things and smell them. Um but em, it's more something that I have to do. I don't, you know, I don't browse or anything cause I've got my list and I just buy those things. (Layla, 35-44, teacher)

Interestingly, Layla acknowledges and recognises visiting smaller shops and the market as a preferred practice. However, she locates shopping as mundane work and 'something I have to do'. While many of the retired shoppers or younger shoppers talk pleasurably about 'the kind of food shopping where you potter round little shops and the market', Layla appears to experience shopping as a necessary 'chore'. Illustrating this gendered dynamic further is Harriet, who works full-time and is responsible for the household shopping. She had timed her weekly shop in an effort to try and squeeze it in around other activities. I asked her why:

Harriet:     I have to kind of think, well when am I going to do the shopping? Or when am I going to have the time to do the shopping? How am I going to fit it in? And every week I have this – will I be doing it at eight o'clock on Friday? Will I be doing it… getting up very early on Saturday?
(Harriet, 55-64, teacher)

Like many female participants responsible for feeding the household, both Harriet and Layla shop according to a highly-organised weekly meal plan. Keeping the idea of domestication as an analytical frame denotes the gendered ways in which feeding work extends beyond the point of food preparation to encompass a series of networks and points of work entailed in the assemblage of domestic food. From sourcing the food through to the handmade processes of embedding value in domestic food, these female participants are synchronising multiple 'time-space paths' (Brannen et al 2013) of themselves, other household members, their paid employment, and their domestic responsibilities.

Returning to the kitchen, I focus now on the microwave to examine these dynamics further. Bar one, all participants had a microwave, and regardless of gender respondents were quick to tell me that they do not use it for cooking. As Philip noted: 'certainly not for cooking a meal completely or anything like that' (55-64, academic). Instead it was used to, for example, steam vegetables, warm milk for coffee, and make porridge. Microwaves enable the effective management of some time pressures. Again, looking towards the working women as the most time-poor of the sample seems to be a good way of exploring this distancing to an object which facilitates convenience and the compression of time pressures. Mary's narrative is in response to the question, 'what do you use your microwave for?':

Mary:     Warming porridge up, mostly. Em, and occasionally reheating leftovers. Occasionally defrosting something. I went for a long time without a microwave, I've only probably had one the last… mm… three or four, five maybe years. Yeah not… like when he [her son] was a baby I know we didn't have one, cause we had the electric steriliser. I know like a couple of people said to me, you'll not be able to manage without a microwave and I was determined to, so I did (laughs) for like two or three years and then I thought 'oh I might as well just get one for defrosting stuff'.

Mary presents a narrative which explains the presence of the microwave as something 'she might as well have' for 'occasional' use. She is clear that she is not the type of person who needs a microwave, nor indeed uses it on a regular basis. Indeed, the ways in which Mary actively distances from her microwave could be read as similar to her disavowal of readymade foods in her description of her food cupboard above. Sara's narrative below is remarkably similar:

Sara:    To be honest probably only use that [the microwave] for cooking peas and broccoli. Um and that's just because you can kind of steam them. Em so I tend to just put them in a bowl with a bit of water and some cling on the top and it almost just steams it. Um but I don't… I don't really use the microwave other than that. Other than maybe to reheat the odd leftover if it's alright in the microwave. I tend to either do it on the hob or put it in the oven, and reheat it sort of more slowly. Um but yeah it's also… I mean when I was in London, our flat didn't have a microwave um and it was… I managed completely fine.



*Figure 5:8      Researcher photo of Sara's microwave with pestle and mortar on top*

Like Mary, Sara appears to insist that she can manage fine without the microwave, and that she rarely uses it. The emphasis on time in her quote is interesting because she suggests that while green vegetables can be 'almost just' steamed, leftovers are better reheated slowly in the oven or on the hob. This is in stark contrast to the lack of precision evoked in her comment earlier about a frozen pizza which she might 'throw' in the oven. Moreover, I photographed the microwave as the object of discussion, because on top of the device is a pestle and mortar. This is probably merely a convenient place for its storage, however it provides an interesting juxtaposition. This image can be interpreted as a visual

representation of the homemade/convenience antonym. The display of the pestle and mortar on top of the microwave almost mitigates the presence of the microwave as a convenience item because it offers a contrasting depiction of the household as one which engages in time-intensive cooking from scratch.

Microwaves, like ready meals, carry imagined distasteful connotations of laziness and cutting corners. Through their association with convenience they emerged in this research in polar opposition to doing homemade. Following Shove and Southerton's (2000) findings, my participants voiced ambivalence towards the microwave, emphasising that they (occasionally) use it to support homemade (defrosting and reheating). In other words, using this technology is deemed acceptable for striking a compromise between doing homemade and being time compressed, but not as a complete replacement of the process of cooking. This illustrates how the participants responsible for feeding were committed to doing homemade because even when harried, the expectations of feeding the household 'proper' food appeared to take priority.

Yet, these participants appeared only too aware of the potential implications of making the wrong 'short cuts' (Meah and Watson 2013: 504). In the excerpt below, Carla details how she negotiates care and convenience to feed her family within time constraints:

Carla:     I suppose there're three things that I do that're not… I buy either pesto or some kind of tomato-y sauce that they're fine with pasta. But then I probably add… like if I buy a tomato-y sauce I probably cut up bits of ham into it and then I will cook some greens alongside it, so they'll have broccoli or green beans alongside it and… or pesto sauce, you know. Um quiche – I buy quiche and just heat it up and then they might have potato salad with that and some… you know I do a lot just cutting up carrots, so they've got raw carrots, some… they all eat um sugar snap peas, raw, so you know as long as I've got something that I know they're getting some kind of vegetable thing alongside what I've got, I might just buy quiche. And then um they all like the pies from Cherry Bakery up the road, so that's my kind of naughty, you know… they are… they cook them there, so they're not… it's not like you know ready… ready… totally salt-induced, (laughs) loaded ready meal, but they are ready-done, you know. I've not done anything and that's… that is a quick, if I really just can't be bothered or you know they're going out and they're all eating at different times. That's the other thing that sometimes is difficult when they've got activities at different times. So the pies are really good for that cause I can just heat them up when they're… but then again you know I still cook some green vegetables. So we had pies last night but I made broccoli for them to have and some salad so it was… I just try to do a bit of you know… (Carla, 45-54, artist)

Carla, who works full-time, is a single mother with four children ranging from seven to fourteen years old. Yet, it seems she has to continually guard against potential judgements and justify her occasional short cuts of using pre-prepared foods. She does this by placing emphasis on the fact that she still prioritises health and repeatedly tells me that even though she 'just heats up' the odd quiche or pie, she puts the work in by cutting up extra raw veg and cooking broccoli. With this in mind, it seems fair to assume that the pies from the local independent bakery are 'naughty', *because* 'I've not done anything', she says. And this is despite the reality of her juggling the extra-curricular activities of four children whilst working full-time. Moreover, Carla uses the processed foods to retain an element of homemade, such that their presence becomes diluted by other homemade components: they facilitate the negotiation of convenience to enable the provisioning of a meal as oppose to completely replace it. Carla very clearly positions herself on the spectrum of homemade to processed foods, in her distinction that the pies are not a 'totally salt-induced, (laughs) loaded ready meal'. Understood in the context of public narratives around the decline of cooking, increase in junk food and the prevalence of microwave meals, Carla's dialogue appears to revolve around respectability. This is by being able to improvise within time constraints to retain an element of cooking by adding vegetables so as to provide a quick and 'healthy' meal.

Here we see gender and class working together to reproduce and normalise a cultural rhetoric of women as the 'guardians of health (and morality) of the family' (Parsons 2014: 387). While some of the men in the sample cooked, in households with and without children women were in charge of the domestic management of food. However, there was a lack of reflexivity on behalf of the female participants about the unfairness of the time crunch on them as women. This is a powerful reminder of a form of symbolic violence which acts to legitimise the ways in which femininity and motherhood is read via food and feeding. Indeed, echoing Harman and Cappellini's research (2015), the way these participants discussed the tension between homemade and convenience food, class was alluded to far more than gender. This is because legitimate ideas of feeding the family are based on classed notions of being a good mother (ibid.). My participants were very clear about marking themselves apart from the type of person who feeds their families processed, readymade food. Despite the circulation of ideas of individualism, participants like Carla

appear to be on constant guard about 'slipping up' (Lawler 1999) in relation to the rigid cultural codes attached to being a good mother.

Regardless of how harried these women were, they expressed a commitment to both dedicating and synchronising time, and to maintaining classed social standards around good food. Through drawing attention to the fact that they are time starved, by not feeding their families readymade food, participants are able to make a kind of status claim about being busy and not cutting corners. This is via the ability to implement temporal strategies, such as using slow cookers and bulk cooking, within feelings of harriedness to maintain social standards of feeding the family 'proper' food. Understood in this light, it is possible to understand why some women expressed guilt when they were unable to navigate the convenience and care antonym (Warde 1997, 1999) to produce homemade foods within time constraints. As I noted at the start of this chapter, Maya prioritises cooking homemade on the weekend. Through the week she uses convenience foods as means to juggle her busy schedule with feeding the family. Her participant photos display a strong theme of convenience, for instance:



*Figure 5:9     Maya's photo of sweet and sour chicken*

Maya:    This is a sweet and sour chicken. Another easy kind of convenience thing I would do but I would cook the chicken. The chicken I've bought, chopped up and stir fried it with… I think I've used some stir-fry vegetables and made my own rice, but it's a shop-bought sauce. So it's a sort of combination of those things.

Like Carla, Maya's description of this weekday meal demonstrates how she has added an element of homemade into an 'easy kind of convenience' meal. She notes that despite using a 'shop-bought sauce', she has 'bought, chopped up and stir fried it [the chicken]' as well as making her own rice. She went on to suggest that prioritising convenience comes with sacrifices:

Maya:       As you can see what I'm trying to do in the week is use the ready meals, and convenience meals, as little as possible while recognising that you know I go… I couldn't possibly cope if I never used them… …

KG:         Yeah, yeah. So do you…? When you sort of… do you try not to use ready meals then?

Maya:       (Nods)

KG:         Why is that then?

Maya:       Er cause I… I worry that they're not as healthy an option really. Um, and they tend… (pause) (sighs) they're quite often high fat. They've quite often, you know, got various preservatives and other things in them. Um I don't feel they're as healthy.

I am not disputing that some ready meals may lack nutrition. However, read in the context of participant narratives around pre-prepared meals, it seems clear that distaste for ready meals also centres on the ways in which they undermine the symbolic and material work involved in producing homemade foods. Indeed, even though Maya relies on convenience 'as little as possible', the hesitancy in her admission that she tries not to use ready meals appears to suggest that she is aware of the moral shortcomings of feeding her family foods which she worries are unhealthy, or at least 'don't feel' as healthy. Taking Maya's framing of foods as feeling healthy, or not, provides a useful point of departure for the following chapter, which explores how the process of domesticating food from the marketplace to the household plate is centred on embodied notions of what constitutes 'good' food. While participants understand these corporeal 'skills' as innate, through the application of habitus it is possible to understand how these dispositions are generatively learnt.

## 5.5 Conclusion

Participants displayed an ability and preference to critically manoeuvre through the food terrain to position themselves and the food that they eat as having cultural value. Together, these themes highlight the intricate ways that food comes to be domesticated via an embodied knowingness. The boundaries of domestic eating and feeding extend far beyond the space of the kitchen to include a series of processes which are temporally, materially, and symbolically interconnected. In this chapter, I have tried to show how the domestication

of food is mediated through everyday practices which centre on its transformation according to the cultural values of the household. In positioning themselves as individual and critical consumers within the abundance provided by mass production, participants draw on and reproduce classed narratives about feeding the family 'good' foods. These processes are contested, entailing both appropriation and resistance, and the ways in which they are experienced speak about broader relations of gender and class. Factoring time and synchronicity into the analysis highlights the complexities involved in the process of domesticating food, namely regarding striking a balance within care and convenience. The harried participants demonstrated that as much as economic and cultural capital acts as a resource in eating and feeding, the resource of time is also required. Those experiencing time shortage might end up feeding their families foods which 'don't feel as healthy', resulting in the gendered and classed standards of care being contravened.

Participants' food narratives appeared to focus on individual preference, strategic decision-making, and self-surveillance. However, as we have seen, these particular research interactions established that these preferred practices and preferences are remarkably similar across the sample. This suggests that the sample shares a classed knowledge around food which operates around critical selection, valuing making an effort, and self-control. As I will go on to explore in the following chapter, this is realised via a playoff between both inherited and acquired capital. I will explore how household social relationships operate to inform food practices, where a combination of capital can be exchanged for 'good' food through a generative and strategically-informed habitus. In understanding the middle-class habitus as a culmination of both learnt practices and strategic accrual of specific forms of capital, the following chapter will explore knowledge about what constitutes good food. It will suggest that culinary capital is embodied intergenerationally to produce a perceived innate knowing and skill on one hand, and on the other, is acquired by through an orientation to being up-to-date.

# Chapter 6: Culinary Capital: Knowledge, Learnt Practice and Acquired Taste

## 6.1 Introduction

I now conclude the analysis to consider the ways orientations to food are continually learnt. Bourdieu argues that taste in food 'reveals the deepest dispositions of the habitus' (2010 [1984]: 188). Taking this as my starting point, this chapter aims to explore how taste is not merely a matter of individual preference and choice, but a reflexive accumulation of generative learning. To start the chapter, I take health and food expiry dates as a lens through which to consider how my participants' knowledge is situated in relation to public narratives. Paying attention to how the sample navigates and invests in health lays bare the subtle and nuanced ways in which food knowledge is understood as self-evident, yet anchored in public narratives which reproduce ideas of personal responsibility and agency.

I also pay attention to individual pasts: how participants drew on childhood memories as a reference point for their current food practices. In addition, I look to the present and future and how this particular sample mobilises learnt attitudes via familial social relationships alongside a disposition to gather and accrue capital as a means to do 'good' food. I consider how the parents in the sample construct narratives around the importance of instilling 'good' food habits in their children. This is in turn to understand how current feeding practices implicitly build middle-class future-consumers. In an era where childhood obesity is often moralised as a literal embodiment of bad parenting, the ways in which participants prioritise the production of 'healthy' children can be read as a reflection of their identity as parents. Indeed, the participants I worked with appeared to prioritise the strategic importance of setting up intergenerationally produced food-related dispositions. To elaborate on this further, I will look towards the household meal, since it figures in so many narratives as a particular occasion where participants seek to 'do' family. In Chapter Two I noted that there is an abundance of literature which frames the household meal as an occasion for the production, and display, of family. Hence, the ways participants negotiate everyday constraints to facilitate household meals can indicate how reproducing notions of good food via the exchange of food is valued. Moreover, important for this research is how the socially-constructed ideal of the family meal appears as a backdrop against which participants navigate between controlling, managing, and encouraging diverse tastes via the sociality of eating at the household level.

## 6.2 Embodied Knowledge

I start this final analysis chapter with a glance towards public messaging about health and food expiry dates. This is in order to consider further how participants locate themselves as having individual knowledge, whilst at the same time internalising wider discursive frameworks about the performance of valued identities through food. On one hand, respondents position themselves as critical consumers. On the other hand, they reproduce the individualised rationale of health messages into a felt sense of what are and are not 'healthy' food practices. Individual self-control and moderation through food and eating emerges as central to maintaining 'civilized' and 'healthy' bodies (Lupton 1996). It appears that participants are all too aware of the need to exercise self-discipline, as Linda's quote below illustrates:

Linda:      I think I'm not sort of extreme but I think I am quite aware. Em and I wouldn't eat too many cakes or sweets or… I kind of… it's a balance I think and I would have one cup of coffee a day, cause I enjoy it. I wouldn't want to not have coffee but I think too much coffee is not good.
(Linda, 45-54, retired head teacher)

The stories established by participants around health offered themselves as being committed to limiting indulgence through self-control. Participants used phrases like 'as long as it's occasional', 'every now and then' or 'one coffee a day' about perceived 'unhealthy' foods. Linda indicates a preference to achieve a balance and the process of achieving this balance is well-thought out: 'I am quite aware', she says. At the same time however, she distances herself from being the type of person who is 'extreme'. Being 'aware' suggests a knowledge of a particular set of social values, which through the application of Bourdieusian concepts, can be understood as classed. These participants are positioned economically and culturally to engage with socially-valued food discourses (Johnston and Szabo 2011; Johnston et al 2012), which are embodied and reproduced in their food practices. This is important because monitoring diets is not just a means to achieve bodily health, it is also a matter of personal identity (Warde 1997: 174). We make sense of and engage with health as embodied individuals.

Most participants noted that they pay no attention to government health messaging. But like Peter's quote below, participant performances of care for themselves and their families seem to both invoke and resist public narratives of health:

KG:          Yeah, what about government health advice? Do you pay attention to that?

Peter:     Not really. I think I probably cook and eat healthily enough so I don't tend to pay attention to it. I know there's… like the campaigns like trying to get people to eat five-a-day and that sort of stuff but I… even when I was like overweight, I was aware that I was overweight. I didn't particularly listen to those, because I kind of was almost aware that I was overweight and I knew that I needed to do something about it. But at that point in time, I wasn't willing to do something about it and since then I kind of go like I've educated myself well enough to know what I want… what I need to do to stay healthy and I don't particularly feel like those kind of campaigns will resonate very… like they just don't resonate really with me. They don't… they're not something that I particularly pay attention to. Even when I've seen like the recipes for them, the recipes that they would usually suggest, I've found quite boring to be honest. They're not adventurous enough for me to want to try, the recipes they suggest.
(Peter, 25-34, project officer)

Peter draws on his embodied knowledge to communicate that he does not pay attention to public health messaging, because he eats healthily anyway. Despite having previously been overweight, he says he was 'aware', he 'knew', but he was not 'willing to do something about it'. But here lies a contradiction because since being overweight, he suggests he has educated *himself* and now knows what he 'needs to do to stay healthy'. Ironically, he reproduces the individualised focus of health policy which postulates that health is the outcome of individual choice and rational action (James and Hockey 2007). Drawing on ideas of self-control, Peter, like many other participants, refers to the 'five-a-day' message, highlighting his awareness of the content of health policy. He acknowledges this message, as well as reproduces the individualistic ideology of public health narratives through self-monitoring. Yet, he understands public health messages as somewhat irrelevant to him personally. This is suggestive of the unconscious workings of the habitus, such that his orientation to 'know' is naturalised. It underlines the taken-for-granted ways in which knowledge about food is internalised and embodied, and culminated in practices of self-monitoring.

My questions about paying attention to best-before dates elicited a similar reaction. Most participants said that they employ their bodies to make judgements about a food's edibility, for instance smelling or tasting, rather than paying attention to expiry dates. Echoing respondents in Waitt and Phillips' research (2016), my participants draw on embodied visceral knowledge to evaluate a food's freshness. Yet while a critical interpretation of public messaging is recurrent across the sample, it is voiced in contested ways and always related to participant biographies. I draw on Elizabeth's narrative below to illustrate this further:

KG:            Ok, so how do you know when something needs to be thrown out?

Elizabeth:     Often it's smell or appearance. Well in fact that's my usual. Um, I don't… I mean ok I keep an eye on the expiry dates but a lot of them I'm quite happy to ignore. I don't ignore expiry dates of meat and fish. In fact, fish will let you know (laughs) but meat would too. Now that's something I remember from my childhood. After my mother died, my father remarried, and he was away, I had to cook a shoulder of lamb joint for the Sunday meal and we didn't have a fridge, we had a basement with a cage in it to stop the rats getting in our food and that's where the meat was and I got it out. And it was looking green-y and a bit smelly and I phoned an aunt and said 'help, what do I do? Can I use it?' So she suggested soaking it in vinegar which I did and then rinsed and patted it and then cooked it and it was perfect.

KG:            Really? Wow.

Elizabeth:     Absolutely perfect

KG:            So would you do that now with meat?

Elizabeth:     If it were just slightly, yep. I wouldn't let it get to that stage (laughs) and it was only a little bit… we had no money to get anymore and we couldn't throw it out so that's what we did. Soaked it in vinegar for some hours.
               (Elizabeth, 65+, retired teacher)

While looking through her fridge, my question about throwing away food prompts Elizabeth to recall this remarkable story about her childhood. What is particularly interesting is that Elizabeth is clear about marking public messaging, such as best-before dates, as irrelevant to her. Indeed, having been responsibilised for feeding since she was eleven years old, best-before dates do not feature in much of her food work history. As Turner (1995) notes, date marking was introduced in the early 1970s in Britain and this was for pre-packaged foods. Having cooked for seventy years, Elizabeth's experience about discerning a food's edibility is well and truly embedded in her habitus. But the point I want to make here is that Elizabeth makes sense of her well-practised capacity to manage the food in her kitchen by positioning herself in relation to best-before dates. Moreover, she notes that she is critically selective about which best-before dates she recognises and enacts respectability through saying she 'wouldn't let it [food] get to that stage' anyway. The effect of this is the production of an individualised performance of awareness and competency about the processes of doing food, but it is clearly socially-located. I have noted previously that Elizabeth's food tastes are at odds with the rest of the sample. Yet, her orientation to household management is shared with several other participants, such as her preference not to waste (though admittedly her frugality far outweighs the rest of the sample). The final point I want to make here is that in the absence of her mother, Elizabeth sought advice from her aunt. I now turn to look at the

processes of childhood learning to scrutinise the feminised learning around *practice* which emerged as important.

