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**A study of consumers' identity construction  
within food culture**

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Some parts of this thesis have been presented at academic events during the process of developing this research

Tonner A (2008) 'Celebrity Chefs as brand and their cookbooks as marketing communication', Academy of Marketing Conference, Aberdeen University

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## **Abstract**

This thesis explores the relationships between consumers, society and food, with the aim of understanding how individuals create self-identity through food culture. The study is based within Consumer Culture Theory, particularly the body of work considering consumers' identity projects and makes theoretical contribution therein. It focuses within food culture because it encompasses universal consumption which is: mundane and symbolic, social and personal, incorporates both work and pleasure and as such contains distinctive insight for consumer identity. Food consumption is also both practice and policy relevant representing the world's largest industry and a key governmental priority.

The findings of this narrative study show that people construct self by negotiating the territory between established theoretical traditions, understanding their own identity as more nuanced than the extremis positions can suggest. The main theoretical contribution in this area is a refinement of extant models of extended-self. It considers that factors of unextended-self are uniquely configured. It finds that consumption can be both instrumental to maintaining unextended-self and a factor of extended-self in its own right and that in this second state it should be understood within a separate category distinct from sans-consumption self. It proposes that understanding how consumer culture becomes subsumed into extended-self requires examination of three distinct matters: characteristics of incorporation, means of incorporation and relevant incorporation activities.

The thesis also contributes to theory upon the social antecedents of identity and consumption. It finds that personal unique constructions of family and friendship are the most enduring and directly impactful relationships. Food culture maintains these relationships while simultaneously being influenced by them and the antecedents of self-identity which they represent.

It concludes with implications for social marketing which embrace the influence of niche-groups upon individuals and for food marketers to ensure opportunity for consumer identity work as part of branded relationships.

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# **Chapter 1: Introduction to the Research**

## **1.0 Introduction**

This thesis is primarily concerned with understanding the complex relationship which consumers have with food culture and how this is affected by the social influences which surround them. This chapter provides both an introduction to the thesis and overview of its progression. It begins by outlining the core theoretical tradition to which it proposes to contribute, namely consumer culture theory as proposed by Arnould & Thompson (2005, 2007) before establishing the context for the research. It briefly defines the research aim, questions and methodology which are expanded upon throughout the thesis. Finally brief summaries of each of the chapters of the thesis are also presented.

## **1.1 Theoretical Tradition of the Research**

The purpose of this section is to identify the broad conceptual area within which this thesis resides and define that which is variously referred to as consumption, consumer culture and beyond. The concept of consumption is not simple or self-evident leading Ekstrom & Brembeck (2004) to consider it 'Elusive Consumption', and so this section while considering a number of the meanings which have become associated with the term will try to define the theoretical tradition within which the study at hand is conducted. It will consider specifically the theoretical perspective coming out of the work of Arnould & Thompson (2005:868) conceptualised as Consumer Culture Theory and referring to a family of contributions that address the "dynamic relationships between consumer actions, the marketplace, and cultural meanings".

### **1.1.1 The development of consumption and the consumer.**

In the family of concepts including the consumer, consumer society, consumer culture and consumerism Aldridge (2003) argues it is their nature that no final agreement about their definitions will ever be achieved (Aldridge, 2003). Wilk (2004: 11) suggests that the "harder one tries to define the term the fuzzier its meanings and boundaries become" but he suggests this is in common with many popular concepts and categories which are typically complex and considers that they are made concrete and meaningful by metaphorical linkage to objects and experiences to which consumers and researchers have direct understanding. So, as this

section will explore consumption discussions have tended to utilise this linking of the concrete to the conceptual as a method of sense making.

Since at least the 14th century “consume” has been in common usage meaning both to utilise and to destroy (Gabriel & Lang, 1995) and as Aldridge (2003) notes was originally a pejorative term focusing upon the destroy aspect of the concept and becoming synonymous with wasting diseases and notably latterly tuberculosis. This negative meaning is one which endured through the pre-industrialised time until the mid-19th century and as Trentmann (2006) argues, before Veblen’s (1899), much cited, writing of the leisure classes, the negative image of the consumer was easily invoked in debates over luxury, unproductive consumers were seen to undermine the national economy through their selfish and unproductive pursuit of novelties. Williams (1976) however argues that even before Veblen’s work, by the mid nineteenth century “consumer” is beginning to become a more neutral term, part of the emerging language of political economy. During this period, however, consumption was viewed as indistinguishable from the economics of production and so economic models setting consumption as a consequence of production and exchange became dominant (Mill, 1844).

Only since the start of the 20th century has consumption as we now understand it emerged. With the rise of economic and social freedoms came an ability to enjoy goods and derive pleasure for them (Lasch, 1984) for increasingly large sections of the population of western economies. Veblen (1899) had identified that in the late 19th Century industrialisation was bringing change to the upper and middle classes in terms of their freedoms. With early 20th Century Fordism, a phenomenon which embraces both production and consumption, came the transformation of consumerism from an elite to a mass phenomenon (Williams, 1976).

Fordism beginning in the 1920s is argued to have created the context for modern consumption practice (Gabriel & Lang, 1995:9). Strasser (1989) argues that trends from this era turn customers into consumer: the growing impersonality of buyer-seller relationships; self-service; advertising; packaging; and the rise of branded goods all put consumers much more in control of their purchasing decisions.

The post-Fordist period which some commentators argue endures today sees a “global marketplace (in which) the consumer is sovereign, and no major company can succeed unless

it is able to meet individual requirements and respond quickly to changes in consumer demand” (Aldridge, 2003:51). Gabriel & Lang (1995) argue this marks also the emergence of post-modernity, “(post) modern consumerism really takes off with the growth of effective advertising campaigns, where the systematic moulding of consciousness can take place.” (ibid: 17). This is argued to be the period when the consumer discourse really rises and a doctrine of individualism becomes dominant. Urban mobility increases and the ties to kin and neighbourhood, particularly for younger generations become estranged, so there is argued to be a shift from community, people centred concerns to objects or material accumulation centred activity. Tadajewski (2006) argues that it also precipitates a change in the way in which the consumer is researched with a much greater focus upon the consumer experience and a turn towards Consumer Culture Theory.

### **1.1.2 Consumer Culture Theory**

Consumption this thesis contends is an important means of contemporary sense making but Zukin & Maguire (2004) argue that it was a relatively neglected field of research for social scientist through the 1990s and that this was partly due to contemporary consumption theory being multi-faceted, and disciplinary boundaries and traditions being challenged by it. Warde (1997: 19) questioned “is consumption a coherent conceptual field since the activities and items involved may not be heterogeneous, what can be said for fashion clothing may not apply to food.” However, for consumer researchers, there is a commonality of thought which ties the study together. Campbell (2004), Belk et al (2003) and others have put emotion, desire and imagination at the centre of the discussion arguing, from exploring marketplace interactions, that valid theories of consumer culture can be developed. Further they argue that it is because the marketplace offers consumers such a large and heterogeneous range of opportunities and experiences that it can be considered to be impactful in collective and individual identity construction (Arnould & Thompson, 2005).

Holt (1995) begins to map consumption practices, building upon Simmel (1950) who defined consumption as a type of social action in which people make use of consumption objects in a variety of ways, with the basic conceptual units used to describe consumers’ actions termed consumption practices. Holt (1995) uses this language to develop a typology of consumption practices that usefully represent the ways on which consumers interact with consumption objects. Building upon the work existing within the field, which he argues defines three

dimensions of how people consume: consuming as experience, as integration and as classification, and suggests a 4th typology- consuming as play. This recognises that consumption is a varied and effortful endeavour not necessarily determined by the characteristics of the object, which may be consumed in a variety of ways by different consumers. Holt (1995) considers these interactions and motivation as the key territory of consumption work.

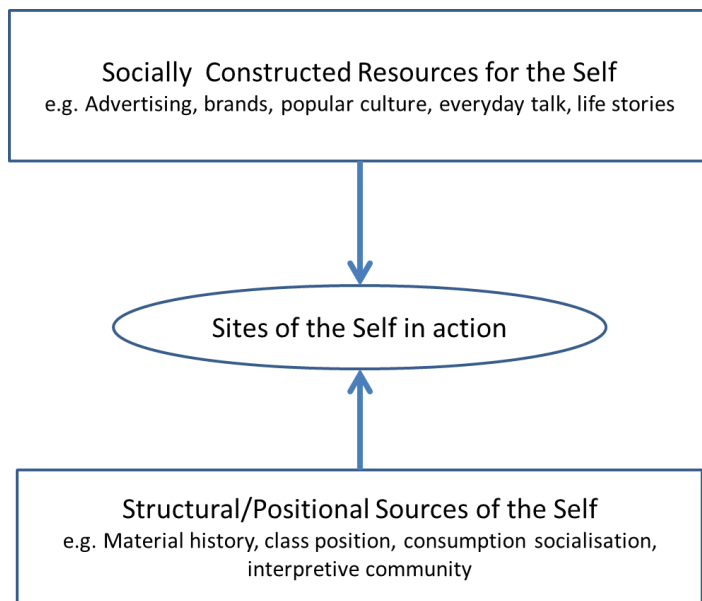
The most central of Holt's typologies to this thesis is consumption as integration, which reflects upon the work of Belk (1988) and McCracken (1986) on self-extension, where consumers integrate self and object, allowing them to appropriate an object's symbolic properties. It is to this body of work which the thesis most clearly contributes concerned as it is with understanding how individuals create and maintain self-identity in contemporary consumer culture. Holt's other typologies, however, are also reflected upon within the work: Consuming as experience, views consuming as a psychological phenomenon which emphasises the emotional states arising during consumption (Holbrook & Hirschman, 1982), the thesis touches upon this area- considering nostalgia when eating childhood food and the loved nature of food culture, among others; Consumption as classification has roots within semiotics and views consuming as a process in which objects, viewed as vessels of cultural meaning act to classify the consumer (Levy, 1959 & Douglas, 1979), this thesis reflects upon the social antecedents to consumption from family through gender and informants own reflections upon social difference demonstrated through their consumption; and finally Consumption as play explores how consumers use consumption objects as a resource to interact with fellow consumers (Arnould & Price, 1993). Since Holt's work this area has become more dominant, within the world of web 2.0, consumer interactions are increasingly being studied (Kozinets et al, 2008) and this thesis discusses how in the off-line world consumers use consumption as a means of engaging with others and maintain important social ties.

Arnould and Thompson (2005) pick up Holt's mantle and, reflecting upon the preceding two decades of consumer research in the *Journal of Consumer Research*, suggest that mapping the work to, what they term, Consumer Culture Theory is a means to bring together the key interests and theoretical themes of consumer researchers. They suggest that "consumer culture" illustrates that way that individuals and groups can use commercial concepts, images and objects as part of their everyday practices to create identities, and meaning which

makes sense of world around and their own lived experience. Geertz's (1973) earlier work concludes importantly that consumer researchers do not simply study consumption contexts; they study them in order to generate new constructs, insights and to extend existing theoretical contributions in the field and this is the aim of the current thesis. Consumer culture theory has at its core a focus upon consumption in context rather than in unreal, created, hypothetical settings, though Belk (1988) argues against methodological cyclopia. Unpicking this perspective it coalesces around the interaction of three interrelated items:

1. Commercial market made commodities: to include texts, objects and images, as Borgmann (2000) discusses, the artefacts of the material world.
2. Individuals and groups: the individual as a unit of inquiry lies at the heart of much of the research within the field either acting alone in their relation to others (Holt & Thompson, 2004). Increasingly attention is paid to groups as units of inquiry such as the family (Penaloza, 2011) or neo-tribe (Cova, Kozinets & Shankar, 2007) .
3. The social environment: Finally there is the recognition that the individual and the artefacts with which he interacts exist within a social system. As Durkheim's (2005 [1914]) dualism suggests- we are neither fully for ourselves or fully for society- rather we are continually pulled between two contending forces. Social routines and habits keeping us from diverging too far from collective representations and so research with individuals and groups can illuminate, and should recognise the structures imposed by, the wider world.

This relationship of factors is represented by Elliot (2004) in figure 1.1 and will form the basis of the research framework for this thesis and act as a means of structuring the remaining chapters in the literature review, encouraging a broad examination of the key writings within the CCT tradition, and beyond through its findings and discussion.



**Figure 6.1 Consumer Culture Theory (Elliot, 2004)**

Arnould and Thompson (2005) in defining Consumer Culture Theory argue for four domains of research which cut across the traditional economic constructions of production, exchange and consumption looking rather at socio-cultural meanings. These domains are now considered and particular attention will be paid to the first two of these: consumer identity projects and socio-historic patterning of consumption and these will be expanded upon in chapters 3 and 4 of the thesis since it is to these research programs which its findings makes most contribution and the research most naturally finds a home.

1. Consumer identity projects,- Conceptions of identity are considered further within the literature review but here it is worth reflecting back on Bauman’s (1988) conception of consumption. He argues in that in late modernity, or some would argue post-modernity, the concept of identity is on “everybody’s mind and tongue” ( ibid: 17) and is born out of the crisis of belonging which accompanies a consumption, rather than production focused, economy: where identity work was more centrally done by occupation and social standing. Arnould & Thompson (2005) consider that Belk (1988) sits centrally to this stream, with his discussion of the inclusion of material objects into the extended-self producing a rich seam of consumer research work e.g. Kyung Park & Roedder John (2011). In this work consumers must be recognised as “co-producers of desire and identity and active participants in consumer self-seduction” (Belk, 2004: 71). Belk’s (1988) work is often considered as marking a discursive shift from passive to active consumer. This theory area and the others

which follow show a recognition of Holts' typologies of consumption which precede them, here notably consumption as integration. Gabriel & Lang (1995) argue that identity theorising taints almost every consumer choice with image consciousness, objects act as accomplices in one's own self-creation. Trentmann (2006) considers that the consumer has become a master category of collective and individual identity (Trentmann, 2006).

2. Socio-historic Patterning of Consumption- Here is reflected Holt's (1998) work which looks at the influence of Bourdieuan (1984) concepts of social capital on consumption where choices are particularly influenced by cultural capital. This stream however also considers traditional social structures such as gender and ethnicity and considers how consumers enact these social roles and positions (Goulding & Saren, 2009) within their consumption.

These two streams are critical to this thesis, which considers that the individual and the food culture artefacts with which he/she interacts, exist within a social system. As noted above Durkheim's (2005 [1914]) dualism suggests, we are neither fully for ourselves nor fully for society and understanding the complexity of this reality is fundamental to full understanding of consumer experience and the basis for this thesis. Arnould and Thompson suggest two further domains:

3. Marketplace culture – There are recurring contentions within the literature that postmodern society has moved away from a more extreme form of individualism, towards creating new forms of social bonds, the phenomenon is discussed as neo-tribalism (Cova et al, 2007). Much of the research focuses upon technology and particularly the internet's ability to connect with individual consumers with each other. They move away from desire of postmodern consumers to use consumption, as a means of creating and sharing their individualised attitudes, expectations and sense of identity (ibid). Shared identities become central and while brands or consumption activities act as the focus and stimulus for interaction (Hewer & Hamilton, 2010) its power comes from joining people together. It allows greater interactivity between consumers and more fluidity of ideas, so consumers become more active creators of emerging cultures (Hamilton & Hewer 2010). This area of theory was not the focus for the current thesis which works with an extended friendship group whose ties are based not upon common consumption but other drivers of friendship. However since



this stream is reflective of Holt's (1988) concept of consumption as play, some discussion is made within the thesis of the role consumption can play in sociability.

4. Mass-Mediated Marketplace Ideologies and Consumers' Interpretive Strategies – finally this field considers how cultural product systems orient consumers toward certain dominant ideologies. The marketplace constructs and reproduces ideals which consumers can either embrace or consciously discard. Research in this tradition often considers market materials as cultural texts which can be decoded to reveal the cultural underpinnings (Brownlie, Hewer & Horne, 2005). There is sometimes an emphasis here upon 'mass consumption' where the consumer is a relatively passive creature created by culture industries and advertising (Trentmann, 2006). While the thesis does consider the texts of consumer culture, marketing communications for example, it considers them as consumption objects and asks how consumers interpret them as part of their own identity rather than considering them demonstrative of grander marketplace discourse, so it does not seek to make considerable contribution to this research programme.

Contribution of this thesis, as noted above, is focussed primarily within the domains of: identity projects and the socio-historic patterning of consumption. This is deemed appropriate since Arnould & Thompson (2007) argue that Consumer Culture Theory cannot be seen as a unified system of theoretical propositions and accordingly one cannot claim to make global advance to it. They consider that the contributions should more appropriately be mapped against the four clusters and should orient the researcher in the field, though they argue that each area should not be considered exclusionary or constraining and that research may appropriately span the boundaries and embrace more than a single domain. They go on to suggest that Consumer Culture Theoretics would have been a more apposite label for the collected works to better reflect the heterogeneity of approaches within the research streams. Their exercise to define the area has however been successful and Fischer & Sherry (2009) argue that Consumer Culture Theory is now institutionalised as a distinct form of consumer research.

## **1.2 Research Context**

The research context of this thesis is food culture and the purpose of this section is to define this as an appropriate domain within which to meet its research aim. It begins by considering that food studies is an emerging academic field typified by interdisciplinarity and an interest in the study of people's relationships with food, it considers that food however remains an under-researched consumption domain particularly within the realms of consumer culture theory. It considers that food is a particularly appropriate domain within which to consider consumer identity projects because of its universal nature and that it is one of few consumption objects which crosses the divide between the external world and internal consumer body. That is uniquely straddles consumption theory boundaries at once being mundane and luxurious; personal and social; and representing both work and pleasure. Finally it considers that food is an important field of inquiry because of the centrality of its practice and policy status.

### **1.2.1 Food Studies/ Food Theory**

There has been an increasing academic interest in food over recent years such that there is argued to be an emerging theoretical domain variously termed food theory or food studies (Belasco, 2008). This is a field which is typified by substantial interdisciplinarity and which draws upon work from outside the academy, learning much from practice, popular commentaries and food advocacy (Short, 2006). Food Studies paradoxically is not considered to be the study of food itself (Miller & Deutsch, 2009): it is argued to be distinctive from other food-related areas of study such as nutrition and agriculture which focus upon food's materiality, rather it is typified by two characteristics: first that it takes a social science and humanities perspective to the field ; and second that it draws upon interdisciplinary sources in order to theorise the meaning of food. It is therefore the study of people's relationships with food within a cultural context.

### **1.2.2 Food within Consumer Culture Theory**

Despite this increase in attention to food and its emerging disciplinary brand it has long been argued to be an underexplored research field. From Fischler (1988) to Belasco (2008) writers in the area consider there to be much scope for further study. Consumer Culture Theory has been established as this thesis's core background theory and while within its auspices there have been some considerations of food e.g. Cova & Pace's (2006) discussion of Nutella

community and Wallendorf & Arnould's, (1991) exploration of thanksgiving meals, these remain relatively rare rather it has tended to focus upon the unusual and distinctive in consumption see for example, Schouten & McAlexander (1995) exploration of Harley Davidson owners or Muniz & O'Guinn's (2001) discussion of luxury brands Volvo's and Apple as a means of understanding identity and belonging. This thesis argues that focussing upon food as a consumption domain is a particularly appropriate means of theorising consumer experience. First because of its universality, Belasco (2008) discusses it as being the "1st essential of life" as a daily necessity everyone by function has food stories, preferences and behaviours which are theory relevant, it is a field of consumption which cannot (for long) be avoided and so is argued to be the most fundamental of all consumption activities.

Secondly, this study as discussed above is focussed upon the identity projects stream of CCT and food is argued to be a particularly appropriate domain for the study of identity because of its unique status of incorporation. That food crosses the barrier between the external world and our internal bodies (Rozin & Fallon, 1981, Fischler, 1988). This material crossing also entails a symbolic crossing and it differentiates it from which remains external. It is within a small range of consumption fields where this incorporation is so explicit and materially concrete, drinks (typically theorised as a subset of food), medicines, tobacco and drugs may also be considered materially incorporated though much of the work in these areas focuses upon deviant behaviours derived from this status. As such the combination of these two elements makes food at once mundane and symbolic, work and pleasure, social and personal (Rozin, 1999). These are features which are picked upon again in the following chapter where much more detailed discussion of the material and symbolic natures of food culture may be found.

### **1.2.3 Food as Practice and Policy Relevant**

Finally food is a relevant domain of study because of its status as an important industry and policy priority. In practice terms food represents the world's largest industry representing c10% of global GDP (Miller & Deutsch, 2009), while this thesis doesn't focus upon production theory it does increase understanding of consumers within this important global industry. Only relatively few households who survive solely upon what they grow themselves are not impacted by the modern food industry and so this thesis, though consumption and

consumer focussed, considers how individuals interact with this industry. Specifically it has considered consumer's interpretations of brands, retailers and marketing communications. Modern consumers are argued to be increasingly removed from food production and so the role of products, brands, retailers and marketing communications become increasingly important as sources of information about food and the means by which consumers engage with the industry.

Food has increasingly become a dominant policy area (Scottish Government, 2009a) and through its consideration of practice and meaning in the field this thesis and its findings are policy relevant. Food policy areas are diverse encompassing issues such as sustainability, affordability and security. This thesis would not claim to make universal contribution however in the sub area of food's impact upon health and wellbeing it has relevance. 65% of men and 60% of women are overweight or obese (Scottish Government, 2009b), the consequences of normal rather than as often theorised abnormal behaviours, this overweight status is now representative of the majority, the average adult. This economic burden, together with the considerable health benefits of maintaining a healthy weight, means that management of overweight and obesity is a high priority in the UK. Exploring the consumption behaviour which may lead to this end state can produce policy relevant insight.

### **1.3 Research Aim and Contribution**

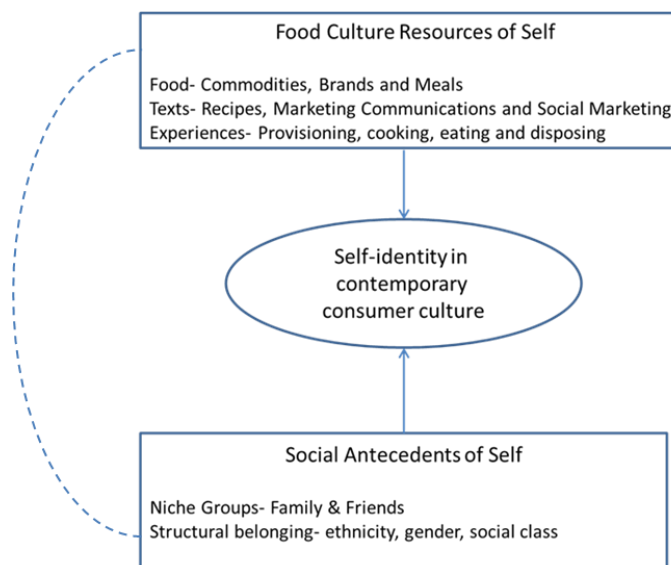
In light the research context and theoretical tradition presented above, this thesis aims to understand how individuals create self-identity through food culture. Its goal is to understand how they incorporate structural sources of self: such as family and gender, and material sources from consumer food culture: items such as goods, texts and experiences, into their accounts of self-identity.

The findings of this thesis contribute towards the body of work upon consumer identity projects within consumer culture theory as defined in the theoretical tradition above and also to its research context of food theory.

### **1.4 Research Questions and Methodology**

To meet this aim, and flowing from a research framework which has been developed through the research process, four research questions have been identified. The research framework

is presented in figure 1.2, it relies upon the theories examined within the theoretical tradition and research context presented above; the literature review and additional sources such as the researchers own experiences within the domain. In representing the framework Elliot's (2004) model of factors of identity, which is presented at figure 1.1 and is considered throughout the literature review, is adapted and developed as a means of visualisation presented at figure 1.2.



**Figure 1.7 Representation of Research Framework**

The resultant research questions which seek to provide clarity and structure to the data collection and analysis in the study are:

1. How is self-identity understood and presented by individuals?
2. What are the relevant social antecedents of self and how are these understood?
3. What is the role of social antecedents in shaping an individual's food culture?
4. What are the salient food culture elements and how are they understood by consumers as part of their identity?

A rigorous, in-depth qualitative research design focussed upon consumer narratives allows the capture of rich data which is explored through the findings chapters forming the basis for the thesis' theory contributions. Presentation and justification for the primary research approach is outlined in more detail in Chapter five.

## 1.5 Outline of Thesis

This thesis is presented in nine chapters. Having introduced the thesis including its theoretical tradition, context and aims in the introduction to the thesis in Chapter One, Chapter Two

begins the review of appropriate literature by defining the material culture of food, it considers that food culture embraces a broad material domain and that to appropriately consider its richness it may be divided into food, texts and experiences all of which may be considered consumable objects within consumer culture.

Chapter Three reviews the concepts of identity theory and their relationships to consumption. It considers particularly personal perspectives of identity and constructed self and introduces the dichotomous traditions related to endurance and authenticity of self. It focuses upon extended-self as a core theory within Consumer Culture Theoretics utilised to consider identity questions.

Chapter Four outlines social theories of self particularly that identity is influenced by a range of social antecedents and discusses extant literature upon these influences from niche groups, through social structures to whole group norms.

Chapter Five discusses the methodological approach of the thesis. Its aim as outlined in this introduction is restated; a conceptual research framework is suggested for exploring the relationships between self, society and food culture; and four specific research questions to meet the thesis aims are set. This chapter discusses in detail the interpretive approach underpinning the research and justifies the decisions made in the research design with respect to data collection, sampling and analysis.

Chapters Six and Seven present an analysis of the data collected in this thesis. Chapter Six focuses upon research questions one and two and considers the sans-consumption elements (those which are not reliant upon consumption for their definition or discussion) of the theoretical framework, individual interpretations of identity and the social antecedents of these conceptions. Chapter Seven considers research question three and four, the relationship between consumption upon social ties and ultimately its impact upon identity.

Chapter Eight discusses the theoretical implications and contributions made by the thesis, focussed upon the research questions it considers the theoretical debates and schools to which a contribution can be demonstrated. Specifically it proposes that self is defined by negotiating the territory between established theoretical traditions, that understanding identity requires a nuanced approach which extremis positions neglect. It develops existing

models of extended-self in three ways: it suggests that factors of unextended-self are uniquely configured; that consumption can be both instrumental to maintaining unextended-self and a factor of extended-self in its own right and that in this second state it should be understood as distinct from sans-consumption self; and that understanding how consumer culture becomes subsumed into extended-self requires examination of three distinct matters: characteristics of incorporation, means of incorporation and relevant incorporation activities. It develops contribution to theory upon the social antecedents of identity and consumption. It finds that personally unique constructions of family and friendship are the most enduring and directly impactful relationships. Food culture maintains these relationships while simultaneously being influenced by them and the antecedents of self-identity which they represent.

The final Chapter considers again the research aim and how well the theoretical framework has met its intentions. It discusses the implications of the findings for practice and policy acknowledges the limitations of the study and makes recommendations for future research.

## **Chapter 2: Literature Review, Material Culture**

### **2.0 Introduction**

The following three chapters provide a discussion of the relevant extant literature for this thesis. They are structured following the discussion within Arnould & Thompson (2005) of the interaction of three interrelated items which are relevant within the field of consumer culture theory and which are requisite to meet this thesis' aim of understanding how individuals create self-identity through food culture: the commercial artefacts of the material world; individuals as units of inquiry; and the social environment within which interactions take place. The literature in each area is considered as a distinct chapter within this thesis and Elliot's (2004) model of consumer culture, presented at figure 1.1, page 11, is utilised as an initial means of mapping their relationships. This first literature chapter considers the material culture of food and outlines the range of items which have been the subject of academic inquiry and are indicative of the diversity of food culture. The second considers the development of theories of constructed self and identity and how consumption has been understood in relation to them; and the third the social environment within which identity work and consumption are enacted.

This first chapter therefore begins with the artefacts of food's material culture. The linking of material goods to the consumer as a means of sense-making is at the heart of this study and as such this chapter aims to define material goods and consider how these have been considered in the extant literature. Consumer culture, as discussed in the previous chapter, is argued by Miller (1987) to be particularly closely linked to material culture studies considering those instances where consumption is the primary means of participation in society. While this study in its entirety is not a material culture study it is important that this chapter focuses upon this area in order to define the material resources of self: to include texts, objects, images and sites which have been the legitimate objects of study in material culture theory and beyond and which therefore may be utilised in this study to allow the meaning of consumers' lived experiences to be examined.

Therefore this chapter explores the broad material culture domain and how it addresses and theorises objects within its gaze. Object as a category is considerably more abstract and far reaching than the word understood in its material sense (Keane, 2006) and as Miller (1987)



discusses, it embraces a vast diversity of subject matter “material culture virtually explodes the moment one gives any consideration to the vast corpus of different object worlds that we constantly experience.” (Miller, 1998: 6). While in most studies the objects are rarely the whole focus of attention, rather being utilised as a means of providing insight into the human social and cultural world, it is important for this chapter to give some consideration to the scope of previously studied material objects in the context of food culture in order to make some boundaries for the types of object which can be included in this study. It first defines material culture, considering specifically how food culture sits within the overall domain. It considers some of the items both physical and abstract which have been studied within the field to include goods: foodstuffs and brands, texts: cookbook and commercial & social marketing communications, practices: food preparation, meals and celebrations with the aim of illustrating the research context and defining these artefacts to be objects of legitimate study. It considers that these may then act as a basis for respondents to this study to construct their own food consumption narratives.

## **2.1 Defining Material Culture**

Material culture studies as a field has grown in prominence in recent decades based upon the view that the social and cultural relations between individuals in late modernity would seem to be more than at any time in the past, mediated via material objects (Dant, 2006). Material objects enter material culture when they are given meaning through use (Lehdonvitra, 2010) and so material culture studies can perhaps be considered as the study of objects in use.

This however has not always been the case, coming from archaeological traditions the conception that material artefacts provide the evidence of past civilisations is long established (Miller, 1998). In this tradition it is often impossible to observe the artefacts in use and so collecting, analysing and interpreting the significance of these objects themselves acts as the means of studying societies distant in time. Buchli (2002) considers how material culture also became popular in anthropology, collecting artefacts from spatially distant cultures allows exploration of the degree of technical and social sophistication of given groups (particularly through the 19<sup>th</sup> century to indigenous ethnic or tribal groups) and the level of their society became intimately linked to its level of material culture, there was little attempt to understand the diversity of objects in use, rather desire to classify prevailed. Reckwitz (2002) argues that contemporary cultural theorists have to consider both the material and the symbolic and that since the cultural turn in social theory in the late 1960s, material culture studies has emerged

as a field which uses this mode of understanding: the symbolic and material, to make sense of the familiar and contemporary as well as the distant and allow exploration of the meaning in everyday lived experience.

Douglas & Isherwood (1979) discuss objects as goods for thinking and for rational beings to make sense of their universe, by making visible the categories of culture that objects act as markers, “the visible bit of the iceberg which is the whole social process” (Douglas & Isherwood, 1979:74). Latour (1991) argues that objects should go beyond illuminating social structures or being simply symbolic and that the material world should be understood in terms of artefacts or things that necessarily participate in social practices just as human beings do. While they may be open to interpretation, they are applied, used and must be handled within their materiality and are not arbitrarily interchangeable (Reckwitz, 2002). In this conception artefacts are hybrids. They are used for and have effect in their materiality: food is consumed to satisfy hunger and marketing communications has consumer impact and this is their primary and certainly most obvious function. They are also however representations, symbolically defined and culturally interpreted and handled: a meal can demonstrate social standing, family inclusions or a cookbook represent national attitudes to taste and gastronomy. This dual nature means that they have cultural and material specificity and are not easily replaced by any other symbolic object.

Barthes (1977) in common with Latour (1991) discusses that objects are not wholly transparent, we can't look through to a reality behind. The process of encoding and decoding is particularly important in this study, in the various artefacts available for study in food culture the individual is engaged in different roles, in food preparation they may be the encoder, as the guest at a dinner or audience for communication message they act as decoder and so their narrative will contain elements across the social semiotic field. In viewing the world as actively constructed rather than passively absorbed, as Leiss et al (1990:201) discuss when considering mass communications “for advertising to create meaning, the reader or the viewer has to do some work, because the meaning is not lying there on the page, one has to make an effort to grasp it”, there is a focus even in semiotics upon the individual as the primary subject of research. This is in line with the approach of much consumer culture research and this study, where individual interpretations and practices can be illustrative of much larger concepts.

Appadurai (1988) argues that objects and our interpretation of them are not just symbolically reflective of society but can actually act to create change. If signs do not merely reflect reality but are involved in its construction then those who control the sign systems control the construction of reality. Brownlie, Hewer & Horne (2005) adopt this approach in their study of cookbooks arguing that their authors and the power structures behind them can shape future culinary culture. This approach can help draw attention to that which is taken for granted in representing the world involving a degree of ideological analysis. The study of food typically involves a degree of exploring the mundane and this study does so by exploring everyday food consumption stories and influences trying to uncover what is taken for granted within them.

Miller (1998b) asks if some artefacts are more worthy of study than others and concludes it is the significance of the object or practice for the individual or social group which makes it worthy of consideration with the fairly simple criterion that “if it matters to them it should matter to us” (Miller, 1998b:12) Brown (2001) however argues that it is important that we do not only look through the artefact as a window to meaning about history, society or culture but that we look at the objects for their own material characteristics.

As briefly mentioned earlier, consumer culture is closely linked to the broad field of material culture (Miller, 1986), though the former is dominated by marketers and the latter anthropologists, and certainly many anthologies dedicated to material culture will contain specific sections dealing with consumption (Tilley et al, 2006, Buchli, 2002). Miller particularly has been instrumental in developing a material culture approach to the issue of consumption in a number of works including his ‘A Theory of Shopping’ (Miller, 1998a). Miller (2006:348) argues that consumption is one means of giving objects meaning and transforming them from the “anonymous and alienated conditions of their production” that through consumption specificity is created. Kuchler (2006) argues that it is not necessarily individual objects which are most interesting in material culture but how items can be grouped together into communities or cultures. Understanding the ways in which goods are consumed is one way of creating communities of things, it is by understanding the item, the process or transformation which extends their materiality and the persons involved in that transformation which allows a complete view of the object world.

This is an essential part of how this thesis approaches the understanding of consumption; by working with consumer narratives of items, situations, and their meanings one not only gets a view of the object world but also the subjectivity of living within it.

### **2.1.1 Food Culture**

This thesis is particularly interested in the material world as it relates to food as a means of understanding. Counihan & Van Esterik (2008) discuss how much food scholarship has a strong material dimension as it considers how food leaves its mark upon the human environment. In his interpretation Barthes (2008 [1961]) argues that food is not consumed in purely transitive fashion, rather it signifies, a functional unit in a system of communication. The consumer by their preferences and practices gives diversity to products that are very similar in basic constitution and he uses the example of cooking oil where brand preference and loyalty is driven by symbolic attributes rather than by particular product differences. Food culture considers a broad range of objects from basic food commodities such as Harris's (1987) discussion of taboos within religious communities about the eating of pigs, through branded goods as contained in Miller's (1997) discussion of Coca-Cola to less concrete or material items such as Douglas's (1972) work deciphering the meal and Wallendorf & Arnould's (1991) exploring food rituals as part of American Thanksgiving celebrations. The remainder of this chapter is devoted to considering some of this range of materiality of food culture as a means of illustrating the consumption goods and practices respondents can draw on in their own narratives as part of this research study. The following sections therefore consider some of the items which have been included in previous food culture studies as a lens through which to create understanding. It does not claim to be exhaustive, for as Counihan & Van Esterik (2008) say, to attempt to do so would be almost impossible so wide ranging is the field, but it is reflective of some of the range of items which can be considered legitimate for study.

### **2.3 Food**

In writing about food it almost seems self-evident that there is common understanding of how it is constituted and what food means yet in many surveys food changes meaning across time and certainly across geography, this study is concerned primarily with the UK so cross cultural studies will not be drawn upon extensively. Olsen, Warde & Martins (2000) looked at changing eating patterns in the UK with respect to how and where food was being consumed, Tomlinson (1994) by taking a class based approach looked at difference in food

preference, both these studies consider that shared meanings of food shifts across time and social context, making its definition rather tricky. This thesis consider three categories of food stuffs: commodities, brands and meals.

### **2.3.1 Commodities**

Commodities are considered to be those food items which are minimally processed in order to be edible or usable when reaching the consumer; that which is supplied without qualitative differentiation for their market (Borgen, 2011). It is recognised that there is a spectrum of commodification (Johnson, 1967) with staples such as milk, eggs and potatoes increasingly seeing means of differentiation by provenance and increasingly brand identity (Stanton & Herbst, 2005). So there is a recognition that these items do have a production component. Fine & Leopold's (1993: 600) work on systems of provision, considers that there is a 'commodity-specific chain connecting production, distribution, marketing and consumption and the material culture surrounding these elements'. The importance of this approach is that it acknowledges there can be symbolic significance to those at the undifferentiated end of the commodity spectrum as well as more refined and designed items (Leslie and Reimer, 1999: 402), indeed Holt (2002) considers that social identity work is perhaps best realised through commodities. This section does not consider its scope to be defining all food commodities and their symbolic properties, rather it reflects upon some of the more seminal pieces considering materiality and symbolism in this area.

#### **2.3.1.1 *Meat and Meat Eating***

One of the most considered areas in the symbolism of commodities is the distinctions in meaning between meat and vegetables. Considered again later in this thesis, when reflecting upon gender as an antecedent to consumption, the symbolic linking of meat to conceptions of masculinity is an enduring factor in the literature. This relationship is considered an archetype of gendering food (Sobal, 2005). Meat has also long been considered more nutritionally dense and of a higher order eating than vegetable or grains, Adams (1990) notes that this has led to a difference in male and female eating with women in many, particularly traditional, societies eating a diet that is mainly plant foods while men in the same societies eat more meat. This leads women to adopt particular preparation patterns of multiple daily meals consumed separately to maintain this difference, they relegate themselves to a second-class diet which Adams (1990) argues is symbolic of power politics rather than basic

nutritional need. In many traditional human societies, men hunt but women procure most of the protein and calories for their social groups through their gathering of roots, fruits, and small animals. This behaviour has led some anthropologists to claim that the importance of hunting and meat eating in these societies is more mythical than real (Nath, 2011). Adams (1990) argues that meat, because of its hunting associations, is a powerful symbol of patriarchy which permeates modern as well as traditional cultures, continually associated with manhood, power, and virility. Twigg (1979, 1986) also points to the enduring elements of sexuality and virility associated with red meat in her work. While not applicable to all cultures, this association is particularly widespread and in considering English culture she suggests that “Men in particular are thought in some sense to need meat, especially red meat, and a series of masculine qualities are encapsulated in the idea of red bloodedness. It is part of the traditional image of John Bull, the beer quaffing, beef eating, fine figure of a man, and negative perceptions of vegetarianism within the dominant culture echo these ideas” (Twigg, 1986: 24). Bourdieu (1984) argued that the British association between beef and machismo is also persistent in French culture, men favour red meats over all other animal products and vegetables. Meat consumption, he suggest, requires a healthy, manly appetite, it is not awkward and fiddly to eat, like fish or salads. Hence, Bourdieu (1984: 192) suggests that meat endures as a superior food: ‘[Meat] the nourishing food par excellence, strong and strong-making, giving vigour, blood, and health, is the dish for men’.

Meat is one of the most symbolically laden food commodities, paradoxically the most cherished and most often tabooed category of food (Fessler and Navarrete, 2003) and it is also central to discussions of ethnicity and religious adherence. Harris’s (1987) writings upon the pig and the cow as animals of revulsion and reverence within ethnic and religious communities considers centrally the issue of food symbolism. In this work he recognises the disconnect between the materiality of these food items: a pig is a much more efficient use of resources in creating a ready to eat commodity “over its lifetime a pig can convert 35% of its feed to energy compared with.. a mere 6.5% for cattle”, (ibid: 35) yet within Indian culture it is the less economically and materially efficient cattle that are symbolically significant. The cow is often referred to as “mother” and as the source of life (Barak-Erez, 2010). The slaughter of cattle is engraved in Indian national memory as associated with national oppression, at first by Muslim conquerors and later by the British (ibid). At the same time swine are prohibited, considered ‘abominable’ and unfit for consumption in both Judaism and Islam. The keeping of dietary laws within these religions is argued by Douglas (1996) to be

critical to group belonging with increasing “prominence (of) the rule concerning pork as the critical symbol of group allegiance.” Though much of the justification for pork avoidance is considered due to the dirty habits of the pig, Harris (1987) argues that this link is not obvious or clear: pigs need to wallow to stay cool but prefer a clean mud hole to one that is soiled and they thrive best on roots, nuts and grains rather than consuming their own filth. Harris (1987) also points out that other widely consumed animals: chickens and goats, being his examples, will readily consume their own excrement yet these are not prohibited in dietary laws. So links between materiality and symbolism are not straightforward or self-evident in nature or origin.

While the above discussions of meat dominate the literature, meat has other symbolic qualities. Spencer (1994) for example considers meat eating to be symbolic of human supremacy over nature, a means of shaping the environment to human needs and this being considered as a laudable goal. In this conception humanity is part of the environmental cycle responsible for animal welfare through responsible animal husbandry. Meat eating in this context carries responsibilities to be concerned with the lives of animals and the farming practices around them as well as the meanings in consumption (Willetts, 1997).

Meat has also been considered as a signifier of luxury indulgence and indeed social class. Tomlinson (1994) writing relatively recently noted class distinctions in purchasing and consumption habits reflexive of class difference, he considers that workers have a preference for staple such as potatoes and bread whereas the middle classes consumed more meat. Smith & Holm (2010) writing contemporaneously with this thesis have however noted a shift in the signification of meat, they argue that meat is declining in reputation and regard as middle class consumers become increasingly concerned with fit and lean bodies and therefore move towards less energy dense foods to achieve this ideal.

### **2.3.1.2            *Vegetables and Vegetarianism***

The other commonly discussed commodity category is vegetables usually considered under the scope of vegetarianism. Vegetarianism is argued to be based upon more symbolic statements of identity than meat eating which remains the dominant cultural choice (Twigg, 1986). Willets (1997) argues this is particularly because vegetarianism, in the west, is rarely a lifelong practice, rather that vegetarians are converts; making deliberate choices to change their eating habits. Adopting vegetarianism, is therefore, considered to be a reflexive process

whereby practitioners understand the symbolic nature of that which they chose and forego (Twigg, 1986).

Studies of vegetarians have found a range of symbolic underpinnings of their dietary choices. Two different symbolic meanings of vegetarianism and vegetables, however, dominate the literature, vegetables as a better choice for personal health and vegetables as a rejection of meat, which is considered contrary to animal welfare and environmentalism (Beardsworth & Keil, 1992; Hoek, Pieternel, Stafleu, & de Graaf, 2004). Rozin et al. (1997) differentiate these as symbolic choices as 'health vegetarianism' and 'ethical vegetarianism' a classification which is also used by vegetarians themselves (Fox & Ward, 2008).

Vegetarianism is largely self-defined (Willetts, 1997), and is reflexive of a variety of dietary practices. Typified by vegetables and grains, within health vegetarian narratives particularly it is likely to include animal products such as cheese and eggs but may also include some meat consumption, most commonly chicken or fish (ibid:116). Twigg (1983) talks about a hierarchy of foods which represent the path to a vegetarian identity, red meat being least compatible & the first thing given up. Willetts (1997) argues that for some vegetarians eating meat is seen as lapsing from their chosen health path, while for others it is part of their vegetarian identity. Vegetarianism is therefore conceived not as a prescriptive food practice but a fluid symbolic category of food behaviours and beliefs.

Health vegetarianism is typified by desire to derive certain health benefits or lose weight (Key, Appleby, & Rosell, 2006) and so, for many, vegetable and grains become embodied with these symbolic meanings. Vegetarianism and vegetables have become associated with health in various notions of bodily and spiritual purity (Douglas, 1966) or holism. In the Victorian period, these ideas were given both a scientific and a spiritual spin, linking vegetarianism with the health of both body and spirit (Fraser, 2003).

Fox & Ward (2008) found that health conceptions of vegetarianism were symbolically constituted in a variety of ways: a good diet generally was perceived as central to good health and longevity, while poor diet was linked to poorer health or specific diseases. Vegetarian eating was considered by their respondents to be nutritionally richer than a diet preferring meat, this they felt led to a stronger immune system. For some a specific adverse health event led to their change of diet and these were wide ranging including "suffered from



difficulties digesting meat, another from acne, while another adopted a vegetarian diet to counter high blood pressure” (ibid: 424). Others had broader health goals in mind: “to lose weight, ‘to cut down on my dairy for cholesterol reasons’ or ‘to avoid high blood pressure and kidney stone’s” The change to a vegetarian diet was associated directly with an improvement in health.

Ethical vegetarians are highly aware of the symbolism of their consumption choices, they wish to minimise harm to animals for food (Fessler, Arguello, Mekdara, & Macias, 2003) and may be engaged in broader ethical consumption, feeling their responsibility extends to social or even global obligation through their everyday food choices. They actively seek out information on the environmental and social costs involved in their daily meals and are more likely to be engaged in activism (Johnston, 2008: 239). Within this group the meaning of meat rather than vegetables remains a dominant part of their narratives based upon justifications for avoidance. Meat is considered not only personally harmful to health but injurious to the environment. “The human population is outnumbered by the number of farm animals by more than three to one, more than seventy per cent of all agricultural land is used for the production of farm animal products, and over one-third of the world’s harvest of cereals is fed to them every year” (Steinfeld et al. 2006: 12). Further energy derived from fossil fuels is often needed to produce feed, to transport animals and their products, and to ventilate, heat, or cool places in which animals spend their lives (Deckers, 2009).

Rather than being motivated by a concern for the human costs associated with meat eating, vegetarians might also be motivated by welfare of animals. In this conception meat becomes symbolic of animal suffering and unnecessarily early death and vegetarianism as a viable alternative to this (Deckers, 2009). This type of ethical vegetarianism is symbolically altruistic: representative of personal sacrifice in order to prevent cruelty to animals or greater environmental ills.

Whichever ideological or dietary stance a consumer adopts, it can be seen clearly that meat and vegetable commodities and patterns of their consumption can be highly symbolic in nature. These are clearly not the only commodities which people may draw upon for meaning: Mintz (1985) for example has considered sugar and Barthel (1989) chocolate and self-defined chocoholics. These items have in common a mundane and everyday nature

which allows them to be considerable resources for consumers in their own consumption stories and identity narratives (ibid).

### **2.3.2 Brands**

Brands are argued to be ubiquitous in contemporary consumer culture (Hovland & Wolburg, 2010) but De Chernatony & Riley (1998) argue that defining a brand is far from straightforward. From the literature they suggest there are at least twelve different uses of the term from across the business disciplines; from simple legal instrument or logo to the image in consumers' minds or added value over physical assets. For most writers on branding there is a recognition that there is some level of symbolic value to a brand and even in early writing on brands this symbolic nature has been reflected. Newman's (1957) definition considers it the sum of people's associations and Martineau (1959) described brands as images in consumers' minds of functional and psychological attributes. Through concepts of brand equity, this symbolic nature has increasingly been considered as a resource which can be monetarised for an organisation's benefit (Gorz, 2003). In the literature there has been an increasing focus upon consumer relationships with brands and this is where this thesis focuses. It comes back to people's relationships with brands throughout particularly when considering issues of identity in the next chapter. Here it briefly suggests some of the ways consumers understand and interact with brands in material culture, and considers some of the food brands which have been considered in the literature.

For consumers, brands can perform a material role, they act as shorthand for functional and emotional characteristics, enabling rapid recall of information from memory and leading to speedier purchase decisions. Consumers can use the brand for heuristic processing, their knowledge of it allows them to engage in relatively superficial considerations and judgments to activate decision rules (Maheswaran, Mackie, and Chaiken 1992). For Brown (1992) a brand "is nothing more or less than the sum of all the mental connections people have around it". By provide these memory shortcuts (Jacoby et al., 1977), it has long been recognised that consumers are more inclined to buy brands they recognise (Chevan, 1992). While considered useful in low interest, mundane categories, perhaps particularly such as food: studies have reflected on McDonalds' (Kincheloe, 2002) and Coke's (Vieceli & Shaw, 2010) power to act as heuristic tools in this field. This short handing role for brands is increasingly seen as too limited, Kapferer (1992) notes that the brand should be more than just the sum of its attributes, "it is the product's essence" "it defines its identity in time and space". These views

argue that even brand equity conceptions which make financial valuation of the intangible aspects of the brand stop short of understanding their true worth.

The evolution of a more consumer centred perspective on the meaning of brands is increasingly part of the domain of consumer culture, Keeble (1991:170) suggests: "a brand becomes a brand as soon as it comes in contact with a consumer". So Fournier (1998) discusses how consumers can create enduring relationships with brands and that these can be akin to love and passion: a richer, deeper, more long-lasting feeling than simple preference. Carroll and Ahuvia (2005: 5) define love for a brand as "the degree of passionate emotional attachment that a person has for a particular trade name." Consumers' love can be very valuable to a brand and includes the following characteristics: (1) passion for a brand, (2) brand attachment, (3) positive evaluation of the brand, (4) positive emotions in response to the brand, and (5) declarations of love toward the brand. Pratesi (2002) discusses the power of relationships to food brands in Italy where she notes that "in a country of Buffalo Mozzarella & Parmigiano-Reggiano" a cheese brand "Kraft Sottilette" processed cheese singles has become a reliable friend and that around 32% of Italian women confessed brand loyal to it with many never using any other type of cheese in their cooking.

Consumers may achieve these deep relationships typified by loyalty and engagement with relatively few brands, in Fournier (1998: 354) she notes many brands remain friends of convenience "there aren't many brands, I'm sitting here now thinking, that I will absolutely not leave the store without". Coupland (2005) reflects this many brands are just there- relatively invisible in consumer's lives, though this doesn't mean they cannot be preferred or regularly consumed. O'Cass & Frost (2002) argue that it is those brands which are symbolically dense which are most likely to elicit stronger feelings and commitments.

Brands can become a rich resource for consumers as means of display. It has been said that individuals tend to consider certain possessions as symbols of their achievement (Bansanko, 1995). "Some of the meaning of products can be found in the status value they have as a result of other people's estimation of the extent to which they express the status of their owners" (Eastman et al., 1999: 2) Fournier (1998: 351) argues that this can be true in everyday items, such as food, as well as in luxury categories: Pastene tomatoes are actively sought by one consumer in her work. She suggests that consumers use branded goods as tangible markers of success surrounding themselves with proven performers to provide

evidence that they too have “made it”. Mellor et al (2010) consider this theme too within food categories and argue that brands can demonstrate knowledge about tasteful foods and consumers attitudes towards caring. Ahuvia (2005) suggests that the consumer's relationship with a particular possession or product is of great importance because of the way that relationship expresses connection to other people. Mellor et al (2010:124) argue that in a dinner party setting, certain brands are also strong symbols of avoidance because they would evidence insufficient care and attention: “Doing a dinner party...I wouldn't go to the fish counter at Tesco”.

Belk & Tumbat (2005) argues that brands can act more personally, people's relationships with their brands are both a powerful means of representing themselves and creating self in contemporary society. In Fournier's work and in the range of work considering symbolic consumption brands are often cited as resources for self largely because they contain rich meaning (Escala & Bettman, 2005). While Belk (1988) focuses on possessions as the extended-self, Ahuvia (2005) investigates the role of possessions and brands in the construction of a coherent identity narrative. Both the meanings that consumers embrace and the meanings they strive to resist influence the construction of the self (Thompson & Haytko, 1997). Food brands are relatively underexplored in these studies, as higher interest categories are favoured, Holt (2002) for example uses bike brands in his work, though Beverland et al (2008) make some consideration of beer brands in this regard. Given that self-identity is not something consumers enter the world with (Askegaard, Gertsen, & Langer, 2002), the self is created through brand relationships and consumption practices. Identity marketing recognises that customers are more powerfully attracted to products and brands where they can be participative in creating meaning and links to themselves (Reed & Bolton, 2005).

Consumers, when they become motivated, are argued to be ever more actively engaged in the creation of brands meaning and assets (Bengtson & Ostber, 2004) and to increasingly seek opportunities to engage with brands for self-expressive benefits. From Gardner and Levy's (1955) early work brands have long been considered public objects not solely under the control of brand owners and marketers but appropriated by consumers. The work of Schouten & McAlexander (1995) and Cova, (1997) among others relating to brand communities and brand tribes moves this work on and considers that consumers are engaging in communal consumption with brands. From a food perspective Cova & Pace (2006) discuss how such communities of consumption are operating within convenience products. Using the example

of 'Nutella' where a community website has shown a "lively passion for Nutella" (ibid:1099) Here they note that the consumer drives the marketing, it is their displays of product enjoyment and use, the brand's role in their real lives which dominate, while the company's role is to be as unobtrusive as possible and allow the community and its shared meanings and narratives to develop.

Brands in these variety of ways act as powerful cultural resources for consumers but Kapferer (1992) suggests a cautionary note for the brands themselves. He suggests relinquishing control and becoming over reliant on consumers' views about how they would like their brand to evolve "excess of democracy" as perhaps evidenced in theories of consumer tribalism can be detrimental to the longevity and integrity of a brand's meanings, neither does he suggest restricting the brand's evolution by not appreciating what aspects of the brand can be changed through consumer appropriation - "excess of code" rather he considers a middle way which allows brands to engage with consumers while retaining a professional brand guardianship.

There are also a range of descriptors of food which may act as an alternative or supplement to brands as a means of engagement with food culture, these are discussed as a category of quasi-brands where retail sales of products can be driven by association with their names and images (Carlson et al, 2009). Commodification as discussed earlier in the chapter is considered to be a spectrum upon which items sit and that in commodities there is still a specific supply chain (Fine, 1995) so that that even basic items are increasingly being differentiated by means of alternative descriptors and definitions (Stanton & Herbst, 2005). This thesis recognises that such marks or categorisations are not directly comparable with traditional manufacturer or retailer brands but that they may never the less be consumer relevant since they provoke meaningful engagement and having identity potential. The type of marks which may be considered within this category could include: provenance, ethical marks, the co-branded descriptors such as particular ingredients see for example Norris', (1993) discussion of 'Intel inside' where such added value items are employed by consumers in their decision making (Norris, 1993).

### **2.3.3 Meals**

Food is not consumed in a *laissez-faire* manner by most individuals and in most households. Though much has been made of the demise of family eating Murcott (1997) argues that,

perhaps in relaxed formats, it endures as both practice and desirable idea. The family meal therefore continues to account for a large amount of food consumption activity (Neumark-Sztainer et al, 2000) and the structuring of food consumption to be characterised by meals. Meals are food consumption considered as organised activity, structured in format and bound by social rules (Douglas & Nicod, 1974) and organised around times and places (Marshall, 2000).

Meals are revisited throughout this thesis particularly in the social chapter of the literature because they are considered to have wide ranging impact, with an important role in family (Murcott, 1997), friendship (Green, 1998) and local culture (Makela, 2000). This section defines the meal, what is appropriate within its structures and how it endures as a qualitatively better type of eating in the literature. Snacking is briefly considered towards the end of this section though its primary focus is upon meals as distinct artefacts in food cultures. Meals are touched upon time and again throughout this thesis particularly when considering social antecedents to consumption because, as will be discussed, meals have a strong social component.

Levi-Strauss (1970) discusses the structural nature of food, what is appropriate in certain cuisines and the symbolism of cooking method but in perhaps the most cited of all writing on meals, Mary Douglas's (1972) 'Deciphering a meal'; she suggests it fails to really explore the small scale social relations codified in eating. Douglas suggests small scale studies are necessary to really generate meaningful insight. She outlines the structures to eating that within a day food is consumed from "breakfast (to) the last night-cap,...in an ordered pattern" (ibid: 37) Meals even in contemporary western society continue to follow a temporal schedule (Marshall & Anderson, 2002). Three meals per day still dominate in the UK, breakfast in the morning, lunch at midday and a main meal in the evening (variously titled: dinner, tea, supper etc. dependent upon geography and social class). Douglas (1972:37) suggest that the structuring is further temporally layered "between Monday and Sunday the food of the week is patterned again". This is epitomised by the British Sunday (roast) as the high point of the week (Marshall, 2000). Murcott (1997) notes that while families may not always have time or scheduling which allows meals to be consumed together every day, weekends are typically reserved as special times when communal eating can be planned and as one of her respondents suggests "always try to have Sunday breakfast and dinner together at least". Other days may not be able to accommodate all family members but as Valentine

(1999) discusses great efforts are made to preserve some structure and communality to eating even in contemporary fast-paced families. Finally Douglas (1972:37) discusses, the “sequence of holidays and fast days throughout the year, to say nothing of life cycle feasts, birthdays and weddings” Much has been written about the role of meals in celebratory events; Bradby (2002) for example discusses the meals of Glasgow Punjabi community weddings characterised by rich abundance and considered central to cultural identity. Here families provide extra items, escalating from basic meal repertoire to demonstrating their wealth and generosity. Wallendorf & Arnould (1991:17) in their discussion of US thanksgiving meals again stress the requirement of abundance in celebratory meals “amount rather than elaboration or delicacy are foremost in people’s minds” they discuss this as stuffing; everything from turkey to pies and everyone must end the day stuffed to bursting.

Other writers have reflected upon the types of food which can legitimately be included in a meal. Charles & Kerr (1988) found that “proper meals” were relatively narrowly defined as one main course based on hot meat or, less commonly, fish as the central component accompanied by potatoes and vegetables and occasionally served with a gravy. In turn, each of these elements have to be prepared individually, “properly” cooked and presented separately on the plate. In proper meals there is a disdain upon reliance on convenience or ‘fast’ food and ready meals, cooking from scratch is privileged as evidence of care, attention and even class position (Backett-Milburn et al, 2010). While meals can comprise of courses: a starter, main and dessert, the main course is usual considered central while the others are discretionary. Some researchers in trying to take account of changing food preferences treat the “proper meal” as a normative, rather than a fixed, concept representative of individual household practices (Marshall & Bell, 2003). They note however that there is general agreement that these eating occasions usually involve a number of different foods, combined and presented in a particular way that is both familiar and meaningful to the household.

As discussed in later chapters eating meals is essentially a social activity (Makela, 2000) but it is worth noting here that meals do not always involve eating with others and certain eating occasions, such as breakfast or even lunch, may be solitary affairs. Meals are seen as “opportunity space” for families to come together and converse (Ochs et al., 1989), mealtimes are set apart from other activities, for example watching television may be considered detrimental to sociability (Vereecken et al, 2006). Eating with family is the strongest indicator of a meal (Wansink et al, 2010).

Meiselman (2008) in trying to pull together the dimensions of a meal suggests that it can be summarised as the five aspects meal model (FAMM) building upon the work of Oltersdorf et al (1999). Meals they suggest must contain a combination of all or some of: specified time of day, specified level of nutrients, social interaction and food combinations. Meiselman (2008) goes on to suggest that meals are the basic psychological unit of eating, other ways of eating are set in contrast to meals or as a subdivision of them and Pliner & Rosen (2000) suggest there is no higher unit which organises our thinking.

In contrast to meals snacks are unstructured food events with little prescription of what is appropriate content or context (Douglas & Nicod, 1974). Pliner et al (2004) argue that whether one is consuming a meal or snack is self-defined by the individual based upon environmental cues and mental schemas. Wansink et al (2010) suggest a number of elements which can define snacking the most clear they suggest is eating while standing. Other elements were eating alone eating for a short amount of time and using disposable packaging or paper plates and napkins. Snacking is considered as being a less healthy way of eating associated with low quality inexpensive items of food in small portions that was packaged and typically of unhealthy ingredients. Douglas (1972) discusses that rather than time set apart, snacking is typified by multi-tasking, eating while engaged in other occupations such as reading or watching TV.

## **2.4 Texts**

Texts within food culture provide a valuable source of both material content and evidence of deeper symbolic cultural meanings. Texts have long been part of food culture from antiquity, written recipes in some form have been part of civilisation from the earliest times, with written recipes discovered on Ancient Egyptian clay tables (Dennis, 2008). Goody (2008) argues that written texts appear because oral histories limit the repertoire of what can be learned while the written form can hold unlimited variation. Texts can be broadly defined to include traditional written materials but in taking a semiotic construction to include additional visual and aural items such as packaging, film and importantly for this thesis, items such as marketing communications (Goddard, 1998). There follows a discussion of three elements of food culture: recipes and cookbooks, marketing communications and social marketing. These are bound together as texts because of commonality of how they may be interpreted but also in how they are utilised as resources within material culture.



### 2.4.1 Recipes and Cookbooks

Recipes as noted above have a long heritage but this doesn't mean they all share a common form. Farquar (2006) notes that we have come to expect that they should contain a combination of "lists and procedures, ingredients and instructions, things and actions for the cook". This form however is one which has emerged over time as historical recipes may contain only ingredients, but no measure or detail on method. The recipe itself is also considered to be a symbolic text, Farquar (2006) discusses one recipe for spam and mushroom soup sandwiches she says "we think immediately of .. church lady coffees, small town women sharing kitchen shortcuts and keeping pantries full of cans" In so simple a text are contained the markers of class, cultivation and (un)cosmopolitanism. McKie & Wood (1992) also note class differences in the sources of recipes their research, though lacking some of the sources now taken for granted such as websites, found a preference amongst lower classes to engage in recipe exchange with friends and family. Their research on people's recipe sources however found that cookbooks dominate across demographic boundaries and these are the most ubiquitous of culinary texts.

Cookbooks are fundamentally a collection of recipes purposefully gathered together, though Dennis (2008) argues this need not be in print format and points to TV cookery programmes and food websites as performing very similar functions. These collections clearly have a material purpose to be instructional on the creation of a meal or which consumers may use as reference materials containing basic cooking techniques or classic recipes. Farquhar (2006) argues that cookbooks are an archive of shared knowledge but that access to the archive requires a body of tacit knowledge in order to usefully be utilised as productive meaning. She discusses "the difference between creaming and mixing, the point at which milk is scalded, the yellow colour of sautéed onions- these kinds of knowledge are more assumed than articulated" (ibid: 145). However Dennis (2008) notes that cookbooks dominate publishing in terms of bestsellers and The Bookseller (2010) estimates the value of the food & drink book market at £90.8m so they have a wider appeal than a simple instructional or productive purpose.

In a paper arising out of this research (Tonner ,2008) about commodity cookbooks it was noted that consumer own a great many more of these texts than they utilise for cooking, rather there is a degree of hyper consumption where the consumption of the books as

artefacts in their own right is as enjoyable and meaningful as any cooking which may, or may not, result from it. Bower (2004:35) suggests that cookbooks can be considered similar to romance novels in that they can be read to achieve the “same kind of escape from daily life as found in novels”. Supski (2005) reflects on this wide ownership of cookbooks and theorises that women, in particular, like to have a variety of recipes because it increases their food making knowledge; even though they may never use the recipes, the knowledge gained from reading recipe ‘methods’ or ingredients lists enables women to practice their food making skills in a broader manner. Much less is written about men’s use of such texts since this is not considered their traditional domain, though Tonner (2008) considers that they enjoy the consumption of them in much the same ways as their female counterparts and Aarseth (2007) their increasing comfort in these pursuits with McKie & Wood noting that 50% of men read recipes for pleasure compared with 64% of women.

Many works looking at the symbolic value of cookbooks consider women’s personal food journals (Theophano, 2002) or locally produced, community cookbooks (Bower,1997). Family and personal cookbooks tell not only how to create foods but also tell us why these were important to preserve in women’s lives, they contain rich autobiographical and social information (Zafar, 1999). Theophano (2002) notes that to access that information one must become skilled at reading between the lines. Community (or charitable) cookbooks are widely written about within US culture, and they are largely a North American and certainly an English language phenomenon, they are considered particularly symbolically valuable because they capture a multitude of voices. While individually authored cookbooks are produced for private enterprise, community cookbooks usually represents the work of several women who devote their time and offer recipes and tips for home cooks in their community and beyond (Rabinovitch, 2011). Theophano (2002) also considers the annotations owners make to printed books as sources of personal narrative. These sources have been privileged over printed materials as more closely linked to individuals and reflexive of their lives.

Considerations of mass produced cookbooks have tended to consider the bigger stories they tell about a culture. Brownlee, Hower & Horne (2005:7) consider that cookbooks may be discussed as cultural artefacts which contain “inscribed cultural tales which can be understood as productive of the culinary culture that they pretend only to display”. Cookbooks can “reflect shifts in the boundaries of the edible, the proprieties of the culinary process the logic of meals, the exigencies of the household budget, the varieties of the market

and the structure of domestic ideologies” (Appadurai, 1988:3). This cultural role of cookbooks has long been considered by historians (Driver, 2009) who look to cookbooks as evidence of domestic culture in previous generations but they are increasingly being interpreted as markers of contemporary society.

In Brownlie and Hewer’s (2005, 2009) various works on the subject of commodity cookbooks they consider them to be productive of new food cultures. Interpreting Jamie Oliver’s blokey tales of throwing food together with mates, or apprenticing at the feet of a master and Nigella’s re-enchantment of the kitchen, structuring food and cooking around mood, they argue that these narratives, perhaps because of the material, instruction residue of cookbooks, become the contemporary ways of doing and thinking about food. With the ever increasing textualisation of the culinary realm, these texts are argued to not only be reflective of the prevailing culinary culture but to be actively productive of it (Brownlie et al, 2005).

This approach to texts is critical for this thesis, certainly it considers that discussions of cookbook ownership and use, provide a useful entry point to narratives about cooking practice but it is further critical to try to read beyond this to cultural drivers of their practice and indications of personal identity work contained within. While cookbooks are perhaps the most obvious textual sources in food culture this thesis considers that there are two others worthy of consideration: marketing communications and social marketing messages. These in common with cookbooks can act as a valuable source of information on desirable manners, styles and lifestyles (Belk & Pollay, 1985) and can illuminate states of having, being and doing.

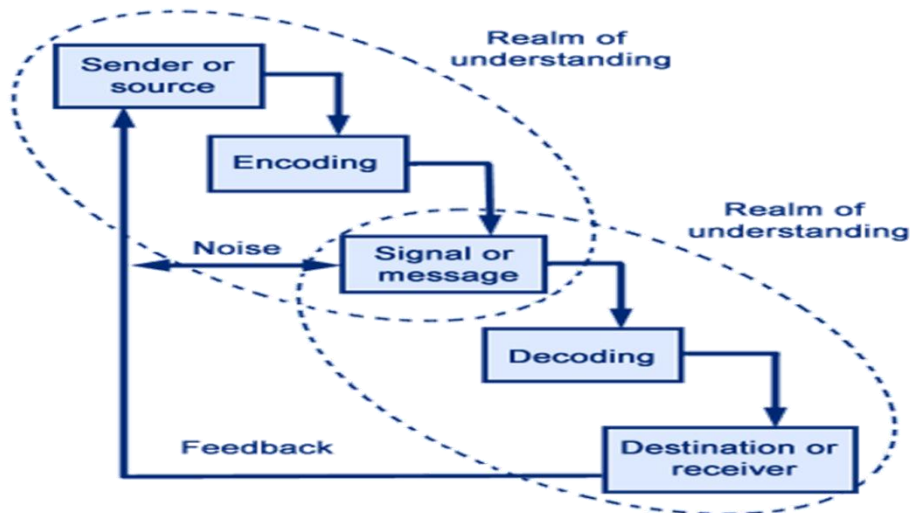
#### **2.4.2 Marketing Communications**

As part of the material culture and a resource for consumer identity marketing communications operate in a number of ways. First they have a material purpose, marketing communications are created in order to have an impact upon consumer attitudes and behaviours (Hoveland & Wolburg, 2010), this is briefly reflected upon though it is not particularly the means of understanding employed by this study. Second they are part of a sign system and consumers have a role in interpreting and adopting meanings within marketing communications. This section will consider the consumer as decoder of meaning by briefly considering the transmission models of communications theory within which they

assume this role, and these can range from simple linear models (Schramm, 1955) to complex models of co-production (Kozinets et al, 2010). Finally marketing communications are seen to reinforce and shape cultural values (Carey, 1989), this section will reflect upon communications as texts and as Belk & Pollay (1985) suggest consider how they may be utilised as an archival record, demonstrative of the ideal self-images society has at particular moments and illuminative of culture.

Marketing communications undoubtedly have a material dimension as they are created, and paid for, artefacts with the purpose of persuading or, as Hoveland & Wolburg (2010) note, creating a relationship with an audience. Communication effectiveness therefore is an area of literature in its own right considering how well particular communications or campaigns perform this primary task and increasingly whether they add value to the company responsible (Luo & de Jong, 2010). Effectiveness research has followed two distinct paths: Behavioural research, typically using experiments to address the effects of communication on individuals against measures such as awareness, attitudes, beliefs, and intentions; and field research which seeks to assess the effects of advertising on such market responses as brand choice, sales, or market share (Tellis, 2009). Researchers have made detailed investigations of a whole range of executional elements of communication e.g. humour (Gelb & Picket, 1983), spokesperson gender (Whipple & McManamon, 2002) and prominence of brand name (Baker et al, 2004) to suggest only a few. While these studies undoubtedly have value to marketing scholarship and practitioners they typically say little of how consumers are interpreting the messages and incorporating them into their lives. Researchers, within a consumer culture tradition, have increasingly sought to tackle these questions reflecting perhaps less on individual marketing campaigns and more on the overall impact marketing has upon individuals and society.

Much of the literature on marketing communications considers it as process where marketers with purpose create encoded messages for the consumer to read for meaning. A simple model of this type of communication theory is presented at figure 2.1. (Shannon & Weaver, 1948).



**Figure 2.1 Shannon & Weaver (1948) Model of Communication**

Within this broad conception of communication as transmission, McCracken (1986) discusses how marketing communications operate within a cultural and economic system. He argues that marketers are cognisant of the symbolic nature of communications and act as gatekeepers of meaning: selecting key meanings residing in cultural categories (e.g. gender) and cultural principles (e.g. manliness), they then transfer these to appropriate consumer goods through marketing communications and brands until finally the consumers appropriate these meanings into their lives. So Mick et al (2004:21) discuss that it in understanding marketing communications one can appropriate transmission models and: “(1) theorizing the selection and organisation of ad components as signs; (2) revealing the meanings of those choices and structurings, especially the hidden or less obvious; (3) conceptualising the consumer’s processing of ad signs in terms of meaning; and (4) understanding the philosophical, historical and sociocultural nature and effects of ad signs.” So each stage of the process becomes loaded with meaning, the choices involved in encoding being as culturally laden as the work of consumer in decoding. In this view modern marketing becomes a body of knowledge concerned with understand how marketing is created by the (culturally embedded) individual for the individual (Addis & Podesta, 2005:388). So research can focus upon the encoding process (Tonner, 2005), the message and the decoding as well as the surrounding elements of noise and feedback.

Fischer and Amabile (2009) have considered some of the background and processes involved in encoding communications within a creative organisation. They discuss the corporate

culture and processes combined with the actions of individuals required to achieve creativity. Though recognised as important marketing, little attention is given to this realm of understanding in this thesis, focussed as it is upon the consumer (though through models such as Kozinets (2010) consumers are increasingly involved in encoding and creativity). The dominant literature in this area considers organisational understanding and processes which are largely outwith scope.

Tresidder (2010) looking specifically at food communications engages with transaction models in his work. Exploring the Marks & Spencer food campaign he considers the communications as artefacts. Following Kress & Van Leeuwen's (1996) social semiotic approach he unpicks the encoded communications in the activity of M&S and how they utilise the cultural language of food and gastronomy and embed them within their "this is not just food, this is M&S food" slogan. Importantly he recognises these campaigns have a number of accepted purposes to "market and sell food and provisions" (Tresidder, 2010:479) but also to drive consumer participation in creating meaning and seeks to consider these encoded signs within the executions.

The active role of the consumer in interpreting meaning is considered by Fouquier (1988) who has argued "advertising reception is an act upon a text, which occurs from a vantage point and is a form of self-expression". He argues that only by understanding this analysis of the text does meaning become known and that this is not universal but individual. This ties in with the work of Hall (1980) who argues that meaning is derived not from comprehension but from interpretation. Dyer (1982) discusses how marketing communications should not be considered in the same way as other sign systems and argues that its language is deliberately loaded, that is semiotically thick and so requires an understanding of the distinct ways in which marketers use language and consumers interpret their meanings. He suggests that up to 90% of the consumers will misinterpret some element of a communication vs. its preferred reading but suggests that this should not necessarily be seen as a problem rather that these interpretations can be reflected upon by marketers and for the purposes of a consumer culture study can provide insight into how consumers utilise such materials as cultural resources.

Finally marketing communications are considered as a social phenomenon, that they have become so pervasive that they are now an essential way of knowing the world and that one can analyse related sociological trends as leading, lagging or contemporaneous to related

depictions in marketing. Marketing communications are considered to be capable of shaping lives and values rather than simply echoing existing patterns (Belk & Pollay, 1985). Many commentators have looked to communications of the past as evoking the cultural zeitgeist (Fletcher, 2008). Critics consider it can create a world in which individuals are made to become emotionally vulnerable, constantly monitoring themselves for social imperfections (Redmond, 2003). They consider that communications present an idealised image of consumer culture; a world of ease and comfort once the privilege of an elite now apparently within the reach of all (Featherstone, 1991). To attain it however he argues they must conform to the modes of behaviour dominant within these communications leading to ever increasing materialism (Goldsmith et al, 2011).

Marketing communications are regarded as being ubiquitous, though estimates of the number of exposures an individual has to communications in a day vary widely. McCracken (1986) argues that marketing communications have become part of the cultural lexicon; a resource for consumers when discussing their preferences and practices.