## 6.3  Childhood Learning and Food

Bourdieu argued that 'it is probably in tastes in food that one would find the strongest and most indelible mark of infant learning' (2010 [1984]): 71). Since the concept of habitus encompasses a person's trajectory across space and time, paying attention to a person's journey starting point, their childhood experiences, highlights the durable ways in which dispositions are subconsciously internalised and embodied to form a 'logic of practice' (Bourdieu 1990b). To recap, these dispositions are long-lasting and structured according to conditions of existence but they are not fixed. They can be continually restructured during encounters with the field which involve the acquisition of capital, but these modifications tend to concur with and reproduce the initial structures which shape the habitus. This provides a starting point from which to consider how food dispositions are related to the conditions of their production and can be adapted through the accrual of cultural capital.

All participant evaluations of past and present food practices contained unprompted references to their mothers. This is unsurprising since previous research has established that mothers act as a reference point for cooking practices (for example Bugge and Almås 2006; Cairns et al 2010; Curtis et al 2009). Our research interactions produced rich data about the food-related learning participants acquired through childhood. Particularly interesting is how on one hand, these learning processes were often understood as natural, and on the other, participants appeared to selectively disregard certain aspects of this learning while retaining and valuing other connections. The two separate quotes below are in response to my asking how the participants learnt to cook and are indicative of the ways in which early learning experiences shape attitudes to cooking:

Juliette:      Well seeing her [mum] cook every day was definitely very formative and… I don't know I just never questioned it. It was just um… yeah I think it just came gradually.
(Juliette, 35-44, tutor)

Ian:           Often when I was at home, my mum was cooking, I'd be talking to her in the kitchen so I… I'm sure there was a lot of observed learning. Um (pause), so yeah, I'm sure I… it came fairly naturally. Whether that was through the observed learning and then sort of filling in the blanks with YouTube and that sort of thing.

Juliette's and Ian's mention of the 'formative' and 'observed' nature of their early food experiences with their mother signposts to the way that knowledge can be learnt and understood. Both quotes highlight that food practices can operate through skills which have been observed and naturalised in early childhood. The hesitancy in both narratives suggests it is difficult for Juliette and Ian to articulate and recall how the practice of cooking was learnt. It is difficult because I am asking Ian and Juliette to reflect on taken-for-granted and naturalised learning processes which operate as something which is self-evident, suggesting that their knowing is a result of a logic of practice. This highlights how food dispositions are subconsciously embodied, 'internalised as second nature and so forgotten as history' (Bourdieu 1990b: 56).

But what came to light as the research unfolded is that these early food dispositions related not to food tastes, but to the household management of food. As Ingrid summed up: 'probably my mum is my main influence in terms of my *approach* to cooking definitely' (25-34, graphic designer; italics mine). Across the sample, these approaches ranged from keeping leftovers, to forward planning (for instance, freezing portions), through to storing food in particular cupboards. As Sara explained:

Sara:        Mum always had her sort of baking stuff all together, so that… it just seemed logical… well I just haven't known any different so I've done that.
                 (Sara, 25-34, project coordinator)

But while Sara notes that storing her food in a particular way 'just seemed logical' because she has never 'known any different', her food tastes are not so durable and long-lasting. As the data presented in Chapter Four shows, participants understand their tastes as broadening throughout their life trajectories. Most participant food cupboards were marked by an absence of foodstuffs which are reminiscent of their childhood. Sara goes on to say that her tastes in food have developed well beyond the 'basic' tastes of her mother and are now 'adventurous':

Sara:        She had very basic kind of tastes but very good sort of staples and things so I've sort of… I think I've definitely picked that up but probably a bit more, well quite a lot more adventurous I would have thought.

Hence, while participants retain elements of household management, their observed learning about cooking skill is supplemented with for example, 'filling in the blanks with YouTube and that sort of thing'. Accordingly, 'family food scripts' are reflected upon and

modified across generations (Curtis et al 2009: 84) through the acquisition of knowledge about taste. This adaptation of learnt practice takes place as a dialogue between the habitus and broader public narratives about the family and food. As the proceeding section will illustrate, this involves the acquisition, and reproduction, of a particular classed knowledge.

## 6.4 Accruing Capital: Cookbooks

Many participants talked about how they actively garner and accrue capital to expand their taste preferences well beyond the tastes of their childhood which they imply are limiting. Many participants spoke of an ongoing commitment to self-education about food. This was often around modes of 'diversity' and 'health'. I began this chapter by discussing how participants distance themselves from public food messaging. Relatedly, most participants talked about seeking out and considering specific forms of food knowledge, for instance through travel, blogs, newspaper food supplements, and cookbooks. Taking cookbooks as an example, I now turn my analysis to consider how participants fuse inherited food dispositions with accrued food knowledge. The majority of participants had extensive cookbook collections. This in itself suggests that keeping up-to-date with specific food knowledge is an active concern. Cookbooks were often on display in participant kitchens, suggesting that these forms of knowledge are a valued investment. Some participants put their own individual stamp on recipes and tweak them according to household tastes and preferences. Nevertheless, a repeated pattern across the sample is that using cookbooks is an acceptable means to provide the structure for the doing of diversity through homemade. The images below are examples from the samples' cookbook collections:
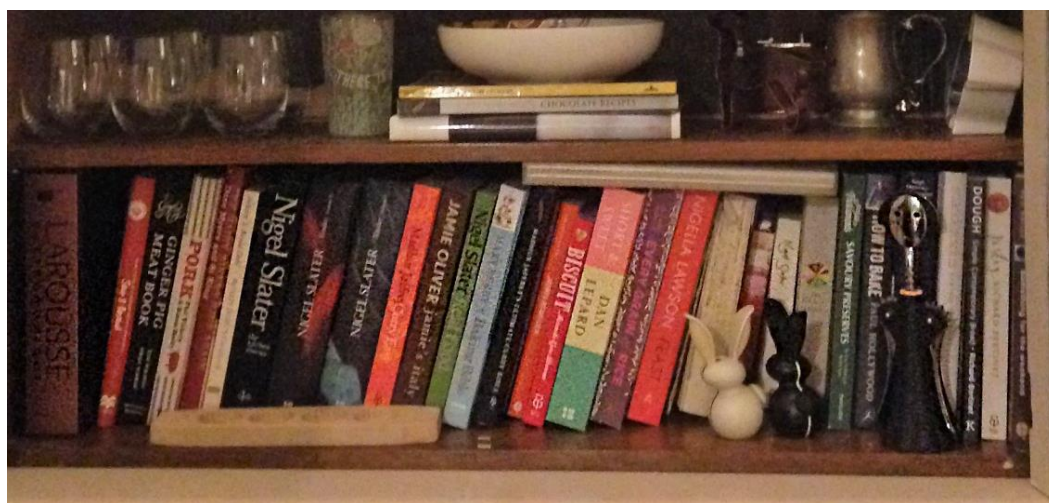


*Figure 6:1      Researcher photo of Ingrid's cookbooks*

*Figure 6:2      Researcher photo of Charlie's cookbooks*



*Figure 6:3      Researcher photo of Ed's cookbooks*

*Figure 6:4       Researcher photo of Gregg's cookbooks*



*Figure 6:5       Researcher photo of Fiona's cookbooks*



*Figure 6:6       Researcher photo of Layla's cookbooks*

Cookbooks offer an alternative to, or at least a creative interpretation of, inherited personal food traditions. They provide a means for exploring pluralism in the kitchen (Gallegos 2005) and enable the accumulation of selective knowledge of international cuisine and different diets, be it about ingredients, cooking, or consumption processes. But, as is evidenced by the imagery above, cookbook collections are remarkably similar across the sample. Of those who have substantial collections, authors like Nigel Slater, Jamie Oliver, Nigella Lawson, and Yotam Ottolenghi are popular. That recipe sources are so similar across the sample suggests that the performance of individual taste preferences around food remains within a limited and narrow range; taste appears to be a mere variation of a broader middle class-orientation towards specific foods and ways of eating. The celebritised nature of the cookbook collections is particularly interesting. The abundance of books by television chefs such as Nigella Lawson and Jamie Oliver denotes how the rise of the celebrity chef in popular culture is domesticated by participants. These books were often referred to by their first name, for instance, 'Jamie' or 'Nigella', highlighting the intimate ways these television chefs are integral to the kitchen and adopted into family life. While participants reproduce the idea that food choices are autonomous and authentic, the cookbooks on display suggest otherwise: that their food knowledge relies on commodified versions of taste.

The homogenous range of cookbooks extends across the sample, regardless of age, which supports my earlier arguments that food tastes are less about generation and more about the impact of the broader circulation of trends around taste. Gregg's quote describes how his cookbook collection has evolved:

KG:           Right so which ones did you first start using when you started to cook?
Gregg:      Um… ah that's a good question. I think probably the Jamie Oliver ones. So some of the earlier Jamie Oliver books are really good because they're quite straightforward. They're easy to follow. I like the methodology of the way it was sort of structured. Um and yeah, they were easy and it wasn't the type of book that had like difficult ingredients that were hard to find. So you could get most of the stuff in a supermarket or you know, locally or whatever. So it was fairly straight forward. Whereas some of those [cookbooks], they would ask for ingredients that maybe you wouldn't be able to get quite as often. (Gregg, 35-44, project manager)

Like many other participants, Gregg notes that he started cooking with basic books which are 'easy to follow' and moved on to more complex books containing difficult-to-source ingredients. This points to the ways in which skill develops over time through the practice of cooking, the deployment of which is informed by the accrual of culinary knowledge, which

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itself relates to the circulation of ideas about diversity. Interestingly, the cookbooks to which he refers as requiring hard-to-source ingredients comprise the main section of his and his partner's 'joint library'. These were either bought together or gifted from friends. This again confirms my earlier point, and that of Warde (1997), that ideas of good food are more about the specific life stage of settling down into family households, which in this case was directly following university. It also supports themes discussed in Chapter Five that the achievement of household 'good' food extends well beyond the kitchen to include external consumption processes. Echoing findings by Cappellini and Parsons (2012a), Gregg notes that his cookbook collection has evolved to focus on sourcing ingredients as opposed to simply cooking, suggesting that culinary skill is displayed through selecting the right products. Hence, within this coming-of-age story through cookbooks, the theme of sourcing and finding amidst diversity emerges as being valued. Moreover, given the sample's distancing from childhood tastes and penchant for diversity, it would seem that commodified culinary knowledge, for instance cookbooks, is a *necessary* source of cultural capital for the appreciation of and performance of good taste.

Alongside a range of contemporary cookbooks, other participants also showed me aging cookbooks. These often appear to act as emotional connections to childhood histories, as Des' narrative illustrates:
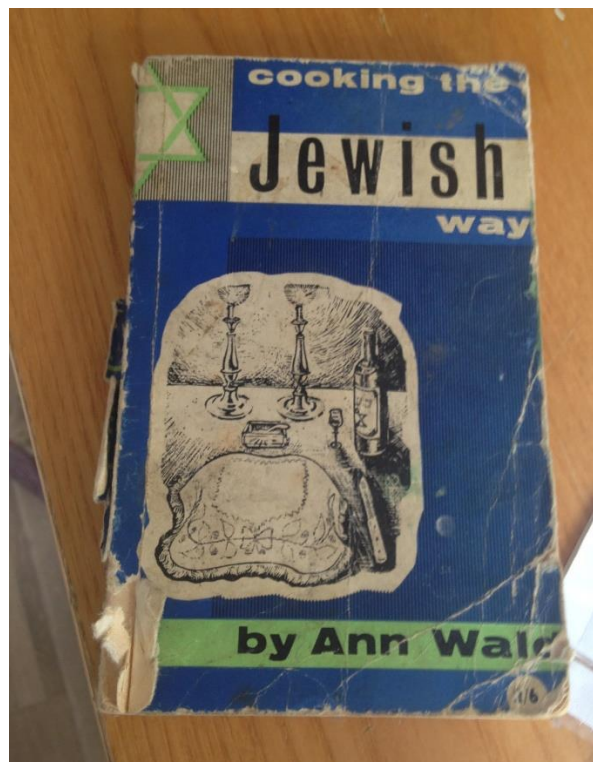


*Figure 6:7        Researcher photo of Des' cookbook entitled 'Cooking the Jewish Way'*

Des:            Some of them have sentimental value, like the Middle Eastern Cookbook.
                That is… I bought new (laughs). It is well used and I think I've had it for… for
                years… …I believe it's a classic but um it's rarely… rarely been printed… …the
                Cooking the Jewish Way we had that… whether that was my mother's… um
                I've actually got a couple of my mother's cookbooks but they're in like a box
                somewhere upstairs.
                (Des, 55-64, retired medical professional)

Des' comment suggests that cookbooks are not merely classed sources of culinary

knowledge. They have an emotional value too. This seems important to Des who talked

often about using food to retain his connections to his Jewish heritage and passing it down

to his children. In a sense, most participant cookbook collections display evidence of a hybrid

relationship to tradition (Sutton 2012). On one hand, their shelves (and kitchens) display

inherited books and markers of tradition; on the other, they are awash with items sourced

from the global marketplace. Many participant kitchens housed sentimental connections to

childhood, alongside contemporary knowledge sources. For instance, old recipe books

containing handwritten notes by mothers and grandmothers, can be found alongside

contemporary cookbooks. But while the homogenous range of cookbooks displayed by the

sample is suggestive of a class-specific knowledge source, so too is the shared commitment

to gathering and accumulating specific forms of knowledge. It could be argued that the

commitment to integrating certain types of knowledge reflective of familial relationships and

histories with newfound knowledge also denotes distinction. This is so because the

customized cookbook collections and personalised recipe sources are all socially approved

by commodified cooks, certain media outlets, or specific family relationships. Whether

intentional or not, they add richness and individuality to the collection of culinary knowledge

which is used to feed households. Moreover, here lies a conflict because while I identified in

Chapter Four that participants narrated biographies of leaving home and breaking away

from their childhood tastes, they do in fact take selective aspects of their childhood into

their adult households.

Culinary artefacts such as cookbooks enable participants to situate themselves and their

families through retaining memories. They also operate, in part, as a means of looking to the

future. Many of the participants with adult-aged children note that they had ensured that

their children left home with well-established food habits. For instance, Fiona's participant

photo of a pan of lentil soup (Figure 6:8) and accompanying explanation can be read as

representative of the way food can be a means to bridge past and future generations:

| | |
|---|---|
| Fiona: | This is just soup, lentil soup. That is a sort of... it's my mother's recipe actually (laughs). |
| KG: | Oh is it? |
| Fiona: | Yeah. And the kids um before they went to university that is the one thing they could make, lentil soup (laughs). It's really easy, but it's really nice. (Fiona, 65+, retired accountant) |



*Figure 6:8    Fiona's photo of her mother's lentil soup*

Des had said that when his daughter left home for university he made a recipe book and spice box for her. In the same passage, he also explained that he had recently bought some 'wurst' from Brick Lane:

| | |
|---|---|
| Des: | It's not very nice actually to be honest (laughs). But it's a sort of... it's a taste that's been there as long as I can remember, so I think it's about holding on to a culture that I had, but also creating a culture. So in some ways still we have a sort of culture... it's also about being able to pass on things. So both of the children, they have recipes. They say 'how do you make your curries?' and Tobias would say 'oh I've been making hummus and it's like your hummus now' and Rosie said um... I met her in London yesterday just for breakfast and she said 'well I tried your pinto baked beans' (laughs) and I think... that's nice that you've got that sense of connection. So it binds us, that's a... |
| KG: | Hmm-mm, so it's not just the eating together? |
| Des: | It's not just the eating together it's about the recipes and the... I think it's full of meaning, um... and it's a sense of feeling there's a tradition, some of which |

are old traditions and some of which are sort of new reinterpreted traditions and some are new ones.

Food can operate as a vehicle for temporal belonging, both as a means of binding participants to their personal heritage and as a means of anchoring their children into a family history. Read in relation to participant biographies, this raises a conflict since these participants appear very clear in marking their adult tastes apart from those of their childhood. For instance, Des no longer observes a kosher diet and Fiona noted earlier in our interview that the food of her childhood was 'plain and unseasoned'. Hence, they seem selective about which tastes to retain and pass on. Moreover, this is not always to do with the physical taste of food. Indeed, Des appreciates the taste of the 'wurst', not because of its physical properties, but because it represents a taste of his past, suggesting that he bought it because it offers him a sense of place anchored in familial bonds.  As Des proposes, tradition is reinvented in order to ensure its survival into the present and future. He notes that there is a 'sense of feeling there is a tradition', implying that tradition is not inherent in food but that food operates to act out tradition. Finally, there is a marked difference between Des' and Fiona's reflections around the transmission of food traditions to their children. Fiona prioritised ensuring that her children could feed themselves something 'easy' but 'nice', as compared to Des who displays pride in his children being driven to tap into his culinary knowledge and creativity. This observation provides a starting point from which to consider the importance of gender within the reflexive accumulation of food-related learning.

By paying attention to the ways in which participants engage with culinary knowledge it seems apparent that there is another layer operating behind practice which relates to gendered generational connections. These function around the management of food. For instance, many female participants have well-thumbed copies of Delia Smith's *Complete Illustrated Cookery Course* (Smith 1989), a British best-selling cookbook. Delia's popularity has been compared to Mrs Beeton, who was used by half of all British housewives in 1930s (Spencer 2002). She has her own entry in the Oxford English Dictionary (Nettleton and Uprichard 2011) and is well known for providing basic practical guidance about cooking traditional British cuisine as well as novel recipes. For the participants at the younger end of the age spectrum, copies of Delia were often taken from their mothers. For those at the older end of the spectrum, some are now on their second or third copy. The interesting thing about Delia is that narratives about her cookbooks concentrate on household management. For instance, her books were described as 'really reliable' (Juliette), 'my failsafe' (Maya), and

'sort of reference books' (Linda). Taking this observation as a starting point, I now go on to consider the role of gender in domestic feeding in the context of household management.

## 6.5 Femininity and Feeding

Ten of the sixteen female participants talked of collecting recipes in folders, scrapbooks, or notebooks. None of the eleven male participants did. These self-produced culinary sources contained recipes cut out from magazines, print-outs from the internet, and hand-written recipes from female contacts such as mothers, grandmothers, and friends. These folders can be read, not just as cooking manuals, but as markers of biography symbolising and narrating emotional connections to older female generations. To illustrate this, I draw on separate conversations and observations with Sara and Juliette, which occurred while we were looking through recipe folders.
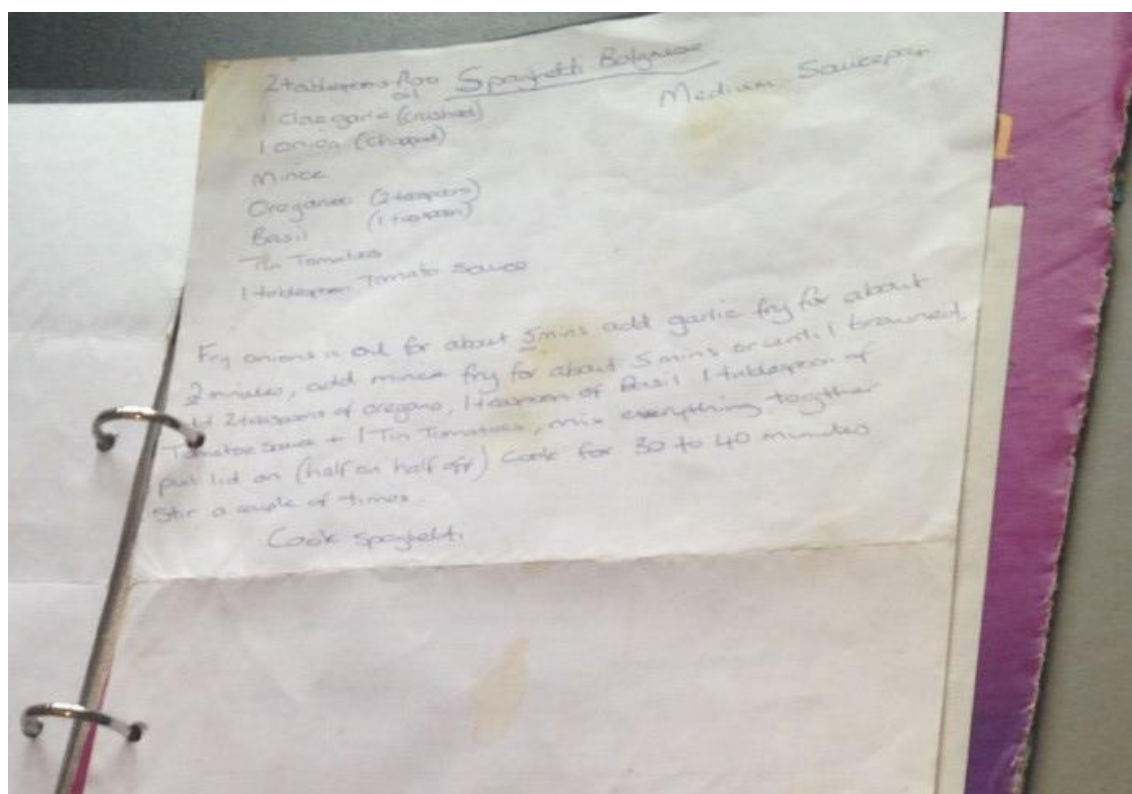


*Figure 6:9     Researcher photo of Sara's mother's Spaghetti Bolognaise recipe*

| | |
|---|---|
| Sara: | This is just like my little rubbish folder that I've… if people give me recipes I just shove them in. Um oh that was my mum's. She wrote that… she wrote that out when she was in hospital. |
| KG: | Did she? |
| Sara: | For my brother, yeah. Um, those are just ones that I ripped out of magazines and stuff. Yeah, she… |
| KG: | Do you mind if I just take a picture? |

Sara: Yeah she em… cause I mean she… like I said before she taught me to cook em and I was always in the kitchen. But my brother em… well he's still a bit rubbish, so she wrote it down and um I just stole it (laughs) and kept it. Em and that's just for a really nice carrot cake recipe and that's Ollie's [her husband]… Ollie's nan em, who just turned 90 and she wrote that down.

Juliette: So some are handwritten. That's my mum's handwriting… …and yeah so I've got things I've cut out, that's something my mum wrote, somewhere I've got one my grandma wrote as well. So some of them are there for sentimental reasons as much as anything. Um, and yes it's… it's rather full as you can see (laughs)… and that's my savoury recipes folder and then I've got a pudding and cake folder as well (she gets more folders out). Er which is even worse because it's just got bits and bobs er everywhere. So yeah so again it's er… yeah things that I cut out, things that were written down…
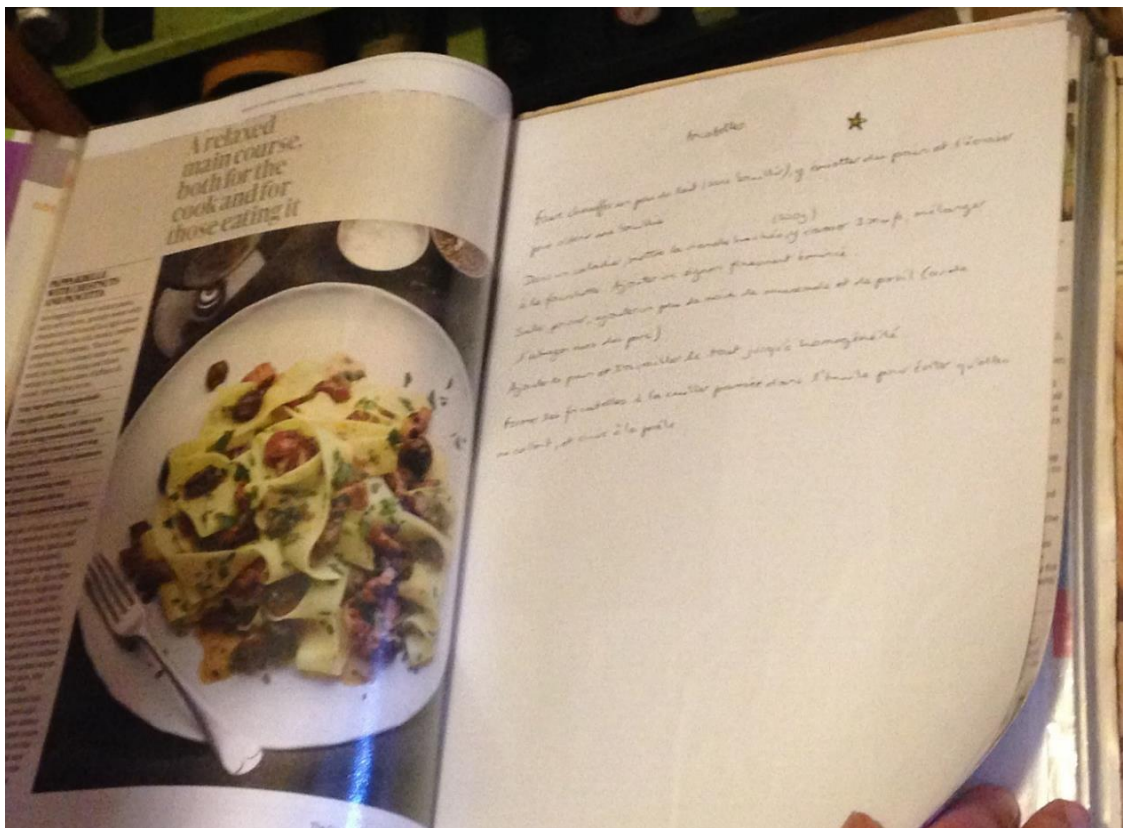


*Figure 6:10*      *Researcher photo of Juliette's recipe folder showing her mother's handwriting alongside a recipe cut out of a magazine*
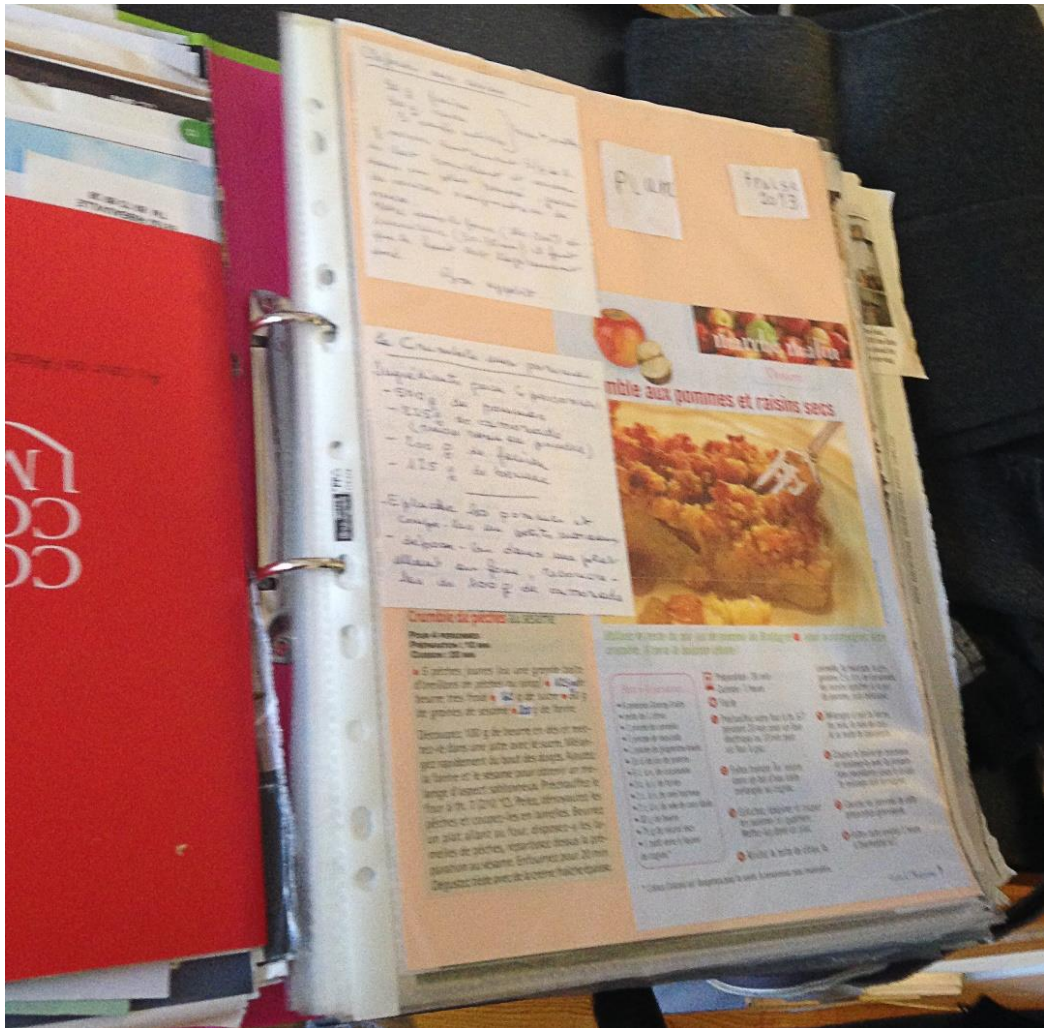
*Figure 6:11    Researcher photo of Juliette's recipe folder*

Theophano notes that the generational sharing of culinary knowledge through the physical artefact of the cookbook functions as a token of female kin, by providing a window into the lives of former female generations (2002: 8). Consistent with that, the recipe folders shown above act as a reflection of the participants' biographies and narrate a story about their family, its character, and the types of relationships it offers. For instance, although Sara's large cookbook collection offers a number of spaghetti bolognaise recipes, her mother's simple handwritten spaghetti bolognaise recipe seems to carry more value because it acts as a first-hand representation and connection to her past. It could be that this recipe acts as an important claim to belonging, since participant narratives locate themselves in an ever-shifting and fragmented social world. As Warde notes, 'customary dishes are a source of security, certainty and are often represented as emotionally gratifying' (1997: 67-68). Likewise, Juliette's folder contains handwritten recipes by her mother and grandmother. The folder, which is one of many, is presented like a scrapbook containing carefully arranged recipes. Older recipes passed down through generations are presented alongside

contemporary recipes cut out of magazines or printed from the internet. The juxtaposition of these recipes can be read as a symbolic representation of the ways in which Juliette retains elements of her personal history while also actively embedding the habitus with new sources of culinary knowledge. Finally, there is an overall dominance of women telling these stories. This is both within the passed down recipes found in the folders, as well as the female participants themselves communicating with me as a female researcher. This highlights the importance of gendered food work across the sample, even though these stories are developed, enhanced, and changed over time.

It is important to point out that not all personal recipe folders contain the sorts of generational connections discussed above. All participants positioned their mothers as an important reference point for their current cooking practices. Some participants noted that their mothers provided good homemade foods, but that their own tastes have since expanded. Other participants situated themselves in complete opposition to their mothers. For instance:

Layla:      But my mum would always do the same meal, like Monday is liver and rice day, em Tuesday spaghetti bolognaise. It was always the same when my mum's cooking because she didn't have a very wide repertoire but then at the weekend my dad would cook something completely new, completely amazing. He would often do er… I remember him doing like a Chinese banquet sometimes on a Saturday night with… cooking everything from scratch, doing lots of things… just cause he enjoyed doing it so much and I remember helping him from a really early age to do those sorts of things. Em, so I do remember my dad introducing us to quite a lot of new foods. (Layla, 35-44, teacher)

There are two interrelated points of interest here. First is that Layla distances herself from her mother's style of household management. Second is the comparison of her father's role in household feeding to that of her mother. I will address each point in turn. Like her mother, Layla manages the weekly feeding of her household, which consists of her husband and three young children. Like a number of other participants, she dissociates herself from the weekly cyclical meal pattern that her mother adopted which she positions as 'boring'. While participants retain some aspects of a disposition, such as bulk cooking, this repetitive style of managing mundane feeding work is not practiced by any participants. Instead, they emphasise variation across several weeks, through the provision of a mix of new dishes and family favourites. There remains a recognition of the importance of feeding the household 'good' food. But the temporal routines through which 'good' food is done are revised

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because the weekly meal pattern that for some participants was characteristic of their upbringing cannot offer the contemporary requirement for variety and fluidity. Thus, the inherited (gendered) propensity to manage food persists, but because participants have different tastes, the management of food needs to be adapted to incorporate diversity. Nevertheless, the ideological value of doing family through the feminised delivery of 'good' food remains intact, which the above examples of recipe folders suggest. Moreover, these participants are operating within fragmented time-space to provide a varied menu based on the fusion of contemporary and traditional knowledge, as I will now go on to explore.

There are no handwritten recipes from her mother in Layla's notebooks. She has several, dating back to her university days, containing recipes she has jotted down from leaflets, magazines and cookbooks. I asked her if she still used the notebooks:

Layla:     I still would yeah. Cause I think (pause)… see I was looking back through this the other day because I was looking for a specific recipe that I cooked and that my husband really liked and I thought 'oh I've not done that one in ages. That was always a really good recipe'. And then there was… there are others in here that I've never tried. But most of the ones in there (Figures 6:12 and 6:13) I've tried. And what I tend to do now is I only write the recipe down if I've tried it and it's been a success and particularly with this book now, post-children, is like ones that I've tried with the children and they like and then I think 'I must remember to cook that again cause everybody ate it' (laughs).
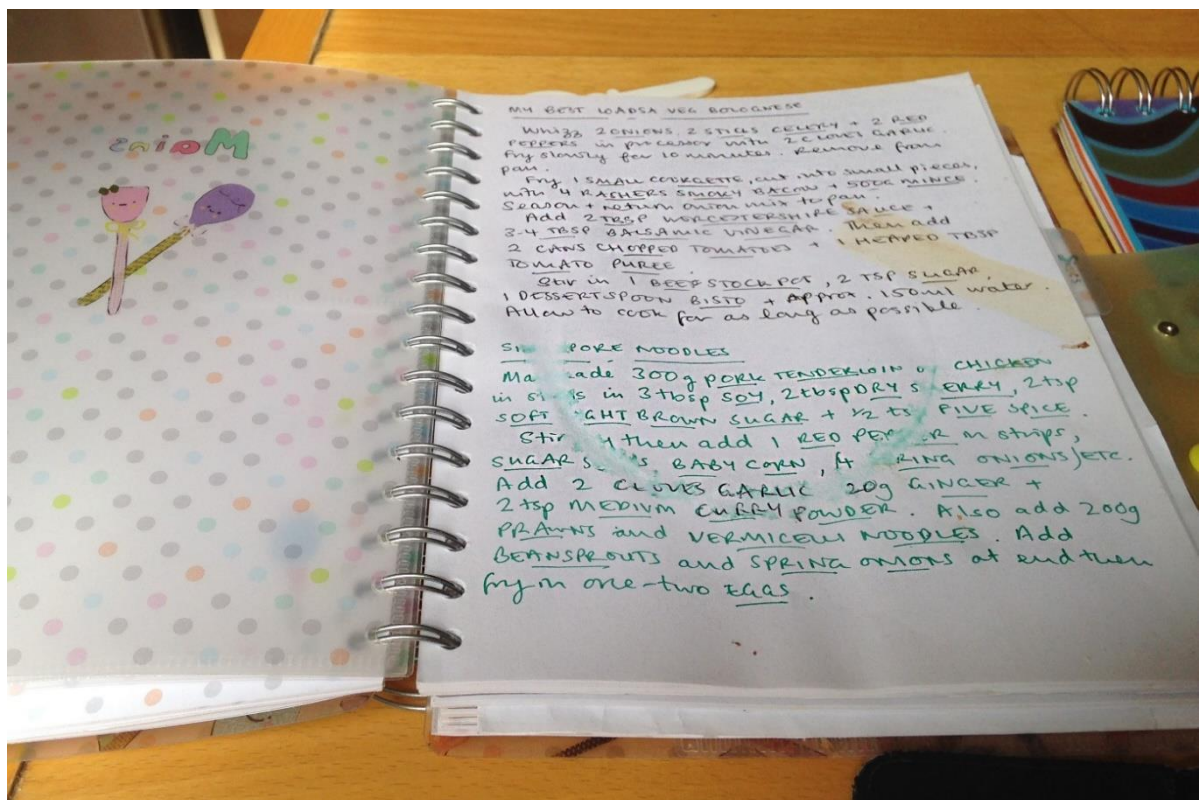


*Figure 6:12      Researcher photo of Layla's recipe folder showing 'My best loadsa veg bolognaise' and 'Singapore noodles'*

At the back of the book there were the lists below:
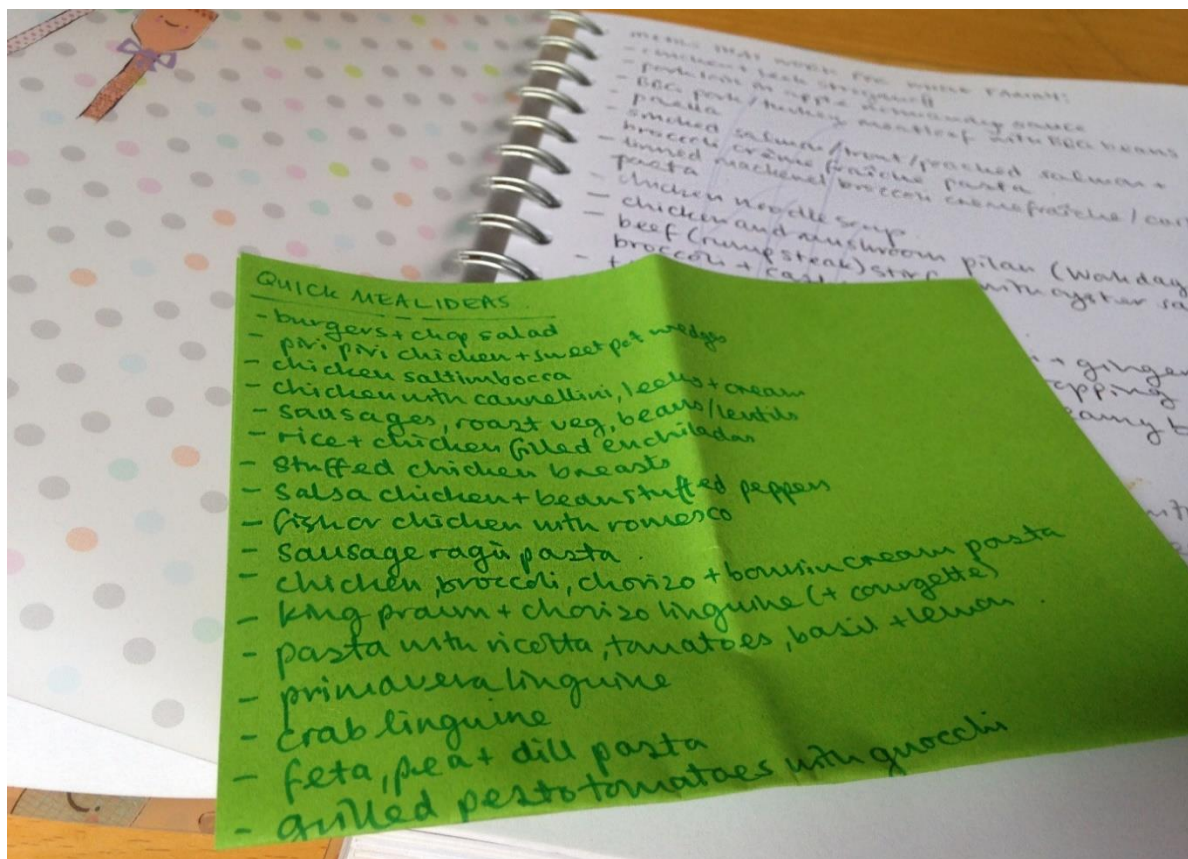


*Figure 6:13    Researcher photo showing Layla's 'Quick meal ideas'; page behind: 'Meals that work for whole family'*

Layla notes that at the weekend 'my dad would cook something completely new, completely amazing… … cooking everything from scratch, doing lots of things'. However, given the level of detail she gives to the possibilities for variety, it appears that this is something that she seeks to provide for her family through the week. In line with Parsons' findings (2016), Layla voices an additional pressure to the generation before her, which is to cook new and inspirational food on a daily basis. This is a classed activity since it concerns the display of cultural capital through diverse and varied foods. Layla's lists above are particularly telling because they 'work' and are 'quick', thus indicating the temporal constraints under which she feeds the family. She also appears constantly alert to the importance of keeping a record of the meals that do work: 'then I think 'I must remember to cook that again cause everybody ate it''. Finally, as Layla suggests her dad played a fundamental role in introducing her to new foods. The exposure to which has provided her with the classed skills to decipher and be attuned to recognising the fluid boundaries of good food as a form of cultural capital, which she then could build upon at university, by actively sourcing recipes. However, while her mode of feeding differs from her mother, she retains the *responsibility* for feeding. As a

result, she is well practised and efficient at the everyday managing of this cultural capital for the household, which requires constant attention and refashioning.

The second point I want to touch on is Layla's comment that her father cooked on weekends. Many participants referenced their fathers as special occasion cooks, and some female participants noted that their male partners cook on the weekend. Hence, before taking a specific look at the household meal as illustrative of how feeding operates to produce middle-class families, I would like to consider first the male participants' contribution to feeding the household.