### **2.4.3 Social Marketing**

Social marketing messages are relatively dominant, within a food context with a range of healthy eating messages and initiatives by different organisations (Royne & Levy, 2008). The most culturally ubiquitous is perhaps the 5-a-day message, initially created by the American National Cancer Institute (NCI) in 1991, with the aim of increasing the consumption of fruit and vegetables to five portions a day as recommended by the World Health organisation (Pomerleau et al, 2004). “5-a-day” programmes have been adopted by many countries in the developed world and beyond (Sukkar, 2009).

Social marketing is widely considered to originate in the work of Kotler and Zaltman (1971) who first coined the phrase and began to create the parameters of the discipline. It evolved in parallel with commercial marketing through the 1950s and 60s. Some writers have considered that in its broadest form of “influencing public behaviour” (Kotler et al, 2002:8) social marketing has much longer history. Weibe (1951) questioned why marketing was considered the domain of commercial corporations and not applicable to social issues, coining the question “why can’t you sell brotherhood and rational thinking like you sell soap?” (Weibe, 1951:679). As the field has developed a number of key themes have emerged

to typify the approach: consumer orientation (Andreasen, 1995) and behavioural exchange (Lefebvre & Flora, 1988).

At its inception, social marketing could happily have an objective of changing public opinion on an issue (Kotler & Zaltman, 1971) and so have the whole of society as an audience but, as the field has progressed, more and more focus has been placed upon ensuring that social marketing campaigns create behavioural change (Andreasen, 1995). This behavioural change approach, which has become prevalent, has resulted in a predominance of campaigns targeted at the individual whose behaviour requires change (Farquhar et al, 1990). The wider targeting of the whole community and understanding the role community can play has only relatively recently been reconsidered (Glider et al, 2001) and as a result community based social marketing initiatives have become increasingly popular (McKenzie-Mohr, 2011).

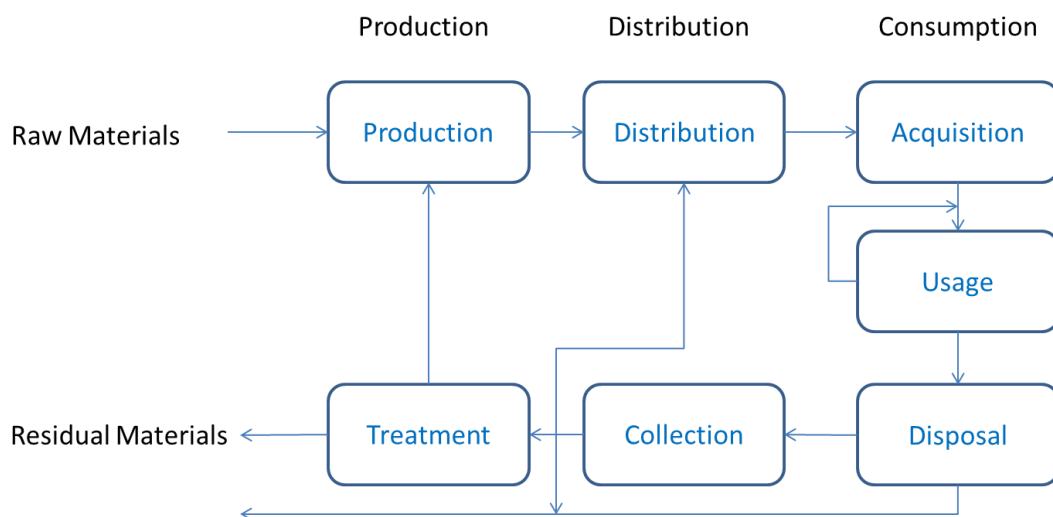
Social marketing stresses the centrality of exchange in achieving behaviour change (Glenane-Antoniadis, 1999). Bagozzi (1975) considers that social marketing addresses exchange behaviour in social relationships and McDermott et al (2005) discuss that the focus for exchange in social marketing is upon voluntary behaviour, and so in order to facilitate behaviour change consumers must be offered something they really want by identifying the most compelling benefits associated with behaviour change. Andreasen (1997) argues that for success, social marketing, like generic marketing, should have a long term outlook based upon continuing programmes rather than one off campaigns. The focus on achieving behavioural change sets the hurdle of success in social marketing incredibly high and Dann & Fry (2006) argue therefore that success in social marketing interventions is rarely clear cut, and even more rarely achieved. Goldberg (1995) provides a discussion of why behavioural change through social marketing is so elusive, he suggests that its focus upon the individual misses the implication of the social environment and so many levers of change are ignored.

For consumers however social marketing messages are still a useful resource even when the overall success of campaigns is unclear. Samu & Wymer (2009) discusses that while many individuals may not be sufficiently influenced by a campaign to change their behaviour, they may be affected in their perceptions and attitudes. Where messages become widespread and sustained, such as 5-a-day they may act as a means of understanding and conceptualising socially desirable behaviours (Moor 2011). Like commercial marketing messages social marketing ideas can further become part of the lexicon of popular culture.



## 2.5 Experiences

As discussed in the previous chapter consumption is often considered in opposition to production (Trentmann, 2006) but increasingly models are suggesting that the relationship between them is more complementary as part of an overall cycle of commercial life. Pieters (1991) represents the relationship as increasingly cyclical with consumption waste being reincorporated alongside raw materials into production. There is an ever increasing body of work which looks to consider how production and consumption can be meaningfully reconnected particularly in the food arena through movements such as slow food (Labelle, 2004). Blake et al (2010) consider that distribution and consumption can also be meaningfully reconnected by understanding consumer-retailer relationships.



**Figure 2.2 Production and consumption cycle adapted from Pieters (1991)**

The Pieters' (1991) model recognises that consumption itself goes beyond the usage of items but involves also both acquisition and disposal, for food an additional element of transformation through the cooking process can also be added. This section deals with these means by which the material culture of food is created because as Kuchler (2006: 325) discusses it is through consumption process from acquisition to disposal that material culture is produced and transformed, material culture is “made, not born...leaves the world we inhabit changed forever”. So in the context of food this section will tackle how and where consumers shop; it briefly considers their transformation of raw ingredients into edible items through preparation, cooking and eating practices though very briefly since many of the issues are also discussed elsewhere within the thesis particularly when considering food's

social roles. Food disposal is not considered, though increasingly discussed within the literature (Cappellini, 2009), it is outwith the scope of this thesis because it was not reflected upon by informants during the primary research stage.

### **2.5.1 Provisioning and Shopping**

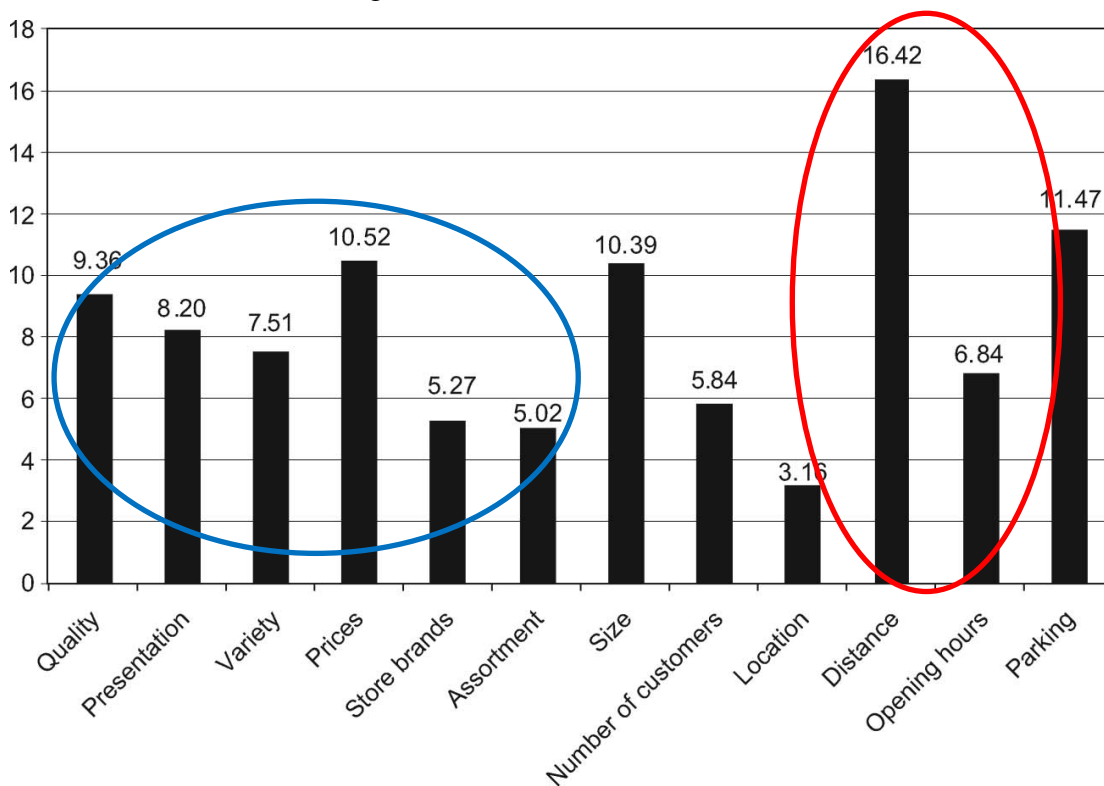
In order to eat, households and individuals must provision food. Though some of that may be self-created: grown in gardens or allotments or collected as in the case of fresh eggs from chickens (Armstrong et al, 2010), half of all allotment holders suggest they do so to save money on food (ibid), the majority of food provisioning involves shopping. Miller (1998) discusses that since objects of consumption are largely perishable, particularly when considering food stuffs then shopping is regularly repeated and with each visit the shopper must consider their values and practices. This section discusses the meaning and experiences of shopping for consumers.

As discussed more fully later DeVault (1991:18) considers the household provisioning of food remains a gendered activity with women retaining responsibility for a range of complex activities: “planning, screening sorting and evaluating as well and adapting, improvising and revisiting”. Shopping is considered to sit betwixt and between the world of work and leisure (Oh & Ardit, 2000) and Devault terms it care work. Oh & Ardit (2000:72) discuss how postmodern authors have increasingly framed shopping behaviour as active and purposeful “a meaningful process by which individuals can shape their lives using materials provided to them by dominant economic forces”. Miller (1998) talks of it as a loved activity where consumers must bring to bear a range of long held social values such as thrift and sacrifice. Reflecting upon shopping for food as care work, he considers that when the primary shopper takes account of the tastes and preferences of others in the household they are engaged in a devotional, sacrificial activity; giving primacy to the needs of others and postponing self-satisfaction.

A variety of factors are suggested to govern shopping sites and individual food items, from thrift (Miller, 1998) to convenience (Jackson et al, 2006). Lang (1999:169) discusses the items consumers put in their baskets as being decided upon a range of binary opposites with an increasing bias towards ‘the local over the global, fresh over processed foods, diversity over homogeneity, skills rather than deskilling.’ In broad terms for UK consumer food is

provisioned either from supermarkets or via what is largely termed alternative food sources (Murtagh, 2010).

The supermarkets are considered to dominate the UK's retail food market (Jones et al, 2004) with increasing ownership of convenience retail formats the major multiples account for 72% of food and grocery spend (IGD, 2010). Supermarket shopping is typified by reliability and convenience for consumers, Saridakis (2009) tested a range of factors associated with UK supermarket choice and found that attributes associated with merchandise and convenience were most influential most notably consumers will prefer the store which is the smallest distance from their home (figure 2.3).



**Figure 2.3 UK Supermarket choice determinants (Saridakis, 2009)**

Alternative food sources, particularly local food sourcing is increasingly considered in the literature. Definitions of local food vary but are centred on conceptions of a local commodity chain: shopping conveniently for the consumer, utilising independent retailer with produce coming from producers within a very small geographical radius (Blake et al, 2010). Blake et al (2010) discuss how consumers actively chose to support local specialist retailers such as greengrocers and butchers above national supermarkets, though this can be for a range of reasons from helping small retailers stay in business to a perception of superior quality produce. Murtagh (2011) argues that in addition to independent retailers consumers are

increasingly making use of co-operative farmers markets, consumer co-operatives and direct delivery systems such as vegetable box schemes.

Blake et al (2010) examine consumers' motivations for participating in alternative provisioning. Although the majority of UK consumers consider themselves to be interested in local foods and alternative food sources, it is a much smaller proportion of people who actively seek to purchase them (Weatherall et al, 2003). Interest is considered to be driven by abstract, credence factors which play an increasingly important role in food choice and include such concerns as healthiness, environmental benefits and animal welfare (Mannion et al., 2000). Yet it follows that actual demand is weaker because these benefits are traded-off against more prosaic 'expediency' factors such as price, accessibility and convenience, which are still very important to many people. (Lappalainen et al, 1998). Blake et al (2010) discuss that this trade-off in needs means that consumers typically engage in a mosaic of food shopping practice utilising a range of retailers including large supermarkets, independent retailers and producer sources such as farmers markets and box schemes.

### **2.5.2 Cooking and Eating**

Woven through this thesis, the within home consumption cycle of food is discussed and so here is presented only a brief overview of its processes and meaning. Involving both material and symbolic transformations it contains elements of work and pleasure. The activity of cooking at the beginning of this process is at once about the transformation of ingredients; a utilitarian process which transforms the inedible into edible (Lupton, 1998) but is equally recognised to constitute a symbolic transformation of raw commodities into a culinary system (Levi Strauss, 1970) and into the preference and identity of the group that practices it, forming part of their cultural gastronomy (Bourdieu, 1984). The act of preparing food is argued to be for many individuals a form of cultural production, it is the assemblage of everyday material goods translated through individual behaviours into a unique, temporal artefact meaningful to individual identity (Fischler 1988). For some it also represents a leisure activity, a means of enjoyment and relaxation equally as further discussed in chapter four cooking is considered to be a representation of care-work and gendered identity (Devault, 1991). These issues and the structuring and meaning of eating are considered in more detail in chapter four reflecting the social nature of their constructions.

## **2.6 Conclusion**

This chapter as the first considering the literature has focussed upon the material culture objects of food as one of the meaningful dimensions of consumer culture which will be explored to meet the aims of this thesis. It has sought to define broadly material culture and map the variety of items which may be considered within food culture as worthy of exploration and potentially meaningful for identity work. It has reflected how objects have both material and symbolic nature and has considered the range of items both physical and abstract items which have been studied within the consumer culture domain. It does this to define the range of items which may be legitimately considered worthy of consideration within the primary research. The following chapter then considers specifically the relevant theories of constructed identity and how consumption and consumer culture have been theorised as relevant to such projects.

## Chapter 3: Individual & Identity

### 3.0 Introduction.

As discussed in the preceding chapters, sitting as it does within the domain of consumer culture theory and particularly the body of work which considers individuals' identity projects this study is directly concerned with conceptions of self-identity through food consumption. This second literature chapter therefore considers definitions of self, individuality and identity which have been employed both within Consumer Culture Theory and beyond. Identity research is rich and varied (Schwartz et al, 2011), it may be considered as either unique and individually constructed (Reid, 1710) or a socially constructed representation of a person's cultural environment (Bourdieu, 1984). This study and the body of consumer culture theory within which it sits suggest that identity is constituted from aspects of both and that these may be reflected in one's consumption practice.

This chapter in considering the relevant literature to this study structures following Schwartz et al (2011) organisation of the identity field. It begins by considering personal perspective upon identity. It briefly introduces the psychological history of self as a mental process as reflected within consciousness and the competing dualist (Descartes, 1641) and monist (James, 1890) traditions of self within. It considers particularly the position of the body within self, which emanates from these traditions and endures in contemporary identity theory literature. It concludes that while the neglected nature of the body and privileging of mental processes in much of identity literature has led some to consider that dualism endures that rather contemporary identity theory relies heavily upon monist perspectives and the theories within.

Remaining with personal perspectives it then discusses issues of integrity and endurance of identity. In this section competing conceptions of multiple selves deriving from bundle theory (Hume, 1739) and multi-dimensional core-self deriving from ego theory (Giddens, 1991) will be discussed. Bundle theory will be developed to consider the multiple self-concept (Sirgy, 1982) to include actual, ideal and negative fractured selves and comment made upon the links to postmodern theories of identity (Firat, 1992). Ego theory is developed to consider the competing discourse of narrative construction of a multidimensional self around a central core which conceptualises that self is an authentic and enduring concept reflective of a

number of both physical and mental dimensions understood by the individual as a coherent narrative.

Finally consumption as a domain of identity, and that most relevant to this thesis, is considered. The role of consumption as a contributor to solipsistic identity seeking (Bauman, 1988) is explored and particularly the work within the Consumer Culture Theory community in conceptualising this relationship. Extended-self provides a particular focus as a core theory for this thesis, following ego theory and the concept of multi-dimensional self, it considers beyond congruent or symbolic consumption how material goods may become integrated into self.

Finally this chapter reflects upon the pre-existing work in the food context as an identity creation domain (Fischler, 1988). Structural sources of self (Elliot, 2004) such as gender, ethnicity and class are reserved and will be reflected upon in the following chapter as these are typically theorised separately in the literature.

### **3.1 Consciousness**

Defining identity is a quest with a long history and from the earliest times man has considered himself to have an internal identity or soul that other objects or living beings don't (Aristotle, [384-322BC] 1988). Over time this became theorised as the study of consciousness considering as its key question the essence of humanity and what makes man different from all other entities. As with much in the field of theory creation agreement is elusive and discourse has resulted in the development of two key traditions: monistic theories of self (James, 1890) which are widely considered to be the more sound in modern philosophy and the subject of much subsequent discussion; and dualist theories (Descartes, 1641), these have been widely criticised as modern science has developed but still have respected supporters, and implications for consideration of the body within identity theory and so are worthy of consideration.

#### **3.1.1 Cartesian Dualism**

The dualist theory is also known as Cartesian dualism based, as it is, in the work of Rene Descartes ([1641] 1986). Simpson (2001) argues that with Descartes began a preoccupation with the self or subjectivity. Cartesian dualism is so termed because it considers the body and the mind to exist separately; it differentiates the conscious from the reflex and puts the mind

or soul on a different plane: “cogito, ergo sum” (I think, therefore I am) (Descarte, [1637]1997: 32). While Descartes’ explanation, that the immaterial soul is connected to the body and the brain through the pineal gland and that the physical brain worked by the flow of animal spirits through its cavities, has been surpassed by modern medicine the conceptual thought of dualism of the physical and mental has endured.

In dualism the body is a physical entity existing objectively and behaviour is also objective, real and controlled by the chemistry of the brain, its neurotransmitters and neuromodulators and these are relatively common to all living beings. Humans in this theory are differentiated from other forms of life due to their consciousness (Chalmers, 1995). Consciousness is that subjective experience of the world, the “unsharable, private sensations relating to real objects in space” (Blackmore, 2003: 9). In a dualist world it is in the non-physical, thinking realm that concepts of self and even the ability to ask such questions as “who am I?” dwell. In this tradition self-reflexivity and consciousness are considered to be inextricably linked (Adams, 2003)

Dualist theory has few modern supporters notably Popper & Eccles (1977) who argue that the critical processes in the brain are so finely poised they can be influenced by a non-physical and feeling self. Most modern scientists and philosophers reject dualism Ryle (1949) discusses it as “the dogma of the Ghost in the Machine” arguing that by discussing the mind as an entity is a category mistake. That mental activity is a collection of processes or the properties and dispositions of people.

The Cartesian metaphor continues to be useful to researchers when exploring concepts of disembodiment (Young & Whitty, 2010). While not truly Cartesian in ontology modern dualism regards the disembodied self as an on-going discussion and is still conceptually relied upon particularly when considering cyberspace experiences of virtual reality. It is also reflected upon by theorists who consider that the body is under-explored in discussions of self (Turner, 2008) such that the ‘ghost’ rather than the ‘machine’ remains the focus for much identity theory.



### 3.1.2 The body in identity

As discussed above while there is a general rejection of the Cartesian metaphor within modern identity theory, the focus within identity theory upon psychological processing, the mind and our constructions of self as abstractions minimises discussion of the physical body and as such it has been neglected such that discussions of consciousness have tended towards the disembodied. Turner (2008) argues that the body remains seriously under theorised despite a recognition by most modern theorists that it is intrinsically linked to identity. By concentrating too much upon the self as symbolically constituted the corporality of the individual is minimised and in much writing is relatively insignificant. Foucault in contrast locates the body centrally as an issue of knowledge and the target for the exercise of power (Smart, 1985). Featherstone (1982) argues that with consumer culture there is a dominant self-preservationist conception of the body, where the individual is in control of preventing deterioration and decay. In Featherstone's (ibid) argument the inner and outer body are linked "the prime purpose of the maintenance of the inner body becomes the enhancement of the appearance of the outer body". Contemporary consumer culture is argued to permit the display of the human body as never before and with effort individuals are persuaded they can achieve perfection.

Harper & Tiggeman (2008:649) argue that against this backdrop has emerged a "thin-ideal" Many feminist theorists have argued that women are particularly affected by this discourse (Dworkin, 1974) and viewing images of thin women in fashion magazines has been linked to body dissatisfaction and a corresponding drive for individual thinness (Harrison & Cantor, 1997) but research into masculine identities show that these cultural drives for physical perfection are not a solely female ideal. Abell & Richards (1996) found young men to be more dissatisfied with their bodies than young women and that those individuals most dissatisfied with their body shape had consequently larger differences between their actual and ideal self-image despite there being no link to objective body weight measures. Thompson (1990) has noted that it remains unclear how feelings about external body appearances contribute to overall self-concept. Mendelson & White (1996) have argued that self-esteem is not however driven by body image rather non-corporeal elements such as scholastic, social ability dominate. This raises questions of the importance of physical characteristics in self-identity. When considering the body as part of social identity, following the thin ideal, much attention is paid to weight, Reitman and Cleveland (1964) for example sought a solipsistic view of body size by isolating subjects from day-to day

comparisons with others and suggested that under such conditions perceptions of body size become unstable. This works with the findings of Klaczynski et al (2004) who suggest that the relationship between particularly body weight and self-esteem is dependent upon the extent to which one internalises the thin ideal.

The body is also considered as a vehicle for self-expression. Post-modernity is argued to free up expressions of identity, with style becoming much more flexible and individual (Entwistle, 2000). Studies particularly of youth culture have shown the body to be a particularly strong way of defining identity and group belonging (Goulding & Saren, 2009) and often of enacting resistant identities. Reflecting upon how much of an individual's self-image is created through the body with "adornment, clothing, perfumery, cosmetics, tattoos, body-modifications" Saren (2007:344) argues that it is the body as well as then mind which motivates much of people's symbolic projects and particularly their consumption.

This brief discussion of the body is included because, particularly in a study concerning food consumption, to talk about a purely symbolic self would be to miss the basic purpose of eating. The body is directly involved in both consumption and conceptions of self in this area and as such will be considered in the findings and discussion.

### **3.1.2 Monist theory of consciousness.**

In contemporary identity theory while not necessarily explicit, monist theories of self dominate. Based in the work of James (1890) who, while recognising the phenomena that dualists classified as: the mind, desires, cognitions, reasoning and volitions, ultimately rejects and dismisses the dualist concepts of soul. He discusses how consciousness can be abolished through injury or brain trauma and so psychology must be linked to the brain's physiology. This is a theory of consciousness which is embedded in scientific enquiry. Early studies by Von Helmholtz (1894) measured conduction of nerve signals, so quantified the velocity of thought and around the same time Weber (1825) developed the relationship between sensations and stimulation. So through the 20<sup>th</sup> century it became accepted that much of conscious experience is reliant upon unconscious processing in the brain and nervous system (Miller, 1962).

Monist theory progressed to the concept of behaviourism which argued that the concept of consciousness was unnecessary and that psychology should be a "purely objective branch of

natural science” (Watson, 1913:158). Watson discusses that behaviourism “recognises no dividing line between man and brute” (ibid). By the 1970s this extreme approach which commentators argued undermined the mind was losing favour and consciousness as a concept was being discussed again (Tart, 1972).

In monist theory consciousness never takes place without a change in the physicality of the brain and a change in the brain never without a change in consciousness (Mercier, 1888). But Chalmers (1995) suggests that even by accepting monism there is still an issue which has come to be known as the hard problem. “How physical processes in the brain give rise to subjective experience” (Chalmers, 1995: 63). Levine (2001:78) discusses this as the explanatory gap “the metaphysical gap between physical phenomena and conscious experience”. And so despite a much deeper understanding of the physiology of the brain and nervous systems “human consciousness is just about the last surviving mystery” (Dennett, 1991: 21).

Not all monists accept the existence of the hard problem. Dennett (1991) argues that focussing attention on the hard question is a major misdirection of attention, “an illusion generator”. This is not because he denies the existence of consciousness but argues that we misconstrue it. He discusses that it only seems as if there is phenomenology and so we need to explain not the phenomenology itself but how it comes to seem this way. For many academics however the subjective experience of human identity remains of interest. Hostadter and Dennett (1981) discuss this as developing an understanding of what experiences are like from the inside. For this study this approach is critical since it seeks to uncover the meanings by looking for consumer’s subjective narratives, their own telling of experience and the importance they attach to such accounts.

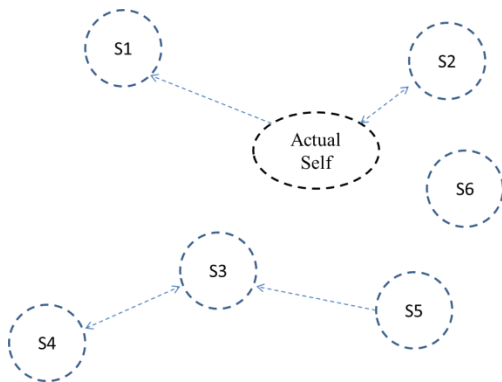
### **3.2 Constructed Self endurance and authenticity.**

In common with the development of theories of consciousness the discussion of the endurance and integrity of identity has also developed against two opposing traditions. Bundle theory based upon the work of Hume (1962[1739]) which has given rise to multiple self theories of identity and ego theory upon the work of Reid (1785) which is the genus of multi-dimensional core centred self.

### 3.2.1 Bundle theory & multiple-self model.

Bundle theory rejects the concept of a single self, it argues that rather there are only a series of experiences linked together in various ways. It suggests that while there seems to be a unified conscious being this is but an illusion. Parfit (1987) suggests that Buddha is the first bundle theorist but it is in the work of Hume (1962 [1739]) that the bundle of sensations first took form as a modern theory. Hume (ibid: 304) wrote that “identity depends on the relation of ideas and these relations produce identity” “we feign the continued existence of the perceptions on our senses” “run into the notions of soul and self” but that there are only impressions, under which he considers violent perceptions such as sensations, passions and emotions, and ideas, the faint images of thinking and reasoning . Representations of bundle theory endure in contemporary thought and have for example been linked to psychological schools such as enactivism which reflects identity as being enacted in interaction with the environment rather than being an abstract concept to be consider alone (Froese, 2008).

Such concepts are considered to be the genus of multiple self theories (Gould, 2010) a representation of which is shown at figure 3.1.



**Figure 8.1 Multiple Self Model (adapted from Gould, 2010)**

These concepts consider that self is not a coherently understood and conceptualised single entity rather that multiple selves co-exist in individually constructed spheres which may be linked to each other or disparate (Hermans, 2002). Often associated with post-modernity such considerations of self are associated with the rise of individualism and fractured identity Rather than seeking a coherent centralised sense of self individuals may be content and comfortable with this multiplicity. Firat (1992: 204), discussing contemporary bundle theory considers that “consumers of post-modernity seem to be transcending (grand) narratives” of identity. In this conception consumers are content buying a diverse range of products,

recognising that images are fleeting but not minding (Suerdem & Sinan, 1992) because post-modern consumers have shattered themselves into numerous self-images coming in and out of focus (Gabriel & Lang, 1995).

### **3.2.1.1            *Self Concept***

Self-concept may be considered as one of the multiple self models which seeks to unpick and categorise the many stories individuals construct about themselves (Sirgy, 1982). Toumlin (1986:41) suggests that defining a person's sense of self is problematic "the most it can be is a shorthand sign, pointing to a whole realm of deliberate and non-deliberate conduct and reflexive experience". Self-concept is reflective of an individual's phenomenological field and argues that behaviour is not only influenced by past and current experiences but by the personal meanings each individual attaches to their perception of those experiences (Wylie, 1961).

Sirgy (1982) unpicks the idea that a person has one personal identity and instead argues that there is a range of self-images dependent upon situation. He argues for four different constructions: actual self-image, ideal self-image, social self-image and ideal social self-image. This is an extension of the duality argument of actual and ideal self-image advanced by Belch (1978) among others. Markus & Nurius (1986) discuss an additional to this work, negative self-concept which is also considered. Oyserman (2004) argues that self-concept contains such a "dizzying array of content, such a rich array of episodic, experimental and abstracted information about that self than not all of it can be salient at any given point" so individuals must work with a subset of the relevant information that is central at a point in time, deciding which self is appropriate for context.

#### **3.2.1.1.1            *Actual self-image***

Actual self-image is the mostly closely akin to the ego theory of Reid (1785) and Giddens (1991) since it has been argued that actual self represents a core/private self (Higgins, 1987). However actual self in common with other conceptions of self is not considered universally relevant for all individuals rather that actual or core self is a tentative concept only recognised by some (Gould, 2010). As discussed above this is reflective of the post-modern condition within which individualism is dominant and identity fractured and episodic (Firat, 1992). Much consumer behaviour literature on self-concept has been in relation to how it influences behaviour particularly in a commercial environment. Bellenger, Steinberg & Stanton (1976)

explore actual self-image in relation to retailing and defined it as the honest way in which people perceive themselves. This can include aspects of negative self-image which Markus & Nurius (1986) argue serves as an incentive for future behaviour representing selves to be rejected or avoided

#### **3.2.1.1.2                    *Idealised self-image***

Idealised self-image is one of the additional selves suggested by Sirgy (1982). It considers that individuals tend to have a view of the changes or improvements they would wish to make in their identity in order to be happy (Belch, 1978). Giddens (1991) refers to the ideal-self as “the self that I want to be” or as Markus & Nurius (1986) defines it “how I should be” and says that such ideals help individuals determine what kind of self to fashion. Markus and Nurius (ibid) go on to define a range of possible-selves, their concept adds a temporal dimensions with a greater emphasis on future-looking individual selves, while recognising past selves also having a role which is further considered when reflecting upon negative-self. The idealising project is largely considered to be changes that one would wish in the content dimension of self-concept e.g. to be more confident, funnier or attractive (Wieland, 2010) and Markus & Nurius (1986) suggest that future possible selves are cognitively motivating in engaging positive behaviours.

There may be a large or small difference between a person’s actual self-image and their ideal self-image (Hamm & Cundiff, 1969), the idealised self-image may be strong or weak in salience. An individual’s conscious judgement of the relationship between these two elements is considered to be their global self-attitude, sometimes known as self-esteem or self-satisfaction (Burns, 1979) and so as Schlegel et al (2009) discuss when the idealise self is considered unattainable self-esteem suffers. Importantly for this study the work on ideal-self doesn’t suggest it to be unconscious or invisible to the individual, rather they are clearly able to distinguish between actual and ideal.

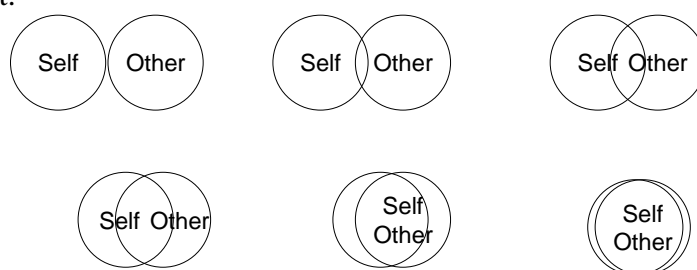
#### **3.2.1.1.3                    *Social Self-image & ideal social self-image***

The social antecedents of self-image; family, gender etc., will be discussed more in the next chapter but is worth noting here that while actual and idealised self-image may draw on social comparisons they are essentially envisaged to be a person’s private view of themselves and that there can be a difference between that and the pictures they choose to portray to

society (Schenk & Holman, 1980) as Mead (1934) distinguishes the I vs. me. This can be because of the way that they believe others perceive them or in the way they would wish them to. Hogg & Savolainen (1998) suggest that this *ideal* social self-image is highly influenced by the social context and the presence of different people.

Identification with a social group is a psychological state, more significant than merely being designated as falling into one social category or another. It is phenomenologically real and has important self-evaluative consequences (Hogg & Abrams, 1988). In social identity theory the individual's self-concept is derived from perceived membership of social groups (Hogg & Vaughan, 2002). This quest for positive distinctiveness causes Hogg & Abrams (1988) to argue that people's sense of who they are is often defined in terms of 'we' rather than 'I' or 'me'. Brewer (1991) however argues that this doesn't result in a total loss of individual self-identity nor does it require that the in-group be completely social homogenous rather she argues individuals are loath to be too similar to others in their social group striving instead for an optimal balance of uniqueness and similarity.

The uniqueness required depends on the level of de-personalised self-categorisation this is the process whereby the self and the in-group become psychologically merged (Smith & Henry, 1996). This depersonalising of the self works in conjunction with the self-expansion model (Aron, Aron & Norman, 2004) describing relationships which are close where the self and other become blurred. This model will be revisited later within the chapter because Belk (1988) suggests this as well as applying to other people it can be applied to consumed objects. Figure 3.2 illustrates the operation of the model and shows that in different relationships and different groups the level of depersonalised self-categorisation will also be different.



**Figure 3.2 Inclusion of others in the self (IOS) scale (Aron, Aron & Smollan, 1992)**  
 Featherstone (1991) discusses the emergence of a conception of self which he refers to as the performing-self placing great emphasis upon appearance, display and the management of impressions. He suggests this encourages individuals to attempt to develop the skills of an

actor where each is responsible for the development of their own personality. With choice comes the increased need and complexity of decoding the appearance of others while taking pains to manage the impressions which they, themselves, give off.

Enacted identity builds upon this concept of performing-self, the idea that one works at creating an identity consciously rather than allowing a narrative or biography to emerge. The requirements of a specific identity discourse, for example in professional settings gives rise to a need for micro-identities (Thomas & Davies, 2005). Sveningsson & Alvesson (2003), in their work, argue that there is often a requirement for a specific workplace identity. Within the context of the norms of company culture and professional community it requires great efforts for a manager to project an image and manage identity expectations. Personae vs. the deeply held self can be tried on or taken off i.e. being a businesswoman at odds with being a bohemian (Ahuvia, 2005) “Identities can be thought of as hats which that consumers put on and take off” (Reed II & Bolton, 2005:18)

#### **3.2.1.1.4                      *Negative Self Image***

Bannister & Hogg (2003) discuss that in addition to the positive seeking of a self-concept there is correlated negative where individuals seek to avoid which would represent the negative possible-self or dreaded-self. Cantor et al (1986) have discussed the self as a dynamic structure which involves a multiplicity of selves and necessarily not all will be wholly positive. The development of a negative self-concept while representing an individual self which is rarely shared is developed strongly in reference to a social group since it often represented by the characteristics of the out-group (Bannister & Hogg, 2003). Ogilvie et al (2008) proposed that the undesired self might be a more stable anchor for assessing the actual self than the ideal self because the undesired self is more likely to be based on lived experiences, in memory even if the recollections may be troubling.

Understanding negative identity and how consumers deal with it can be important in uncovering their resistant identities. When forced to confront the negative-self, Maurer & Sobal(1999) argue that resistant identities emerge demonstrating rebellion against the socially dominant ideals of self and reframing the negative identity in positive terms. These can be expressed in a number of ways including flamboyance, discussed often within gay cultural theory the flamboyant display of a gay identity is regarded and part of resistance and



rebellion (Drummond, (2005); and activism, often by joining an activist group. Joannis & Synnot (1999) talk about the National Association to Advance Fat Acceptance (NAAFA) as a mean for overweight people in the USA to show their resistant identity.

The avoidance behaviour and resistance associated with negative self-concept is an important part of the overall development of a symbolic consumption framework (Hogg et al, 2008) which will be discussed further in this chapter.

### **3.2.2 Ego Theory & Multidimensional Core Self.**

The idea of a coherent self is in contrast at the fore in the work of ego theorists such as Reid (1710) who wrote “I am not thought, I am not action, I am not feeling: I am something which thinks acts and feels.” It speaks to identity as being an enduring concept embodied within the individual. Simpson (2001: 315) discusses that personal identity is not identical with acts of self-consciousness. “That self-consciousness may be Humean: a mere bundle of otherwise independent states but from the outside of an individual’s consciousness there will be no doubt that all the acts belong to one soul, since the substantial entity that is the living body will always be one and the same and publicly observable” and so Simpson accepts that the bundle theory may be appropriate for self-conscious acts or indeed that individuals may consider themselves to hold different contextual identities but argues that personal identity transcends this theory.

Within ego theory therefore it is considered that identity cannot be represented solely by considering the potential range of multiple selves which individuals may adopt or enact but that rather these are linked to a coherent whole by the individual and observable by those around them. Identity work in this concept is conscious and becomes a continuous process of “forming, repairing, maintaining, strengthening or revising the constructions that are productive of a precarious sense of coherence and distinctiveness” (Oyserman, 2004: 11)

Constructed self is argued to be particularly a feature of the individualism of modernity where developing a strong sense of self—unique from others—is considered to be of paramount importance (Triandis, 1995). Though existential philosophers have long maintained (Kierkegaard (1849), 1983) that coming to a deeper realization of who one is beneath the veneer of social trappings is what imbues life with a sense of authentic purpose.

Schlegel et al (2009) reflect upon understanding actual/core self and consider the ability to be oneself; to perform one's true identity is a key component of well-being. They reflect that the more easily accessible individuals find the actual self-identity the more meaningful they also regard their life. Weigart (2009) considers as a psychological requirement; self-authenticity, or living and presenting as often as possible one's true self and this being reflected in one's consumption.

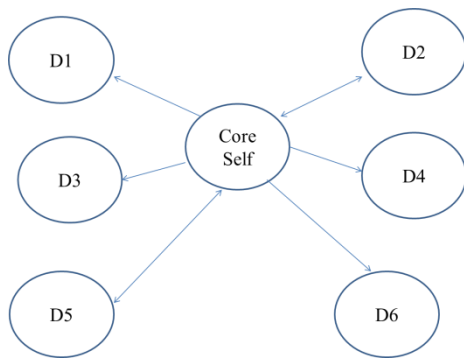
Giddens (1991) writing about identity in late modernity, which he defines as the breaking of old moulds and the instigation of new one's "the increasing globalising influences on one hand and personal dispositions on the other" (ibid: 1), begins from an acceptance of consciousness "that to be a human being is to know, virtually all of the time in terms of some description or another both what one is doing and why one is doing it" (ibid: 35). He argues that self-identity is not an individual trait possessed by an individual but rather that "the self is reflexively understood by a person in terms of her or his biography" (ibid: 53). Identity work therefore thus highlights the ways that individuals author their self-identities (Alvesson & Willmott, 2002).

In ego theory a person is a single, continuous self who has experiences. Identity is enduring throughout life, so while the narrative is changing and incomplete it has a continuity which distinguishes a person from all others. Giddens distinguishes ego from bundle theory by suggesting that through action a person may represent a false persona, using the example of a cheating husband lying to his wife he suggest that despite playing the part of a dutiful husband this falsehood does not seriously compromise the husband's own self-image. He says that a "person's identity is not to be found in behaviour, nor in the reactions of others, but in the capacity to keep a particular narrative going" (ibid: 54). Giddens also argues that this identity must have some objectivity because "to maintain regular interaction with others in the day-to-day world it cannot be wholly fictive" (ibid: 54). Snygg & Combs (1949) suggest that the aspect which are included in the self-narrative are those which are vital or truly important to that person. Giddens' (1991) view of identity as narrative is important to this study which collects individual narratives of consumption, as will be discussed further in the methodology, utilising depth interviews. These allow participants to be reflexive and selective about the stories they tell and to help uncover that which they consider vital to their own self-identity.

The view that consumers seek self-authenticity is important for this study, since it relies upon consumer’s own narratives of consumption and meaning to theorise. If consumers had no real understanding of themselves the power of their narratives would be limited however, as Weigart (2009) discusses, individuals are best placed to present their own multi-faceted identities and reconcile their co-existence.

### 3.2.3 Multi-dimensional Core Self

This has led to the development of conceptions of multidimensional self (figure 3.3) embedded within ego theory these concepts have a dominant theme of uncovering true or real selves and behaving in keeping with this (Gould, 2010). It is however recognised that to define self requires consideration of the dimensions which may be the constituent parts thereof ( Higgins, 1987).



**Figure 3.3 Model of multi-dimensional core-self (adapted from Gould, 2010)**

Belk (1988) reflects upon the potential dimensions within his review of identity literature within his seminal piece and considers that there are a number of potential hierarchies of selfhood with the core represented by the factor at the top of the rankings (figure 3.4).

<b>McLelland (1951)</b>	<b>Prelinger (1959)</b>	<b>Ellis (1985)</b>
1. Free will	1. Body Parts	1. One’s body
2. Body, conscience	2. Psychological processes	2. Personal Space
3. Belongings	3. Personal characteristics	3. Ingestibles
4. Friends	4. Possessions	4. Territory
5. Strangers, physical universe	5. Abstract ideas	5. Domicile
	6. Other people	6. Copulatory partners
	7. Objects in close physical environment	7. Offspring
	8. Distant physical environment	8. Friends
		9. Tools
		10. Objects of aesthetic appeal

**Figure 3.4 Comparison of Hierarchies of Self (adapted from Belk, 1988)**

While specifically considering the role of external objects and particularly consumption within self (a matter which will be considered again later in the chapter when discussing extended-self theory) Belk (ibid) presents a considered review of the potential dimensions of a multi-dimensional self and considers that through previous research these exist in hierarchical proximity to a central core. Within this review it is worth noting that while common factors are present across the different hierarchies of self (body and friends) there is a lack of agreement regarding their hierarchical arrangement. Belk (1988:141) considers that in summary the major categories of self are: “body, internal processes, ideas and experiences and those persons, places and things to which one feels attached” but doesn’t suggest a clear arrangement of these factors. Mittal (2006: 554) in his discussion of the same topic considers that rather than a hierarchy the identifiable dimensions of self, which he considers to be: body shape and appearance, personal values, success and accomplishment, social role fulfilment, self-image traits and possessions, are rather organised uniquely for each individual in terms of their centrality and proportion of self “ingredients which consumer mix in different proportions to come up with their own recipe of their ‘I’”.

Within multidimensional core theories of self, inauthenticity of identity is argued to be damaging to individual well-being (Schlegel et al, 2009). Goffman (1969) discusses that if individuals are required to be other than their true selves all the time it can lead to a bureaucratisation of the spirit, for the performing self must produce an even performance every time. It is not enough to have the capacity to perform in specific contexts it becomes essential to be able to project a constantly winning image. The need for authenticity doesn’t necessarily suggest however a fixed concept of self, improvement projects can be undertaken as individuals rather than engaging in actual-self acceptance set about making changes to become closer to their ideal self (Sedikides & Hepper, 2009). These projects often revolve around the body, but can also include educational activities to improve knowledge or altruistic activities which meet a moral need (Wuthnow, 2006). For this study again this complexity of identity is intriguing because it is considered to be conscious on the part of the individual so in researching consumption meaning these micro-identities may be explored in addition to larger, perhaps more coherent, identity stories.

### **3.3 Identity and Consumption.**

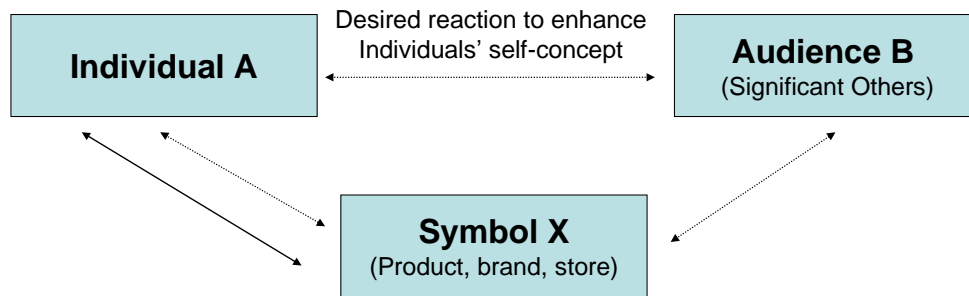
Consumption has been linked to the range of concepts of identity by researchers and field is often traced to 19<sup>th</sup> century thinkers such as Veblen (1899) who initially discussed the

concept of conspicuous consumption and the outward displays of identity and social positioning which consumer goods can perform. Cushman's(1990) empty-self critique sees identity in the modern era as a black hole into which the consumer relentlessly feeds object but which never fills up leaving a chronic and undifferentiated emotional hunger. McCracken (1988) in considering Diderot's 'Regrets on parting with my old dressing gown' notes that when old possessions are replaced everything around it looks lesser and as he seeks to replace old items with new each in turn fails to live up to the most recent. In this concept consumption is ultimately futile because it seeks only to soothe the symptoms of emptiness without ever being able to address the antecedents, Giddens' (1990) conception of late modernity's absence of community and tradition, Cushman(1990) argues, cannot be replaced by the goods, products and celebrities consumer use for meaning in their place.

While material objects can serve many different psychological and practical functions, outwith identity functions such as utilitarianism (Maio & Olson, 2000) self-expression and identity functions recur throughout the literature. McCracken (1988:136) argues that consumption can fulfil two functions in an individualised world as a symbolic outward display and as personal identity work "through the goods which we consume we may be communicating with ourselves" he discusses them as representing "a bulletin board for internal messages and billboard for external one's". This notion of consumption as a form of self-communication draws in Douglas & Isherwood (1978) who consider that even in solitary situations consumption is carefully considered for the meaning it carries.

Bauman (1988) argues that the relationship between consumption and identity and the increasing need for self-identity is as a direct result of growing individualism in society. Individuality has increasingly become prominent in social discourse with Morris (1972) arguing that individualism is a "distinctive feature of western man". Luhmann (1986) suggests that individual persons can no longer be firmly located in one single subsystem of society, but rather must be regarded a priori as socially displaced. Within this modern individually focussed world Bauman (1988:63) argues that the "rapidly expanding, seemingly limitless, world of consumption" is "the place where freedom and certainty are offered and obtained together" and "the harrowing task of constructing one's own social identity" can be made real by "making the necessary purchases".

This relationship between self-image and purchase behaviour has been a feature of consumer behaviour research since the 1960s and looking back to the work of Birdwell (1968) and Grubb & Hupp (1968) consumers' identity projects are conceptualised as the seeking of congruence, matching product image with self-image and mediating their opinions based upon prevailing social norms this relationship is represented in figure 3.5.



**Figure 3.5 Relationship of the consumption of goods as symbols of the self-concept (Grubb & Grathwohl, 1967: 25)**

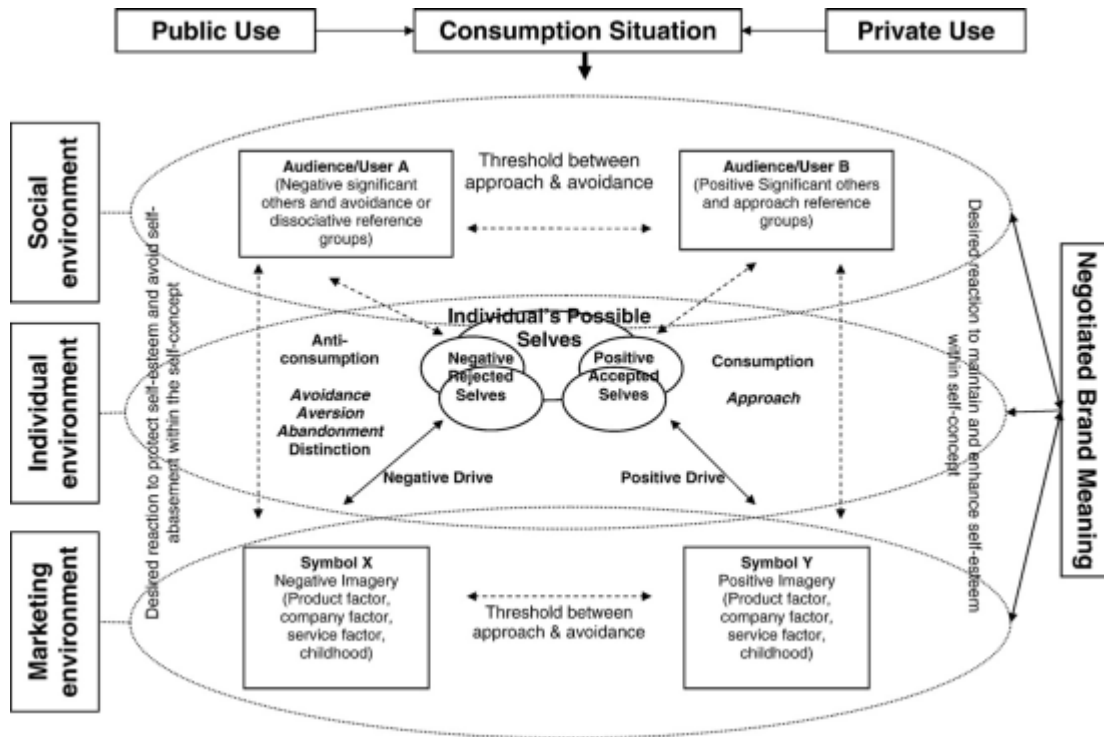
In consumption for identity work the role of consumption can be summarised at three levels: consumption which is congruent with identity, this conception of congruence is argued by Kleine et al (1993) to be a far from simple relationship, they argue that people care less about communicated product meaning and more about how the product can be contributory to their lived experience; consumption which is symbolic of self-identity and consumption to create identity as theorised in extended-self, these are now considered.

### 3.3.1 Congruent and Symbolic Consumption

As noted above there is a consideration that consumers tend to seek products which are congruent with their sense of self, whether taking a core-self approach where coherent identity is constructed or a multiple-self view where congruence can be to any of the potential selves within scope at the given time. When congruence is threatened it is argued that consumers seek to resolve the dissonance and even choose brands with “personalities” that they see as matching their own (Aaker, 1999, Savani, Markus, & Conner, 2008).

The emergence of symbolic consumption which goes beyond congruence is a field of study within its own right and is typified by what Jackson & Holbrook (1995) argue is a complex interaction within which consumers “transform their (the goods’) meaning as they incorporate them into their lives.” Hogg et al (2008: 1) argue that “symbolic consumption involves reciprocal and reflexive relationships between products (tastes and distastes) and

consumers (positive and negative selves) within social contexts”. Central to symbolic consumption is the idea of the “I-for others” (Joy et al, 2010) or the self as externally presented. In this work the goods have a communicative as well as an identity forming role. Hogg et al (2008) argue for an expanded framework of symbolic consumption which includes anti-consumption and the negative self within its remit (figure 3.6)

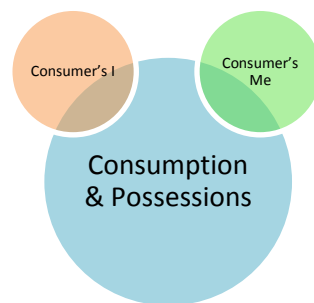


**Figure 3.6 Mapping symbolic (anti-) consumption: an expanded integrative conceptualisation (Hogg et al, 2008)**

They argue first that symbolic consumption happens within three environments: marketing, where commercial messaging interacts with marketplace beliefs to create positive and negative imagery which the consumer must evaluate; social, where structural influences e.g. family and reference groups mediate the attitudes of consumers; and individual how the range of selves including past (encompassed in memory and nostalgia) and possible selves influence our consumption practices.

Contemporary conceptualisations have extended the symbolic consumption beyond simply embracing goods, to a wider consideration of material culture as that which may be employed in identity work. Douglas (1966) discusses a world of goods, as has been considered in the previous chapter, to include image, texts and practices in addition to traditional goods (Miller, 2006).

Consumption however does not only do outward identity work, communicating the ‘me’ it has a role in defining our individual conceptions of self, the ‘I’. Mittal models this relationship as in figure 3.7 and considers how consumers seek congruence between these elements often through their consumption and possessions. The need for an authenticity of self has already been discussed in the chapter (Schlegel et al, 2009) and this may be reflected in purchasing products which are closer to the true actual self. Kleine and Klein (2000) argue that consumption can reflect both distinction (I) and identification (me).



**Figure 3.7 Tension between “I” & “Me” and consumption as a reconciler (Mittal, 2006: 556)**

Given the close link between the individual self-concept and material possessions, individualists may rely on their possessions not just to express their personal characteristics but also to protect the self against threats such as self-uncertainty.

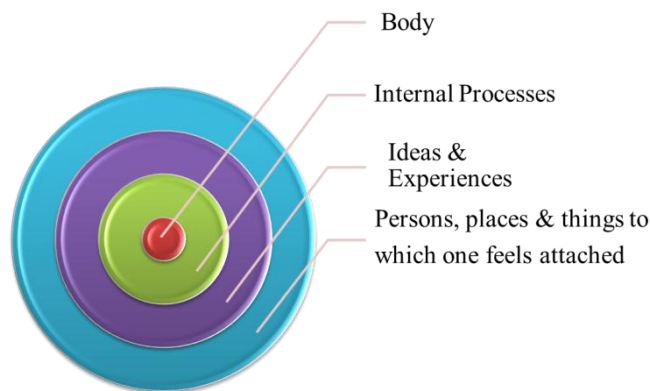
As discussed earlier it would seem that while complex, individuals’ various identities are at least known to them. This research will seek to preserve this complexity and explore it using Mittal’s conceptualisation to work with respondents’ consumption narratives to explore the disparity or congruence between the elements and how this is managed by the individual.

### **3.3.2 Extended-self**

Central to this thesis is Belk’s (1988:140) definition of the extended-self. While he discusses it as “a superficially masculine and western metaphor comprising that which is perceived as “me” (the self) and as “mine”, it has become a dominant means of understanding how consumption items are interwoven into concepts of self. The extended-self includes both ‘sans consumption’ factors of self or the unextended-self such as body, internal processes,



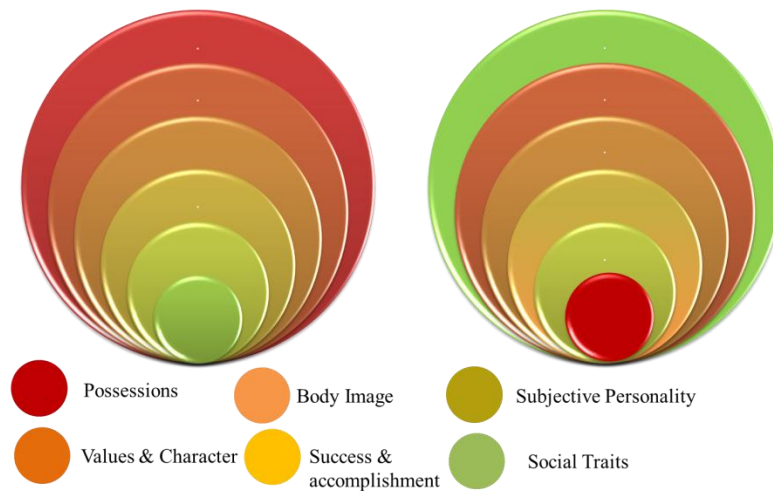
ideas and experiences, as well as external or extended factors such as the people, places and things to which one feels attached (Belk 1988, 1989) and may be represented at figure 3.8.



**Figure 3.8** Visualisation of Belk's (1988) model of extended-self

As discussed in previous sections Belk's review of the literature has tended to theorise the multidimensional factors of self as hierarchical with those internal to the individual being more clearly unextended and those external: people, places and possessions more clearly extended, though he discusses that this categorisation is unclear given the lack of agreement in existing theory over the position of mind and body, as discussed earlier in the chapter. This section will discuss the concept of extended-self, the means by which authors suggest possessions may become integrated into extended-self and prevailing research upon what types of consumption may legitimately be considered relevant to extended-self.

Belk, in his often cited 1988 work 'Possessions and the extended-self', argues that consumers possess a core and extended-self and that consumption specifically theorised as possessions are, intrinsically linked to the extended-self. This is closely related to the work of Aron et al (1992) reflected in social identity above, who considered how, through closeness and particularly love, other people become part of our identity by a process of de-personalisation. Belk has argued that the same process can also be applied to special possessions. The layered approach to self in this work is reflective of multi-dimensional core theories of self and ultimately ego theory. Though extended-self work tends to suggest a range of dimensions which should be included within self Ahuvia (2005) argues that it remains a subjective assessment of the individual across these dimensions and perhaps others which may change by culture and by time (Ahuvia, 2005). Mittal (2006) model's this subjectivity at figure 3.9.



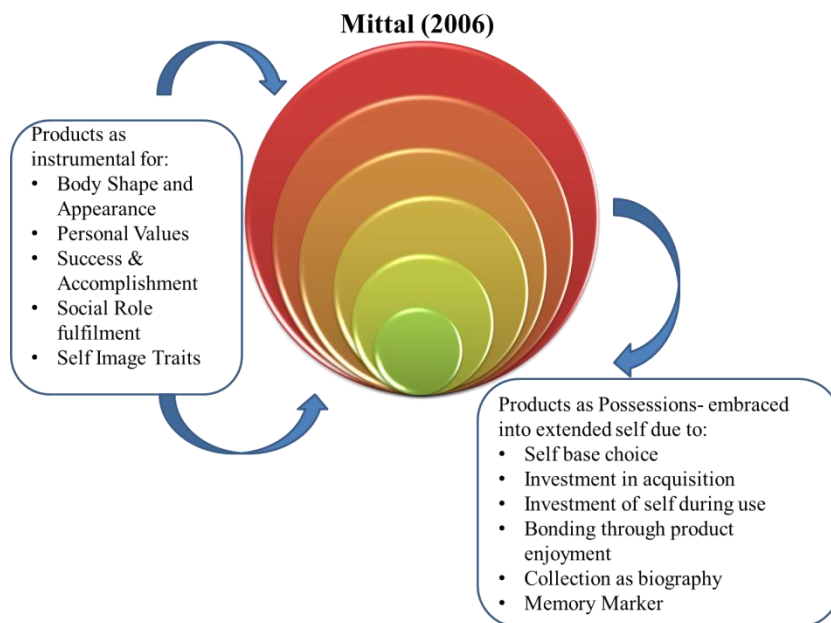
**Figure 3.9 Components which define self (Mittal, 2006: 554)**

In his model Mittal (2006) suggests that the way components are combined is unique to the individual & does not follow a set order of concentricity; so for one consumer possessions may be the least important element of defining self while for others that may be another construct such as body image. Possessions therefore, though the literature may suggest otherwise are therefore, not necessarily universally important. Miller (2000) in ‘The Comfort of Thing’ in the chapter ‘Empty’ draws a portrait of George whose home is spartan, without personal possessions and that this emptiness is reflected in the life of its inhabitant.

Ahuvia (2005) however argues that such people are relatively rare. Goods and artefacts in this theoretical tradition are not used for their own sake rather they act as the “building blocks of life-worlds... they can be understood as constituents of selfhood” (Friedman, 1990:327) it is in their embedded signs that their worth as identity tools resides (Schembri et al, 2010). In Mittal’s discussions there is not an absolute dividing line between an extended identity and a core identity; rather material goods emerge as constituent parts of a person’s identity.

Sartre (1956) explored the relationships among “having,” “doing,” and “being,” asserting that when an object becomes a possession, what was once self and not-self are synthesized and “having” and “being” merge (Belk 1988; p. 146). He outlined four means of making objects part of the extended-self: Control, creation, knowledge, and contamination (Goffman 1969). Kleine et al. (1995) stated that possessions are not literally the self, but rather artefacts thereof. In two studies that examined people’s attachment to gifts and a very wide range of other possessions, they found that when objects are perceived as being closer to the self, there is a direct and one-dimensional relationship between self and object.

External objects Belk argues become viewed as part of the “self” only when the individual is able to exercise power or control over them, just as one might control an arm or a leg within his discussion as control over an object is increased, it becomes more closely allied with the self. The object’s control over the individual also makes it part of self. As the individual imposes their identity on possessions so possessions may impose their identity on the individual (Belk 1988, p. 141). Mittal’s (2006) model considers a similar but distinct process of how goods become incorporated into self he argues for six means by which goods become incorporated: Self based choice, resource investment in acquisition, resource investment in use, bonding, post acquisition, collection and memory. These six means and how they impact self are modelled by Mittal (ibid) and his representation is presented at figure 3.10



**Figure 3.10 How Products Relate to Self (Mittal, 2006: 558)**

Because of the focus of these models upon the investment of resources, self-image creation through consumption (either symbolic displays or as identity work) is often discussed using high involvement categories such as automobiles and clothing after Douglas & Isherwood (1979) or collectables such as “stamps, Franklin Mint coins, salt cellars, beaded purses, blue plates, deer replicas, Cupid pictures, opera glasses, James Whitcomb Riley leather bound books, perfume bottles, silver spoons, and figurines of women” (Belk et al., 1995:482).

Ahuvia (2005) extending Belk's (1988) work suggests that while being self-expressive our relationship to goods can also be transformative. Somers (1994:614) however argues that within this conception narrative construction of identity becomes increasingly relevant as a means of understanding and conceptualising self, that "people still construct identities (however multiple and changing) by locating themselves within a repertoire of emplotted stories". By accepting post-modern identity as constituted of a variety of narratives, individual and social, then it can absorb fluctuations in consumption patterns as forming part of the narrative (Kemmer et al, 1998). So consumers can be more fickle and variety seeking and still perform identity work and even low cost habitual purchase can form part of the identity (Somers, 1994). Firat & Venkatesh (1995) argues that this is liberating as people are freed from "having to seek centred connections of an authentic self" but Ahuvia (2005) argues that the narrative even in post-modernity is enduring absorbing a range of conflicting and episodic elements. In this conception identity creation is far less effortful, not only the goods in which time, money and effort is expended, either in acquisition or use, become part of self but a wider range of items (ibid). The goods become central as it is they which help create and construct identity (Munro, 1996) as a complex construct. They serve "as indexical mementos of key events or relationships in the life narrative and help resolve identity conflicts" (Ahuvia, 2005:179). Ahuvia (ibid) discusses this in the context of loved items Corvettes, baseball, cigarette lighter and cooking (which will be further considered later in the chapter) but argues that it easily extends to the mundane and routine.

### **3.4 Food & Identity Creation.**

This section considers the literature around food's role in identity formation. It begins with the theory of incorporation, before linking food to the symbolic consumption theories running through the chapter. It argues for an increased individualisation of taste and personal responsibility for managing one's consumption and it reflects back upon the material cultural nature of food and how elements have been considered in identity creation.

Fischler (1988, 275) argues that "food is central to our sense of identity" and that by crossing the border from outside to inside it touches upon the very nature of a person. At the simplest level through the act of eating we become what we eat (Lupton, 1996) This process of incorporation gives food a nature, not widely shared, of truly becoming part of the physical self. Lupton (1996:22) notes how the consumption choices individuals make with regard to food become inscribed upon their bodies: "skin-tone, weight, strength of bone's, condition of

hair and nails” are all directly affected. She reflects upon the civilised body in late modernity; how it has become a self- project to be constrained and managed and sets in contrast to the grotesque as uncontained, unruly and uncared for, this civilising, she argues, is achieved by considered consumption practices. Falk (1991) argues that the collective nature of meals and tastes has declined and is now much less about shared aesthetic and taste becomes a personal definition in food, as in other consumption contexts, part of the identity project.

Ahuvia (2005:178) uses the example of food and cooking in his extension to the extended-self. In Cindy’s story he reflects upon its role as expressive or creativity, individuality and sophistication. “I did a tropical, I had fish, I had the sun, I had every imaginable kind of fruit” “Creativity comes in figuring out flavours and measurements. Creativity also comes in when you are figuring out the menu itself.” It is discussed as a major outlet of self-expression in this context as discussed in the previous chapter the material culture of food is relatively complex, here it the approach to planning meals that is discussed.

Valentine (1999) reflects upon the complexity of identity creation within her work, studying in- home food consumption she draws a case study of the Cushing family where a teenage daughter made a decision to become a vegetarian while the family now eat largely vegetarian food to accommodate this change it has affected their identities differently with their other daughter & father partially located within the vegetarian narrative but mum firmly identifying herself as a meat-eater despite her dominantly vegetarian consumption practices. For one member of this family the rejection of meat is a positive symbol of “individuality and rebellion” (Gabriel & Lang, 1995) however the same consumption practice does not have universal or homogeneous meaning in terms of individual identity creation. Warde & Heatherington (1994) suggest that “vegetarianism is a personal or individual commitment rather than a family style of life”(771) and this case study would support this view.

Food is argued to be symbolic in nature and reflective of self-identity so Kniazeva & Venkatesh (2007) argue that people self-impose taboos and restrictions to avoid potential negative selves and engage in self-improvement identities. Negative self in this context is often reflected in the body, health and weight, and Kniazeva & Venkatesh (ibid) reflect upon avoidance of fatty foods, artificial colours and sugars and starches as resultant anti-consumption behaviours. These behaviours are however individual projects and do not reflect

practices which are shared among the family or household. Featherstone (1982) situates healthy eating behaviours within this context of self-improvement identities.

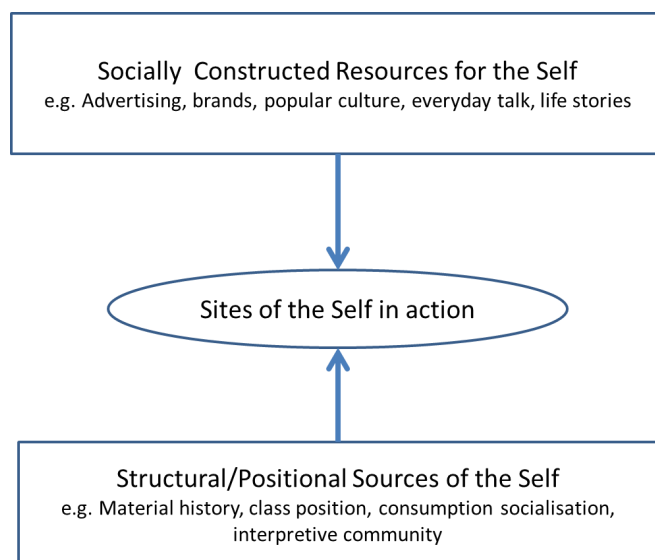
### **3.5 Conclusion**

This chapter has reflected upon the literature on consciousness (Descartes, 1641 & James, 1890), individual identity creation (Hume, 1739 & Giddens, 1991) and the role of consumption (Bauman, 1988). The concept of identity is far from simple and it is theorised in a range of ways. This work has focussed primarily upon conceptions of identity a form of narrative, understood subjectively by the individual and maintained by them. Identity is multi-faceted and often contains conflicting dimensions but this work argues that it is through narrative that the individual manages these conflicts and makes sense of their lived experience. The role of consumption in shaping identity is increasingly theorised and while some have considered its role has been over-stated, research in the field has blossomed. Conceptions of food and identity have however been relatively rare, it is almost taken for granted as doing such work, mentioned fleetingly at the beginning of article but not fully explored. Much more common are socially embedded identity food portraits, the influence of ethnic identity, family meals etc. and these are considered in the following chapter.

## Chapter 4: Social Factors

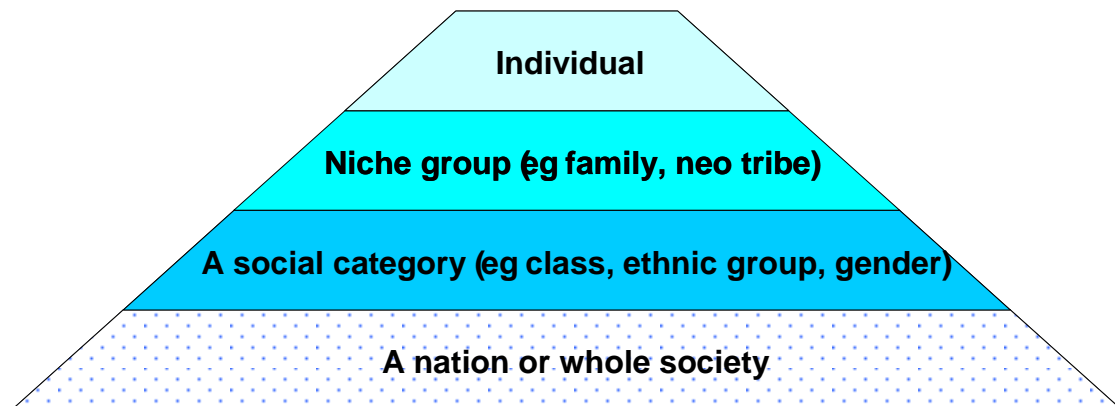
### 4.0 Introduction

As discussed in the previous chapter solipsistic identity is a key factor in the consumption experience, however it is also critical to recognise that consumers do not exist in a social vacuum . Social identity, as briefly discussed in the previous chapter is a critical part of defining of self, one understands self by comparison to others and the people and places to which one feels attached may indeed becoming part one's extended-self ( Belk, 1988). Social role as an extension has been argued to be crucial way of linking the individual to their surrounding social structures (Mittal, 2006). Dominant social categorisations of difference, such as the classic sociological variables of gender and class are argued to continue to influence the consumption experience (Caplan, 1997). Elliot (2004) argues that these classifications act as structural and positional sources of self and that even in late/ post modernity the constraints of society endure. This is not to minimise the role of the individual who brings his/ her own subjective repertoire to interpretive acts as discussed in the previous chapter but recognises that these subjectivities are shaped by socio-historical context. This relationship is reflected in figure 4.1, already considered in previous chapters, it models the interaction of individuality and social constraint (Elliot, 2004). In this chapter the structural sources of self are considered, how these lead consumers to perform certain socially enacted identity roles.



**Figure 4.1 Consumption Practices and Identity taken from Elliot (2004:137)**

These structural/ positional sources of self are further modelled by Warde (1997) and illustrated in figure 4.2. The previous chapter has considered individual models of identity and this chapter will reflect upon the remainder from the every-day direct and explicit influence of family through to culturally embedded implicit influence that derives from nationhood or wide social belonging.



**Figure 9.2** Shared Taste (Warde, 1997: 20)

Using the above model the discussion within this chapter is structured around the different levels of shared taste. Beginning with the niche group it considers the direct impact that family, as both the primary socialisation vehicle (Charles & Kerr, 1988) and most common site of shared consumption have upon conceptions of self and consumption practice. Peers are then theorised in the form of friendship and in-group belonging as defined within Tajfel & Turner's (1979) Social Identity Theory.

It will then consider more embedded influences which derive from the traditional classifications within western social order of: gender (Markus et al, 1982); ethnicity, including local culture in a British context (Hraba, 1979); and social class (Bourdieu, 1984). Finally it will discuss the formation of dominant social discourse, how social movements develop through communities of practice and, as Maffesoli (1996) discusses, the emergence of new tribalism.

Importantly while these categories are considered separately in this chapter it is recognised that they do not form mutually exclusive delineations. The individual will have membership



of many or all concurrently and so often unpicking each category e.g. friendship from its own social context: class, gender etc. is difficult if not futile.

## **4.1 Niche Groups**

Niche groups are those which are argued to have the most regular and direct influence upon consumption practice (Moisio et al, 2004), that is because, in most cultures, family and friends form the focus of daily interactions, those whose company and opinion is regularly sought (Nicholson & Seidman, 1995). Therefore it is relevant in this section to consider the two most regularly analysed niche groups in the context of consumption: family and, variously theorised, friendship.

### **4.1.1 Family as a Social Object**

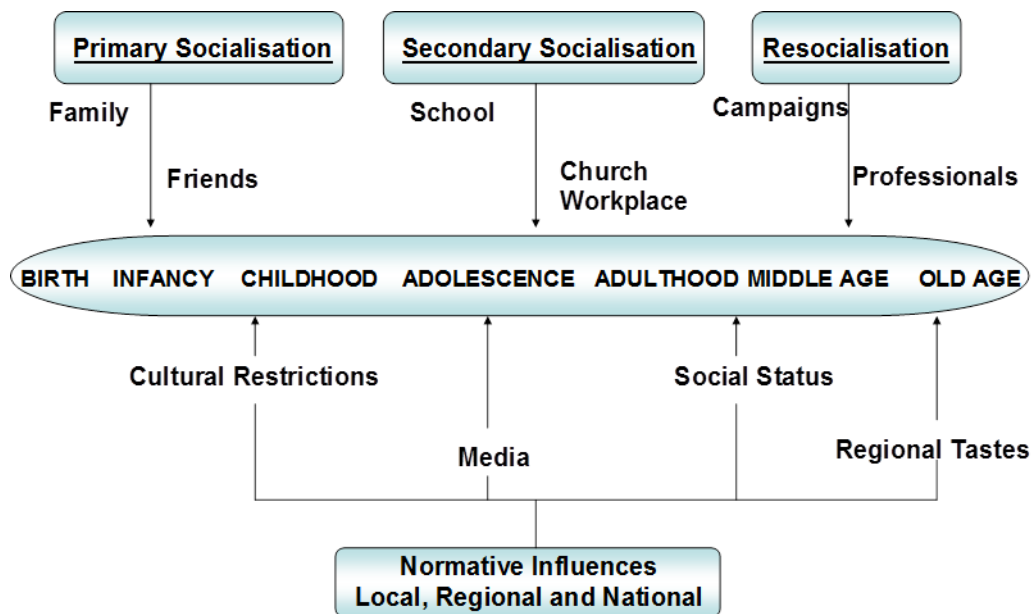
Social science has at its heart a belief that human interaction is a key influence on the behaviour of the individual and discussion of such often begin with the family. The family in this context is distinguished from the household; Baca et al (1993:102) define the household as a “co-residential unit in which people can be found” whereas family “is an ideology of relations that explains who should live together, share income and perform common tasks”. The concepts are argued to be no longer synonymous and family is primarily considered to be an ideological construct (Pahl & Spencer, 2010) which for many people extends to other households “through dissolved marriages, cohabitation past and present...step relationships....broader kin relationships and same sex partnership” (Finch, 2007: 68) Family therefore can include ‘biological kinship’, ‘legal kin’ (step relationships etc.) and ‘fictive kin’ to include godparents and social ‘aunts’ and ‘uncles’ who may be more part of the family than distant biological family (long lost cousins etc.). These conceptions of ‘fictive kin’ are particularly widespread and meaningful in particular contexts e.g. British Pakistani community (Baumann, 1995) and deprived inner cities in the USA (Hunt et al, 2011). An individual’s understanding of family is argued to be in part subjective, rooted in their own biography and subject to change over time: so my family may refer to my parents and siblings, my partner and eventually my children and grandchildren as well as the extended conceptions considered above (Finch, 2007), this subjectivity is particularly evident among those who live within ‘chosen’ families including same sex partnerships (Weeks et al, 2001). This doesn’t however mean that the family is no longer relevant indeed research suggests it remains a robust concept (Park & Robert, 2002) but because of its more fluid nature family

has taken on a performative dimension as something which must be done or displayed (Finch, 2007).