## 6.6 Masculinity and Feeding

The table below illustrates participants' involvement in weekday cooking.

| Level of participation in weekday cooking | Female participants living with partner | Male participants living with partner |
|---|---|---|
| No/little everyday cooking | 3 (21%) | 3 (33%) |
| Shared everyday cooking | 2 (14%) | 4 (44%) |
| All/most | 9 (64%) | 2 (22%) |
| **Total number of participants living with partner** | **14** | **9** |

*Table 6:1        Male and female participation in weekday cooking*

There is a small, but growing, body of literature which focuses on men's everyday experiences of and approaches to cooking (Cairns et al 2010; Klasson and Ulver 2015; Neuman et al 2017; Szabo 2012, 2014; Warde et al 2017). Given the self-selecting nature of the sample, it is unsurprising that men's reported involvement in cooking is high in my research (relative to other literature). Participants who took part in this research by and large said that they had an interest in food, bar a handful of participants who offered participation to assist the research community. Even with this in mind, the women in this sample are approximately three times more likely to do all, or almost all, of the weekday cooking for the household. This finding adds to swathes of research which shows that women take on more responsibility for household feeding work. The most up-to-date research indicates that men are more likely to have household meals prepared for them than are women. In Yates and Warde's recent study, forty-three per cent of men's meals (using an oven) were cooked by their female partners as compared to fourteen per cent of women's meals (2017: 105). In relation to this my point is twofold: first, while a third of male

participants, and two thirds of female participants' male partners do no, or very little, everyday cooking, they nevertheless play a role in the doing of good food for the household. Second, the women in this study were not passive in taking on the everyday responsibility of feeding the household. Indeed, this emerged as an important part of their identity. On the whole, the women appeared to proactively take on this role of providing food, which as Haukanes (2007) suggests, serves to position them as 'proper' women as well as create family members as 'proper' people. Nevertheless, being responsibilised for feeding the household is an aspect of their identity that appears difficult to shed. Mary cooks all the household meals because her partner cannot cook, except for the barbeque:

KG:          And when he does the barbeque, do you cook on it or do you do any…?
Mary:        I'm not allowed anywhere near it. No, no (laughs)…
KG:          (Laughs)
Mary:        I'll get all the stuff in the kitchen ready, get the table ready, do the drinks and just supply him with meat to cook. Em, like if I go over and suggest something looks like it might be about done, I'm told to mind my own business, so, yeah… (laughs)
             (Mary, 35-44, accountant)

Mary's story portrays her as willingly casting aside her cooking skill and experience and adopting a supportive role. This is despite her acknowledgement of her superior judgement of knowing that the meat may be almost done. Nevertheless, her accompanied laughter about being told to mind her own business denotes the irony of the situation because cooking for the family *is* her business on every other occasion. In line with Klasson and Ulver's findings (2015), Mary's partner is able to masculinise his cooking and thus detach it from domesticity. This is because the barbeque becomes an occasion for the dramatization of cooking, something which is ordinarily relegated to the mundane. Importantly, Mary takes on an active role in enabling his performance, albeit via a demoted role of preparing the drinks and supplying him with the meat. Finally, while Mary's experience of cooking is as an 'other-oriented responsibility', her partner appears to experience cooking as a 'self-orientated leisure' (Szabo 2014: 18). He is cooking in situations which are free from obligation and time constraints, such as a barbeque at the weekend.

As Table 6:1 shows, there are some male participants or male partners of female participants who do the majority of the daily household feeding work. Nevertheless, as the extended quote below illustrates, their female partners are still operating in heteronormative frameworks which align responsibility for feeding others with women.

| Irene: | I just do it [cooking] because I have to. Er and I'm quite happy for Dennis to do it and he enjoys it, so er… but I think that's because I've done it all my life. He's really just taken over since he started to work part-time and I was working full-time, so he was at home and he started to do the cooking and really enjoys it. |
|---|---|
| KG: | So what is it about cooking that you don't particularly like that much? |
| Irene: | I think it's just because it's something you've done for so many years you lose interest don't you? (laughs)… … And I do cook. I mean yesterday I cooked the bolognaise from scratch, made the las… and cooked the sauce and made the lasagnes. It's doesn't… you know I do do it. But I just wouldn't list it as one of my em ten favourite things to do or anything like that. |
| KG: | (laughs) So would Dennis make a lasagne for the boys and things like that? |
| Irene: | No, no. |
| KG: | Does he do…? |
| Irene: | No he wouldn't do that one. |
| KG: | Right. |
| Irene: | He would do the bolognaise, but he wouldn't bother making the lasagne. |
| KG: | Right ok. Why is that? |
| Irene: | I think its… that's something I've always done and he doesn't like lasagne particularly. So I don't make one for us, I make it for everybody else, but not us.<br>(Irene, 55-64, retired librarian) |

Irene's quote illuminates a stark contrast between her own and her husband's experience of and approach to cooking. She has cooked all her life, she says, and it was not until her husband started working part-time that he took over the responsibility. Previously, she suggests she cooked out of obligation as opposed to her husband, who enjoys it. Nevertheless, even within this switch of domestic responsibility for the cooking, the care-orientated aspect of her feeding work is, to some extent, still apparent. For instance, she tells me that just yesterday she cooked a lasagne because her husband 'doesn't like lasagne particularly'. The lasagne she cooked is not for her and her husband, but for her mother and grown-up children who live in their own households. Hence, while Irene suggests that she does not enjoy cooking, that she pro-actively made the lasagne suggests that there is an aspect of pleasure to her 'other-oriented cooking'. The data cannot confirm whether this is especially since Irene, now retired, is no longer responsible for the everyday provisioning of food. However, that she willingly retains the duty for nurturing family members through the flow of food, highlights the active ways she retains her feeding role. As I will now further explore, many female participants actively and knowingly take on the main feeding work.

## 6.7 Active Women

As is now apparent, the theme of gender is prominent in all food narratives, and it was even notable in the initial stages of this research. In the case of Irene for example, even though she is no longer the primary cook, she put herself forward for interview. It appears the 'other-oriented' female role stretches beyond the provision and preparation of food to being responsible for representing the household. This perhaps partly explains why a specific recruitment strategy was required to secure all but two male participants for this study. But even of the men that came forward for participation, female partners sometimes stepped forward in the moment of interview, to interrupt, to correct, or in some cases were called upon by my male participants to answer questions. I touched on this in Chapter Four in my discussion of Kelly's interruption in John's narrative about the contents of the food cupboards. For the purposes of discussion here though, I would like to explore how the contributions of these female partners centred on the household management of food.

For instance, Gregg was primarily responsible for the daily and weekend domestic cooking. When I arrived at our first interview, he and his partner, Becky, had just returned from the fishmongers and I noted that Becky was pre-portioning salmon to be frozen for their toddler. Becky was partially present during both interviews. In the first interview which mainly focused on attitudes and preferences, she did not interrupt implying that she was happy with the way that Gregg articulated the family's food preferences to me. In the second interview however, when it came to showing me the intricate dynamics of how the household operated to produce food, she interrupted. This was during our conversation about expiry dates:

Gregg:      So with fruit and veg probably not, with meat yes. But typically even with meat you could… you can smell it or you can see if it's gone off, so I wouldn't be against using stuff um if it was over its sell-by-date if I felt that it smelt and looked ok.

KG:      Right and do you do that then with meat?

Gregg:      Yeah.

KG:      Yeah. And would that be for everybody? For Tom [son] as well, or just you guys?

Gregg:      No everyone yeah. As long as it… as long it's um you know… if it's not massively over, like because of the way that we plan the meals…

Becky:      We don't… sorry… we don't eat out of date meat, no.

Gregg:      No but in terms of like if… something was a day over, I'm not going to chuck it sort of thing, if it smells ok.

Becky:      Oh I don't know. I disagree.

Gregg:      Well with chicken obviously you've got to be a bit more careful but with beef and lamb…

Becky:      Doesn't tend to last that long.

Gregg:      I don't… I can't recall an example of when we've used meat recently that has been out of date.

(Gregg with his partner Becky, dentist)

This extended excerpt demonstrates two themes. First, is that even though Gregg's participation in cooking is 'care-oriented' (Szabo 2014) in that he is responsible for cooking for the family, he nevertheless configures a masculinised identity when he talks about feeding. He draws on expertise about meat to ascertain what is edible enabling him to position his domestic-self through knowledge. In other moments, Gregg does draw on feminised frames relating to care and nurturing about the daily feeding of his wife and son. At the same time, however, he speaks about this feeding work in masculinist terms. Earlier he noted that his wife is responsible for the planning and shopping of food because she sticks 'rigidly' to what is needed for the week's recipes, whereas he is more likely to go 'off-piste' and buy alternative foods. The term off-piste conjures up images of Gregg's potential to explore the unknown to seek out new foods, which has the effect of reproducing his 'foodie masculinity' (Cairns et al 2010: 607). Second, and related, is that his wife's interjection is in relation to his performance of modestly reckless masculinity around the organisation and planning of food. It is assertive and has the effect of making him revise his claim that he would use out-of-date meat. Combined, their narratives reproduce Becky's domestic authority and capacities for the efficient management of feeding the household.

I have thus far suggested that while the possibility of household food work is open across gender, the everyday aspects of domestic feeding remained with the women of this sample. Men, be it participants' fathers or male partners, were never aligned with the household management of food. However, the women's active involvement in the provisioning of food suggests that this domestic responsibility is not passively occupied by the female participants in this fieldwork. Indeed, it could be a performance of cultural competence around ideas of reflexive involvement with care-giving through food, thus enabling participants to position-take on a class and gender hierarchy. Like the personal recipe folders above, it could be read as a kind of identity work in which women engage to reproduce themselves and their families culturally and socially. Given their levels of responsibility regarding feeding the household, it appeared crucial that women's food spaces, the fruits of

their labour, would be seen by me, as the researcher, as displaying the right sort of cultural capital.

Furthermore, just as participants differentiated themselves from not making an effort to invest in 'good' food, the women in the sample appeared quick to distance themselves from being the sort of woman who passively takes on the domestic food work. Many female participants noted that they feed the household out of choice: because they enjoy it, or for practical reasons such as skill and having more time than their male partners. The centrality of choice as a means to justify their roles of provisioning food are apparent in Jane and Sara's separate comments below:

Sara:      I do pretty much all of the food buying. Em, not because you know, it's a prearranged role or anything, but just I do pretty much all of the cooking, em, just cause I really enjoy it.

Jane:      I think once you get quite quick at doing things and you know how things cook… like my husband would take forever to cook something from scratch which he does… you know if he's cooking dinner, I'll say 'start at 2 in the afternoon, it might be ready at 6' you know (laughs). Um whereas I could cook the same thing in probably a third of the time because I know what I'm doing and I'm more proficient because I've just done it for longer and I suppose I enjoy… because I enjoy it, you know I do more of it than him (Jane, 45-54, project coordinator)

DeVault suggests that while it is important to acknowledge that food work is meaningful and rewarding for women, this work is carried out in the shadow of social and cultural expectations which position and reproduce women as responsible for the maintenance of the household and for pleasing others (1991: 234).  As Harriet notes:

Harriet:   I don't mind if James ignores my food, but I just sort of feel well it's there, at least I did it. So it is quite important. It's like how… it's part of how I define my role in the house and I do see myself as the provider of the food.
(Harriet, 55-64, teacher)

This quote suggests that the point of Harriet's role is not whether her husband appreciates her food, but that she fulfils a role as 'a provider of food'. It highlights the ways her identity is configured via ideas of care-giving through food, such that it is important to *her* that her role is fulfilled: 'well it's there, at least I did it', she says. Elsewhere, Harriet mentions that her husband was overweight:

| Harriet: | My husband is very overweight, um (pause) but (laughs) I don't really feel responsible for that because I'm not. Does that sound really…? Like I sort of feel well… I mean I don't… I don't serve very, very fatty food deliberately. Um… um… I just serve what I consider to be a fairly normal diet. If he came in and said 'right. I'm going to follow this diet so that I can lose some weight, will you help?' I probably would but he… I would get behind that, but he doesn't. He just sort of says things like 'oh I need to lose weight' and then does nothing about it. |
|---|---|

This narrative is interesting because on the one hand, Harriet is clear that she is not responsible for her husband's weight, especially since he has not been proactive about losing weight. Yet on the other, her unfinished question 'does that sound really…?' and the hesitancy thereafter, suggest that that maybe her husband's weight should be her responsibility; that perhaps she needs to justify her response by saying she does not deliberately serve 'very fatty food'. Her justification seems to suggest that she is uncomfortable with appearing to condone a physical attribute often associated with working-class bodies. Nevertheless, she is clear that there are limits to her levels of responsibility in catering for her husband. While her feeding work is other-orientated, this is not a passive position. In fact, the narrative is more about her husband's passivity than hers. In order for her to take on the responsibility for her husband's diet, she is quite clear that her efforts ought to be matched by him.

Previous studies have identified female participants as prioritising their male partner's tastes (for example Charles and Kerr 1988; DeVault 1991). However, unsurprisingly since over twenty-five years has passed, in my research, husbands and male partners are not the focus of female participants' cooking. For instance, Layla noted that when she is planning her meals she takes into account her children's preferences, with her husband's preferences 'probably low down the list (laughs)'. However, while her husband is low down the list, Layla's own tastes are not mentioned at all. Like many of the female participants responsible for feeding children, their primary focus is ensuring that their children are fed a diverse range of healthy foods. However, as much as this is about pleasing others it is also about a gendered responsibility for the classed reproduction of capital across generational lines as I will now go on to explore.

## 6.8 Fashioning a Taste for Diversity

Bourdieu (1996: 23) notes that the family is a primary site for the accumulation and transmission of capital. He also argues that: 'each field calls forth and gives life to a specific

form of interest, a specific *illusion*, as tacit recognition of the value of the stakes of the game and as practical mastery of its rules' (Bourdieu and Wacquant 1992: 117; italics original). To recap, interest is defined by one's position in the game and the journey which brings each player to that position in the game. As such, the 'mastery' of taste requires recognition of its value, which, once recognised, enables its conversion into capital, depending on a player's position in the field. I will now consider how participants with children pass down a disposition to recognise certain foods as being indicative of good taste, in order to equip children with inherited capital. Importantly, this intergenerational reproduction was always spoken about in relation to broader public narratives. Thus, while the hierarchy within the field remains, its associated specific form of interest must be understood in relation to the broader narratives which influence and reproduce social rules. In light of this, I direct analysis towards the ways in which my participants strive to transmit an understanding of these social rules around taste to their children. In line with the findings of this research, fashioning a taste for diversity and being open to foods emerged as substantial and important for the intergenerational reproduction of cultural capital in participant households. As one parent notes, exposing children to diversity is worthy of constant perseverance: 'I just think you keep plugging away at that and eventually they'll like it'.

All parents talked at length about introducing their children to new foods and displayed pride around their children being open to new foods. As the following three separate quotes illustrate, pride operates around the success at ensuring that their children's disposition to good food has been embodied:

Carla:      And I would never buy meat from McDonalds. Ever.
KG:         Why is that?
Carla:      Because I think it's junk.
KG:         Mm. Do you take… have the kids been to McDonalds?
Carla:      Er. My eldest's been twice, after his gym competitions because that's his…
            what he would like as his reward (laughs), um (pause)… you know I haven't
            taken the others, but they've probably been… they've probably been
            occasionally, you know with a friend or sometimes at parties people order in
            chicken nuggets or something don't they? I mean I… I don't know… it's not a
            regular thing anyway. They're probably pretty militant about food. They all…
            they all get that we need to eat nice food (laughs).
            (Carla, 45-54, artist)

Ed:         My son went on work experience when he was 15 with the school… …all the
            other kids were having burgers, chips and fish and things, and he said 'Now
            can I have the duckling a l'orange please?' (laughs) and went back up for
            second helpings you know.

Mary:      Even when he was a baby, like I was always trying really hard to try and give him lots of like different things to eat and make sure he wasn't going to be one of these dead fussy kids. And he's not too… like then they get fussier as they get older don't they? But he's not too bad, like he'll try most things so I'm quite fortunate in that… you know, if… like on Friday night, Darren [partner] was away so me and Rowan [son] just went out for dinner and he wanted Thai (laughed). So we went for Thai food (laughed) on Friday, which is really nice, cause I know like quite often your choices with your kids it's like burger or pizza or something, but he's quite sort of open to lots of different things.

These quotes illustrate how disgust and distinction work in tandem. Participants' boundary-marking around their children's propensity to appreciate either healthy or exotic foods is articulated in relation to their understanding of bad food. The symbolic value in Thai food or duckling a l'orange for example, lies not in the food itself, but in its relationality to banal and 'unhealthy foods', which surface in participant narratives time and time again. It suggests that it is necessary to position 'nice food' alongside 'junk' in order to fashion their children's good food habits and demonstrate their capacities as parents to produce children who make the right choices, even when children around them are choosing burgers, chicken nuggets, pizzas, and chips. Their commitment it seems has paid off, such that their children are 'militant about food' and 'open to lots of different things'- except, of course, being open to the pizzas or burgers that could not carry the same distinction. Again these narratives, framed in terms of making choices, are limited to foods which are situated as distant from uncultivated palates. Being committed to producing children who are open-tasters as oppose to fussy-eaters has the effect of positioning the participants as sophisticated parents.

Below, Julie talks at length about the importance of providing her two boys a wide variety of foods:

Julie:      Em but no, once they get to a certain age, 'that's your tea, and get on with it, or go without'. So, we've never lost (laughs). We've had to compromise many times, but we've never lost that battle.

KG:      Hmm-mm and is that important to you?

Julie:      Yeah. We did fajitas and Harry's fine with fajitas, he'll eat the pepper and the onion, Keiran just wouldn't. We'd rolled it up because we thought if we hide it, but he just wouldn't eat it. So the compromise was: we made him a fresh one up with just a bit of chicken in. And he ate it, you know. You've got to be aware that there are certain food tastes that they just will not like. Harry tried a bit of butternut squash when we made this Spanish stew up and they ate the chicken and the chorizo from it, and we gave them a piece of butternut

squash each. Harry said he would try it. He tried it and spat it out and started crying (laughs). So you know, that's obviously, he really didn't like it…
(Julie, 35-44, occupational therapist)

Julie is clear that she understands the individual taste preferences of the boys, yet overrides their preference. Her and her husband have never lost that battle, although they have had to compromise. But the compromises she makes are downplayed. After giving her son a fajita, she notes 'the compromise was: we made him a fresh one up with just a bit of chicken in'. In fact, she made her son an entirely new chicken wrap, after he had rejected the initial one in which she had hidden onion and pepper. Nevertheless, rather than suggesting that she accommodates her son's narrow tastes, she presents a narrative that he will either eat what she expects him to eat or that he is at least open to being exposed to new foods. Julie seems to maintain a position of authority through the performance of a kind of feeding work which is orientated towards producing 'autonomous and independent children' (Gram and Grøhhøj 2015: 549), who are open to trying new foods. However, she makes discerning judgements around which foods are worthy of perseverance. As opposed to situating her children as open-tasters, this has the effect of limiting their autonomy, thus reproducing her own childhood experiences of lacking choice.

Narratives about perseverance in exposing children to good foods, highlight that good taste is not innate, but rather the result of a strategic inclination to persevere to be open to or appreciate certain food is a result of cultural capital. While couched within frames of diversity, Julie implements controls around food in order to encourage tastes for health and diversity. In doing so, she transmits cultural capital to her children via feeding, which they can take out of the home and draw on as future middle-class adults. Julie goes on to add:

Julie:      You want them to have choices, they're growing up as well. They need to have a bit of choice, but… I don't know it is hard. It's a hard one and I think that's why often we'll eat separately, em from them. But it's… trying things at school. Em in a maths lesson they'd had some Dorito crisps Harry was saying he'd tried some Regae Regae sauce and he said he really liked it. So if they come back with anything positive that they've tried this and they liked this, I'll go and buy it or try and find it. Em and it's trying… sometimes we'll dumb down what we eat. So try and find a balance in the middle. Try and lift them up a little bit from their comfort zone but we'll pull ourselves down a bit so we can try and eat something a bit similar.

Julie suggests that she would seek out new foods, in response her son's experience of trying Reggae Reggae sauce. However, there is an implication here that had he voiced the same

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positivity about Dorito crisps, she would not make similar efforts. Doritos are something he 'had' as oppose to 'tried'. Crisps cannot be appraised via frames of health, authenticity or exoticness. Furthermore, Julie notes that when they eat together as a family she attempts to strike a balance between everyone's differing tastes. Her comment that 'we'll dumb down what we eat' in order to 'lift them up' both reproduces a taste hierarchy as well as signposts towards the negotiations and compromises she makes in relation to fashioning a taste for diversity in her children at the household meal.