Family as discussed above should be defined widely enough to encompass the variety of household structures which are present in contemporary society. Particularly within the literature in addition to nuclear families, the influence of partners is reflected upon, Bove et al (2003) suggest that marital partners, civil partners and cohabitantes may be considered a considerable social influence upon the individuals engaged within them. Family and the household in these broad definitions are considered to be both antecedents of consumption behaviour and sites of contemporary consumption practice.

#### ***4.1.1.1 Family as antecedent of consumption***

Family as an antecedent of consumption is often researched by considering intergenerational influence (Mittal & Royne, 2010). Parent to child influence is considered under the auspices of socialisation (Moschis, 1987). Learned behaviour, it is argued, is central to the development of children: life skills, consumption patterns and social norms are all things which need to be taught (Charles & Kerr, 1988). While this teaching may not be explicit, it is widely recognised as an early role of family belonging and considered universal across the globe and across time, with anthropological study showing that appropriate learning behaviour is critical to functioning in adulthood (Fieldhouse, 1986). While childhood is a particularly crucial time for socialisation it is a process which endures throughout a person's lifetime helping not only with performance of current role at particular lifestage but also ensuring understanding of future roles and behaviour expectations (Moore et al, 2002). This leads to the family being discussed as the most immediate and enduring social group to which an individual belongs and its influence being described as the primary socialisation and enculturation vehicle. The socialisation process is illustrated by Fieldhouse (1986) (figure 4.3) as linear with family influence giving way to other external forces with the passage of time however this view is disputed by other commentators, Assael (1998), for example, argues that the family remains the most important decision making and consumption unit throughout lifecourse with parents and siblings perhaps giving way to different elements such as partner and children.

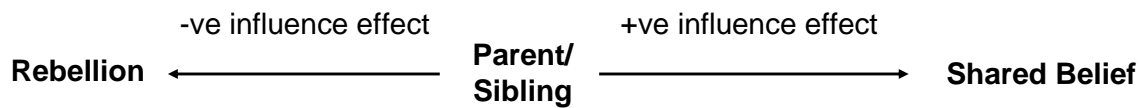


**Figure 4.3** Fieldhouse's (1986) socialisation in the context of food

Cotte & Wood (2004) suggest that the ways in which a family exert influence on individual members is complex. Parental influence upon children is reasonably well established (Moore et al, 2002) with intergenerational influence showing an effect on many key consumer behaviours including brand preference and loyalty (Carlson & Grossbart, 1988), and the overall transmission of values and attitudes (Childers & Rao, 1992). Moore et al (2002) argue that inter-generational influence also works in reverse with children acting as influencers of their parents well into adulthood.

The addition of siblings to the family provides an additional reference group influencing behaviour (Bearden & Etzel, 1982). This influence is not always easily predictable; Hoffman (1991) has shown a significant, though not strong, positive interclass correlation with regard to attitudes and interests between siblings but it has also been identified that there is a sort of rebellion within the family known as sibling de-identification which means that siblings are about twice as likely to report being different as they are to report being alike (Schachter & Stone, 1987). Using Festinger's (1954) social comparison theory, Schachter & Stone (1987) argue that this phenomenon can be explained by considering that many siblings are the subject of constant comparison, either explicit or implicit, which they may find painful and so they will attempt to make the other sibling a non-relevant comparison. This creates a situation where the sibling influence can create two outcomes: first the siblings can act as a relevant reference group for each other and so socialise towards similar attitudes and behaviours; or second they may use the other as a reference to cultivate difference particularly into

adolescence and adulthood (Cotte & Wood, 2004). Moore et al (2002) note that this unpredictability in the direction of influence is also true in intergenerational situation, while children often share their parents' religious and political beliefs, the parent can equally act as the establishment from which children may rebel. This effect is illustrated at figure 4.4



**Figure 4.4 Impact of Festinger's (1954) Social Comparison Theory upon interfamily influence.**

The influence of intergenerational and family impact in the field of consumption research has long been considered from early work on family decision making and family life cycle (Wells & Gubar, 1966) through to the work of Obermiller & Spangenburg (2002) on family influence on attitudes towards advertising consumption and beyond.

#### ***4.1.1.2 Household as Site of Consumption***

Contemporary household structures in common with families are increasingly varied: single person households, nuclear families, extended and intergenerational families and blended or reconstituted families amongst the types (Valentine, 1999). Households though not synonymous with families are important as sites of shared consumption (Baca & Eitzen, 1993). Within a household while not all decisions or activities are communal there is a conception of sharing (Belk, 2010) either demand sharing where members ask for food or other items and these are provided or open sharing where members may simply help themselves, they require no permission “to sit on the sofa, take a bath or turn on the lights”. These shared items become de facto joint possessions, though the payment and ownership responsibility may lie with one member of the family. Households act as sites of shared goods, services and emotional support (Hunt et al, 2011). Belk (2010) discusses that shared households activities remain attractive, with lone individuals far less common than those who choose to live in the company of others and households consume two-thirds of meals together (Bove et al. 2003). Households however are increasingly being reconceptualised as sites of negotiated interdependent consumption such as television watching (Yang et al, 2010) and from a single unit of consumption to more like a distribution centre for its members, in which

a wide variety of decision making processes are engaged by different members (Hunt et al, 2011).

Finch (1997) discusses the household as one site of doing and displaying family, though she argues for many others. There are expectations of quality of family, however constituted, which cannot be assumed simply by inhabiting the same space so the conception of sharing time fruitfully can become important perhaps by watching TV or playing games together or sharing a family meal (ibid).

#### ***4.1.1.3 Food & Family meals***

Murcott (1997) suggests that while there is little evidence for the reality of a standard family meal structure over this generation and previous one's, the idea of a family meal is real and a presumed norm remarked upon by its absence in exceptional cases particularly in literature of how children should be raised and how family life should be. This is supported by Hunt et al (2011) who consider that the concept of family meals remains important even if it is not regularly possible to achieve. Charles & Kerr (1988) found that the family meal is easily described and highly valued as a core part of family life and for both men and women that food sharing and family life are inextricably linked. Short (2006) discusses how family meals are seen as the "the cornerstone of family ritual and family life, the fabric of society" and while some authors have argued that this role for the family meal is only an ideal preserved by the middle and upper classes in a rather stuffy atmosphere of manners and symbolism (Frihammar, 1995), Murcott (1997) discusses a number of studies (Wall, 1995 & Dobson et al, 1994) where the importance of the family meal as part of family life is evident across social class. The importance of the meal in lower socio-economic circumstances is considered by Hunt et al (2011) investigating the role of shared family meals in removing young people from gang culture, they discuss how this group reflect fondly upon times when their, variously constituted, families ate together and their aspirations to have such experiences with their own children in the future.

A particular role for the family meal as discussed within the literature is the way in which it enforces individuals' roles within the family, tied to the issue of gender influence on behaviour (that will be considered later in this chapter), the meal has been shown to define the power relationship within a family (Moisio et al, 2004).

Dixon and Banwell (2004) argue however that the influences upon the family meal are not fixed or stereotypical. As late as the 1990s studies showed that men's food choices controlled

a women's activities in the home (De Vault, 1991) the refusal of certain foods ensured that the food in question did not reappear, self-esteem of the mother and wife was shown to depend largely upon the food she provided for her family (Ashwell, 1990). This centrality of the family meal is argued to have become less significant with women's entry to mass paid employment, with a wider range of responsibility preparing meals and the provision of food have become far less significant events in the lives of women (Gofton, 1991) and meal preparation has become a task much more widely shared within the family with ¼ of US children claiming to frequently prepare the family meal almost double the 1990 level (Stoneman, 1999). This has allowed the role of the child as dictator of family food preference to emerge, both in terms of setting boundaries for which foods come into the home and the rituals around their consumption (Dixon & Banwell, 2004).

The family meal had been defined as "all or most of the family living in the house" eating together (Neumark-Sztainer et al, 2003:318) and recent research shows this still to be a relevant construct, Hunt et al (2011:6) in considering gang member Romika, 24, conclude "she is intent on creating a family environment that includes a family meal. Every night she sits down with her spouse and son for a home cooked meal." However, just as families are no longer all nuclear, so household eating patterns have also changed. Valentine (1999) discusses the range of households and the negotiated patterns and identities within them. Reflecting upon a number of family types: single person households; a variety of cohabiting styles; and nuclear families, she presents the complexity and variety of practices and meanings within the family meal that goes beyond that suggested by Neumark-Sztainer et al (2003). So the household can be a site of multiple consumption practices and be caught in a "complex web of power relationships" which signify sameness and difference, children's role is considered alongside socially embedded identity narratives and individual conceptions of the spatial openness of the household to represent the multiplicity of experiences researched. (Valentine, 1999:521).

The family meal in this complex picture of family is considered central to maintaining belonging and communication and memorable meals are often accompanied by family togetherness (Kniazeva & Venkatesh, 2007). Family tastes appear to be enduring and preferences for mother's cooking, as food that is made to completely fit with the tastes of the family, continue to form part of food stories across the generations (Hunt et al, 2011). Valentine (1999) discusses how achieving this feeling of food that is just right can be

effortful for the person preparing the food, in her portrait of the Webb family the mother is engaged in making numerous different dishes to meet different tastes or resorting to bacon sandwiches as the one food the whole family can eat together. The caring work done in preparing and consuming the family meal endures from Devault (1991) to Mosio et al (2004) and homemade food as construction of family and act of love are still considered worthwhile (McIntosh et al, 2010).

#### 4.1.2 Friendship and social identity theory

Friendship is an important part of a person’s life and the ability to form friends appears to be related to the quality and coordination of social behaviours (Hartup, 1996). Pahl (2000) argues that our choice of friend is personal and in contemporary society we choose them as part of our private lives reciprocally friends choose us though the relative balance of the relationship may not be obvious. Within post-modern thought the formation of friendships takes on additional significance because it is argued that the traditional structures of society have lost relevance and so individuals seek ‘families of choice’ for sense of belonging ( Pahl & Spencer, 2004). Friendship is increasingly “being celebrated and held in esteem comparable with that of kin in traditional families” (Weeks et al, 2001:98). Pahl & Spencer (2004) argue that the distinction between family and friendship is not the dominant choice but that the relationships are chosen and may include elements of both. The personally constructed communities represent a person’s micro-social world which Calhoun (1991) argues is a dense and multiplicitous network with varying degrees of commitment, belonging and communication. Pahl & Spencer (2004) suggest a typology of personal community, mapping the relationship between family and friendship at figure 4.5. In their work family still holds for many a privileged position within their network supported by a variety of friendship approaches, the position a person holds in this typology may change through the lifecourse and with circumstance.

Friend-like personal community	Friend enveloped personal community	Family-like personal community	Family-dependent personal community	Partner-dependent personal community	Professional-dependent personal community
Friends at centre with close family	Family not friends in centre	Family not friends in centre	Family not friends in centre	Partner only in centre	Professionals in centre
Friends outnumber family	Friends outnumber family	Family outnumber friends	Family outnumber friends	Varies but small personal	Varies but small personal

				community	community
Broad or focal friendships	Broad or focal friendships	Focal or intense friendships	Basic Friendships	Basic Friendships	Basic Friendships

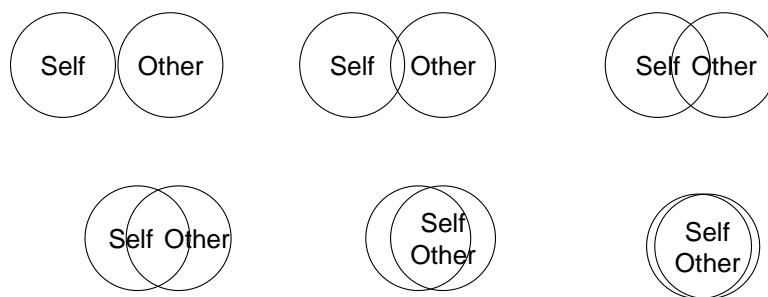
**Figure 4.5 Typology of Personal Community ( Pahl & Spencer, 2004)**

Friendship while often representing close relationships is not without obligation for development and maintenance. Friendship once created cannot be presumed indefinitely and may indeed lapse or weaken in intensity (Pahl & Spencer, 2004) equally however it can produce deep, enduring and binding attachments and modern conceptions of friendship tend to be based upon conceptions of “fidelity, solidarity and trust” (Pahl, 2000: 35). Friendship is complex, dynamic and context specific and Simmel (1950) argues that friendships are rarely all embracing and that perhaps what we have are “differentiated friendships, which cover only one aspect of the personality” so Pahl (2000) considers we may have friends for enjoying sport, others for the school run and thus compartmentalise our friendships according to our needs. Friendship then can range from the simple, based on shared activities, fun or favours to more complex and intimate ties “from associates and what some referred to as champagne friends, to confidants and soul mates” (Pahl & Spencer, 2010)

Allan (1998) argues that friendship is socially structured, not free-floating but inevitably bound to the social and economic environment in which it is being enacted; friendship in this context can play a significant role in shaping social identity. Social Identity Theory developed by Tajfel (1972) seeks to explain the dynamics of relationship within and between groups. It theorises not only within friendship groups, though these would be caught within the in-group, which is identified by state of belonging but has been utilised in stereotyping (Spears et al, 1997), crowd behaviour (Reicher, 1987) organisational behaviour (Hogg & Terry, 1998) and beyond. At its heart there is a desire for self-categorisation, seeking out companionship with similar peers (Abrams & Hogg, 1999) and the idea that social contexts may trigger an individual to think, feel and act differently: social cognition (Turner et al, 1987). Social identity therefore is the individual’s self-concept derived from their perceived membership of social groups (Hogg & Vaughan, 2002). It is an individual-based perception of what defines the “us” associated with any internalized group membership. It creates in-group/ self-categorization and enhancement in ways that favours the in-group at the expense of the out-group. Turner and Tajfel (1986) showed that the mere act of individuals categorizing themselves as group members was sufficient to lead them to display in group



favouritism. Individuals seek to achieve positive self-esteem by positively differentiating their in-group from a comparison out-group on some valued dimension. Social Identity Theory emphasises that while within the in-group depersonalised self-categorisation occurs, in conjunction a process of stereotyping others (the out-group) begins (Haslam & Turner, 1994). The self-expansion model (Aron, Aron & Norman, 2004) explaining this depersonalising has already been considered in the previous chapter. Figure 4.6 restates the operation of the model. In some cases self-identity becomes almost completely socially dependent and Maffesoli (2007) argues a tribal aesthetic takes over, where one loses oneself into another.



**Figure 4.6 Inclusion of others in the self ( IOS) scale ( Aron, Aron & Smollan, 1992)**

Friendship has largely been conceptualised in marketing and consumer research as a type of membership reference group. Reference groups may be defined as the social groups that are important to an individual as a consumer and against which they make comparisons (Escalas & Bettman, 2003), These groups are also argued to potentially exert a normative influence upon consumers' consumption choices (Tarnanidis et al, 2010) delineating socially acceptable behaviour and purchases. Cocanongher & Bruce (1971) discussed these friendship reference groups as socially proximal since they are situated within the individual's immediate social network, Breaden & Etzel (1982) argue that influence from membership reference groups comes from this opportunity for social interaction. Reference groups can equally be socially distant, aspiration groups (Childers & Rao, 1992) and the concept has been extended to include dissociative groups (Englis & Solomon, 1995).

#### ***4.1.2.1 Friendship and consumption***

The influence of membership reference groups upon consumption is argued by Childers & Rao,(1992), and supporting the findings of Bearden & Etzel (1982), to be greater amongst publicly consumed or conspicuous consumption categories. They argue that conspicuousness can be determined across two dimensions: the degree of luxury or rarity, items which are not

widely owned are more conspicuous than others; and the degree to which the consumption is public or observable, they use the example of a golf-clubs as an example of such publicly consumed luxury items. These items are argued to be more symbolic of group belonging than privately consumed necessities. White & Dahl (2006) in considering membership reference groups consider that there is a body of research which shows an ability to influence individual intentions, attitudes and behaviours (Abrams et al ,1990) a summary of influences is represented in figure 4.7.

Exercise Intentions	Terry & Hogg (1996) ‘Group norms and the attitude- behaviour relationship: a role for group identification’
Sun protection behaviours	ibid
Message persuasiveness	Haslam, McGarty & Turner (1996) Salient group membership and persuasion
Evaluations of products and advertising	Whittler & Spira (2002) Model’s race a peripheral cue in advertising messages
Product and brand selections	Bearden & Etzel (1982) Reference group influence on product and brand purchase decisions
Brand usage	Childers & Rao (1992) The influence of familial and peer based reference groups on consumer decisions

**Figure 4.7 Influences of reference groups upon behaviour (adapted from White & Dahl, 2006)**

Work on friendship or membership reference groups has also shown a particular influence of peers upon the behaviour of adolescents (de la Haye et al, 2010) and upon individual’s propensity to engage in risky behaviour such as smoking (Merken et al, 2010) and alcohol consumption (Glazer et al, 2010). Kleine et al (1993) argue that it is not only through conspicuous consumption that we can demonstrate reference group influence rather that mundane consumption can also be so guided and Warde & Tampubolon (2002) consider their impact upon relatively mundane activities such as swimming, going to the cinema and eating out. Friendship and food have long been linked and Belk (2010) reflects that companionship comes from the Latin *pannis* or those with whom we break bread. Friendship then as Turner & Rojek (2001) suggest is a direct consequence of shared rituals such as meals. There is a

consideration that friendship and the occasion at which food is consumed will have an influence upon food choice. Ahuvia (2005:178) discusses this belonging approach to food as something which should be “appropriate for the situation... the food and the menu and everything fitting in place” in order to fit with the expectation of the friendship group who will share it.

#### ***4.1.2.2 Consumption to maintain friendship.***

Friendship as discussed above is considered not to be classless, part of its role is to distinguish the in-group. Pahl (2000) argues that particularly among the middle classes there is evidence of planned sociability, setting certain events into the diary to do friendship work. Lynch (1989) has argued that the work of friendship is often gendered with the responsibility for sustaining friendships being primarily the responsibility of women. Food, in this view of the work of friendship, has been considered to have a creation role. Ahuvia (2005:178) considers an example where a dinner party brought a group of women together to create a friendship network “ they were all friends of mine but they were all total strangers (to each other) everyone got on so well we decided to make it a monthly thing.” Kniazeva & Venkatesh (2007:424) talk about food in this respect as providing “an excuse” for gathering people together, while at the same time adding to the gathering by taking it out of the ordinary and creating a celebratory dimension. “The social dimension of preparing and enjoying food with other people while talking underlines the longing for good unstructured communication”. Mellor (2010) et al discuss the work of friendship through food, in their examination of in-home dinner parties and reflect upon the caring work that is done within. The food is considered as a gift and great care taken to meet the tastes of the guests, even if this requires considerable effort, this is part of the friendship work done at such occasions. Not all dinner parties have friendship at their core Kniazeva & Venkatesh (2007) discuss how business meetings over dinner are different because of the need to control one’s behaviour, food has a role to play in such situations in easing social interactions but they do not contain the relaxing pleasure of enjoying food with friends.

Muniz & O’Guinn (2001) discuss how consumption activity can be placed centrally in the creation of friendship and belonging. The work on brand communities and neo-tribes is considered next but in closing this section it is worth noting that brands and practices can be the focus around which friendship is created and maintained.

### 4.1.3 Neo-Tribes

Groups, real or virtual, are increasingly formed around particular products, brands or activities of consumption, which provide the "linking value", which unites the members (Cova & Cova, 2001: 69), McGrath et al (1993) discuss this with regard to farmers market communities and McAlexander & Schouten (1995) in regard to Harley Davidsons. Watson et al (2008) discuss the "foodie" communities and how they create meaning, understanding and identity through discussing their off-line consumption experiences online.

Muniz and O'Guinn (2001) point to the increasing number of academic studies on tribalism or consumer tribes and suggest that interest is sparked by the increasing trend in their existence deriving from changing cultural factors. Individualism, as discussed in the previous chapter, has long been considered the basic state within western societies. The explosion of technology however, especially the continued development of speed, interaction and ultimately connectedness available through the internet has caused some to re-evaluate this trend and Maffesoli (1996) argues for another phase, which he discusses as the time of neo-tribalism. These theories argue that individualism is on the wane; Cova (1997) for example suggests that too much emphasis on individualism has led academia to ignore the powerful of non-individual consumer consumption behaviours and led to narrowed horizons. Considering the emergence of tribes they argue for a "renewed sense of community" (Cova & Cova, 2002, 595). Post modernity they argue is less about individual identity and more about a search for social links based upon shared passions and emotions (Cova & Cova, *ibid*). He distinguishes tribalism from identity seeking by the different motives for their consumption behaviour: 'tribalism=linking value' versus 'individualism = use value' This is not to suggest that tribalism doesn't have an identity component, as in social identity theory above, belonging to a tribe can be a vital way of understanding and expressing self-identity (Mitchell & Imrie, 2011).

Cova (2002) draws distinction between tribes and the brand communities, which preceded them in literature (Muniz and O'Guinn, 2001). He suggests that communities may share common interests and habits but they do not contain the emotional links which define neo-tribes. This field of literature draws distinction between a range of different social groups centred around consumption. Brownlie et al, (2007: 113) focus upon subcultures these they distinguish from the others the presence of "clear hierarchical social structures that may identify the status of individual members". They classify belonging as: hard core, soft core and pretenders. This type of social consumption is defined by commitment to the ideology of group and demonstrative adherence to its norms. "Membership is seen to be static, one mask

being permanently worn, in that distinct dress codes and a specific stable way of life permeates everyday activities". (Brownlie et al, *ibid*). Consumer tribes differ from subcultures in that their connections are much narrower, with similar beliefs, values or customs setting them apart from the dominant societal culture (Schiffman et al., 2008). The term "brand community" is also an inadequate means of describing a tribe. A brand community is established around supporting a particular brand or product (Brownlie et al., 2007; Burgh-Woodman and Brace-Govan, 2007). This contrasts with consumer tribes, which in some instances may diminish brand equity, similar to a consumer activist placing themselves in opposition to mainstream consumers (Kozinets and Handelman, 2004).

Much of the work on neo-tribes is focussed in the virtual realm, tribes, unlike more traditional niche groups, do not require physical proximity or contact, because 'they exist but do not exist' in the nether world of the internet and virtual social networks (Cova, 2002:604). Others have argued for examples of physical extant neo-tribes Aubert-Gamet (1999) for example discusses how through real life rituals and events members in a same tribe they may gather together. He also argues for a materiality to tribes which links them together, however disparate they may seem, their shared consumption of clothing, music and other objects identifies their physical belonging.

#### ***4.1.3.1 Neo-tribes and consumption***

Consumption is argued to be central to neo-tribes, to be the key to understanding and reaching the collective nature of the tribe ( Mitchell & Imrie, 2011). This is because such groups have been found to act with collective loyalty because personal relationships are maintained, not through contact but by shared, regular consumption (Gainer, 1995). While often socio-demographically diverse they are bound together by shared consumption passions. Consumer-consumer relationships and their influence on individual consumption have been considered in the various forms of consumption group: subcultures, brand communities and tribes (Berger et al., 2006; Muniz and O'Guinn, 2001; Schouten and McAlexander, 1995).

Shared consumption is the post-modern consumer's means of creating a social link and building bridges between individuals (Cova and Salle, 2008; Simmons, 2008). These are self-formed groups that hold meaning and relevance for the individuals within them, rather than

attempting to create a homogenous segment from arbitrary characteristics. Bauman (1992) considers consumer tribes, or neo-tribes, as solely existing around the use of symbolism to show allegiance to the group. This symbolic consumption is used to create a social link that is expressive of self-identity (Cova, 1997). The benefit of marketing to consumer tribes is that social influences are the most important influence on an individual's consumption decisions (Bagozzi, 2000). Involvement with a tribe is an expression of self-identity, so the consumer tribe shares not only moral values or opinions, but consumption values and preferences. This provides opportunity for marketers to access a group of consumers, like a market segment, that actually connect with each other and share consumption preferences.

Cova & Cova (2002) discuss that not all tribal members engage with the tribe in the same way or engage in the same consumption activities. They suggest four categories of participation:

1. a “member” of institutions (associations, religious sects);
2. a “participant” in informal gatherings (demonstrations, happenings);
3. a “practitioner” or adept who has quasi-daily involvement in tribal activities;
4. a “sympathiser” or fellow-traveller who moves with the vogues and trends and is marginally/virtually integrated into the tribe.

Mitchell and Imrie (2011: 44) extend this to include devotees whom they define as “These members have a long-standing passion, knowledge and involvement with the tribe. They may not be as frequently active as members but consider (its consumption activity) a central part of their self-identity”.

## **4.2 Structural Classifications**

This section considers the social classifications which some literature considers to be self-evident distinctions within society (Doi, 2002). This thesis questions the objective nature of these classifications and considers the literature upon individual's interpretations of such terms. It considers ethnicity, gender and social class as dominant examples of such distinguishers.

### **4.2.1 Local culture/ ethnicity**

Local culture and ethnicity have in the past been considered to be a slowly dissolving artefact (Glazer & Moynihan, 1970). It was considered that Mass migration and the rise of mass media would result in the assimilation of various ethnic groups and render difference unimportant. In order to acculturate, commentators suggested that migrants would not only

adopt the norms of their host culture but abandon those of their own (Novak, 1971). Fieldhouse (1986) however argues that, by the writing of his work, this view has changed and that the development of ethnic communities has shown the desire for cultural support for old ways which is reflected in policies of multiculturalism to promote the survival of ethnic diversity (Berry & Laponce, 1994). Rather than assimilate members of ethnic groups, under multicultural discourse, experienced a more complex and multi-faceted form of adaption, acquiring skills and traits which enabled them to function within the host country while also retaining aspects of the culture of origin (Laroche et al, 1998) and developing into what McFee (1968) refers to as “150% man”. Consumers from migrant communities are expected to understand the codes of both their ethnicity and host culture. Multiculturalism has been characterised by some commentators as a celebration of ethno-cultural diversity embracing the range of customs and traditions that exist in a multi-ethnic society (Kymlicka, 2010). Penaloza (2004) notes that multiculturalism may consider an array of cultural markers including: ethnicity, race and more broadly gender and age and that researchers have considered how all of these factors impact consumer behaviour. Kymlicka (2010) considers that perhaps there has been a shift to post-multiculturalism which prioritises individual freedom over cultural recognition and that the pendulum has swung toward building inclusive common national identities rather than recognising ancestral cultural identities to deal with structural inequalities in opportunity and participation.

Ethnicity is not considered to be a self-evident phenomenon and Malezevic (2010) argues that while it can help identify sociologically relevant commonalities it first requires definition and explanation. Rattansi (2004) argues that it is a term around which there is little agreement except that it derives from the Greek *ethnos* as a people who share certain common attributes and that ethnicity, culture and race have often been used interchangeably. Race is generally defined in terms of physical characteristics such as skin colour, features and hair type which are common to geographically defined populations (Jones's, 1991). These classifications are broadly criticised as containing more within group variation than between group variation (Betancourt & Lopez, 1993) this however does not prevent race being used as a variable in a broad range of research including consumption studies e.g. Sloan & Grossman, (2011) considering alcohol and Kivniemi et al (2011) assessing fruit and vegetable consumption. Ethnicity tries to address the arbitrary nature of racial classification and has, broadly, been considered in two ways: objective formulations stressing cultural traits, national origins and segregated living (Keefe & Padilla, 1987) which try to flesh out conceptions of race to

include social factors which make the distinctions more meaningful; and more widely it has been considered as a subjective “psychological phenomenon which can be expressed in any identity display” (Hraba, 1979).

A product of past affiliations and adjustment to contemporary circumstances, an individual’s ethnic identity is a pliable concept (Costa and Bamossy, 1995) and a personal construction but it is argued it may incorporate the following objective sociological dimensions:

“Language; friendship networks; religious affiliation; ..food preferences; and traditional celebrations” (Laroche et al, 1998: 128). Ethnic identity is relational, meaningful only when two or more different ethnic groups intersect (Phinney, 1990). Yinger (1994) argues that ethnic identity is not open to everyone, that ethnicity and minority are inextricably linked and that large and dominant populations cannot be considered as ethnic groups because they have little need or desire to value their identity through ancestry.

Ethnic identity is reflected in the retention or loss of behaviours and attitudes of one’s culture of origin (Laroche, Kim, & Tomiuk, 1998) and may manifest itself in attitudes and socio-cultural practices. Individuals with high ethnical identification tend to be appreciative of their own ethnicity (Phinney, 1990) For example, a strong sense of ethnical identification has been found to strongly influence immigrant's consumption behaviour (Penaloza, 1994). This concept is often discussed in relation to generational change within ethnic communities considering whether second and third generations of ethnic minorities retain ethno-cultural affiliations (Kibria, 2000). The literature shows modifications in ethnic group commitment over time and across generations generally considered to be a weakening of ethnic identification (Rosenthal and Feldman, 1992), this corresponds with a shift in the degree of influence that the ethnic group holds on a member's attitudes and behaviours (Hirschman, 1981) "Symbolic ethnicity," a particular quality of ethnic attachment observed among the third- and fourth-generation descendants of migrants, refers to a type of ethnic identification that is voluntary, centred around symbols and highly subjective (Kibria, 2000). Discussed by Alba (1990) this kind of ethnic identification is characterized by a high degree of choice, in terms of how and even whether to identify with a particular ethnicity it is result of an individual's self-labelling process in terms of affiliation and membership in a particular ethnic group or none at all (Phinney, 1990). However Penaloza (1994) argues that to deny ethnicity is difficult and that even after considerable generations embedded within a culture one may be unable to change the fact that she/he has a different ethnic origin from the majority group.



Lindridge et al. (2004: 214) conclude that ‘the ethnic minority individual creates multiple presentations of their self-identity in different contexts’.

In a UK context the concept of ethnicity can be extended to embrace locality and regionality; that to be Cornish or Scouse is to embrace a distinctive cultural heritage (James, 1997) not shared across the country. So it may be difficult to define a dominant population in the UK at all, because of local variability in identity construction. These regional groups would meet Gurr’s (1993:3) conception of ethnic groups as a “psychological community whose core members share a distinctive and enduring collective identity based on cultural traits and lifeways that matter to them and to others with whom they interact”.

#### ***4.2.1.1 Ethnicity and consumption***

Within culturally heterogeneous societies “...the psychological and behavioural consequences of ethnic group membership are of considerable importance” (Rosenthal and Feldman, 1992, p. 214). Ethnic identity embraces the attitudes and importantly the behaviours associated with that sense of membership including consumption preferences (ibid). The relationship between ethnicity and consumption has drawn considerable attention from marketers (Hui, Laroche & Kim, 1998). They argue that some consumption behaviours are ingrained in the minority culture and are unlikely to change with time or acculturation while others, in contrast, are more amenable to acculturative pressures and cultural assimilation may occur. They use the example of Lee and Tse’s (1994) work which found that consumer acculturation would more readily occur with culture-irrelevant consumption activities such as waxing the car than with culture-relevant activities such as consumption associated with ethnic festivals.

#### ***4.2.1.2 Ethnicity and food***

Food is argued to be one of the familiar cultural markers of ethnicity (Kymlica, 2010) Part of what Alibhai-Brown (2000) critically calls the 3S model of multiculturalism “samosas, steel drums and saris”. The linkages between ethnic identity and food preference have been widely researched (see for example Laroche et al, 1998) and it remains one of the most widely accepted dimensions of ethnic identity. Considering membership or sense of belonging to a specific ethnic category might therefore help in defining food consumption patterns. (Carrus et al, 2009)

In cultural, ethnic and religious terms the acceptability of foods is not purely based upon nutrition (Falk, 1991). Cultural difference accounts for distain for meats such as horse or dog and cat and religious significance surrounds the avoidance of pork or beef (Sanjur, 1982). Conner & Armitage (2002) in discussing the consumption of food suggests that “we are consuming meanings and symbols” the meanings of which are culturally embedded but can vary from town to town, religion to religion and ethnic group to ethnic group. It is against these parameters that the Punjabi women of Bradby’s (1997: 226) study discuss the basis for their food choices as something “we’ve all got it in our heads... I think it’s just what you believe in”. Aldridge (2003:71) argues that the cultural belonging effects behaviour by “implanting deep seated norms and values,.. which act as a kind of gyroscope that orients action towards culturally approved goals”.

One manifestation of these norms of ethnicity is the purchasing and consumption of specifically ethnic foods, a complex category of market goods, which reflect a certain culture and hold the tastes and norms of the country of origin (Verbeke & Poquiviqui Lopez, 2005). Ethnic foods are often viewed as particularly fit to satisfy consumer's needs for an authentic linkage with the culture of reference, their purchase often requires special shopping trips and significant cultural knowledge of how to handle and prepare speciality items (Bradby, 1997). Gabbachia (2000) reflects on how some ethnic food items remain specific to the tastes of a particular ethnic identity while others such as Bagels in the USA or various Indian sub-continent curry dishes in the UK become part of the mainstream.

Another stream of work considers the role of food in acculturation. Bradby (1997) discusses how Glaswegian women of Punjab origin have used food in their process of adaption categorising our food (Asian) and your foods (Scottish or British). Habitual daily food choices reflected their Punjabi origins and preserved their cultural heritage with non-Asian food introduced as a treat or for variety, in particular non-Asian food was introduced through children and young people. Jamal (1998: figure 4.8) shows that the symbolic meaning of foods varied across the generations within the British Pakistani community in respect of traditional ethnic foods and mainstream English foods as well as the consumption of these foods; younger generation British Pakistanis were much more likely to eat “like the English” (ibid: 224). Some meanings however endured e.g. Pakistani food is tasty and spicy and reflects conformity despite different lived experiences across the generations.

	Pakistani Food	English Food
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2nd generation	Tasty, spicy, filling, reflecting maternal love, family unity and conformity to culture Routine and ordinary	Convenient, fast foods, tasty and filling, reflecting adventure and independence
1 <sup>st</sup> generation (men)	Tasty, original, spicy, reflecting conformity to culture and family Heavy and problematic	Bland, foreign, non-filling, snacks, but not meals, light and healthy
1 <sup>st</sup> generation (women)	Tasty, original, spicy reflecting conformity to culture and family	Foreign, light and healthy, reflecting conformity with children.

**Figure 4.8 Perceptions of British Pakistanis about food (adapted from Jamal, 1998)**

And finally food practices are considered, Wright et al (2001) consider that food traditions associated with different cultures and ethnicities are embedded in their practices. In their discussion Greek orthodox traditions are explored and they consider that “Greeks are either feasting or fasting” embedded within the religious calendar these practices endure through generations because of a tradition of multi-generational households where meals from part of social togetherness. Jamal (1998) discusses the traditions of Pakistani eating where proper meals are constituted by chapattis and salan or curry. Murcott (1990:54) notes that the while people in all societies have a conception of a proper meal, for both special occasions and for everyday the make-up of these meals is argued to be culturally specific for example ‘meat and two veg’ endures as proper meal in the British context. For Laroche et al, (1998) their study considered consumption of proper Italian meals as a mark of ethnic identity and they reflect that while food consumption is ethnically bound some traditional consumption patterns can embrace the norms of the dominant society e.g. using dried pasta, bottle spaghetti sauce and canned tuna as part of Italian ethnic identification; while other innovations remain too distant from ethnic food norms e.g. frozen pizza, canned soups or candy bars.

#### **4.2.2 Gender.**

The role of gender as an influencer of consumption has already been touched upon earlier in this chapter in discussing how family role can have an impact ( DeVault, 1994) and it is often difficult in the literature to distinguish between the role of female gender and the impact of social position of wife and mother particularly in the context of food (McIntosh et al, 2010).

Contemporary conceptions of gender emerged in the 1970s when distinction was drawn between biological sex differences and the way these inform identity and behaviour (Oakley, 1972) and Scott (1988:2) argues that “gender is the organisation of sexual difference”. Degher & Hughes (1999) have argued that gender is a relatively self-evident form of classification with most people being clear about their category of belonging. While gender was intended to extend the conceptions of biological sex in usage there is constant slippage between sex and gender. Pilcher & Whelehan (2004) argue that this may not be particularly problematic as contemporary gender studies suggest that distinctions between the two are over-stated and that sex is as socially constructed a concept as gender (Gatens, 1996). Nicholson argues that focus upon gender has resulted in a problematic situation where it acts as a barrier to our ability to theorise about differences among women ( Nicholson, 1995). This is not considered particularly problematic in this thesis since both individual identity and social categorisation are being explored.

#### ***4.2.2.1 Gender in Consumption***

Male and female, masculine and feminine, have been considered a means of, social identity distinction and polarisation and a way of categorising activities associated with them (Hogg & Garrow, 2003). This has led, in consumer behaviour, to much work considering ‘gender as a variable’ or ‘sex difference’ research (Bettany et al, 2010) and these have been considered in responses to shopping, advertising and many other areas ( Dahl et al, 2009). The consumption literature considers that there are fields which are gendered both in terms of demonstrating difference and in creating gender identity those which are masculinised include: body building (Jeffords, 1994), motorbike riding (Schouten & McAlexander, 1995) or the purchase of big boys’ toys (Faludi, 1999) and elements which are feminised: fashion (Barthes, 1985); lingerie (Jantzen et al, 2006) and homewares (Hunt, 1989). Markus et al (1982) argue that is both biological and psychological aspect of sex and gender which have potentially important implications for how men and women consume.

The gender polarisation approach tends to define “mutually exclusive scripts for being male and female” (Bern, 1993:81). Hogg & Garrow (2003) argue however that this approach is restrictive and rather as Butler (2006) suggests there is a degree of free play in gender construction so within the postmodern context traditional gender roles are no longer fixed (Nicholson, 1995) that “gender in consumption is overused as a unitary theoretical construct” ( Freed, 1996:69) and that little discussion has been made of gender heterogeneity (Hogg & Garrow, 2003). Using Bem’s Sex Role Inventory (1977) Hogg and Garrow (2003) considered

a group of men and women's gender self-schemas and considered the impact that these rather than biological sex had upon advertising discussions and concluded that differences were more based upon psychological self-definition than objective sexual difference.

Gender distinctions however do endure consider for example Bettany et al's (2010) review of the enduring structural inequalities in employment and power. MacLaran et al (2004) discuss how technology can become gendered and that few are used equally by men and women, white goods such as washing machines becoming associated with femaleness.

#### ***4.2.2.2 Gender and cooking***

There is a plethora of work on gendered approaches to food and eating and this cannot be an exhaustive review but it seeks to consider some of the dominant themes. Devault (1991) in considering cooking argued that it remains gendered work, the responsibility for caring and creating the family falls to women and that this is primarily demonstrated in responsibility for family meals. Lupton (1996) reviews work in the area and reflects that food consumed in home remains women's work from Murcott (1983) to Warde & Heatherington (1994) with McIntosh et al (2010), bringing the work up to date, it is considered that, even in contemporary society, mother is provider of everyday meals and that this commitment endures, despite other employment. This explicitly female role of caring is considered by Cairns et al (2010:604) who show that mums who don't cook are belittled by those who do as neglecting their responsibilities to expose their children to 'good', 'authentic' food, they also consider however that cooking for others is a source of great pleasure for the women in their study "it's about pleasure, it's about ethics and...it just fits within a larger part of human experience" Consequently about three times as many women as men plan meals, shop for food, and cook ingredients into meals (Harnack et al. 1998)

Considering the gender division in grocery shopping Woodruffe- Burton & Wakenshaw,(2011:71) argue men could perhaps have a role in pushing the trolley around but the shopping is the domain of women. They consider that there are different factors at work in this division of labour: that women use shopping and cooking as a means of protecting their gender territory and identity, men are minimised in this discussion as being incapable " they cannot do multiple tasks, they can only focus on one thing.. he cannot take a list and get everything"; and as a means of sharing and caring after DeVault (1991) & Belk(2010) "he says go to Marks and Spencer. That is why I go..you know it is always good"

(Woodruffe Burton & Wakenshaw, 2011:76) and that as Brown & Miller (2002) suggest cooking is for women a means of pleasing the family and showing affection.

Mellor et al (2010) take the discussion out of the mundane practice of food within the family and consider that women do gender work through special food events such as celebrations and entertaining. Creating a successful dinner party, they argue, is an opportunity for women to engage in display, they can demonstrate individual flair, creativity and taste. Certain jobs when entertaining fall to the man, shopping for drinks & serving guests while the woman cooks and that this division of labour is based upon specific knowledge sets with neither expected to transcend their boundaries.

This is not to suggest the men do not cook but it has been widely theorised that male cooking is more concerned with leisure and hobby than care and obligation (Cairns et al, 2010 and Coxton, 1983) or potentially as a profession concerned with issue of expertise (Fine, 1995). When men do cook, it is often for display and, in cooking for others, frequently focuses on barbecuing or grilling meat (Miller, 2010). Brownlie and Hewer (2007) in discussing masculine representations in contemporary cookbooks consider that cooking is represented as an activity where the emphasis is placed upon reiterating masculinity through strength, power and control. Cooking by men is represented as “serious stuff..as man’s work, and there is a definite style and character to this man’s way of doing cooking.”

#### ***4.2.2.3 Gender and eating***

By attributing gender to particular foods, eating masculine or feminine foods becomes semiotic. Many foods are defined by gender in most societies (Sobal, 2005). To the extent that people are what they eat, they establish their identity as man or woman on the basis of eating masculine or feminine foods. Traditionally women have been considered to have different tastes to men and that appetite in women is undesirable this is perhaps linked to conception of the thin ideal for western women (Lupton, 1996), Harter (1986) suggests that women’s self-esteem is more strongly correlated with their perceived physical attractiveness whereas men’s self-esteem is more strongly correlated with their physical effectiveness and so this will influence their attitudes towards eating. An archetype of gendering food is the relationship between maleness and meat (Sobal, 2005) whereas Chaiken & Pliner (1987) argue that eating lightly is associated with femininity and both men and women perceived

this to be true. While masculinity may be represented by what men eat, femininity is represented by what women *do not* eat. Women for example have been found to minimize meat consumption (Lupton 1996) or eat less masculine forms of animal flesh, such as seafood or chicken (Dixon 2002). Charles & Kerr (1986) found that women engage in self-denial of sweet foods because of perceived social pressure upon women to be slim. This was also considered by Grogan et al (1997) who found sweet snack consumption to generate conflict in women which their male counterparts did not experience.

Men maximize and women minimize meat as they perform and advertise their gender in everyday life (Goffman 1979). Sobal (2005) in his review of the subject found that red meat is a consummately male food, and a man eating meat is an exemplar of maleness. “Men sometimes fetishize meat, claiming that a meal is not a “real” meal without meat”. Meat is argued to symbolize the strength and virility of the conquering of beasts by men and tie to social ideals of physically powerful male bodies (Lupton 1996).

Cairns et al (2010) in research with ‘foodies’, both men and women who identified themselves as passionate about food, suggest that in deriving pleasure from food consumption gender differences may not as binary as some research suggests. Their study showed that both sexes derived great pleasure from the sensual aspects of consumption. They recognise that the ‘foodie’ identity may be easier for men than women who shouldn’t be “seen as sort of piggish and to overeat” but they consider that this area of pleasure may open up gender boundaries in consumption.

### **4.2.3 Social Class**

Defining social class like all other social contexts is not without difficulty, Weber (1978) considered that social class should reflect the differences in people’s ways of living as well as their economic resources reflective of a stratification of society. Most western societies have broad categories of upper, middle and lower class with occupation and social standing allowing for further distinctions. Class is not the only way to stratify the populations, caste for example is considered in an Indian context (Bloch et al, 2004). Based in the idea that societies segregate based upon economic similarity as well as other reputational criteria (Holt, 1998) this definition of social class is centred on a distinction between class situation and status situation as the two key dimensions of social stratification. There are argued to be three basic paradigms in contemporary social stratification research:

- the Marxist framework of Wright (1997) which seeks to update the Marxist categories of class and which reflects upon the power systems of class division and the exploitative power of class division.
- Goldthorpe's (1964) Weberian interpretation of social stratification class and status divisions comprise the causal determinants of life chances, social class is seen as demographically formed groupings of individuals with similar causal determinants operating to shape their life chances. In this view social class represents a set of constraints that are determined by the resources inherent in a person's class situations (Scott, 2010) so reflecting on on-going class differences in for example educational attainment which persist across the generations, this is argued to be because parents in disadvantaged class situations make rational decisions that lead their children to leave the educational system earlier than those from more advantaged class situations (ibid).
- The more cultural framework inspired by Pierre Bourdieu (Bourdieu 1984). Holt (1998) argues that Bourdieu synthesises a number of traditions in his model of social organisation which considers the various types of capital within social life. Bourdieu (1984) argues that the world is ordered by distinction and that individuals engage in status games with three types of resource so he defines social class as a three dimensional construct consisting of: economic capital, social capital and cultural capital. It is in the area of cultural capital that much of the work on social class and consumption is based.

Bourdieu's social capital will form the basis of much of the following discussion but it is recognised that both Wright, when considering the consumer's power position within the market e.g. Crompton (1996), and Goldthorpe, when considering social outcomes (Arber, 1991) and writing himself about cultural consumption (Chan & Goldthorpe, 2007) have influenced consumption writing with regard to social class.

#### ***4.2.3.1 Consumption and Social Class***

Social class has long provided a fruitful arena for examining consumption patterns (e.g. Coleman 1983) and in traditional consumer research was considered useful to represent enduring divisions in society and particularly reflected upon the exclusion of deprived socio-economic groups from what was considered liberatory consumption practices (Firat & Venkatesh, 1995). The predominant conception of social class that marketers and consumer



researcher had employed across this early period derived from that of Warner, Meeker, and Eells (1949). This view saw social classes as communities of individuals bounded by common social status, this was reflected in such variables as having the right kind of house, furniture and indeed living in the right neighbourhood as consumption expressions of status within the community (Holt, 1998). In this approach social class groups develop within societies a unique way of life but in this approach there was little understanding of how particular goods or practices came to be adopted as symbolic rather Warner et al (1949) argued they are arbitrarily defined by the in-group. Holt (1997, 1998) reinvigorated the field by employing Bourdieu's (1984) theory of cultural capital and taste to demonstrate how social class position and consumption patterns remain intertwined.

Class with Bourdieu's (1984) work is considered as reflected within consumption practice. He argues that this process of distinction is one of the core mechanisms of consumption and makes clear the differences between the purchasing habits of different social classes, Barthes (1985) did a similar piece of work in establishing differing modes of fashion across class driven France and their associated symbolic meaning. Longhurst & Savage (1996) consider it to be a particular strength of Bourdieu that his work could embrace a broad variety of consumption practices, dress, eating, home furnishing and consider that these are all tied up with the same basic conflicts of identification and distinction of social position.

The greatest refinement of taste might be expected among the middle and upper classes since historically the social prestige of the strata has been associated with greater financial power and a claim to be more cultured than the proletariat (Warde, 1997) but Holt (1998) suggested that it is more appropriate to focus on everyday consumption practices, rather than consumption objects, since a primary mechanism lies in embodied preferences, not just overt status symbols.

Focus on the overt can be deceiving in complex societies, since symbolic markers are in a constant state of flux. As these meanings evolve, they often diffuse across social groups, inherently altering their power to define social boundaries. Embodied preferences (such as implicit knowledge, skills, and dispositions) have been described as "a set of decontextualised understandings . . . that are readily recontextualised across new settings" (Holt 1998, 3). So these embodied preferences (or tastes) are imbued into thinking, feeling, and acting across the course of everyday life and reflected in consumption practice.

On the vertical axis is the concept of capital volume where the higher the social class, the more economic and cultural capital people tend to have. The horizontal dimension considers the strength of cultural capital vs. economic capital, Erickson (1996) explains this by using the example of a business leader and professor arguing that in academia cultural capital matters more while in business it is economic capital which is dominant but that both professor and business leader are part of the dominant class in their own ways.

#### ***4.2.3.2 Social Class & Food Consumption***

Mennel (1985) argues that within the food context even by the 19<sup>th</sup> century British class identity was being mediated through the influence of foreign foods and so here particularly it is in consumption practice that class distinction is most clear. Bourdieu (1984) writing on food suggests that “The art of eating and drinking remains one of the few areas in which the working classes explicitly challenge the legitimate art of living. In the face of the new ethic of sobriety for the sake of slimness, which is most recognised at the highest levels of the social hierarchy, peasants and especially industrial workers maintain an ethic of convivial indulgence” (ibid: 179). Tomlinson (1994) in exploring Bourdieu’s work in a British context concluded that there were differences in preference with a desire for staples among the working classes bread, potatoes, flour etc. and bourgeois preferences for restaurant eating and premium items such as beef and veal. The middle classes emerge as the consumer most akin to the explorer with constant desire to try the new, to adapt the norm and personalise (Gabriel & Lang, 1995).

### **4.3. Whole Culture Norms.**

Some cultural elements are so widely shared and unquestioned within a specific culture that the actors within it are not even aware of its existence or that other cultures may not share the ideals. Nonetheless these values may be having a strong impact: (Greenberg et al, 1993). Sometimes these cultural elements so closely embody the mood of the time form a dominant social discourse or capture the cultural zeitgeist. This section will consider three aspects of this phenomenon: the nature of cultural collectivism; the rise of a thin ideal in western culture; and rebellion against a dominant cultural norm.

Many authors have suggested that postmodernism has seen the decline of the structures of community and that in western culture now there is a dominance of individualism where only

the individual and their direct family and friends are seen as important (Giddens, 1991) and that community and social belonging is now the reserve of Eastern cultures (Abbas, 2004). Schatzki (2002) argues that eventually all social phenomena are to be explained with reference to configuration of individuals. There are however authors who reject this, Ashley (1990) for example accuses postmodernism of the death of the individual arguing that the postmodern individual is to a large extent dominated by social belonging. Alexander (1992) argues that community is still the dominant frame of reference of the discourse of civil society. Illustrating this point Turner (1986:119) points to the work of De Tocqueville (1969) who suggested that individualisation and collectivism are inextricably linked “Americans of all ages, all stations in life and all types of disposition are forever forming associations, religious, moral: not government led but driven by association.” He argues that the modern state and the modern individual were born together “the bonds between them sanctified through citizenship”. He discusses a process of individuation where through collective processes of the state, individualism becomes an institutional code constituting the social construction of political reality (Turner, 1986:119). Weiss (2003) suggests that social belonging is of great importance in shaping behaviour and attitudes and he describes it a collective individualism.

#### **4.3.1 Thin Ideal**

A social norm particularly relevant to food culture is ‘the thin ideal’. This social agreement is argued by Weiss (2003:270), to privilege particular representations of the body. He describes a collective discourse of the disciplined body in postmodern society “the ideal body is part of the media, Hollywood, glamorous models and other idols of collective worshipping” so that both the ideal one strives to reach and the means of achieving it (the dietetic method) are collectively shared. In post modernity the person experiences his or her own body within the collective context of a media environment of repeating images, staying in shape is not an individualist conviction but a collective mantra (Weiss, 2003). Kern (1975: ix) describes the contemporary world as being one

“obsessed with youth, health and physical beauty. Television and motion pictures, the dominant visual media, churn out persistent reminders that the lithe and graceful body, the dimpled smile set in an attractive face are the keys to happiness, (perhaps even its essence)”

Glassner (1989:183) writes that “even when fitness is pursued privately in one’s home the body is commonly experienced by way of a conceptual looking glass- by how it is interpreted

in comparison to images of bodies in the media and how it is commented upon by others.” Fallon, (1990) suggests that the concept of beauty is not static arguing that the rise of mass media has contributed to the collectivism which has created a more general standard of beauty and fashion in the west, reflective of the standards of high status groups, already in existence, made widespread. Individuals are asked to assume self responsibility for the way they look and persuaded that a certain given desired appearance can be achieved (Hepworth & Featherstone, 1982)

Becoming fat against this backdrop suggests a lack of individual success associated with lack of control and thus with moral failing. Mennell (1987) goes so far as to argue that the fear of fat and certain eating disorders of anorexia and obesity are problems of prosperous western society. Crandall (1994) suggests that this belief that being overweight is under one’s control is linked to conservative political values, endorsement of a protestant ethic and belief in a just world.

Within consumer culture slimness has become associated with health and health education message that being overweight is a health risk has become absorbed into the conventional wisdom Featherstone (1991) discusses how the work of Andres (1979), Bruch (1957) and Beller (1977) have concluded that slimming studies show that being overweight has little to do with health but rather that slimness is about looking good achieving social acceptability and leading a more exciting lifestyle. With appearance being taken as a reflex of the self the penalties for bodily neglect are a lowering of one’s acceptability as a person as well as an indication of laziness and even moral failure.

Recent work suggests that despite fat failing to fit within the collective social ideal and so representing a devalued social identity it does not follow universally that such people will suffer from low self-esteem, rather they may have generally high self-esteem suffering only where the element of their identity which is devalued is prominent (Crocker & Quinn, 2004).

Reflecting back upon the role of gender in this discourse Fredrickson & Roberts (1997) argue that this collective social attitude is particularly relevant for women, that there is a pervasiveness of cultural messages that women are objectified and evaluated in terms of their physical appearance. Objectification theory, and also self-objectification then come into play

so that women learn to view their bodies from a third party perspective, which is a much higher level of self-criticism than men exhibit.

There is also argued to be cultural discourse around how one achieves the thin ideal. Chapman (1999) outlined a shift from dieting for weight loss discourse to a “healthy eating” discourse for weight control. She suggested this shift has occurred for two main reasons. Firstly, people (mainly women) are dissatisfied with the success rate of conventional dieting plans, promising much but delivering little in relation to a long-term weight loss solution. Secondly, other discursive shifts in governmental literature, campaigns, and the media have all contributed to an environment in which the ‘healthy eating’ discourse, rather than the ‘dieting discourse’ has emerged (see also Fraser, 1997). Chapman found that women differentiated between the old beliefs about ‘dieting’, which was seen to be antiquated, and the new belief that ‘healthy eating’ led to long term weight control. When defining ‘dieting’ the women used such words as ‘control’, ‘deprivation’, ‘denial’, ‘cheating and guilt’ and the women described their eating behaviour when on this diet as ‘being good’ or ‘behaving’. The women also talked about certain foods being responsible for their ‘downfall’ and after eating these foods it evoking extreme feelings of guilt.

Rather than talking about denial, women talked about ‘healthy eating’ in terms of ‘watchfulness’, “I’m not on a strict diet, I’m just watching my food intake” (Chapman, 1999: 78). They talked about making permanent life changes that included exercise rather than ‘going on a diet’. Going ‘on’ something inherently implies that you will come off it at some point. In contrast to the talk about dieting, the women talked about ‘healthy eating’ being permanent, and something that they did not go ‘on’ or ‘off’. The women talked about this type of plan and food in terms of balance. They emphasized the ultimate goal of the new approach was long-term health rather than quick weight loss. It seems then that although women may frame the way they talk about food differently, it still involves some level of surveillance. Even when the women talked about not being on a diet, they were still watchful of what they ate.

#### **4.3.2 Rebellion against the cultural norm**

There are however examples of defiance of cultural norms Orbach (1986) for example suggests that to be fat is to rebel against a social roles defined by women in industrialised

society, to rebel against being an object of adornment and pleasure. The choice to be of vegetarianism is seen as being at odds with the dominant culture by Twigg (1983) who argues that red meat is the most highly prized of food in a hierarchy of nutrition, but vegetarians reassess that dominant paradigm and reclassify vegetarian food as pure and full of the essence of life. It is unclear however how successful rebellion is as a symbolic consumption pattern, how quickly rebellion becomes just the next fashion or craze and like the early adopters or innovators of fashion goods whom marketers do so much to try to harness they are quickly subsumed as the dominant discourse shifts or left with devalued identity as their rebellion is ignored (Gabriel & Lang, 1995).

#### **4.4 Conclusion**

This chapter has been written with recognition that consumers do not exist in a social vacuum. Social role as an extension has been argued to be crucial way of linking the individual to their surrounding social structures and dominant social categorisations of difference, such as the classic sociological variables of gender and class have been argued to continue to influence consumer culture (Caplan, 1997). In this chapter the structural sources of self have been considered, modelled by Warde (1997) it has discussed social antecedents of identity from the every-day direct and explicit influence of family through to culturally embedded implicit influence that derives from nationhood or wide social belonging.

## **Chapter 5: Methodology**

### **5.0 Introduction**

This chapter considers the philosophy, reasoning and approach to this PhD study. It considers how data has been collected and provides rationale for the choices made. It makes definition of research, beginning by outlining the research aims and objectives which emerged from the literature review and during the research process. It considers the research philosophy under which this study was designed, justifying a qualitative approach within an interpretive framework. It establishes the research as sitting within the narrative paradigm, which is a well-established school of work, particularly in the social sciences for gathering detailed personal, retrospective life and consumption stories from individuals. The resultant research design is described in some detail including the role of the researcher and ethical issues. Data collection process is outlined, specifically this research uses semi-structured interview approach to collect detailed and comparable data across the issues of material culture, identity and social environment. Appropriate methods for analysing narrative and evaluating the data are outlined along with an explanation of how these have been adopted within this study. Finally the chapter closes with discussion of the limitations of the research methodology used. The discussion in each of the sections also seeks to provide a review of relevant literature and a justification for the decisions made within the study.

### **5.1 Research Aim**

This thesis aims to understand how individuals create self-identity through food culture. Its goal is to understand how they incorporate structural sources of self: such as family and gender, and material sources from consumer food culture: items such as goods, texts and experiences, into their accounts of self-identity.

### **5.2 Research Philosophy**

Defining research is a complex task given the variety of problems, contexts, activities and audiences different research approaches it may encompass. It has been considered to involve systematic inquiry whereby data is collected, analysed and interpreted in some way in an effort to "understand, describe, predict or control phenomenon" (Mertens, 2005: 2). As researchers continue to expand the scope of their inquiry looking for increasingly innovative modes of knowledge creation O'Leary (2004) argues it has made defining research, a task that

was relatively simple thirty or forty years ago far more complex in recent times “particularly in the social/applied sciences” (ibid: 8). Hudson & Ozanne (1988) note a multiplicity in ways of seeking knowledge about consumers and argue that each form has its own value. It has been suggested, however, that the “exact nature of the definition of research is influenced by the researcher's theoretical framework” (Mertens, 2005: 2) and so it is perhaps apposite to first consider the theoretical positioning for this study.

### **5.2.1 Ontological Position**

Mason (2002: 32) argues that in defining research forms it is critical to ask two related questions “What is the nature of the social reality that I wish to investigate” and “what might represent knowledge or evidence of that reality?” or one’s ontological and epistemological stance. In defining these positions Stalker (2009) argues that we as researchers construct ontological and epistemological narratives and that these are used to communicate our identity as researchers and socially to situate ourselves within a pre-existing tradition (ibid). So the methodological narrative sites the researcher as communicating constituents of the individual self at least partially as social in origin within their chosen research community “the I owes its existence as much to the We as the We does to the I. Neither is a physical reality but they are not fictions either” (Carr, 1997: 12). McGregor & Murnane (2010) argue that consciously identifying one’s self within a philosophy and more specifically a research paradigm minimizes the risk of relinquishing a responsibility to account for the philosophical underpinning of one’s work and enhances the integrity of consumer scholarship. Consequently this research and researcher are now clearly positioned within an interpretive tradition and the details and consequences of that situation now explored.

If a researcher’s ontological position provides the starting point to build a conceptual framework for seeing and making sense of the social world it also defines those basic assumption and beliefs they hold about the nature of knowledge and reality (Easterby-Smith et al., 1991, Guba and Lincoln, 1998). It helps the researcher establish the nature and form of reality they wish to pursue. Broadly speaking, ontology in the social sciences is oriented against two polar opposites (Guba 1990): positivism, which is rooted in a realist ontology, the belief that a reality exists and can be objectively discovered and interpretivism which comes from a postmodern sensibility, the belief that there are multiple realities, that reality is socially constructed, and is dependent upon the perceptions of individual, social actors (Denzin & Lincoln, 1998).



Guba (1990) argues that to sit at the extremes of either position, and certainly true positivism, is to be naive to the complexities of reality. She argues that a third ontological position has emerged: post-positivism which considers that there is an objective reality but that it may not be fully discoverable through research. McGregor & Murnane (2010) argue only for two research ontologies positivism and post-positivism which they argue encompasses interpretivism and critical positions and represents any way of knowing aside from scientific method. This however is not a dominant definition and they recognise that there are a range of ways to position the research field and types of knowledge: for example Niglas (2007) organises around 6 methodologies along a quantitative/ qualitative continuum and Lin (1998) questions the post-positive construction entirely.

Consumer scholarship in common with other disciplines has a long tradition of positivist scholarship and the quantitative studies which are associated with the position (McGregor, 2007) and indeed many journals within the field are focussed around empiricism (Ostergaard & Jantzen, 2002). However there is an increasing focus upon post-positivist, interpretive scholarship (Belk, 2006) considered to be led by European academics, e.g. Asskegaard (1991), and argued to reflect a postmodern turn in consumer research (Cova & Elliot, 2008) though they consider that the two are not inextricably linked and that interpretivism is not only concerned with postmodernity . Figure 5.1 considers the differences between the two approaches.

<b>Assumptions</b>	<b>Positivist</b>	<b>Interpretive</b>
<b>Ontology</b> Nature of Reality	Objective, tangible, single, fragmentable, divisible	Socially Constructed, multiple, holistic, contextual
Nature of Social Beings	Deterministic, Reactive	Voluntaristic, proactive
<b>Axiology</b> Overriding Goal	Explanation via subsumption under general laws, prediction.	Understanding based upon verstehen
<b>Epistemology</b> Knowledge Generated	Nomothetic, time-free, context independent	Idiographic, time-bound, context dependent
View of Causality	Real cause exists	Multiple simultaneous shaping
Research Relationship	Dualism, separation, privileged point of observation	Interactive, cooperative, no privileged point of observation.

**Figure 10.1 A summary of positivist and interpretive approaches taken from Hudson & Ozanne (1988:509)**

***5.2.1.1 Consumer Culture Theory and Ontological position***

Consumer Culture Theory is not considered to require fidelity to one research tradition nor to deify qualitative work. It does have at its core a desire to uncover the experiential and sociocultural dimensions of consumption which are not easily accessible from a positivist perspective (Sherry, 1991). So a body of work has grown around this field which is interpretivist in approach and this study fits most directly with that work. Hogg & Maclaren (2008) consider Consumer Culture Theory to be methodologically linked and a new banner and viable disciplinary brand for those working in the interpretivist tradition.

Taking Consumer Culture Theory's aims of making contributions that address the "dynamic relationships between consumer actions, the marketplace, and cultural meanings" (Arnould & Thompson, 2005:868). Having situated this study within this tradition and also within the interpretive tradition it sits in a domain increasingly well established in the social sciences (Hogg & Maclaren, 2008) being as it is concerned with the world of 'lived experience', which should not be stripped of its context and meaning but related in richness.

**5.2.2 Epistemology.**

Having considered the ontology as being interpretivist the related questions of epistemology and paradigm are considered. A research tradition's epistemology as discussed above considers how knowledge and meaning are created and understood. It is argued by Hudson & Ozanne (1988) to break down to three elements: how knowledge is generated, the research traditions view of causality and relationship between the participants and researcher.

***5.2.2.1 Quantitative Tradition in Consumer Research***

Calder and Tybout (1987) consider that in the field of consumer research that the quantitative tradition has been privileged in leading journals, only knowledge obtained by applying "sophisticated falsificationist methodology" (p. 137) was crowned as being "scientific". The quantitative arguments centre on the role of data in knowledge generation, only the data in the falsification methodology were considered as self-correcting in the sense of providing opportunities to refute existing theories. For qualitatively generated knowledge, data is either too descriptive or selective and cannot be used to test existing theories. So, they concluded

that “scientific knowledge rests on a methodology that offers the possibility of scientific progress” (p. 140).

While many leading marketing and consumer focussed journals are still dominated by quantitative studies there has been argued to be a qualitative turn in consumer research, if not wider business research (Askegaard, 1991)

### ***5.2.2.2 Qualitative Inquiry***

The interpretive tradition where this study sits is as noted above most closely associated with qualitative inquiry. Qualitative methods are sometimes utilised in positivist studies however they are considered, in that tradition, to be a less rigorous form of knowledge (Denzin & Lincoln, 1998). Hudson & Ozanne (1988) also note that when used in different research traditions, the techniques and data are changed by its practices e.g. quantitative narrative analysis (Franzosi, 2011).

Qualitative research embraces a broad range of methods and activities and is argued by Denzin & Lincoln(1998) to constitute a field of inquiry cross cutting disciplines, fields and subject matter. Qualitative inquiry is in the midst of a renaissance within the social sciences (Gergen, 2010.) Qualitative methods have been considered a holistic form of inquiry in which the lives of various individuals or groups are framed, for example descriptions of the experience of being marginalized within a dominant group (Hooks, 2000). These modes of inquiry have tended to foster close, often non-hierarchical encounters between researchers and participants. Qualitative methods have emphasized a depth approach to understanding, in which a rich or “thick” description of the topic is involved (Geertz, 1994). They encourage complexity over simplicity. Stemming from the view that the world and reality are not objective and exterior, but rather socially constructed and given meaning by people (Husserl, 1946). Proponents of this view argue that the task of the researcher (as a social scientist) should not be to gather facts and measure how often certain patterns occur, but to appreciate the different constructions and meanings that people place upon their experience (Geertz, 1994)

Interpretivists often argue that there is no fixed relationship between paradigms and methodology and that there should be no sovereignty over data collection or analysis techniques. However in practice those of intepretivist state of mind typical engage in qualitative inquiry. Tesch (1990) suggest that there are as many as 28 different forms of

qualitative research. Creswell (2007) simplifies and amends this list, arguing for 5 different, commonly utilised approaches to qualitative inquiry (figure 5.2).

Qualitative Inquiry	Characteristics
Ethnography	Research, used for investigating cultures by collecting and describing data that is intended to help in the development of a theory.
Phenomenology	Understanding the essence of experience, studies several individuals with shared experience to explain the phenomenon.
Narrative Study	Tells the story of individual experiences, exploring their lives' or events within to explore their individual stories
Grounded Theory	an inductive type of research, based or "grounded" in the observations or data from which it was developed; it uses a variety of data sources, including quantitative data, review of records, interviews, observation and surveys.
Case Study	Developing and providing a depth description and analysis of a case or multiple cases, typically studying an event, program or activity comprising more than one individual's perspective.

**Figure 5.2** Types of qualitative inquiry adapted from Creswell (2007)

This research is situated within the area of narrative study and as such this approach will be explored more in the following sections.

### 5.2.2.3 Consumer Culture Theory and Qualitative Inquiry

As discussed when considering ontology, consumer culture theory argues against a methodological hegemony, and quantitative studies are embraced by its breadth, Algesheimer & Gurau (2008) suggest that within CCT, research methodology is driven by the level at which culture is being conceptualised and explored . Their distinctions are shown at figure 5.3.

Level	Unit of Research	Focus of Research	Methodology
Micro	Individual consumer, Business organisation	The interaction between the consumer and the business organisation; the co-creation and the co-reinforcement of purchasing and consumption rituals	Mainly qualitative, case study approach
Mezzo	Social groups, Strategic groups	The influence of the groups of reference on the cultural profile and behaviour of customers and business organisations; the participation to multiple groups; the dynamic of groups	Quantitative and qualitative; statistical analysis detailed through a case study approach
Macro	National culture, market system and institutions	The influence of the national characteristics on the cultural profile and behaviour of groups, individuals and business	Quantitative and qualitative

		organisations; the historical evolution of national culture	
Supra	Globalisation trends, Transnational systems and institutions	The influence of globalisation trends, on the profile and dynamics of national culture, groups of reference, individuals and business organisations; the dynamics of transnational trends and institutions	Quantitative and qualitative; transnational cross-country analysis

**Figure 5.3 The various levels of cultural influence and the methodological approach for their investigation (Algesheimer & Gurau, 2008)**

Fischer & Sherry (2009:1) however discuss the discipline emerged to make space for “interpretive perspectives on consumer phenomena” and their edited volume contains exclusively qualitative studies from the field. Sherry (1991) argues that qualitative inquiry is suited to consumer culture theory studies because they focus on the experiential and sociocultural dimensions of consumption that are not plainly accessible through experiments, surveys, or database modelling. This growing link between CCT and qualitative inquiry has emerged because, they suggest, most studies of the area rely upon understanding informants' points of view (emic) to portray broader cultural meanings (etic point of view), and that to seek emic data one must engage with individuals (ibid). Therefore methodological preferences “follow from the aims that drive CCT rather than from a passion for qualitative data or vivid description” (Arnould & Thompson, 2005).

### 5.3 Research Paradigm

Research Paradigm is “The set of assumptions, concepts, values and practices that constitute a way of viewing reality for the community that shares them, especially in an intellectual discipline like consumer studies” (McGregor & Murnan, 2010: 422) and which orient thinking and research (Bogdan & Biklen, 1998) or the philosophical intent or motivation for undertaking a study (Cohen & Manion, 1994). Alternatively, MacNaughton, Rolfe and Siraj-Blatchford (2001) provide a definition of paradigm, which includes three elements: a belief about the nature of knowledge, a methodology and criteria for validity. They also argue that paradigms dictate the guidelines of how a researcher should conduct their endeavours, therefore dictating the techniques to be adopted when conducting research.

Paradigmatic position is argued to be based upon the ontological and epistemological assumptions one has about the research and the world it investigates (Guba & Lincoln, 1993) and in addition it reflects decisions about appropriate methodologies and the constraints upon these that the previous decisions have made. Narrative analysis is argued by Wengraf (2001)

to stand as a paradigm in its own right and is certainly an increasingly widespread qualitative methodology in social science research (Chase, 2000) and the approach which is employed in this study and so this debate is now reflected upon.

### 5.3.1 Narrative Inquiry

Paradigmatic determinants as identified by McGregor & Murnan(2010) are considered in figure 5.4 in the specific case of narrative inquiry in order to evaluate its position as a research paradigm.

Paradigmatic Factors	Narrative Inquiry
Assumptions	That the story is one, if not the, fundamental unit that accounts for human experience. Narrative as fundamental to cognition Narratives are plausible, evocative and considered true.
Concepts	Narrative inquiry involves the reconstruction of a person’s experience in relationship both to the other and to a social milieu
Values	To behave with respect towards research subjects and preserve the integrity of their stories.
Practices	A range of practices which focus upon the study of stories, narratives, or descriptions of a series of events, including: metaphor of story to articulate learning from research generally and sociolinguistic analytic tools to analyse qualitative data

**Figure 5.4 Paradigmatic determinants of narrative inquiry**

Narrative inquiry has at its core a belief that social life is premised on stories (Stalker, 2009). It is through stories that we convey meaning and importance or ‘narrative’. This research study fits with the ‘narrative turn’ in social science research and the associated shift toward understanding the necessity of qualitative methodologies. Narrative researchers treat narrative as a distinct form of discourse (Chase, 2000) which can be oral or written. Boje (2001) argues that while narrative traditions may be boundless and wonderfully varied there are

distinct forms of narratology : the theories and systematic study of narrative across disciplinary boundaries that are represented in figure 5.5 though these represent a shortlist rather than an exhaustive review.

Narratology	Ontology	Epistemology	Methodology
Living Story	Stories live and possess time, place and mind.	Knowledge is the story of performed time, place and has a life of its own; story cannot be dualized from context without imbalance and other consequences	Restory the relation between dominant narrative and the author's preferred story.
Realist	'Real' reality mirrored more or less imperfectly in narrative of case. Narrative is a cultural artefact and object; social facts.	Dualist: real and real, narrative is subjective interpretative knowledge; story is an object to know other objects (culture, etc.).	Experimental manipulations, interviews with narrative as measures, narrate with rating scales; biography of narrative uniqueness.
Formalist	'Real' is unknowable but some forms are pragmatic or possess fidelity and probability, or scenes, plots, act, agency, purpose.	Narrative is a sign system separated from knowledge of the signified; narrative is rhetorical device; contextualist epistemology of historical event unfolding in the present.	Collect and contrast forms of the narrative and coherence of narrative elements.
Pragmatist	Assertion of the reality if general terms or laws. Meaning is oriented towards the future.	Ideas are not mere abstractions; they are essences-things are what they are. Names are intended to show the nature of things.	History session by the actors. Learning from the past in view of future action.
Social Constructionist	Individual and socially constructed realities	Narrative is subjective account reified as objective knowledge. Narratives are acts of sense making.	Explore relative differences in narrative social construction
Poststructuralist	There is not outside to inside text duality or originary narrative	Narratives are intertextual to knowledge of other narratives; narratives are ideological with political consequences.	Deconstructive reading of narratives.
Critical Theorist	Historical materialism shaped by class, ethnicity, gender and socioeconomic values	Grand narratives dominate local knowledge. But there can be local resistance to grand knowledge narratives.	Hegemonic reading of narratives; ideology reading of narratives.
Postmodernist	Virtual and cultural	Knowledge and power are	Polyphonic and

	hyper real, sceptic critiques of late capitalism, to affirmation of spiritual world.	narratively fragmented; to affirmative knowledge living cosmos	juxtaposed reading and writings of a chorus of narratives.
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**Figure 5.5 Selected Narratologies taken from Boje (2001: 15-16)**

Gergen & Gergen, (1988) argue that it is through narrative: the stories, accounts, tales and descriptions utilised in everyday speech, that meaning is created and understood. The stories people tell constitute the empirical material that the researcher can use to interpret the world (Chase, 2000)

### 5.3.2 Big Narratives.

While narrative inquiry as discussed above is a rich and varied field, Caru & Cova(2008) suggest that within consumer research there has been a preference for big stories which they typify as being led by introspection. They call for greater use of small stories, these they argue are generated in everyday talk and gathered dominantly from ethnographic and increasingly netnographic methods (ibid). These observations of speech in natural settings are considered to allow truly naturalist observation of the subject (Georgakopoulou, 2006). Self-recorded conversions, online discussion forums, text messaging or mobile phone calls are potential data sources and are argued to illuminate the social experiences of consumers during their participation (ibid). This data is argued to particularly useful in capturing topic information which it is difficult for the respondent themselves to reflect upon (Bamberg & Georgakopoulou (2008)

‘Small stories’ refer to stories told during interaction, generally within everyday settings, about very mundane things and everyday occurrences. They are usually, but not always, heard outside of the formal interview setting, often as ‘fleeting moments of narrative orientation to the world’ (Georgakopoulou, 2006: 123), Bamberg proposes that they can be very revealing with regard to how speakers (or writers) convey a sense of self and identity. Benwell and Stoke (2006: 138) have noted the power that remains in big stories, ‘the practice of narration involves the “doing” of identity, and because as we tell different stories we can construct different versions of self.’ The ‘big story’ focuses upon the biographical narrative content of the story such as personal, past experiences. For Bamberg (2006a), this process enables clear meaning and connections to become evident. Big stories are predominantly gathered during interview situations, and therefore elicited by a level of guidance from the research. Freeman (2006) asserts that rather than being a liability, the distance that is built-in



to big story narrative reflection creates possibilities for understanding that are largely unreachable when focusing only upon the immediacy of the moment. For Freeman, ‘we are not only the selves that issue from small stories. Whether we like it or not, we are also – at this moment in history, in the context of contemporary Western culture – big story selves’ (p. 135). Neither big nor small stories are any better or ‘truer’, rather they each tell about different but interconnected regions of experience. They are, therefore, both equally salient in terms of narrative inquiry

Importantly for this study which is concerned with issues of identity through consumption, telling stories about ourselves to others, through big story narratives, is one way in which our identity may be accomplished or performed (Phoenix and Sparkes, 2008). As well as being shaped by broader social narratives of the type outlined in chapter four, individuals also utilise cultural resources of the type discussed in chapter two as a means describing their lives, and creating identity, and this is argued to be best accomplished with some degree of reflexivity (Freeman, 2006). The research interview as a means of eliciting narrative is discussed further in the research design section of this chapter as is the ways in which narrative may be analysed.

Squire et al (2008) discuss the theoretical diversity in narrative research, the influential Labovian (1972) approach for example which is considered to be text centered, focusing upon textual structure of a very ordered complete form of event narratives (Patterson, 2008). This thesis takes a broader approach, within what Squires (2008) terms experience narratives. It assumes that personal narratives include all the “meaningful stories of personal experience that people produce” (ibid: 42).

Narrative analysis is relatively well established among consumer researchers (Hirschman, 1988) as a means of hermeneutic understanding and Shankar & Goulding (2001) argue that consumption experience in particular can be explored satisfactorily within the narrative paradigm because its goal is to emplot the hermeneutic units into a logical theory development.

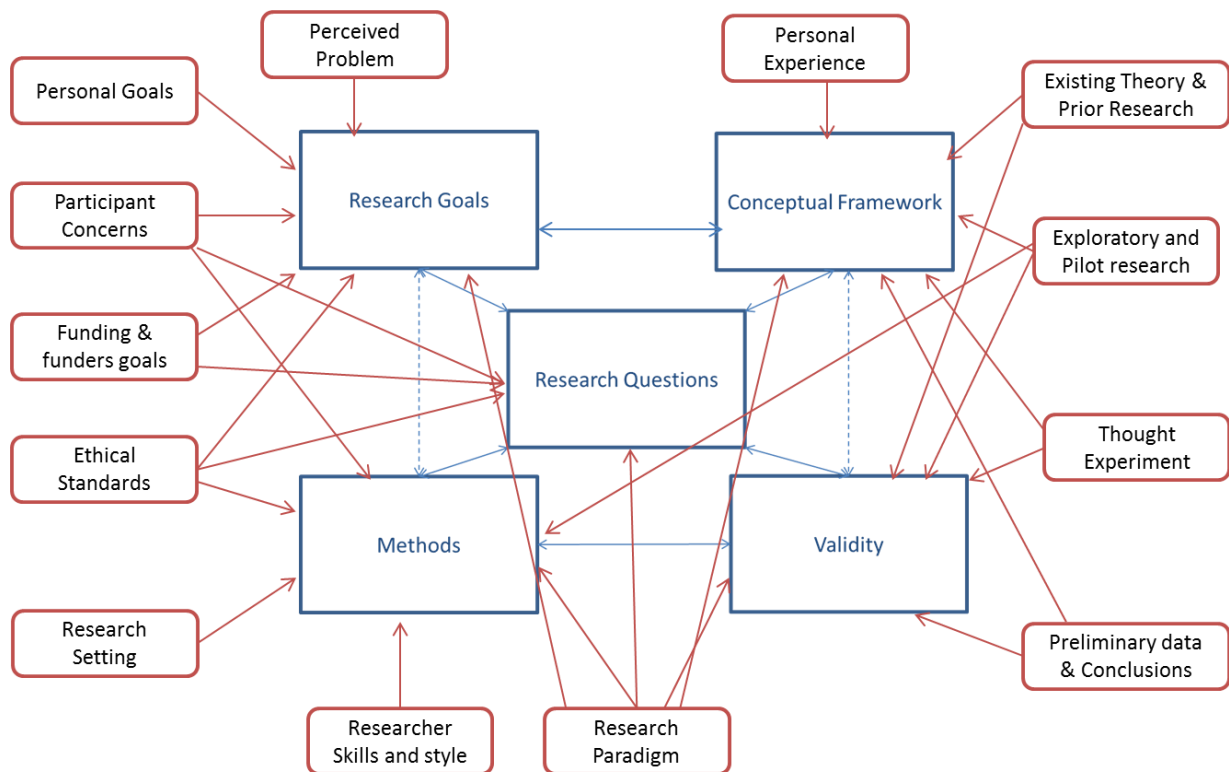
#### **5.4 Research Design**

Research design is concerned with the organisation of research activity, particularly the collection of data, in a way most compatible with and therefore likely to achieve the research aims (Easterby-Smith et al., 2001). It is essentially the plan for a study, and a guide for the collection and analysis of data (Churchill and Iacobucci, 2005). While each piece of research is unique, the typical sequence of steps of a research process is presented in many research

methods texts as a linear model (Easterby-Smith et al, 2001). Maxwell (2005) however argues that such sequential models are not appropriate to qualitative studies where the process is much more iterative in nature, research design in such studies is argued to be a “reflexive process operating through every stage of the project” (Hammersley & Atkinson, 1995:25). Maxwell (2005) therefore argues for an ‘interactive model’ which consists of the components of a research study and how these may affect and be affected by one another but does not presume a particular order or directionality of influence. He discusses that there are three sets of activities which comprise:

- Collecting and analysing data
- Developing and modifying theory
- Elaborating and refocusing research questions

Maxwell (ibid) then breaks research design into 5 components and argues these fit together in an integrated way not adequately represented in models deriving from a quantitative tradition.



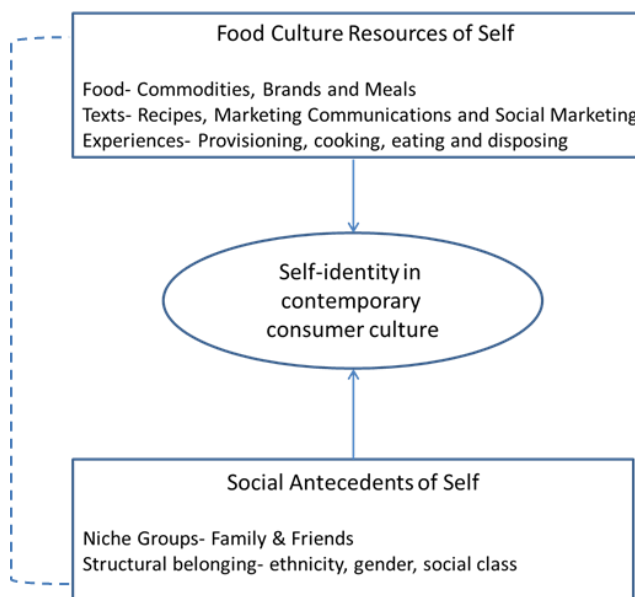
**Figure 5.6 Maxwell’s (2005:6) model of research design**

The research aim and goal have already been outlined earlier in the chapter but are recapped here.

The thesis aims to understand how individuals create self-identity in contemporary consumer culture. The goal is to explore the narratives of individual consumer, to understand how they incorporate structural sources of self, such as family and gender, and material sources specifically from food culture such as goods, texts and experiences, into their biographical accounts of self-identity.

### 5.4.1 Creating the research framework

The research questions for this study flow from its research framework which has been developed from its aims and through the research process. It relies upon the theories examined within the literature review, though as this model of research design recognises sources of conceptual framework are varied and its creation iterative, such materials as the researchers own experiences both broadly and with the research topic are intrinsically woven through it, given the reflexive nature of qualitative inquiry. The literature review as presented in the previous chapters was mainly focused as upon consumption theories as its background theory, and within that specifically Consumer Culture Theory and those studies relating to identity creation through consumption as its focus. Marketing, sociology and anthropological sources have been drawn upon to define the material culture of food: the resources which the individual can draw upon, through their varied consumption activities to engage in their identity projects. The study has also looked widely within these fields to consider the social antecedents which shape consumers' identity, preference and action.



**Figure 5.7 Representation of the research framework**

In representing the framework Elliot’s (2004) model of factors of identity, which has been utilised in the preceding chapters, is adapted and developed here as a means of visualisation.

### 5.4.2 Research Questions

The research questions therefore seek to meet the research aim and goals, to be reflective of the research framework and provide clarity and structure to the data collection and analysis in the study.

The thesis aims to understand how individuals create self-identity within food culture. The goal is to explore the narratives of individual consumer, to understand how they incorporate structural sources of self, such as family and gender, and material sources from consumer culture, specifically food culture such as goods, texts and experiences, into their biographical accounts of self-identity.

1. How is self-identity understood and presented by individuals?
2. What are the relevant social antecedents of self and how are these understood?
3. What is the role of social antecedents in shaping an individual’s food culture?
4. What are the salient food culture elements and how are they understood by consumers as part of their identity?

### 5.4.3 Methods

Maxwell (1998:234) suggests that deciding the methods of a qualitative study there are four major considerations:

- Sampling
- The research relationship one establishes with participants
- Data collection
- Data analysis

#### 5.4.3.1 Sampling

In sampling as with other elements of the research design the decision are based upon the preceding issues of ontology and epistemology , there are broadly two types of sample: probability and non-probability, associated closely with respectively positivist, quantitative studies or post-positivist, qualitative inquiry. The differences between the two broad types of sampling and their purpose are outlined in figure 5.8.

<b>Dimension of Contrast</b>	<b>Purposive Sampling</b>	<b>Probability Sampling</b>
Other names	Purposeful sampling	Scientific sampling

	Nonprobability sampling Qualitative sampling	Random sampling Quantitative sampling
Overall purpose of sampling	Designed to generate a sample that will address research questions	Designed to generate a sample that will address research questions
Issue of generalizability	Sometimes seeks a form of generalizability (transferability)	Seeks a form of generalizability (external validity)
Rationale for selecting cases/units	To address specific purposes related to research questions The researcher selects cases she or he can learn the most from	Representativeness The researcher selects cases that are collectively representative of the population
Sample size	Typically small (usually 30 cases or less)	Large enough to establish representativeness (usually at least 50 units)
Depth/breadth of information per case/unit	Focus on depth of information generated by the cases	Focus on breadth of information generated by the sampling units
How selection is made	Utilizes expert judgment	Often based on application of mathematical formulas

**Figure 5.8 Comparisons Between Purposive and Probability Sampling Techniques adapted from Teddlie & Yu (2007)**

As outlined above this thesis is adopting an interpretivist, qualitative approach seeking to gather narrative data. Marshall (1996) argues that there are 3 broad sampling strategies when conducting qualitative studies: convenience, judgment and theoretical samples. He suggests that they are rarely used discretely but rather that the selection of any sample involves elements of all three. Convenience sampling is often regarded as a classification of its own, a form of non-probability sampling which relies upon drawing samples that are both easily accessible and willing to participate in a study. Two potential types of convenience samples would be captive samples and volunteer samples (Teddlie & Yu, 2007). Watters & Biernacki (1989) suggest that all qualitative sampling contains some degree of convenience, without willingness and availability of participants to speak or be observed then research would stall. This thesis follows this logic and has a sample which was voluntarily constituted.

Judgement and theoretical samples are commonly discussed as forms of purposeful sampling. Judgement sampling is as the name suggest where the sample is selected based upon the expert judgment of the researcher based upon their research aims and questions, and theoretical sampling, most commonly associated with grounded theory research, goes further to suggest that samples should be selected based upon emerging theory in the study, choosing new research sites or cases to compare with one's that have already been studied ( Glaser & Strauss, 1967). This study does not employ a grounded theory approach and so would not wish to claim that theoretical sampling was used rather it relied upon the judgment of the researcher based upon the aim of the study, previous research in the field and as already mentioned the willingness of respondents to participate.

Teddlie & Yu (2007) suggest a typology of purposeful, judgment sampling which includes: Sampling to Achieve Representativeness or Comparability, Sampling Special or Unique Cases, Sequential Sampling and Sampling Using Combinations of Purposive Techniques. This research seeks to use a homogeneous sample which is one of the subset of sampling methods which allows representativeness or comparability. Homogenous sampling seeks individuals or groups which have similar characteristics and attributes (Miles & Huberman, 1994) Homogenous sampling is considered appropriate for this study because it allows the research to consider a group which look very similar through surface attributes, demographics, group membership etc. and delve below the surface to consider the heterogeneity of their experiences and narratives. So the sample for this study consisted of an extended friendship group of men and women ranging age from 29 to 36: see appendix 1 for a breakdown of their socio-demographics.

The group were specifically selected to be middle class, tertiary educated and urban dwelling because as Caraher et al (1999) discuss this group are most likely to be unconstrained in their food behaviour: not worried about whether they have enough to eat, not likely to suffer from a lack of food and cooking knowledge and to have access to a wide range of ways of provisioning their food (Blake et al, 2010). This was important for the study because much research about food practice had focussed upon choices made through lack of resources, education or access to quality food stuff and so a gap existed in considering the food behaviour of the relatively dominant and under-researched middle class.

Regarding sample size for this study, a sample of 20 individuals was selected. While many qualitative researchers contend that it is not the purpose of their research to generalise beyond their sample to the population, Onwuegbuzie & Leech (2007) argue that most studies do attempt some level of generalisation: from verbatim words to capturing the overall voice of the sample, sample observations to theory development, from key informants to other sample members, from the words or experiences of sample members to individuals not selected for study. They suggest therefore that sample size requires attention (ibid). It is discussed that sample size should be sufficient to achieve saturation in the group, topic or setting but not too large that a deep analysis becomes difficult (ibid) Creswell (1998) suggest that in qualitative inquiry one should seek to explore one cultural-sharing group and when conducting interview to consider between 15-20 individual cases. These considerations have formed the basis for the sample size within this study which focuses upon 20 individuals within a shared friendship group.

Access to the friendship group was obtained by snowballing within the researchers own social network. Initial informants were identified through a shared social interest of University Debating which many of the group had participated in while undergraduate students, some 10 years or so previously. The group is particularly entwined, with multiple and varied social connections these are mapped at appendix II. This thesis doesn't consider the nature of these connections as a focus for study rather it uses the closeness of the group and their multiple connections as a means of maximising ability to explore their shared cultural experience and homogeny.

#### **5.4.3.2      *Research Relationship***

Hammersley & Atkinson (1995) discuss that the process of conducting qualitative research unavoidably involves the researcher and the participants of their study influencing each other, though they are writing particularly about ethnographic research, many qualitative methods require participants to think explicitly about issues which have hitherto been invisible to them. So they suggest that one make explicit the type of relationship within a study. This research study, as discussed in the sampling decisions above, engaged with a friendship group, partially the respondents own and partially snowballing beyond. As such participants were socially aware that the researcher was undertaking PhD study and of the broad areas of interest.

### 5.4.3.3 *Data Collection*

There are several data collection options that could be used in a research project and these largely flow from the researcher's position on issues already tackled in the chapter: ontology, epistemology, paradigmatic position. Positivist studies have traditionally been associated with a quantitative approach, where the data collection methods include experimentation and within social sciences and business disciplines a wide use of surveys/ questionnaires sent out to large samples. The data collection approach for this study follows its situation within interpretive ontology and qualitative epistemology. Researchers within these traditions have used a wide range of different approaches in collecting data, such as the grounded theory practice, narratology, storytelling, classical ethnography, or shadowing. As mentioned above when considering research paradigm this research is situated within narratology and has a specific interest in big story narratives or those collected with reflexivity and researcher participation. This has led the study towards interviewing as the form in which the data is collected and specifically semi-structured interviews.

Other potential forms of the data are recognised to include group discussions, observation and reflection field notes, various texts, pictures, performance and an ever increasing range of other materials, however justification is now made of the semi-structured depth interview approach, utilised in this study, as a means of collecting narrative materials.

#### 5.4.3.3.1 *Depth Interviewing*

Oral interview research interviewing is argued by Squires (2008) to be the most common form of eliciting experience-centred narrative data. The depth interview is a special type of conversational interaction. It has specific feature which set it apart however from a normal conversation which are implicitly understood by both researchers and respondents (Wengraf, 2006). Interviewing is in essence conversing with the purpose of eliciting information, not only the domain of social sciences, it is widely used both explicitly, for example when one applies for a job and implicitly, for example when consulting a doctor. Interviews create a framework of similarity within which participants understand the structure of narrative creation (Fiske, 1987). Depth interviews for research purposes Wengraf (2006: 6) suggests contains two broad meanings

- “to go into something in depth is to get a more detailed knowledge about it
- To go into something in depth is to get a sense of how the apparently straight-forward is actually more complicated, of how the ‘surface appearances’ may be quite misleading about depth realities”



To obtain this depth of information and understanding Wengraf (2006) argues that the researcher must make adequate planning and preparation time prior to conducting the interviews. For this he suggests the main task is to translate the research questions into a range of topics or interview questions. The researcher has undertaken this process and the resulting discussion guide is enclosed at appendix IV. While the depth interview must be specifically prepared and designed before entering the field of study to consider it semi-structured it is expected that in such interviews not all of the questions need or should be prepared ahead of time, rather that a degree of flexibility remain during the interview itself to allow the researcher to respond to the answers given by the respondent (ibid). Squires (2008) suggests that most experience focused narrative interviews are semi-structured and as such there is a level of co-production in the stories, the researcher to some extent determines the sequencing of questions and themes and with active listening and prompting in the interviews one not only get a fuller narrative about particular experiences (Chamberlayne et al, 2002) but is involved in shaping which are the important and focused upon narratives. Hollway & Jefferson (2000) suggest an alternative approach of free association interviewing where the respondent assumes the role of sequencing their stories however Squires (2008) notes issue with this approach because of the burden it places upon participants and considers that it is less like real conversation and a more awkward form of research.

So in sequencing the questions the researcher recognises that there a partial shaping of the resultant narratives. As O'Connell Davidson and Layder (1994, 36) suggest "The interview is a social encounter, and how the respondent answers the questions will depend to some degree upon what the respondent and interviewer think and feel about each other" To minimise this and keep narratives as respondent-driven as possible it was considered important to keep the research interaction as natural and like a conversation as possible and so the researcher took care to allow time for the respondents to become comfortable in the research situation, easing any apprehension people may be feeling before probing deeply into research questions. At the end of interview time was taken to ensure that the respondents felt happy that their views had been reflected and all their expected points from the interview covered. Within the body of the interview the questions were grouped around the research questions. The format of the questions is as important as their flow in garnering narrative data. Throughout the process of formulating questions it was viewed as crucial to ensure that questions were presented in an open manner, to ensure "the answer is not implied, and the type and manner of response not suggested" (Krueger, 1998, 31). Jargon was also avoided and great care taken to ensure

familiar language was used all with the aim of allowing respondents to own their narratives as much as possible.

In keeping with the desire to ensure the research interview was as comfortable as possible for respondents, they were scheduled at times and locations most convenient for them. In essence this meant in the evenings after work and on weekends and either within their own home or the researcher's home. While no payment was provided to respondents for participation the research was often accompanied by a meal or refreshments and some social time around the interview itself again with the purpose of making the interview as normal as possible but also recognising the researcher's participation in the social network from which respondents were recruited.

Narrative research interviews are variable in length depending on purpose and structure among other issues (Squires, 2008). In this study the interviews were between 45 minutes and 90 minutes, this was driven by the enthusiasm and verbosity of the respondents and the semi-structured format was flexible enough to allow for these preferences as well as allowing the researcher to prompt particularly where brief answers were initially proffered. Time was, however, monitored subtly throughout the discussion to ensure that interviews did not run much beyond 90 minutes since it was considered that respondents would lose focus and tire around this time, and individual energy and attention levels were also considered.

Due to the substantial amount of data, which would be collected, it was clear that field notes alone could not capture all the information. Audio equipment was thus utilised to ensure that no information was lost. This approach also has the added bonus of having a record of the nuances of the language used (Bryman, 2001). A digital Dictaphone was utilised and extra batteries were always on hand. Since this was the researcher's own equipment there was a high degree of familiarity with its use. It was viewed as best not to draw excessive attention to the recording equipment rather permission was sought at the beginning of the interview, prior to beginning recording and consent obtained to keep both the audio files and written transcripts for this study. Consent statements can be found at appendix III

As the discussion approached an end any questions which had been postponed during the discussion were addressed and enquiries about the research itself were welcomed. The interview was closed by thanking the participants for their time and assuring them that their

comments were invaluable. Again the participants were reminded how their comments would be used and that all information given would be treated as highly confidential (Squire, 2008). The audio equipment was checked to ensure the discussion had been captured, this was always the case and the recording equipment proved reliable. The tape was left running until respondents left the room or the researcher left the respondents home to minimise comments made off tape which may have been informative.

The researcher carried out transcription personally, although time consuming personal transcription seemed both a valuable and necessary step in remaining familiar with the data. This is backed by David and Sutton (2004, 99) who concur that “the temptation to get a professional to do the transcription (to save time) should be tempered by the fact that time spent transcribing is a very useful way for a researcher to ‘get close’ to the data.” Though time intensive it was felt the arduous transcription process would pay off later in quality of analysis as “knowing every word of the conversation is a great advantage when it comes to qualitative data analysis” (David and Sutton, 2004, 99).

#### 5.4.4 Evaluation of Qualitative Data

Trustworthiness, the indicator of rigor or merit of a qualitative study, is contingent on a study’s credibility, dependability, confirmability, and transferability (Denzin & Lincoln, 2004). Achieving thick description is considered to demonstrate the credibility of findings or the extent to which the phenomenon of interest has been accurately described. In presenting qualitative research, though used and published more widely than in previous decades, Hogg & Maclaren (2008) argue that there remains a challenge in persuading an audience that knowledge has been created & is worthy of attention. They utilise the work of Golden-Biddle & Locke (1993) to suggest three writing practices which are commonly used to convince readers of a qualitative study’s worth.

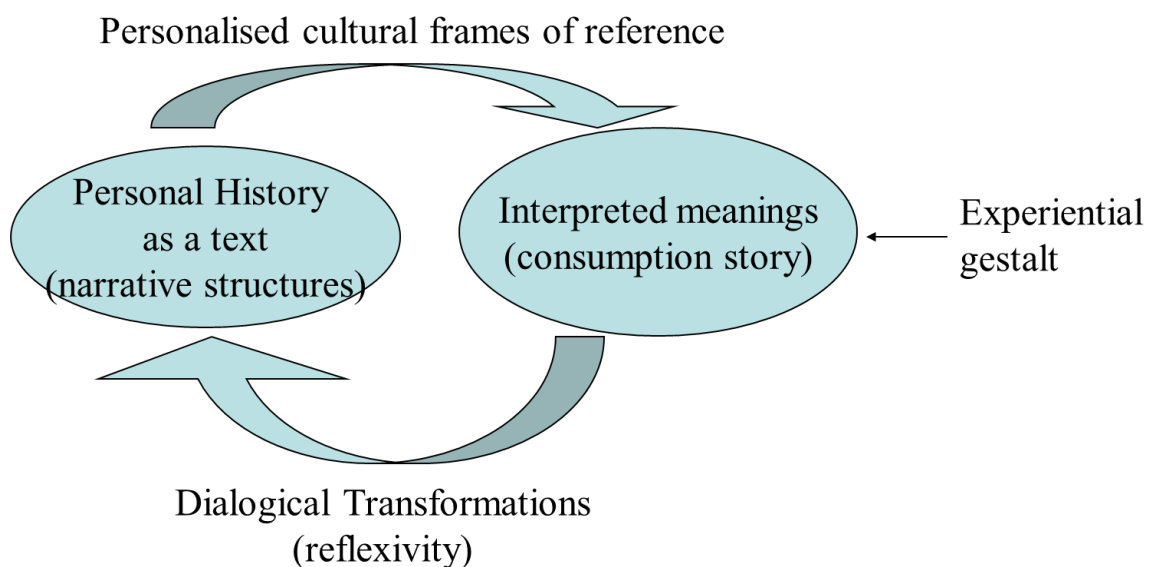
Authenticity	Convincing the reader that: the interpretation is drawn from the data the researcher has been present in the field and grasped how members understand the world
Plausibility	Accounting for as much information as possible, so that there is some degree of well-argued fit between the information (or data) and the explanation offered to account for that interpretation.
Criticality	Incorporates reflexivity “carving out room to reflect, provoking the recognition and examination of differences and enabling readers to imagining new possibilities”

**Figure 5.9 Rhetorical Issues in qualitative writing**

These issues are recognised and reflected upon when considering the data analysis of this study.

#### 5.4.4.1 *Overview of Data Analysis*

Squire (2008) discusses that finding the correct interpretive frame is the most troublesome research stage and suggests that the simplest approach is to utilise a simple hermeneutic circle with a combination of top-down and bottom up interpretations. Thompson (1997) further describes a hermeneutically grounded interpretive framework for deriving marketing-relevant insights from the analysis of qualitative data. In it the meanings that consumers ascribe to their consumer experiences are discussed as texts, stories, and narratives and focuses on the interpretive activities by which people "make sense" of their lives. This is the approach used by the current study and is represented at figure 5.10.



**Figure 5.10** A hermeneutical framework for interpreting consumers' consumption stories (Thompson, 1997)

This approach conceptualizes consumption as a type of narrative, but it further argues that consumers are "self-narrators" (Polkinghorne 1988) who selectively highlight particular facets of these experienced events in their narratives (Thompson, 1997). The narrative data for this thesis is contained in interview transcripts but Squire (2008) discusses that it can also be represented in original audio files, or video if that is captured since text is considered quite widely in narrative inquiry (Riessman, 2002). This researcher reflected back upon the original audio files, on occasion, for clarity and context.

The interpretation of narrative data proceeds through a series of iterations (Spiggle 1994). Thompson (1997) suggests two distinct stages. The first, an intratext cycle in which the interview transcript is read in its entirety to gain a sense of the whole (Giorgi 1989) before breaking down the interview using some criteria e.g. individual experiences, top down conceptual themes or a more open form of code. The interpreting researcher utilises their conceptual framework and to gain understanding of the consumption meanings in the transcript and then moves on to the second stage and conducts an intertextual reading looking for commonalities (and differences) across different interviews.

The understanding of a narrative is argued to “reflects a fusion of horizons between the interpreter's frame of reference and the texts being interpreted” (Thompson, 1997: 441) As discussed above this fusion will involve the researchers existing conceptual framework but also engagement with data raises new questions and interpretations. Thus Thompson’s (1997) model seeks to be “open to possibilities afforded by the text rather than projecting a predetermined system of meanings onto the textual data” (ibid: 441). This model requires the researcher to consider not only the respondents consumption stories but also to look for evidence of their personal and cultural frames of reference either explicitly narrated or implicitly gathered through the research relationship. It requires iteration to allow for reflection upon and assumption and as discussed above that the researcher bring their own experiential gestalt to bear on the text.

In practical terms transcripts were held in both hard copy, to facilitate easy reading in their entirety and as a data storage back-up, and electronically and analysed with the assistance of Nvivo computer aided qualitative data analysis software (CAQDAS), which has the benefit of maintaining a clear record of analysis since “an efficient and well-structured data management system is critical to tracking, accessing, and documenting, qualitative, data and the analyses applied to it” (Wickham & Woods, 2005:688). Great care was taken to ensure that creativity and insightfulness were retained since as Dey (1993:61) suggests using CAQDAS can lead to a “routine and mechanical processing of data” if one considers that the software, rather than the researcher, is there to do the analysis work. In CAQDAS work the software should act as a workbench which aids the researcher in the work that they would traditionally do manually. Fielding (2002) notes that most CAQDAS use is consistent with the manual techniques for coding, retrieval, and searching through qualitative data: a means of enabling traditional processes to be undertaken in an electronic form.

The first step, as Thompson suggests, involved reading through the transcripts and forming a general impression. The transcripts at this stage were considered in full to ensure that context was not compromised through pre-emptive coding, as according to Coffey and Atkinson (1996) coding can result in the fragmentation of data so that the narrative flow of what people say is lost. Throughout subsequent coding process, importance was placed on maintaining a regard to context and not taking individual ‘chunks’ of text as independent from the body of the transcripts themselves. To try to ensure this integrity of the narratives, the process of coding began from bottom up: a period open coding, considering each transcript in detail and reflecting upon issue of interest within them. This allowed the researcher to reflect upon individual consumption narratives, cultural and personal contexts before bringing the theoretical framework formally to bear upon the data, though as many authors suggest it is almost impossible to behave totally naively with the data when open coding if one has already engaged extensively with the literature (LaRossa, 2005). The second stage involved going through the data explicitly with the theoretical framework informing the reading, this was done within individual transcripts in the first instance as Squire et al (2008) discuss narrative researchers tend to privilege individual accounts rather than immediately seeking patterns in the data. The third stage completed the circle by considering the relationships between transcripts: commonalities and difference. The writing of this process suggest that it was linear however in practice it was as most commentators on such methods suggest iterative (Spiggle, 1994) at each stage the researcher was reflecting back upon those that had gone before and as Rosaldo (1989: 8) discusses the interpretations presented in the following chapter remain provisional since they are made by the researcher as a “positioned subject who is prepared to know certain things and not others... analyses are always incomplete. Where possible the following chapter will try to reflect where there are multiple valid interpretations of the data (Freeman, 2003)

#### **5.4.4.2      *Methodological Limitations***

Any research method is argued to have its limitations indeed McGrath contends that (1982: 77) “all research strategies are ‘bad’ (in the sense of having serious methodological limitations): none of them are ‘good’ (in the sense of being even relatively unflawed)”. Limitations of narrative inquiry are now considered and the researcher’s responses to these challenges identified.

The first is both a practical and conceptual limitation which is identifiable in much qualitative work, the time commitment required in both data collection and interpretation makes it unsuitable for work with a large number of participants and so resultant studies are by their nature reflective of the opinions and experiences of relatively small numbers of participants, this is a criticism levied at much qualitative research raising questions of reliability and generalizability. To draw conclusions and generate theory based upon the experiences of a small research sample contains challenges, Van Maanen (1988) considers however that reliability and validity are overrated criteria and Connolly & Clandinin (1990) argue that apparenacy and verisimilitude are more appropriate means to judge qualitative work, though more troubling to define these measures are considered to be most relevant to such work. Apparenacy, requires the researcher to demonstrate appropriate interpretation and also present the narratives with requisite clarity to allow the reader to judge for themselves the connections and suppositions within (Rodrigues, 2010). Verisimilitude that the narratives presented should be interpreted in a truthful manner where theory may follow appropriately from the data presented and provide a plausible explanation which maintains the integrity of informant accounts. Guba and Lincoln (1989) consider also that generalization should more appropriately be considered as transferability; not how results may be applied to a whole population or regardless of context but rather how the insights within data may be equally applicable in other contexts or populations.

The second is an ethical consideration, that eliciting narrative requires close collaboration between participant and researcher and recognition that the constructed narrative and subsequent analysis contains researcher identity as much as the participant's. When researchers take people's stories and place them into a larger narrative, they are imposing meaning on participants' lived experience and resultant written work can never be free of the researcher's interpretation. Narrative accounts are inherently multi-layered and ambiguous, so the constructed nature of truth and the subjectivity of the researcher (Peshkin, 1988) are particularly evident.

Finally exchanging research narrative is often understood within a larger story of friendship as was the case within this study, so researchers may find disengagement difficult at the end of the research project, or have trouble defining with clarity the research relationships (Bell, 2002). Earlier in this chapter the research relationship for this study is made explicit and it intended that there be no formal disengagement at the end of this work rather that the

research group remain a valuable resource for further study and longitudinal work within this field.

## **5.5 Conclusion**

This chapter has considered the researcher's methodological approach to the study. It has defined the research aims as understanding how individuals create self-identity through food culture and set its goal as understanding how they incorporate structural sources of self: such as family and gender, and material sources from consumer food culture: items such as goods, texts and experiences, into their accounts of self-identity. It has then situated the research within an interpretive ontology, which though not required by consumer culture theory is in keeping with its aim of uncovering the experiential and sociocultural dimensions of consumption. It has advanced the qualitative approach of the study and again considered that this is in keeping with both its aims and theoretical tradition and has explored the narrative inquiry paradigm and particularly social constructionist approaches to narrative and the assumptions, concepts and practices that this has led the study to adopt. The chapter has then outlined the specifics of research design for the study. It has presented a research framework, explained its origins and defined the research questions which flow from it and meet the overall research aim. It has discussed the choice of purposive sampling as being in keeping with other methodological decisions and outlined the semi-structured depth interview approach to data collection. Finally it has discussed the data analysis approach employing Thompson's (1997) hermeneutic framework and reflected upon methodological limitations of the adopted approach.



## **Chapter 6: Findings, Solipsistic and Social Sources of Identity**

### **6.0 Introduction**

This chapter presents the first half of the primary research findings, the second being considered in chapter seven which follows. Taken together they seek to meet the research aim of understanding how individuals create self-identity within food culture. Both are structured around the research questions, identified previously in the thesis as coming from the research framework, and meeting the overall aim. This chapter considers research questions one and two: how self-identity is understood and presented by individuals and what the relevant social antecedents of self are and how are these understood. Chapter seven then considers research questions three and four: what the role of social antecedents are in shaping an individual's food culture; and what the salient food culture elements are and how they are understood by consumers as part of their identity.

Food culture has been identified as a particularly relevant area of consumer culture in which to consider identity given its universality and everyday nature. It is a resource which may be reflected on by all and has been argued to be the most fundamental of all consumption fields (Fischler, 1988) rather than considered by a niche of enthusiasts as in some other work in the area of identity and consumption (e.g. Schouten & McAlexander, 1995). Before considering the impact of this consumption field, this chapter considers individual accounts of identity and the structural sources of self incorporated within them in the absence of their consumption context. It does this because it is increasingly considered critical in discussions of constructed self to be clear upon individual interpretations of their identity before considering the impact that consumption may have upon these conceptions (Gould, 2010). It recognises that there is a deficit of such accounts in extant consumer culture theory accounts of identity and meets a research need for clarity upon the identity construct. It begins by considering the emic definition and interpretations informants make of their identity, particularly focussing on how they utilise the competing established etic identity theories: multi-dimensional core self, as represented by the sans-consumption factors of self of Mittal (2006) and Belk's (1988) unextended-self definitions within their wider extended-self models; and multi-dimensional self, as represented by Sirgy's (1982) self-concept and the relevant extensions to it (eg .Markus & Nurius, 1986). At the outset it presents the initial

repertoire of concepts drawn upon by informants in determining identity and in chapter eight these are reconsidered to reconceptualise how the process of introspection upon an issue as complex as identity begins. Consumption is largely excluded in this chapter's discussions of self because of its disputed role within identity theory; debate continues upon whether it can become a form or factor of identity in its own right (e.g Cheetham & McEachern, 2012) or merely act as instrumental to other established factors (Millan et al ,2012). This chapter therefore focusses upon uncovering the nuance and complexity inherent in sans-consumption identity and how this may be impacted by the sans-consumption social antecedents which have been previously proposed as impactful, these are represented by Warde's (1997) model at figure 4.2 on page 76 of this thesis. Where consumption is considered later in the chapter it is only to explore the limited instrumental role it is suggested to have in maintaining sans-consumption definitions of self.

Chapter seven then reflects specifically upon food culture and informants' consumption narratives. It considers how social sources of self influence interactions with this form of material culture and ultimately how consumers incorporate food culture within their self-identity, here the explicit role of consumption within identity theory is directly considered and how informants understand their food consumption as a form of identity. It seeks therefore to address the disputed nature of consumption in identity theory and present the emic understanding of the issue arising from informants' narratives. In all these issues the analysis presented in this chapter is contextualised with extant research, in keeping with the iterative sense-making nature of qualitative research, though specific theoretical contribution is detailed in chapter eight.

### **6.1. How is self-identity understood and presented?**

The literature in chapter three considered the conception of self-identity and its multi-faceted nature, for example Sirgy's (1982) conceptions of at least four different self-images. Before presenting the findings in this area it is initially recognised that the data has been sourced using interviews and as such has asked consumers to construct narratives with reflexivity. There are two key consequences to this approach. In interacting within an interview setting the data collected is to some extent a presentation of social self-image, the me of self-identity rather than the I (Mittal, 2006). This is a common issue within research design, uncovering

the actual self-image is particularly difficult and indeed may be little recognised by the respondent themselves. In recognition of this difficulty, questions were asked to encourage informants to reflect upon the multiple nature of identity: considering how they see themselves, how others may see them and how they'd like to be seen as well as reflecting on undesirable elements of their identity. It also considers evidence from the narratives consumers construct about their consumption and considers the resultant implications for their identity construction.

The second consequence is that in dealing with reflexive narratives it is argued that informants are conscious of telling a coherent story and so there is a continuity to their accounts. This coherence of account is considered later in the findings, but Giddens (1991) has suggested that narrative is the primary means by which individuals understand their own identity. Collecting narrative accounts is therefore an appropriate means for researchers to access issues of self.

In responding to this research question there are a number of considerations of identity residing within the literature and presented in the following sections. It begins by discussing the initial repertoire of concepts which consumers draw upon when considering self. These top-of-mind ways in which self is defined and which individuals use to present themselves to the world provides an understanding of the resources involved in introspection. It then considers a number of components of the concept of self. As discussed in chapter three Belk (1988) reviews the literature in this area and suggests that there does not appear to be a single agreed definition; rather different studies have identified different factors and hierarchies. This study employs the factors used by Mittal (2006) as constituent of self: values and character, success and competence, bodies, social roles, and subjective traits these he discusses as the components of self 'sans possessions'. The incorporation of consumption and possessions into self is considered later in the chapter and picked up again in answering research question four in chapter seven. While Mittal considers that possessions can be as central an element of self as the other previously identified components Belk (1988) and others, e.g. Ahuvia (2005), in advancing the extended-self, consider that possessions are clearly extended rather than core elements of identity. These perspectives are considered in this section and the findings of this study reflect upon how factors of self are understood within its sample and suggests developments to these extant models. The section also considers other aspects of identity which have again been identified in the literature: the

endurance of identity over the life-course (Giddens, 1991) and the positive and negative dimensions of multiple-self and how these may be managed by individuals (Bannister & Hogg, 2003).

### **6.1.1 Primary presentations of self.**

To begin to answer this research question the primary presentations of self made in the research interviews are considered: the means of informants defining who they are, beginning the narrative, setting the story of themselves. A small range of resources were drawn upon and commonly used in these narratives. Referred to as personal identifying characteristics by Prelinger (1959) and sitting within his hierarchy of self, these resources appear to be well understood by consumers as part of their repertoire of self-understanding and presentation. One's name is an obvious introductory resource, though each of the informants had met me frequently previous to the research, many began their account of themselves with their forename. In the opening discussion of the research interview when I asked simply that informants tell me about themselves, they related very similar responses used a range of classifications to define themselves in the social setting of the interview, considerations such as age, gender, marital status, and presence of children formed the basis of descriptions of self.

*"name is Elaine I'm 30 years of age, I live in Edinburgh I was brought up in Oban on the west coast of Scotland, I work for the government erm I'm married I don't have any children erm"*

Elaine

*"I'm 31 and I'm a nurse. And I work in NHS24. I'm recently separated from a marriage which is good news not sad news. I'm back home with my mum and dad which is interesting"*

Virginia

These accounts, as above in Elaine and Virginia's cases, were typically brief- the way one may introduce oneself within social situations. Even in these short accounts interesting indications of the important things in a person's life were becoming evident. Virginia, for example, recently separated, begins her introduction to herself with this life event and its implications.

Some informants such as John gave longer more detailed and complex answers however the resources drawn upon remained within broad socio-demographic classifications.

*"my name is John, and I am 36. I live in Edinburgh. I'm married to Ivy, who is pregnant with our first child. I'm Scottish, in fact I'm Glaswegian, which is interesting, living in*

*Edinburgh, and um, I went to University in Glasgow but moved from Scotland really quite soon after that, and lived in London for a long time, for ten years or a bit more, and I would say I recently came back to Scotland but in actual fact, I came back three and a half years ago, and it's flown by, so umm, in truth, I haven't recently come back, I came back ages ago. And, I am very much enjoying living in Scotland again, looking forward to beginning a new chapter here in terms of family and so on, and uh, uh, I am now very close to all my friends, which is terrific. Obviously in London, my old life here seemed quite far away. I studied Law at University but never practiced it, really wasn't very good at it. Umm, and eh, since graduating from Uni I have worked in the advertising/marketing professions. Is that professions? Are they professions, or ?”* John

In John's account, place is a particularly important part of his presentation, where he's from where he studied, where he lives now and in the past. This setting of oneself in the social context is perhaps not so deeply considering who am I as much as how do I begin my story of self, how do I situate it with the social context. While recognising these as means of beginning introspection it is essential to recognise that these initial definitions people make of themselves are not the whole of whom they consider themselves to be but one facet or category of self.

The open request to talk about oneself was quite difficult for some informants to respond to, they sought clarification of what sort of things I might like to know about them. This, I would argue, suggests that they are beginning to contemplate the breadth of the subject of self. Tracy for example dealt with the question by asking “*can I come back to that, that's very hard, it depends what kind of context*”. As discussed in previous chapters, if conceptions of self are complex and multi-faceted, it is perhaps unsurprisingly not straightforward for informants to decide how or where to begin their introspection, the choices of which elements to foreground and how well these aid self-definition can be troublesome.

### **6.1.2 Factors of Self.**

As discussed in chapter three defining self or identity is a complex task with many ways of approaching the issue this section considers the factors of self within a multidimensional core-self construction. Belk (1988), in his work on extended-self, reviews the literature which tries to categorise elements of self and considers both internal and external components to be relevant. Mittal (2006:552) outlines six basic components which he suggests can be considered as a “systematic list” of items which may be part of the concept of I and me:

body, values and character, success and competence, social roles, traits and possessions. This research has utilised these factors and found them to be important as the means by which informants construct their identities. Mittal (ibid) argues that the importance of each element to one's sense of self will vary between individuals and indeed may be personal and unique. The following discussion considers these factors and their hierarchical or uniquely defined nature.

### **6.1.2.1 Values, Character & Personality Traits**

In seeking to understand oneself or explain the elements of self which are important, it is recognised by informants that there is a need to go beyond the observable or surface elements of self. To delve into aspects which are internal and underlying. Mittal (2006) suggest two elements of the internal understanding of self which he considers as distinct: subjective personality traits such as considering oneself extrovert or caring; and one's values and character- the desirable goals of life and means of achieving them. The findings of this research suggest that while Mittal (ibid) may seek to separate these strands, they are considered by informant as tied concepts. As such values, character and personality traits are considered as one category of self in this work.

For most informants the desirable goals in life are broadly defined as happiness. This is what they'd wish for themselves, what their parents would wish for them and indeed what they wish for their children. This goal is not particularly well defined as Cameron puts it

*“is so bland as wanting to be happy, then you kind of, it's not, it doesn't manifest itself in your life as a particularly tangible aspiration. You know, you don't embroider it and frame it and put it up so you can touch it every morning and make sure you are getting there. Being happy is a thing that everybody strives for, I think. As it happens, I am happy.”*

In this account there is a recognition that this is not a particularly distinctive goal, that perhaps it is universal to wish to be happy. Some informants such as Madeline, however were able to add some detail to how happiness may manifest itself, to make this broad goal more personal:

*“I think intimacy with people I love is very important to me to be happy, humour is very important cause I think if I didn't laugh I'd be really miserable, people that make me laugh are really important to me.... I'm the sort of person who likes a quieter life so sees friends on a Saturday eat and drink a bit too much that sort of lifestyle that makes me happy.”*

She makes decisions about her social situation, friendships and lifestyle based upon this broad goal of happiness and works towards creating her own happiness. Cameron's account on the contrary considers that happiness isn't something which he considers can be planned nor a simple path plotted towards. For him it is a vaguer concept a state of being more binary; as something which one is or is not.

Considering character and the elements which were drawn upon by informants when considering identity both the I: the actual identity or means by which individuals consider themselves and also the me: their social identity or ways in which they'd wish and consider other's to perceive them, certain desirable characteristics were evident in the data. Fairness, loyalty, kindness, caring and consideration are all elements which were considered important in defining self. In combination they were considered to build towards being a "nice person" and that to be so was a desirable state of being. In Virginia's account she highlights trust as being a central characteristic *"I think I really value trust, so people who I can trust, so I'd like to think that I am a trustworthy person"* She seeks out others whom she considers to be trustworthy as friends, and considers trust to be part of both the way she sees herself and wishes others to see her.

Interestingly the language used to describe one's character was variable across gender: men talking more about being 'decent' and 'straightforward', as William puts it to be a *"decent guy, likes his pint, buys his round..I'm fine with all of that err I'm pretty, relatively, kind of a, pretty straight kind of guy"* whereas the women in the group highlighted ways of being 'nice' and 'considerate' as in Virginia's discussion of trust above. While gender will be discussed more fully in answering research question two there is evidently difference in desirable characteristics and, in this instance at least, it appears that Bern's (1993) suggestion of different scripts from male and female are evident and that there is a degree of gender polarisation.

A small number of informants linked these character elements and values back to a broader social belonging, religion or the dominant ideals in their family group. For example Anna discussed :

*"the kind of Catholic aspect, kind of, permeated through the household to the point where by being good and being kind and being thoughtful um you know just kind of, I guess was*

*just part of the way in which we grew up. So I guess yes and I suppose I would try to live life now as a reflection of that”.*

For most, however, it was about an individual state; the thing which they considered to be important for themselves, and commonly in others too. Virginia’s discussion of trustworthiness, above, demonstrates this.

#### **6.1.2.2 Success & Competence**

This element of identity is linked to conceptions of self-efficacy: to feel competent and successful in some aspects of one’s life. It is largely derived from one’s life experience and indeed Belk (1988:141) in his synthesis of factors of self discusses it as one’s “ideas and experiences”. It proved a rich area for discussing self among the informants of this study, linking to practical aspects such as their occupations as well as more intangible concepts such as their values and for most it proved to be a particularly meaningful aspect of self.

For some informants indeed this element was one of the primary ways in which they described themselves part of their introductory repertoire and focussed upon skill or talent based accomplishment. Michael focuses upon his communication skills as being part of his identity:

*“I think I am a good communicator and I think that, I think I am good at getting on with people. I think it’s quite unusual to have to erm like have done debating and stuff like that I suppose that I’m loquacious generally”*

As discussed within the methodology, this research group consisted of an extended friendship group (see appendix II) many of whom had known each other through University and engaged in University Debating. Perhaps as a consequence being skilled at communicating and speaking publicly was one of the skills which they focussed upon when talking of accomplishment, though they didn’t expressly link this back to their University interest, they did discuss it as skill used in their current lives to achieve broader desirable characteristics such as in Michael’s account above where it contributes towards his ability to make friends and getting along with others.

For some in the group however the content of the accomplishment being considered was less important than an overall ethos of making the most of the skills and talents one has and maximising one’s impact. Scott discussed it as:



*“if it is worth doing it is worth doing properly. And I think that has a lot to do with how we were brought up that you need to, you know as long as you stick in and you need to do it. There is no point in doing it half-heartedly. If you are not keen on doing something then fine but do it to pretend. Do it properly or don't do it at all.”*

This making the most of one's self was a relatively common feeling expressed by the informants and links to both Maslow's (1968) need for self-actualisation and Giddens' (1992) discussion of self as an on-going narrative which one seeks to edit and improve.

The concepts of accomplishment and success were not always being fully achieved or actualised in informants' lives and they didn't necessarily feel universally positive about their achievements. Cameron for example discusses his achievements:

*“kind of wish I was a bit more ambitious I had a bit more kind of drive and sometimes I'm annoyed at myself that I don't have that erm but then I think well I'm doing all right erm I think I'm I'm happy I'm definitely happy erm I think just quite average all round I don't really think there's anything that you'd think oh wow look at that”*

In this account Cameron minimises the importance of this factor of self in his life. This minimisation may be explained in multiple ways: it may be because, for him, it is not particularly important to maximise accomplishment and push to the extent of his ability and potential or it may be a means of dealing with an undesired or negative aspect of his self-identity. This is an issue which will be considered again later in this chapter.

For many the primary means of discussing accomplishment was through career and work. Pam who is a lawyer, working full-time discusses her profession as:

*“I think it just forms part of my identity. I see myself as a professional woman and that is just how I consider myself, and if I didn't have that and I was like, say a stay at home mum, I would feel like a part of myself was missing, because I like going out to achieve things, I like the feeling of fulfilment that you get at the end of a good day and I don't think I personally would get the same satisfaction from say, running a house well.”*

Achievement in this context is comprised of a number of elements: first to be of that profession, Nicholson & Seidman (1995) talk about this as a modernist means of identity where one is what one does, farmer, policeman etc. Postmodernist perspectives (ibid) suggests that as individuals have more varied careers and as professions become less well defined, for example going back to a comment presented earlier by John *“I have worked in the advertising/marketing professions. Is that professions? Are they professions, or ?”*, then

occupation as a means of self becomes less meaningful. The postmodern approach was not particularly strongly evident in this research with most informants feeling profession was important in their identity, however there were the postmodern few who did not consider work to be central or even a particularly important part of their lives, *“It’s important to me because it sustains the, it sustains the lifestyle and I’m used to and want.”*, for William work is a means to an end, a necessity to maintain his lifestyle. It is what he does, to allow him to have what he likes rather than, as for some others, defining who he is.

Within the group there was also a consideration that this sense of achievement was not only solipsistic but part of their social self; the me that one presents externally. Broadly the group wished to be considered capable and respected among colleagues, to be seen to be contributing. Noel, a solicitor, however went further in his discussion:

*“I think work is important, to be doing well, you know doing a good job and feeling that others know that. I think you need to feel like you’re being appreciated and basically promoted or its time to move on”*

For Noel in addition to respect or recognition of others there was also a feeling that that skill and competence should be rewarded in status, whether as position in one’s company or in terms of financial recompense. Therefore it is not sufficient to know one’s own strengths and find ways of demonstrating them it is also important that others recognise this and that requisite reward is associated with success in terms of economic or social advancement (Bourdieu, 1984).

For a fortunate few informants competence is being well integrated in their broader lives. They have a clear understanding of what they consider to be their own skills and believe that these are being employed appropriately in their work lives to help them achieve successful outcomes. Valerie in common with others in the group stresses her communication abilities as one of her main competencies but she discusses how it is particularly central to her job in journalism:

*“I’m good at getting people to talk to me I think I relate to people quite well like strangers and things who have no particular reason to want to talk to me. A part of being a good journalist I’d say is you’ll knock somebody’s door and demand of them a story, it is a certain kind of skill or to get them to tell you that story erm therefore. I’m reasonably good at knowing what the story is and therefore interpreting the information and putting it forward in a manner that people understand”*

Valerie feels quite fortunate in this respect that she has found a job which is suited to her strengths and it was commonly felt to find the correct job, that best suited one's skills was instrumental to happiness.

For a small number of the group their work and accomplishments are driven by their values and personality, this small number considered their job to be a true vocation. This vocation however is driven not by the job itself: there were nurses and doctors in the group, jobs traditionally seen as vocational, who did not link their occupation particularly centrally to their sense of self. Rather vocation is defined by a person's own approach to their work, the most striking example of this within the informants was Ivy who conducts ethical research for a financial services institution. For her what she does is central to her sense of her own ethical identity, her personality and values:

*“oh she's a greeney or, you know, they take the mickey a bit [laughter] ... think yeah, I think probably maybe more than most people, my friends, all my friends know what I do or roughly what I do. Whereas there are lots of people, even my very good friends that I'm not entirely sure what it is they do. And I don't know whether that's because I bang on about it an awful lot or because it's now quite a sexy thing to do and people are more interested in it. But mmm I'm definitely, I definitely would be described as being what it is that I do, I think it defines me a bit more than maybe some other people's jobs define them.”*

For Ivy being successful in this area is important not only because it builds her sense of self but it also bonds her to a wider social movement of environmental activism and positions her legitimately within that group. This issue of neo tribalism and social belonging is picked up again in considering objective two later within this chapter.

### **6.1.2.3 Social Traits**

In the previous sections, when considering personality and values there was a dominant desire to be considered a “nice person”; and when considering success and competence to be performing to one's best and be “good at one's job”. In discussing social traits informants had a similar desire to be well considered in their immediate social settings: that performing their social roles well was a relevant factor within their sense of self. This crossed areas of family, friendship and occupation, which has already been considered to some extent when discussing the issues of success and competence but is now reconsidered.

The importance of doing well in one's work to self-identity has already been explored but some of the group reflected upon a social obligation not only to succeed but to do so in a way which is socially responsibly. Success therefore should not come at any cost but rather one should be a good and responsible part of one's work community. Cameron discusses his social role within the community of solicitors as:

*"I would like to think that most of them (other solicitors) respect me and consider me to be fair and reasonable and erm the sort of person who they can deal with and trust"*

Others within the group discussed colleagues whom they felt did not meet these social standards at work, those who would succeed at any cost, as not being the type of person one wants to be or even to particularly associate with. One respondent, Pam, discussed a tension between her personal desire to be a nice person and maintaining her social role as a solicitor, she recounted that

*"the partners are not at all pleased that I fraternise with the secretaries and I have been pulled up so many times and told to remember that they are just typists. But I cannot have the mentality where I wouldn't speak to someone or I wouldn't treat somebody with respect because they are just a secretary"*

she considers that this doesn't make her less professional or capable but recognises that perhaps by acting outwith professional norms she has damaged her own advancement, a sacrifice she makes to maintain her values.

While the range of social antecedents of self and particularly the importance of friendship and family in developing identity is much more fully discussed in answering research question two the linked issue of displaying a performative dimension in fulfilling one's social roles and the resultant impact upon self is reflected upon here. Considering oneself to be fulfilling a role well is part of being able to identify oneself as holding that position. For those women with children being a good mother was widely discussed, Lisa considered it was particularly important that she fulfil this role because she considered that her own mother had not done.

*"I'm married to Stephen, I've got my own two kids and I can only do what I think best for them and give them what I can see I never had, em and just be you know just show them what a family is all about. The kids are my, my family are my priority.. when I was 15, my mum left for Wales and I was kind of , I was just left to get on with it from the age of 15, so I was kind of left to, I was 15, I was old enough but"*

In Lisa's discussion a mother is not just something one is by virtue of bearing a child but a role one must perform well throughout a child's life, often involving self-sacrifice, in order to legitimately consider it part of one's identity.

The importance of friendship is discussed in the following sections but it was a dominant theme within the group that again friendship requires the individual to perform their expected role. While friendship can often represent particularly close relationships it is not without obligation upon the individual for development and maintenance (Pahl & Spencer, 2010). Virginia talks about the importance of fulfilling this obligation to her sense of identity:

*"I hope that those nearest and dearest to me would say I'm a very good friend, which matters very much to me. Umm, I think I would like people to think I was helpful, and I suppose that is linked very closely to friendship. I would like to think that I am amongst the first people some people would call in a crisis, umm."*

While close friendships were not universally considered important by the group, some of whom focussed more on family or other forms of social belonging, the desire to be considered a good friend was quite widespread. In common with other factors of identity it was not unrelated to the broader values of being a nice person, being trustworthy or helpful and these were often the means by which one fulfilled the role of good friend but it was also performed by more practical actions such as keeping in touch or being there to listen.

#### **6.1.2.4 Body**

Many hierarchies of self (Prelinger, 1959; Ellis, 1985) suggest that one's body sits most centrally to conceptions of self while, as discussed in Chapter 3, Thompson (1990) is less certain how external body appearance contributes to overall self-concept and Mendelson & White (1996) have argued that self is not driven by body image but rather non corporeal elements such as scholastic or social ability. Certainly in this study, body is less spontaneously discussed by informants than other elements of self such as personality. In only two cases was reference made to body image a part of an informant's introductory repertoire in one case (Lisa's) this was a relatively short description where she considers herself to be pretty average *"I think I am reasonably attractive, I'm not overweight not underweight"*

But for the other informant, who introduced herself by considering her body, it was clearly more central to her sense of self and fundamental to how she talked about herself. Valarie

though accomplished in many aspects of her life introduced herself by talked about how she saw herself when looking in the mirror.

*“I like to think of myself as Sarah Harding from girls aloud ( hah hah) But in reality I know I’m like Sarah Kennedy in game for a laugh. (ha ha ha) that is me. I came to that conclusion the other day whilst staring at myself in the mirror. She’s got that kind of wizened old blonde look and that’s kind of where I think I’m headed towards rapidly.”*

Looking glass self as a concept has a long lineage in social sciences (Yeung, et al. 2003) but does not usually refer quite so literally to the face in the mirror. This theory usually considers the “me” that one presents to others, their judgment of that appearance and the amendments one makes to self based upon that evaluation, a flexibility of self. In Valerie’s account of the looking glass, she reflects upon incongruity between her sense of “I” and “me” represented by Sarah Harding & Sarah Kennedy. In discussing body, more than in other factor of self, informants reflected upon the negative dimensions of self, those elements which they’d rather not see and these are discussed within this section. Negative-self is however discussed further, later in this chapter including consideration of the ways in which consumers dealt with undesired self. In Valerie’s case above she uses humour and vibrant imagery to discuss her undesired aging image.

Body was more commonly a prompted area of self, one which was perhaps taken for granted, not considered particularly important and largely a dimension of self where the informants didn’t consider themselves to be particularly distinctive. Many discussed being reasonably attractive or reasonably happy with their appearance rather than being in any extreme state either positive or negative. Madeline, like Valerie, reflected upon the evidence of her body presented in the mirror and said:

*“I think I’m attractive and I know I’m not ugly, I know that for sure cause I’ve been told it and I can see it in the mirror and I also don’t think I’m someone who necessarily turns heads either.”*

This middle of the road nature of appearance and body perhaps it is a dimensions of self which becomes forefront or considered only where it becomes particularly undesirable or cannot adequately perform function.

As discussed within the methodology this research group was aware of the researcher’s interest and study’s focus upon food culture and perhaps as a result when discussing appearance and body image discussions of weight and managing body size were particularly

a feature, though Featherstone (1982) and Harper & Tiggeman (2008) argue that social norms would drive such discussions of body in any case. Particularly, in this study, body was discussed in terms of being unfit rather than overweight and certainly negative language such as “fat” was avoided. Joseph who has a BMI of 32 which would make him, in current medical definitions, obese talks about his body as:

*“Physically I am out of shape and I should be a lot fitter than I am because my wife is quite fit and quite active. And I still play sports and I still play football and stuff but I am over weight and I should weigh a lot less than I do. And that’s yeah I mean it’s kind of I like think I am a kind of acceptable level of overweight rather than being massively physically out of shape. I can still run and go and play football twice a week and I still have a cycle now and again or whatever but you know if I was going to change something about myself I would be more enthusiastic about exercise. I don’t think I’ve got a particularly bad diet or anything I just think that I could probably do with losing some weight so.”*

Again while negative-self will be discussed further in the following section Joseph employs ways of minimising his description of being overweight describing it as acceptable and stressing that his diet isn’t particularly bad. In keeping with Featherstone (1982) however Joseph does feel a responsibility for maintaining his body and discusses his physical activity as a means of achieving this.

Considering their bodies was a particularly troubling issue for some of the women in the group who had small children and so were reflected upon their post-pregnancy body shapes as being distanced from their ideal and the body of their memory. For most of the group, including the men there was a time when they considered their body was at its peak, typically in late teenage or early adulthood. Many talked about how by aging they had become removed from their ideal state of attractiveness, size or fitness. As noted this was particularly true for the mothers in the group Anna discusses it as:

*“I think in terms of um identity and things I think yes even when I was um overweight and proud of having my first child or of being pregnant or having had my children. I think actually everybody has an image in their heads of what they kind of ideally looked like when they were about 18 and I suppose the interesting thing for me is when I look back in pictures when I still thought I looked like that and I clearly didn’t. But clearly I thought I did look like that for a long time.”*

Her ideal body at 18 stands as the physical body she'd aspire to have back. Others reflect that this "other body" they now have has impacted their self-confidence

*"probably erm showing the bloated effects of having two children ... I think I was quite confident in my body shape and everything and now I'm not so at all because clothes that used to fit me before just do not... baby stretched appearance"* Valerie.

While body discussions were largely negative, some could think of relatively small individual elements which they liked in themselves, hands, legs, eyes etc. even if this did not translate into an overall positive image in the mirror. They could also reflect positively upon the peak body of their youth. Despite this there was relatively little desire or intention to enact change. When discussing the ways of changing one's body consumption of food and exercise have a recognised role. Looking again at Valerie, whose concerns about aging and her body have been discussed already in this section, she considers her lack of satisfaction with her body she reflects:

*"I'd like to change in the way I'd like to find time to do exercise erm I've got a Fridge full of salad stuff but when I come in from work I just want something really quick and and Salad is just not what I want and so I end up a week's worth of salad in the fridge until the end of the week it lies and I call for dominos so whilst I want to change and eat better do my exercise I find time constraints just overtake me and I end up slumping into bad habits erm in terms of I mean there's not really much you can do about the effects of ageing unless you consider botox which I would definitely (ha ha)"*

While her dissatisfaction with her appearance may give her good intentions she feels either powerless or lacking motivation or interest to effect a change. Featherstone (1982) argues that consumer culture persuades individuals that with effort they can achieve perfection and that if they fail to do so they must bear the blame. Interestingly when Valerie discusses her own consumption behaviour she imposes value judgements that her current behaviour amounts to bad habits. It may also be worth noting that Valerie is not overweight according to her BMI nor unattractive or particularly aged in the interviewer's view, so it would appear that Abell & Richards' (1996) work which found little link between actual body size and dissatisfaction holds in this case.

### **6.1.3 Negative-Self**

In considering identity most multiple-self theories consider some elements which are undesired or negative dimensions, which the individual rarely shares with others (Bannister



& Hogg, 2003). Though discussing negative self is considered difficult for individuals because they often seek to avoid or minimise these elements, avoidance is not the only means of dealing with a negative self (Maurier & Sobal, 1999) and certainly informants to this study had both a recognition of and willingness to discuss some of the elements of their identities which they consider to be less than desirable. Undesired elements of self extend across the range of self components already considered in the previous sections and indeed as discussed already particularly when considering body the undesired self was perhaps more readily accessible than a positive image. However these negative elements were not necessarily presented neutrally within the narratives. Maurer & Sobal (ibid) discuss of a number of ways in which individuals may deal with negative self, from minimising and avoiding, to resistant identities using flamboyance and activism. For most of the informants in this study negative items were either minimised or mitigated in discussion as either not being particularly important or at least not something which was worthy of change.

Many of the negative discussions around body have already been discussed in the preceding sections when discussing body shape and size but these negative elements were readily accessible to informants who had a wide range of items to dislike about themselves. Scott for example focussed upon hairiness

*“Um, I don’t like I’m quite hairy and I wish I wasn’t quite as hairy as I am. Not that it’s a problem I don’t think it bothers me on a day to day basis but you know. And I’m very, very glad that I don’t have a job which means I don’t have to shave every day because I can’t be arsed doing that.”*

In his discussion while this negative part of self had some troublesome aspects, the need to shave frequently, he minimises the impact of it to his sense of self and impact on his broader life. This was common across most discussions of undesired or negative aspects of the body- while easy to identify they were rarely troubling enough to seek to change as John suggests

*“If I could wave a magic wand and be ten pounds lighter, I would. But the fact is, I could go to a gym and be ten pounds lighter next month, and I’ve never done it, so it’s obviously, it’s never, if we’re talking about magic beans, then okay, I’ll have one, but if you want me to, if I don’t care that much that I’ve done it and it’s easily within my capabilities so to do”*

so while broadly negative in dimension there is also an acceptance of these aspect as forming part of self as much as all the positive dimensions, as Cantor et al (1986) discuss self if understood as multiple, inevitably contains the undesired within.

Not only physical factors are identifiable as being negative, the incorporeal aspects such as personality and social traits may also contain negative dimensions. While these items were less readily discussed and perhaps less readily recognised by informants they were nevertheless evident. William discussing his own personality flaws says:

*“I wish I could say I was becoming more patient as I get older and I’m not. I mean I’m well on the way to becoming a Curmudgeon and I’m only 32, that’s really quite horrible”* though not particularly obvious in the written text, in making this admission William used a combination of defiance and humour to mitigate its impact, he uses “Curmudgeon” a term in keeping with related concepts such as eccentric which carries some degree of affection but remains defiant that while recognising this trait he doesn’t intend any form of change and that rather others must make allowances for this aspect of his personality.

Michael also gives an account which discusses his negative aspects of self, both in terms of underlying personality and the impact that has upon his social traits:

*“I happen to be lazy, the main thing for me is friendship is very situational you know and I’m not very good at keeping in touch with people that I’m not seeing regularly.”*

Michael deals with his negative personality trait which he defines as laziness by varying his whole approach to friendship, he minimises its importance and suggest that friendship has different meaning for him than for others, being based in the immediate present rather than being based upon any obligations for him to maintain its longevity.

#### **6.1.4 Coherence of Identity**

The literature continues to debate whether identity is enduring or fleeting. In the traditional, modernist conceptions identity is largely based in self- narrative, constructed throughout the lifecourse and reflexively understood by a person in terms of her or his biography (Giddens, 1991). Postmodern scholars tend to suggest a fractured identity where there is no need for coherence or endurance of a single identity rather that it is multiple and changing in nature (Firat, 1992). The findings of this research suggest that both conceptions have validity and that individuals themselves can locate upon two continuums of continuity and authenticity.

Not every choice or narrative is loaded with need to fit a single authentic self, but there is recognition by people of where identity fractures and they are able to construct a self which includes these choices and continues to fits together in their own understanding of their self-identity. For some there is a clear strong sense of one self across situation and time for others

this is less coherent. In considering the findings from the study one can address these two distinctive issues within coherence of identity. First informants discussed the endurance of identity over time. Three examples from the informants illustrate how they are able to defining self-endurance and situate themselves within a continuum. Scott situates himself towards the modernist position:

*“I’ve grown up but I don’t think I’ve changed personality I’m probably more open I’m probably less shy now than I was at School and I think University is a very good thing just to get to know people and open up and things but fundamentally the same person”*

He notes that certain elements have changed, shyness, openness but considers that little that he considers to be fundamental to his own understanding of self has shifted. Anna reflects that external factors have caused her to reconsider her sense of self:

*“at the core I am same um and I think, but I think um, I think definitely I have changed. I’ve changed living in a different country in terms of my religion so being an Irish Catholic is very, very different for me than being a Catholic in Scotland –but I find that intriguing is that in many ways life doesn’t alter the older you get.”*

Her conception is not as fixed as Scott’s though she reflects upon a core of identity, an authentic inner self (Giddens, 1992) but she considers that living in a different country has caused a shift in some of her sense of self, particularly her religious identity largely because she considers that to be Roman Catholic in the Republic of Ireland has different meaning than to be so in Scotland though her own practices remain similar, so the cultural script has shifted around her requiring her to adapt (Murray, 2002). In her narrative construction of self she does incorporate this change and reflects that upon most measures her life and identity remain fixed.

Fin sits closest to the postmodern conceptions of self where the individual chooses their identity and constructs it freely through choice and action:

*“I’m a pretty much different person ..you were never this person at school and I said yes I as you just never bothered taking the time to get to know me. I think it was quite Shy when I was younger erm I remember erm I remember having a bit of difficulty, I was a bit of a late developer erm and by the time I got to about twelve I suddenly realized I was reasonably bright and all the friends I had wernae and I had to make a purposeful decision to get myself some bright friends erm and I remember the day I did it I just phoned up this guy, who is my hedge fund mate, and I remember it was quite a quite a difficult thing for me to do but I knew if I didn’t do that I wouldn’t have any mates”*

Fin more than any other informant discusses his emerging identity not as being shaped by external factors of emerging naturally rather he discusses consciously changing one's identity being in charge of one's own destiny and being continually capable of change.

The second issue is that of authenticity of identity. As discussed in chapter three, this is considered by some to be a psychological requirement; self-authenticity, or living and presenting as often as possible one's true self. Schlegel et al (2009) reflect upon the actual self and consider the ability be oneself to perform one's true identity is a key component of well-being. They reflect that the more easily accessible individuals find the actual self-identity the more meaningful they also regard their life. Others (Ahuvia, 2005) consider that through enacted identity, social selves can be adopted in certain situations e.g. the workplace without potentially damaging one's self concept or well-being and Firat & Venhatesh (1995) go further to suggest that there is no authentic self, rather that is it fragmented and multiple.

Again the findings of this research suggest the individuals exist within a spectrum with some considering that they maintain a clear authentic identity across a broad range of social situations while other consider themselves to have distinct parts of their lives which they keep discrete and where different facets of their identity are evident. These are again presented as three examples from the informants which demonstrate the range of approaches.

Pam's approach to maintaining an authentic self which she considers is in keeping with her core values and personality have already been considered in this chapter, discussing her difficulty reconciling self with the social expectations of her at work. In discussing her sense of self she says:

*"I think I am always the same Pam, and I think that that has possibly caused me difficulties at work, because I am the sort of person, I call a spade a spade, I am very open, as I have just said, I'm a bit mad. I've got a wicked sense of humour, I like to laugh, I am quite loud. I treat people as I find them. I think I am very much how you see me is how you get me!"*

While the literature tends to consider acting in keeping with one's actual self to be desirable for health and well-being Pam recognises that it is not universally positive, here again she reflects upon the difficulties it causes her in a work situation by being unable or unwilling to engage in performative identity considered socially appropriate for the situation. Sveningsson & Alvesson (2003) reflected upon the need for a specific workplace identity in keeping with

company culture and that this often requires individuals to engage great effort in creation and maintenance of an appropriate social self.

Joseph's description is reflective of the approach of most of the informants, he says

*“think it's human nature that you've got to be different. In front of my chief executive than I'm going to be in front of my friends or in front of my parents kind of thing but only to a very small extent and that would just be an .... But I think I'm the same person yeah”*

This recognition that there is a core sense of self which remains relatively stable over time but around which different identity hats or personae can be worn (Reed & Bolton, 2005) was common among the group.

William was perhaps the most faceted in his descriptions of his sense of self:

*“Oh I'd hate to say I'm the same whenever you find me but this is manifestly not true. Err I'm very different at work. I'll size my personality so that I'm always terribly attractive. I do have a work persona and it's you know, my interpretation of what professional and dynamic is err and...the political side of me which is obviously a new thing is very different, and, and I've not found that voice yet. The work side of me I've been doing for a long time and has a kind of, it has the authenticity of being practiced at it and a politician side doesn't yet and I'm at my best when I'm practiced. The funny thing that makes me at my best when I'm more of myself. I mean, the closer to home, the me that my parents recognise is probably wildly different from the one my friends recognised and that's probably for the best. Err, it's all recognisably me but you flex different parts of it for different people”*

Not entirely fractured William is, as Murray (2002) suggests, cobbling together a coherent identity within the context of a fragmented society. While his identity is undoubtedly faceted and has distinct parts coming into focus with circumstance he continues to have a clear understanding of how the individual parts still constitute “one William”. He recognises within himself that some of the aspects of identity are performative and uses terms associated with the dramatic: “practicing” and “finding one's voice”. Mittal (2006) has argued that consumption can provide a link between inner identity and performative identity and as such the role of consumption for informants is now discussed.