Many participants noted that eating together was an important means to establish a disposition for their children to learn appropriate tastes, which for the most part centred on being open to particular foods. A number of participants said that their food habits did not change with the arrival of children, since they were motivated to have their children join them at the household table at an early age. For instance:

Harriet:     But it wasn't long before she was eating the same as us, just obviously pureed and all the rest of it. So I don't really remember and we didn't… we didn't eat all that differently. I didn't pander to her being a baby particularly. I think we may have… it's slightly, slightly plainer food perhaps, but um (pause) I can't remember. Actually I can't remember but I don't remember it being much of an interruption, put it that way.

While comments such as these are framed in terms of children fitting in with the household, there is nevertheless a 'heightened child-centeredness' (Ochs and Kremer-Sadlik 2015: 89) implicit in these narratives. As Harriet suggests they ate 'slightly plainer foods' and as Julie suggests, they 'dumb down' their tastes. The care work involved in balancing child and adult food tastes, as well as the organisation of time to ensure the staging of the household meal, requires dedication and negotiation, as the following section will illustrate.

## 6.9 Sharing Time, Sharing Food: Ideal Family Meals

This concluding section will look towards the family meal - sometimes achieved, sometimes not. Read as the final moment of domestication, it is a practice where households come together symbolically and physically to enact good food through familial bonding. However, I argue, regardless of participants' individualised notions of good food, this final moment of household good food is scaffolded by gendered and classed food work. This suggests that little has changed since Charles and Kerr's (1988) oft-quoted study thirty years ago. Charles and Kerr found that participants defined a 'proper meal' as a social occasion, in which family members come together at a table to share food, which is more often than not cooked by a

woman. Given the multiple strands required to facilitate this occasion, the staging of the family meal requires prioritisation and time.

The frequency that households eat together at a table varies across the sample, but all participants indicated it is a preferred practice and all participants with children noted that their children eat at the table. Those participants who said that they eat in front of the television, did so with justifications which acknowledge the norm of eating at the table. For instance:

Ian:        I would love to say that we sit down at the kitchen table every time, but I'd say, no, week nights it tends to be here on the sofa and then the occasional meal at the table.

Other participants noted that eating in front of the television is 'naughty' or 'not great' in confessional tones. Likewise, a repeated pattern across the sample was that phones and tablets have no place at the family meal. This implies an overall recognition that social bonding processes are key to the family meal and that by shifting the focus away from conversation, these technologies remove the potential to perform a particular version of family over the convivial sharing of food. In short, technology is positioned in a similar way to convenience foods: in direct opposition to doing family through food.

I now return to primarily focus on households with children, since in this research the family meal emerged as an important means to deliver children with a carefully monitored range of foods and provide them with a repertoire from which to make responsible choices. Juliette's quote below describes an occasion when her and her husband eat separately from their children:

KG:         So when it's just the two of you here and you say have a curry takeaway or when you're just eating, the two of you, what happens then? Is it different to when the children are with you?

Juliette:   Um well sadly because the curry is usually on a Friday night, I'm afraid we'll usually have it while watching the telly and hoping there's a Bruce Willis film on or something (laughs). It's kind of part of a whole cultural experience like um, 'yes, I'm having a take away so I haven't cooked this dinner and I'm watching a blockbuster' (laughs)…. yeah so it is different because with the children, *very* occasionally, as a treat, they'll be allowed to eat in front of the telly. But by and large we eat at the table. Um but if they're not watching then sometimes we eat in front of the television (said in a whisper)

Juliette says her children *very* occasionally eat in front of the television and situates the table as pivotal to the family meal. Her justification is clear in marking herself (and her family) apart from the type of person who eats in front of the television. But for her and her

husband, having a takeaway curry on a Friday night marks a domestic moment which is free from the emotional and physical labour of staging the family meal. The explicit connection she makes is between eating a takeaway and watching a Bruce Willis film. She suggests that if she is going to let herself slip and indulge in takeaway food, then watching television, and specifically enjoying the facile offerings of a mainstream movie, is acceptable. There is an implicit suggestion that the inferiority of these two cultural forms go hand-in-hand, because they are convenient and their consumption requires little effort. Nevertheless, distinction can be attached to their consumption. This is done through provision of irony around watching a blockbuster being a 'cultural experience' and the justification that this is not the norm.

Central to Juliette's narrative is that eating dinner in front of the television is not normal practice, despite my original question being about what her and her husband are doing when they eat separately from the children. She appears to have a heightened awareness of the importance of presenting a household to me which eats at the dinner table; that eating a takeaway in front of the television (from the lack of preparation of the food, lack of conversation, and without the prop of the table) is not the norm and requires justification. Furthermore, she concludes her response in a whispered tone that this is done without her children watching. This suggests that not only does this act as a guilty pleasure, but also that it is important to her that her children's food experiences, observed and practiced, are centred around convivial eating at the table. Participant narratives tend to situate the family meal as a significant bonding practice which acts to expand children's tastes so that they recognise good food and make the right choices. Central to this is instilling in children a capacity to engage with variety as well as discern which foods are worthy of critical evaluation. Considering that participants on the whole draw on notions of choice and abundance in relation to food preferences and practices, passing on the capacity to make active choices is a key concern for the parents of the sample. It centres on restriction as much as choice.

That the occasion of the family meal is prioritised reflects classed ideologies around the performance of the family through food. In all households the valuing of the family meal is often spoken about in relation to public narratives about its perceived decline. Take Philip for example:

Phillip:    I think nowadays it's a little more dispersed isn't it? That families perhaps don't do that as much, but certainly when we were growing up we did. It wouldn't have been acceptable.
(Philip, 55-64, academic)

While some households ate together most days, others reserve the family meal for fewer occasions, such as Sundays. Overall, all participants living with other household members displayed a commitment to gathering the household around the table to share a meal which is contrary to political and even academic claims (for instance, Daniels 2012; Skeer and Ballard 2013) that the family meal is in decline. Like Philip's comment above, there is a suggestion that the family meal is a practice almost defunct and that this is a result of a dispersion of family networks. Nevertheless, there is an abundance of literature highlighting the ideological prevalence of the family meal (Bugge and Almås 2006; Murcott 1997; 2012; Wilk 2010). Yates and Warde argue that the ideological dominance of the family meal is evidence of 'the continuing joint strength of custom, preference and necessity' (2017: 114). In line with this, participants seem to display a heightened awareness of an idealised image of the family meal as being a necessary means of enacting family. Moreover, that participants establish and prioritise the family meal as a means to synchronise the multiple time-space paths of the household, is evidence of its ideological value. As Neil suggests:

Neil:    It binds us together as a family. Particularly with us all… as the kids have got older, spinning off and sitting in front of screens and electronics the whole time. I mean we don't even watch telly together. It's very rare that we even do that, so it's the thing that binds us together.
(Neil, 45-54, IT consultant)

Neil positions the pulls of technology as a threat to family time, and maintains that sharing food acts, to use Wilks' words, 'as a kind of universal family glue' (2010: 429). It is a domestic occasion worthy of protecting because it is understood as a means to bring the family together when the household, especially the children, is 'spinning off' in different directions. Des also hints that households are more fragmented:

Des:    I think society is more atomised than it was and it does take an effort to eat together and I think we make a you know… …if you lose the habit I think it sometimes difficult to get that. We don't eat food in front of the… I mean we sometimes eat in front of the TV but it's not… it's not a regular thing.

Like Neil, Des' narrative posits that eating together is difficult to achieve because society is more atomised. Moreover, his narrative moves on to situate the television in opposition to the family meal, and like Juliette he distances himself from this mode of eating.  Importantly, Des suggests that it takes *effort* to eat together, suggesting that this occasion is difficult to

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achieve but worthy of prioritising. That participants actively prioritise this mode of eating suggests that this is an occasion worthy of investment. By sharing time and space, the bonding processes established during the family meal are an important vehicle for passing on cultural capital through food.

Across the sample, participants noted that the family meal is an important means of bonding for the family. My point here is not to question the extent to which households are fragmented or not, but to highlight the ways in which perceptions of fragmented time-spaces and external interruptions (such as technology) are operating behind participant understandings of coming together and sharing food. Daly (2001) argues that when family time is labelled as scarce, people idealise it more. Families reaffirming togetherness over food is meaningful when read in relation to participant ideas about households being 'atomised', 'dispersed', and 'spinning off' in different directions. Understood in this light, my participants' prioritisation of eating together reflects the importance of the family meal as an occasion worthy of protection from the changing dynamics of family time, in order to reaffirm family values. Implicit in the idea that the family meal is hard to accomplish, is the notion that achieving it requires that participants make an effort, as Des suggests. Importantly, this effort extends beyond the sourcing and preparation of food, to include the coordination of family time and space. This situates the practice as a priority from within a multitude of constraints. Moreover, eating together is valued when it is achieved away from external cultural flows (such as the television), such that the final moment of domestication of food can be read as reaffirming values of intimate familial living. The ideal of the family meal holds such strong currency across all interviews, denoting participants' cultural and social orientation towards the practice (achieved or not) of sharing food as a means to establish and reinforce familial bonds. These bonding processes are pivotal in reproducing symbolic value in certain foods and relatedly the production of middle-class identities.

## 6.10  Conclusion

In this final analysis chapter, I have scrutinised the early childhood learning processes which provide the initial structures of early food experiences forming the basis of the habitus. I have traced my participants' life journeys in order to explore their ways of knowing about food, which I read in relation to narratives about the importance of abundance, choice, and diversity. Exploring this trajectory has allowed for a nuanced understanding of the ways that

participants' logic of practice is comprised of (feminised) generative learning supplemented with accrued culinary capital, as my discussion about cookbooks suggests. Cookbooks enable participants to enact the (selective) diversity which they associate with good food, and at the same time, cookbooks can act as anchors to personal history. Moreover, personal recipe folders reveal gendered generational bonds between the female participants and other female family members. While the majority of the cohort distance themselves from their childhood tastes, they do reproduce a disposition to invest in food as a form of cultural capital.

The family meal emerged as a priority in this research as a means to enact family through talk over food. The family meal is also understood by the parents in the sample as a means to ensure the intergenerational reproduction of cultural capital through food. It acts as an important household event to instil a naturalised logic of practice in children to be (selectively) open to diversity. Indeed, participants appeared reflexive about the work involved in its production, not least in the scheduling of time it requires but also the work, or effort, involved in attaching symbolic value to food. It appears worth it though because it is an occasion to bond and enact intimate relationships over particular types of food. For the parents in the sample, these processes are integral to the intergenerational reproduction of capital though food through the teaching of making appropriate choices, which reflect and reproduce classed understandings of good taste. It is also a key moment to reiterate gendered values around practice. In most households, the staging of the family meal is the result feminised feeding work involving the domestication of carefully selected external processes, which are then symbolically and physically integrated into the family via food. These processes, which I have shown extend well beyond the home, culminate in the display of a family habitus which is orientated to make careful, considered food selections from the global marketplace.

In the context of our research interactions, through food, participants were able to show the values which produce their selves, their family, and their household. Such values centre on making an effort, active choosing, investing in health and diversity and the mediation of particular knowledge sources to ensure good food is delivered to the table. Much like their understandings of choice and taste, participants draw on social understandings of the ordered practice of sharing food at a table. These are inherently classed understandings, and demonstrated through differentiation to notions of the imagined mass. On the one hand

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participants articulate notional individualism through their tastes and preferences. On the other hand, they understand and enact the domestic sharing of food in relation to the social world, in which the family meal is ideologically positioned as a means to achieve intimate togetherness in fragmented times. From staging the family meal, to sourcing ingredients and information, the sample collectively mobilised shared culinary knowledge. This implies a shared recognition of a general and classed orientation to invest in particular foods and modes of provisioning as having value.

As the final chapter will go on to argue, participant performance of good food in the domestic sphere relates to the reproduction of class privilege. Given the classed positioning of my participants, I will argue that participant prioritisation of particular foods and ways of eating, denotes a recognition of the importance of 'playing the game' successfully, a capacity for which requires exchangeable dominant capital. This in turn suggests that Bourdieu's model of accumulation based on knowledge and perception of future value is applicable for this sample. Through their possession of legitimate capital, my participants are able to attach value to their food practices to 'convert, accrue or generate value for themselves' (Skeggs 2011: 501-502). In other words, their recognition of the importance of having good taste in food and the ways in which individuals can be implicated through their food choices, serves as a resource which can be exchanged within the field for privilege.

# Chapter 7: Conclusion

## 7.1 Introduction

The story this thesis tells is about the intimate ways that class is connected, through food, to identity and the home. Twenty-seven middle-class participants residing in the North East of England have contributed to this research by offering their time and their homes as fieldwork sites. I have recounted data which starts from my participants' childhoods and tracks their journeys into the established households in which our research conversations took place. From this vantage point, I have learnt about the ways in which respondents incorporate food and ideas about food into their homes to arrive at the point of eating. I have looked towards everyday practices of domestic food provisioning with the aim of understanding how in middle-class settings some foods and modes of eating are valued and normalised, while others are implicitly and explicitly rejected and othered. I contend that these small-scale domestic interactions have implications for a broader understanding of the relational ways that class both provides access to particular ways of eating, and reproduces eaters who participate in very specific ways of valuing 'good' food. In this final chapter, I gather together the themes which have emerged from my research to offer a concluding discussion about the broader implications of taste, middle-class identities, and domestic food provisioning in contemporary Britain. I start by outlining the main empirical and theoretical contributions this research offers to the sociology of consumption and class analysis. Based on these contributions, I subsequently offer potential directions for future research.

## 7.2 Reflexive Identities

Ingrid:     I apologise that The Archers has just come on (laughs). It sounds so middle class (laughs).

KG:          I remember now you said you listened to the Archers while you had your tea (laughs)
            (Ingrid, 25-34, graphic designer)

Participants were recruited for this research based on my assumptions that they were located in middle-class social positions. Interview talk highlighted the contested ways that participants related to their class position. On the whole, participants struggled against social categorisation, specifically as being seen as middle class in any straightforward way. This is contrary to a recent study which found that as the class hierarchy ascends, the proportion of respondents who think

they belong to a class rises (Savage et al 2015: 367). Participants could have been pushing back against some of my framing assumptions by insisting *against* their evident middle-classness. But in the context of my interviews, it appeared rather that by elaborating the complexity of their self-understandings and biographies, participants were aiming to present themselves as unique and distant from *any* form of classification or collective belonging. This speaks powerfully to postmodern debates about reflexive individualism. What is particularly striking in this regard is that participants understood that there is value in reflexive individuality, both in their talk about class and in their food tastes. As Ingrid's quote above suggests, this value lies in recognition of what class practices might look like, which through humour can almost be situated as separate from a more enduring, complex and authentic self. And yet, humour is not neutral. Used by Ingrid as a tool for deflection, it provides insight into the complexities entailed in differentiation: in this case to being middle class. In this sense, class becomes an identity category which can be reflexively appropriated – and therefore reflexively refused or denied. As a result, identity is situated as the property of an individual rather than a collective category. The point I want to make is that the participants I worked with appeared relatively comfortable in marking themselves as too biographically and culturally complex to be reduced to a class category. While this has the effect of displacing class, it simultaneously remakes and reproduces middle-classness. Paying attention to practice highlighted that my participants' recognition of the value of individuality was collectively shared across the sample. Furthermore, this entailed the drawing of distinctions in relation to ideas of the mass.

Valued displays of reflexive individuality are classed because they require cultural and economic capital. This cohort reside in middle-class positions. It follows then, that they have the dominant capital to reflexively appropriate certain kinds of identity. If the field marks a social space wherein people can accrue and exchange capital for valued identities, then valued identities can only be available to those who have the capitals to enter the field in the first place. As Skeggs (2011) reminds us, those outside the field are valueless on account of their social position of exclusion. They can only ever be defined through their lack. It is in this way that Bourdieu's concept of habitus (the embodiment of capitals inherited and strategically accrued over time) is of direct relevance to this study. As Skeggs notes, habitus provides a way to understand how *valued* subjects are made (2011; 2004a). Common to participant food narratives is that they centred on valuing self-investment through prioritising the acquisition and provision of 'good' food. But this was not always narrated in a straightforward way. While eating and feeding

household members with certain types of food emerged as important to these participants, *not* eating certain foods emerged as a much more significant. Participant modes of self-investment through food appear to be more about rejecting an imagined figure of a mass consumer, which is implicitly marked as working class.

Identities are of course relational, and the findings of my research support Bourdieu's (2010 [1984]) now well-known claims that the middle classes perform distinction through distinguishing themselves from a working-classed mass. But my findings show too that some of the value of the middle-class performance of individuality lies in its reflexive nature. For instance, when participants 'confessed' to their 'occasional' use of convenience foods or eating in front of the television, they performed a critical awareness about the lack of value in these foods and ways of eating, which acts to authorise their more authentic food identities. As in Ingrid's statement above, some participants demonstrated ironic knowingness around coding practices and tastes as middle class or not. Participants then displayed heightened critical reflexivity, of themselves and the foods they eat. This matters because it is a way of working to mark themselves apart from an uncritical mass. Marking the self as different from the mass requires that the mass be (situationally) invalidated. It also involves the assumption in the moment of utterance or performance that the mass is knowable, homogeneous, even simple, implicitly marked as unreflexively consuming the wrong sorts of food.

Against this reductive figure of the unreflexive mass consumer, the middle-class participants in my study separately - but in exactly the same ways - emphasised their own difference and reflexivity. They presented themselves as prioritising homemade food, critically selecting foods from the marketplace, and talked about the household's eating habits in frames of diversity. Class consciousness seemed to be operating through not belonging, even to the category of middle class. That is, the participants can be *collectively* positioned through their consensual recognition of the value in *individual* performances of reflexive diversity. Consistent within this idea is that the construction of valued personhood requires dominant capital for self-investment as 'tacit recognition of the value of the stakes of the game and as practical mastery of its rules' (Bourdieu and Wacquant 1992: 117). I now turn to reconsider the life histories of my research participants in order to show how class processes are made and drawn upon through critical selection and restriction, which work to maintain their social position of value.

## 7.3 Personal Food Histories

Neil:   So whenever she cooked rice, my mother, it was always 'watch out for the weevils' (laughs). You know there's a different generation thing where you… now with our generation you know, well we'll have food anywhere it's… I think em… I went to university, lived in halls of residence, then when I started to… left halls of residence and that's when I think you first start cooking for yourself, and that's when you start to experiment and expand.
(Neil, 45-54, IT consultant)

The life stories generated in this research capture nuanced relationships between capital accrual and life stage. Central to all participants' narratives was a sense of moving from restriction and lack of choice to abundance and diversity. Participants drew on notions of expanding choice offered by the global marketplace, suggesting that they understood their broadening of taste to be the result of a 'generational effect' (Warde 1997: 72). However, bar Elizabeth who was born pre-World War Two, *all* participants narrated a journey of moving from lack of choice to abundance. This suggests that the notion of choice is a necessary frame through which participants make sense of themselves as consumers of diversity. In part, this supports Warde's (1997) findings that changes in food practices relate to life stages. But by factoring class into the analysis, it is remarkably evident that participants' transition from being fed as children to feeding themselves independently coincided with classed moments in their life trajectories. As Neil's quote suggests, these points involved the accrual of capital, such as university. This significant insight provides a starting point from which to consider the ways that class is implicated in participant food biographies. What these food stories tell us is that the expansion of taste is to do with individual life trajectories as well as perceptions of broader social change. These stories indicate how the accrual of capital goes hand-in-hand with the capacity to display an (authorised) disposition of openness to diversity, and thereby assert and reproduce middle-class taste.

Life stories were an important means of capturing the complexities of social mobility. They were also particularly effective at identifying moments when the habitus was ill-fitting with its position in the field of food consumption. Previous research has established that education can act as a vehicle for upward social mobility, but there is little research that centres on the impact of social mobility on cultural consumption and identity in Great Britain

(Friedman 2012)[6]. Food histories show that participants who experienced upward social mobility recalled times where they were acutely aware that they lacked the dominant capital to play the 'good' food game. For example, Jane's recollection of eating in a Chinese restaurant I discussed in Chapter Four. Conversely, participants who were from established middle-class backgrounds did not display such self-conscious reflexivity around personal food moments. Indeed, the relationship between social mobility and the experience of everyday food could be usefully explored in future research as I will detail towards the end of the chapter.

Studies have established that individuals experiencing social mobility relate to aspects of their working-class histories in complicated ways (Bourdieu 2010 [1984]; Friedman 2012, 2015; Lawler 1999; Reay 2017; Reay et al 2009). The narratives of the upwardly mobile people I worked with were consistent with these insights; in particular, the moments in which they were self-consciously reflexive about their lack of capital to enact legitimate food performances. But regardless of shifting class positions, what is significant about my findings is that *most* participants expressed a dissonance between childhood tastes and adult tastes. All participants displayed ambivalence towards their childhood tastes. Rather, their narratives emphasised how during their life course their tastes had expanded to include a more diverse range of foods. Unsurprisingly then, there was a marked absence of foods reminiscent of childhood in participants' food cupboards.