### 6.1.5 Possessions and consumption

The literature on possessions, consumption and identity is extensively discussed in chapter three, reflecting the range of views upon how consumption is used by contemporary consumers to negotiate modern society. In answering objective four, in the following chapter the ways in which this research group understand their own food culture consumption as part of their identity is further discussed. In this section however a brief consideration is made of the ability of consumption to maintain self. As mentioned earlier in this chapter Belk (1988) reviews the literature on factors of self and concludes that there are elements which he characterises as unextended and extended. Mittal (2006) discusses the unextended-self as “self sans possessions”. Both of these discussions consider that possessions and consumption can be part of self, being external to the individual it is considered that they must be working in a different way to other elements such as body and personality. Mittal (ibid) however suggests that self is a personal mix and that organisation of self may be ordered differently depending upon the individual in his hypothesis possessions while being external are capable of playing a central role in identity and overshadowing every other component. Belk’s (1988:141) discussion of extended-self considers it a more hierarchical concept, with items flowing from most-closely aligned to identity to the least. He suggests, as we’ve discussed in considering factors of self, items such as “body, internal processes, ideas and experiences and those persons places and things to which one feels attached” For him the items to which one feels an attachment are most clearly the extended elements of self.

The findings of this study are more in keeping with Belk (ibid) than Mittal (2006), consumption is important to self but is not discussed, by informants, as occupying a central role such as personality can hold. It is certainly not within the repertoire of resources which informants drew upon to introduce themselves nor to discuss the concept of self. How consumption can become a factor of self in its own right is discussed later in chapter seven when consideration is given to the different aspects of food culture and how these are being understood in relation to identity. Certainly the finding suggest that aspects of food culture do form part of self but this is only accessible when prompted through the interview, to consider consumption practices, then informants can discuss how they are important parts of self but they are not accessible to them by discussing self directly. For example Tracy discusses her vegetarianism and rejection of dairy as being important parts of her identity:

*“I’ve not eaten meat or milk since Chernobyl I just can’t but I like being a proper vegi not just eating chicken and pretending but properly vegi”*

This aspect of self was however only discussed when prompted to consider food it was not included as part of her unprompted discussions of self where aspects such as personality were more dominant :

*“I’d say I’m a worrier about everything really, driving to work will I get killed, and big things too like global warming everything”*

There is however clearly a link between the self through consumption discussion where fear of contamination of milk and meat have been part of Tracy’s decision to adopt a vegetarian identity and her overall discussion of her personality as being worried about a wide range of issues. This second issue of how consumption can be instrumental in maintaining the other factors of self is now discussed (Mittal, *ibid*) Informants to this study were clear that they consumed in ways that were in keeping with the other factors of self functionally and symbolically.

Some of this discussion focussed upon items which serve a functional purpose in maintaining self. Particularly evident when considering the body, informants discussed the things they consumed in order to keep their bodies looking and feeling at their most positive. Valerie for whom, as noted earlier in the discussion, body is a particularly important element of self discusses her consumption thus:

*“I’ve got very dry skin some of them are I mean I don’t feel like they’re making me feel that any younger I still haven’t managed to get my hands on that protect and perfect the boots But I do use anti-aging products. I’m concerned about sun and things so I use sun protect the use things with UV protection. I do, I try to improve my appearance”*

Her consumption of anti-aging creams and sun protection is part of her efforts to maintain her ideal physical self, identified as being present in her late teens and so to preserve the quality of her skin as close to that state as possible.

In Kathy’s case her consumption is more outwardly symbolic (Hogg et al, 2008) she discusses how her dress for work is about external presentation of an appropriate self but it is also instrumental in the success and competence aspect of self:

*“I think I dress appropriately for my work environment, to do well you have to look a certain way, have a fresh ironed blouse and everything we have is very expensive. So it is all Hobbs suits, and everything is co-ordinated and matching and designer handbags and designer shoes”*

Kathy considers that by dressing appropriately for her environment she presents the correct image, as Joy et al, (2010) discuss it the “I-for-other”. Meeting expectations of dress allow her to succeed and her work and skills to be appreciated.

Finally there is evidence of consumption which is congruent with other aspects of self, this idea has already been touched upon when considering Tracy’s account above, but Kleine et al (1993) discuss that in seeking congruence consumers do more than simply communicate appropriate product meanings rather they consider how their consumption contributes to their lived experience. Ivy’s account demonstrates this approach, in her discussion of self Ivy identified herself as a “greenie” an emic use of an etic term. This was evident in her work and she felt was reflective of her values in discussing her consumption practices Ivy maintains congruence.

*“So things like environmental sort of pollution, resource management, how they look after their people and the local communities where they operate, those sorts of things... So I think about those things and make sure I buy things which I know have an ethical dimension”*

In her account Ivy is not concerned with others seeing her ethical consumption behaviour, it is rather an interaction with herself which maintains her values. By seeking ethical purchasing Ivy is engaging in consumption which is transformative (Ahuvia, 2005) the more ethical consumption she engages in the more of a “greenie” she becomes.

## **6.2 What are the relevant structural sources of self and how are these understood?**

Social identity, as briefly discussed with the literature is a critical part of defining of self, one understands self by comparison to others and as discussed earlier in this chapter the people and social structures to which one feels attachment are considered to have the ability to become part of one’s extended-self: being a good mother, good friend etc. A number of social structural elements have been considered in chapter four as potentially impactful as antecedents in the development of self: family, friendship, gender, ethnicity, social class neo-tribes, and cultural norms. This second research question considers how these social antecedents are understood by the research group and which are the most relevant to their conceptions of self. It considers each previously identified social factor beginning with those most closely situated to self : the niche groups (Moisio et al, 2004) and working outwards through social categories to whole society factors. It considers how these are being discussed by informants and understood within their own development of self.



### 6.2.1 Family

There is considerable debate in the literature about which of the niche groups is more influential. Family and friends form the focus of most people's daily interactions and so each is considered to be particularly influential upon one's consumption and also one's sense of identity (Nicholson & Seidman, 1995). Whether family (Assael, 1998) or friends (Pahl, 2000) dominate in this role is widely debated. The findings of this study suggest that both remain influential and that it varies by individual which is the more dominant source. An individual can also determine the overall importance the influence of others is within their life. This can be to such an extent that one becomes almost depersonalised while at the other extreme an individual may consider themselves to be totally self-sufficient (Aron, Aron & Smollan, 1992). One's position upon these matters is unlikely to be fixed across the lifecourse rather fluctuating with circumstance such as marriage, children and ultimately bereavement.

For most of the group in this study family was considered to be the primary social source of self. Definitions of family are however variable and, as Valentine (1999) discusses in her work, this is perhaps driven by the increased range of household structures which now validly constitute family within society. Relatively few of the informants defined 'family' as their own partner and children though most were in a marriage or co-habiting relationship and many had children within their household. Those who did consider this type of family typically situated it within a wider family of their own parents and siblings and reflected upon the important role the whole family played in their lives. Valerie describes her family as:

*"my family is a huge part of my life, massive, it takes up the biggest part of my time I suppose I clearly have two kids and a husband I also have my mum who's on her own with my sister so they are round a lot and they only live five minutes down the road and erm husband's mum and dad"*

More commonly, though this group are in their late twenties and early thirties and lead lives independent of the family they grew up in, their definitions of family remained their own parents & siblings. Elaine who is 29 and married and now lives 120 miles from her parents' home, describes the continuity of her relationship with, what she considers to be, her family:

*"I am close to my mum, I'm very close to my mum erm I am close to my brother but he has you know a wife and a child and another one on the way and he's pretty busy so we*

*don't speak as often as maybe we should but you know we still speak and it's kind of different he's got different commitments now"*

In this account it is clear that Elaine's concept of family is in transition, her brother she considers has moved to a new family of his own, a step which she has still to take and considers herself still to be a close part of this increasingly historic family unit.

Finch (1997), in considering the complexity in defining family, talks about categories of kinship, and the informants to this study were thinking in these terms too. Family, Finch (ibid) suggests, can include 'biological kinship', 'legal kin' (step relationships etc.) and 'fictive kin'. For most of the informants biological kinship was the focus of their accounts of family as Elaine's account above shows. While a large number of the informants had grown up in traditional nuclear families there were examples of divorce and re-marriage and so legal kin becoming subsumed into family. Tracy describes her family situation:

*"My mum and dad are divorced a long time ago so my sister & I live with my mum & Kevin (stepfather), he's been around a long time. My dad is in the States and I've got a baby sister who's 10 now. I used to see them every summer but that's not so practical now and now my dad is getting divorced again so I don't know how that will work with that bit of family, so yeah I guess pretty complicated"*

In this account Tracey considers that her family changes because of the actions of others rather than being under her control, her mother & father's decisions to divorce and remarry reconstitute the meaning of family and who is included within its definitions.

One informant in the group, Margaret, demonstrated, in her account the complexity of defining family. Her family situation is particularly complex, adopted by one family during early childhood, she has contact with her biological family in adulthood and describes these relationships.

*"Our family is me & Scott (co-habiting partner), then of course there's my family, but, it's you know. I grew up with adopted parents and two brothers who were their only children. So I came into this kind of fully formed family already and I was very, just very different from them and so was kind of aware of the differences em but yeah I do consider them to be my family. But then I also have contact with my birth father and his partner and uum you know although he considers me to be his daughter, which technically I am I don't. I don't perceive him as my father, though he's still family. Because we've kind of worked at and got a relationship and he's a nice guy. Em, but then I also have family, I have a half-*

*sister who's 17 er through him, who I've met a couple of times, but I'm not in contact with. I'd still consider her family and I also have a em brother who was a year younger than me who was from both same parents. But he was given up for adoption as a baby and I've never met him. I made contact with him once in a letter and I just never really pursued it beyond that but I still would consider that Family despite the fact that you know I've never, I've never met him and I don't know if I ever will but, so I think family's kind of what you what you decide it is. Rather than yeah it's kind of what you allow to be your family rather than, but I yeah I don't know, because that's different from how a lot of other people feel."*

Margaret has almost all of Finch's categories of kinship: legal kin because of her adoption and biological family in a variety of forms, father, half siblings and full siblings. She also discusses her co-habiting partner as her primary category of family and some would consider that this is fictive or situational kin with no legal or biological relationship binding them together. Weeks et al (2010) talk about this complexity in family as meaning that it is not something which is objectively known but rather which is subjectively constructed. Margaret constructs family in this way, while she is quite inclusive of all the members of her family, she does hint at the different meanings and relationships contained within; her biological father considers himself her father which she doesn't while still recognising him as family. She introduces the concept of family of choice (Weeks et al, *ibid*) the people you allow to be family. As discussed in chapter four this concept has been researched particularly within homosexual partnerships which until relatively recently had no legal kin recognition yet these relationships strongly constitute family for their members.

Family of choice is not however only the domain of complex or unrecognised family structures. Virginia who was brought up in a simpler family structure, the typical nuclear family of two parents married and living together and one sibling, also discusses this concept of family of choice in defining her family:

*"obviously my immediate family, we are really quite close my mum's family. We are very close obviously to my dad's side like his brother that died, we are very close to that side of the family but um the rest of them ... we don't have anything to do with so. But my mum's family are all very close and they are all very helpful and concerned about everybody and you could turn up at anybody's door so. My friends are just as important to me certain one's like Siobhan who is in my mum's house more often than I am to be hone'st. Do you*

*know these people are very important and I don't make any difference between them and they're my family too"*

Virginia has two unusual aspects to her discussion of family. First she includes extended family of aunts and uncles as being a close and meaningful part of her concept of family, this is unique in the group who largely considered these elements to be distant. Second she introduces close friends into her definition of family and considers that she makes no distinction between the two. This is particularly uncommon, with most in the group, while considering that both can be influential and important, still considering them to be conceptually different.

While family can be varied in meaning, it is considered by most informants to be particularly influential in shaping the components of one's identity. As discussed under the previous research question when considering endurance of identity, early development and childhood is considered, by most, to be when self-identity emerges and that it is within the environment of the family that formative experiences and ideas are experienced. This is in keeping with the literature which considers family to be the primary socialisation vehicle and means of learned behaviour (Charles & Kerr, 1988). The influence of family upon identity extends across the factors of self previously discussed under objective one.

William discusses in his account the enduring impact of family upon his values & personality:

*"the values you were brought up with err do stay with you so that, that's really important ..values but a moral compass err because my, my, moral compass works is pretty established ... I don't, I don't have clashes of conscious err I know the right thing is to do it, I know the wrong things to do."*

The values of childhood are considered to be so influential that in adulthood he can be certain of his moral position without needing to consciously evaluate or consider the situation. For him the socialisation with the family has made his values so entrenched that his adult life is easier as a consequence. A role that Moore et al (2002) have previously considered that family can play by making behavioural expectations clear.

As discussed in the previous objective, for many of the informants success and competence was clearly an important factor in identity. Most were clear that this had become important to

them because it had been important to their parents as an aspiration for their children. Anna describes it as:

*“I think achievement was definitely kind of something that ran through our childhood but without any kind of um I suppose it was just, it just kind of permeated every aspect of what we did as opposed to the fact that it was kind of thrust upon us and I think out of respect for our parents it’s important to us”*

Most stressed that they didn’t consider themselves pushed by their parents rather that their families acted as sources of support in achieving their goals. Many talking about doing one’s best as just being the way things were done in their families, a sort of family culture such as many commercial organisations may aim to have.

Family was also considered to have direct impact, over which the individual has little control. When discussing body for example, while clearly a factor of self, there was a recognition of being genetically and physiologically similar to previous generations. Fin discusses his body by saying:

*“I’ve got a terrible body shape for my future heart health erm because the O’Neill’s have got sparrow like legs a very small arse and any weight they put on is all in their mid-drift and in their chest which is extremely bad for your heart health apparently erm so I’d say I’m quite curiously shaped erm and that best suits my being thin”*

In this account Fin recognises the elements which are outwith his control such as carrying weight around his centre. He has made conscious choices, as an adult, of how to respond to this physiology. He considers that it is most appropriate to maintain a low body weight both for his health and his appearance and links these choices to his genetic lineage.

In the body, familial influence was considered not only from those physically inherited characteristics but also from the attitudes of parents towards their own sense of self in these respects. Pam talks about her mother’s approach to her own body and her monitoring of Pam against her ideals:

*“My mum is a bit weird about weight and things she’s always dieting really and I don’t know she’s kind of on my case a bit. I guess growing up I kind of felt fat cause she was weighing me and looking at my weight and thinking about her own weight. I look back now and think I really wasn’t fat at all.. so yes that’s not really helped me have the best attitudes to food sometimes.. not weird weird or anything but I always pretty much feel I could lose weight even when I’m fine”*

In this discussion it is clear that parental influence is not considered universally positive it can be contributory to negative aspects of self. Though Pam recognises that her mother's attitudes and consequently her own are not "normal" she is unable to disregard the influence and discusses how enduring feelings of being overweight remain in her adult self.

Childers & Rao (1992) discuss parents particularly as being instrumental in the development of values and attitudes and this influence is evident among the research group in this study. The final aspect of personality that is considered is the development of social traits, this is particularly discussed by the informants as being driven by their early socialisation. Stephen discusses it as:

*"things that my parents instilled in me certainly it's that thing of treat your neighbour the way you'd like to be treated yourself my parent very much instilled that in me and I think i do think that's really important and it goes wider to the fact that you know you treat people with respect on the street you say your please and thank you, that sort of thing and I think, yeah that's come from my upbringing definitely".*

One's attitude towards others and one's roles and position within society are discussed as being driven by one's family attitude to such matters and setting the right expectations of appropriate social behaviour.

While most informants discussed family influence as being most evident within childhood and during the early formation of identity they also recognised that family remains the most influential social factor into adulthood. This can be as a source of advice or reflecting what parents would think of decisions, Stephen talks about them as being like a *"little voice in your head, you just kind of know what they'd think and so you'd take account of that"* As a source of influence upon adult identity informants partners were also considered to be increasingly influential, this was true across genders. Lisa for example talks about her husband's impact upon her identity:

*"he is very influential. Yes. I mean, he's had a big part to play in me as an adult and sort of making me a lot more responsible and sensible. I was very different before and now I do think about what he'd do or think and try to consider that, it's very concrete and feel that he believes in me and that gives me confidence"*

For Lisa her husband has taken over the role of her parents as being part of her internal dialogue and for many of the other informants partners had certainly joined parents as being influential upon decisions and attitudes. For a small number like Lisa, parents as a source of

influence had waned into adulthood. Cameron discusses this as being driven by difference in life experience:

*“I don’t go to my mum and dad for advice ever about anything now and the reality is that I live in a world that they wouldn’t understand err you know they were err both brought up in Glasgow both taught all their lives and raised a family and that’s all terrific stuff but it’s not, it’s a world alien to the one I live in. So you know simply my life and work it’s not something my dad can really advise on,”*

This diminution of parental influence is an example of Fieldhouse’s (1986) discussion of socialisation where external factors become more dominant sources of self. This issue will be discussed further when considering the role of friendship in the following section. Family however, as variously self-constituted in this section, but to include parents and partner in most cases, continues to have an enduring impact for the majority of informants which confirms Assael’s (1998) proposal that family remains the most important influence upon an individual’s self throughout the lifecourse.

Moore et al (2002) suggest that intergenerational influence is bi-directional and that children can exert influence upon the attitudes of parents well into their own adulthood. There was relatively little evidence of this within this study, this is not to suggest that such influence isn’t possible rather it is likely to be as a consequence of the children in informants households being relatively young at the time of research. As will be further discussed in considering research question three while it difficult to find evidence of personality or attitudinal influence of children over their parents there is clear discussion of changed consumption habits and practices to meet children’s needs. As discussed previously in answering research question one, the addition of children to a household creates an additional social identity for individuals, as mothers or fathers, which carries with it new roles and responsibilities. Cameron discusses the addition of children to his family and its impact upon his identity:

*“suppose it’s definitely helped to mould I guess a kind of a more middle aged me in terms of I guess definitely kind of um approaching the next stage of our lives which is kind of with children and that kind of stuff with a degree more responsibly”.*

They are definitional of his lifestage and the person he considers himself to be in this stage – his “middle aged me”.

The preceding discussions have considered that familial influence is ordinarily such that the generations developed shared beliefs and attitudes. However there was a recognition among informants of, what Moore et al (2002) discuss as, the unpredictability in the direction of influence. A small number of the group considered that some aspects of parental influence can lead one to rebellion and holding quite different attitudes or views. Madeline discusses her own situation as:

*“my parents I have some connection. Growing up I had quite a bad time with getting on with them though especially my mum. We fought terribly even in my early twenties and we were just worst enemies and I know now that I just don’t think the way she does or want the same things in life. That’s made it easier I don’t need to rebel any more I just accept we’re different.”*

Other informants talk not so much of feeling that they rebelled from their parents but that there are areas which shouldn’t be subject to their influence and boundaries which should be respected. Pam discusses this in her relationship with her mother:

*“we just understand each other quite well, we know where each other’s boundaries are, we know not to step over some of them and we’re quite respectful of each other, I think that’s fair to say. If she ever said to me, I don’t like your husband, I would think then tough shit. You know, so and if she said I don’t think you should live there, or I think you should move to a bigger house or a smaller house, or I don’t think you should have a sports car, then I would just say, well, it’s none of your business”.*

This is a recognition that while family can be of considerable influence there is, as Aron, Aron & Norman (2004) define, still limits which an individual sets upon the degree to which others can be included in one’s sense of self. While different for each individual this limitation is considered essential by informants to maintain a sense of self since where self-identity becomes too socially dependent, even among family, then one loses oneself in others. The inclusion of others into self is not limited to family but may include other close individuals, friendship is a means of such close relationships being theorised and its influence is discussed in the following section.

### **6.2.2 Friendship**

As discussed in chapter four friendship is considered in the literature to be increasingly important in contemporary society as traditional structures are considered to be losing their strength (Pahl & Spencer, 2004). An ability to form friends appears to be an important element in defining one’s self, through friendship others are permitted to access our private



lives and become influential upon decisions and identity (Hartup, 1996). Friendship is regarded by informants to this study as being important, and all consider themselves to be skilled in forming friendships. The importance of friendship is however rather taken for granted, while all agreed that having good friends is an important element of life it was difficult for them to articulate why. The importance of friendship is therefore a relatively vague concept. Tracy discusses it as:

*“Friends are very important em I don’t although I don’t know, I can’t I think of examples of why. I’ve probably got more friends than I think I have. I’ve got really, really good friends. My friends are fantastic em, because I could really count on them”*

The idea of reliability and “counting on” friends “being there for you” was recurring in discussing their importance, though most informants recognised that they very rarely put that to the test.

*“I would say I don’t place any demands on anyone to be hone’st. I just wouldn’t like to be that type of person that demanded so I think now they know that if I did phone them I’m not phoning for nothing.”*

There is a consideration of different levels of friendship which Calhoun (1991) argues represents a dense and multiplicitous network with varying degrees of commitment, belonging and communication. While informants had their own individual means of categorised friendship, there was across a number of accounts a distinction between friends and acquaintances. Kathy categorised her friends thus:

*“I think about friends as sort of primary and secondary and tertiary and primary friends would be you’re kind of close buddies that you see a lot your second friends you still see a lot but you wouldn’t necessarily tell them all your ups and downs and your tertiary friends you’re quite happily spend an evening with them but you wouldn’t necessarily go out of your way to.”*

Close friends such as in Kathy’s primary friends are qualitatively more important. Pam talks about her friends as:

*“I have a few very close friends, a friend who I have known for years who sometimes I don’t speak to for ages, but when I meet them it is just like picking up where we left off. I’ve got a couple of very, very close friends who I see all the time”*

Within even her good friends Pam makes distinction similar to Kathy’s primary friends of a qualitatively superior group of “very, very close friends”. There is consideration that these are people seen frequently and embedded in one’s daily life. ‘Good friends’ are not so easily

defined they depend not upon frequency of contact but a more complex construction of strength of relationship, length of relationship and other less definable characteristics such as the “ability to pick up where we left off” this characteristic was often repeated amongst informants as marking quality of friendship.

Since the research group for this study consisted of an established friendship group, in discussing friendship, informants were often reflecting upon their relationships with others in the study. Many considered demonstrative of a good group of friends, that it is relatively fixed. Like Turner & Tajfel’s (1986) conceptions of social identity when the in-group is formed it is particularly difficult for outsiders to join since members tend to exclude other who are not “us”. Anna talks about this in her relationships within the group

*“I have a wonderful extended group of friends and I don’t seek to make more friends kind of, I’m happy so I suppose I don’t go out of my way to make friends. So I’ve got lots of acquaintances probably since my 20s and lots of great work colleagues and things but I think um I think I’m probably actually I’m quite self-sufficient and don’t feel the need to develop deeper friendships with new people as much”.*

The informants reflected that this relatively fixed nature of friendship is not common throughout life and that at earlier stages they had been more willing to meet new people and form new friendships but that as one ages there is a reluctance to seek new friends. The qualitatively lesser category of acquaintances is however continually evolving but informants were unclear on how and if people can move from being an acquaintance to a friend and whether this was even a desirable change.

Most discussion of quality friendships suggested them to be relatively free of effort and able to maintain at distance spatially or temporally as in Tracy’s account above. There was however a recognition of the reciprocity in effort required by others. Valerie describes this effort:

*“I’ve got friends that I would consider much more hard work than any other friends and then you do have to question whether it’s worth the effort because it can be really quite arduous erm but I do it anyway because they’re the one’s who’d do the same for you. I wouldn’t do all the chasing that’s too desperate.”*

In this discussion she alludes to some unwritten rules of friendship that effort should be recognised and considered worthwhile for friendship to endure. Friendship was considered to

be distinct from family in that friendship can be broken by failure to obey the rules whereas family will endure any difficulty. Pam says:

*“no matter how badly I fuck up anything in this world, there is nothing I could do that would stop them (family) from loving me and being there for me. Which is a different kind of relationship from the one that I have with friends, because I know that there’s a multitude of things I could do, in everyone’s friendships that would bring them to an end”*

Whether friends could be influential upon one’s life or identity was a polarising issue for the informants. For some friends, while important, were not considered influential upon their individual identity and they reflected that such dependant friendships were the reserve of an early stage of development, through teenage years rather than in adult friendship, as Noel discusses:

*“we’re wildly self-sufficient people so I don’t tend to have friends to ask about thing in my life or what I should do, we don’t cry on each other’s shoulder we don’t tend to do that. When you’re younger, like a teenager then what your friends think is really important and falling out is the end of the world but not now we do our own things.”*

For others however friends were considered to be a great source of influence, advice and support and able to impact their identity. Fin discusses how friends have been instrumental in shaping his identity:

*“I would describe my friends as being a big source of influence in my life definitely, I’ve got a friend Mark and he was on at me to come back up and to be a lawyer and at one point in my life that’s just not that was the last thing I was going to do. I’m not saying he totally responsible for it but certainly he was a there saying this is what you should do as opposed to going off and being the manager of a company in Norwich”*

For Fin his identity as a lawyer is a relevant factor of his success and competence and while he recognises that his achievement is driven by his own effort he suggests friends like family can guide one’s choices and values.

Allan (1998) argues that friendship is socially structured and that one tends to have friends who are socially similar. The group again diverge in their opinions upon this issue while they recognise that there is a homogeny to their social categorisations as Michael describes it:

*“I’m not going to pretend I straddle all boundaries”* they consider that within these broad social confines friends may be like minded or quite different.

John talks about how he values the diversity in his friends:

*“They are a very varied group of friends, and I’ve moved around a bit, I lived in another country, so my friends geographically are quite spread out. They’re all great people, and I think they’re all wonderful in their diversity they do share some things I suppose it would be very hard to be friends with people who didn’t share your broad world view, but otherwise they’re quite different and some are quite mad”*

Recognising some similarity he discusses that as being only at broad levels with little commonality of specific personality or characteristics. William goes further and says:

*I’ve got ten or eleven friends that are actually very important to me but it’s funny they’re so different I have very close friend whose fiercely private which is kind of weird. Some friends kind of like to show off a little bit. Some are quite funny and like to argue and stuff and others are sort of socially awkward ... it’s just that interesting dynamic to it and you know.*

For him there is very little other than their friendship which unites these people with commonality. The rest of the group however consider that friends should be similar to get along Lisa talks about this as not only sharing views or personality but of having shared experience:

*“This is quite a transitional period so friendships ebb and flow, everybody is at in their own lifestyle. So friends of mine who are still single um you know the chat is different the kind of the interaction is different. Friends of mine who have had babies they tend to be closer now because we’ve got that in common and we’re sharing that bit of our lives. I think you need to share things otherwise you lose closeness”*

As discussed earlier individuals varied on whether family or friendships were the dominant relationships in their lives. There was evidence of a shift in attitude across lifestage for those who had children in their household family had become the primary social influence over friendship even if those relationships had previously been particularly meaningful:

*“I guess when you have babies it all just gets too busy, I’ve got good friends who I used to see and call lots and we were really close but we’ve all got other things. Your own family becomes the most important and it’s just you know that’s where your focus is”*

The literature suggest that in addition to friendship a means of understanding close relationships is in the form of neo-tribes and brand communities (Maffesoli,2007), though not focal to this study these relationships are now briefly considered.

### 6.2.3 Neo-Tribes

Maffesoli (2007) and others have discussed that loosening of traditional structures in society have caused individuals to seek their own means of belong and that they are increasingly doing so through shared consumption practices, Shouten & McAlexander (1995) discuss these as brand communities. The research group from this study however was drawn from a friendship group which had grown through shared interest and experience rather than being focussed around any particular consumption driven element, though arguably their shared debating could be considered a consumption of experience, like a love of the arts (Gainer, 1995). The data was also collected before the relatively recent explosion in mainstream usage of social networking and its corresponding reach and impact in association with neo-tribalism (Mitchell & Imrie, 2011). Brand community was equally not the focus of the work being undertaken in this research so it wasn't part of the prompting within the research interview. That said the informants did not spontaneously identify themselves strongly with brands or communities of consumption. Even where individuals did feel some loyalty and attachment towards a brand, see research question four for a discussion of Michael's Branson Beans affection, these considerations were confined to individual preference rather than seeking others who shared a passion for such elements. There is some discussion of this under research question four, which considers that celebrity chefs can have a philosophy towards food and eating which is appealing to individuals and which they seek to follow. Michael again is dominant in his opinions on such issues and he says:

*"I like him (Nigel Slater) and his approach to that and I suppose lots of people have cottoned on to that and now he's quite instrumental in that whole movement of just eat something simple but you know make it a good ingredient and again for me I think that was a significant"*

Michael considers that Nigel Slater leads a movement towards food which he feels part of and he is engaged in consumption which is in keeping with the philosophy he associates with it. His participation doesn't extend to seeking to become in any way an active part of a community and engaging with others of a similar view. His belonging rather is passively felt. This perhaps identifies him as devotee of this tribe (Cova & Cova, 2002) this form of membership is typified by passion and knowledge but relatively little engagement with their fellow followers.

This brief discussion of neo-tribe concludes discussion of niche groups and as such the next of Warde's (1997) forms of shared taste and social belonging are discussed; the social

categorisations. These include the social groupings argued to be objectively measurable (Doi, 2002) and self-evident distinctions within society (Doi, 2002). The following section questions the objective nature of these classifications and reflects upon the informants' interpretations of such terms. It considers ethnicity, gender and social class as dominant examples of such distinguishers.

#### **6.2.4 Gender**

Social categorisations are considered in the literature to be both objective means of ordering society and also resources which individuals can draw upon and use subjectively in their own identity construction. The first of these to be considered in this section is gender, specifically a concept in the literature which tries to embrace both objective biological difference of sex and the socially different experience this may bring (Pilcher & Whelehan, 2004). When considering gender the literature tends to reflect upon the experience of women, as men remain the dominant gender in most societies (Hogg & Garrow, 2003). It is often difficult in the literature to distinguish between the role of female gender and the impact of the resulting social positions of wife and mother and this too was an issue for informants of this study and their discussions of being a woman were often tied to enacting socially feminine roles. Pam for talks about how she considers her role of wife as part of her feminine identity

*“sometimes I like to be quite feminine with my husband, and you know, cook him a meal sometimes, you make the effort and go out, and get stuff, and just be girly inside the house..”*

In this account her gender is both biological and performative, she feels feminine and girly when engaged in traditionally female activities.

Elaine, a female, married informant reflects upon the differences inherent in gender that do not require a consciously performative dimension. She reflects upon her own gender thus:

*“women will have very different lives from men and even though I don't have children now I think well if I have children in the future how will that change my life and how will that change my responsibilities how will that change my work and women have different life patterns in that way”*

In this account she highlights her expectations about the difference in experience and responsibility that men and women continue to have in society and she reflects a gender polarisation (Bern, 1993): that men and women have experiences which are mutually exclusive. She also reflects upon, what Bettany et al (2010) discuss as, the enduring structural

inequalities of gender: that as a women having children in the future will impact on her employment and power. For most informants however discussing gender as an overall concept was relatively difficult. They could reflect on the experiences of being gendered: to be man or woman, masculine and feminine but found it much more difficult to engage with the broader categorisation of gender. Valerie says:

*“Things like class and gender is never anything I’ve ever thought about with regards to myself or anybody else for that matter.”*

To discuss being a women in terms of gender was to abstract it from lived experience, and so it became distant and ambiguous. This is in keeping with Nicholson’s (1995) view that focussing on gender can act as a barrier to understanding women.

Men continue to be considered the dominant social group, and most of the male informants in this group also believed themselves to be so, Noel for example says: *“I’m glad I’m a man I suppose it just makes it easier no-one’s prejudiced against me or holds me back”*. For some this meant that they felt that gender didn’t really apply to them, like Valerie above it had little impact upon their lives. Yinger (1994) in writing about ethnicity, argues that it becomes evident only when one is outside the dominant group and this may also be true of gender, though not for Valerie. For others gender is “just there”, as Degher & Hughes (1999) argue, a self-evident form of classification which require little further examination or reflection.

William talking about his male identity says:

*“It’s just there and you know people who act very masculine are always frauds and normally can be seen through. In fact, macho posturing is really quite annoying.”*

While he is clear about his category of belonging, like most of the men in the group it required no further performative element.

For women, in contrast, gender, when discussed as being a woman rather than an abstract categorisation, was intrinsic to identity and they linked concepts of being a woman to femininity and also, quite commonly, ‘girliness’ as a set of related concepts. These embraced elements of body image and also considered consumption of items which can be instrumental to maintaining a feminine identity. Lisa says:

*“I think that is important to you as a woman that you want to feel and look attractive particularly if you’re going out of an evening you want to sort of put your face on and do your hair and everything so that people think oh that’s really oh you know you’ve made an effort and you’re looking well and that is important to me”*

In Lisa's account there is both evidence of social expectation and creating a desirable social self, she wants people to think that she's made an effort but there is also identity work here which is more self-focussed, it is important to feel attractive internally as well as presenting an appropriate outward image.

Other informants talked about their gender as a source of social belonging, wanting to be in an in-group with other women and defining themselves within that belonging: Valerie talks about this and says:

*"I'm quite a girly girl erm I like girly things and I like women erm I like being round women and talking and yeah and I appreciate feminine things I would spend money on hand bags and shoes".*

Her sense of being a 'girly, girl' positions her gender, when discussed in appropriate terms, as quite central to her identity. Her social belonging within a group of likeminded women who talk about similar things and engaging in consumption activity to support this give her a clear means of defining her own identity and positioning it socially.

Only one of the women, in the group, considered feminism to be part of her female identity, Margaret said *"I consider myself sort of feminist in certain issues. Yeah. I'm a feminist, I guess I'm yeah,"* while being quite distinctive in the group in defining herself this way it was difficult for her to access a deeper explanation of what feminism meant to her. She discussed it as sitting in opposition to being feminine, to being one of the 'girly, girls' of Valerie's group, so Margaret says:

*"In all my comprehension, I think I'm quite often well what's perceived to be masculine in my approach to things. I've two brothers, so mucked around a lot, was quite tomboyish and I still er I don't think I'm, if there's a feminine scale I don't think I'm up there with the Number Ten's."*

So in this only self-categorisation as feminist, it is considered to be quite a masculine approach to being female, perhaps to minimise the importance of gender within identity construction rather than relish it and seek social belonging through it. This is a definition of feminism taken up by the only other respondent to discuss the concept, Madeline rejects the term entirely in her discussion of gender as carrying meaning which takes one beyond seeking equality or appreciating their difference towards, what she considers to be a negative way of considering women:



*"Feminist is kind of the aggressive version of appreciating women and kind of realising how great women are but in a male way and I don't understand. Do you know what I mean? So no not a feminist although I do believe in equality and all that stuff but I don't want to go that route of being classified as feminist."*

While in agreement with Margaret that feminism sits in opposition to femininity and is rather a masculine concept she rejects categorisation under its auspices because of these associations despite defining her beliefs in equality being consistent with it. For the remainder of the group feminism was not considered a feature of their discussions of gender or sense of self as a woman.

### **6.2.5 Ethnicity**

While some theorists consider gender to be self-evident and the findings of this study would confirm this in many cases, ethnicity, as discussed in chapter three, is not widely considered to be a self-evident phenomenon, Rattansi (2004) considering that it is a term around which there is little agreement. Ethnic identity is considered to be most obvious when it is relational, meaningful only when two or more different ethnic groups intersect (Phinney, 1990) and Yinger (1994) argues that ethnic identity is not open to everyone, that ethnicity and minority are inextricably linked.

These conceptions make accessing ethnicity within the friendship group being studied particularly difficult, as Allan (1998) discusses friendship is socially structured bound by environment in which it is enacted. While, as discussed above, the group themselves diverge in their assessment of their heterogeneity, using objective markers such as skin colour, nationality and language (Keefe & Padilla, 1987) they are largely ethnically homogenous: white skinned, English speaking and mainly of British and Irish descent. In their accounts they consider that, in the main, they live relatively ethnically homogenous lives, with many white friends from the British Isles: Michael reflects this in his narrative: *"I'm not going to pretend that I have a huge number of friends from ethnic minorities, you know, but that's not because I don't want to have, you know, but I'm not pretending that I straddle all boundaries"* considering that this is driven not by preference but by circumstance that he lives within a relatively bounded environment of social similarity.

While not necessarily using the terms of ethnicity, the group did feel that within their broad similarity there was evidence of difference deriving from nationality, regionality and locality, which James (1997) discusses as being reflective of distinctive cultural heritage, and the

informants discussed their own identity against these aspect. Conceptions of ethnicity that suggest it is more important in minority were discussed by a small number of the group who considered that at periods of their lives they had lived outwith their dominant culture. Anna who was born in Cork but now lives in the suburbs of Edinburgh discusses her identity: *“definitely I think Irish. I mean Irish living abroad in a sense, therefore I think I definitely feel more Irish in ways. I definitely still view myself as Irish and I view that as something which is important for our kids to have kind of in a sense of an insight in to”*. She discusses her nationality as important because of her feeling of minority and of nostalgia. It defines not only how she considers herself but also acts as a cultural heritage which she seeks to preserve for her own children. Jamal (1998) has discussed this desire to preserve cultural heritage across the generations when one feels in a minority culture. Madeline’s identity is as a second generation migrant, though she recognises that her mother hasn’t moved geographically very far- from Northern France to Devon, she considers the identity her Mother’s French nationality gives to be important: *“it’s where I come from and I suppose where I fit in society, so being half French and half English too is actually quite an important part of my history and I’m quite proud of the fact that I have a mixed nationality”*. This use of nationality as a means of distinction, defining for oneself the unique mix which contributes to self was important to Madeline.

The majority of the group were white and Scottish, and living in Scotland, there was evidence of pride in this nationality: Pam says simply: *“I’m quite proud to be Scottish”* which reflects back upon James’ (1997) discussion of distinctive cultural heritages within the UK, that many national or regional groups consider themselves to be in the minority because of the amount of local variability in identity. Some of the informants to this study for example talked about being proud also to be from their city of origin as distinctive from others. Fin says *“I like being from Glasgow and living here, it will always feel like home, and when you live away being Glaswegian has advantages, people always think you’re quite hard”* for him his locality was as important an element of his identity while in his home environment as when in a minority, this sits in contrast to much of the literature on ethnicity.

### **6.2.6 Social Class**

As reflected in the literature social class is a construct which seeks to segment and stratify people in society, reflecting not only their economic resources but also their ways of living (Weber, 1978[1925]). Again as discussed in previous sections the research group within this study were chosen because of their relative homogeneity and as explained in chapter five

were selected to be middle class, because so much of the previous work on food consumption had focussed upon disadvantaged groups and their lack of a range of resources, and this study's focus was upon working with those with relatively few economic or knowledge resource restrictions. It was interesting therefore to understand how accessible conceptions of class were to this group since rather like when considering ethnicity and gender for men the middle class is considered to be the socially dominant group in society. Theory (Wright, 2007) suggested that this should make reflecting upon their own social position difficult and for some this proved to be the case. Scott discusses this position of being in the majority in society:

*“there's nothing to define yourself against err you know it's very white Scottish and overwhelmingly Protestant middle class where I grew up so I don't have a sense of I am different or special... just never really made my radar at all”*

Being surrounded by similarity made social categorisations including, ethnicity and class background issues, which are not consciously considered nor impactful upon subjective definitions of self.

Fin considers that while he doesn't find class particularly personally meaningful, he recognises the objective impact these factors can have by saying:

*“you are a product of all these things and um, you know, statistics show that I'm less likely to go to jail, and less likely to die of a heart attack, um, more likely to go to University, more likely to have had a paid job, some of that is just because I'm brilliant, but some of it is because I'm white middle class”.*

This enduring impact of difference in life outcomes is an example of the enduring nature of Weberian ((1978[1825])) interpretations of class which consider that status divisions continue to comprise the causal determinants of life chances, class being reflective of resource driven constraints inherent in these situations ( Scott, 2010).

With traditional social structures declining and more focus in western society upon the individual, class is no longer a meaningful means of distinguishing people, rather it is based in outmoded conceptions of economic and social status and within this research group too there was an overall lack of engagement with the conceptions of class. While it was understood that there was economic difference between people defining oneself into a particular social class was often difficult, Madeline for example tries to define her own position:

*“It’s true that class is much vaguer now, which class you fit in I’d like to think that I have a bit of class that I come from a background that has some class I don’t actually know what class I am erm possibly my dad used to say we’re working middle class erm if that makes sense but I think there a sort of an element of being sort of proud that you’re that and again grateful that I’m not properly council flat working class and I hate the fact I’m saying that but again I’m lucky that I was born into a family that certainly isn’t rich but has enough money”*

She struggles with positioning herself, seeking out the markers of class from her own experience: to have enough money, to be comfortable, and an element which she considers to be more qualitative, to have some class. By this she alludes to Bourdieuan (1984) conceptions of distinction, understanding the habitus, conducting oneself appropriately and having classy behaviour or choices. She also considers, in describing herself as working middle class, that social class can contain elements of both cultural and economic capital (Erickson, 1996), while she doesn’t consider her background to be particularly wealthy, her parents needed to work for a living so considered themselves working class, her father’s position as a secondary school teacher carried with it appropriate social capital within her hometown to be mark them as middle class. So while her class position is difficult for Madeline to clearly articulate fairly established concepts of class such as Bourdieu’s (ibid) are evident within her discussions.

There was a recognition that class can be evidenced by the things one does and consumes and this is picked up again in considering the next research question. Michael for example discusses it thus:

*“I think I’m fairly middle class person in terms of what I do and where I live and the way I choose to spend my time and the income, that I have all of the factors which speak to that. I wouldn’t tend to choose for example to go away on holiday to a place where I think a lot of working class people would go”*

This is evidence of the type of social class explored in the work of Holt (1998). Class represents communities of individuals bounded by common social status, reflected in consumption expressions of status within their community (Holt, 1998). In this approach social class groups develop within societies a unique way of life and Michael speaks to these small apartheid in his discussion of holiday. How social class position and consumption patterns remain intertwined is discussed again in the following chapter as it is evidenced through food culture. The final tier of social belonging to be discussed from the data is the

influence felt from broad social norms. While more fully considered in the following chapter as evidenced in food consumption, the following section briefly discusses the ‘thin ideal’ as an identity and consumption relevant norm recognised by informants to the study.

### **6.2.7 Whole Culture Norms**

The literature (Weiss, 2003) discusses the ‘thin ideal’ as a cultural norm within western society for women. Most discussion of social norms impact upon identity is considered in the following chapter since informants accounts of such influence involved consumption activity. This section however briefly reflects upon the account of Margaret where there is some evidence of the ‘Thin Ideal’:

*“At the moment it’s, you know, it’s the kind of pre-wedding thing. And I think no, no, I don’t want to look like fucking Victoria Beckham. I don’t want to be stupidly, stupidly thin em yeah and then I wonder if there’s that thing of, you know, you always kind of however whatever size you were, you’d always want to be. You’d always want to be six pounds lighter or something”*

Within the particular context of wedding preparations Margaret considers that there is an expectation upon brides to meet society’s expectations of beauty. Seeking to be slim within this context she recognises as an external pressure and she draws comparison with dominant cultural examples of slimness within the definition of her own self-improvement project. Though she rejects the extremity of this disciplined body discourse Margaret has clear cognition of an ideal body which she strives to reach and considers that this is a common pressure upon women in her social circle.

Other norms will be considered more fully within the following chapter particularly discussions of healthy eating vs. dieting and the consumption behaviour engaged in under these auspices.

## **6.3 Conclusion**

This chapter has considered data gathered in answer to the first two research questions of this thesis: how is self-identity understood and presented by individuals? and what are the relevant social antecedents of self and how are these understood? It has presented findings which consider the introductory repertoire which informants use in self-definition, their understanding of factors of self within a multidimensional core-self construction of identity

and their discussions of multiple-self ideas such as negative and ideal-self. It has also discussed the accounts of social influence upon identity. Working first within niche groups it has considered the dominant groups of family and friendship, how these are understood individually by informants and how they negotiate the competing demands of each. It has briefly discussed neo-tribes though recognises these not to be a core part of the data. It has considered the social categorisations of gender, ethnicity and social class explored how self-evident these categorisations also how well understood and embraced they are by informants. Finally it has considered some social norms which informants have reflected upon, and this topic is considered more fully in the following chapter when social influences upon food culture are discussed. The theoretical implications and contributions of these findings are considered in chapter eight alongside those of chapter seven which follows. Chapter seven focuses upon the second two research questions set: what is the role of social antecedents in shaping an individual's food culture? And what are the salient food culture elements and how are they understood by consumers as part of their identity? The discussion of these questions uses the findings of this chapter as a basis upon which to consider how food culture and consumption interact within sans consumption constructions of identity and complete the scope of the contribution made by this thesis' data.

## **Chapter 7: Findings, Integration of Food Culture within Identity**

### **7.0 Introduction**

This chapter is the second considering the primary research findings. Following on from chapter six, which contains discussions of individual understanding of identity and the social antecedents of these perceptions, this chapter considers the role of consumption and specifically food culture consumption within these constructs. It is, as the previous chapter, structured around the research questions, intended to meet the overall aim of understanding how individuals create and maintain self-identity in contemporary culture. The two research questions to be answered in this chapter are therefore: what is the role of social antecedents in shaping an individual's food culture; and what are salient food culture elements and how are they understood by consumers as part of their identity?

As noted throughout the thesis, food culture has been identified as a key area of consumer culture in which to consider identity, the most fundamental of all consumption fields (Fischler, 1988). This chapter focuses upon the food consumption stories within individuals' discussions of social structures and then also considers how the material resources from food culture influence their accounts of self-identity. As before, while considering these issues using the primary research data, the analysis is contextualised with extant research from literature chapters two through four.

### **7.1 What is the role of social antecedents in shaping an individual's food culture?**

As discussed in chapter six the social, structural sources of self have been considered important influencers upon the individual identity (Elliot, 2004). This section now turns to consider the role of these social factors in shaping the individual's consumption practices and specifically their engagement with food culture. Miller has argued that consumption is the primary means of participation in society and so an understanding of how these two concepts engage is fundamental. Warde (1997) as discussed in chapter four, has reflected that tastes in food, and across consumption fields, are not wholly solipsistic; rather that social factors impact upon preferences and norms. This section seeks to consider how this shared consumption is understood and discussed by the individual. It begins however by considering that food culture and social structures share a bi-directional relationship: that

while social structures can impact tastes food culture also plays an important role in maintaining social structure.

### **7.1.1 Food's role in maintaining important social ties.**

As discussed in chapter six, social structures are considered to have particularly distinctive impact upon an individual's discussions of self. They are also considered to be important constituents of life for other reasons such as support, belonging and wellbeing (Pahl & Spencer, 2004). The niche groups of family and friendship in particular have been considered, by informants to this study, as particularly important and widely influential, as outlined in answering research question two in the previous chapter. This importance has been variously expressed as "*very grounding*" or "*keeping you on the straight and narrow*" among other means of articulation. So it is relevant to understand how these individually important social structures are themselves maintained and nurtured. Previously the thesis has reflected upon the role of consumption as being instrumental in maintaining elements of individual self-identity; it is considered here that they can also play this instrumental role in maintaining social structures.

Discussing first accounts of family meals, Murcott (1997) suggests that there is little evidence for family meals across the generations, but in recollection many of the informants considered them as important parts of their own family life. In talking about food's role in maintaining family Ivy says:

*"eating together was really important and even if the whole family were completely broken and we weren't speaking to each other we would always sit at the table. It might end up in a bigger argument or it might end up with us making up but it was incredibly important."*

In this account Ivy places food and its associated rituals centrally as her family's means of dealing with conflict, mending relationships and ultimately being a family. This is reflective of Finch's (1997) conceptions of doing family, that to sharing time fruitfully can be an important way of signifying family belonging and as Ivy discusses it even if the family were "completely broken" the act of shared consumption could help in reconstituting its performance.

Firhammer (1995) suggests that family meals are perhaps a middle class ideal, tied to stuffy atmosphere of manners and symbolism and certainly though there does seem to be evidence



of rules around the family meal these are not lined, by informants, to social class. As discussed in chapter seven, group descriptions of their social class were variable with some, including Elaine, quite strongly identifying themselves as working class but in her account of family meals, her recollection is akin to a middle class ideal of structured encounters with rules which are restrictive and at times resented:

*“Dad had a real thing about sitting, round the table and discussing our days and erm you weren’t allowed to leave the table till you were finished and when my dad was away on work and cause he worked mostly in Oban it was fairly infrequent we were allowed to sit in front of the TV and that was a big, big treat”*

In this account there are a number of ways in which ‘family’ is done using food consumption; the talking about one’s day and sitting at the table until finished when dad is around; and the less formal eating in front of the TV when not. These are equally powerful for Elaine as reflecting her family relationships. There are many accounts of the rituals of family meal consumption, Fin for example discusses:

*“we did always eat at the table, always. We always had a glass of milk with dinner, we always and they’re quite rituals, a lot of rituals actually about food, very few dishes but very well cooked and nothing fancy”.*

Epp & Price (2010) discuss the role of the table in preserving family meals, though discuss how this can have a detrimental impact upon other family activities, denying space for dancing, reading or other enjoyed activities. Absence of the physical markers of family meals were remarked upon by other informants. Valerie talks about her family meals by saying:

*“I think generally we would all have had dinner on our laps or erm all that is tied up with my mum being on her own. It probably wasn’t ever practical that we sat down at the table but at least we were sort of eating together”*

Despite lack of formality in these meals, dinner remains a means of doing family. Eating together, with meals on laps, punctuated a day, which was temporally quite distinct for each member of the family. Though conversation or ritual may not have been a feature of these meals shared consumption remained impactful.

There were a small number of informants who considered that family meals were not a feature of their family life. John talks about this in his interview:

*“I was kind of robbed, in a way, of the ritual of dinnertime because my parents have not been together for such a long time, that there’s never been a family dining table at which we congregate, um, just by definition.”*

For him this lack of food as a means of doing family is to be mourned. The decline of family meals for him is related to a lack in the closeness and integrity of his family structure as a whole.

Devault (1991) discussed the gendered work of preparing family meals and this is a topic which will be considered specifically later when considering the role of gender, however she also introduces the concept of family meals as care work. This is considered by informants, who discuss how their own mothers demonstrate love and affection through meals. William discusses this in relation to the Christmas meal, one of the few he now shares with his geographically distant family

*“my mum, she’s a cracking cook actually she’s really good and err, err I mean Christmas dinner at home, she always, she always make sure that the beer in for you and you know, she always err she always pick something that I would like err which is really interesting because I know she cares very much”*

His account shows a very different type of family meal to those of childhood, this is no longer a meal which is mundane and everyday but has become a form of hospitality. He highlights his mother doing care work by seeking out items or tastes which she thinks may be enjoyed and treating him specially with food. This he recognises demonstrates love, thought and remains a means of displaying familial affection and ‘doing family’.

As noted in the previous chapter, ‘family’ has rich complex meaning. For some their own partners were increasingly becoming part of the concept and shared food consumption was considered instrumental in developing these relationships. Kathy in discussing her marriage to Fin says:

*“we talk about food a lot we talk about dinner when we’re eating lunch you know erm we eat out a lot: we eat out a lot together on our own but we eat out with friends as well. A hell of a lot actually yes it’s a big influence on our relationship”*

Shared interest in food culture is an instrumental part of their relationship and their means of doing their emerging family, this is not necessarily only reflected in shared meals but also shared planning and preparation, topics which are again considered further in the chapter.

Hunt et al (2011) talk about family meals as being an enduring ideal even if the reality of achieving them in practice is increasingly difficult. Madeline in her discussion of the

importance of family food with her partner talks about the effort required to achieve some form of shared consumption

*“little pact where we said to each other that we’ll spend at least sort of one night of the week eating together where it’s just us two. In the week, in the Monday to Friday week which we’ve pretty much managed to sustain”*

Here she considers that even by achieving a family meal once a week the concept becomes enduring for them, rather than considering the rituals and structures of such meals as restrictive and stuffy (Firhammer, 1995) she considers these elements to be necessary for ensuring that a communal eating tradition is created and maintained with their relationship.

The meaning of family, as discussed in the preceding chapter, changes across the lifecourse (Cotte & Wood, 2004) but, as noted, most informants considered their parents and siblings to remain an important component of family well into adulthood. Shared consumption is considered to play an important role in keeping these relationships relevant Joseph discusses this,

*“it’s very important to us as a family because we always sit down together and enjoy it, and also we quite often go out for or over to our parents-in-law, my parents-in-law, for like dinner, and out for lunch, etc. and it’s a way to meet and sort of a social occasion”*

Many informants reflected that, as proximity and circumstantial contributions to family closeness, such as sharing the same household, wane then maintaining family ties begins to require the type of effort more typical of friendship, to remain meaningful. When time spent together becomes more sparse and brief there is a need for purposeful engagement to maintain relevant ties and shared food consumption can fulfil this role.

The social occasion role of food, which is mentioned in Joseph’s discussion of family in adulthood, is often discussed when considering friendship maintenance. As discussed in chapter seven, friendship more than family is considered to require effort and work to endure and as Pahl (2000) discusses carries obligations. These obligations however are not necessarily unpleasant or arduous to enact, Virginia discusses how she maintains her friendships through socialising:

*“We always sort of meet up, we would book a restaurant somewhere. I think everybody likes Italian because there is always something you can eat. It is very easy to get a group of people to go there. And eh we would all go and there would be lots of wine on the table and lots of lovely food and it would take hours. It is not your rushed thing, it’s not you’re*

*in and you're out. And we make that very clear to people when we do book a table like we are not moving and we are here for the night basically. We tend to just sit round a table and chat and drink coffee and have a good time."*

Virginia is quite clear of the contributory factors to a 'successful' social meal: planned sociability (Pahl, 2000) setting time aside to do friendship work, that the restaurant selected should be such that everyone will be able to find food to their taste, the food as Mellor et al (2010) discuss is almost a gift in this respect and the organiser of the evening would be upset if someone's experience was suboptimal; and the meal should be taken at a leisurely pace, the food acts as a means of bringing the group together, focussing their socialisation, as Kniazeva & Venkatesh (2007) discuss, it provides the "excuse" for gathering and the presence of food marks the temporal boundaries of the occasion, once the food or drink stops the socialising is over. So there is evidence among the group that food, particularly in the traditional form of meals, is being used to maintain meaningful social relationships and structures. The examples drawn have been particularly from family and friendship accounts because these are the most frequently encountered and easily accessed social structures in informants narratives.

### **7.1.2 Social antecedents of consumption**

As when discussing the socially bounded aspects of identity in the previous chapter, consumption is also argued to be a learned, socially constrained activity. Discussed by Holt (1998), social antecedents, such as those defined in chapter four, underpin an individual's consumption activity. This section therefore seeks to consider how social antecedents impact individuals' understanding of their own food culture.

#### **7.1.2.1 Family**

As discussed in chapter seven and the previous section, niche groups, as those most commonly encountered and close in proximity to the individual, are considered to be instrumental in learning about external factors such as food culture (Moisio et al, 2004). Family and friendship continue to have an enduring influence upon decisions well into adulthood and while debate may continue as to which is more impactful it is important to consider these two niche groups, along with neo-tribes', influence upon one's food consumption. Fieldhouse (1986) discusses the family as the primary vehicle of socialisation the means by which one learns about the world and individual interactions with it and food culture seems to play a critical role in this process.

As discussed above, the concept of the family meals remains relevant to the informants and they discuss these vividly. Madeline says:

*“we only ever ate at the table. I never, not once, had a TV dinner and I didn't even know they existed until I was probably about 16.”*

While these types of meals are an important means of constructing family they are also, in Madeline's account, equally acting to shape tastes and understanding about food itself. She talks about never having a TV dinner nor knowing of their existence, this continues to influence her understanding of what food should be in adulthood which she discusses as:

*“food should be tasty food, well oh you know organically grown, it's got to be right and therefore that usually means quite expensive but it doesn't have to be could be grown in the garden that sort of thing. I won't eat in fast food restaurants I won't go in a MacDonald's or a KFC.”*

In this discussion Madeline has clear views of her approach to food, what constitutes good food and what is to be avoided. There are clear relationships between the absence of fast food in her childhood and her continued resistance to it. She is also following the approach of her parents in being selective about the origins of food, though she talks about buying organic food whereas her parents more typically sourced from their own garden or local suppliers.

These main meals of the day, typically prepared by mother remain instrumental in shaping the tastes of many of these adult informants ( Hunt et al, 2011). Ivy talks about this relationship quite directly in describing her taste for, what she discussed as, clean food:

*“It means separate bits on the plate and it looks all clean, you know, like the plates clean underneath. That's how mum used to cook, you know, you'd have meat mmm or fish and then some potatoes done somehow and then a couple of bits of veg. And I love that kind of food, I do”*

Ivy doesn't consider herself to be unadventurous with food she says:

*“I love pasta and I do like rich sauces and all the rest of it. But anything too complicated I find, I wouldn't want on a daily basis.”*

She considers that her tastes and experiences with food are diverse but her preference is for the food she grew up with, the food which fits with the tastes of her family which is in keeping with the work of Hunt et al (2011). Some in the group discuss it as 'comfort food', Ivy as clean food but these familiar, traditional meals are the mainstay of their conceptions of good food.

These nostalgic memories of food within the family played a large role in discussions of the constituents of ‘good’ food but less wholesome childhood favourites were also considered to be relevant to adult tastes and practices. Michael gives an account of his childhood food and particularly the ‘treats’ enjoyed with his Grandmother:

*“Heinz tomato soup I consumed a great deal of as a child that and Kia Ora at my Gran’s house. I was busy getting a buzz of the tartrazine in the Kia Ora and the Soda Stream. I think still love Kia Oraish orange squash, never knowingly containing a natural ingredient, brilliant”*

These preferences when retained into adulthood, are sometimes the stuff of snacking and private food moments. Snacking and private food are considered again later in the chapter when tackling foods influence upon identity, but here it is relevant to consider that impactful food practices, specific to particular families, are not only the stuff of family meals but may extend across a wide range of food and eating types.

It has been discussed in chapter seven that the direction of familial influence can be unpredictable (Moore et al, 2002). While the nostalgic accounts of family food above consider that eating together has resulted in enduring, shared family tastes and food norms there are accounts in the study which also reflect a rebellion from the food of childhood and family. Fin talks about his family meals as:

*“plain food, quite boring really and always the same. There was a set menu every day so you more or less knew. I remember, it’s a while ago now, but I remember Tuesdays was mince, Wednesdays was pork chop, Fridays was obviously fish and chips”*

This regimented and unadventurous food has spurred Fin to develop his own food tastes and to be more variety seeking in his consumption:

*“I’m keen to try new things I don’t get as much time to try new things as I should like but every time I do I think this is just wonderful and I should really do more of it. Love Italian food, I love Italian wine as well, I love Italy yeah mainly Italian I love spicy food as well erm and so spicy Italian is my idea of heaven”*

Since family food has had a negative influence upon Fin’s preferences he has engaged in conscious development of new adult preferences at odds with the restrictive meals of childhood.

The kitchen, as the primary place for preparing food, was discussed by some respondents as also being the central place in the home where family life took place. The kitchen has often been discussed as the heart of the home (Southerton, 2001) but in being part of family life it is also instrumental as a site of shared tastes and development of food skills and interest.

Joseph talks about the importance of the kitchen in his household:

*“I just kind of grew up being surrounded by it and em the kitchen was kind of the hub so a lot of time was spent in there and I just saw it.”*

For him an interest in food wasn't consciously developed but emerged by being surrounded by it every day. This approach was also evident in Margaret's discussion of learning to cook:

*“I probably picked up lots more stuff from my parents, you know from my mum especially and probably from my dad as well who both cooked in the house. So I probably picked up stuff from them, I mean I've definitely picked up techniques and kinds of food that I'm interested in but I wouldn't say that um I've learned it from anyone specifically so I'd say probably half by osmosis”*

For these informants food culture is so familiar that they find tracing the antecedents of their interest and skills relatively difficult. This pervasive nature of food is such that assumed rather than articulated knowledge (Farquhar, 2006).

Learning about food and particularly learning to cook was for others a more conscious and active pursuit and evoked more specific memories. Madeline talks about her mother as being the main source of her interest:

*“I learned to cook from my mother definitely cause I'd say she's like me but 10 times more so she's pretty obsessive about cooking and food. I have clear memories of learning to cook and cooking together, basic things like soups but also baking and cakes and things”.*

For Madeline learning to cook is like learning a craft skill, apprenticing to her mother and learning not only recipes but also building the tacit knowledge of cooking required to undertake it independently (Farquhar, 2006). This furthers the idea of food as care work, here passing on cooking skill is a form of care work, preparing her children for independence and handing on skills like heirlooms (Price et al, 2000).

For many, family remains their primary source of information and education about food and particularly cooking. Pam talks about her approach to cooking as being: *“you phone your ma and ask how you do it, and she tells you, and then you know”* this sharing of recipes and techniques is in keeping with McKie & Wood's (1992) work which suggests that there is an

enduring preference for recipes exchanged among friends and family. Some writers have considered that loved recipes may be passed through the generations by means of personal food journals and family cookbooks (Theophano, 2002), there is no evidence of this among informants, rather this information is transmitted orally, as for Pam, or through shared practice, in Madeline's case, and held in memory. Like cherished possessions (Curasi 1999), recipes and skills have been bequeathed by their mothers and this is appreciated and nostalgically recalled by informants.

For other informants inter-generational learning was absent from their accounts of food and particularly cooking. Elaine, for example, though she considered food to be important in her family. In her account, earlier in the chapter, there are a number of ways in which family is done using food consumption but she doesn't consider family to be a source of cooking skill or knowledge.

*"I didn't learn from my mum she just tended to, she worked and she tended to cook in advance and just do her own thing so I don't think my brother and I were in her kitchen a lot erm so I didn't learn at home"*

Here though her mother engaged in the traditional care work of preparing home cooked meals (McIntosh et al, 2010) it was a solitary rather than communal family activity. Elaine attributes this to her mother working outside the home and so having to cook differently to manage conflicting responsibilities i.e. cooking in advance.

Michael's account of family food is similar to Elaine's, though even more reflective of the literature around declines in family meals (Gofton, 1995). For him, with a working mother family meals were absent as was home cooking.

*"there was a fair amount of sitting in front of the telly with dinner erm more often than not I think- my mum worked so there was a lot of heat up stuff from Marks & Spencer"*

Michael doesn't consider that this was a failing of his mother's care work rather than reliance upon convenience food and informal meals structures were driven by circumstance. He does however reflect a dissatisfaction with this way of eating and talks of his decision to eat differently:

*"Learning to cook was significant part of feeling independent for me, the first time I lived away from home. It's part of what I perceive as being quite sort of a being a grownup, there were things I could learn to make so there's an extent to which I suppose it's about being grown up, buying your own stuff taking responsibility"*



For Michael, while he doesn't consider his approach to food to be particularly rebellious, there is a similarity with Fin's account of seeking an alternative to the food of childhood for one's adult self. Fin separates the blandness and rigidity of childhood from the variety seeking in his adult food and Michael the convenience food of family from the authentic home-cooked food of his adulthood. For Michael however this represents a need to define his own food tastes in the absence of clear family influence rather than rebellion from an undesired influence.

Intergenerational influence was also evident in the attitudes which informants held towards brands. Virginia for example considers the dominance of brands in her own childhood memories of foods.

*"I don't ever remember my mum do you know buying do you know Safeway Super Beans or do you know. I didn't know such a thing existed when we were younger. But I don't, it's always you know that's what's been in our cupboard Bachelors Soup, Heinz Soup, Rice Krispies, Kellogs. Do you know it's always been branded foods"*

She discussed how this dominance of brands has endured in her adulthood

*"I just think that's what you should be eating. I don't want to eat anything else, It just doesn't look as good. The labelling doesn't look as good, it's not as appealing. It wouldn't make me want to buy it. Do you know when you see like whatever Bachelors Soups and the Heinz Soups and that and then you see Asda's own soup it just doesn't, it doesn't look the same."*

She is also able to reflect upon the generational element of these perceptions.

*"It's back to my mum because she has done it and I've done it with her ever since I was young and I think it is a learned behaviour. She does it so I do it because that's what you do"*

The meaning of brands to identity is considered later in the chapter, and Virginia's relationship is among those discussed. Here it is worth noting that brand associations come not only from the manufacturers' intentions (Gorz, 2003) but also from the enduring relationships consumers have with them in use. For Virginia her relationship with branded goods is long established and deeply multi-faceted (Fournier, 1998) though habitual in part as will be discussed later her relationship extends beyond this to deep attachment which is intrinsic to her identity (Carroll & Ahuvia, 2006).

As has been discussed frequently in the thesis family definitions are unique to the individual and partner may be included in that definition as individuals move through the life-course. This marital or cohabiting relationship can prove a very powerful influence upon food practices and preference (Kemmer et al, 1998). Lisa for example, discussed her relationship with Fin and the impact that has had upon her food behaviour by saying:

*“food’s more important probably since meeting Fin because he’s kind of into food prior to that I was a vegetarian so I was probably a bit more sort of limited, now it’s much, much broader”*

By entering this relationship Lisa has engaged with a new food culture, her vegetarian identity of 10 years is discarded in preference of new food norms which embrace Fin’s variety seeking approach. The explanation for this change may be theorised in two ways: as an example of enduring power differential in relationships evidenced by deference of woman to man, or more simply an example of the food preferences of the partner who cares more about what is consumed entering the habit of their partner (Kemmer et al, 1998).

There is also evidence of partners engaging in care work for each other through food. Those foods because they are carefully prepared to individual tastes and preferences may surpass mother’s food in affection. Ivy talks about her food loves as:

*“I would rather have this than any restaurant food, it’s something John cooks and it’s his steak, which is always really, really, really good. I don’t like too much redness. And homemade chips but with really chunky beautifully done potatoes and then some sort of fresh, very fresh vegetable on the side like spinach, peas whatever. And I love that”*

Interestingly though prepared for her by John and in keeping with his approach to food, sourcing quality local ingredients and cooking simply- this is discussed later in the chapter when considering how food is provisioned, it is also negotiated to be in keeping with Ivy’s preference for clean food, there is no sauce, the steak isn’t bleeding onto the plate and the food items remain distinct. This couple are creating their own food traditions and norms.

Inter-generationality is argued, in the literature, to also flow from children to parents (Moore et al, 2002) and some informants considered this in respect of their own parents. Michael for example whose account of convenience food in childhood is presented above, discusses how his increasing interest in food coupled with a change in his parents circumstances have made food more central to their relationship:

*“I think food’s more important to my family now they’re all more interested in it now than they used to be erm and certainly erm both my parents and my sister enjoy as I do going out to restaurants and stuff so again that’s something that when we do see each other, we share that. We also now prepare food together in a way which we never would have done when I was a child. We would actually now make food together which I really enjoy doing with them was just never a feature of growing up”*

Food for this family has changed character as the family has grown up and moved apart, with the burden and mundanity of preparing food removed from his busy working mother and Michael’s clear interest in food being shared with the family, food has become a much more pleasurable and social aspect of their family life.

Though the children of most of the informants are young there has already been some consideration, within this thesis, of the impact of them upon respondent’s narratives of their own identity. They discuss also how having children in the household shifts their parental food practices. Cairns et al (2010) discuss a responsibility for mothers to expose their children to good food and set good eating standards. Valerie discusses her own changing food habits since having children

*“I was very haphazard about my own eating arrangements before I had kids because quite often we maybe ate out twice a week because we couldn’t be bothered cooking but that all goes out of the window my whole eating pattern is much more regimented because they have I would quite often skip lunch just because I was quite busy and I couldn’t be bothered and so have nuts or something but you can’t do that with kids because they’ve got to have their regimented meal times”*

The very presence of children in the household as well as their preferences is exerting influence upon the shared practices within it but also the individual food practices of parents.

As discussed within the previous chapter family and friendship may be considered as competing sources of social influence within the confines of niche groups and so it is to the influence of friendship upon food culture which the thesis now turns.

### **7.1.2.2 Friendship**

The importance of friendship upon the individual’s sense of self has been discussed in chapter seven, and friendship has been theorised as being among the greatest influencing factors upon consumption ( White & Dahl, 2006). Friendship and food have also been

considered to be connected (Belk, 2006). However for this sample friendship was much less influential upon their food behaviour than family. As discussed at the beginning of this chapter, a strong role was identified for food as a means of maintaining friendship; acting as the excuse for sociability and there is broad agreement among the group that food is best when it is enjoyed with others, Pam says:

*“I can’t imagine myself ever going into a restaurant on my own to have a meal, you know, or cooking a huge great meal for myself, if I’m on my own I’m more likely to have something quite simple, you know, a really nice sandwich or something like that, or maybe a nice soup or something, rather than going to the effort, I would never do a starter and a main course and a dessert sort of thing for myself.”*

Pam here also demonstrates the influence that eating with others can have upon the choice of foods one makes, food eaten alone is likely to be more snack form: a sandwich or some soup (Wansink et al, 2010), whereas social food would be a meal, indeed the presence of others is argued to be one of the strongest factors in defining a meal (Meiselmann, 2008). This role that presence or absence of others plays in influencing food is an elaboration of, what Ahuvia (2005) talks about as, a belonging approach to food, that it should be constituted of which is appropriate for the social situation and the expectations of those sharing it.

There was a very small amount of discussion of conspicuous consumption within friendships groups (Childers & Rao, 1992), when asked where he sought influence for his food John said

*“from your friends who share the same interests, and there may be a competitive element to that. If you aren’t getting better, you need to be asking yourself a few questions, so yeah, it just comes from participation and of active interest.”*

It is evident that when considering food there are friends whom he considers to be a reference group since he discusses competition and comparison with them (Escalas & Bettman, 2003). The friends who share his interest in food act to delineate the accepted social standard of cooking and he seeks opportunities to engage in display and one-up-man-ship through his food (Tarnanidis et al, 2010). His skill at cooking gives him a position within this in-group which enhances his standing, belonging and self-esteem. (Hogg & Vaughan, 2002). John’s discussion may also be indicative of a gendered approach to food. Miller (2010) for example discusses how male cooking is often for display and Fine (1995) men’s concern with refining skill and developing expertise. These issues are considered again later in the chapter.

There was also relatively little evidence of friends sharing recipes or information about food or cooking as a direct means of influencing each other. One informant Pam, for whom, as noted above, food has a strong social dimension, talked in her account of asking friends about food:

*“If I’ve been round for dinner and someone else cooks something that is particularly nice you say, how did you do that? Word of mouth, that works for me but cookbooks don’t really work for me, I get too stressed about it”*

While the importance of cookbooks will be revisited again later in the chapter, Pam’s openness in asking friends about food is quite a different approach to John’s, rather than focussing upon her own social position, her asking for a recipe rewards the effort of her host and enhancing their standing within the friendship group while also strengthening the quality of the friendship.

Cooking as care work has been widely discussed within families and particularly for women and there is some discussion of also using food in this way in friendship. Noel talks about his role as cook for his friends over an extended period:

*“I think if you said to people who were around at that time, and many of those are the same people who are now still my friends, um, what was it like to go around to Noel’s flat and be fed? It would probably be quite a damning report because it was pasta and red sauce, I didn’t have a very developed palate, but they kept coming and I kept cooking”*

Brown & Miller (2002) have suggested this way of using food to please and show affection is a typically female motivation for cooking, but Noel shows it to be more widespread, since he comfortably adopts this role for his friends: students who wouldn’t or couldn’t cook for themselves. There is other evidence of this approach in the group, Elaine talks about sharing student flats and doing care work and friendship with food:

*“when I was a student we obviously did cook together a lot and we were rubbish so I had to learn to feed us. I would make things like cauliflower cheese and make cheese sauce from scratch but I guess we had more things like meat and a jar of curry sauce and things like that”*

Whether as an obligation of sharing a household with friends or simply through necessity to be sustained, developing an ability to cook was influenced by their desire to use food as a means of social interaction, developing and maintain friendships.

The final niche group widely considered in the literature is the neo-tribe which is now discussed.

### **7.1.2.3 Neo-tribe.**

As discussed in answer to research question two in the previous chapter, there was only scant evidence of the neo-tribalism where individuals seek belonging through their consumption practices (Maffesoli, 1996). Possibly because it was neither a strong feature of either the research aim nor friendship group of the sample. As such relatively little discussion of such tribalism is evident in their discussions of food culture but there is some evidence of engagement with consumption practices which bring with them a sense of identification with a wider movement, that there are linking values which unite them with others of shared beliefs and practices (Cova & Cova, 2002). Much of this group's engagement with such communities, as is discussed in chapter six, is relatively passive, they may feel some belonging but they don't necessarily seek others with shared practices to engage about the issues (ibid). Madeline talks about being a foodie, an identified neo-tribe (Watson et al, 2008), and the kind of passion this leads her to feel for food:

*"I absolutely love food I'm quite obsessive about it and not just the eating of it ,but the cooking of it, everything that goes around it. I like learning about for example how livestock is kept and the different cuts of meat"*

Like Michael's account, discussed in the previous chapter, Madeline's engagement with the food tribe is as a devotee: food is a passion about which she gathers considerable knowledge however she engages in her interest privately, she is aware that foodies are social and share recognised tribal values (Mitchell & Imrie, 2011) and she feels some sense of belonging but is not actively engaged with other members (Cova & Cova, 2002).

There is a reasonable amount of blurring of the theoretical lines between friendship groups and neo-tribes and this is relatively evident in John's discussion of his friends and their shared interests:

*"People who've got similar interests tend to find each other, don't they? So um, quite a lot of my friends are very into food too, and I've got a few friends who that's what we do, we'll go to Michelin starred restaurants or most of them can cook really well so we'll take turns cooking that sort of thing I enjoy."*

In this account John doesn't identify his friends as a neo-tribe, rather he thinks of them merely as friends, neither does he identify a group term which applies to them such as

foodies. However there are features of such groups in his description, these friends have a shared passion for food, they socialise together physically to engage in their passion and so have many of the characteristics of, Cova & Cova's (2002) members of neo-tribes. John discusses how his friends visit spaces where they can gather to indulge their passions, in his case Michelin starred restaurants, and this seeking out of extraordinary food experiences was a common feature of those passionate about food. Joseph for example discusses his sites of consumption:

*"I've been to some of the top 10 restaurants in the world and I 'd like to get to them all. I've been to some of the harder one's like El Buli in Spain and in fact, apart from getting there, food was easily the biggest expense, it was much more expensive than the apartment we rented, for instance. And we ate in a different place every night, and that was magical and um, I have some great memories of that, and some of the best food I've ever eaten"*

Exceptional restaurants are for these informants, like holy sites to members of religions, places of pilgrimage, for these informants they equate to the consumption of extraordinary experiences (Tumbat & Belk, 2011). Unlike the extreme individualisation of mountaineering, these experiences unite Joseph and his friends with a select group of similarly interested foodies (ibid).

The thesis having explored niche-groups' influence upon conceptions of food culture now considers the impact that structural classifications can have upon the topic. It begins with ethnicity though considers how such terms may be understood within homogenous research groups.

#### **7.1.2.4 Ethnicity**

As discussed in the previous chapter, this sample was not particularly diverse in terms of ethnicity though they identified in themselves some interesting distinctions in terms of their locality or cultural heritage (James, 1997) which may legitimately be discussed under the auspices of ethnic identity.

Conner & Armitage (2002) discuss food consumption as being locally culturally embedded with meaning which can vary greatly over small geographic distances. For the ethnically Scottish informants there was a pride and preference for local produce, with the whole of Scotland usually being the boundaries of locality, as in Noel's discussion:

*“In Scotland, I think we’re absolutely blessed with some of the best fish and shellfish and beef and ingredients in the world and I try to eat as much of it as possible”*

For Noel to know that food is Scottish is a meaningful provenance which acts a marker of quality. This concept of locality is reflected upon again later in the chapter when considering research question four when considering how informants provision food. For some informants preference is more regional or local, Pam though living in Glasgow, grew up in Aberdeen and talks about her preference for the distinctive Rowie.

*“Everybody goes on about Glasgow’s rolls and they’re good, with a sausage or that, nice and chewy but I prefer a Rowie, just with butter, that’s the stuff that’ll stick to your arteries”*

Ethnicity and belonging have been argued to be layered rather than mutually exclusive scripts pliable dependent upon circumstance (Costa & Bamossy, 1995). Pam in her interview, as discussed in chapter seven, considers herself proud to be Scottish, but in terms of food her preference is based upon being Aberdonian, rather than Scottish, and it is this identity that provides her with a meaningful distinction in terms of preference.

As discussed in chapters four and six Yinger (1994) has argued that ethnicity is more apparent in the minority since dominant groups may find it difficult or unnecessary to achieve distinction. Some of the group have previously self-defined as being outwith the dominant culture of their habitation. This self-definition was relevant in their accounts of their food preference, Anna for example, whose ‘Irish living abroad identity is discussed in the previous chapter talks about its relevance in her food preference:

*“I suppose what I like is probably very Irish, that’s you’d have your meat very plain, roast or grilled and then two kinds of potatoes at least, potatoes and then some more potatoes. My husband laughs he says it’s stereotypical but you would, maybe mashed and boiled in their skins or roasted or something but definitely more than one”*

In this discussion Anna reflects upon her cultural heritage with food and though she talks about her preference for potatoes as stereotypical this reflects perhaps the deeply embedded nature of food within culture as a vessel for tastes and norms (Verbeke & Poquiviqui Lopez, 2005).

The other informant noted in chapter six who considered herself ethnically distinct was Madeline whose French ancestry held strong importance. Her partner Michael in his account discusses how her cultural taste has become part of his repertoire :



*“that’s changed with meeting a French, ‘President Butter’ now I would never normally have unsalted butter, just shows you, it’s a thing for me. I actually felt I was making a big concession to being in the relationship that I’ve switched my brand of butter”*

This demonstrates two types of social influence upon food: first Madeline’s desire to consume items which she considers to be ethnically distinctive because she considers her own identity to be apart from the dominant culture, Bradby (1997) discusses how ethnic foods satisfy a need for an authentic linkage with the culture of reference, in Madeline’s case France through ‘President Butter’; second it speaks to familial influence upon food consumption, Madeline’s choice of butter has become the preferred brand for her & Michael’s household and Michael, humorously, hints at the compromise and negotiation involved in this decision noting that it is indicative of the status of the relationship, serious enough to make the concession of switching brand preference.

Madeline herself also reflects upon French heritage in relationship to food, specifically she talks about its influence upon her cooking skills saying:

*“actually remember her showing me how to make soufflé when I was about 10 years old how to fold the eggs into the white and erm being thinking oh my god that look really complicated but it’s the French thing beating eggs by hand and learning the skills”*

Though this is clearly an account of cooking skill being passed through the generations, a topic which Madeline touches upon throughout her account and is considered earlier in the chapter when discussing family influence upon food, she also makes it clear that she considers there to be a cultural, ethnic dimension to the learning. Bradby (1997) again talks about ethnic approaches to food encompassing the knowledge of how to handle and prepare specialities and Madeline considers that the French way of making a soufflé; beating eggs by hand rather than using an electric whisk to speed the process and learning how to fold, is a culturally specific food approach.

While this group is ethnically, pretty homogeneous their accounts have shown evidence of some culturally specific attitudes to food consumption. Whether at a national, regional and even local level these means of distinction have resonance for the informants and they can reflect upon their influence.

Though ethnicity can be difficult to reflect upon all informants have a recognition that they inhabit a gendered body and some more widely a gendered social environment. It is these

accounts that are considered within the following section continuing discussion of structural classifications' impact upon consumption practice.

#### **7.1.2.5 Gender**

The literature regards gender to be a major antecedent to food culture practices, most elements of shopping cooking and eating have been examined through this lens ( Lupton, 1996, Devault, 1991, McIntosh et al, 2010). Mother as the provider of meals, as discussed when considering family above, is an enduring social commitment and certainly informants reflecting upon their childhood considered their mothers' to be the primary carers in food matters, including responsibility to provide meals and also to pass along cooking skills. There were however, again as previously discussed, some accounts of Fathers' as guardians of the rituals of family meals, Elaine's account is considered earlier in the chapter but clearly show Father as the enforcer of the rules of family eating

*“Dad had a real thing about sitting, round the table and discussing our days and erm you weren't allowed to leave the table till you were finished and when my dad was away on work and cause he worked mostly in Oban it was fairly infrequent we were allowed to sit in front of the TV and that was a big big treat”*

In his rare absences his preferences and rituals were disregarded in favour of a more relaxed, less social approach. This is reflective of discussions that while men and women may both have involvement in the work of food their roles are considered distinct (Mellor et al, 2010).

Harnack et al (1998) discuss this difference in men and women's roles with regard to food when considering the labours around it, they suggest that around three times as many women as men have responsibility for planning meals, shopping for food and meal preparation. This is evident, to some extent, in the accounts of informants to this study. They consider the planning and shopping activities to be linked and some note these as more markedly in the domain of women than related tasks of preparing meals. This is consistent with Woodruffe-Burton & Wakenshaw's (2011) work in the area, Kathy for example describes her own responsibilities for these tasks:

*“each week I'll do the shopping and plan the meals for the week so it is something I give thought to, to make sure that you're not having something always the same that you are getting a balance between your red meat and white meat and fish. Fin will do some of the cooking we're both kind of into food”*

Kathy is clearly thinking throughout a process from planning to preparation, she is engaged in care work through her decisions by balancing the diet and ensuring variety throughout the week. She notes the separation of cooking as less firmly the domain of women, that her husband will cook some meals though largely based upon her planning and shopping.

Other informants however talk about planning and shopping as more gender neutral activity, a shared activity, to be enjoyed by both partners together during their leisure time, as Oh & Arditi(2000) discuss shopping sits betwixt work and pleasure and Margaret, for example, says:

*“Food shopping is an important part of our weekends , we’ll go out shopping, buy nice food come back cook it, eat it, feel great”*

Here her partner becomes engaged in the food decision making, he does more than the trolley pushing role suggested by Woodruffe-Burton & Wakenshaw (2011) and becomes an active participant in the whole process of food. These women rather than using food as a means of protecting their gender territory (ibid) engage in shared consumption, throughout the consumption cycle, as a means of enriching their familial relationships.

In a small number of cases the planning and shopping activity is done by men alone, either through necessity because they are unmarried and living alone as in William and Noel’s cases or by preference. Noel, though engaged in the mundanity of shopping and cooking for himself everyday talks about taking pleasure in food pursuits:

*“Just cause I’m eating on my own doesn’t mean it should be sad little ready meals, I like to cook and cause there’s only me I can be quite indulgent. I wouldn’t spend money on oysters or something for six people cause that would be way expensive but I can get a little bit if it’s just me. If its rubbish it doesn’t matter I can just make it better next time”*

For Noel food is a means of treating himself, by shopping for nice things and experimenting with taste and techniques. There is some evidence of a gendered approach to his food however, Cairns et al (2010) discuss how for men food is more concerned with leisure than obligation and Noels certainly discussed food as being an interest, a place to have fun and experiment, with little consequence since he is the only audience for his food on most days.

While William and Noel cook for themselves through necessity, John and Ivy talk about John’s role as food shopper and cook as being driven by both circumstance and preference. This relationship and their accounts provide an interesting example of gendered

interpretations of the same food events, while both agree that the responsibility for shopping and cooking lie with John they diverge in their accounts of why this is the case. John talks about his love for food and shopping, actively seeking out the best suppliers and spending larger amounts of time and effort preparing resultant meals,

*“am now trying as best I can to buy all of our meat and fish from local suppliers, small independents, a guy whose name I know and I think that is important, principally because the products you buy there are better”*

For him the role of shopper and cook is a preference, activity which he cherishes. Ivy in contrast, while recognising John’s effort, attributes his dominance in the household food to circumstance: John can engage in such activity because he works from home,

*“John’s really good he goes to the butcher and fishmonger and all the rest of it, but I can’t do that because I’m at work”*

Ivy talks elsewhere in her account of her enjoyment of John’s food but she considers that for preference the responsibility for food would be hers:

*“I’d love to be able to potter around with a basket and go and get some fish from the fishmongers, butchers, you know, all that.”*

Ivy’s desire is in keeping with Cairns et al (2010), who suggest that food provisioning can be a great source of pleasure for women, her idealised notions of pottering with a basket position it not as a chore but pleasurable pastime.

The work of cooking is quite evenly spread across the genders in this study and most of the informants engage in some of the household cooking. Cooking however, is considered in the literature, to be laden with different meaning and practice across the genders, with women doing the mundane weekly meal preparation ( Lupton, 1996) and men engaging in more display work (Miller, 2010). There is some evidence of this, John says: *“my cooking is a bit more flamboyant because I am trying to show off more”* but the practice of this group is more complex across the genders and there is lack of evidence of really clear cut divisions, with some women discussing display and some men taking on the mundane tasks. This complexity is now explored beginning by considering accounts of traditional gender roles before considering those which defy the expectations of the literature.

In keeping with the traditional roles of woman as the main cook and provider of food, much of which has been discussed in earlier discussions of family and motherhood, Valerie when reflecting upon her own cooking considers her role as mother to be a driver of her practice:

*“With the kids and working, that’s made me much more structured last night I made tonight’s dinner tonight I’ll make tomorrow’s dinner and the next night’s dinner because Thursday is a busy day so it always that having to plan we fall into that pattern as well obviously”*

She discusses cooking as a chore or obligation, a demand upon her time, this is work that requires planning and pattern to be manageable within the many demands upon her time. While she doesn’t discuss the role of her gender in making her responsible for food she simply accepts the role as part of the organisation of family. Failing to adopt this role would have detrimental consequences of waste & inappropriate foods and she considers that her husband wouldn’t or couldn’t perform it in her stead.

As noted previously, few of the women in the group reflected upon their gender as part of their identity. However particularly those who identified their femininity as an important constituent, considered food and cooking to be an obvious way of enacting gender. Pam’s account has been discussed in chapter seven when considering gender, where she says:

*“And also sometimes I like to be quite feminine with Fin, and you know, cook him a meal sometimes, you make the effort and go out, and get stuff, and just be girly inside the house.”*

Her reiteration of sometimes in this account defines it as femininity performed on special occasions this is not care work of an everyday nature but having the freedom to engage in gendered identity as one of many available to her.

One of the traditional representations of men as cooks, within the literature, discusses their cooking as “serious stuff” (Brownlie & Hewer, 2007). The quality of the finished food is the focus, a means of reiterating their masculinity. John who as discussed above, takes the primary responsibility for their household’s food discusses the endurance of what he considers a male approach to cooking:

*“Mine would be more complicated, Ivy jokes that I am incapable of cooking a meal without using every dish in the house, for instance, because I will marinate something in one set of cookware and then I’ll maybe fry it before it goes in the oven, then I’ll put it in the oven, and then when it comes out I might cut it on something else, so you might be talking about a lot of chinaware being used!”*

While, he is concerned with the expertise involved in preparing food- marinating and flash-frying before oven cooking, he shows less concern for the mundane consequences of such an

approach- using every dish in the house: *“The kitchen looks like a bomb site when I’ve finished”*. This is in contrast to Valerie’s approach which is functionally providing food with least fuss. For John the business of cooking is unconcerned with utility and practicality, he and Ivy agree that she bears the responsibility for tidying and cleaning the kitchen, as their negotiation of a fair division of labour, but that John does little to minimise her task.

Men’s cooking has also been theorised as the preserve of occasions and opportunities for display (Miller, 2010) Fin talks about his cooking for occasions thus:

*“We’re entering a new phase which is having a garden with the barbecue always lit, and having kids bring their friends round, and you know, um, meeting with parents of friends of your kids, and that”*

Men barbecuing meat as a means of display is widely considered one of the most common opportunities for men to demonstrate masculinity (ibid).

Kemmer et al (1998) found that traditional gender role distinctions around food were increasingly weakening with much more of the kind of shared activity discussed in Margaret’s account above. While John’s role as main household cook is laden with continued gendered practice some of the other men found taking the cooking role to involve much more of the mundane, utilitarian practice associated with women’s cooking, Joseph says:

*“I do most of the cooking in the house. Mostly because I usually get in before my wife does so I do most of the cooking so I probably, I wouldn’t say dictate but you know I am more of an influence on the food stakes.”*

This approach is akin to Valerie or Kathy’s practical approaches to providing for the household’s basic food needs on an everyday basis.

While most of the literature on women and food considers it to be of the mundane, everyday nature discussed by Valerie and Kathy (Lupton, 1996) there is also work which considers that women can engage in the more typically male activities of cooking for display and hobby (Mellor et al, 2010). Anna discusses her emerging interest in the area:

*“really enjoy um cooking now which in a way I never did before um the joy of that is I guess again you just kind of get more adventurous. I think given a change in our social lives whereby we are more home based um I enjoy cooking more just both in time of us but in addition to that in you know kind of having people round for dinner is I guess a core part now of kind of what we do.”*

The dinner party as a formal structured encounter is often considered a rather old-fashioned, but many informant discussed entertaining at home as a large part of their socialising:

*“I’ve very rarely in my life attended or given what I would regard to be a dinner party where there is more than two couples or something it’s mostly dinner with a couple of friends but I do like it to be good.”*

These informal dinners at home with friends act, as Anna discusses as a means of displaying talent. She attributes their growing importance to having children, and therefore being limited in opportunity to eat out, coupled with an increasing interest in food and cooking as she advances through the life course.

As well as discussions of gender roles regarding the provision and preparation of food the literature also considers gendered distinction in regarding to eating (Sobal, 2005). Women and men are considered to have different tastes and appetites there was evidence of some particularly gendered preferences.

The relationship between masculinity and meat is reflected upon in chapters two and four of the literature and Cameron discusses his own preference for meat:

*“I’m particularly carnivorous so any meat. I’ll very rarely have anything that doesn’t have meat in it so if at lunchtime if I’m having a sandwich I wouldn’t have generally have a vegetable sandwich in fact I wouldn’t ever have a vegetable sandwich it would always have to have ham on it or chicken on it or roast beef on it or something on it like that ..anything that’s got a bit of taste about it and a bit of substance about it I cannae be bothered with wishy, washy food that turns to water as soon as you put it in your mouth . If its substantial and particularly if it’s got any meat in it them it’s alright”*

This is in keeping with Sobal’s (2005) review of the subject, where he discusses men claiming a meal is not a proper meal without meat. Cameron goes beyond and considers even a sandwich not worth eating without meat. This eating of meat, substantial food in contrast to the “wishy-washy” stuff of vegetables is argued to be an exemplar of ‘male eating’ (ibid:144).

Feminine eating in contrast minimises meat and is argued to be more closely associated with maintaining physical attractiveness (Harter, 1986). Valerie as discussed in the previous chapter is one of the few informants for whom body was a key part of her identity and she discusses its maintenance through a gendered approach to her eating. She discusses her own

diet as being based around the latest trends in ‘superfoods’: those which promise extraordinary health or beauty affects.

*“There’s always latest fad latest juice to drink erm pomegranate for a while and then I read something about purple grape juice so I’ve started buying that some research in the states erm I’ve read some again about Brazil nuts so I quite like to try to have brazil nut”*

This in contrast to her very utilitarian approach to feeding the family, as discussed above, which focuses upon time and resource management. In her own personal food she indulges in more variety seeking and trend based consumption.

The above data demonstrates the complexity inherent in conceptualising gender’s impact upon food and its associated practices: provisioning, cooking and eating. This complexity will be considered again in chapter eight when highlighting theoretic contribution since it is in preserving this nuance where this thesis data advances current conceptions. The final structural classification to be considered within this chapter is the concept of class as has been discussed in the previous chapter class is not considered by informants to be particularly self-evident and so the following section considers the evidence of informants consumption practice as a means of illuminating their class positions.

#### **7.1.2.6 Class.**

Class as discussed in the previous chapter was a relatively difficult construct for informants. Their discussions within chapter six reflected an uncertainty about the definitions of class and their own belonging however there is argued to be strong dimensions of class which can be evidenced through particular modes of consumption. Tregear (2005) discusses a strong class dimension to engagement with the alternative food economy and preference for goods which are organic or local. Consumer attachment to such quasi-brands is discussed in answer to the following research question but here it is recognised that informants do consider such, class bound, behaviours desirable. Ivy says:

*“all the veg we eat is organic, we wouldn’t have it any other way, obviously you’re really careful about removing soil but you kind of just have this feeling of I don’t need to peel it loads to get rid of whatever it’s been doused in. You know at university I did lots of studies on ... phosphates and all these kinds of nasty chemicals and you really, I just don’t want them anywhere near me.”*

While not directly referencing her class, her educational status is a clear driver of her preference for organic produce. She is an example of what Tregear (ibid) describes as the



“worried well” consumers who are rich in the economic and, particularly in Ivy’s case, cultural capital associated with middle class identity.

Discussion of differing food preferences across the classes is evident in the literature from Bourdieu (1984) to Tomlinson’s (1994) particularly British tastes research. The informants in this group demonstrated some class element to their tastes and preferences, Margaret for example, discusses the refinement of her tastes as being class based:

*“I can tell the difference between a piece of meat that is bought out of a good butcher and a piece of meat that is bought out of a supermarket. I can tell, I believe that I could identify it in a blind taste test. I’ve never tried it, so it could be quite an interesting experiment to see if it’s all just an elaborate middle class conceit”*

In this account she hints at an understanding of the concept of middle class tastes, to be able to tell the difference between mass market and speciality produce by having an educated palate. She refers to her own practice of seeking out quality butchers because of her belief in this difference.

Informants also indicated a symbolic class hierarchy within the supermarket chains, since all were using these to buy at least some of their food they considered that distinction could be drawn between them. Fin categorises them thus:

*“I use M&S, I would never touch Asda, I would reluctantly touch Morrisons but would rather not, Somerfield it’s a travesty that we have to, Sainsbury OK, Tesco OK but no if given the choice I would rather shop in M&S and Waitrose”*

This identification of Marks and Spencer and Waitrose as supermarkets of choice was common among informants and part of their identification of themselves based upon class, Asda in particular is identified by Fin as for a different class of people. In discussing this he considers that others must only shop there through necessity: *“the poor bastards who have to shop at Asda who get shit, big quantities of shit”* his class perceptions are such that he cannot consider Asda to be a free choice of unrestrained economic resources.

Though class is not therefore at the forefront of informants’ minds, there is evidence within their practice of its impact in terms of Bourdieuan (1984) distinction and Holt’s (1998) consideration of class as representative of consumption communities (Holt, 1998). The final social consideration upon food culture is that perhaps most distant from individual’s immediate experience; whole culture norms. Given their wide nature these norms are rarely

actively considered by individuals and so in the section which follows the evidence of their consumption narrative is used to provide clues to their interpretation of such norms.

#### ***7.1.2.7 Whole Culture Norms***

Set within a mono-cultural environment there are aspects of cultural norms which are difficult for informants to access or the thesis to consider. Food taboos for example were not reflected upon by informants perhaps because of their intrinsically normative nature. Only in considering their experiences in alternative cultures did informants consider that food itself was not a universally understood concept. John for example discusses his experiences in Japan.

*“Japanese are very aesthetic about their food, so um, and also, they eat stuff that is just quite alien to us, so that is very theatrical and very I mean, you could always get a kind of buzz out of that without eating it, I think”*

In this account he considers that the whole approach which one has towards food may be reflective of the broad cultural context within which it is consumed.

There is however a social norm upon which informants did reflect which embraced issues of body maintenance. As noted in chapter four and discussed again in chapter six there is argued to be a dominant discourse around the body of ‘thin ideal’ for women and ‘hard body’ for men states of physicality where the individual bears responsibility for their appearance, weight and health (Weiss, 2003) which is recognised by informants. How this achieved is also considered to be the subject of cultural norms and Chapman (1999) discusses a discursive shift from ‘dieting’ to ‘healthy eating’ as the means of achieving these ideals. Dieting she argues is based upon denial while healthy eating, which she argues has emerged from social marketing and media emphasis upon watchfulness. The core of each approach however is argued to be common: the restriction of certain foods or overall energy intake to maintain body.

While the term ‘dieting’ was rejected by all informants, they did engage in behaviours typically associated with the discourse such as control, denial, cheating and guilt. Virginia discusses:

*“Chinese food and chip shops and things like that as much as you like that horrible greasy food I feel disgusting as soon as I’ve finished it. I think oh what did I eat that for. And I get really angry with myself for eating it. So that makes me quite angry that I’ve wasted*

*do you know all those months and months I've been good and then you go and eat something like that and you just feel horrible after it as well and you get really angry at yourself for doing it and then for making yourself feel bad and the affect it has on your body."*

Virginia discusses her general diet as good and her approach to eating as 'healthy eating' however she retains images of restricted foods and guilt when consuming these items.

Others more clearly engaged with the discourse of healthy eating, that constant vigilance is required to maintain a slim body and, Anna says:

*"I kind of describe it as a work in progress. Um but an enjoyable one and actually for the first time that's something. And I think the other thing is for the first time ever I've got my head round the fact that this is not a diet in the typical sense it's for life. I mean there's been you know months at a time whereby my weight hasn't shifted at all but I've been on holidays or I've had lots of food and that kind of stuff. So I guess I'm kind of busy getting on with life and trying to alter my physical appearance. But I'm happy enough at the moment um but um it's not for me on a permanent basis."*

While this discourse is argued to be a more responsible approach to weight maintenances with discussion of talked about making permanent life changes rather than dieting it requires weight management to be more constantly within consumers motivations. This discourse doesn't allow consumers ever to be free of the responsibility for their own health nor to fix mistakes like a consumption project to go on a diet and erase past behaviours. Though the discourse suggests that goals for such eating should be longer term health rather than short-term weight loss this remained the goal for many, Anna says:

*"I've lost three stone since December so I suppose in terms of that I am very proud of it and I'm very happy with where I've gotten to. I've got another stone to go so I guess I have a target in mind"*

Though individual informants framed their discussions of food as related to weight differently, all the accounts involved some level of surveillance. Even when the women talked about not being on a diet, they were continually impacted by the healthy eating discourse and watchful of what they ate.

This section has sought to consider how social antecedents impact individuals' understanding of their own food culture and provide answer to research question three upon this subject.

The overall impact of this research question upon extant theoretical tradition is further

discussed in the following chapter. This chapter now examines the final research question of the thesis exploring how food culture is understood by consumers within their constructed identity.

## **7.2 What are the salient food culture elements and how are they understood by consumers as part of their identity?**

As discussed in chapter three consumer culture is considered to be closely related to material culture (Miller, 1985). The material resources within which have been considered, to be particularly meaningful to consumers as a means of constructing identity. Belk (1988) discusses, through the various forms of consumption these resources can become incorporated into individual's extended-self. As discussed in chapter six consumer culture objects have two roles in identity: one, which has already been considered, is to be instrumental in the construction of other factors of self such as one's values and being symbolic reflective of these (Mittal, 2006); the second, now considered, is how consumption and material culture, in this case food culture, can become part of extended-self in their own right (Belk, 1998).

As has been discussed throughout the thesis Belk (1988) reviews the literature on factors of self and concludes that there are elements which he characterises as unextended and extended, and concludes that possessions can become part of self through consumption practice. Considering the factors of self as hierarchical he suggest that the persons, places and things to which one feels attached are the most clearly extended elements of self. The finding of this research suggest that aspects of food culture can form part of self, but that it is typically only accessible when prompted through the interview.

This research question seeks to considers the various elements of the material culture of food, as broadly outlined in chapter two, and categorised here as: objects, texts and experiences and explore how they are understood by individuals as part of their own identity. Consumer culture artefacts or objects are considered to be hybrids, understood for their materiality and their symbolism (Latour, 1991). This is reflected where appropriate in the following discussions.

### **7.2.1 Food**

As discussed in chapter two food, its objects and artefacts are not a self-evident material category (Olsen, Warde & Martens, 2000). Food understanding and preferences change

across time, place and individual understanding so this thesis defines the objects of food into three categories: commodities, brands and meals. These are considered in turn within this section. It has been argued throughout this thesis that food is one of the most fundamental of all consumption categories and informants to the study reflected upon its status in their accounts, Margaret says: *“some of my earliest memories are about food”*. Mittal (2006) argues that, while there are a number of means of objects becoming part of the extended-self, and many of these will be considered in the following sections, those things which are most clearly recalled or embedded in memory, in Margaret’s case food, tend to be those which are most important, cherished and relevant to self.

Ahuvia (2005) writes about loved items, as special category of consumption item particularly meaningful for identity, he says they constitute only a handful of the array of consumption activities and that they play a special role in consumers understanding of self (ibid). Informants themselves often used this kind of terminology when discussing food, Pam for example says:

*“Love it! Love it! Love it – it is very important. I’m absolutely bonkers, because we will be sitting having his breakfast and I will say, so, what will we have for dinner. And my husband is like, for Christ’s sake, you have not finished one meal before you start the next, but I love food, I love nice food. And, I love planning what I am going to have and sometimes it is actually the anticipation of it is so much part of it.”*

Ahuvia (ibid: 182) argues that “loved objects receive work and dedication from consumers rather than provoking simple pleasures” and this nature is evident in Pam’s discussion, her anticipation and planning show an effortful engagement with the category. So it is evident that food falls, for many informants, into the category of loved item and that as Ahuvia (ibid: 182) suggests the investment of energy into the loved category make it “existentially meaningful and helps integrate it into the self”. This is consistent with Mittal & Belk who suggest that significant investment in items gives them an increased relationship to self.

Reflecting upon Belk’s (1988) consideration that possessions are the most clearly extended elements of self, informants to this study understood their position thus. John, for example, situates food within a hierarchy of external objects’ relationship to self and says:

*“Massively important. It’s not like big things, like love and family and trust and relationship and friendship and that. Those are kind of big things. So it is not in that category of important, but in the, on the league table of things like sporting interests,*

*reading, playing a musical instrument, going to the cinema, it is way, way, way at the top of that list. It's massively important."*

This definition is akin to Belk's (1998) discussions of extended-self and the position of consumption within it, he considers that most hierarchical models of self consider special people places and items to have a role in defining self but that perhaps there are those, such as consumption goods, which are more clearly extended than others, such as family and friends. John's account supports this and considers that external social objects (such as family) occupy a different, and more fundamental, category than consumption items (such as food) but that all can nevertheless be meaningful and may play an important role in self. For John, food is the dominant consumption field above other categories often considered more involving such as music or sport. An idea of the food one loves being unique to self and therefore part of self becomes evident through the accounts. These ideas are further discussed below as individual food categories are now considered.

#### **7.2.1.1 Commodities**

Commodities are considered to be those food items which are minimally processed when reaching the consumer (Borgen, 2011), though it recognised that there is a spectrum of commodification from basic staples through to items carrying clear brand identity. Leslie & Reimer (1999) discuss that both the undifferentiated end of the commodity spectrum and the refined can carry symbolic significance and be part of identity construction. Many works have considered this identity work in the discourse between meat eating and vegetarianism and this thesis reflects upon it too but also considers the distinction between conceptions of good and bad food. This extends the idea that loved, and it is contended here 'hated' foods can be particularly meaningful to identity discussed above.

For most of this research group, commodities emerge as the more meaningful food items in their identity construction, rather than, as might be assumed, the more refined end of the spectrum containing brands with their own embedded meanings. Expressed often as loved food a category of items particularly meaningful to identity construction, they may be constituted of a single item as in Margaret's case:

*"Roast Chicken, is good food. If it's meat then it's been grown healthily if it's had a nice life. I definitely buy organic or good quality stuff where I can"*

This discussion of what makes a roast chicken good is reflexive of the symbolically laden nature of even simple commodities: 'good chicken' carries meanings not only of taste but

also of its quality of life and the resultant health of the meat. To consume and love such an item is symbolic of the individual's attitude towards an array of items from animal welfare to their own health.

More commonly loved food was expressed as being 'a meal', that it is through the transformation of the commodity ingredients into the meaningful food of meals that it becomes special and good. Virginia says:

*"I just like fresh tasting meals so it might be a really nice salad or a seafood linguine or panacotta and good food sometimes can be you know steak and potatoes something you prepare yourself you know and is really nice – you know where it comes from and it's not messed with"*

The raw ingredients in this account are in keeping with Pam's discussion of the chicken, to be loved they should be good quality and have a clear origin but for Virginia preparation is also important. It is discussed as being sympathetic to the ingredients, to 'mess about' with food too much is to 'spoil' the essence of its goodness so transformation must be tackled with care and attention befitting a loved item. While shaping commodities to one's individual preference makes it uniquely associated with that person, transformation or creation of an item is argued by Belk (1988) citing Sartre (1943) to be one of the means by which objects can become part of the extended-self, it is important not to lose the symbolically meaningful characteristics of the item in the process.

For others the circumstances surrounding the consumption are tied to its cherished identity, and are the factors which embed it in memory. William talks about the appropriateness of food to circumstance in his account:

*"It would depend on context, so you know, my favourite thing to order in a New York Steakhouse would be a very different thing from if I was in a different context. In the morning a bacon roll is a glorious, glorious thing. It's God's proof that he loves us and wants everything to be okay."*

For William the material and symbolic are entwined, Borgmann (2000) discussed food consumption as being a focal practice, finding the right thing for now, so steak in a New York Steakhouse fits its situation but may not be loved or meaningful to identity outside of its context.

For others it wasn't individual foods or commodities which were loved but the whole process of engaging with food culture in its variety. Fin talks about it as:

*“food’s like art it reflect your mood, sometimes you’re in the mood for different things. I’m generally always in the mood for Italian food or spicy food and a curry it’s one of the major reasons why I like living in Glasgow because the curries are so good. It’s just the possibilities are endless it’s a bit like listening to music I can’t abide people who say I only listen to classical, why limit yourself”*

In this account Fin situates food preference as being as personally reflective of self as art and music and as outwardly symbolic of one's identity. He also discusses however that for food to be meaningful that one must be actively engaged with it, investing resources within use and engaged in mastery (Mittal 2006, Belk 1998). For Fin to stop seeking new experiences is to stagnate and lose the specialness and significance of one's relationship with food, art or music.

Hogg et al (2008) have discussed the symbolic nature of anti-consumption that what is avoided can be as important a part of self as that which is consumed. Hated, avoided food is very accessible and clear in informants minds. William, as discussed above, found loved food a difficult and circumstantial concept but had no such caveats upon hated foods which were extensive and clear:

*“ I don’t like vegetables, there are some vegetables I never really got to love, green beans is one of them, I hated them as a kid and I hate them now and broccoli’s the same and err cauliflower also I’m not crazy about and this is a serious thing, I don’t like the kind of mixture of sweet and savoury, so I don’t put apple sauce on my pork, I would never put sweet sauce on a steak and a lot of people really like it, it’s just not my thing. ”*

That hated foods are meaningfully part of the extended-self is clear in the clarity of memory surrounding them, however informants do not associate such items with an undesired-self as the literature would suggest should be the case. Some discuss considerable effort and personal sacrifice to avoid hated, food including jeopardising their social relationships and position. Lisa for example says:

*“I hate mushrooms and I went to somebody’s house and they served me with like really big giant mushrooms with like a Ratatouille on top and when she put it down in front of me, I thought, Oh I’m not going to eat this but I thought that’s so rude so I didn’t say anything. Another week I was there she gave me Mushroom Stroganoff and I had every kind of mushroom in it and I just can’t go back”.*



This anti-consumption is not therefore about avoiding an out-group identity as some social identity theorists would contend (Bannister & Hogg, 2003) but rather is a preference deeply embedded in individual sense of self and has endurance and stability (Ogilvie et al, 2008).

It has been discussed that food is a special category item that by crossing the border between the external world and one's internal body it has a unique place in consumption categories because it is physically incorporated into self (Levi Strauss, Belk, 1988). In reflecting upon this materiality of food, informants considered that consumption could change one's physical self for better or worse and they distinguished between the effects of "good" and "bad" food. Good food is associated with satisfaction, wellbeing and health, Madeline talks about both the material and symbolic nature of food when she says:

*"There's nothing better than being really, really hungry and eating something going from empty to being full, it's terrifically fulfilling. It makes me feel happy as long as it's something that's nice obviously. I think I do get a lot out of that sense of what you put inside you does effects the way that you feel I will have a feeling afterwards that I've put good things in me and that's what makes me happy so it's a more holistic view to food and its effect on you"*

The physical feeling of fullness is impactful upon self, that food has crossed the boundary and become part of one's body but its symbolic nature is equally consumed. Eating good food will have impact upon happiness and wellbeing.

Bad food's materiality and symbolism was also discussed. Virginia's bad food has been reflected upon already in the chapter when considering discourses around dieting and healthy eating, and again she talks about her own consumption of such stuff:

*"Chinese food and chip shops and things like that as much as you like that horrible greasy food I feel disgusting as soon as I've finished it."*

In this account there a clear recognition of the materiality of food that to eat bad food will have a negative effect upon one's physical body but there is also a clear symbolic link between eating bad food and an undesired self which feels disgusting to the individual. To eat this way as noted already is also to act against social norms of restraint and control and the thin ideal, one incident can waste months of effortful good practice and force the individual to confront negative aspects of self.

In addition to loved and hated, good and bad food, which are not synonymous in the data, there has been discussion of commodities playing a role in extended-self when an individual adopts a food based social identity. Most typically in the literature this is discussed through vegetarianism and such identity was evident with the informants. Only three members self-defined in this way either their contemporary identity or a lapsed practice, though small overall number at 15% of the sample, with only 5% of the overall population defining themselves as such (Mintel, 2011), this identity is well represented though the sample wasn't recruited to be quantitative or for probabilistic analysis. Vegetarianism as discussed in chapter three is largely self-defined and reflexive of a variety of dietary practices (Willett, 1997). Categorised as a form of symbolic identity it is considered that the dominant constructs are either health vegetarianism or ethical vegetarianism (Fox & Ward, 2008). The vegetarians in this group found such simple categorisation difficult & talked about a combination of the two in addition to a more utilitarian lack of desire or taste for meat. Kathy talks about her vegetarianism:

*"I became a vegetarian it was really one of those sort of adolescent fits my parents were never particularly good cook and I was kind of fed up with the grey chop with an inch of fat round the side so just said to them well that's it I'm no longer eating meat and became a vegetarian"*

It is interesting that her vegetarianism, as with the others in the group, emerges during adolescence. Much of the literature makes a link between this life-stage and symbolic social identity, Belk (1988) reviews the literature on adolescent identity and considers that adolescence is typified by identity seeking behaviour and consumption acts as a key means of distinguishing one's self and also situating belonging independently from one's parents. This is partially the case for Kathy, who rejects childhood food in favour of a vegetarian alternative but her practice is also perhaps more prosaic, unable to negotiate her dislike of grey meat and lacking the skill or control to prepare meat to her tastes she eliminates it from her diet. A vegetarian identity is a useful tool for her to gain power in her parental negotiations, clearly delineating her new practices. In this example therefore vegetarianism is a means of achieving mastery over food culture, one of Belk (1988), Sartre (1949) and Mittal's (2006) means of incorporating consumption into identity. As discussed already in the chapter Kathy's vegetarianism lapsed upon meeting her partner, when new ways of cooking meat were introduced:

*“I then was happy to try meat again because he was a much better cook, I explored meat again. Whereas if I hadn’t met Manus I probably would still have been a vegetarian to this day on my cauliflower cheese.”*

She had a wider repertoire of skills to engage with meat and so her vegetarian identity became restrictive. She became able to master meat, prepare it her own taste and so no longer needed to exclude it from her diet.

In terms of the two approaches to vegetarian identity outlined above there was some evidence of these within informants accounts. Valerie, whose body focussed identity and gendered approach to eating have been reflected earlier in the thesis, considers her vegetarianism to be a part of her wider approach to healthy eating:

*“I’m clearly conscious of what I’m eating. I’m not the kind of vegi who struggles to find something to eat ‘cause I do enjoy vegetables and the kind of vegetarian replacement foods like quorn but I’m conscious about cooking and healthy eating. I do think very much about getting enough portions of fruit and vegetables a day, I’m quite easy ‘cause that’s what I’m eating anyway but for my family too I count how many portions of fruit and veg the kids have had. I’m aware of salt very aware of salt. I’m careful about buying reduced salt options on basically anything that I buy now.”*

As such her vegetarianism is most closely akin to the health vegetarianism of the literature but her identity is reflected not just in her avoidance of meat but also her wider food behaviour such as avoiding salt and meeting the social marketing aim of 5-a-day.

The remaining vegetarian Tracy’s approach to food has already been discussed in chapter seven when considering the link between her general tendency to worry and her rejection of meat and dairy consumption:

*“I’ve not eaten meat or milk since Chernobyl I just can’t but I like being a proper vegi not just eating chicken and pretending but properly vegi. I just thing that its’ not the right way to eat, all that factory farming and cows milked till they bleed and stuff, I don’t need to eat that. The cows milking thing is something I saw on the television and I thought well I will now look out for that. I don’t particularly want to see a 50,000 chickens living in a barn together in the dark I think that’s wrong”*

In her ethical vegetarianism Tracey is very directly internalising external influences which are easily identifiable to her: Chernobyl and news reports of dairy farming, while this type of consumption is at odds with her values she embraces her vegetarianism actively and invests

resources in understanding her position, she is engaged in advocacy and activism. Both informants however while dominant in one of the categories of vegetarianism displayed also awareness and evidence of the other in their justifications of this identity.

This section has considered commodities as the relatively unprocessed or refined forms of food the following considers the informants relationships with brands which are more symbolically dense and refined examples of foodstuff.

### ***7.2.1.2 Brands and Quasi-Brands***

As discussed in chapter two defining a brand is argued to be a relatively complex task (De Chernatony & Riley, 1989) though most writers would agree upon their symbolic value as part of the components. In discussing this category of food culture a number of items will be considered as symbolic markers of distinction which consumers utilised for identity purposes. This section begins therefore by considering traditional manufacturer brands, the original site of theoretical developments upon consumer relationships with brands, it then considers supermarkets as brands with which consumers may form identity relevant relationships before turning to brand like, quasi-brand (Carlson et al, 2007) distinctions in food descriptors such as organic, locality or provenance, and fair-trade, which Goodman (2009) discusses as emerging quality food indicators, used in preference to or in conjunction with traditional brands (Leitch & Richardson, 2003).

#### ***7.2.1.2.1 Manufacturer Brands***

As discussed in the literature there is an increasing focus upon consumers' relationships with brands (Fournier, 1998) that they can perform a material role, acting as shorthand for functional and emotional characteristics & the informants do recognise this value:

*“I suppose the one thing that I do tend to do is um is cereals tend to get Kellogg’s rather than own brand stuff. I just think they are better.”* Noel

But such an engagement with brands is not widely considered to be meaningful in terms of identity, rather than speaking to involvement in acquisition, or use the brand is helping consumers to negotiate their lack of involvement and interest, it is reducing the time spent engaging with their consumption. Brands are often argued to be symbolically dense (ibid) but for most informants this rich symbolism wasn't easily accessed. Kellogg's while relatively ubiquitous only suggested better quality than the alternatives, few deeper associations were discussed. Many of their brand purchases were so lacking in engagement, or perhaps working

so effectively as heuristics, that they were invisible to informants conscious mind and memory

*“Brands I’m conscious of buying, you’d probably be able to find loads if you looked, but consciously not really. I always buy bagels but I don’t know what brand they are gosh that’s quite weird.”*

Margaret

This is distinguished from the work of Coupland (2005) who consider how consumers seek to make brands invisible and blends into the household environment for brands that can be made invisible in their lives through use unbranded storage strategies camouflaging branded packaging.

For most of the group, brands are undoubtedly part of their food repertoire and purchased frequently and repeatedly but this stops short of the kind of attachment usually considered necessary in the process of become part of the extended-self

*“Heinz Tomato sauce is it Heinz yes I guess I quite like Heinz Tomato soup sometimes what other brands do we have, if we’re buying juice I mean diluting juice it might be Robinsons I buy Schweppes tonic but I think I’m more habitual than I am loyal.”*

Habitually purchased, they simplify the acquisition process and reduce the effort or resources required in acquisition and use. Their processed and refined nature means scope for mastery and transformation which may be employed by the consumer as a means of incorporation to self is minimal. The symbolic density of brands works against them, rather than as O’Cass & Frost (2002) argue, eliciting strong commitments, the lack of space for consumers to add their own interpretations makes bonds difficult to forge.

For some however brands are important in identity and there is a clear emotional involvement with them. Virginia as discussed earlier in the chapter considers her preferences for brands to be deeply embedded in the influence of her family and they remain items about which she has clear and vivid memory. She, uniquely in the group, discusses brands as being directly part of self:

*“I’m a brand girl I’m afraid. Even when it comes down to toilet paper and cleaning products I am still a brand girl which is probably just stupid.”*

This language of being a brand girl is quite significant in defining the importance of brands to Virginia’s identity, they are not simple something which she consumes (mine) but part of defining who she is (me). This kind of identification is more commonly felt towards one particular brand, see Michael’s discussion of Branson beans for example or Cova & Pace

(2006) on Nutella, for Virginia however it extends to the whole concept of brands across all categories. She discusses the strength of emotional attachment which her branded identity leads her to feel towards them

*“I think I would feel bad, I would feel guilty if I didn’t buy, I don’t know I’ve never done it. But I would think that I would maybe feel a bit guilty.”*

Her account here is quite remarkable in the passion with which she talks about the relationship, these truly are loved consumption, she offers brands fidelity such as one may within marriage or friendship such that it is difficult for her to imagine buying anything other than brands without strong feelings of guilt. Finally she discusses the fundamental display role which brands play in her identity, they are symbolic of the ‘me’ she expresses to the outside world

*“I think it’s a social, maybe it is a social thing. I wouldn’t like people coming to my house or look in my shopping trolley and see own brands. I’ve never looked in anybody else’s trolley but maybe I wouldn’t like that. No I wouldn’t really like that actually. I wouldn’t like people to know I had Asda’s own toilet paper or something”*

In this account brands are playing a complex role in Virginia’s identity, they are part of both her “I” and “me” by describing herself as a brand girl she goes far beyond a simple preference and her guilt and distress at the thought of buying own label products is illustrative of the emotional attachment she feels.

Only one other informant considered himself to be particularly engaged with a food brand and that was Michael who says

*“I like Branson beans and I tell myself I’m quite clever because I like them best and I found that brand that I think better than other one’s, they’re my beans”*

Mittal (2006) considers that that by considering an item as mine, as opposed to anyone else’s then they become a virtual part of self. Michael clearly identifies Branson as his brand of beans, he also considers that here has been intellectual and emotional resources invested in their acquisition, he has taken a risk by seeking and trying this lesser known brand (Heinz dominate in the sector) and he considers himself rewarded for his effort. This has led to both emotional attachment and increased self-esteem because he can consider himself clever and rewarded for his risk.

#### 7.2.1.2.2 Supermarkets

Typically informants had more recall of their supermarket brands than the branded items purchased within, one of the reasons they consider is the high level of economic resources allocated to them, John says:

*“I probably spend £100 a week in Sainsbury’s, so, they are £5,000 beneficiaries of my cash. The only person who gets more of my cash is the bank that owns my house.”*

While this spend is constituted of small investments in a range of items and brands within the store, Sainsbury is the brand he identifies as being in receipt of his resources and as such the brand with which he holds a relationship (Grewal et al, 2004). As Allaway et al (2011) discuss the relationship consumers have with their grocery stores are among the most ubiquitous and visible in society.

Though all informants engaged in supermarket shopping, like individual brands, many felt no particularly strong attachment and considered them an undesired necessity for sustenance rather than a meaningful form of consumption as Margaret says: *“I avoid supermarkets as much as possible as well, we do go because we have to go”* For others, because the ubiquitous nature of the supermarket, they utilise them but have developed no clear preferences rather their consumption is based upon utilitarian factors such as convenience:

*“I don’t actually enjoy the process of going to the supermarket. I go to the different places for variety more than anything else it’s monotonous enough having to do it than having to do it in the same place all the time but it just comes down to convenience more than anything else I go to a supermarket park the car, get my stuff”* Valerie

This is consistent with Saridakis (2009) who considered that convenience factors such as distance and parking were instrumental in driving supermarket choice, though Valerie’s variety seeking behaviour is outwith Saradikis (ibid) factors.

Others in the group recognise the values and symbolism associated with individual supermarket brands, as in Fin’s account, which has been reflected upon earlier in the chapter when considering class based consumption, for him individual supermarkets are symbolic of class position and he creates his own hierarchy

*“M&S I would never touch Asda, I would reluctantly touch Morrisons but would rather not, Somerfield it’s a travesty that we have to, Sainsbury OK, Tesco OK but no if given the choice I would rather shop in M&S and Waitrose”*

M&S and Waitrose are those which most closely fit with his sense of self and act conspicuously to display this to other, these he considers to be his brand preferred over the others, interestingly too Asda and Somerfield are openly rejected these are brands associated with a class based out-group and so through choice would never form part of his repertoire. Ivy goes further and has developed a clear preference for one supermarket over the others, based upon her understanding of the values of individual supermarkets, she says:

*“Sainsbury’s happens to be the supermarket I use, in brand terms, it’s a more attractive prospect than the terminator- Tesco, and so it’s a much more sympathetic brand for me.”*

Though she doesn’t express what Sainsbury’s brand values are, they constitute the best fit with her individual self-concept. Ivy’s congruence seeking behaviour is beginning to resemble the kind of attachment which may be considered meaningful to identity (Caroll & Ahuvia, 2006).

One informant, Michael, whose attachment to Branson beans has been considered, also displays strong loyalty and attachment to his preferred supermarkets, though he privileges the higher class brands of Fin’s hierarchy, Michael discusses them with a deeper personal attachment and loyalty

*“Marks and Spencer or Waitrose would be things. It doesn’t matter what it is if it’s from Waitrose it must be clean somehow you know I do buy that, they’re places that I would think that I always could rely on. It’s partly the experience of being there, I know supermarkets are quite variable but I think it’s a more pleasant environment to walk round and the range of things they have I guess that also influences me”*

As in Virginia’s discussion of her attachment to brands, Michael both evaluates these brands positively and talks about them with emotional attachment, that they can be relied upon and trusted across all categories (ibid), this emotional connection with supermarkets is not widely theorised in the literature which rather considers supermarket shopping.

### **7.2.1.2.3 Quasi-Brands**

There are a range of descriptors of food which act, for informants, as an alternative or supplement to brands as a means of engagement with food culture, these are discussed as a category of quasi-brands: names and images when associated with products may drive retail sales (Carlson, 2009). Though such items have been widely theorised there is little agreement over terms for these descriptors, Leitch & Davenport (2008) theorise them as social brands within the consumer focussed brand literature as has been discussed in chapter two.



Commodification is considered to be a spectrum upon which items sit and that in commodities there is still a specific supply chain (Fine, 1993) so that that even basic items are increasingly being differentiated by means of alternative descriptors and definitions (Stanton & Herbst, 2005). In discussing these items informants focussed upon three commonly used distinguishing factors, which have been grouped as alternative (Morris & Young, 2000) or ethical (Barnett et al, 2005) food: organic produce, locality and provenance, and fair-trade, though the later was meaningful for only few people.

This thesis recognises that such marks or categorisations are not directly comparable with traditional manufacturer or retailer brands but it discusses them here because they are introduced by informants as distinctions which can provoke meaningful engagement and having identity meaning. While the literature often distinguishes ethical consumption as a distinctive form of counter-consumerism (Bryant & Goodman, 2004) for informants it did not function in such a way rather it was integrated into their mainstream consumption practices.

#### 7.2.1.2.3.1 *Organic*

Organic food is relatively widespread and easily available to consumers with 88.3% of households buying some organic produce ( Soil Association, 2010), supermarkets increasingly carry ranges accounting for 73% of the market (DARD, 2010) in addition to it be a feature of alternative means of provision such as Farmer's markets, Goodman (2009) notes that such produce however is regularly consumed by a relatively narrow segment of consumer, as discussed when considering class based choice, those with appropriate levels of economic and cultural capital and 67% of consumers are in social classes ABC1 (Soil Association, 2010). As has been discussed earlier in the thesis the research group for this study are all middle class individuals with relatively few constraints upon their choices and they consider that organic food particularly is ubiquitous, Lisa describes it thus:

*“I think because organic food has become much more accessible now it's almost like you almost don't have an excuse not to buy organic”*

She does however recognise that it is not a choice which all would consider necessary. To engage with such quasi-brands one is required to make a resource investment in acquisition which is greater than their non-organic counterparts and Lisa describes how this isn't always considered worthwhile:

*“this is to do with budget and there are days especially near the end of the month where I just think I’m just going to get the cheaper carrots this time because money is tight and that does happen. As much as possible I will try to buy organic.”*

So while Lisa is habitually purchasing organic produce, it is not for her either a loved item nor one which is particularly meaningful to her identity because when it requires financial sacrifice she is unwilling to consume (Mittal, 2006). This approach was common among informants when considering organic produce, while they would consider it as part of their purchasing any hurdles such as increased price and lack of convenience which required additional resources to be employed was likely to cause an intention behaviour gap (Lappalainen et al, 1998), Anna says:

*“they’re actually just that much more expensive and they’re in a different section (in the supermarket) and I never really get round to looking at them. I should probably go to the farmers market more often and get things. Funnily enough sometimes it is only when I go to supermarket and I go to get mushrooms and there is no mushrooms that I then like swing round and think where is the organic section and get organic mushrooms. I do find mark up on it that quite a lot and I can’t quite buy in to doing a full (organic) shop.”*

While Anna displays intentions to shop organically, using the farmers market, the utilitarian factors around organic produce prevent her from translating this to behaviour, this is because of a lack of attachment to the organic concept and understanding of the benefits associated with it, Goodman (2009) discusses how such markers rather than having distinctive meaning have become simply means of denoting quality and Anna reflects this:

*“ the organic thing is definitely hit and miss for me. A lot of things that I am cooking, you kind of think well what’s the point of cooking with organic goods because you are cooking it. The subtle difference in flavour would be lost, so you know, I’m not convinced”*

Other informants however identified organic food as being a particularly important part of their food choice, Ivy says:

*“all the veg we eat is organic, we wouldn’t have it any other way, obviously you’re really careful about removing soil but you kind of just have this feeling of I don’t need to peel it loads to get rid of whatever it’s been doused in. You know at university I did lots of studies on ... phosphates and all these kinds of nasty chemicals and you really, I just don’t want them anywhere near me.”*

Ivy’s preference for organic food has been considered previously in the chapter when discussing class and certainly here she does display her social capital through her discussions,

but for Ivy organic food is akin to loved food, she demonstrates strong brand attachment and positive evaluations (Carroll and Ahuvia, 2006) but also considers that resources are well employed in avoid the negative chemicals she associates with traditional farming methods.

Organic produce though easily available through traditional shopping channels is closely associated with alternatives means of provisioning (Goodman, 2009). As discussed by Anna, this may be sources such as farmer's markets which account for 1% of the market (Soil Association, 2010) and, also common among informants, organic box schemes which, along with mail order, constitute 8.4% of the market (ibid). Box schemes added an additional layer of attachment for consumers when discussing organic produce, Elaine talks about her scheme:

*“the company that delivers our box of vegetables is called East Coast Organics. Their vegetables come in a little plastic box which you use every week and they've got a corporate identity and there's a van that drops the vegetables off. Um, I think that versus a Sainsbury, East Coast Organics, is a terrifically worthwhile brand socially.”*

This relationship with the East Coast organics brand is typical of consumer relationships with loved brands and more tangible than the quasi-brand status of organic food generally. This individual company give Elaine considerable trust in organic food which the literature argues is important to developing loyalty (Eden et al, 2008), she is clear of its provenance and farming practices and that allows her to make an emotional attachment to it, she has made a commitment to receiving vegetables weekly and surrendering some of her own choice to the company's judgement of what is seasonal and best from their farms, there is some discussion of this form of provision upon cooking practice later in the chapter.

#### 7.2.1.2.3.2 *Local Food*

Goodman (2009) argues that quality food and local food are often considered interchangeable as food categories and that this relationship is based upon local embeddedness. Increasingly discussed as slow food this movement has increased in prominence in recent years and Goodman (2004: 902) argues it carries with it embedded meaning of rural communities, traditional landscapes and gastronomic difference. This type of consumption he discusses is considered to be eating to “make a difference”. Informants while engaging with the concepts do consider its limitations and consider that there are advantages to globalisation even where these sit uncomfortably with their beliefs: William says:

*“I think if you’re having pineapples from Equador, it’s a bit weird, but we can’t really grow them here”*

So they consider that the exotic is an important part of diet and discuss a desire for authentically ethnic foods without considering the geographical origin of the ingredients. Warde (1996) discussed this antimony between seeking adventure and tradition and argues that consumers are ever pulled between the two, John talks about his adventure with food:

*“I certainly cook a curry, be that one that would be broadly recognisable as an Indian dish, or one that, which would be southeast Asian, at least once a week, I’ll go to one of the Indian supermarkets and get all the spices and stuff to make it right”*

and he discusses travel as a source of inspiration and information about food:

*“in Japan, and we ate some extraordinary things there, the Japanese are very aesthetic about their food, they eat stuff that is just quite alien to us, so that is very theatrical and very I mean, you could always get a kind of buzz out of that without eating it”*

For the informant to this study such food typically was discussed as regional food and their engagement with such concepts was based upon conceptions of quality but also this more embedded considerations noted by Goodman (2004), Joseph says:

*“Regonality I’d say is more. I mean I tend to pick Scottish strawberries and raspberries just because well they are local. I think that is quite a good thing to support local businesses. So that would be doing that. However you are very much at the ... of major retailers who you know to be hone’st if all the strawberries they’ve got are from I don’t know from Berkshire or from Spain then that’s what you go for because if you want strawberries then that’s what you have to get. You know I think it is becoming an increasing issue but I wouldn’t say its forefront in my mind with very small exception. “*

This is a preference and supporting local business is part of the discussion, but he doesn’t consider this to be distinctive consumption, it is done within the multiple supermarkets and based upon the constraints of availability.

#### 7.2.1.2.3.3 Fair Trade

Fair trade as a form of ethical consumption is argued to be well established in the UK market and Goodman (2009b) discusses it a form of developmental consumption, where consumers can “do” things through their purchasing, this can include such behaviour as shopping in charity shops, or buying charity goods such as Pink ribbon goods to ‘do’ charity, or purchasing fair- trade produces to support farmers in the developing world. The sorts of

development one can do with consumption he considers staggering. Though often ethical consumption is theorised as a form of anti-consumption, Goodman (ibid) argues that developmental consumption does little to limit consumption behaviour, rather it posits that if one is going to be buying a product anyway then simply make it the most sustainable, green form. Fair trade is considered to be one of these forms of consumption and informants to the study considered it thus, William said:

*“Fair-trade in its own right is wildly important to me, I don’t go out of my way to look for Fair Trade stuff but if there are two things, both look nice so I’ll buy the Fair Trade one, I don’t look at prices because I don’t care how much they cost,”*

While the concept of fair-trade is meaningful to William he as Goodman suggest varies his consumption only minimally to incorporate it, he will not seek out fair-trade products in specialist retailers or sections of stores but when confronted with the choice in categories which he already shops would favour the fair-trade option. Fair trade itself is reflexive of a range of business practices (Littrell & Dickson, 1999) at a minimum paying a fair wage and providing a safe working environment but may also encompass a whole range of sustainable initiatives, empowering artisans or establishing political and social justice (Pelsmacker et al, 2005), while fair trade defies simple definition many products now carry a fair trade mark regulated by one of the fair trade labelling organisations, within the UK this is the Fair-Trade foundation and food items constitute between 60%-80% of all fair-trade produce (Moore, 2004). No informant expanded upon their understanding of the meaning of fair-trade, Ivy says simply: *I will feel less guilty about where it’s come from* reflecting an understanding of its aims to improve the rights of marginalised workers, but there was no discussion of the variety of practice embodied by fair-trade (Moore, 2004). For only a few informants was fair-trade a means of distinction which they considered relevant and for some their engagement was relatively low level: activity which they sometimes engaged in though not habitually an relevant to only a few categories of food, Elaine says: *I do sometimes buy fair-trade tea or coffee but that’s really as far as it goes sometimes fair-trade bananas* this behaviour is reasonably typical, coffee is the most prevalent fair-trade product (ibid). Pelsmacker et al (2005) in segmenting Belgian coffee consumers considered that 39% of their sample were occasional purchasers who like fair trade but were not loyal to it.

Only two of the sample considered themselves loyal to and engaged with fair-trade, Anna talks about it as a quasi-brand:

*“Our brand that we would tend to, it is not a brand per se but we would tend to always buy Fair Trade tea and coffee and Fair Trade kind of biscuits.”*

While still only relevant in the particular category of coffee, and related categories, which dominates the market, Anna considers herself to be fair-trade loyal, that has surpassed traditional brands as her means of identification and choice, Pelsmacker et al (ibid) discuss that only 11% of their sample considered themselves to prefer fair-trade as a differentiator over traditional brands and even fewer translated that into loyal purchase so Anna remains in a minority through her engagement but clearly considers fair-trade to be a meaningful distinction referring to it as her brand, and as Ahuvia (2005) discusses when items become mine they typically also become part of me.

The other informant for whom fair-trade was meaningful was Ivy, whose preference for ethical consumption through organic produce is also considered above, within her identity discussions considered in the previous chapter Ivy identifies herself as a bit of a greenie and so it perhaps unsurprising that of the group it is she who most engages with developmental consumption:

*“fair trade yeah, big fair trade coffee, fair trade tea, honey, nuts, and I don’t care about paying a bit more for it, I really don’t. Fair trade where possible, I mean all those things that, you know, are actually important to me when I enjoy a meal, you know, I will kind of if I see fair trade coffee, that will be a better cup of coffee in my head because I will feel less guilty about where it’s come from.”*

Her inclusion of categories such as honey and nuts which are less commonly considered as fair-traded commodities suggests a widespread use of the quasi-brand as discussed in chapter seven Ivy is engaged in consumption which is outwardly symbolic of her ethical identity which she considers to be core to self but she is also engaging in transformative consumption (Ahuvia, 2005) through her ethical purchasing she becomes increasingly embodied of those behaviours.

### **7.2.1.3 Meals and Snacks**

The definitions of meals has been discussed in chapter five and the importance of meals to these informants when considering the social antecedents of food culture, that meals are demonstrative of the structural nature of food, its temporality & ritual. Snacks on the other hand are unstructured food events (Douglas & Nicol, 1974). The literature argues for the privileging of proper meals as a preferential form of eating, and the informants concur. In

discussing commodities above, it is noted that food typically become more meaningful to consumers when transformed through cooking into a meal and this is recurrent in accounts. Ritualising the meal, though resented in childhood, is a means for informants to discuss its special nature in their discussions of individuality, though Belk (2010) has considered that sharing can be an means of consumption whereby goods become part of extended-self, the informants to this study focussed more clearly upon individual behaviour within the social setting. Ivy talks about the individual rituals which she and her husband John construct around their shared meals:

*“like John and his perfect mouthful, that’s his ritual, he has a perfect mouthful thing where he has to get the absolute little bit of everything, particularly when it comes to clean food. Because obviously that’s separated but I suppose that’s a ritual in itself, you know, having everything separated is quite ritualistic isn’t it and liking it that way. I am very fussy, if I’m having sort of fish and potatoes and peas, I’ll have a glass of milk. But if I’m having chicken something else and something else I wouldn’t have milk, I’d have a water”*

Ivy refers, in this account, to her preference for ‘clean food’, which as discussed already she considers is influenced by family food growing up, but has now adopted into her self-identity as uniquely her ritual. John her husband has to negotiate this in constructing his identity and has constructed a ritual where every mouthful of food must be perfectly balanced, while sharing a social meal these individuals have adopted practices which distinguish their individuality and from part of their solipsistic identity.

Ritual as a means of incorporating consumption into identity is not restricted to meals Madeline, discusses her personal rituals when snacking:

*“Laughing cow which is processed cheese which my parents have always said och are you still eating that children’s cheese but I love it because its processed and I bite the top of the triangle off and I squeeze it on to crisps there you go it’s pretty grim but it tastes fantastic”*

This ritual, as in the discussions of meals above, prescribes clearly both what is eaten and how, for Madeline this snacking is intensely personal in intrinsic to her identity, despite the disapproval of others she retains her loyalty and affection for this snack.

This thesis therefore considers that perhaps personal food rituals whether in meals or snacks are more meaningful to identity than the more commonly engaged in public consumption. Particularly in the case of snacking this sits in opposition to much of the established literature, while snacking is generally considered to be a more individualistic form of eating,

it is qualitatively inferior to established meals (Wansink et al, 2010) and informants do reflect this discourse within their discussions, Margaret says:

*“You see now I don’t like the word snack. I think that I don’t know where it comes from, it’s like an American British thing that’s kind of been invented by food manufacturers who want you to eat their shit. And I don’t know, it’s almost something, something kind of evil about it. Just the idea of snack, it’s like almost like the idea of it’s a bad thing.”*

Snacking, because of the association in the literature and articulated by Margaret: low quality, inexpensive, fast and unhealthy form of eating, is not readily accepted by informants as part of their consumption and many consider that they do not snack.

Some of those who admit to snacking reflect upon both its personal and inferior nature, Lisa says for example: *“sometimes he’ll say, “Oh you’ve bought a lot of rubbish”, but I always buy good things as well”* she reflects that her husband’s awareness of her private snacking violates her identity. While constitutive of undesired self: Lisa is embarrassed at her desire for rubbish food and mitigates it by suggesting that such behaviour is balanced by good food, her snacking behaviour remains a meaningful part of her identity. Those who reject the snacking definition because of its inferiority, typically do still engage in informal modes of eating, Elaine says:

*“I try not to snack but I might have a chocolate biscuit or I quite like fruit and nuts cause I think that’s my healthy option and tend to take a banana or couple of bananas to work with me to eat rather than eating crisps and things.”*

While engaged in informal eating, by limiting such choices to healthy items such as fruit Elaine is able to reconcile her behaviour with her identity and minimise the impact of her undesired snacking and as such her undesired self. So snacking is clearly a widespread if relatively hidden aspect of consumption, because of its unhealthy associations but rather than being a low involvement mode of eating, done primarily for sustenance such as the literature suggests (Douglas, 1972) consumers are devoting considerable emotional resources to their snacking behaviour.

This has led some in the group to speak quite openly about their snacking behaviour and consider it to be particularly salient part of their food consumption, Madeline’s Laughing Cow ritual has already been discussed and Valerie describes her snacking:

*“Sometimes where you want to go scoff your face with something that is not necessarily good for you um and you think that you probably daren’t try it round in public you know.”*



*I like to think well you know it's quite nice and I'll sit in private and have a cake or a chocolate bar or something like that."*

While containing elements of undesired self and undesired behaviour as in Elaine's account, Valerie embraces the private nature of such food, this personal indulgence is to be relished and preserved as a loved consumption activity. In this instance snacking rather than being typified by multi-tasking and thoughtless or hurried consumption (Wansink, 2010) is a considered treat to planned and enjoyed, symbolic of personal, reflective time and loved as part of identity construction.

## **7.2.2 Texts**

Texts as part of the material culture of food are deeply embedded (Dennis, 2008), evidencing changing tastes and traditions they act as repositories of food knowledge, interpreted and assimilated by individual consumers within their food culture. Texts, as with food items, are consumed artefacts and as such can become part of extended-self through the same processes, proposed by Belk (1998) & Mittal (2006) when considering more traditional consumer goods. This section therefore seeks to consider how texts, particularly: cookbooks and recipes; marketing communications; and social marketing messages, are being interpreted and utilised by consumers in their own identity accounts.

### **7.2.2.1 Cookbooks**

Earlier this chapter discussed Pam's use of oral transmission from her mother as a means of learning and expanding her food knowledge, but Goody (2008) argues that such methods limit the repertoire of what can be learned and transmitted where written texts, visual or aural archives can hold unlimited variation. This nature has led to the cookbooks becoming a dominant material artefact in consumer culture, archiving shared knowledge (Farquhar, 2006) and producing new food cultures (Brownlie & Hewer, 2009).

As noted in chapter three much of the consideration of cookbooks has considered personally or group authored food journals as particularly meaningful (Theophano, 2002). There was no evidence, within the group, of this practice of food journaling but some, using the internet as a source, were engaged in a similar activity of gathering recipes together, Fin says: *the internet is a great source if there's something that I fancy I'll go and have a look and get a recipe* he considers this creation of one's own virtual cookbook as reflective of personal taste, though the record may not be enduring for future generations to research, the on-going

development of a personal collection of recipes is meaningful to him within the present, he distinguishes between this form of recipe search and commodity cookbooks saying:

*“Internet is actually the best source for these things because that way you don’t have to shell out the £20 on a book cookbooks seem to be a kind of lifestyle choice at the minute where they try to sell you their idea of food”*

This recognition that cookbooks contain ideologies is in keeping with much of the academic work on the subject and will be further considered (Appadurai, 1988) but Fin rejects affiliation to the external philosophies of food inscribed in the books, rather he considers that the act of cooking, transforms ownership of a recipes from the author to the individual:

*“you look for things you like to cook and then it’s not that cooks recipe any more ‘it’s yours’”*

As discussed earlier in the chapter when items become considered “mine” there exists an emotional attachment which also identifies them as part of “I”.

For some informants like Fin, the cultural nature of cookbooks is an undesired element, rather they consider cookbooks are ‘at their best’ when instructional in nature and utilised as source of information, John rejects the narrative content of cookbooks saying

*“I don’t read cookbooks like novels, um, I’m not looking for the story, because the story is what I add. When I am cooking, I get enjoyment out of that, and when everyone eats it, if it’s good, that’s good on a bunch of levels.”*

He, like Fin, considers that meaning is created by the individual and is not to be lifted from the pages of the text and considers that:

*“Cookbooks are about lists and tried and tested ways of combining different things. You have to read that somewhere, or you have to train as a chef.”*

So for the above informants, recipes and cookbooks should be stripped back to the bare essentials of lists and procedures (Farquhar, 2006) leaving the individual to adapt the recipe and integrate it into his own cooking identity.

Farquhar (ibid) however argues that in order to be able to deal with recipes in such a way requires a basic level of knowledge and Valerie talks about her absence of such skills.

*“I’m starting from absolute basics because I’ve never done anything like this before”*

Valerie is one of the informant who considered cooking not conveyed orally from parent to child so texts act as her primary means of learning both explicit and tacit skills:

*“I found an old book of which is called ‘Cooking for Blokes’ (Anderson & Walls, 1996) it’s your absolute basic recipes. I referred to it the other day because I’m going to make shepherd’s pie and I’ve never made shepherd’s pie before so there’s a shepherd’s pie recipe in there, I mean it’s completely box standard straightforward. I just want someone to tell me the fundamentals.”*

For Valerie her food identity is emerging and cookbooks act as an essential companion in this endeavour. ‘Cooking for Blokes’ has taken on a special position of trust and affection as a means of negotiating this liminal identity. Reciprocity is another feature of strong relationships with cook books, Ivy says

*“some books have been quite influential on me, I will go back to them a fair bit. I go back to them because I feel they’ve given me something.”*

Like friendships she considers her relationship with cherished books to require equitable contribution, while the books remain useful they remain important and Ivy demonstrates considerable fidelity.

Cookbooks further may be instrumental in development of liminal social identity (Cody & Lawlor, 2011). Annabel Karmel is discussed by Lisa in her construction and maintenance of motherhood identity-

*“I’m an Annabel Karmel mum, I like them to get organic food, I think it’s important for children to have the best her stuff is all full of veg and cook from scratch”*

As when considering Virginia’s attitude towards brand above, it is demonstrative in describing herself as an Annabel Karmel mum, Lisa, rather than simply identifying a preferences for these books, is both identifying herself with an in-group of similarly committed mums and incorporating the values of Annabel Karmel into her extended-self (Mittal, 2006).

For some the cultural dimension of cookbooks is essential and acts a strong identifier of self, Michael’s discussion of Nigel Slater, briefly discussed in chapter six when considering neo-tribes, is particularly striking in his identification with the philosophy of the author and the way that leads him to discuss his own identity:

*“Nigel Slater, I think he’s good because he can take sort of the relatively mundane and be doing yourself justice. Just because you don’t have long to make something or you can spend a lot of money doesn’t necessarily mean that you have to have something tasteless or processed or particularly bad for you. So I like him and his approach to that and I*

*suppose lots of people have cottoned on to that and now he's quite instrumental in that whole movement of just eat something simple but you know make it a good ingredient and again for me I think that was a significant part of feeling independent the first time."*

Rather than, as John and Fin do, rejecting the cultural narratives of the cookbook Michael embraces and internalises them for him these, rather than individual recipes or skills, become part of his extended-self.

Tonner (2008) reflects that consumer own many more cookbooks than they habitually use and, as discussed above, books to which fidelity is felt may be relatively few. Bower (2004) considers however that despite this, cookbooks as artefacts in their own right, as opposed to the culinary practices which flow from them, can be considered important. Belk (1988) has suggested that collection can be a means of identity meaningful consumption and Margaret discusses her own collection of cookbooks:

*"I have got lots of them, I like reading them. I actually just like reading them and thinking, Mmm; I'd love this one as much as actually cooking them from. There are one's I love that do have a chat, there's 'Dear Francesca' which is the woman who who runs Valvona & Crolla. It's brilliant."*

This reflects both hyper consumption of cookbooks as pleasurable reading (McKie & Wood, 1992), they need never be employed in cooking to be valuable, and that cookbooks in this use are involving enough to be collectable and therefore identity forming (Belk, 1988).

While cookbooks are the most obvious written texts within food culture, texts can also be considered to include materials such as film, TV and other visual materials which being symbolically rich are decoded by consumers' in a similar way to written materials. The first of these to be considered are the commercial marketing communications which consumers encounter in food culture, these are discussed in the following section.

### **7.2.2.2 Marketing Communications**

Marketing communications are discussed in the literature as symbolically dense. Belk & Pollay (1985) argue that they are demonstrative of social norms and culture, Tresidder (2010) that consumer participation is intrinsic to meaning creation and Fouquier (1998) that interpretation is a form of self-expression which is not universal but individual and therefore illustrative of identity. Tresidder's (2010) semiotically analysed the Marks and Spencer food, his work is particularly relevant to this study since the M&S campaign was the only

marketing communication recalled by informants, despite significant spend in the food and drink sector at c. 7% of the advertising market (Nielsen, 2011), this is the only contemporary food campaign which has entered the cultural zeitgeist (Fletcher, 2008). This section therefore considers some of the variety in interpretation of the M&S campaign (see appendix VI for example communication). The most recalled item is a TV advertisement for melting chocolate pudding and therefore it is this which is discussed.

In discussing marketing communications informants found recalling particular campaigns difficult, Fin says *“there was an ad I liked, no I can’t actually remember it strangely and food ads no none at all”*. As noted above the only food campaign regularly recalled were those for M&S, these communications were well received, and many executional elements richly described, Lisa describes it thus:

*“the chocolate the melting chocolate centre thing. Oh my goodness that’s just fab I mean the images are very good I even love the woman’s nice seductive it’s not just food it’s M&S food it’s brilliant”*

Marketing communications are argued to enable the individual to engage with food as entertainment, escape and aestheticism (Williams, 2006) and Lisa certainly focuses upon the aesthetic qualities of the communication.