Social distance is central to the formation of taste (Bourdieu 2010 [1984]). What is particularly noteworthy about these findings is what they reveal about the multi-directional flow of distance. As well as narratives which distance the self from being a (working-class) mass-consuming other, participants distanced themselves from a middle-class childhood self which is best fixed in the past. This complicates Bourdieu's idea that taste in food 'reveals the deepest dispositions of the habitus' (Bourdieu 2010 [1984]: 190), because it is not as simple as tastes staying the same or changing. I discuss omnivorousness below, but in the context of thinking about food, culture, and social mobility my participants were perhaps less cultural omnivores than they were 'culturally homeless' (Friedman 2012). That is, much like the upwardly mobile display ambiguity towards their childhood tastes, all participants

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[6] This is with the exception of Friedman's (2012) use of mixed methods to explore comedy taste. Elsewhere, Daenekindt and Roose (2014) and Coulangeon (2015) employed quantitative research to explore music taste formation in Belgium and France respectively.

displayed a tension between distancing themselves from their childhood tastes and shaking off learnt dispositions. These learnt dispositions were not entirely 'sedimented' in their habitus, because habitus is not rigidly set at birth. Life stories then suggest that taste is the outcome of personal and social history. Their focus on mobility not only highlights how childhood learning processes are disrupted when working-class individuals move into middle-class positions, but also that the childhood tastes established for those born into middle-class positions are also insufficient features of a middle-class habitus. While individual class starting points presuppose the possibility of acquiring further capital, for this particular sample the possibility to enact good food centred on accrued, rather than inherited, capital to facilitate the active and reflexive reconstitution of childhood tastes laid down by their parents.

The inherited tastes that participants carry with them into adulthood are deemed insufficient, then. But a repeated theme is that participants, now in middle-class positions, displayed a strategic disposition to actively invest in and display forms of culinary capital, such as cookbooks. These investments have exchange-value in a social world which prizes the importance of diverse cultural consumption. Participants distanced themselves from passively reproducing their learnt dispositions, but they also refrained from articulating a wholesale rejection of them. They often fondly shared memories and showed me passed-down culinary objects, such as crockery and cookbooks, valued for their representations of family connections to well-established culinary knowledge. But importantly, according to the valuing of plurality, these past-markers of taste could be presented as having classed value through their juxtaposition with more contemporary culinary objects. Thus distinction can be performed through an active and mediating relationship to the culinary capital available, which has the effect of producing a performance premised on individuality. Yet, across these individualised biographies and narratives, there are clear and repeated patterns. The types of culinary capital in the form of knowledge and objects that participants valued from childhood all related to the doing of homemade. Yet, many of these were commodified versions of doing homemade, in the same way as the types contemporary culinary capital they acquired. The recurrence of Jamie Oliver, Yotam Ottolenghi, Nigel Slater and Nigella Lawson across the sample's cookbook collections alongside culinary items which centre on romanticising thrift and tradition for example, was remarkable. This shared (mis)recognition of the social valuing of nostalgia alongside up-to-date food modes indicates the ways in

which this cohort is able to exchange a variation of cultural forms for value. It is in these relations of exchange that the specific diets of the participants and their households are reproduced as valued. This has important implications for middle-class reproduction as I will now go on to show.

## 7.4 Intergenerational Reproduction of Culinary Capital

Juliette:     My daughter's first proper solid savoury food was er mashed up chicken korma with rice (laughs). I was so proud (laughs).
(Juliette, 35-44, tutor)

Analysis established that households prioritise the intergenerational reproduction of cultural capital through food. That is to say, all participants with children drew on frames of diversity in their narratives of feeding children and encouraging diverse eating habits was clearly understood as worthy of parental perseverance. Being 'open' in the late modern world is valued (Bennet et al 2009), and this was certainly reproduced in the narratives of the parents of this sample. Cultural competence around food tastes is an important disposition to lay down in childhood teaching and learning. But as I argue through the empirical chapters, openness is selective and therefore it is in fact around taste judgement that valued dispositions are laid down. These dispositions are mostly established during the family meal which emerged as highly valued in this research, despite political and media narratives which suggest otherwise. In the intimate space of the family home, and through sharing food at the kitchen table, children are taught the social importance of diversity and the importance of being open to trying new foods. But operating within frames of openness and diversity is a clear limiting of choices, specifically around those foods which are regarded as insufficient for the appraisal of good taste. As the above quote demonstrates, parents were spontaneously proud when their children ate 'exotic' and 'ethnic' foods. By contrast, when their children ate 'plain' foods these seemed to be justified and explained. This social training around taste is enacted at an everyday level and centred on selective exposure to diversity. Children are taught not to eat everything, but to make legitimised preferences. These processes are classed. They implicitly encourage an intergenerational reproduction of an orientation towards aestheticizing and valorising a wide and varied diet as a vehicle for the display of knowledge and critical reflexivity, particularly around the notion of making healthy choices.

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Warde notes that 'it seems now equally, or perhaps more, important that parents convey to their children skills and competences for the handling [also] of new forms of culture' (2017: 152). This is particularly interesting when read in relation to the ways my participants related to their own childhood tastes. Yet while is a disconnection between my participant's ambivalence towards the foods of their childhoods and the inculcation of taste amongst their own children, taste itself remains worthy of perseverance. Given that, as we have seen the socio-historical value of food taste is always changing, the transmission of capital must be via frames of critical appraisal and nurturing (legitimate) individual preferences. That is, part of this social training around food seemed to be about arming children with the skills to negotiate the ever-changing boundaries of 'good' taste. Teaching and learning how and what foods to consume (and limit) is worthy of perseverance, because an aesthetic preference to critically discern food can be transferred to other cultural forms. This has fundamental implications for classed relations because even though ideas about what constitutes good taste shift, the transmission of cultural capital ensures that the doctrine of good taste remains intact through its recognition. Therefore, it remains the property of those with the classed resources to ensure its reproduction and reinvention. The following discussion about omnivorousness will expand further on how the display of taste involves a play-off between choice and restriction, openness and closure, in order to fashion preferences which reflect a valued aspect of middle-class habitus which encourages individualism.

## 7.5 Omnivorousness: Critical Selection

Julie:          So there's not a lot that I couldn't eat now. But, I used to detest coriander, it used to make me feel ill and Dan [husband] loves it and we found a recipe in one of the books for this Thai noodle em, with… it's got prawns and crab and stuff in and it sounded lovely, but you needed to use loads of coriander and he was going on and on (laughs), 'we'll just do it, but just put a little bit', so was like 'oh this is alright' cause there was so many other strong flavours and then we just kept making it and we just upped and upped the level of coriander and now I can have coriander… you know, I can eat it in the handful. And, I really, really hated it… … I'm firm believer that if I can do that, then you can sort of almost (pause) get your taste around anything. You know a lot of food tastes, anxiety issues are… you know can be changed… …yeah, it's just you know you feel like you're missing out on certain things by not eating certain foods, em, to try and like them. And because it's worked, you know, I like… up until even when I started eating meat again, I would only eat certain meats. I wouldn't eat beef, and I certainly wouldn't have eaten a steak. Whereas now I love a steak and the bloodier the better.
                 (Julie, 35-44, occupational therapist)

Omnivore refers to 'a person who eats foods of all kinds' (Oxford English Dictionary 2018). As I explained in Chapter Two, the sociology of consumption in recent years has appropriated the term 'omnivorousness' to categorise contemporary shifts towards a preference to consume multiple cultural forms which span traditional hierarchies of high and low culture (Peterson 1992). To this, class analysis has added that social groups who possess high volumes of cultural and economic capital are more likely to display diverse cultural tastes (see Chapter Two for a full discussion). In addition, openness to variety and breadth of cultural consumption acts as a form of distinction. Bennett et al note that 'the required orientation is towards reflexive appropriation, in a spirit of openness, of a diversity of cultural products, but this continues to produce subtle boundaries beyond which it is not respectable to trespass' (2009: 194). One of the effects of using omnivorousness in relation to cultural consumption more generally has been its dislocation from food. Bar a handful of studies which by and large concentrate on 'foodies' (for instance, Cairns et al 2010; Johnston and Bauman 2010; Oleschuk 2017), cultural omnivorousness in relation to food itself has passed by largely unnoticed. I return omnivorousness to its food connotations by paying attention to the everydayness of food in relation to a group of people who are driven to being open to engaging with a diverse range of foods in the home. In so doing, I flag up the contested ways that diverse diets are experienced and preferred. The term omnivore suggests that we have a choice; that biologically we are not limited to being either carnivores or vegetarians. The omnivore can choose to eat anything. But what became clear as the research unfolded is that while participants performed a disposition to consume diversity, this was in highly restricted ways. Participants were not open to all foods.

People's experience and understanding of diversity has often been overlooked in research into omnivorousness which foregrounds quantitatively analysing modes of consumption. My thesis develops an understanding of omnivorousness by focusing on the how of consumption to reveal a more nuanced picture of participants' 'ways of preferring' (Daenekindt and Roose 2017). One of the ways I have done this is by drawing on life history data to reveal the ways in which a disposition to consume diversity is understood by participants in relation to broader social changes. As I discuss above, what clearly emerges from these stories is the explicit marking of some foods as worthless. So, while Julie claims in the quote above that 'there's not a lot that I couldn't eat now', elsewhere in her narrative

she is clear in naming foods that she would not eat. These are ready meals, jarred sauces, 'processed foods', Tesco's Basics and Sainsbury's Basics range, and cheap chicken.

Echoing Johnston and Bauman's findings (2010), only certain kinds of foods are valued. Despite framing themselves as diverse and open eaters, the highly selective nature of the sample's 'diversity' has the effect of reproducing the taste hierarchy. Moreover, subtle forms of classed disgust implicitly mark particular ways of eating and foods as having no value. All foods are not equal, and participant selections appear to be premised on an assumed knowingness of not being like a mass-consuming other together with a distance from passively reproducing the tastes of their childhood. While some participants, for instance Des, retain aspects of their childhood food traditions, these were always enriched and complicated with newfound tastes. Yet for most participants, not being like their childhood selves emerged as significant as I have detailed above. In line with an emphasis on mobility and distancing from parental tastes, the focus of these food stories was not personal tradition in food tastes, but rather they prioritised rejecting the figure of a passive, mass-consumer. To some extent, this points to a fragility in participant understandings of themselves via their food tastes. By this I mean that part of the consequence of narrating a lack of belonging in childhood is that established traditions cannot be mobilised as a means to make sense of current food habits. But likewise, rather than focus on the aspects of 'good' understood as important in food practices, narratives focused instead on differentiation from an other. With little to go on asides from not being a passive reproduction of their childhood selves or a mass-consumer, a sense of fragility and defensiveness emerges from these performances of individuality. This suggests that while positional possession of capital reproduces an ability to make valued 'individualised' investments in particular foods, it is done so in contested ways.

In a social milieu which values reflexive individuality and diverse consumption, taste boundaries are ambivalent and fluid. Despite this, I have argued that they are still present, and through closer inspection it is possible to see how class is 'faintly written' (Savage 2003: 537) therein. Following Skeggs (2005), it is within this ambivalence that notions of disgust flourish: the proximity of the other becomes too close for comfort. When all foods are presented as culturally equal, social distance becomes distorted and harder to discern. Furthermore, when socially-valued identities rely on personal investment of cultural forms, such as food, disgust and selectivity appear to be a necessary means of pushing the other

away. Much of what participants did and said was premised on not being like 'them': a passive, uncritical consumer. The disgust levied at mass-produced or mainstream foods centred on their lack of potential for individual investment. Disgust was largely directed at convenience foods suggesting that participants' relationship with 'good' food focused on enhancing its aesthetic value through material and symbolic labour. In the section that follows, I focus on this active relationship with food in order to consider the ways in which food is domesticated by the sample.

## 7.6 Domesticating Food: Processes of Choice and Restriction

Harriet:        Actually cause I'm on my own today, I've actually got a ready meal from the supermarket (whispered).

*Later when showing me the fridge:*
Harriet:        Ok well there's not much in here. Um because um like I said I succumbed slightly to the er lure of the ready meal (laughs).
KG:             Oh right yes. Can I take a picture? (laughs).
Harriet:        Yes, alright (laughs). I think I've got one of these.
KG:             Ok yeah.
Harriet:        But normally this would *not* be in my fridge (laughs).
KG:             No I know.
Harriet:        Um but basically… um jams, er that's stock, that's homemade stock. Um because I'm going to use that in something tomorrow probably. Otherwise it's fairly standard isn't it?
                (Harriet, 55-64, teacher)

The concept of domestication provides a means of understanding the active ways that participants domesticate food from the consumer marketplace into the intimate surrounds of the home. With the 'lure' of convenience foods ever-present, the enormous amounts of time and care that participants dedicate to preparing and sourcing the right kinds of food emerged as significant. Domestic food selection is a multi-linear process which extends out to the market, with the ideal end result being food which is homemade and individualised according to the habitus of the household. Distaste for mass-produced foods (particularly those bought from the homogenous/mass-consumption space of the supermarket) emerged as a powerful image in this research and an important reference from which my participants enacted distinction. 'Convenience' foods in particular were accorded little value since they remove the possibility of individual investment and a personal touch. Under this framing, the ready meal, both mass-produced and a convenience, was positioned as the epitome of bad taste. As Harriet's quote highlights, the consumption of this food must be confessed to in

hushed tones and positioned as something about which to feel guilty. Her mention that she 'succumbed to the lure' alludes to an admission of moral shortcoming. But despite the presence of the ready meal suggesting that somehow Harriet had slipped up, her critical justification and reflexive awareness about it not being the norm works to keep Harriet's good taste profile intact. Harriet's slippage can be offset because usually she makes an effort to invest in the food that she eats and feeds her household.

*All* participants displayed a heightened awareness about the importance of making an effort: from selecting the right foods through to expending time on food provisioning and particular ways of eating. Infusing practices with aesthetic labour was important to these participants, and again was understood in relation to the sets of dispositions my participants appeared keen to display. Valued food is that which embodies a personal connection through its journey from market to plate, always understood in terms of choices: about quality, cost, and place of purchase, for instance. The overarching framing to these choicse was the attainment of diversity. Taking the family meal as the final moment of domestication, I want to suggest that the value of this event lies in its function to display the habitus of the household through a personal connection with food. The staging of this occasion was articulated in relation to competing temporal forces, but prioritised nonetheless as a means of doing family through food. Importantly though, the material and symbolic work undertaken in order to produce the food over which families bonded relies on a series of classed and gendered relationships. These function to reproduce the symbolic value of the family meal. Participants were explicit that family meals are important for family bonding, physical nourishment from healthy foods, and for children, the inculcation of manners, for example.

Skeggs notes that formulations of reflexive individualism resonate with middle-class experience and perspectives (2004a: 53). My research further complicates this picture: practice does not always mirror preference. While reflexive individualism emerged as powerful and worthy of perseverance, it certainly was not always participants' *experience*. The symbolism of the family meal is intimately tied to the unique and individual domesticity of a particular household. At the same time, it is distinguished in relation to its distance from homogenised foods produced externally to the household. Homemade food signifies a 'love of family' (Moisio et al 2004: 368). But it takes time to cook from scratch and to peruse the marketplace, and it takes time to plan and deliver the required diversity of 'good' food. It

takes time and effort, in other words, to invest in the symbolic and material means to manage and restrict choice. The reproduction of these standards requires classed capital to both invest in and reproduce food, but it also requires the resource of time. It follows then that justifications around feeding households' convenience foods were related to perceptions of compromising norms of care. Not cooking from scratch in these classed contexts denotes a lack of personal involvement in the production of food, and this was understood as contravening the standards of care through food. As such, the very investment in an ideal of 'good' food as that which reflects time and care devalues the shortcuts implied in convenience foods.

Predictably, this intimate care work through food is gendered. My research interactions clearly established that the responsibility for synchronising the food-related 'time-space paths' (Brannen et al 2013) of the household lay with the female participants. They appeared disproportionately affected by the convenience and care antonym presented by Warde (1997). The guilt expressed by female participants when they made use of processed convenience foods showed the detrimental consequences experienced by women when the ideology of infusing food with time and care is compromised. Harriet is able to justify her ready meal because it is out of the ordinary that she is not feeding anyone else and therefore need not expend any labour on cooking. Yet, as her explanation of her homemade stock suggests, in planning ahead for the following day's meal, she is still conducting the 'invisible' work of feeding (DeVault 1991: 56). The biographical interviews produced data which highlights that orientations to cooking and feeding as care were clearly laid down by my participants' mothers. This was reproduced by the participants in complex ways. Given the cohort's overall distance from childhood tastes, on the whole this generative learning manifested itself around food practices. The female participants were responsible for household feeding work which involved the delivery of health and diversity to the household. However, this was not passively performed. The women of this sample, and even the female partners of the male participants, were highly active in their roles in feeding the household. For instance, the participants said they cooked because they were better cooks, had more time, or because of enjoyment. This involved making discerning food selections for themselves and the household in highly controlled and organised ways - for instance, planning variations in weekly meals through using cookbooks. Their roles as feeders are understood in terms of choice: they choose to feed and they choose what to choose.

The navigation of choice involved in this feeding work is an important vehicle for the acquisition and display of culinary capital for the female participants, which draws on classed *and* gendered skills and knowledges. It culminates in a habitus which can display classed dispositions around strategic investment and gendered training around the successful delivery of domestic good food. Yet there was a lack of reflexivity in participants' narratives relating to the gendered responsibility of domestic feeding and feminised ways in which food management skills are generatively learnt. This is a powerful reminder of a symbolic violence which feminises everyday feeding work as being central to the knitting-together of familial relations. This has important implications for the reproduction of class and gender inequality because it tacitly naturalises the classed reproduction of families through food as feminine. This process of naturalisation is a fundamental way in which middle-class practice is reproduced as normal, even if it is sometimes out of reach for the most harried of the sample.

In participants' freezers, I was shown a number of homemade 'ready meals'. Being individually made from scratch, these meals did not offend classed and gendered standards of care. On the contrary, they were objects of value: indicative of a culmination of culinary and time management skills which prioritise efficiently delivering the household with good food within time constraints. The negative positioning of convenience food appears related to its mass-production. The way many women in this sample discussed the conflict between handmade and convenience food suggests that they are all too aware of the importance of defending against an imagined, uncritical, mass-consuming other: the kind of woman who feeds the household ready meals. Of course, convenience foods were used in all households. But through their critical appraisal, participants were clear in communicating that these foods contravene the standards of good food. Drawing attention to their awareness of the need to distance themselves from mass-produced convenience foods, has the effect of reproducing classed and gendered forms of individual investment through food as legitimate and valued. The social rewards attached to making active choices are constituted through their differentiation from being inactive, or lazy. Time and time again, the cohort positioned themselves as active, through talk of 'making an effort' to find and cook the right ingredients, persevering to expand theirs and their children's tastes and preferences for diversity, and prioritising eating together in fragmented time-space paths. Active personal involvement in the entire consumption process and subsequent domestic production of meaning clearly emerged as having value across the

whole sample. As I will now go on to explore, this emphasis on active choices centralises the self amid the competing forces of globalisation which were almost understood as a contaminating threat to domestic food practices.

## 7.7 Active Consumers

Carla:   And I'm sure we could all eat better, you know we could eat less butter and do… but we do basically give all our kids green vegetables and you know, there are still a lot of people who don't… …. It's like, it's all over the newspapers all the time, how can you not, when you have children, realise that you need to make that an important thing? I don't know, it seems so… nobody cannot know it anymore. It has to be a choice now.
(Carla, 45-54, artist)

As a single parent, the 'we' to which Carla refers is unclear, but I can only assume she means people like her. Relatedly, other people are knowingly making the wrong choices; they are knowingly *choosing* to ignore mediatised information. But like most participants, in navigating the social world, Carla also chooses to ignore much of the wealth of information on offer, specifically that which is aimed at the general public. Yet, ignoring certain information, functions to display more, as oppose to less, knowledge for these participants. This is because they possess dominant capital, which legitimises their performance. Participants distanced themselves from passively consuming mass-messaging, be it marketing messages (such as BOGOF), guidelines about best-before dates, or government health messaging. But as I have suggested, their individualised understandings of themselves and their tastes and practices were similar across the sample, indicating that their tastes and practices are the result of a broader middle-class orientation to value individualism. These individualised identities conducted via food must be understood in relation to public narratives in which notions of the self are made central matters of concern, such as public health policy. For example, publications by Public Health England (2014, 2016) aim to promote healthy (individual) *choices* around eating a balanced diet and exercising. Participants deployed public health narratives of self-control and balance when referring to their diets: using phrases such as 'everything in moderation', for instance.