The use of, apparently, authentic representations of food is argued to a strong feature of this campaign, allowing the viewer to vicariously find escape through their consumption (Tressider, 2010). The images used offer a representation of food that is removed from the mundane, marking it as different, and providing a context for interpretation. Ivy talks about the different, special nature of consuming these items:

*“They’re the best adverts ever in the entire world. I went and bought those chocolate puddings, I love those chocolate puddings. Because it just is appreciative of food, it’s not about a trendy kind of, it’s not like buy one get 300 free and it’s not, it just looks like food, it looks like good food, it looks like quality food, you know its fresh food and I just I think that absolutely rocks.”*

For her both the advertising and the products are extraordinary and authentic, attributed which she seeks in food. She uses the language of gastronomy: appreciation of food quality and freshness, in discussing the special nature of these items and her passion for them. As discussed earlier in this chapter loved items are considered to be meaningful to identity and so the loved nature of this campaign makes it particularly impactful (Ahuvia, 2005).

These communications however take the preparation of what is essentially a ready meal: microwaved chocolate pudding, and so in informants' narratives characteristic of bad food, and accompanies it with a gentle soundtrack and voiceover to convince otherwise, that it is authentic and "not just food" but special, as Ivy discusses it (Tresidder, 2010). For some informants this discrepancy was obvious, Joseph says:

*"it's food porn, the Marks and Spencer's ads. Actually when you think about it a little bit further, well that's just ready meals. Plush ready meals but they are ready meals. At the end of the day it is food that you don't really know where it's all from and stuff"*

For some, these communications were loved and had led to subsequent consumption of the advertised product and been subsumed within extended-self, there is clearly individual difference in interpretation and symbolic associations and other consumer continued to reject them as symbolic of bad food dressed up as good, but remaining essentially the stuff of rejected food behaviours.

While commercial marketing communications aim to drive specific purchase social marketing campaigns as another example of texts which are dominant in food culture aim to achieve often more complex behaviour change. Informants' recall and interpretation of such campaigns and their associated messages are now considered.

### **7.2.2.3 Social Marketing**

Social marketing is argued to be relatively vibrant within the food arena (Royne & Levy, 2008), widely theorised it essentially seeks to influence behaviour for social benefit (Andreasen, 1997). Though possibly initiated by a range of different organisations, informants typically regarded such campaigns as being the domain of government Raftopoulou & Hogg (2010) argue that social marketing is increasingly being used by governments and public sector organisations for the promotion of behaviour change for social benefits. The use of marketing by governments, they argue, is a natural development of the general adoption of private-sector-based approaches in the organisation of public services. Informants opinions upon the appropriateness of government intervention to encourage desirable social behaviour varied widely: John says:

*"I think they're patronising, not the role of Government and an abhorrent waste of the taxpayers' money that we raise"*

whereas Margaret says:

*“I think it’s a good I think it’s necessary because so many people do need educating about food.”*

All informants however recognised such public sector social marketing as a common feature within food culture (Grier and Bryant, 2005).

The ubiquity of social marketing did not however make individual campaigns or executions particularly memorable, William says:

*“people know what healthy food is to what and what’s not but I can’t think of any particular TV ads or stuff that I remember.”*

Two campaigns were however dominant in consumer minds: the culturally ubiquitous 5-a-day message which has been widely adopted by governments in developed nations (Sukkar, 2009); and the traffic light system upon food packaging (Sacks et al, 2009).

For 5-a-day it is the overall message, rather than any executional or campaign specific information, which is recalled but all informants discusses trying to achieve 5-a day, Pam for example says

*“Um in terms of the five a day think yes I’m conscious of it um and I do notice things like funnily enough on the Innocent Smoothies pack it says this equals two of your veg a day.”*

More specifically recalled and controversial for informants was the traffic light system of packaging upon food introduced by the Food Standards Agency in 2006. New forms of food labelling and ‘front-of-pack’ nutrient signposting in particular, are viewed as potential tools for changing food behaviour (Nestle and Jacobson, 2000). A number of different systems have been developed (Grunert and Wills, 2007) and their effectiveness vigorously debated both in the literature (Sacks et al, 2009) and by informants to this study, Anna for example says:

*“I cannot understand why they continue to push ahead with the traffic light system on food. It does my head in because it just doesn’t make any sense I think for most people in the way they do their shopping. I like what they have at the moment which is, I don’t know what they call it, but they have calories salt sugar on the front of their foods and for me that works very well and I think in terms of being able to kind of see at a glance what something is I like that. The traffic light system I think doesn’t make much sense at all and I really hope kind of common sense prevails but I don’t quite know where they are going with it.”*

Sacks et al (ibid) found that despite the introduction of traffic lights there was as Anna suggests no impact upon the way consumers shopped. They found no association between the 'healthiness' of a product as evidenced in traffic lights and growth or decline in sales. A small number of informants to this study however suggested that traffic lights specifically were influential upon their purchasing, Madeline describes her purchasing:

*"this little dial on the front that shows you: red, amber or green and I bought a cheese salad baguette the other day and it as mostly red, ¾ red and I was shocked that a cheese salad baguette could be ¾ red. So now I'm actually looking at the dial and I never thought I would do that and I'm thinking these are actually quite useful, more so than a brand that says be good to yourself. Those little dials work I think cause I'm now picking up things that are more orange and green than they are red."*

Though many of the informants discussed awareness of social marketing and adopting behaviours in keeping with its aims, very few were particularly engaged with the area or found social marketing impactful upon their identity. An exception was Valerie, whose approach to health issues has been discussed throughout the preceding chapters, she says:

*"I'm aware of the 5-a-day thing I do try to. I kind of compulsively gather wee snippets of about things that are supposed to be good for you there's always latest fad. Pomegranate for a while and then I read about purple grape juice so I've started buying that. Brazil nuts so I quite like to try to have brazil nut if you have 2 day apparently it's something to do with the selenium intake boosts brainpower I'm aware of the omegas 3 thing at the moment and oily fish so I try to do that try to include fish at least in my diet. I'm aware of sweeteners, I'm aware of the message on salt, although I couldn't quote you the milligrams I got a piece of paper with it on it but I couldn't tell you. I think these things are confusing the latest research shows in pregnancy you can have a glass of wine won't do you any harm then when I was pregnant they were aghast at that notion it's a zero limit. I don't understand why advice changes so quickly"*

For Valerie her social marketing consumption is both instrumental to her quest for health and youthfulness but she also discusses her gathering of such information as part of her extended-self, she is a compulsive collector of snippets, as Belk (1988) discusses collection can be a means by which items become incorporated into identity, however for Valerie collecting such information also has a negative impact in that she begins to distrust the sources and the information because of its proliferation, and so its reliability as a means of achieving meaningful aspects of self becomes questionable.



The impact of consumers' understanding of the various forms of texts considered within the preceding sections will be considered further in chapter eight and the theoretical consequences explored. The final section in this chapter now considers the experiences of engaging in food consumption with particular attention to shopping and cooking as the final objects of food's material culture considered within this scope of this thesis.

### **7.2.3 Experiences**

Consumption is discussed as the means by which consumers incorporate goods from the material world into their extended-self. Belk (1988) suggests some categorisations of consumption which might achieve this process including such activities as gifting, sharing and collecting. This last section of the findings chapter considers kind of consumption activities within food culture specifically which may act to transform goods into meaningful identity items. Much of food culture consumption has already been discussed in this and the previous chapter. When considering meals, relationships with brands and commodities much reflection has been made upon the central consumption experience related to food namely eating and these findings are not restated here. Consumption is however often conceptualised as cyclical (Pieters, 1991) beginning with acquisition, through transformation, use and disposal to reuse, while no information was gathered on some aspects of this cycle, particularly the disposal and reuse of food, which as an emerging area which warrants further study, other aspects such as acquisition and transformation are considered.

#### ***7.2.3.1 Acquisition- Provisioning and Shopping***

Some of informants attitudes towards food acquisition have already been considered elsewhere when considering relationship with supermarkets and quasi-brand attributes such as locality and when considering social roles within food culture. This section however will consider the distinctions that informants drew between shopping for food through traditional channels and alternative modes of provisioning. It will discuss alternative means such as growing food and using markets.

As discussed when considering relationships to supermarkets shopping is argued to occupy a space between work and pleasure (Oh & Ardit, 2000) and some informants, such as Michael whose account can be found above considering supermarket brand attachment, discuss their pleasure in supermarket shopping, Kathy also discusses her pleasure in her weekly shop:

*“There’s a Waitrose which we’ve just started shopping in, which is like really, really good quality, like amazing, the fruit is like out of this world and you compare to, like grapes from Waitrose and grapes from Sainsbury’s, like a different animal. It’s a pleasure and you can pick up your bits and it’s quite pleasant”*

Lang (1991) discusses the purposeful nature of selecting item when shopping, and other consider that it is the means by which consumers can shape their identity using the materials of the economic world (Oh & Ardit, 2000). For Mittal (2006) the investment of time and effort in shopping makes it meaningful to extended-self. In Kathy’s account Waitrose again emerges as a preferred retail brand and her relationship with it is engaged and purposeful.

Some informants however discussed alternative means of accessing food, while these typically still constituted shopping they focussed upon the alternative food market (Murtagh, 2010) such sources as independent retailer, farmers markets and veg boxes featured highly. As discussed above while some of this move to the alternative market is simply as a means of accessing quality (Goodman, 2009) as in John’s account:

*“am now trying as best I can to buy all of our meat and fish from local suppliers, small independents, a guy whose name I know and I think that is important, principally because the products you buy there are better”*

for others local sourcing involves a hedonic experience, Madeline says:

*“when we lived in London we’d go around Borough market you have to say it’s an experience. It’s the whole going there is an exciting thing to do, it’s a fun thing to do you get your cash out before. I’ve got £50, I’m going to spend £50, I’m going to really enjoy spending it.”*

This is indicative of the way shoppers can carefully consider their values and practices in the acquisition of goods (Miller, 1998) as with restaurants discussed earlier in the chapter, the alternative food market can act as a site of pilgrimage, consumption becomes sacred activity (Belk et al, 1989).

Finally there was a little discussion of provisioning food without shopping. Though all respondents recognised that such means could not practically meet all their food needs and that rather they engaged in mosaic practices ( Blake et al, 201), utilising a range of retailers and sources, the ability to provide food from home was particularly meaningful, Margaret says:

*“it’s all about being in the garden, growing food. I had my own like vegetable patch from about age 5, so I got to grow my own food, which I think as well was a brilliant thing. So I’m just in the process of a lot of it, not that I’ll keep animals and slopping out or anything like that, but I do think it’s a large part of life so the meal is more than just from the fridge to the table.”*

While shopping carefully can allow control over aspects of the consumption cycle, growing at home and self-producing puts the entirety of the cycle within the control of the individual. This gives scope for significant identity work, as both Belk (1998) & Mittal (2006) creation and control over goods is key means of incorporation into self. Consuming self-produced food was, while rare within the informants, a universally desirable practice in their accounts. Though in scope this often represented no more than pots of herbs on the window-sill, it was symbolically rich food important to identity.

The final part of the consumption cycle to be discussed in these findings and the final substantive section of this chapter is the transformative work undertaken in home in the form of cooking.

### ***7.2.3.2 Transformation- Cooking***

Cooking has been discussed throughout the chapter as a fundamental activity in food culture, it is at once the utilitarian transformation of food from the inedible to edible is discussed in Levi Strauss (1970) but it is recognised to also constitute a symbolic transformation of raw commodities into a culinary system and into the preference and identity of the group that practices it, forming part of cultural gastronomy (Bourdieu, 1984). The socially bound aspects of cooking have been considered in discussions of gender and class earlier in this chapter and so this section considers the ways in which individuals discuss this most every day activity as identity relevant.

The act of preparing food is argued as a form of cultural production, it is the assemblage of everyday material goods translated through individual behaviours into a unique, temporal artefact meaningful to individual identity (Fischler 1988) and informants to this study discussed their engagement in these terms. The enjoyment derived from cooking and the significant resources employed within it mark it as an experience which has sizable identity impact. John, for example, says:

*“I cook all the time, sometimes three times a day. Ivy quite often comes home from work at lunchtime and I’ll quite often start cooking at 11.00 for her coming home at 1.00, and then if she comes home at 6.30pm, sometimes I may have been cooking since 4.00 which means that some days I cook for four or five hours.”*

Though at the extremity of time committed to food preparation, John’s account illustrates the level of care taken by informants when creating food. Cooking identity was also a matter which was accessible to informants, with clear descriptors of the type of cook they considered themselves to be. Most discussed their cooking identity as being akin to a “foodways career.” (Short, 2006) This career may be compared to, and is closely related to, the life cycle: as an individual moves through childhood, adulthood and old age, eating practices, specifically food preparation and cooking change and most discussed this emergence of a cooking identity or cooking “skill”, Noel discusses his acquisition of the skills thus:

*“again that’s probably going back to the independence thing that I can fend for myself. I am not relying on somebody coming in and waiting on somebody cooking me a dinner to eat that I can do it myself. So it is probably quite important from that point of view. But I know I would survive I would go out and buy stuff that I wouldn’t have to do you know mess about with to cook. So it’s important that I think that you can do it so you can invite friends over for dinner and not be worrying or stressed out about oh no I’ve got this to do, I’ve got that to do. It’s a good skill to have. I wouldn’t say I’m excellent but do you know I think I’ll get by.”*

Cooking identity as highlighted in this account is related closely to self-consumption aspects of identity Noel links his perception of his self-sufficiency to his desire for acquisition of cooking skill. Others suggest that it is the important nature of food culture itself within their life which drives them towards developed skill and proficiency. Margaret discusses:

*“I think that if you care about something, and you do it a lot, if you don’t develop a greater level of skills as time progresses on one axis, you should be looking for other interests. Um, and I think especially, I can’t think of another interest where you would do it twice a day unless you are going for the Olympics at it, em, so if you are cooking twice a day and you love food, and you are keen to experiment and learn”*

This reflects also food’s status between work and pleasure, while an enjoyable pastime for some it is not without effort and toil. To advance and maintain the skill required to be recognised as having expertise, either individually or by one’s peers takes both practice and

commitment. Margaret draws the analogy of Olympic athletes as being at the pinnacle of performance which may only be achieved by endurance and preparation.

While the social aspects of food and consequently cooking have been considered elsewhere it is here considered that cooking becomes particularly dominant for the informants to this study as they advance through the lifestage, Anna says:

*“it’s a part of our lifestyle and our friends as well tend to be into sort of cooking and things particularly now once you have a family you’re kind of home based then if you don’t cook it would make it very difficult to have people round and that makes it difficult to keep in touch with people as well if you don’t feel confident and able to cook for them”*

It is not sufficient in this account to socialise without food, underlining its central role in such occasions. It is presenting an image of oneself through the food which is offered, a unique product oneself bound within a unique history of family, friendship and place commensurate with the social encounter.

Ahuvia(2006) discusses how cooking can be an important part of identity, that it can fulfil both the positive social functions which Anna discusses above, but can also mark one as part of an undesired outgroup. Madeline discusses how those who can’t cook are a “different kind of person”:

*“ability to cook I consider incredibly important, my ex flatmate was an absolutely terrible cook and it’s shameful I actually think it’s shameful. I just think, come on, it’s one of the basics of life to be able to cook yourself a good meal and I can never understand why people can’t. It definitely a different kind of person who can’t cook they might not have the time or just not be interested and I guess it it doesn’t make them a lesser human being but it makes them a different human being”*

Scott reflects upon his status within this out-group and his desire to have the skills inherent in the in-group:

*“I would love to be able to, I would love to be one of those people who knew enough to be able to throw something together with a random set of things that don’t look as though they could amount to a recipe. I’d love to be able to do that and I can’t or don’t have the confidence to it. And that’s simply about, I think that’s a lot to do with experience but a lot to do with simply knowing what things are and what they do and I don’t think, and Margaret seems to have an instinct for that which I don’t have. Um but I’d love to be able to do that.”*

Scott's experience was shared by others in the groups with limited cooking skills, amongst this group a desire to hold cooking skill was apparent. So cooking would appear to be an example of one of the special status activities suggested possible by Belk (1998) which has particular impact upon extended-self, whether strongly skilled or novice.

This concludes the presentation of findings of how food culture may be impactful upon identity and the exploration of research question four.

### **7.3 Conclusion**

This chapter has considered data gathered in answer to the second two research questions of this thesis: What is the role of social antecedents in shaping an individual's food culture? And What are the salient food culture elements and how are they understood by consumers as part of their identity? It has presented findings which consider how food culture is both instrumental in maintaining established social structures such as family and friendship but that more than that individual understanding of food culture is shaped by these social antecedents both directly and indirectly, that simple theories of these influences are however inappropriate rather that the connections between are multiple and diverse in nature and that in seeking to conceptualise their connections it is important to retain the nuanced descriptions within consumers' own narratives. It has considered also the relationships between food culture and individual identity construction, it has recognised the complex nature of food and many good, texts and activities it embraces and explored this most fundamental of consumption fields and how informants understand and utilise its resources within their own extended-self narratives. The following chapter will consider the theoretical contributions and implications of these findings. It will structure in common with the findings chapters around the research questions and show clear development to extant conceptual work.

## **Chapter 8: Discussion and Theoretical Contributions**

### **8.0 Introduction**

This previous two chapters have presented the primary data findings which answer each of the four research questions set with the overall aim of understanding how individuals create self-identity through food culture. This chapter discusses the theoretical implications of these findings and considers how this thesis is contributing to scholarship within the overall field of identity studies and particularly the body of work on consumer identity projects within Consumer Culture Theory (Arnould & Thompson, 2006). Importantly, this is based upon the nuanced understanding gathered through a qualitative approach to the data and where possible the complexity of the lived experience of the informants is preserved and over-reductive analysis resisted. This means that, in contributing to extant debates, the variety within individual narratives often makes contribution to each opposing argument and often the underexplored middle ground rather than simply advancing one school. This is because many theoretical traditions discuss only one aspect of phenomenon rather than exploring its diversity. The structure of the chapter follows the four research questions considered in the findings. First it reflects upon how self-identity is understood and presented, identity is considered to be a large and complex field of study and in seeking to understand individual lived experiences within food culture this thesis make contribution in a number of areas. It considers the narrative continuity of self and the presentation of possible selves and considers how these perspectives may be theorised across the group. It then focuses particularly upon the theory of extended-self as a theory widely used in discussing consumer identities and reflects upon the organisation of the factors of self proposed within. Second it considers the relevant social antecedents of self and how these are understood, contribution is suggested to two related debates: between individualism and social integration; and between family or friendship as dominant influences. It reflects upon the complexity of defining social categories and situating oneself within. It considers individual responses to larger social norms. Third it reflects upon the role of social antecedents in shaping an individual's food culture, it considers first that influence is reciprocal and that food culture maintains meaningful social structures, in addition to being influenced by them. It then reflects upon the

diversity of influences that social antecedents can have upon individual interpretations of food and emergence of food norms. Finally it considers the salient food culture elements and how they are understood by consumers as part of their identity, it considers the means of food become part of extended-self and how this fits with existing theory, it reflects upon the loved and hated nature of food as meaningful to self and questions the dominance of brands within this literature.

## **8.1 Discussion of Research Question One: Constructed Identity**

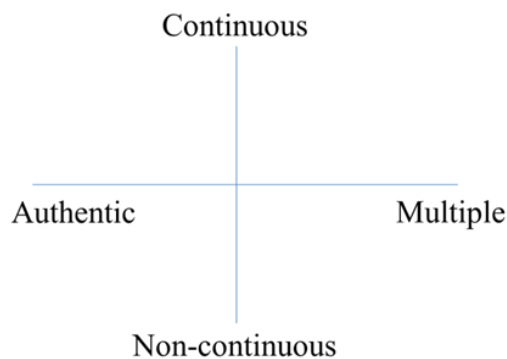
Identity theory is rich in variety and complexity and as such mapping the territory is a sizable task (Schwartz et al, 2011). Contribution under this research question is focussed around how personal perspectives of identity are conceptualised. It begins by adding to the body of knowledge upon, what Gould (2010) has described as, an emerging theoretical framework of the constructed self. Though not making contribution in every area it considers existing discourses of self and seeks to highlight consumer understanding of their own position within dichotomous tradition in matters of identity endurance and authenticity. It then considers specifically the discourse of multiple vs. multi-dimensional core self and seeks to add to understanding of these models of self.

### **8.1.1 Endurance and authenticity of self**

The first contribution which the thesis makes is to an emerging theoretical framework of constructed self (Gould, 2010). There exist two dichotomous discussion of identity: between longstanding and postmodern conceptions of self; and between multi-dimensional core and multiple self concepts. Gould (2010) has called for research which asks consumers to reflexively consider these concepts as part of their own identity and this thesis seeks to meet this need. The literature continues to debate first whether identity is enduring or fleeting. In the traditional, modernist conceptions identity is largely based in self-narrative, constructed throughout the lifecourse and reflexively understood by a person in terms of biography (Giddens, 1991). Postmodern scholars however tend to suggest an episodic identity where there is no need for endurance of a single identity rather that it is multiple and changing in nature (Firat, 1992), as Oyserman (2004) argues, that self contains such a “dizzying array of content, such a rich array of episodic, experimental and abstracted information about that self than not all of it can be salient at any given point” so individuals must work with a subset of the relevant information that is central at a point in time. Secondly debate continues between authentic and fractured conceptions of self, authentic models of self tend to feature a range of



factors or dimensions of self organised to form a single understood core identity (Belk, 1988) whereas multiple self posits that self is fractured (Firat, 1992). Sirgy's self-concept, for example (1982), unpicks the idea that a person has one identity and instead argues that there are a range of self-images dependent upon situation. He argues for four different constructions: actual self, ideal self, social self and ideal social self and Markus & Nurius (1986) add negative self-concept. The data in this thesis finds that individual reflexive understanding of self tends to utilise not only one of these theoretical positions but rather that individuals can situate themselves within the discourse and have their own unique understanding of identity. The thesis considers that these two debates are related and from the primary research findings that a matrix of two continua may be constructed within which consumer narratives may be emplotted. The relationship of these debates is suggested in the findings and visualised below:



**Figure 8.1: Continuity and authenticity of identity.**

For some individuals there is a clear strong sense of one self across situation and time for others this is less enduring and indeed there is some discussion of purposeful alteration of the emerging narrative of self, to fracture it and set off upon a different path. The examples used with chapter six show how individuals themselves are able to consider their positions within the debates of self-endurance and authenticity. The discussions within the data range from accounts of extreme continuity; where an individual considers that with only minor difference they remain the same person over time, to non-continuous selves; where the individual has distinguished their current identity vs. a previous preferable or undesired version of self.

The second axis is between authentic and multiple selves again the data shows that individuals self-define their position within the debate. There has been much discussion in the literature about the validity of a core or inner self and this again was reflected in discussions within the data with a range of positions from those who consider their identity clear and that

they remain true to that identity across social situations to those who consider self to be much more performative and reflexive of the social needs.

### **8.1.2 Multiple Selves**

This section makes contribution to the conception of self based upon Sirgy (1982) which discusses self as multiple and often performative selves. While this thesis recognises that accessing an actual self is difficult in conversation which tends to consist of socially accessible and acceptable descriptions of identity. It considers that through the findings of this research there exists a contribution to one of the dimensions of multiple self-concept, the negative self. Negative self is defined as an avoided or dreaded self. Cantor et al (1986) in discussing multiple self theory suggest identity is as a dynamic structure which involves a multiplicity of selves and necessarily not all will be wholly positive. The development of a negative self-concept is argued to represent an individual self which is rarely shared and is strongly in reference to the characteristics of the out-group (Bannister & Hogg, 2003).

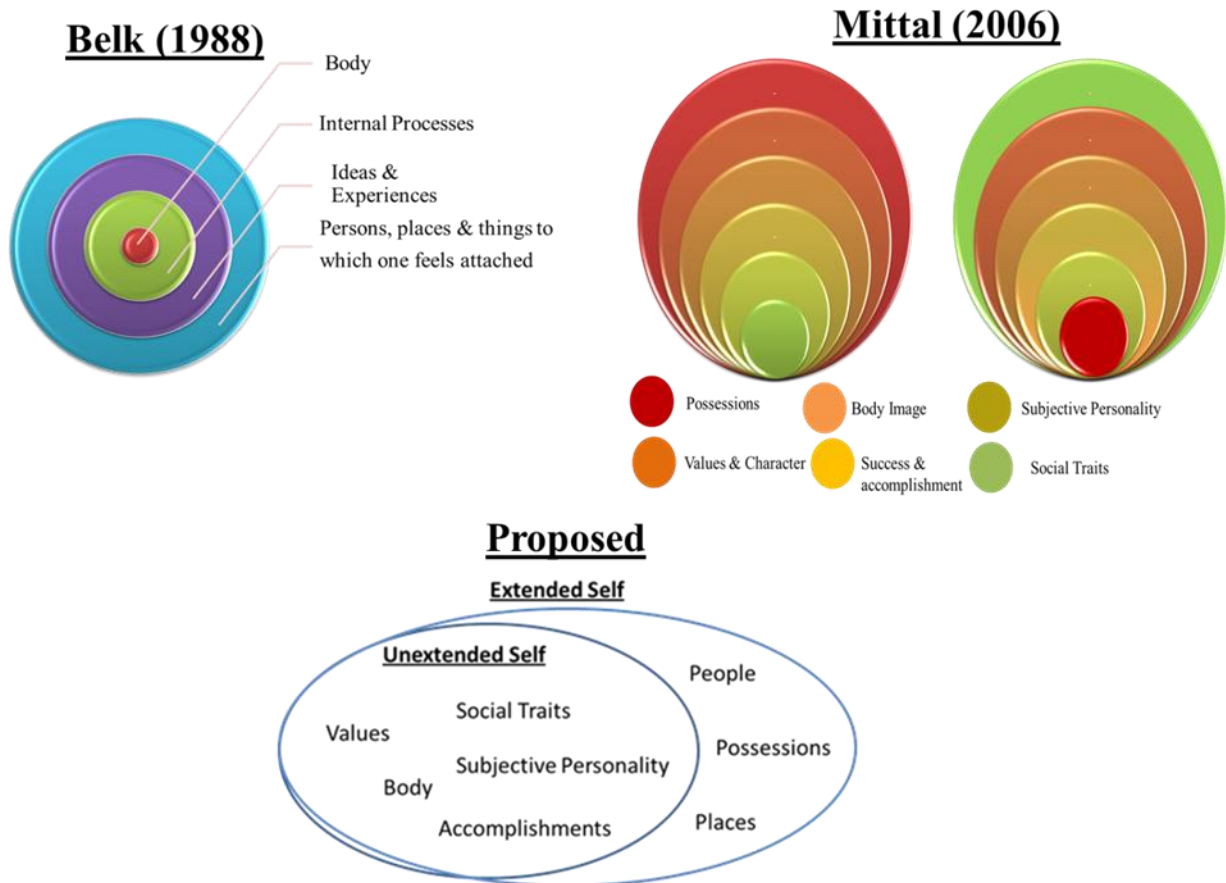
Negative self within this group however was relatively readily discussed, within a range of social situations from such as job interviews individuals are increasingly called upon to be reflexive about their own shortcomings and undesired attributes and so perhaps are increasingly accustomed to confronting and exploring these issues. The data in this thesis suggests a social negative self, the self-deprecating discourses which consumers are willing to engage in with other. These were more readily accessible to consumers than their positive traits, these negative images are held in memory to be divulged to preserve the integrity of the more deeply held and difficult aspects of negative self. Negative self the data finds can extend across trait based conceptions of self: body was typically discussed but other incorporeal elements are also identifiable, the source of such negative assessments may emerge from comparison against others or comparison against a personal ideal.

The most common means of dealing with negative self was through mitigation, that either the negative trait is not so bad or that the impact of this is not so important. Negative-self not a hidden form rather is mitigated within narrative negative where individuals seek to avoid which would represent the negative possible-self or dreaded self. Understanding negative identity and how consumer deal with it can be important in uncovering their resistant identities. When forced to confront the negative self Maurer & Sobal(1999) argue that resistant identities emerge demonstrating rebellion against the socially dominant ideals of self and reframing the negative identity in positive terms.

### **8.1.3 Multi-dimensional core self**

The third contribution under this research question is to the conception of self where multiple dimensions contribute to a core authentic self. This is a conception of self widely used when considering identity in the domain of consumer culture within which this thesis lies.

Dominant theory contends that in this domain consumption is a means of extending self adding external objects such as possessions into individual conceptions of self. However it argued that in such constructions that to extend self there must also be a concept of unextended-self, made up of definable dimensions. While as has been recognised above multiple self theorists would dispute the core self (Ahuvia,2005). The findings of this research are that the dimensions suggested as contributing to self are meaningful to individuals as their means of identification and discussion. Belk (1998) whose work forms the basis of much writing upon extended-self, reviews trait based identity literature and argues for a hierarchy of factors from those most closely associated with core to those most clearly extended. Mittal (2006) however while agreeing with a trait based approach considers that there is no clear hierarchy of factors, rather that each individual constructs the combination which is most personally meaningful, so that no item is privileged over the others. The data in this thesis suggests that elements of both constructions may be true and an extension to extant models is suggested as visualised in figure 8.2. In terms of unextended-self, self sans possessions it would agree with Mittal (2006) that the importance of the dimensions is individually determined and chapter six gives evidence of where individuals have privileged each of his suggested dimensions within their accounts. Belk however in arguing for a hierarchy suggests that there are some items of self which are more clearly extended: the people, places and possessions to which one feels an attachment. The extent to which these become part of self and how such integration is achieved is discussed in further sections however here the thesis, based upon its findings, wishes to suggest a two tiered approach: unextended-self within which dimensions may be uniquely configured, and an extended category within which again the dimensions may be uniquely configured but that each represents a distinctive category of self.



**Figure 8.2 Proposed model of extended and unextended-self.**

This model therefore suggests a midway between a hierarchical approach and total self-determination.

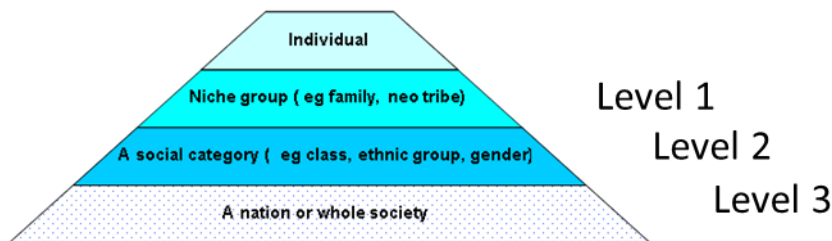
#### 8.1.4 Possessions as instrumental to self

The means by which extended-self items become part of self has been much discussed in the consumption literature (e.g. Ahuvia, 2007 or Belk, 2010). However there is often a conflation that all meaningful items become part of extend self. The data in this work suggests rather that possession may perform three distinctive roles: being congruent with other dimensions of self, being instrumental to their development and symbolic of them, and becoming integrated as items in their own right. The integration to self is much further discussed under research question four. Here however a contribution is suggested that rather than as Mittal (2006) suggests considering all of these as means of integrations. That there should be distinction between the functions which recognises that congruent and symbolic consumption act as means of enhancing or presenting other sans-consumption factors of self rather than become self in their own right. This clarifies and refines Mittal's (2006) extant

model full presentation of the proposed model can be found at figure 8.8 when considering research question four.

## 8.2 Discussion of Research Question Two: Structural Sources of Self

The literature upon identity in addition to the solipsistic dimensions considered above also contains social and contextual perspectives upon the field. This may be presented as social identity theory, how one positions oneself against in and out groups or as this thesis has focussed upon social sources of self derived from close personal relationships and structural classification variations. This section considers the contribution which this thesis can make to extant debates within this area of scholarship. It considers these relationships based upon a three tiers of social belonging:



**Figure 8.3 Model of Social Sources of Self (Warde, 2007)**

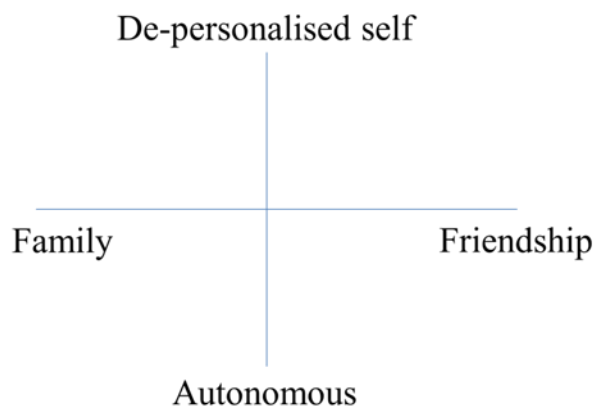
These social structural elements have been discussed and explained in considered in chapter four as potentially impactful as antecedents in the development of self: family, friendship, gender, ethnicity, social class neo-tribes, and cultural norms. It considers contribution within each previously identified social factor beginning with those most closely situated to self : level 1, the niche groups and working outwards through level 2, social categories to level 3, whole society factors.

### 8.2.1 Level 1 Niche Group Sources: Family, Friends, Neo-Tribes

Niche groups are those which are argued to have the most regular and direct influence upon consumption practice (Moisio et al, 2004), that is because, in most cultures, family and friends form the focus of daily interactions, those whose company and opinion is regularly sought (Nicholson & Seidman, 1995). This section reflects upon the contribution which the thesis makes to a range of debates upon how these groups impact self.

### 8.2.1.1. Individualism vs. Community, Friends vs. Family

There are two debated social trends within the literature: individualism vs. community, family vs. friendship/neo-tribe and while the informant to the study do not reflect awareness of these academic discourses they do tell narratives which position them within these debates & again the thesis argues that the debates continue because there are elements of each argument within the individual approaches of lay consumers. Their self-positioning within the debates can be represented by the figure 8.4



**Figure 8.4** Matrix of niche group social belonging.

Much of consumption literature and identity literature has focussed upon an increased individualism in society (Bauman, 1988). Giddens (1991) writes about the increase in individualism in late modernity based upon increased personal choice and dispositions. A conflicting trend within post-modern literature is for what Cova & Cova (2002) discuss as new community. Typically this is focussed around how individualism has given way to non-individual consumer belonging, post modernity they argue is less about individual identity and more about a search for social links based upon shared passions and emotions (Cova & Cova, *ibid*). While this literature typically considers that social links are through consumption rather than traditional social structures social science continues to have at its heart a belief that human interaction is a key influence on the behaviour of the individual. Aron et al (1992) have argued this similarly by considering that individuals may adopt positions either de-personalised vs. self-sufficient. This thesis, from its findings, argues that individuals are neither wholly individual nor wholly social after Durkheim (2005[1914]) and that this may be reflected in individual position upon the de-personalised self/ autonomous axis in figure 8.4 above, it find that social belonging may be driven by consumption practice but is more commonly as a result of more traditional forms of affinity.

It is considered that level one groups are typically considered to be the most directly influential means of self since they are the most frequently encountered and directly accessible social factors for the individual and so if depersonalising is likely to take place it will be in relation to these groups. The second debate extant within this area therefore regards determination of the most dominant and influential social group and that therefore which is most like to act as a source of self. Typically this debate focuses upon considering the distinctions between the two most dominantly theorised niche groups: family and friendship. Family is primarily considered to be an ideological construct (Finch, 2007) but as traditional concepts of family wane some commentators consider friends become the more dominant social force (Pahl, 2000). Pahl (ibid) argues that our choice of friend is personal and in contemporary society we choose them as part of our private lives as reciprocally friends choose us. Within post-modern thought the formation of friendships takes on additional significance because it is argued that the traditional structures of society have lost relevance and so individuals seek ‘families of choice’ for sense of belonging (Pahl & Spencer, 2004). The conflicting nature of these two dominant groups is modelled in figure 8.4 as poles upon an axis of influence.

This thesis finds that individuals vary in their response to this question and uniquely position themselves upon which dominates. For some family remain dominant well into adulthood and act as a continual source identity. For others familial influence lapses within adolescence and friendship becomes a more appropriate source of self. Others find a balanced approach where both play a role and still others who position highly on the individualism and autonomy axis of the model would consider neither to be particularly relevant. This betwixt and between position upon the dominance of family or friendship, and autonomy and depersonalisation is reflexive of the variability of identity construction. Rather than considering that such issues are the results of macro social trends this thesis considers that within consumer narratives individuals position uniquely within the discourses with no evidence of a common approach which has become a dominant norm.

### ***8.2.1.2 Familial Influence***

In discussing the individual elements of niche groups the thesis seeks to make contribution to understanding particularly of family. Family is widely theorised in the literature and primarily considered to be an ideological construct (Pahl & Spencer, 2010) made complex

“through dissolved marriages, cohabitation past and present... step relationships....broader kin relationships and same sex partnership” ( Finch, 2007:68) Family therefore can include ‘biological kinship’, ‘legal kin’ (step relationships etc.) and ‘ fictive kin’ to include godparents and social ‘aunts’ and ‘uncles’ who may be more part of the family than distant biological family (long lost cousins etc.). An individual’s understanding of family is argued to be rooted in their own biography and subject to change over time: so my family may refer to my parents and siblings, my partner and eventually my children and grandchildren as well as the extended conceptions considered above (Finch, 2007). This thesis agrees with the theories discussing the complexity of family and presents examples of these in action it makes contribution by stressing that definitions are highly subjective and though rooted in biography are not easily predictable based upon circumstance. While most informants considered family quite narrowly to extend to biological kinship, considerations of ‘chosen’ families ( Weeks et al, 2001) were evident and these were not the exclusive domain of complex or non-traditional family structures rather such concepts extended into even the most traditionally nuclear families. This doesn’t however mean that the family is no longer relevant indeed research suggest it remains a robust concept (Park & Robert, 2002).

### **8.2.2 Level 2 sources: gender, ethnicity, social class**

Social categorisations are considered in the literature to be both objective means of ordering society and also resources which individuals can draw upon and use subjectively in their own identity construction (Doi, 2002). In this domain the research group for the study were largely homogeneous with very little class or ethnic diversity and as such some discussions in these areas were rather restricted and any comparative analysis upon dimensions other than gender is difficult and relies upon individual interpretations. Two contributions are considered in this area:

The literature considers that social classifications are not particularly meaningful for majority groups and that only when two or more different classification groups intersect do they become relevant means of understanding self (Phinney, 1990). It considers that large and dominant populations cannot be considered in these terms because they have little need or desire to value their identity thus. This was evident in the findings of the thesis some of the white, middle class men in the group found little means to distinguish themselves using these terms however the findings of the thesis make conceptual contribution by demonstrating the strength of subjectivity in such term. It suggests that people can make themselves distinctive



across these dimensions even when objectively highly homogenous. In ethnicity or perhaps more appropriately locality small geographical distance is often discussed as highly symbolically relevant, this can extend to region or town differences which contribute to a distinctive and enduring sense of a collective identity that matters to individuals. Class was equally understood to contain objective elements, income, occupation etc. but that it contains also subjective elements of belonging.

None of the social categories explored were considered within this thesis to be self-evident, Malezevic (2010) argues that while it can be helpful to identify sociologically relevant commonalities it is first critical to determine people's understanding of the terms and this thesis adds to the body of literature demonstrating this understanding. Across all the classifications including gender informants were reluctant to engage with them as abstractions they became meaningful only when translated into meaningful language. This adds evidence to Nicholson's (1995) view that focussing on abstract classification such as gender can act as a barrier to understanding the experiences of individuals. These classifications become meaningful when individuals integrated their own understanding, choice and identity within discussions. They become the result of an individual's self-labelling process in terms of affiliation and membership so femininity or being a woman for example are much more meaningful than discussing gendered experience.

### **8.2.3 Level 3 sources: social norms**

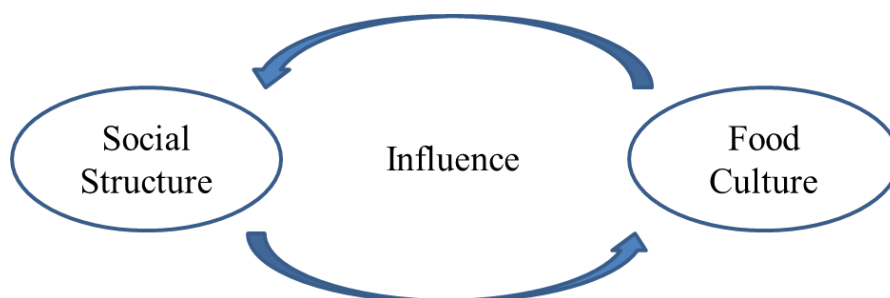
This section seeks to discuss contributions which the thesis makes to understanding of dominant discourse in the field of identity, this was relatively difficult to separate from food culture since this is the cultural domain within which the research was conducted and therefore the social norms which were most readily reflected upon during research. The contribution which is made in this section is a refinement to Weiss's (2003:270) contention there remains a collective discourse of the disciplined body in postmodern society, so that both the ideal one strives to reach and the means of achieving it (the dietetic method) are collectively shared. Informants to this research reflected this norm, all within the study reflected upon slimness however while the literature suggests such concerns are more marked for women (Fredrickson & Roberts, 1997) this wasn't borne out in the findings. Rather there were gender differences in the way the issues were discussed women foregrounding slimness while men focus upon fitness but both experienced similar resultant dissatisfaction.

### 8.3 Discussion of Research Question Three: Social Antecedents of Food Culture

Miller (2006) has argued that consumption is the primary means of participation in society and that the social aspect of consumption is integral to its impact and importance. Warde (1997) as reflected in the structure of the section above, has reflected that tastes in food, and across consumption fields, are not wholly solipsistic; rather that social factors impact upon preferences and norms. This section seeks to contribute to theory upon how such factors impact food preferences and individual understanding of food culture. It begins by considering that the influence between food culture and social structures is reciprocal and reflects upon the importance of this dynamic relationship. It considers that in keeping with the literature that social influence is complex, variable and wide-ranging and that contribution is made in this field by seeking to capture this complexity and its impact. It considers the nature of dominant social discourses in food culture and individual interpretations of these.

#### 8.3.1 Reciprocal Nature of Food and Social Influence

It has been discussed that social structures and belonging are considered to have particularly distinctive impact upon an individual's discussions of self. They are also considered to be important constituents of life for other reasons such as support, belonging and wellbeing (Pahl & Spencer, 2004). The niche groups of family and friendship in particular have been considered as particularly important and widely influential, so it is relevant to consider how these individually important social structures are themselves maintained and nurtured. The data of this thesis shows that food consumption plays an instrumental role in maintaining social structures. This role is important because it marks the relationship between the two constructs as being dynamic and therefore the findings of this thesis make contribution to conceptual understanding of the relationship between these two external influences upon identity (figure 8.5). Studies, as discussed in the literature, have considered the impact of social structures upon behaviour and consumption but relatively little attention has been paid to the flow in the opposite direction



**Figure 8.5 The dynamic, reciprocal relationship between social structures and food culture.**

Extending Finch's (1997) conceptions of doing family, performing the whole range of social connections i.e. by sharing share time fruitfully in the form of food culture, can be an important way of signifying belonging. The findings show that the act of shared food consumption it can be both instrumental in reconstituting the performance of such groups when discordant and strengthening already powerful relationships. Examples have been draw particularly from family and friendship narratives as the direct social interactions of niche groups.

**8.3.2 Complex nature of social influence**

As discussed above this thesis by using a qualitative approach seeks to maintain a nuanced exploration of the topics under consideration and as such when contributing to debate it rarely considers that only one interpretation of phenomena is appropriate. This is particularly the case in considering social influence, this area has been argued to be typified by emerging trends: a break-down of traditional families, the loss of family meals, friendship replacing family as the core social unit, neo-tribes replacing real world friendships as means of belonging. This thesis makes conceptual contribution by arguing that within identified trends its data suggests there is great variety of experience and as such trends themselves are complex in nature.

**8.3.2.1 Family meals**

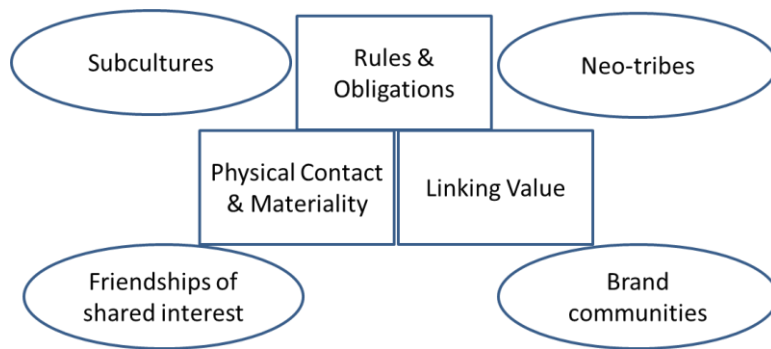
When considering family as has been noted above the term encompasses a wide range of differently constituted units to include the various dimensions of kin suggested by Finch (2007). This work adds to Valentine's (1999) portrayal of the variability of family food, while there is clearly some evidence from this thesis of decline in the practice of family meals driven by factors such as working families and temporally dislocated families the trend is far from universal there equally remains strong conceptual attachment to family food and enduring practices akin to traditionally recognised meals. The enduring influence of family is equally debated, some discussions reflect the trends that family through distance of experiences and contact loses relevance and influencing upon the individual through the lifecourse. However there is equally evidence of family, both past and in many cases still presently, influencing the preferences and practices of individuals. This extends to food

skills, conceptions of proper food and meals, and brands. Like individual families the means of influence are individually unique: they may be through directed learning or by observation; directionally may be positive or negative; and may lead to following or rebellion behaviour. Family food may not simply be characterised as nostalgia, it doesn't have all the negative bits airbrushed out though memory clearly plays an important role in its relevance, since it retains meaning and importance through the lifecourse.

### ***8.3.2.2 Friendship and Neo-tribe***

Friendship has been argued to have surpassed outmoded social structures of family, that now family of choice tends to prefer friends over biological kin as a source of influence (Pahl & Pevalin, 2005). This has not been found to be typically the case in the accounts of this thesis and so it adds to such theory by suggesting the family and friendship as means of influence are conceptualised as distinct and different rather than greater and lesser.

Food in friendship is discussed by informants as being at its best when it is social and the friends in this study engage in a range of means of influencing in this regard each other through conspicuous consumption and forms of care work. There is some extant blurring of the theoretical lines between friendship & neo-tribe and the thesis seeks to add something to discussions within this middle area. As noted throughout the thesis this research group were not a defined neo-tribe, nor did they specifically reflect upon these social groupings extensively. However as means of belonging the boundaries between friendship and neo-tribe were blurred. Neo-tribalism suggests that social engagement is based upon consumption activity: Groups, real or virtual, are increasingly formed around particular products, brands or activities of consumption, which provide the "linking value", which unites the members (Cova & Cova, 2001, p. 69). Within this field of new social forms a number of related group forms are discussed, neo-tribes, brand communities and sub-cultures, The data of this thesis considers that traditional friendship based upon shared interest should also be theorised within these confine while there is much work extant in the area of individually defined groups, friendship is not clearly conceptualised within these remits. Figure 8.6 shows how such conceptualisation may be considered.



**Figure 8.6 Conceptualising friendship alongside neo-tribal theory (Extended from Cova & Cova, 2001)**

This thesis has found that while there are many bases for friendship that a shared interest or passion is well established as one of these connections. Informants to this study discussed this as similar people finding one another and having friends with whom they shared passions in this context for food (though others have discussed football etc. within this area). For some informants there is identification with an established tribe, though they do not explicitly use the language of tribalism, but in most cases this was absent. Rather it was considered that there can exist exclusive groups of friends who consume in common. One of the notable elements of food behaviour which these friendship groups engage in is pilgrimage, to seek out extraordinary culinary experiences as part of their social identities.

### **8.3.2.3 Social categories.**

In considering social class and ethnicity Bourdieu's concepts of habitus are dominant that these act as means of distinction in the tastes and practices of individuals, reflecting upon ethnicity as discussed in the previous chapter and above small geographies made large cultural difference and impact was considered from tastes, brands and skills. Class distinction focussed upon difference in access and ability but also what Bourdieu (1984) discusses as habitus that it is not so much what is consumed but how which differs, and informants discussed different supermarket shops, quality in their produce and ideas of the worried well.

In gender extant theories are rather less clearly supported and so this research seeks to make contribution by adding to the nuance of such work. There is one body of work within the consumption literature which considers gender as a social identity distinction, polarisation and a way of categorising consumption activities (Hogg & Garrow, 2003). This has led to 'gender as a variable' or 'sex difference' research (Bettany et al, 2010) and there is some evidence within this thesis of these distinctions enduring for informants. There were some

mutually exclusive scripts between genders across food consumption cycle and some support in the findings of extant research showing women as dominant in care work through food. Equally there is a body of work which suggest that focus upon gender has resulted in a problematic situation where it acts as a barrier to our ability to theorise about individual differences among women or men ( Nicholson, 1995). This thesis also contains evidence which supports this view with clear examples of both men and women behaving contrary to traditional gendered scripts or simply not recognising such expectations. As such the data of this thesis suggests that neither school has adequately explained the gendered consumption experiences of the informants in this study rather as within the extant identity literature consumers are creating their own positions betwixt established theoretical traditions.

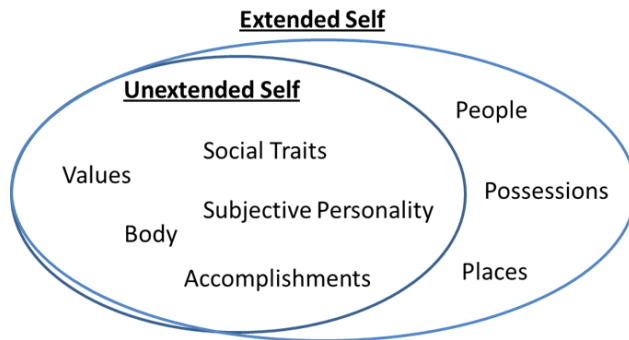
### **8.3.3 Emerging Social Norms.**

As discussed above this thesis is in agreement within theorists who consider social norms of thin ideal to be within the cultural lexicon. How this achieved is also considered to be the subject of cultural norms and Chapman (1999) discusses a discursive shift from dieting to healthy eating as the means of achieving these ideals. This thesis seeks to add to the literature upon this shift by adding detail to the practices which accompany the discourse. Chapman (ibid) suggests that dieting which has waned in fashion because of its basis in denial while healthy eating which emphasises watchfulness has surpassed it as a more responsible means of dealing with the thin ideal and resultant personal responsibility for health and appearance. This data in this thesis shows that while the term dieting has fallen out of use, the core behaviours of individuals remain largely unchanged. In each approach there is continued evidence of restriction of certain foods or overall energy intake to maintain body. While Chapman (1999) discusses that Healthy eating is not something to be “on” and “off” but this thesis shows that these approaches were still being adopted within healthy eating discourse: periods of being good and periods of being bad. It is also considered that the healthy eating discourse carries its own new tyranny, with dieting individuals could eat normally as their desires would dictate and manage excess periodically by dieting, healthy eating demands greater continuity of effort and as such is arguably a more enduring pressure.

## **8.4 Discussion of Research Question Four: Food Culture in Identity**

This section considers the contribution which this thesis may make to the literature which considers how material goods may be integrated into identity. As discussed above in answer to research question one constructed self may be considered either multiple or multi-

dimensional around a central core and contribution has been made to both schools. This section focussed upon multi-dimensional core-self constructions and particularly the extended-self. As has already been considered the thesis proposes a refinement of extant models of extended self based upon Belk (1988) and Mittal (2006) as presented at figure 8.7.

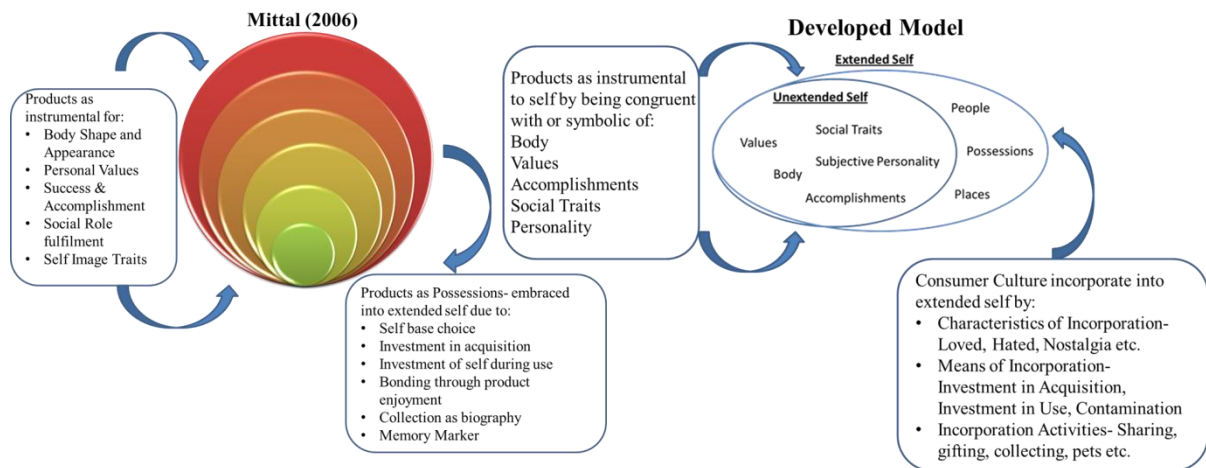


**Figure 8.7 Proposed Model of Extended-Self**

This section now considers further refinements to these models by considering how goods, or as will be discussed in this thesis food culture may become subsumed into the extended-self.

#### **8.4.1. Variation of Mittal’s model of incorporation of possessions**

Mittal (2006) developing Belk (1988) developed a model seeking to explain how product may become embraced into extended-self. He suggest six mechanisms by which this may be achieved: self-based choice, investment in acquisition , investment in use, bonding, collection and memory. The data of this thesis suggest that this model by grouping these items without clear distinction or categorisation the means of incorporation are under-theorised. He argues that congruent consumption through self-based choice is a means by which items may become part of extended-self, whereas symbolic consumption remains distinct as being instrumental to sans-consumption factors of self. This thesis proposes a refined model at figure 8.8 which seeks to add detail and clarity to the way in which goods are understood within identity.



**Figure 8.8: Development of Mittal's (2006) Model of Incorporation of Possession into Extended-Self**

These developments are discussed and clarified within the following sections.

#### ***8.4.1.1 Congruent and symbolic consumption as instrumental to self***

This thesis seeks first to distinguish Mittal's (2006) conception of how possessions become incorporated into self by considering his first means of incorporation: self based choices, items which are congruent with self-identity. He sets as a distinctive role for symbolic consumption as items which can be instrumental in sans-possession dimensions of self, these categorisations are confused and inconsistent with the data within this thesis. It develops a model which considers rather than possessions or material culture can perform three roles related to identity, these have been touched upon earlier in the chapter:

1. Being instrumental to self by being congruent,
2. Being instrumental to self by being symbolic,
3. Becoming integrated as dimensions of self in their own right

The two instrumental roles have already been touched upon and this thesis is in agreement with Ahuvia (2007) that such consumption as well as being reflective of self can be transformative of these dimensions of self. However it is considered also relevant to add to the theory of how material culture can become incorporated into extended-self, rather than simply being instrumental to other factors while reiterating the thesis earlier contribution that possessions alongside other external resources such as people and places retain a status distinct from sans-consumption factors of self.



#### ***8.4.1.2 Material Culture's incorporation into self***

This section considers that in understanding how possessions or consumer culture can be incorporated into extended-self there are three distinct matters to be recognised and explored: the characteristics of incorporation; the means of incorporation; and incorporation activities, or what Belk (1988) discusses as special cases of extended-self within consumer behaviour. In refining extant models the thesis recognises that there is continuing work upon incorporation activities and their incorporation into self across a wide range of consumption areas and would not seek to be exhaustive in categorising such items but it does seek to add dimensions from food culture specifically within the activities considered impactful.

##### ***8.4.1.2.1 Characteristics of incorporation***

It begins by extending the discussion upon the type of items which may be incorporated into self. Possessions are the most widely theorised category of item and these are discussed by Belk (ibid) and Mittal (2006), and distinguished from consumables. Mittal (ibid) argues that not only possessions may become part of self and this thesis posits that all items within material culture are capable of incorporation and would specifically argue for including the perishable items such as food within the definition. Ahuvia (2005) for example has discussed dinner parties a part of the lexicon of loved items and so across the range of goods, texts and experiences as categorised in this thesis, perishable items may become extended-self.

Ahuvia (ibid) discusses that special possessions are the category of things most commonly considered relevant to identity and that it is their special nature which makes them involving, Ahuvia (ibid) recognises the distinction between involvement and love but chooses to focus upon love in consumption contexts. While this has proven to be a useful construct for this thesis, food is typically considered a loved item within consumer narratives, it is also useful to broaden out and consider other characteristics which may be relevant to consider when unpacking consumer involvement. Specifically this thesis has considered both hated foods and food which evokes memory as other types of engagement and meaningful characteristics which may be considered in determining why some possessions and consumables are capable of identity work.

Hogg et al (2008) have discussed the symbolic nature of anti-consumption that what is avoided can be as important a part of self as that which is consumed and in the data of this thesis hated, avoided food is very accessible and clear in informants' minds. That hated foods

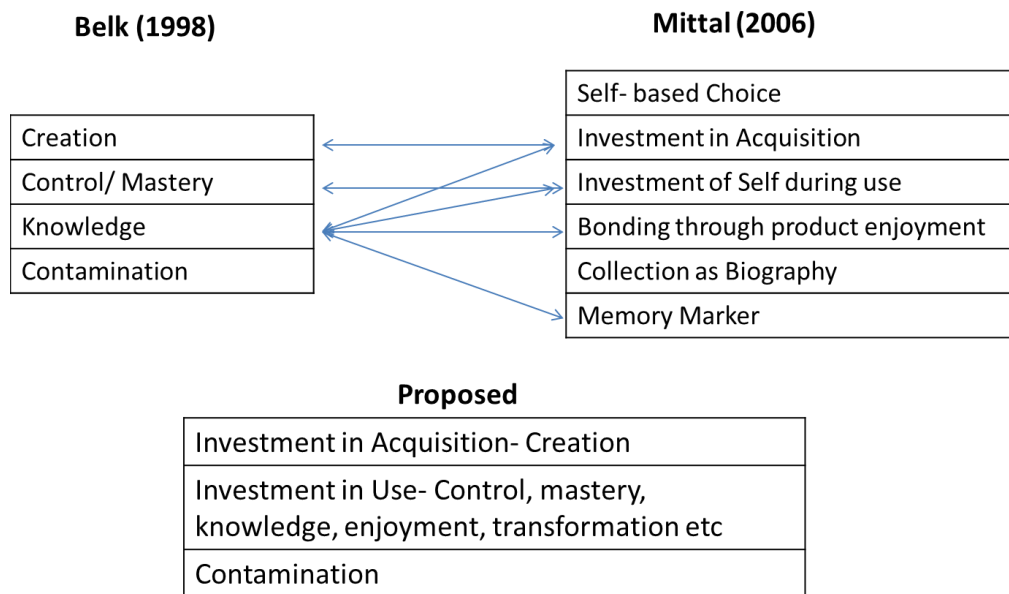
are meaningfully part of the extended-self is clear in the clarity of memory surrounding them and the considerable effort and personal sacrifice recounted in avoiding hated food. This anti-consumption is not therefore about avoiding an out-group identity as some social identity theorists would contend (Bannister & Hogg, 2003) but rather is a preference deeply embedded in individual sense of self which has endurance and stability (Ogilvie et al, 2008).

Mittal (2006) discusses bonding and memory as means of incorporation but these the data of this thesis suggests are more appropriately considered as characteristics of incorporation, that those possessions which with which one creates bonds are synonymous with the cherished items of Ahuvia (2005) or the hated of Ogilvie et al (2008). This thesis contends that all of these characteristics and including Ahuvia's (ibid) loved items should be distinguished from the means of incorporation and considered as the characteristics of incorporated items which may be considered synonymous with this thesis' discussion that it is items with which some feels engagement (though not necessarily love) that marks them as worthy and meaningful to self.

#### **8.4.1.2.2      *Means of incorporation***

Both Belk (1988) and Mittal (2006) theorise the means of incorporation. Belk discusses these as deriving from Sartre as control/mastery, creation, knowledge and adds contamination. Mittal's five processes of integration are split for this discussion into, characteristics (bonding and memory) means (acquisition and use) and activities (collection) since as has been argued above to keep as a single list hinders clarity.

While not entirely synonymous Belk (1988) & Mittal's (2006) means of incorporation do share a common heritage and are clearly related items and a relationship between the two is suggested in figure 8.9 alongside a proposed list which incorporates these commonalities.



**Figure 8.9: Amended taxonomy of means of incorporation of consumer culture into extended-self**

This proposed taxonomy which integrates the work of both theorists while keeping distinct the characteristics of incorporation and potential incorporation activities. Evidence of each of these means can be found in the informant accounts of engagement with food culture found within this thesis data. In discussions of provisioning informant talk of scarcity and seeking quality and distinction in their acquisition as meaningful to identity. There is abundant evidence of the importance of investment in use as a means of incorporation whether in transformations enacted in cooking, how recipes become one’s own when cooked or in the relationships which consumers forge with foodstuffs and brands through their individual rituals and use.

#### **8.4.1.2.3 Incorporation Activities**

The final matter to be considered in refining extant models of extended-self are the practical consumption activities through which individuals achieve incorporation. The research on the activities are extensive: sharing, gift giving and collecting have all been considered within the consumer culture literature. This thesis recognising the ongoing work considers it imprudent to produce an exhaustive list, there are arguably as many activities as there are consumption contexts which are relevant to incorporation. This findings of this thesis however suggest that there focal food practices which might be included within such discussions. Provisioning as an extension to simply shopping is proposed as an area for further exploration, informant to this study found meaningful their ways of accessing food which were slightly beyond

mainstream practice whether belong to an organic box scheme or growing their own herbs. This thesis would also contend that cooking may be appropriately considered a relevant incorporation activity since it was considered so relevant to the identity of informants.

In answering research question four this thesis has suggested advances to extant theory upon extended self, it has sought to clarify and refine the dominant models within the field and also show how the data contained within supports such developments.

## **8.5 Conclusion**

This chapter has aimed to demonstrate how it contributes to theoretical tradition while preserving the nuanced understanding within the data and as such to theorise the complexity of the lived experience of the informants. This has meant that while contributing to extant debates it has often considered the underexplored middle ground rather than having allegiance to one position. It has considered within identity theory, debates over the narrative continuity of self and the presentation of possible vs. core selves and that in each individuals understand their own identity within the shades of grey between academic debates and that perhaps by consider academic positions as poles upon axis that individual difference may then be mapped. It has focused particularly upon the theory of extended-self as one widely used when considering consumer identities and suggested a model which preserves the unique configuration of dimensions of self proposed by Mittal (2006) and the hierarchical nature of extended aspects such as possession suggested by Belk (1988). Second it has considered contributions in the area of social antecedents of self and considered again that individuals situate themselves between academic poles of individualism and social integration; and between family and friendship as dominant influences. It reflects upon how social categories far from being self-evident reflect a variety of interpretations and experience and that while some similarities and trends within categories can be observed there is equally scope for within category difference. It has considered how individual responses to larger social norms and that while discourses may alter this is not necessarily reflective of equal shifts in practice, and that all forms of social norm carry their own tyranny. Third it has reflected upon the role of social antecedents in shaping an individual's food culture, it considers first that influence is bidirectional and that food culture maintains meaningful social structures, it then reflects upon the range and diversity of influences that social antecedents can have upon individual interpretations of food and emergence of food norms.

Finally it considers the salient food culture elements and how they are understood by consumers as part of their identity, it considers the means of food become part of extended-self and how this fits with existing theory, it reflects upon the loved and hated nature of food as meaningful to self and questions the dominance of brands within this literature.

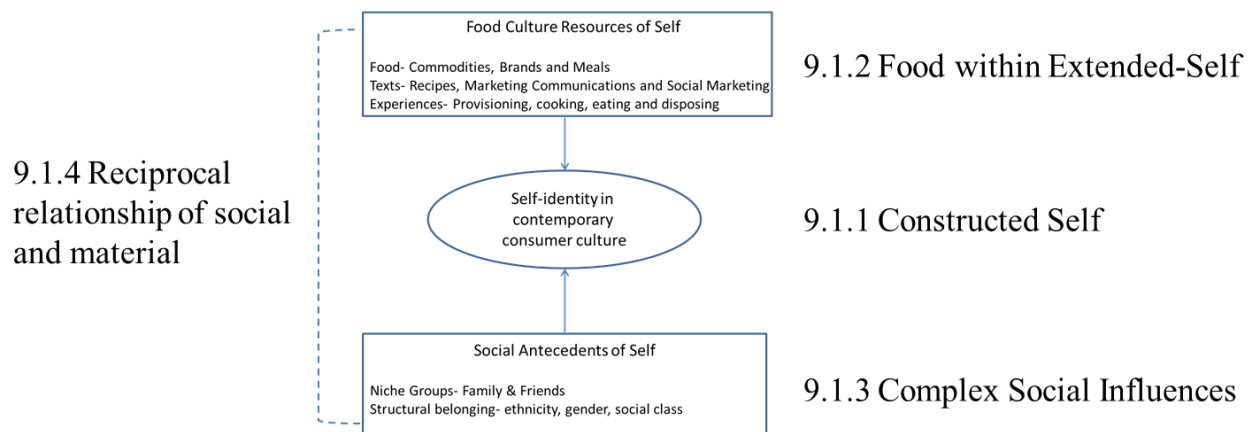
## Chapter 9: Conclusions, Limitations & Recommendations

### 9.0 Introduction

This final chapter of the thesis has four purposes. First to reconsider the conceptual framework and evaluate how well it has contributed to the aim of the thesis. It does this by breaking the model into its constituent parts and considering the key findings and contributions within each area before discussing the impact of the model as a whole. Second it considers the practice and policy implications of the thesis and its key findings. It then acknowledges the limitations of the project and considers areas for further research stemming from both the key findings and the limitations. It finally presents a brief summary of the work contained within the whole thesis, and concludes upon this final chapter in order to bring the thesis to an appropriate close.

### 9.1 Conceptual framework, key findings and theoretical implications

This section reflects upon the theoretical framework which was constructed as a means of meeting the aim of the research: to understand how individuals create self-identity through food culture. As a reminder the framework is presented at figure 9.1 and has been coded to suggest how its constituent parts will be reflected upon in this section, these largely correspond to the research questions but importantly in this chapter there is reflection upon not only the nature of constituent parts of the framework but on the relationships between them and how the model works as a means of conceptualising the field. These relationships between factors are considered to be the least theorised and most taken for granted elements of the framework and ultimately the means by which the achievement of aim can be evaluated.



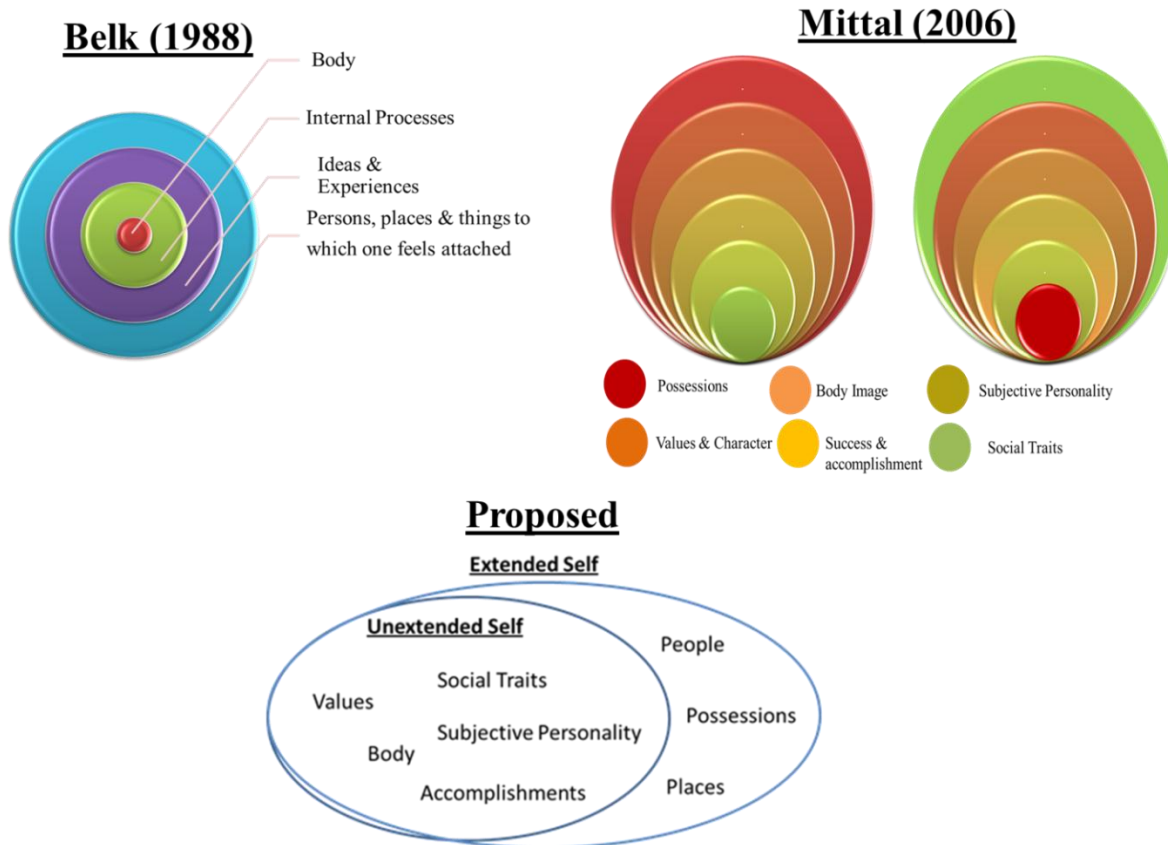
**Figure 9.1 Theoretical Framework**

The first issue to be reflected upon considers the constructed theories of self; the second, the nature of food culture and the relationship between its elements and constructed self; third, the nature and means of influence from social antecedents to self; and finally the new relationship suggested by this thesis, absent in Elliot's original model upon which this conceptual framework is based, which completes the circle of relationships recognising the material and social worlds don't only impact upon the individual but also have a symbiotic relationship in their own right. The framework in its entirety is then considered and an evaluation made of its contribution towards the overall research aim.

### **9.1.1 Constructed Self**

The first part of the model considered is that relating to individual's consideration of their identity. As discussed throughout the thesis and particularly the focus of chapter six, it is necessary to understand how individuals consider both their own identity and, as discussed in the following section, their social relationships sans-consumption before considering the impact that consumption has upon these conceptions. As discussed in the previous chapter the theories related to constructed identity are characterised by dichotomous traditions which the findings of this thesis do not support. Rather the data suggest that when taken from an individual perspective a person constructs their own identity by drawing upon theories from across the established positions. Both when considering questions of endurance and authenticity of self it finds that individuals situate themselves within the space between identity discourses rather than seeing them as distinct positions to be adopted.

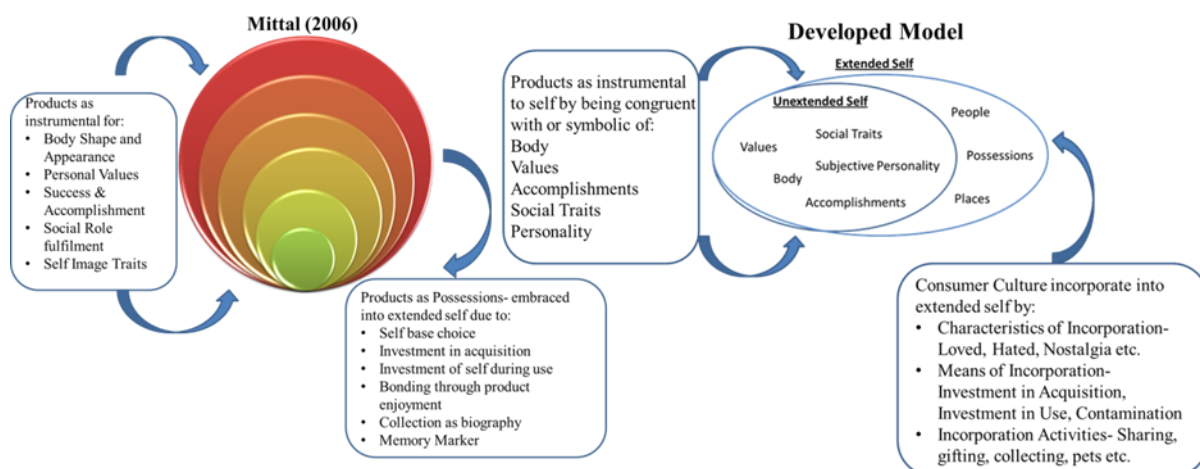
Considering multi-dimensional core self, a theory which considers an authentic self to be an appropriate model of constructed self and a core part of the identity projects stream within consumer culture ( Belk, 1988 etc.). The findings contribute to established theory by demonstrating that there is no singular hierarchical organisation of the suggested dimensions of self, rather consistent with Mittal (2006) these are uniquely configured by the individual. Distinguished from Mittal's (ibid) model they show that potential dimensions of self which are external to the body such as people; places; and importantly for consumer culture: possessions or consumption objects exist within a distinct conceptual domain for individuals. As such the findings lead to the development of an amended model of the extended-self represented at figure 9.2.