Yet, on the whole, participants said they had no need to pay attention to public health messaging. This is important because unreflexively reproducing the individualistic nature of health messaging naturalises a pre-disposition to be 'aware'. It highlights how dispositions to self-monitor are understood as an individual practical logic, as oppose to an embodied response

to public health messaging. Positioning the valued aspects of practices and perceptions as a function of individuality, has the effect of positioning participants as self-conscious eaters. It masks the effects of class, which facilitates access to the resources which enable positioning as authentic and knowing. The contemporary foodscape is awash with concerns about the increase in junk food, the decline of cooking, and fears that knowledge about cooking is no longer intergenerationally reproduced from parents to children. My research participants all drew on these public narratives despite their desire to draw on frames of individuality to make sense of themselves in their evaluation of food practices and choices. This reproduces classed practice as the result of individualised capacity: a function of who they are, rather than what they have access to. Individualising tropes around good food leave little space for marginalised people to forge a positive identity for themselves, thus reproducing a class privilege which blocks social mobility. There is scope for much future research which could focus on access to resources in order to undermine the cycle of class privilege around food. In the section that follows, I focus on three such possibilities which have emerged from this research.

## 7.8 Avenues for Further Research

### 7.8.1 *Managing Health Through Food, not Medicine*

Irene:     If we took note of everything they've [the government] said we'd be dead of malnutrition by now. Um cause it seems to contradict itself so often. Um, but I do try and be careful. Um I do try and eat my five a day. I get to four, I'm not sure I get to five every day. Er and I do try to er watch the… er both of us are on statins, so… and I have tried very hard to get my cholesterol level down without them beforehand and it didn't work. Hence… I didn't like porridge, but I learnt to like porridge and that's… you know my sister-in-law's cholesterol fell rapidly when she started eating porridge, mine didn't budge.
KG:        Really?
Irene:     I did the Benecol, nothing happened so eventually I had to give in and go on the statins.
           (Irene, 55-64, retired librarian)

Looking closely at how people might choose to self-monitor via food in order to achieve optimum health was beyond the scope of this study, but it certainly warrants further research. Findings could have important implications for health policy, specifically around the ideological construction of the notion of active choice. Several participants had high blood pressure or high cholesterol, and the ways that they sought to individually control these health issues through food emerged as significant. I have not identified any sociology of health literature which specifically focuses on the ways in which individuals manage

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cholesterol through diet. However, sociological literature about illness has highlighted that responses to illness are framed by the social, cultural, and ideological contexts of individuals' biographies, as well as biophysical symptoms (Nettleton and Watson 1998: 5). As signified in Irene's quote above, taking medication, particularly statins, appears to signify a lack of self-control; refusing them implies a commitment to conduct a healthy lifestyle through effort and food. She had to 'give in' and recognise that her efforts to effectively manage her body were in vain. Moreover, she deals with the risk of stigmatisation of lacking self-discipline, by reiterating her perseverance to adapt her diet. Her narrative illustrates the ways that health solutions are morally positioned as a matter of individual investment. Most research into health inequality focuses on marginalised groups and there is a lack of research which focuses on middle class groupings to consider access and take up of health messaging. Again, this normalises middle-class practice and by implication, reproduces marginalised groups as the other. It obscures the classed relationship between health and lifestyle specifically around the notion of food choice. A Bourdieusian scrutiny of the processes by which healthy identities are enacted and marked as valued through food can illuminate how middle-class identities are normalised in the field of health. This, in turn, could offer considerable explanatory potential for the ways in which access to health is socially and culturally located.

### 7.8.2 *Healthy Children: The Process of Learning*

Kelly:  To be fair, from her being a new born baby, I would think, pretty much, she sat at the table eating. Before she could eat, she sat with us. So she knew what was going on when your sat round a table and I… we kind of tried to like sort of encourage her to be healthy, but she's a very, very good eater anyway. Em so there's not much I would say she would be a fusspot over, like you would need to be…

Maisie:  Apart from tomatoes and broccoli…

KG:  …Right what about snacking? What do you think of snacking, about how it affects mealtimes? Like do you have any like thoughts about it?

John:  Well she constantly grazes so…

Maisie:  Don't eat before teatime or I won't eat my tea

John:  She just grazes from getting up to going to bed, constantly

Kelly:  She must cost me, I would say on average a week, 20 pound in fruit

KG:  In fruit?

Kelly:  In fruit alone

KG:  Yeah

Kelly:  Which is not a bad thing to be fair. It's not… I certainly wouldn't complain about it. I would say she definitely eats more fruit than she does sweets and everything.
(John, 35-44, gas engineer; with wife, Kelly, 35-44, hairdresser, and daughter, Maisie, 6)

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A preference to deliver healthy and diverse food to children emerged as highly significant to all parents in the sample. This was often spoken about in relation to public concerns about childhood obesity. It is rare to hear children's voices in relation to the ways in which family identities are forged through food (Albon 2005). But a growing body of literature has begun to take account of children's and young people's perspectives specifically on food (Atik and Ertekin 2013; Backett-Milburn 2010a and 2010b; Elliott 2014; Wills et al 2008). Much of this research has been in relation to teenagers and their consumption of branded junk foods. There is a need for future sociological research to look more closely at the social and symbolic meanings of food, and at even younger consumers (Elliott 2014: 90). While my research explores how the 'feel for the game' is developed and prioritised in the intergenerational transmission of cultural capital, an exploration of how this training is received would open up new research paths.

Indeed, the conversation above is part of a discussion when John's wife and child joined our research conversation about how they eat together as a family. Maisie has an active voice and at the age of six already reproduces classed ideologies relating to proper food. Her comment that she shouldn't eat before tea is exemplary of the parental teaching she has received about learning to control her appetite. Children as eaters are often positioned as passive recipients of parental food choices; as passively embodying their parental capital. Yet Maisie's voice is clear (and will be familiar to many) in saying she doesn't like tomatoes or broccoli. Several parents (predominantly mothers) talked of the emotional work conducted in order to accommodate children's individual preferences, whilst at the same time embedding classed ideas about 'good' food and ways of eating. On the whole, participants with children talked proudly of their children's diet and the need to limit snacking, which was often aligned with sweets and junk foods.

Given the 'heightened child-centeredness' (Ochs and Kremer-Sadlik 2015: 89) of feeding I have identified, further research would benefit from the inclusion of children's voices in order to empirically understand the impact of generative learning and teaching processes on the formation of food identities. This would involve garnering a deeper understanding of children and young people's experience and perceptions of food and the extent to which they echo and contest parental narratives. This is to identify the ways that children mobilise learnt dispositions, and the extent to which children actively accommodate this teaching through either resistance or acceptance in other social spaces, such as school. Such a generational perspective on the formation of taste would unpick the nuanced ways in which the transmission

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of culinary capital is received and instilled into the habitus. Research with this focus would help uncover the social and cultural conditions which make foods appealing and distasteful to children and young people and the effects of class in these processes.

### 7.8.3  Social Mobility

Gregg:    Um and sometimes food can be used as a way to find out what class you are. And I think people… I've been in people's houses where… where there's almost been a probing sense where it's almost like a test, like a dance, where food is being used as er 'we ate at so and so and we ate x, y and z. Have you…?' You know, not have you ever eaten it? But maybe slightly more subtle than that. Um and I think it's a pretty horrible experience when you're in that sort of situation. Um and it's not… it's not very nice. It's not very host-like. But restaurants are as guilty of that as er… you know, you might not experience it in here as much but certainly in the… in my past, in going to a private school and all the rest of it, as the person on… who's you know not paying fees for example then… then there have been situations where food has been used to embarrass or to upset or to find out what he's made of and you quickly learn what's going on um and it's an uncomfortable place to be. And I think that can have further ramifications in terms of your attitudes towards specific foods or maybe you dislike things because actually you've maybe had a bad experience.
(Gregg, 35-44, project manager)

It is noteworthy that so many participants drew on framings of mobility in relation to their classed identity. This in itself is significant because, as I have argued, my participants' narratives highlighted that mobile, reflexive identities are valued, both in public as well as the individual narratives of the cohort. Specifically paying attention to the complexities of social mobility was beyond the scope of this thesis. But future research which focused especially on class mobility would offer a deeper understanding of the complex ways in which the upwardly mobile negotiate food and identity during their upward trajectory.

There is a small but growing body of literature which provides qualitative accounts of social mobility (Lawler 1999; Friedman 2012; Mallman 2017, 2018), and much of this takes higher education and/or employment as its focus (for instance, Bradley 2018; Friedman et al 2017; Giazitzoglu 2018; Lehmann 2014; Reay 2013, 2018; Reay et al 2009). As the food narratives of the upwardly mobile in my sample suggested, stories of upward mobility were punctured with 'moments of hysteresis' (Friedman 2015: 131) around food. Here, participants recognised classed aspects of these occasions, yet perceived that they lacked the capital to authorise their performance. This resulted in feelings of exclusion and lack. Gregg obtained a

full boarding school scholarship when his father died. His narrative dwelt, as in the comments above, on how such moments are 'an uncomfortable place to be.' But he also suggests how 'you quickly learn what's going on,' that is, to recognise the aesthetic display around food as a class 'dance'. To date, there is no research which pays attention to these moments of disjuncture through the lens of food. And yet such moments could be a vital way of understand class processes. While increasingly class is understood as fragmented and individualised, the food life histories of the upwardly mobile draw attention to the boundaries of class and in particular the experience of crossing them. These *'tension points'* (Mallman 2017: 29; italics original) highlight the fraught nature of upward mobility whereby access to resources brings more possibilities, even if they are experienced with heightened reflexivity.

## 7.9 Conclusion

In this final chapter, I have assembled the findings of this research to offer an account of middle-class food practices and in so doing added layers of complexity to dominant accounts of 'good' food. I have sharpened my focus onto the perspectives and experiences of those with access to resources in order to provide an account of the ways in which classed advantages are reproduced. To do so, I have emphasised the logic of practice inherent in middle-class decision-making and the ways in which it relates to the strategic accumulation of capital. There was a homologous relationship between participants' social position and the classed resources they deployed to make sense of and justify their food choices. Cutting across every participant's understanding of good food was the sense that making an (individual) effort is mandatory. Yet, by probing the minutiae of daily domestic practices, I have shown how food taste preferences can be both compromised and facilitated by circumstances. In so doing, this research complicates the nature of individual *informed* choice, an ideology which is circulated in public and political imaginaries and relies on naïve assumptions about the relationship between knowing and doing.

My research has responded to calls that in order to address class inequality, it is necessary and important to address and critique the assumption that middle-class taste and practice carry inherent value (Reay et al 2011, Savage 2003, 2015, Lawler 2005, Skeggs 2004b, 2004a). I have been driven to redress this: just as whiteness and heterosexuality are saliently normalised, so too are middle-class dispositions (Lawler 2005). Using the examples of foodbanks, obesity and

the circulation of food trends, this thesis began by explaining that class is relevant to *all* understandings of food in Great Britain. Yet political and public narratives about class and food overwhelmingly focus on marginalised groups eating the wrong kinds of foods. There is a lack of scrutiny about how access to 'good' foods relies on the possession of multiple forms of capital. This implicitly marks 'good' food as classless.

Scrutinising how class enables access to choice and valued forms of individuality is fundamental for effecting change in the field of food consumption. The consumer ideology of active and individual choice has highly moralising consequences. It (re)produces a classed rhetoric which focuses on the individualised inadequacies of those cast as ignorant about 'correct' food choices. For example, Jamie Oliver is well-documented for his crusade to educate the nation about healthy eating - but the working classes are undoubtedly his main focus. The focus of my thesis has been to capture the classed processes which normalise ways of being and ways of eating and some of the relational ways which good food literally and metaphorically makes the middle-class embodied habitus. In so doing, I draw attention to the nuanced ways in which middle-class reproduction through food is implicitly marked as legitimate through its separation from the collective mass.

# Appendices

**Appendix 1: Demographic Questionnaire**

1. **What is your age?**

   ☐ 18-24 years old

   ☐ 25-34 years old

   ☐ 35-44 years old

   ☐ 45-54 years old

   ☐ 55-64 years old

   ☐ 65 or more years old

2. **What ethnicity do you consider yourself to be? (Please describe)**

   _____

3. **Where do you live?** _____

4. **Do you own your own property?**

   ☐ Yes

   ☐ No

   **If yes, what is its current approximate value?**

   ☐ Less than £125,000

   ☐ £126,000 to £250,000

   ☐ £250,001 to £500,000

   ☐ £500,001 to £700,000

   ☐ £700,001 to £925,000

   ☐ £925,001 to £1,200,000

   ☐ £1,200,001 to £1,500,000

   ☐ More than £1,500,001

5. **How many bedrooms does it have?**

   _____

6. **How many people live with you?**

   _____

7. **What is your occupation (if any)?**

   _____

8. **What was your previous occupation (if any)?**

   _____

9. **If you live with a partner, what is their occupation?**

   _____

10. **What were/are your parent's occupations?**

_____

11. **What is your annual household income before taxes?**

| | |
|---|---|
| | Less than £15,000 |
| | £15,001-£30,000 |
| | £30,001-£45,000 |
| | £45,001-£60,000 |
| | £60,001-£75,000 |
| | £75,001-£100,000 |
| | £100,001-£150,000 |
| | £150,000-£200,000 |
| | £200,001-£300,000 |
| | Over £300,001 |

12. **What is the highest educational qualification you have completed? (Please describe)**

_____

13. **If you live with a partner, what is the highest educational qualification they have completed?**

_____

**Appendix 2: Recruitment Flyer**

## Participants required for research project

I am looking for participants of all ages (18+) to take part in a research project exploring social class, identity and food consumption in the home.

No matter how much or how little time you spend on food in your household, I am interested in speaking with you.

## What does taking part involve?

You will be invited to be interviewed by me in your home on two separate occasions. Interviews will be informal, entirely confidential and will last around two hours. The first interview will take place in the coming weeks, with a follow-up interview taking place four to five months later.

Interviews will cover a range of topics. These include your life story, how you manage food within your household, different food contexts in the household, and, why and how you choose or avoid certain foods.

### Getting in touch

If you are interested in taking part or would like more information about the project, please visit:
http://research.ncl.ac.uk/foodresearch/
You can also contact me, Kate Gibson, on the following:
Email: food.research@ncl.ac.uk
Call/text: 07340 681 530

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ECONOMIC & SOCIAL RESEARCH COUNCIL

Newcastle University

## Appendix 3: Participant Demographic Details

| Participant number (in order of recruitment | Pseudonym | Age | Occupation | Partner's occupation | Household income (participant estimated) | Property value (participant estimated) | Bedrooms | Household structure | Education level | Partner's education level | Self-identified class (in interview) |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| P02 | Carla | 45-54 | Artist | n/a | £75,000-£100,000 | £500,000-700,000 | 5 | Lives with her four children (primary-school aged to teenage) | BA Hons | n/a | middle class |
| P22 | Charlie | 45-54 | Architect | Project coordinator | £45,001-60,000 | £126,000-£250,000 | 4 | Lives with wife | RIBA | PhD | middle class |
| P24 | Des | 55-64 | Retired medical professional | Retired nurse | £100,000-£150,000 | £250,000-£500,000 | 5 | Lives with wife (has two adult-aged children) | MA | BA | middle class |
| P19 | Ed | 65 + | Retired social worker | n/a | less than £15,000 | £126,000-£250,000 | 2 | Lives alone (divorced, has three adult-aged children) | MA | n/a | working class |
| P7 | Elizabeth | 81 | Retired teacher | Professor (deceased) | £45,001-60,000 | £250,000-£500,000 | 4 | Lives alone (widowed, has two adult-aged children and four grandchildren) | MA translation studies (2013) | PhD | middle class |
| P14 | Fiona | 65+ | Retired accountant | Retired social worker | £30,000-£45,000 | £250,000-£500,000 | 4 | lives with partner (three step and two adult-aged children, and four grandchildren) | MA | BA | middle class |

| Participant number (in order of recruitment | Pseudonym | Age | Occupation | Partner's occupation | Household income (participant estimated) | Property value (participant estimated) | Bedrooms | Household structure | Education level | Partner's education level | Self-identified class (in interview) |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| P5 | Grace | 65+ | Retired librarian | Retired solicitor | £45,001-60,000 | £700,001-£925,000 | 6 | Lives with husband (has one adult-aged son and one grandchild) | Postgraduate Qualification | Postgraduate qualification | middle class |
| P26 | Gregg | 35-44 | Project manager | Dentist | £100,000-£150,000 | £250,000-£500,000 | 4 | Lives with wife (pregnant) and son (toddler) | BA | Degree | middle class |
| P12 | Harriet | 55-64 | Teacher | Medical professional | £150000-£200000 | £500,000-700,000 | 3 | Lives with husband (has daughter at university) | PGCE | Medical degree | middle class |
| P06 | Helen | 55-64 | Arts professional | Retired writer | £60-001-75,000 | £250,000-£500,000 | 4 | Lives with partner | Mphil | BA | middle class |
| P21 | Ian | 25-34 | Nurse | Project officer | £45,001-60,000 | £126,000-£250,000 | 3 | Lives with wife | BSc | BSc | middle class |
| P09 | Ingrid | 25-34 | Graphic designer | Project officer | dna | £126,000-£250,000 | 2 | lives with husband | BA | MA | middle class |
| P15 | Irene | 55-64 | Retired librarian | Retired director | £30,000-£45,000 | £250,000-£500,000 | 5 | Lives with husband (has two adult-aged children) | BA | BA | middle class |
| P01 | Jane | 45-54 | Project coordinator | Business owner | 45,000-60,000 | 250,000-500,000 | 3 | Lives with partner (has two adult-aged children) | MA | City and Guilds | working class |

| Participant number (in order of recruitment | Pseudonym | Age | Occupation | Partner's occupation | Household income (participant estimated) | Property value (participant estimated) | Bedrooms | Household structure | Education level | Partner's education level | Self-identified class (in interview) |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| P25 | John | 35-44 | Gas engineer | hairdresser | £15,000-30,000 | dna | 2 | Lives with wife and primary-school aged daughter | NVQ Level 3 | NVQ Level 3 | working class |
| P03 | Julie | 35-44 | Occupational therapist | Academic | £75,000-£100,000 | £250,000-£500,000 | 4 | Lives with husband and two children (primary school-aged) | Degree | PhD | working class |
| P18 | Juliette | 35-44 | Tutor | IT specialist | £45,001-60,000 | £250,000-£500,000 | 5 | Lives with husband and two primary-school aged children (has two adult-aged step children) | PhD | Degree | middle class |
| P17 | Layla | 35-44 | Teacher | Manager | £75,000-£100,000 | £250,000-£500,000 | 5 | Lives with husband and three young children (two pre-school, one primary-school aged) | PGCE | BA | middle class |
| P16 | Linda | 45-54 | Retired head teacher | Retired head teacher | £15,000-£30,000 | £250,000-£500,000 | 2 | Lives with husband (has one adult-aged son and two adult-aged stepsons) | MA x 2 | NPQH | middle class |

| Participant number (in order of recruitment | Pseudonym | Age | Occupation | Partner's occupation | Household income (participant estimated) | Property value (participant estimated) | Bedrooms | Household structure | Education level | Partner's education level | Self-identified class (in interview) |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| P04 | Mary | 35-44 | Accountant | Consultant | £60,000-£75,000 | £126,000-£250,000 | 3 | Lives with partner and primary-school aged son (has two teenage step-children) | BSc | A-levels | working class |
| P11 | Maya | 45-54 | Senior medical professional | Academic | £100,000-£150,000 | £500,000-700,000 | 5 | Lives with husband and teenage son (has daughter at university) | PhD | PhD | middle class |
| P23 | Neil | 45-54 | IT consultant | Housemaker | £75,000-£100,000 | £250,000-£500,000 | 5 | Lives with wife and two teenage children | MBA | Bsc | middle class |
| P10 | Peter | 25-34 | Project officer | Project officer | £30,000-£45,000 | renting | 2 | Lives with fiancée | BA | PhD | middle class |
| P08 | Philip | 55-64 | Academic | NA | £45,001-60,000 | £250,000-£500,000 | 3 | Lives alone | BSc | NA | middle class |
| P13 | Sara | 25-34 | Project Coordinator | Teacher | £60-001-£75,000 | Less than £125,000 | 2 | Lives with husband | MA | MA | unsure |
| P27 | Steve | 35-44 | Business manager | Accountant | £100,000-£150,000 | £250,000-£500,000 | 3 | lives with partner (has primary-school aged daughter who lives there part-time) | MBA | ACCA | middle class |
| P20 | Thomas | 65+ | Retired consultant | Retired project manager | £30,000-£45,000 | £126,000-£250,000 | 3 | Lives with wife (has two adult-aged children) | MA | MBA | lower middle class |

# A. Introductory questions

1.  **Could you tell me about other people living here with you and their relationship to you?**
*If children probe for: age/life stage, whether left home and if so, what they are doing.*
*If partner probe for how long in relationship, what job they do.*

2.  **I'd like to talk to you about how food is managed within your household. Could you talk me through a typical week in terms of your food practices?**
*Probe for:*
*Shopping*
*Who does the food shopping? Where and why there?*
*How important is cost? Do you ever economise with food? How? Do you bulk buy or stock up on particular items? Such as?*
*Do you write a shopping list? How do you keep track of what you need?*
*What kinds of foods do you buy? What kinds of foods don't you buy?*
*How is food prepared*
*Who does the cooking? Do they cook from scratch? Why/why not? How long do they spend?*
*Mealtimes*
*Who eats with who? All the time? Why/why not? Where do they eat?*

3.  **What about special occasions? Do they make a difference to the way you eat or prepare food in the home?**
    *Why/Why not? Probe for examples*

4.  **Does work or leisure activities effect the way you manage food in the home?**
    *If so, in what ways? Probe for examples and what takes priority.*
    *Do they prevent or facilitate eating in particular ways? Do they have a positive or negative effect?*
    *Do you organise your time to ensure you eat in a particular way?*

5.  **I'm interested in finding out about whether you have an ideal regarding eating certain foods or in particular ways at home. Can you tell me a little bit about how you like things to happen?**
    *Are there times when this doesn't happen?*

# B. Maps

**I'd like to explore in more detail who you eat with at home. The aim of this activity is to think about people in your life NOW and with whom you <u>share food</u> (or provide with food) in your home. Looking at this diagram, can you please write the names of each person, with those who are most important to you closest to the centre, which refers to you. You don't need to include people in every ring, and please just concentrate on those people with whom you eat**

**or provide with food in your home. After you've arranged these people onto the diagram, I'm going to ask you some questions about each person (or sets of people, if you'd prefer).**

(Allow time to complete diagram and pay attention to instances where participant makes comments/reflections)

**I'm now going to ask you a few questions about each person you have listed** *(reminder there is likely to be repetition here).*

1. **Why have you placed x there on the circle?**
2. **Can you describe your relationship with them?**
   PROBE FOR: *How long have you known them? How did you meet? How old are they? What do they do? How often do you see them and why?*
3. **Can you tell me about the role that food plays in your relationship with x?**
   PROBE FOR: *Do you eat with them? How often? Where in the home? Do you cook for them? What kinds of foods do you (and don't you) share/provide? Why/why not? Is it important that you eat with them?*
4. **If you eat together, can you tell me a little bit about what happens?**
5. **How is this relationship different from other relationships where food features?**
   PROBE FOR: *How eating occasions differ internally within the household and with non-family members.*

**Finally, thinking about you when you eat alone in the home?**

   a. *Is this different? If so in what ways?*
      PROBE FOR: *When do you eat alone? Under what circumstances? What sorts of provisions if you're eating alone? Use of time (preparing, eating), where they eat, type of food they eat.*

(Number each person in turn as participant discusses and mention number and location in the map for the audio recording.)


## C. Questions about attitudes

   **I'd now like to explore your attitudes to food.**

1. **Is food important to you? Why/why not?**
2. **What do you think constitutes good and bad food?**
   *Probe for examples.*
3. **Do you think it's important to eat good food?**
4. **How do you think people are able to eat good food in the home?**
5. **Are there occasions when you feel you don't eat as well as you'd like to?**
   *Probe for examples.*
6. **What do you think constitutes good and bad taste in food?**
   *How does that compare to say fashion, decor or music? Is having good taste in food the same kind of thing? Probe for examples.*
7. **How do people know what good taste is?**
8. **Do you think it's important to have good taste?**

## D. Life History

**I'd now like to explore your personal life history in order to put your current food practices and preferences into a longer-term perspective. So could you please take me through your life story as you see it? You can take as much time as you need and there isn't a 'right' way to do this.**

Allow participant some time to construct their own response and if necessary tell them to start with whatever they feel is most important. If they are really struggling, or if response is really brief, go to the following prompts (depending on characteristics/life stage of participants).

PROBE FOR:

- *Starting with your early childhood:*
  - *Where did you grow up?*
  - *What was your home life like? What did your parent's do?*
  - *What are your earliest memories of food?*
  - *What family stories are there about you and your siblings and food?*
  - *Did you have a typical eating pattern?*
  - *What kind of eater were you?*
  - *Who/what influenced your relationship to food?*
  - *Were you encouraged to eat particular foods or in a particular way as a child?*
- *Thinking about your school years:*
  - *Did things change or stay the same?*
  - *Can you recall anything in particular relating to food?*
- *How about when you left home?*
  - *Did you think about food in the same way?*
  - *Did you make any conscious changes to the way you eat?*
  - *What influenced your tastes and practices?*
- *How about when you started university/working?*
- *Living with a partner/having children?*
  - *Do you encourage your children to eat certain foods or in a particular way?*
- *Overall, what or who would you say have influenced your relationship to food?*
- *How have your food tastes changed over time and can you think of any key moments in your life that have influenced this?*

## E. Identity

**I'm interested in how you see yourself as a person, and whether and in what ways this might have shifted or changed over the course of your life.**

1. **Do you think of yourself as belonging to a social class? If so, which one, and why? If not, why not?**

*Have you always felt this way? Did you feel you belonged to a particular social class when you were growing up?*

*Have any food experiences ever made you more or less aware of yourself as belonging to a class?*

*And if you feel like you do belong to a particular class, do you think that has influenced your food habits and attitudes? Why/why not?*

**2. Do you think our food choices reflect the kind of people we are?**
*Why/Why not?*


**3. Do you see yourself as belonging to a particular generation?**
*Why/Why not?*
*Have any food experiences ever made you more or less aware of yourself as belonging to a particular generation?*
*If so, do you think that belonging to a particular generation has influenced your food habits and attitudes? Why/why not?*
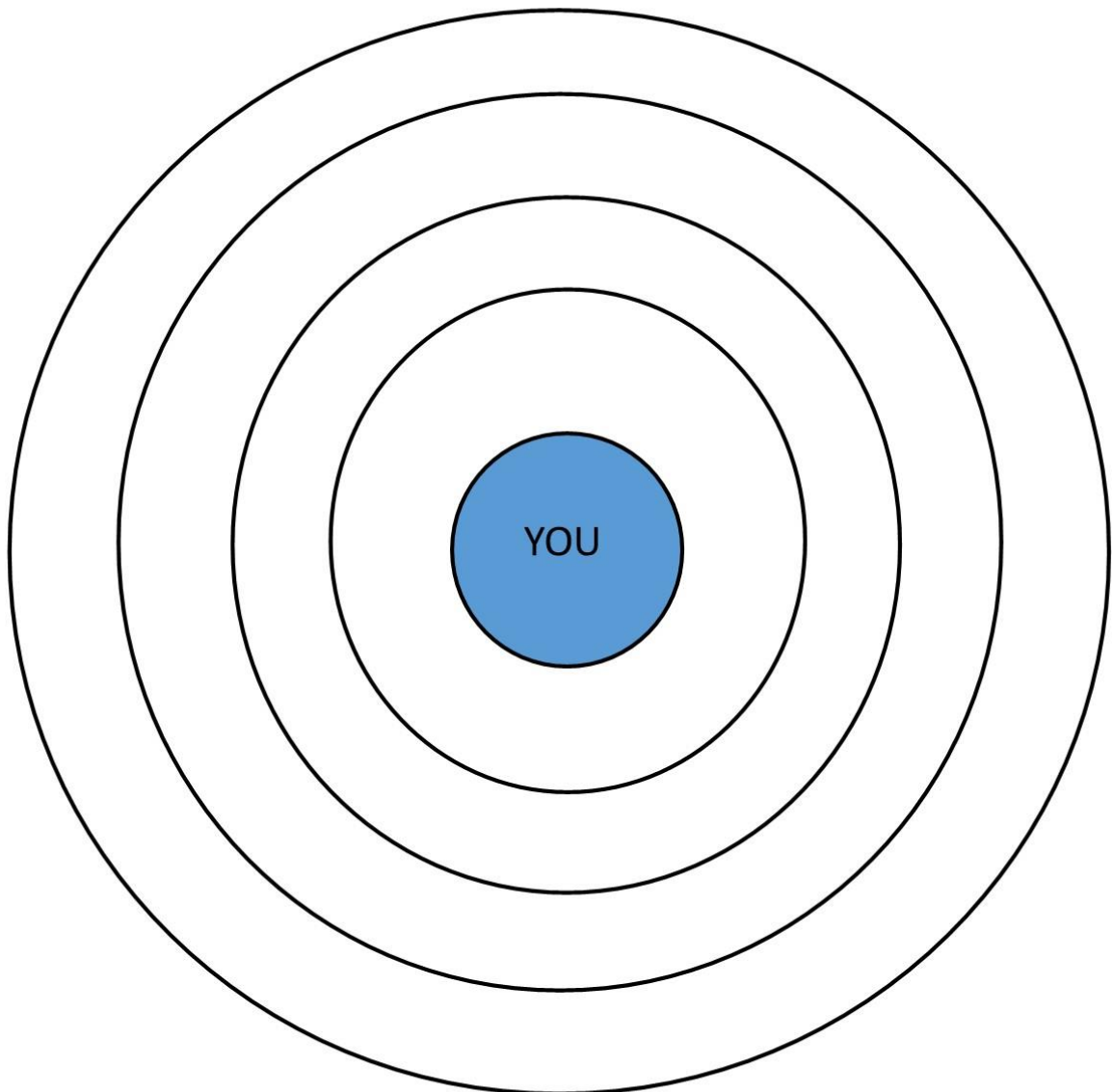*What about your parents/your children?*


**Is there anything else you would like to add? Or ask? Thank you.**

**Appendix 5: Personal Community Map**

# Personal Community Map

**Participant number:** _____

YOU

### Appendix 6: Wave Two Interview Schedule

(This was used as a rough guide)

In this interview I'd like to follow up on a few things we talked about last time, chat about your photos and also as we discussed, I would like to have a look and take some photos if that's ok with you? Basically I'm looking to document food storage areas, the kitchen and places you eat, prepare, manage and dispose of food.

## Revisiting last time
**Q: Did you think about any of the things we talked about last time? Was there anything you wanted to add?**
**Q: Why did you participate in this project?**
<u>Probe for</u>
*Could they see their participation achieving anything?*


## Participant photos
**Q: Why did you chose to take these particular photos?**
**Q: Talk me through them.**
<u>Probe for</u>
*Probe for regular everyday meals v special.*
*How easy or difficult they found it to choose what photos to take.*


# Food tours
I'm interested in having a look through your food storage areas and also where you eat.

*Note which spaces are dedicated to food and how is space managed to enact particular practices (veg patches, chest freezers, integral kitchen diners, large dining tables, bench seating…)*

**The kitchen/ food-related displays (photographing)**
*Take note of what's on display, what's visible? How do they denote the tastes, preferences and markers of family life?*

**Q: Tell me about them (talking points)**
*Probe for anything sentimental and reminiscent of the past? Are they important? Are they incorporated into everyday life (ie connecting past to the present (and future) through practice)? What's the relationship between these material things and family identities?*

**Q: Cookery books (most are on display). Tell me about those?**
*Probe for their histories, could they narrate a kind of food life history through the books?*

**Looking through food cupboards and storage areas (photographing)**

**Q: Talk me through your cupboards.**
*Ask participant to talk me through what is in here. Note what they start with, what they elaborate on, what stories they tell, what they ignore.*

*Probe for what is used when. Who eats what? Is there anything in there they hardly ever use? Is there anything here that's out of the ordinary?*

**Q: How does this compare to when you were growing up? Is there anything there that reminds you of your childhood?**

**Q: How would it have looked before you had children? (if relevant)**
*Probe for any major shifts with arrival of kids.*

**Q: How does this compare to when you first started feeding yourself (left home or went to university)?**

<u>**Looking through fridges/freezers (and photographing):**</u>

**Q: Talk me through what's in there**
*Probe for what is used when. Who eats what? Is there anything in there they hardly ever use? Is there anything here that's out of the ordinary?*

**Q: Does anything ever get thrown out? Do you do anything to avoid waste? Is that important to you? Why? Do you pay attention to use by dates?**

**Q: How do you know when something should be thrown out? When does something become inedible?**
*Probe for knowledge about what's edible, what's inedible (the process of discernment and assessment). Who makes these types of decisions? How does this tie in with writing shopping lists or forward planning?*

**Q: What do you do with leftovers?**
*Do they make use of them? If so, why? Do they incorporate into new meal? How do they classify which bits to use? Who eats the leftovers? Everyone?*

**Q: Have you planned what you will be eating for the next few days?**

## Cooking spaces
*Note design of eating and cooking spaces. What does it enable/prevent?*

**Q: Appliances – is there anything important about them? How much do you rely on them?**
*How integral to life are the various kitchen appliances?*

**Q: Do you have a microwave? What do you use your microwave for?**
*What does it enable, what does it prevent? What is its relationship to time?*

**Q: Where are your pans/baking dishes/utensils kept?**
*What do you use most? Are there conflicts over what is kept out vs put away?*

**Q: Do you like cooking? Do you ever dislike cooking?**

**Q: Would you say that preparing homemade food is a commitment in terms of time and labour?**

**Q: Have you heard of Hello Fresh, the meal delivery service that sends you menu cards and ingredients? Would you ever use anything like that? Why/why not?**

**Q: What does eating healthily mean to you?**

**Q: How much attention to you pay to government health advice?**

**Q: How much attention to you pay to food trends?**

## Eating spaces (and photographing):

*Some of this covered in Wave One, but useful to revisit alongside observations*

Household eating

**Q: Who usually eats here, and when? Where does everyone sit – at different meals? Why there? How does this compare to when you grew up?**

**Q: What are you doing when you're eating?**
*Probe for tablets, phones, TV. Are there table rules?*

**Q: Is eating together the main time that you catch up? Which meal?**

**Q: Are there ever any tensions in the household meal?**
*When are they? How are they dealt with? How does it influence the family eating together? Have they got examples? How are everyone's food preferences negotiated? Do you introduce new foods to the kids?*

**Q: What about snacking, how does that affect mealtimes?**
> *Is snacking seen as a disruption of mealtimes, or does it enable family meals? Do they think snacking is healthy?*

Non-household eating

**Q: Apart from everyone who lives here, who else might routinely eat here eg share an ordinary household meal without a formal invitation?**
*Probe for extended family, close friends, children's friends etc.*

**Q: What about when you cook for people outside the family, having someone over for dinner, someone invited specifically?** *Probe for who, on what occasions; is cooking comfortable? Is eating comfortable?*

**Q: When you look back at when you first cooked for other people or had someone over for dinner, is it different now? How?**

**Q: Did your parents have people over for dinner?**
*How are theirs different/the same? Are yours less formal?*

**Q: Do you have a dining room? When do you use it? Why?**

**Q: (if relevant) Do your children have people over for dinner? What happens?**
*Are there frustrations? Do they slot in with the household meal?*

**Q: Are there any other food-related places we haven't covered?**

## Shopping

**Q: How much time do you spend planning and doing the food shopping per week?**

**Q: Do you enjoy food shopping? What do you like? What don't you like?**

**Q: What kinds of things guide your decisions when you shop?**
*Probe for health, local, economics, value, ethical, quality. How do they know about these things?*

**Q: How much do you spend on food? How do you feel about that?**
*Probe at control over food budget, are they squeezed, what would they or do they do if they're financially squeezed?*

**Q: Have you ever had to be cautious about how much money you spent on food?**
*What did they eat? Did they make sacrifices? Do they enjoy getting a bargain? Why?*


## Clearing up spaces and things

**Q: Do you have a dishwasher? Who stacks and unloads it?**
*Probe for who does it and when? Are there conflicts over dirty dishes?*

**Q: When do you clean up surfaces and floors during/after cooking?**
*Probe for aspects of cleaning that are important*

**Q: How do you dispose of food and other waste in the kitchen?**
*How much is recycled/where/how? What do you do about the bin? Who puts it out?*

### Appendix 7: Participant Information Sheet

**An exploration of the relationship between household food practices and social class**

You are being invited to take part in a research project. Before we commence the research process it is important that you understand why this research is being carried out and what your participation will involve. Please take time to read through the following information carefully and decide whether you wish to take part. Please feel free to discuss it with others, and ask if anything is unclear or if you would like more information.

**Who is conducting the research?**
The research is being conducted by me, Kate Gibson, as part of my PhD in Sociology at Newcastle University. I am a student working under the supervision of Dr Cathrine Degnen, Dr Lisa Garforth and Professor Alison Stenning.

**What is the study about?**
The purpose of this research is to explore the relationship between social class and aspects of our identity through focusing on people's household food practices.

Whether or not you spend time preparing food in your home, I am particularly interested in finding out about your attitudes to different foods and the different contexts in which you eat in the home.

**What does my participation entail?**
I intend to interview twenty-five people on two separate occasions. The interviews will be informal and relaxed and are expected to last around two hours. I would like to conduct interviews in people's homes because I am particularly interested in household food practices.

Prior to the first interview, you will be invited to complete a short demographic questionnaire that asks you about things such as your age, ethnicity, occupation, education level, and household income. The information you provide will be kept confidentially and will assist me in documenting your demographic characteristics.

In the first interview I would like to ask you questions about your attitudes to food, your sense of identity and the role food plays in your life history and in your social relationships. After my visit, I will leave a disposable camera with you and request that you take around 20 photographs of food in your life over the following period of two weeks. Once you have done this, I will ask you to return the camera to me in a pre-paid envelope which I will leave with you.

After this, I plan to contact you again to arrange a second visit. In this second visit, I would like to explore issues arising from the findings of the first wave of interviews. In addition, I would like to ask you to show me any food-related aspects of your home (such as your fridge or the places you eat). We will also have a chance to discuss the photographs you have taken which I will have printed and bring with me. I will also be keen to document some of what you show me by taking some photographs. This will not be done without your consent.

**What will you do with the information I provide?**
The interviews will be audio recorded and transcribed by me. I will analyse the transcripts for themes. Any photos taken will be analysed alongside these themes.

The research findings will be used in my final PhD thesis, with a possibility of also being used for reports and articles in academic journals and academic conference presentations.

**Will my involvement be kept confidential?**

Transcripts, audio recordings and photographs will be stored securely at Newcastle University for the duration of the project. These details will only be accessed by me. Your real name will be changed during transcription, which will be done by me. Any other details which make you easily identifiable will not be used in my final thesis or any other pieces of work relating to this research. Whilst every effort will be made to ensure your anonymity, it is important to point out that the nature of some of your comments and answers may reveal your identity. No photos will be used which make you or the whereabouts of your home identifiable.

Confidentiality will be assured unless you indicate that you or anyone else is at risk of harm, for example being a victim of crime.

Your contact details will be stored securely at Newcastle University on a password-protected computer. These will only be shared with a designated contact who will need to be informed of my whereabouts during interviews.

**What happens if I decide not to take part or change my mind?**

If you decide to take part, you will be given this information sheet to keep and will be asked to sign a consent form prior to each interview. Your participation in this project is entirely voluntary and you are free to withdraw at any time, including during an interview, without giving a reason.

**Who has reviewed the research?**

The research has been reviewed and approved by Newcastle University's Research Ethics Committee.

**Further Information**

If you have any concerns or would like to discuss your participation further, I can be contacted by email at food.research@ncl.ac.uk or by telephone/text on 07539 644 345.

If you have any further concerns or queries, please feel free to contact one of my supervisors:

Cate Degnen, email: cathrine.degnen@newcastle.ac.uk, telephone: 0191 208 8467

Lisa Garforth, email: lisa.garforth@newcastle.ac.uk, telephone: 0191 208 7876

Alison Stenning, email: alison.stenning@newcastle.ac.uk, telephone: 0191 208 8017

## Appendix 8: Participant Consent Form for the Collection and Use of Interview and Photographic Data

**Research Project:** An exploration of the relationship between household food practices and social class

**Researcher:** Kate Gibson

**Please circle each statement below as appropriate:**

1. I have read and I understand the participant information sheet.     YES/NO

2. I have had the chance to ask questions I may have about the project.  YES/NO

3. I agree to take part in this study.                 YES/NO

4. I understand that data collected in this interview will be used as part of this project and may be used in written reports including a dissertation and papers for publication.      YES/NO

5. I understand that interviews conducted will be audio recorded and that these recordings will then be transcribed for analysis.       YES/NO

6. I give permission for my words to be quoted in any publications or presentations arising from this research but that my real name and any identifiable details will be changed during transcription so as to protect my identity.          YES/NO

7. I consent to the researcher using photos taken by me in this project and any publications arising from this research which do not make me or the location of my home identifiable.      YES/NO

8. I understand that the researcher will not take any photos without requesting permission at the time. YES/NO

9. I understand that photos taken by the researcher will be used in this project and any publications arising from this research, but these will not make me or the location of my home identifiable. YES/NO

10. I understand that all information I provide within this interview will be securely stored and treated confidentially. YES/NO

11. I understand that I may withdraw from participation in this project at any time and request that the data I have provided be destroyed.   YES/NO

**If you are happy to proceed, sign and date below**

Name of participant: _____

Signature: _____ Date: _____

I, Kate Gibson, confirm that I have discussed the participant information sheet and the process of informed consent with the participant.

Signature: _____ Date: _____

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