**Figure 9.2** Progression of Extended-Self Models

**9.1.2 Food within extended-self**

Having established that the unextended-self is uniquely configured and that extended dimensions of self are of a distinct nature within the data of this thesis, the conceptual framework then allows consideration of these extended elements and how they are understood as part of self as at figure 9.3.



**Figure 9.3** Model of incorporation of consumer culture into extended-self

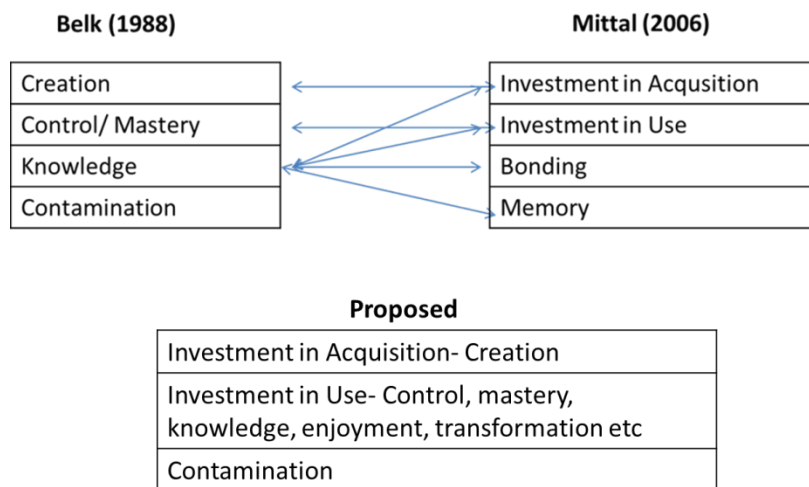


Mittal's (2006) work had considered that possessions could be either instrumental to sans-consumption factors of self/ unextended-self or become incorporated within extended-self in their own right through a variety of means. The findings of this thesis extend and clarify this position by first considering that not only possessions may become part of extended-self but that consumables and, as specifically examined in this work, the artefacts of food culture are also capable of such incorporation. Secondly it considers that such artefacts can be considered instrumental to sans consumption dimensions of self in two ways: by being congruent with these dimensions and by being symbolic of them. As such it amends Mittal's (ibid) model which considers that self-based choice is a means of products becoming part of extended-self; the findings of this thesis are that such congruent and symbolic choices rather act as a support to the unextended-self. Third this thesis adds clarity to the theory of how items may be incorporated into extended-self and the characteristics of such items. It brings together the findings from this thesis and also the on-going work within consumer culture identity projects and considers that there are three distinct matters to be considered when discussing how artefacts become part of extended-self: characteristics of incorporation; means of incorporation; and incorporation activities.

Theory upon the characteristics of incorporation has tended to focus upon positive love relationships (Ahuvia, 2005). The data from this thesis considers that this is a useful way of theorising the relationship individuals build with consumer culture and that it is certainly applicable in the case of food culture but that love is not the only type of relationship which can incorporate artefacts. In the data of this thesis hated foods were as much a part of extended-self as loved, and that the strength and longevity of feeling towards hated foods were as deeply embedded as their preferences. As such rather than theorising only around loved and cherished items the data suggest a wider consideration of all the artefacts which elicit strong feelings either positive or negative to be appropriate within discussions of extended-self, such feelings may be more broadly theorised and further work may explore these distinct characteristic forms.

The means of incorporation are considered by both Belk (1988) & Mittal (2006) and though their conceptions are not synonymous they share common characteristics. There is a focus upon the level of involvement and investment of self which the individual is required to devote to the object. Belk (ibid) specifically considers contamination as a means of incorporation where physical evidence of self is left upon the material object as an extreme

form, this is not considered directly by Mittal (ibid) nor within much of the work on identity within consumer culture theory and equally this thesis doesn't extend to such consideration rather issues of contamination of food by self such as eating other's left overs etc. are an area for further inquiry. Mittal (ibid) & Belk's (ibid) work is rather considered for its areas of agreement. With the central theme of incorporation being achieved through effortful engagement and investment with the material objects. Figure 9.4 shows the overlap between Belk & Mittal's considerations of the means of incorporation and the amended taxonomy suggested in this data with 3 broad means of incorporation only two of which are fully considered since as discussed above contamination is out of scope.



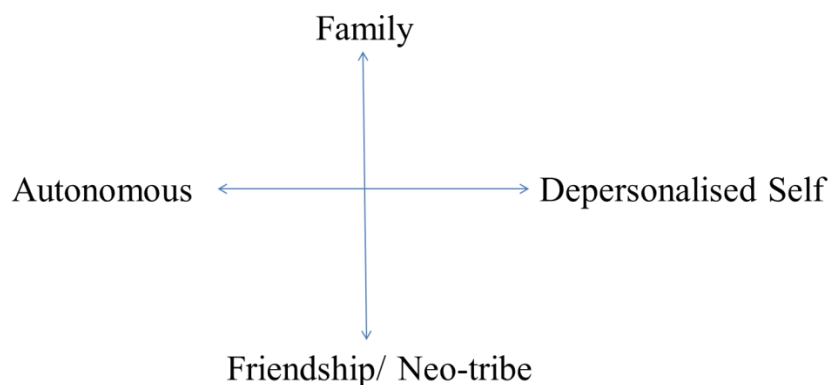
**Figure 9.4 Proposed means of incorporation of consumer culture into extended-self**

Incorporation activities are the final consideration of this thesis with regard to extended-self. Taking account of extant work and its own data it considers that this should represent a non-exhaustive list of the types of activity or as Belk (1988) discusses potential “special cases of extended-self” which may provide particular insight into the relationships between consumer culture and identity. As such Mittal's fifth means of incorporation: collection, is considered to be one of the potentially meaningful incorporation activities rather than a means of incorporation. This sits alongside others which Belk suggest in, or has explored since his 1988 paper: sharing, money, pets, gifting and activities which others within consumer culture theory have explored: shopping, ritual etc. Particularly meaningful within the data of this thesis, were the activities of provisioning as an extension of shopping theory, cooking and the collection of cooking materials and centrally eating.

### 9.1.3 Complex social influence

In considering the social environment the thesis has focussed upon gathering data about the structural sources of self derived from close personal relationships and classification variations. It has considered these based upon a three tiers of social belonging deriving from the work of Warde (1997). Identified in extant literature these social structural elements have been considered as potentially impactful as antecedents in the development of self. The data from this study contributes to this scholarship and suggests that all such sources may be impactful upon individuals. Niche groups exert the greatest influence, though which individual group is dominant is variable by individual. Trends have suggested a diminution of the traditional structures of family to more individually constructed domains of friendship and neo-tribe. This thesis' data however suggest that far from representing universal trends, that individuals negotiated their competing social pulls and identified their own dominant influences.

The extent to which individuals considered themselves socially integrated varied by individual and as did their dominant source of influence. So the data suggest rather than being driven by modern or postmodern trends towards either individualism or community that individuals continue to negotiate a Durkeimian (2005[1914]) pull between the extremities and negotiate their individual positions (figure 9.5).



**Figure 9.5: Matrix of niche group social belonging**

This thesis makes a contribution to understanding particularly of family. Family is widely theorised in the literature and primarily considered to be an ideological construct (Pahl & Spencer, 2010) made complex “through dissolved marriages, cohabitation past and present...step relationships...broader kin relationships and same sex partnership” (Finch, 2007:68) This thesis extends the subjectivity and complexity of family and particularly

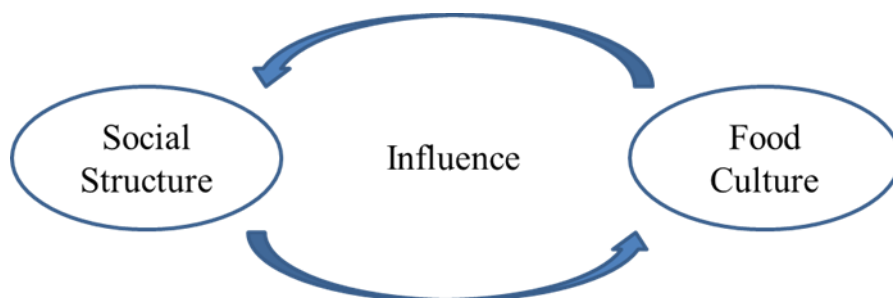
stresses the unpredictability and variability of these definitions are subjective and not predictable based upon circumstance.

Though the research group for the study was largely homogeneous and as such some discussions in social areas were rather restricted. Previous research has suggested that ethnicity, gender or class and minority or exclusion are inextricably linked, that large and dominant populations cannot be considered in these terms because they have little need or desire to value their identity thus. However within the data of this study it was evident that while such classifications carry some objective measures they are more commonly understood personally and subjectively and that people can make themselves distinctive across these dimensions even when objectively highly homogenous. Social categories have been considered self-evident reflective of sociologically relevant commonalities. The findings of this study showed a reluctance to engage with externally defined abstractions and reiterating their subjective nature became meaningful only when translated into meaningful language.

All within the study reflected upon slimness and while the literature suggests such concerns are more marked for women (Fredrickson & Roberts, 1997) this wasn't borne out in the findings rather there were gender differences in the way the issues were discussed but both experience resultant dissatisfaction.

#### **9.1.4 Reciprocal relationship of social and material.**

Finally examined within the research framework was consideration of a previously underdeveloped aspect of consumer culture models which focussed upon the reciprocity of the relationship between important social structures and material culture as represented at figure 9.6



**Figure 9.6 The dynamic, reciprocal relationship between social structures and food culture.**

It has extended extant theory in the area by recognising that food culture, in the data of this thesis, plays an instrumental role in maintaining established social structures such as family and friendship and equally that individual understanding of food culture is shaped by these social antecedents both directly and indirectly. It has added conceptual nuance in explaining these influences demonstrating that connections are multiple and diverse and that by preserving consumer's own narratives this complexity can be preserved.

#### **9.1.5 Whole Model and Research Aim.**

It is requisite now to consider how effectively the research aim of understanding how individuals create self-identity through food culture has been met. The research framework has acted as an appropriate model within which to add richness to pre-identified relationships within consumer culture theory. It has allowed detailed consideration of individual theory areas of individuals incorporate structural sources of self: such as family and gender, and material sources from consumer food culture: items such as goods, texts and experiences, into their accounts of self-identity by considering these as distinct research questions. It has assisted also in conceptualising under-explored relationships such as those between social antecedents and food culture and theoretical contributions to emerge in explanation. Overall in meeting the research aim, the methodological approach adopted has ensured that the research retains depth of understanding of the variety and nuance within and between individual consumer culture experiences and the resultant account of self-identity in food culture presented is both detailed and respectful of this diversity.

#### **9.2 Practice and Policy Implications**

As discussed early in the thesis food is a particularly relevant consumer culture context because of both the scale of the industry which it encompasses (Miller & Deutsch, 2009) and its importance as a policy area for government and NGO's (Scottish Government, 2009a). The thesis findings have implications for both policy and practice.

In policy terms food consumption's impact upon health and well-being remains a key concern (Scottish Government, 2009b)). There has been a shift in the past decade where the end state of being overweight which concerns health professions is now the dominant reality for British society (ibid); it is now the result of dominant behaviour by the average person. Equally there is less low-hanging fruit in terms of education and lack of understanding following many decades of initiatives to communicate healthy diet messages so social

marketing must adapt. Exploring the consumption behaviour of average consumers has produced two policy relevant insights.

First in looking at the research findings it is clear that food consumption is deeply embedded in both individual identity and the social environment within which consumers interact. Many preventative health care services are offered by governments, and require voluntary behaviour change in individuals but such change may in essence be damaging to the integrity of the individual's identity therefore it is appropriate to consider how extended-self may be maintained if the material objects within it must change.

Second it is a relevant criticism of social marketing initiatives that they are focused either very narrowly upon the individual through individual interventions in diet or exercise or very widely upon whole society change such as legislation upon nutritional information on packaging. There is a need also to consider the individual's micro environment, this thesis has shown that the dominant social influences remain within an individual's niche group, their family and friends and there is opportunity in harnessing this influence when considering social policy and marketing.

For practice two implications are suggested. For consumer brands within the food industry the findings of this research are particularly impactful. It considers that in order for meaningful relationships to develop or goods to become incorporated into extended-self their characteristics should be such that there is scope for individual involvement. Ritzer & Jurgenson (2010) have discussed the concept of the prosumer where both parties engage in co-creation of value. This may be a relevant way to achieve involvement, the findings of this research suggest that as brands become more refined and symbolically dense consumers may lose scope to impart their own identity so that rather than acting as brand guardian's keeping all a brand's meaning with the producer marketers may rather consider themselves brand advocates allowing brand meaning to develop in consumer use.

### **9.3 Limitations**

As noted within the methodology any research approach must be considered to have limitations since for every proactive decision taken numerous alternatives are discarded. In reflecting upon the limitations it also recognised that there are different conceptions of reflexivity (Bettany & Woodruffe-Burton, 2009) from objectivist through multiplex. The

limitations presented here flow from an objectivist reflexivity in the main with some consideration of the perspectival approach. As Bettany & Woodruffe-Burton (ibid: 675) discuss there is a “need to reflect upon our own actions in the world as researchers, to interrogate our own practices as knowledge makers and produce better accounts.” There are two decisions within the research which when considered with objectivist reflexivity have caused limitations within the data.

First the data was collected to represent a snapshot within consumer’s lives rather than as a longitudinal study. This has meant that some trends have continued to emerge and developed during the research term, specifically the thesis reflects upon the literature upon neo-tribalism. While it has been in existence throughout the research process its associated theories and practices have become more mainstream as technological and social trends particularly those associated with web 2.0 have reached critical mass such that almost everyone has some social media presence. This aspect is consequently absent in informants discussions of social belonging.

The researcher also reflects upon her own omission in considering the consumption cycle that there is no discussion of disposal practices within informants’ accounts. As briefly noted in the literature this is an emerging area of interest within consumption and increasingly attention focussed upon the end of the consumption process (e.g. Cappellini & Parsons, 2011).

Both these points are considered again when considering areas for future research below since the researcher retains a relationship with the informants there is scope to engage in future research work with them, to consider their consumption longitudinally and embrace the breadth of the consumption cycle.

Perspectival reflexivity asks for reflection upon different perspectives which research subjects may bring to a research encounter, while this thesis has tried to reflect the variety in individual interpretations of the topics under consideration it is clear that there is a limitation inherent within the homogeneity of the sample chosen. While purposefully decided to allow for deeper interrogation of the difference within this group it has limited the insights which the research can draw upon issues which depend upon diversity, social categorisations for example were often difficult for subjects to reflect upon because of their situation within dominant groups and there was implication too for social norms since the broad cultural

context of all informants was common, this thesis cannot and wouldn't claim to offer cross-cultural findings.

#### **9.4 Future Research**

Finally the thesis based upon its findings and limitations makes recommendation for future areas of research. It considers that there are three streams of work which should flow from it. First to further explore the models of constructed self and particularly extended self proposed within the discussion, second to look with more detail at individual elements of food culture and explore consumer practices and their impact upon identity and third to consider future research in response to the limitations identified within the previous section.

The findings of this these have suggested the development of two models in respect of identity construction. The first deals with the disputed matters of authenticity and endurance of self while the second proposes refinement and development of extended-self theory. It is suggested that further work is apposite in both these areas to understand further how individuals negotiate this territory: quantitative work may be appropriate to consider if a typology approach is discoverable in consumers' approaches to authenticity and self-endurance; and it is suggested that further exploration of the distinctions drawn within this thesis of the characteristics, means and activities of consumer culture incorporation into extended-self is warranted and would reinvigorate this theoretical area.

This thesis has considered broadly the narratives consumers construct around food culture to include goods, texts and experiences, it is suggested that future work may consider in more detail individual elements of food culture, and their impact upon identity. Particularly the findings of this research suggest more work would be valuable which discusses the matrixed practices in provisioning food: how traditional shopping channels, new routes such as eco schemes and self-growing are being integrated by consumers as identity relevant practice. Cooking particularly remains identity relevant and though there is an extant stream of work within this area particularly from sociology it is considered that more attention from within the consumer culture theory community could garner theory relevant insight.

Finally the thesis has recognised limitations within its data. First that data was collected to represent a snapshot within consumer's lives rather than as a longitudinal study and secondly that elements of the consumption cycle, notably disposal are not considered within. It is



suggested that, in response, future work is appropriate which would address their implications. Longitudinal work within this consumption domain would allow consideration of how lifecourse affects issues of identity and practice and would also allow the integration of emerging theoretical fields such as neo-tribalism. As has already been suggested above detailed exploration of the individual elements of food culture could be theory rich and this might include practices underexplored within the consumption cycle such as disposal and self-production.

## **9.5 Summary**

This chapter has presented an overview of the argument developed by this thesis before presenting a summary of the findings which were generated and the implications which these have. Attention was explicitly drawn to the limitations of the research before detailing the recommendations which the findings of this research make for the food industry, policy and future research.

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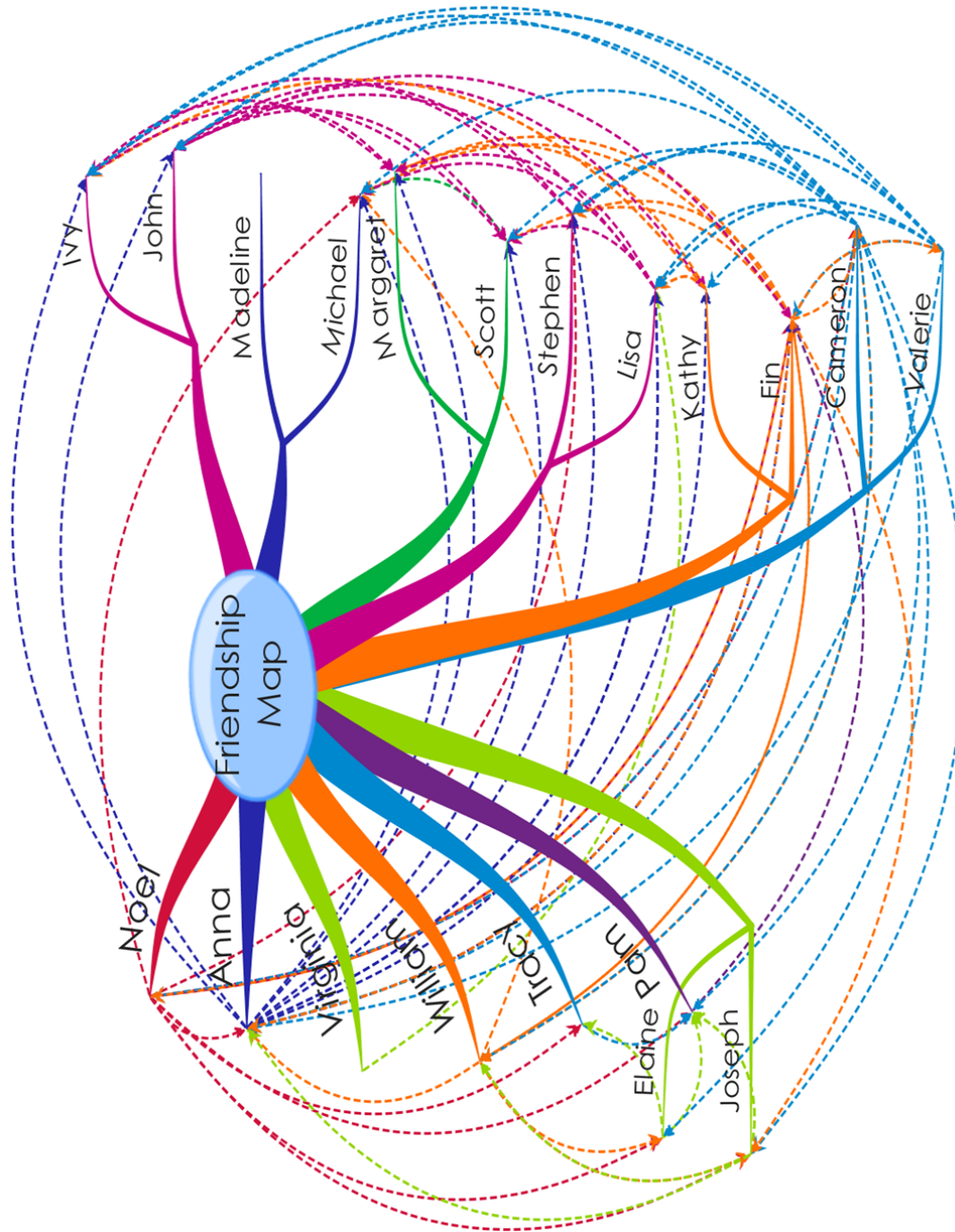
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## Appendix I Informant Socio-Demographics

<b>Name ( anonymised)</b>	<b>Age</b>	<b>Family Situation</b>	<b>Occupation</b>	<b>Living Location</b>
Anna	30	Married with kids	Human Resources	Suburbs
Cameron	35	Married with kids	Lawyer	City
Elaine	30	Married	Lawyer	City
Fin	35	Married with kids	Lawyer	City
Ivy	30	Married pregnant	Financial services	City
John	36	Married	Marketing	City
Joseph	31	Married	Marketing	City
Kathy	34	Married with kids	Doctor	City
Lisa	29	Married with kids	Nurse	Suburbs
Madeline	31	Co-habiting	Exec PA	City
Margaret	33	Co-habiting	Artist	City
Michael	32	Co-habiting	IT	City
Noel	32	Single	Lawyer	City
Pam	35	Married	Lawyer	City
Scott	34	Co-habiting	Director	City
Stephen	36	Married with kids	Financial Services	Suburbs
Tracy	32	Co-habiting	Lawyer	City
Valerie	36	Married with kids	Journalist	City
Virginia	31	Divorced	Nurse	Suburbs
William	32	Single	Marketing	City

# Appendix I Informant Friendship Map



## Appendix III Informant Consent

In compliance with the University of Strathclyde and ESRC ethics guidelines on research with people I ask that you read carefully the following details and if you give your consent to be part of Andrea Tonner's PhD study please sign below.

1. Your participation is voluntary
2. Your signature on the consent form indicates:
  - (a) that you are aware of what your participation involves
  - (b) that all your questions concerning the study have been satisfactorily answered.
3. You can terminate your participation at any time without giving a reason and without any of your rights being affected. You can also ask to have your data withdrawn from the study. You are under no obligation to respond to all aspects of the procedure: you can refrain from answering any question(s) without providing reason or justification.
4. You understand that all information you give will be treated with the utmost confidentiality and your anonymity will be respected at all times. Individual names will be altered and the researcher will take care at all times to avoid or alter information which may be used by the reader to identify individuals.
5. You give permission for interviews to be audio recorded and transcripts made and you give permission for Andrea Tonner to maintain records of the study for the duration of her PhD and afterwards for use in publication stemming from the PhD research.
6. Once the interview is transcribed, and if the interviewee requests, a copy of their transcript can be sent as may any audio recording. Respondents may also request copies of research papers or other written materials based upon their data.
7. The research project is under the responsibility of Andrea Tonner, Doctoral Researcher at the University of Strathclyde in Glasgow [a.tonner@strath.ac.uk](mailto:a.tonner@strath.ac.uk)  
Supervisors are Professor Gillian Hogg and Professor Susan Hart

You are asked to sign that you understand and accept the above terms.

Signature \_\_\_\_\_

Print Name \_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_

## **Appendix IV      Discussion Guide**

This document was used as means of shaping discussion and of reminding interviewer of salient points to consider, it remains however relatively loose to allow the discussion to emerge informant narratives to develop.

### **Informal Explanation of Research.**

You are helping by providing an interview for the PhD work of Andrea Tonner, we will talk today for about an hour. We'll talk about you how you describe yourself and the things which you consider important about you, I'll ask also about your family, friends, your opinions about society and the people around you. We'll spend time discussing food and how you feel about it. There are no right or wrong answers I am interested in your thoughts and opinions & I'll audio record the session. Your participation is voluntary, you may stop the discussion at any time and are under no obligation to answer any question. You may request at any time to withdraw from the study or to have access to the data you provide, all your information will be treated confidentially and anonymised. I have provided you with a written consent statement which you have signed you may get further information about this study at any time from me, my supervisors or the director of research within Strathclyde Marketing Department. It is conducting in accordance with the University of Strathclyde researcher Code of Ethics

### **1.      How is self-identity understood and presented by individuals?**

Probe as appropriate to individual informant

*Overall Identity:* Can you tell me about you? What would you say is important about being you? What makes you unique?

*Endurance/ Authenticity of Identity:* Have you changed much over time? Any key events or things that happened that you see as turning points? Are you the same person across different circumstances? Do you think you're easy to get to know?

*Factors of Identity* – Probe from overall identity elements which are most important and relevant

*Values, Character, Personality Traits:* What things are important to you? How would you describe your personality?

*Accomplishment:* Things you're really good or bad at? (are those important) always or at certain times?



*Body:* Do you think much about your body? How would you describe it? Happy with body/ appearance? Things which you particularly like/ dislike?

*Social Traits:* How would others see you?, how would you like others to see you?

**2. What are the relevant social antecedents of self and how are these understood?**

*Talk to me about Family* Who are your family (how do you define it?) does that change, is it a close relationship, (can you describe the closeness) is it important? Do you feel they are influential? How? (partner, children, siblings, parents) When you were growing up were there things that were very important to your parents? (have they become important to you?)

*Talk to me about friends,* many or few, how do you socialise, do you work at those relationships, do you think they influence you, are your friends like you? What about acquaintances do you have different categories of friend? What's important about friendship?

*Talk to me about classifications.* Ethnicity, nationality, gender, class (do classifications mean anything to you) How would you classify yourself, would you? What are you and what is your family?

*Talk to me about the wider world? Pressures. To behave, to buy, to be?*

**3. What is the role of social antecedents in shaping an individual's food culture?**

*Family:* Is food important in your family (was it growing up, is it with your children?) What about food currently in you main relationships? Is there a family meal? Do you eat together?

*Friends:* What sort of things do you do together? do you eat with friends? at home or out of home? What would meals with friends be like? Why?

*Neo-tribe:* Do you have friends with whom you share particular interests? Describe this?

*Structural Classifications:* We talked earlier about how you describe yourself in gender, ethnicity, class. Do you think these have influence upon your food?

*Whole Culture:* Can we talk a little about thinness/ fatness, how do you feel about it and how would you describe yourself ? Any particular approaches to eating?

How would you describe your overall diet? Is it something you think about much?

Does it worry you?

**4. What are the salient food culture elements and how are they understood by consumers as part of their identity?**

*Talk to me about food?:* Is it important in your life, how so, has that changed over time? What things are important about food? Does food make you feel anyway in particular, how do you think you eat (fast slow, thoughtful?) Is food private or social? Or both? Has this changed at all in your life? Meals and Snacks?

*Brands: Manufacturer, supermarket and quasi-brands:* I want to talk a little bit about branded goods, how do they make their way into your house, life? How do you decide which one's you buy? Are there things which you conscious of buying certain brands of? Would you say you have any brand loyalty, any brands to which you feel loyalty Are there certain shops which you'd say get lots of your custom? Why? Talk to me about local business, branding through other means locality, regionality, organic etc.

*Texts:* Cookbooks do you own them, use them, have favourites?

Do you have a favourite marketing campaign at the moment, can you tell me about it do you think you pay attention to such things, What makes it good?

Talk to me about social messages, which do you most remember, why? Do you follow any?

*Experiences: Provisioning & Cooking:* Talk to me about how you get your food?

Growing any? Shopping? How & Where?

Talk to me about cooking? Preparing food- Do you? What sort of cook are you?

Would you say it' part of who you are? Is it something you learned? How? Where? Is it important? In what ways? Do you enjoy it?

Allow informants opportunity to add information/ ask their questions.

## Appendix V      Sample Interview

### IVY

- I: I was asking you how you would like to be seen by others. How would you like your friends to think of you or others to think of you?
- R: Mmm good nice, kind, just kind of well rounded I suppose, you know, passionate about the environment and, mmm don't know what else.
- I: Is it important what your friends think about you?
- R: Yeah.
- I: Of what others think?
- R: Yeah, I think so. I wouldn't change myself in order to have somebody think something of me but I hope that my friends see me the way I am.
- I: Aha.
- R: And hopefully that is nice and kind and all those things I don't know, oh my god I don't know.
- I: Okay, okay [laughter]. Would there be something you think, well I'm really good at that?
- R: I suppose I'm quite sociable.
- I: Aha.
- R: Really good at something, no nothing particular.
- I: Anything that's important to be?
- R: Mmm I'm not very good at this. [pause] no I'm drawing a blank.
- I: Okay, no that's OK, we might come back to some of that then once we're into it. When you were growing up, what sort of things would have been important to your parents for yourself and your siblings to become? What sort of things would they of said, that's what I want for my children?
- R: I think happy would be the thing, if they were here that's what they'd say. But well educated, well rounded, appreciative of things, a good friend, you know, whatever we ended up doing be good at it, you know, so if you're working in a company, be good at working in the company, you know. And my sisters and I we're all so different and yet actually even though we're not all academic, we are all quite strong characters and we're probably perceived to be quite good at what it is that we've chosen to do. Which I guess is exactly what mum and dad would of wanted.

- I: So the things that were important growing up, have they become important to you, so is it now important for you to be good at what you do, good at things?
- R: Yeah, yeah I suppose it is, yeah. But what I do now is not necessarily what I thought I'd do, so that's quite different. But I suppose yeah, it is important that I'm good at what I do. I feel a level of pride I suppose of what you do.
- I: So can we talk a wee about work, is work important?
- R: Not at the moment it's not [laughter]. No it is important, it's always been important and my subject is more important than my job.
- I: Okay, so can you describe that for me?
- R: That is, well at the moment it manifests itself in looking at companies and determining whether they are performing, sort of responsibly when it comes to issues that are Financial. So things like environmental sort of pollution, resource management, how they look after their people and the local communities where they operate, those sorts of things. So I think about those things and make sure I buy things which I know have an ethical dimension. But previous jobs have looked at wider kind of sustainability issues, so things like, you know, building new projects, taking into account the impact of those projects on environment and that sort of thing, and trying to have a more holistic view of how companies operate in general. So that's what I do, that's the kind of overall thing that I do.
- I: And is what you do important to who you are?
- R: Very I think actually. Going back to your probably earlier question, how friends see you, I think a lot of them would say, oh she's a greeney or, you know, they take the mickey a bit [laughter] ... I think yeah, I think probably maybe more than most people, my friends, all my friends know what I do or roughly what I do. Whereas there are lots of people, even my very good friends that I'm not entirely sure what it is they do. And I don't know whether that's because I bang on about it an awful lot or because it's now quite a sexy thing to do and people are more interested in it. But mmm I'm definitely, I definitely would be described as being what it is that I do, I think it defines me a bit more than maybe some other peoples jobs define them.
- I: Aha. Mmm do you think you're an easy person to get to know?
- R: Yeah, far to open actually, well I don't mind so much, I think I like that quality, I like that about myself when it comes to friends. And particularly moving, I've moved a lot and meeting new people I Find it, you know, I like the fact that I can do that and I have no issues with telling everybody anything. Because you know I don't think there's anything, I don't understand why people don't. But when it comes to things like work environments and things when I want to be taken more seriously, I Find that I probably give away too much personal information, so people get a bit too pally, pally and I think they maybe don't treat me as professionally as ... [tape recorder moved]. So yes I think professionally I probably am too open, too, friendly is the wrong word, but that kind of, on a personal level giving away too much information. But generally I think I do just, yeah. Very open.

- I: So it is the same Ivy that people get in every situation or are there different Ivy's?
- R: There's probably pretty much the same Ivy, and maybe only John would say [laughter] bossy, no actually that's a complete lie then because my sisters would see a very different me. But I am quite, the same kind of Ivy but there are certain attributes that Karen, Victoria my sisters would see, and maybe John would see but nobody would see. And that's the kind of slightly bossy stereotypical oldest child kind of stuff, but generally, but then other friends would probably see that kind of coming across in a different way. So like quite, I would have a little group of my friends call me Mother Mills, you know, just because I'm quite like that and I suppose that is the oldest child sort of symptom isn't it. But mmm, don't know generally I'm pretty much the same, yeah.
- I: Do you think you've changed much over time?
- R: Massively, massively.
- I: How would you describe that?
- R: Mmm I'm a lot more confident now, really I think I was quite, well I've always been quite bubbly, I think actually I was a bit unsure of myself and I think I would follow people quite easily, you know. I'd sort of pick up trends and pick up accents, I never, every time I moved my voice changed because I would just follow what was easiest and things like that. But now I'm just much more, I think this is the way I'll be now, but I think that took until I was probably 30 really.
- I: Are you happy about the changes?
- R: Yeah much happier, I think yeah, quite pleased.
- I: Good. Are there things that worry you, things that trouble you or are you not a worrier?
- R: I'm a massive worrier, I worry about everything, I worry about everybody I love all the time mmm, all the time and mmm.
- I: What sort of ways do you, what sort of worries do you have?
- R: If anybody is traveling, I worry about them traveling. If anybody is going through a hard time I worry about them going through a hard time. I find it hard to switch off so if a friend's having a hard time I would kind of almost live it, I get quite, I worry a lot about them and how they're handling it. I worry about, every so often I worry about me and I worry about like very selfish things, like I worry about mmm I don't know particularly now I suppose seeing as I'm pregnant I worry an awful lot about obviously the baby. But I worry an awful lot about me in the long term and, you know, what sort of person I'm going to be and all that kind of stuff, like my health and will I, you know, live to a ripe old age and how do I, and what if I don't and I worry about that a little bit, but I've stopped myself from doing that because that

could end up a bit weird. So I try not to worry too much about that. Worry about the climate quite a lot, have had a sleepless night about climate change which is not many people can say [laughter]. So that's quite worrying in itself really. I worry about reverse parking all the time and I worry about [laughter]. Yeah silly things, I do worry a lot actually, the more I'm talking the more I'm realising I think maybe I need some help.

I: A lot of worrying?

R: Uhu.

I: [laughter] Has that changed over time?

R: Yes.

I: In which direction?

R: Much more worrying now as I've got older, much more.

I: And do you think and the way that you worry about friends, do you think they worry about you?

R: No [laughter] I don't at all, I don't even think John worries about me, the way I way I worry about, I really don't. But then they're not worriers, I don't generally, I don't think I've got many friends who are like proper worriers, probably a good thing.

I: [laughter].

R: A few maybe but yeah.

I: Mmm can move on a wee bit and talk about the way you look, how you are, health, all of these such things. How would you describe yourself?

R: At the moment?

I: In those contexts. Yeah at the moment [laughter].

R: Good except for a slightly rotund middle [laughter].

I: Pregnant.

R: Pregnant mmm no I'm generally quite happy with the way I look, have always been though, I've never really had a big problem. And I have probably in the last two or three years, since I've moved up here, so probably four years I probably lost quite a lot of weight but really slowly and over time and it was just from a change of lifestyle really. Eating much more healthily, walking everywhere because Edinburgh's walkable, London isn't and also I strongly believe it was a delayed reaction, a delayed puppy fat lose, I'm absolutely convinced.

- I: You were waiting for it to happen.
- R: As is my mother, aha, seriously because the way it just sort of disappeared, very odd, so that was quite good, late twenties, loosing the puppy fat which is great. And but no, quite happy, really one area that really annoys and that's, and I shouldn't really complain because I am very, very lucky and I don't want to say it out load because it will obviously even something worse will happen, but having grey hair from the age of 18 has been a bit of a pain in the arse.
- I: So if you were thinking of a thing that you would change about yourself, would that be it?
- R: That would be it and I think people don't really, you know, everybody's got something and my god, you know, lots of people have things that are 20 times worse. But it's such a visible thing and you Find like, you know, you can't possibly, if your hair's 100 percent grey which mine now is pretty much, and you dye it, you know, you will, unless you dye it every three weeks, you're going to get some sort of like a silver line coming through. And people talk to you and you can see them sort of looking at your hair and you know, and I think that really like years ago used to really upset me, I used to get really, really upset about it, now I don't give two hoots. I mean I really just well, you know, that's their problem and at the moment obviously it's as grey as you like because I'm trying not to dye too much because I don't want anything to harm the baby. But that would be the one thing that really has always bothered me, but in a way, you know, my granddad was ... saying, and he was such a lovely man and he was always described as being such a lovely man, that actually, you know, to be like him in that respect is kind of quite sweet I suppose. Yeah.
- I: If you were thinking of something that you really like about yourself in a sort of physical context.
- R: Physical?
- I: Yeah, is there anything?
- R: Well I would have said my boobs, it's probably a bit quiet for the tape.
- I: You're allowed to say it out aloud, it's okay [laughter].
- R: Mmm yeah I would of said my chest actually but I don't know, just generally quite happy, I don't really think about it too much.
- I: So is how you look important, is it something you think about or is it not important?
- R: Yeah but more how I, not in the terms of am I thin or am I, you know, more in terms of how I dress, you know, looking like I dress well is more important to looking really kind of, I don't know foxy or whatever. So having really nice clothes, that's really important because I love that sort of feeling of being well dressed mmm.
- I: So what would nice clothes be? How would you describe it?

- R: Tailored, lovely tailored clothes, I don't, I've never been very good at this whole kind of floaty kind of chuck on a load of stuff and just kind of look good, it really doesn't work for me, I think unless you're a twig it's really difficult.
- I: [laughter]
- R: But having like a really expensive suit, I'd rather have a really expensive suit than, you know, ten kind of nice tops for going out, do you know what I mean. Mmm so yeah.
- I: Do you think your, do you follow fashions in the way that you dress?
- R: No.
- I: How would you describe your style?
- R: Probably quite classic really, like I know what suits me and I would probably wear the same thing obviously you know, you're not going to be able to buy exactly the same things, fashions will dictate to a certain extent how much is available. But my wardrobe, you know, I've always worn three button jackets since I started working because one button jackets don't suit me and I know that, so one button jackets can be in, I just won't buy any if that's all that's available, that kind of thing. I mean I will follow fashions to a certain extent, colours and all that sort of stuff but, accessories, but not really, I kind of, the way I dress is very simple I suppose really.
- I: And do you want to, does it say something about you in terms of how you dress or how you look?
- R: At work probably and less so at the weekends, I don't really ever get dressed up to kind of, I very rarely get dressed up to go out in something that's really kind of, you know, spangley and kind of exciting. But at work, yeah it does say, I suppose it says professional or whatever, not at the moment because none of my jackets fit me anymore [laughter], so I'm not very professional at all, generally in my head definitely.
- I: Okay. Gender, womanliness however we would describe it.
- R: [laughter].
- I: Are they important things?
- R: Yeah I think so.
- I: How would you describe it?
- R: For me?
- I: Yeah.



- R: Femininity, I suppose when you work in quite a male industry it's about being feminine but not being tarty. You know wearing clothes that are feminine but without revealing too much or being too tight and being too this or whatever.
- I: So as a description as feminine, one that you would use or whatever, or is there something else that you would say?
- R: For me, yeah and I think other people probably would as well because I think it's great, I think it's great.
- I: What's good about it?
- R: Because I think you have the power, I really do the older I get the more I think god and there's just this massive misconception that women are hard done to and yeah there aren't enough women in senior jobs and there aren't enough women doing this and all the rest of it. But why is that, well maybe that's because, you know, they're doing other things that aren't as high profile and they are actually as valuable. And I don't mean just staying at home and raising children, that's one category, you know, there are other women who maybe, I just think women are warmer in general. Obviously there are men who are great and warm and lovely and, you know, and all the men that I know and love are like that. In general women are kinder, you know, they're just.
- I: So you're aware that how you are and the way you behave and things is to do with, is part of your gender?
- R: Yeah definitely, definitely and not in a flirty kind of feminine way, in a kind of you know stuff, you can get stuff, I think you just have more of sixth sense about stuff. So the way I work is very much like that so I'll pick up on how people are feeling a lot more than like my male exact counterpart, does exactly the same job as me. And funny you can go into a meeting and you can get so much more out of a meeting, just I don't know, yeah, femininity rocks man, but I'm not a feminist.
- I: Right okay, so what would a feminist be, how do you define?
- R: Feminist is kind of the aggressive version of appreciating women and kind of realising how great women are but in a male way and I don't understand. Do you know what I mean?
- I: Yep.
- R: Seems a bit of waste really. Mmm so no not a feminist although I do believe in equality and all that stuff but I don't want to go that route of being classified as feminist. I don't think anybody would say that about me either actually. Mmm I don't know maybe they would, I do bang on about it quite a lot at work.
- I: You talked a little bit before about sort of weight and having lost some, if you were describing yourself in terms of fatness and thinness and these sorts of things, how would you, what terms would you use?

- R: Mmm until about three months ago, I would say probably, you know, good or I wouldn't say average because I don't think I am average, I think I was average, I think I'm probably slightly lighter than average but I'm still in that kind of camp of, I don't think anybody in the street would describe me as slim or skinny. But I don't think they'd describe me as, you know, fat or whatever, I just am kind of bit norm really, do you know what I mean, in a nice way. I don't think, it is quite difficult.
- I: So is there anything that you think about, is it something you manage, is it something you watch or is it just there, you just are the way you are?
- R: I just am, I think I probably used to manage and watch a little bit more but that's when I was having the kind of lifestyle that made it easy, so that I didn't have to. Do you know what I mean, like in London, you know, eating rubbish and eating late and, you know, sitting on the Tube and never walking and hardly any exercise, and any exercise that I did do was kind of forced and begrudged because it was in an overpriced gym and it's full of sweaty horrible people and it's just yuck. So it was all really negative, everything was negative and here it's all about, I mean I live with John so he cooks and his food is amazing so I probably eat far too much but I'd rather have really nice meals and then just not bother in between meals. Oh saying that I do snack I suppose but I don't know, it's just easy so I don't really have to manage it at all because it just is. And I never weigh myself I only ever go by my clothes because weighing yourself is bizarre, I don't understand how people can be my kind of height and be like nine stone, eight and half stone, I don't understand that because I just, bone's are heavy.
- I: [laughter]
- R: So yeah I don't weigh myself. See you can manage it if you don't weigh yourself.
- I: Okay, talk to me about food then.
- R: Food, I love food. Never really was in to food very much at all until I met John and now I'm big into food. Since we got married even more into food, since I stopped smoking massively more into food. Mmm yeah funny.
- I: Is food important?
- R: Yeah.
- I: What's important about food?
- R: The taste of it, the variety, not having to cook it, having it cooked for me is great but having said that I do cook a lot more myself now because I've got more into I and I appreciate it. But I'm a real recipe girl so I'm not really, don't really have the understanding of food. I understand the completed product, how it tastes and whether that is good or bad. What I don't understand is all the ingredients how you would put them together and whether that would taste good, I can't imagine the completed thing but I'm a very good ... I think.

- I: We'll talk about food and we'll talk about cooking in a wee bit separately if that's OK good food, what's good food then?
- R: Good food is not greasy food, is fresh, fresh, fresh, doesn't have, I have got quite obsessed with the quality of food, really not interested in that sort of processed nasty and now actually have an aversion to it. I mean I can taste it, I don't like it, I don't like diet coke because I don't like that taste of fakeness almost, so fresh stuff as much as possible. It does sound a bit right on but organic and I know you can't tell the difference but I know that it's better, I just know it's better and it's not just better for you which I know is still contested but the way it's made is better for the environment, so therefore I'm not sitting there looking at it going, you know, this is dreadful. Fair trade where possible, I mean all those things that, you know, are actually important to me when I enjoy a meal, you know, I will kind of if I see fair trade coffee, that will be a better cup of coffee in my head because I will feel less guilty about where it's come from mmm.
- I: So is good food about more than just the flavor you get from it?
- R: Yeah, it's about everything, it's about where it's come from, you know, I would rather have a Scottish raspberry in July, you know, than one from elsewhere and I'd definitely feel guilty if I'm eating a raspberry from Brazil in January. I mean there just isn't, that's not right, do you know what I mean, I would quite happily live completely seasonally but obviously John wouldn't, because that would be, we'd be in all sorts of trouble. But, you know, that sort of thing's important.
- I: So if you were describing what, how you decide something's good quality?
- R: I'd say it will be seasonal, really fresh, local, mmm not interfered with be that chemicals in its manufacturer or in its actual processing, in its packaging, yeah.
- I: So if you were to tell me about a really good meal, a favourite food or any of these sorts of things, ... .. and what would they be?
- R: My favourite dinner?
- I: Aha.
- R: And I would rather have this than any restaurant food is something John cooks and it's his steak, which is always really, really, really good. I mean obviously I'm pregnant now so it would have to be well done but usually it would be sort of medium to well done, I don't like too much redness. And home made chips but with really chunky beautifully done potatoes and then some sort of fresh, very fresh vegetable on the side like spinach, peas whatever. And I love that, I love that simple, I like clean food, I don't like fussy kind of sauces and all the rest of it. Although when I do have them, I do love them but my favourite meals are one's that are, John does describe them as clean food.
- I: So what does clean mean?

- R: It means separate bits on the plate [laughter] and it looks all clean, you know, like the plates clean underneath and it's just, you know, I suppose it's probably very Irish. That's how mum used to cook, you know, you'd have meat mmm or fish and then some potatoes done some how and then a couple of bits of veg. And I love that kind of food, I do, I love pasta and I do like rich sauces and all the rest of it. But anything too complicated I find, I wouldn't want on a daily basis.
- I: So favourite food makes sense, you do have favourite things?
- R: Mmm, mmm absolutely mmm. I have, do you want me to tell you?
- I: Mmm.
- R: A couple of them, well got the classic steak and chips which I do love. I do like fish and I like, you know, kind of fresh, you know, done in the George Foreman kind of fish. I sound like some kind of health food weirdo and I'm really not. John's carbonara is absolutely divine mmm. Mmm what else, not a massive meat fan, but I do eat meat. But if I was cooking for myself I would generally always cook vegetarian but I'd say 80 percent of the meals I eat, the evening meals I eat have meat in them, which is fine I don't, I'm not anti it. But I don't, I wouldn't generally cook it for myself. Other favourite meals, it's so difficult there's so many [laughter]. I love Italian food actually, so lasagna, carbonara, you know the classic kind of one's that you get, that you then try and make at home or John does make at home. I cooked a really good thing the other day which was moussaka, which I've never made before and that was quite nice. And then there's some things like you'd have with salad that I really like but I wouldn't have the potatoes ... ..
- I: Favourite restaurants?
- R: Oh you see I could come across real [laughter] ... In Edinburgh favourite restaurant, that's difficult, for food not atmosphere, because atmosphere is very different, for food would be the ... is very good, again it's that kind of clean, local, yummy, nice. ... in the city obviously very good. The Patio Italian restaurant love that. The Van Café ... delicatessen Italian restaurant. Mmm where else, I love The Apartment and The Outsider, have you been there, they're really quite nice, again quite simple I suppose. Mmm and then there are a couple of restaurants in Belfast that I absolutely love mmm and then I have restaurant experiences like ... experience, oh my word but it's not favourite restaurant because I've only ever been there once, for obvious reasons. Mmm and then there was a restaurant in Canada that we went to that would be in the same category, you know, I'll never forget what the food was like and what the place was like but I'm unlikely to go again. And the same would be true with probably, you know, a place in Japan that would be the same and probably all over the place. But in terms of Edinburgh probably only a few that are regular haunts.
- I: Okay. Is food private or is social or is it both?
- R: I'd say it's social definitely, even it's just John and I, I suppose that's quite social isn't it. But no all the best times are around food, always and I would ten times rather go out for a nice long boozy lunch than go stand in a pub, you know. And a really good

dinner with friends is just oh it's lovely and all family occasions are all around the kitchen table, they're all food based

I: I'm going to come back to all of this stuff I want more of that [laughter]. Does food make you feel any way in particular?

R: Mmm excited quite often and I will quite often know what I'm going to have for dinner and I do get quite excited about it during the day. Quite obsessive I suppose mmm.

I: What way?

R: Like, you know, you really get into it and you're really, you're focused on having really nice food, it does kind of take over your world for the hour or whatever that you're involved in eating it, cooking it whatever. Mmm really quite appreciative because I never ate the way I eat now before I met John, never, so I am really grateful, I probably don't tell him very much but I am because, you know, it is like living in a restaurant so that's quite good. Mmm yeah can't think of anything else.

I: One last thing before we go on and talk about cooking. Do you snack or are you a meals person?

R: I do snack but I am quite annoying in that I don't really snack on chocolate or crisps and things and that all stems from lent. Where I took it to the extreme for so many years in a row that rather than just giving up sweets, which we were kind of encouraged to do when we were young. I mean my mum, we used to give up sweets but we'd buy the same amount of sweets that we'd normally of had when we each ... chocolate tin to save it in and so on Easter Sunday we'd eat the whole lot and we'd be so sick, really not healthy at all. But when I got older, you know, I don't know I suppose in London I took a notion it would be kind of a healthy thing to do and I suppose maybe I was a bit more conscious of, you know, how I looked and stuff then and maybe wanted to lose a few pounds. I would use Lent as a way to do that, by the time I got up here it was getting so, quite extreme so I gave up chocolate biscuits, sweets, crisps, cakes, you know, everything that was in that kind of camp. And so by doing that a couple of years in a row, you'd get so used to, if I was hungry I would have an apple so I generally have apples, I don't have many bananas because I find them really... But apples and other fruit really, nuts, the odd biscuit but not really, I feel a bit, I mean I'm having chocolate in the middle of the day, haven't really ... in the last couple of weeks I have been ... crashing. But mmm chocolate in the middle of the day I wouldn't really have it, I'd have chocolate maybe at night when I'm watching the telly if that counts as a snack, but that's obviously is supper, that's like with a glass of milk, that's not snacking that's a meal. But no I wouldn't even buy it, like a bag of crisps is quite a bizarre, I wouldn't do that like at work and stuff.

I: Are there special things around food, rituals or that sort of thing?

R: Mmm this is like, it's like John and his perfect mouthful, that's his ritual, he has a perfect mouthful thing where he has to get the absolute little bit of everything, particularly when it comes to clean food. Because obviously that's separated but I suppose that's a ritual in itself, you know, having everything separated is quite

ritualistic isn't it and liking it that way. Mmm I suppose things that accompany it, like what drink you have, I am very fussy, if I'm having sort of fish and potatoes and peas, I'll have a glass of milk. But if I'm having chicken something else and something else I wouldn't have milk, I'd have a water, you know, it really depends.

I: Okay well let's talk about cooking then.

R: This could be very short.

I: Do you cook?

R: Hardly ever.

I: Okay, if you were describing the kind of cook that you are, how would you describe your style of cooking or the way that you cook?

R: Methodic, following recipes, very occasionally I'll freak out and do something off ..., made up but I can name the dishes on like one hand, but I can cook like that, the rest of the time it is going by the exact amount, follow the recipe and then it works and then I go, oh well that's obvious unless I make a mistake and it's very disappointing for everybody. Like my cinnamon in lasagna episode which didn't work very well, but yeah no I'm a recipe follower.

I: So is it important to be able to cook?

R: Yes. And I wasn't really taught, so it is kind of a, I did live for many years on pasta and pasta. Like too many years but that was mainly laziness as well and not having enough time.

I: So is cooking something you need to learn to do?

R: Yes.

I: How do you go about, how have you gone about leaning that, how do you go about learning to cook?

R: I think you, I don't know actually, yeah it's weird, obviously I was taught at school, obviously I watched my mum cook. But in terms of learning I am, it is a self taught thing because you've got to have the confidence to follow a recipe and then just do it and see what happens. But I think if you've got somebody who you used to watching you kind of learn by... really don't you. Mmm but yeah I don't if taught isn't the right word, mmm I don't know.

I: Okay. So talk to me about cookery books then, are there some that you go back to time and again or have you got a favourites, how do you use them?

R: Mmm well obviously I live by cookery books because it's the only way I would cook. Mmm what one's do I like, got one that I bought for a pound in a charity shop, it's call The Baking Book that I probably open once every two weeks because I love baking, that's one thing I do do, I bake.

I: Aha. Is that different from cooking?

R: Yes that doesn't count as cooking, cooking is for savoury food, baking is for fun.

I: [laughter] okay.

R: And obviously that goes back to the whole snacking thing because I've baked something I eat it all, I'm a complete liar [laughter]. Honestly I think I make stuff up in my head about food because if I have done a big batch of baking on a Sunday and I'll bake like loads of buns, because there's only two of us, I literally end up, I would sometimes bring them into the office and give them out to people but I blatantly bring those in and then snack on those, but they don't count because they're home made ... Do you know what I mean and they also don't count as cooking because it's baking, so that's fine. So I've got a baking book that I love and I don't even know, it's by a lady and she's Scottish because she says in part of it, as a Scot ... .. but I can't remember what it's called, very old fashioned, it's lovely, everything's in ounces. And then my parents brought John, Prue Leith which he loves and I would occasionally refer to as a bit of a bible, in the same way as my mum would talk about Mrs Beeton, which I don't have and I would actually like. Mmm and then Nigella because I love some of her recipes because they always work. Mmm and then who else we got I'm trying to visualise the shelf, oh mmm Silver Spoon the Italian one which is just, no recipes seems to have more than about 5 ingredients and it all seems really easy and everything's in there. So you end up, we get a Eco box delivered with vegetables every week and you end up with stuff that you don't know what it is and then you look up on the internet and found out what it is and then you go ahh, I need a recipe somehow to cook this thing and you try even the River Cottage book or any of these and they don't have really recipes for everything. And you open Silver Spoon and it's got like 25 recipes for spinach and it's brilliant and so I use that quite a lot.

I: So what do you look for in a cook book?

R: Pictures are essential except for baking books where it doesn't matter because that's not cooking. Mmm pictures are really important because otherwise it's very difficult to kind of visualise what you doing, but then that's probably because I'm quite basic. Mmm I get lots and lots of my recipes from magazines, like I will tear out, I'm a tearer outer and I have a file [laughter]. Where I keep my magazine tear-outs and they would be my favourite recipes, I'll use those more often than I use the cookery books.

I: What is it about them?

R: What is it about the magazine?

I: Yeah.

R: I don't know whether you maybe, you don't sit down with a recipe book and read it, whereas if you're lying in the bath reading a magazine and you get to the cookery bit and it's got some nice pictures, you go oh that looks nice and then you actually read it and you think, oh could do that and then you tear it and you file it away. And you're

much more likely to go that because you remember it rather than rather then, unless you're looking up something specific like the 25 spinach recipes in Silver Spoon. Mmm sorry what was the original question?

I: I think that was it, what cookery books do you like and what do you like about them?

R: Yeah, so mmm, yeah but pictures are quite helpful.

I: Is there fashion in food, do you think there's fashion in cookery and do you follow it?

R: Mmm I think there is because everybody bangs on about the seventies and the prawn cocktail and whatever else I can't even think. Absolutely, I mean things like, you know my mum always used to make sherry trifle. I love sherry trifle, nobody makes sherry trifle, my mum doesn't make sherry trifle anymore, it's such a mistake, it's fabulous. Mmm so yes I guess there are and I go through fads of things I cook, so I will cook, like I only have about ten things that I can cook really, you know, most of them still need a recipe but ten dishes that I would do that John wouldn't. Mmm and mmm like probably four of those I haven't cooked for a year just because I'll kind of go off them and then maybe I'll do one of them again and go, oh that's quite nice. But so definitely there is fads but I don't know whether it's a fashion thing. No and as I say a lot of the stuff that I like, not even the stuff that I just cook, the stuff that I like to eat is quite similar to what I grew up with, is quite old fashioned kind of simple clean stuff, so no, fashion no.

I: Okay last question if you would, describing your overall eating how would you talk about your overall eating rather than individual foods?

R: I'd say it's pretty good, I would say it was yeah, pretty good.

I: Is it something you think about?

R: Yeah definitely, definitely and it's funny because, you know, being pregnant makes you think very carefully about what you're eating and food becomes this, you know, it's got risks in it that you never, the worst that can happen when you're not pregnant that if you eat something is you're going to get sick and food poisoning is horrible, but if you generally young and fit and whatever it's, you know, that's the kind of the worst. Mmm being pregnant every food and it's not, I mean I have all sorts of issues about food guidance for pregnancy and all that and that drives me mad and I don't want to be precious about it and I'm trying not to be precious about it, but you're eating anything and you just think god actually the ramifications of eating something that's bad is, you know, quite a big deal. Mmm and so anyway so when I found out I was pregnant, definitely started thinking right okay am I getting everything that I need. And I really am pretty confident that I wouldn't ever need to take a vitamin or a mineral supplement, I really like feel pretty much we're getting everything. Because even if we don't, we don't manage it so that we have a couple of portions of oily fish a week but we generally have a couple of portions of oily fish a week, you know, and because we have the Eco box and we have a competition with ourselves that you have use everything in it and we can't throw of it out because that's very bad and waste is bad. So you end up making a huge vegetable soup to use it all up, so I mean everything is kind of quite veg orientated but not so much fruit orientated actually,



which maybe is a good thing or a bad thing I don't know. Mmm but then I still have treats but then dark chocolate is good for you and you need it. So mmm yeah I'd say it's pretty good.

I: Good, right let's move onto the next bit. Mmm talk to me about family, what's family?

R: Well John's my family, mmm I suppose we're going to have our own family which is a bit weird, because I still see myself as part of my mum's family. Obviously then I've got John's family so that's brilliant but that's different. Mmm and my family, I always think in terms of my mum and dad, my two sisters and I and then there's the grandmothers, the close aunts, that sort of thing. Mmm but, you know, we're a five that's the way I think, when I think of family and probably maybe it'll change when the baby's born but someone had said, you know, whose your family, I'd say mum, dad, Karen, Victoria, I'll probably forget to say John even, do you know what I mean, because I associate very much with sitting around the kitchen table and that sort of thing.

I: So would you say, how would you describe the relationships with your family, are you a close family?

R: Aha, mmm obviously they live away in Belfast so I don't see them as much as I'd like but when I do, it is very close, very close to my sisters and they are my best mates definitely. Mmm although I probably drive them mad with my nagging and telling them to eat healthily and mmm, but no we're very close and yeah it's a nice set up, talk a lot on the phone, email occasionally.

I: So what does closeness, what's closeness like, what is closeness, how would you describe closeness?

R: Well anything went wrong that's who I go to first off, really is and that complete trust completely. Mmm and also I've moved around so much that they're the one constant, you know, so I'm very lucky, really lucky.

I: Are your family influential?

R: Oh dear yes, but less so. I mean when it comes to things like food, I would say John and I have a much, have a very different approach to food than my family would have. You know, they wouldn't influence me on that front but their views on certain things still influence me. But then I guess things like politics and everything I think if you think of things like that, you know, when you're younger you automatically would vote the way your parents vote wouldn't you, I would guess everybody's like that. And as you get older you kind of go hang on a second, you know, and you develop your own opinions and so they influence me but they don't, there's no control at all anymore, except for the respect kind of side. But mmm influence, yeah they could say stuff and it might change the way I feel. I think it would be very interesting when I have the baby, I'm sure I will be heavily influenced by my mother and my grandmother and my aunt, just because I think they're all great mothers. But no, don't know, weird, quite independent I suppose.

- I: Was food important growing up?
- R: eating together was really important and even if the whole family were completely broken and we weren't speaking to each other we would always sit at the table. It might end up in a bigger argument or it might end up with us making up but it was incredibly important. Yes but not in a fancy way just in a functional way, we did always eat at the table, always. We always had a glass of milk with dinner, we always and they're quite rituals, a lot of rituals actually about food, very few dishes but very well cooked and nothing fancy, I don't think mum's ever made a sauce in her life, I don't think she really understands, not because she's not a good cook, just because she's a really simple, just old fashioned cook. She probably cooks exactly the same meals that my grandmother would cook for herself if she was still cooking, you know, very traditional kind of, you know.
- I: So there's a proper concept of a family meal?
- R: Yeah definitely, definitely, every so often the ... dad being allowed in the kitchen but that would just rarely happen, but he was the one that taught my mother to cook which is very interesting and I do wonder whether history will repeat itself and John will be the one that teaches and I'll end up doing all the cooking and it will be awful [laughter]. But mmm yeah dinnertime was a big thing and it all went slightly downhill, we moved around an awful lot and I think there must have been a period when my mum wasn't terribly happy. Because I remember we got the junk cupboard and we were allowed to go into the junk cupboard but with permission at certain times of the day. And there would be all sorts of nonsense in there and I do remember actually, I never was that into it, Karen and Victoria my younger sisters would have been a bit more into to, maybe it's just because they were younger. But mmm I remember the junk cupboard and yeah that was a bad move because it was low level, it was just there and you'd walk in and ... be calling out to you ... I do remember those. But mmm sorry that probably wasn't your question?
- I: No it was. So mmm do you think food's important to being a family?
- R: Yes, I would be quite determined that a television is never on in the background when we're having dinner and it's not that we didn't have that, you know, we definitely did, you know, mum please can we watch whatever please, please, please, yeah go on then. But it wouldn't be the norm mmm but I would be quite ... about that I think, do you know what I mean, I just don't think if you've cooked food. I mean John and I occasionally have the telly on, we'll watch the news or something and I do feel a bit guilty about that and I don't like, but I still do it. Mmm but no I think the children, think family is really important, you kind of appreciate what you're eating and you can taste what you're eating, she said in a really kind of yummy mummy to be annoyingly, oh god ... going to be awful.
- I: [laughter] Okay lets talk about, if that's okay ... probe a wee bit into you and John's relationship, tell me about it? [laughter]
- R: [laughter] Oh god.
- I: And whatever tales you're happy with.

- R: There are all these problems [laughter] mmm it's good, it's great, it is.
- I: Has that been a influential relationship in your life?
- R: Yeah massively, massively. And I don't think I've changed as a result of things mmm I don't think I've changed as a result of him, but I think all the whole being happier and being more confident and being, just everything kind of falling into place a bit, you know, as I hit 30. I think an awful lot of that is to do with just being happy with him and just, it's that whole just unconditional love thing isn't it, it just definitely feels that way.
- I: So is food important in that relationship?
- R: Absolutely, I would say, I mean I don't know you could do a Mr and Mrs here but what if you were to say to John, what are the top five important things in your life and you aren't allowed to say family or people, food would be number one, absolutely would be number one for him and I would say it would be probably in the top five for me.
- I: So do you take the time to eat together?
- R: Yes every day, every day at least once a day, I'll come home for lunch sometimes and he cooks and that's great. So yeah and he is a superb cook mmm and that is, it's a very attractive quality in somebody, you know, it really is. Mmm just sort of sit with a glass of wine and watch somebody just kind of be quite absorbed in creating this and I'm kind of hmmm and I'm quite annoying because I mean I do tend to kind of look over his shoulder and go oh, is that cooked enough, is that this and is this that. And I'm sure it drives him mad but I'd rather be sitting in the kitchen with him than sitting in here, you know, watching telly unless I'm exhausted. But yeah it's quite a big part, I mean it's come home from work, prepare the food, have a glass of wine, talk about the food, you know, cook the food, eat the food and then the night begins, you know.
- I: Yep. Mmm okay I'll move on, I'm not probing too deeply into that one. Mmm friends, talk to me about friends? Do you have many, do you have few, is it important?
- R: I have, I would say from each of the places I've lived I have a handful of good friends and I sort of, you know, yeah they're very, very important.
- I: What's important of a friendship or friends?
- R: It's just, you enrich each others lives don't you with your stories and your woes and your joy and there's nothing better than seeing your friends like delighted for something, you know, and the knowing that you can help, you know when people aren't happy. Just, it's like having, it's like having an extended family but one that you have to work at a bit more I think because you can't really ...
- I: So is friendship is something that needs to be maintained, so something that

requires work?

R: Yeah and I would say that I probably, yeah I probably do work at it, particularly some of my friendships. Mmm but then most of them you can pick them up where you left off and it doesn't matter. So yeah I don't have hundreds of friends, I have friends who have hundreds, not hundreds, but tens and tens of friends, you know, and they'll see like loads and loads of people and, you know, I'm quite busy but I don't go out on a Saturday night with ten girls, you know. I'd see a friend for dinner, a friend for lunch, a friend for a coffee, you know, I like that kind of one to one friendship much more than a big group. Except for big parties where there are groups of friends and that's obviously totally different.

I: Talk to me about socializing then, how do you socialise with friends?

R: Food [laughter] dinners, lunches, cooking, we cook a lot mmm going out for dinner, going out for lunches more now more people have children lunch seems to be the new dinner. Mmm yeah and then obviously with booze as well, you know, can't have dinner without wine can you, unless you're pregnant.

I: [laughter] Mmm are friends influential?

R: Mmm definitely.

I: What ways?

R: Mmm I don't know they're just a bit more current than family, so family is a concept so if they're influencing you it's because of things that you've grown up with and the way they are and it's, you know. Whereas friends will influence me in terms of things they do, you know, I've got one friend who very much influences me on things I wear, you know. Other friends influence me, you know, I'll talk to them about something and I'll go and buy something as a result of the conversation, which is very odd but, you know, a book or go and see a film, you know, they influence in that way. But not in a, I'm going to change my beliefs kind of way.

I: Do you have different types of friends?

R: Mmm I have male friends and female friends [laughter] mmm old friends, new friends, friends I met through John friends, friends I met myself friends. Mmm I have work friends which are a funny concept of their own and that stems back to the whole ... Mmm I have, yeah no I definitely do have, I don't think about them in those terms but I suppose I do. But I don't really have like oh these are friends that I go out with drinking and dancing, I don't have categories like that, I have categories just in terms of how I know them as opposed to what I do with them. Because I pretty much see all my friends the same way now, food, dinner, lunch, coffee, you know.

I: And is food something you talk about with friends as well?

R: Not really, not in the same way as I talk to John, but I don't talk about food as much as John will. And I know John will have entire conversations about food. I'll talk about diet and yeah I suppose mmm depends who it is, some friends I would talk to a

bit about food and being healthy and that kind of stuff, but not. Much more likely to talk about shoes.

I: Okay yeah no that makes sense [laughter] mmm, talk to me about wider society, social pressure, social influence, the wider world, do these things, are they influential in your life, do you worry about them, are they there, or do they not mean anything?

R: Oh yeah I do worry about them, I mean obviously not just climate change but no I do despair that society is utterly falling apart and seems to be in a complete mess. Yeah I just look at the telly and I'm just like I don't understand, nobody seems to care about anything, really people don't seem to care for each other. There's so much bad news although I'm sure it's exactly the same level of bad news as there was years ago we just don't hear about it ... then, but it seems to be so negative, everything's so negative. Mmm yeah people really just don't, I just get frustrated with people not realising, you know, how lucky we all are, do you know what I mean, it sounds a bit ..., but it's so annoying.

I: So do you feel pressure from society to be a certain way?

R: I feel pressure from society to not be a certain way, do you know what I mean. Just a real almost rebelling against this, I don't know, just Tesco culture, just can't bear it.

I: What's a Tesco culture?

R: Mmm the domination of something that I believe is fundamentally just unhealthy for society, it's about being sheep and devaluing things that actually should be expensive and valuable. You know people have got everything the wrong way round and I'm not just talking about food, I'm talking about everything, clothing, you know, and I'm a complete hypocrite because I'm all for T.K. Maxx and a bit of a bargain, do you know what I mean. But I just hate this whole mentality of, you know, it's completely acceptable to buy a pair of jeans for five pounds, what, how, where does that come from, you know, what sort of lives do people have that make those clothes and, you know. Just even the price of milk and knowing that farmers get like nothing, you know, and Tesco gets like this much and the rubbish that goes into everything and nobody knows about it. Like the antibiotics in food and all of that, I just don't understand why people, why there isn't like this, oh there is, there is now ... and I suppose I'm kind of jumping on that band wagon as opposed to the other one but I hate that whole, every town looking the same, every, you know, kids all being the same, kids all eating rubbish, all those programmes on telly like Jamie Oliver School Dinners, all that kind of stuff. Fundamentally upset me and I found it horrific, I just don't understand, you know, they're not my children but I actually do really care. You get these poor kids who are eating absolute crap because it's cheap, you shouldn't be able to go and buy five massive bags of chicken bits from Iceland, you shouldn't be able, a whole chicken cost more than five pounds. So that, so yes society sorry grr [laughter], more counselling required.

I: Is it something that's just there or is it something that's, you know, that's front of mind? Is it something you think about often?

- R: It's something that I feel like I'm made to think about often, I think it's very topical and I think because of that you made to think about it a lot. I think it depends what newspaper you read, I read *The Guardian* everyday and *The FT* for a bit of balance. Mmm but you know you open up *The Guardian* and you want to throw it out the window because it's all so dreadful. Mmm so yeah I think you're provoked into thinking about it, I don't know whether it's just me in my little world, whether I would, I probably wouldn't.
- I: Okay. Mmm last wee bit on this is things like classifications, ethnicity, nationality, gender, class, these sorts of things, do they mean anything to you? Do you see yourself in a certain way mmm or do you reject them?
- R: Blimey I'd love to be really right on and say I reject it all man. I don't think you can though can you, you are defined by who you are.
- I: How would you describe yourself then, in those terms?
- R: Mmm it's funny because I wouldn't really describe myself in those terms, obviously I would say, you know, I'm a women in her 30's mmm. Yeah that's weird actually I don't know, I never really thought about that way, I understand why they're used. I don't think and I have argued with John about this so many times, I hate the whole and forgive me because I will get it totally wrong, A1, B1, C2, whatever nonsense, I don't understand how marketers can put people in groups like that. Because I'm sure without doing an in-depth analysis of me as an individual I'd be put in the wrong group, mmm and I hate that. I hate the way somebody who doesn't have mmm, you know, maybe isn't as wealthy or lives in a nice place or whatever would automatically be put into this category and kind of kept there, I don't like that. And then, you know, perhaps the whole bloody Tesco club card culture as well isn't it and I don't like that, the predictability, don't like that. But no I do understand why mmm having different types of groups is important. You need to count how many men and women there are in certain professions, you need to know the age range of, you know, your population, you need to, all those things need to be done. And maybe it's a hang up from Northern Ireland I don't know, you know, I was at school and didn't know what religion I was and I was asked what foot do you kick with and went home, said to my parents, somebody's asked me what foot and I had no idea. And I went to church every Sunday and I had no idea and they said they're asking me what religion you are and I was like, well mmm what religion am I, I don't know [laughter], am I protestant or catholic, you know. And just that I think is why I have a real anti kind of anything more detailed than your age, your gender, I just don't, I feel a bit uncomfortable.
- I: Okay no problem, we're onto the last wee section, I want to talk a wee bit about sort of marketing and things.
- R: I love the Marks and Spencer's adverts. They're the best adverts ever in the entire world. I went and bought those chocolate puddings, I love those chocolate puddings. Because it just is appreciative of food, it's not about a trendy kind of, it's not like buy one get 300 free and it's not, it just looks like food, it looks like good food, it looks like quality food, you know its fresh food and I just I think that absolutely rocks. I generally can't ... I just Find it, I don't know it just really annoys me, I hate the way they put the volume up for the adverts, just the whole thing ... .. considering what

..., but you know I understand the value of it. Mmm but mmm it really annoys me but some adverts I just absolutely love and that kind of marketing I suppose, I just thought was absolutely spot on, brilliant.

I: Okay, can we talk a wee bit about brands, can brands make their way into your household, are there one's that make their way in?

R: Oh I'm sure there are.

I: Any that you can think of, that you're conscious of buying?

R: Brands I'm conscious of buying, actually probably quite, well you probably be able to find loads if you looked, but consciously not really because things like cereal don't have, I mean I chop and change my cereal all the time, quite often I have muesli or porridge, at the moment I think it's Raisin Wheaties, but I couldn't tell you who makes them. Mmm milk is just whatever, you know, so that's bad that should be local. Mmm I suppose Olivio spread, mmm but then any old butter it doesn't really matter. We don't really buy packets, much packaged stuff, bagels, I always buy bagels but I don't know what brand they are. Mmm biscuits don't really buy, mmm gosh we're quite weird.

I: Okay no that's fine. Shops that you feel a bit of loyalty to, you've kind of mentioned Marks and Spencer's [laughter], what is it about it?

R: Oh I just think they're great, it's only because I analyse these companies quite a lot with my work and so I know that Marks and Spencer's really have got quite an aggressive mmm programme looking at supply chain, reducing food miles and all the rest of it. And I know the others claim to do the same thing but I just don't have the same, I just haven't warmed to them in the same way, I don't like the shopping experience, I hate the whole kind of bright lights, I hate the thought that somebody is monitoring my purchasing to try and help them with their profits, I understand why they do it, obviously it makes sense, if you're clever enough to think of the club card thing, you know, well done. But I just don't like that kind of thing, I know Marks and Spencer's probably do it too but mmm, shops, ... shops mmm, you see I like Prêt. Like if I wasn't going to go for lunch I'd probably get a Prêt sandwich.

I: And what is it about them?

R: Just they really, they market themselves on being really, you know, no preservatives, no colouring, no rubbish, just food really nice, you know, quality, mmm yeah, so I like Prêt.

I: What about local businesses, are there one's that you seek out?

R: Yeah there's a lovely mmm place called Henderson's, which I love for lunch mmm, the more sit down sort of lunch. Mmm and there's a great salad bar that I go to, which is lovely. Mmm ... bread, mmm local shops there's like a corner shop here called ... that we probably frequent far too often as they charge so much money for the smallest of thing. But they're very odd because they have absolutely everything in there, very strange. Mmm there's a Waitrose which we've just started shopping in,

which is like really, really good quality, like amazing, the fruit is like out of this world and you compare to, like grapes from Waitrose and grapes from Sainsbury's, like a different animal. Mmm and yet you don't get the impression that it's, you know, that means that, you know, hundred thousand tons of grapes have been discarded in the interest of producing this perfect bunch, it's not got that kind of mmm feel about it. Other local shops, John's really good he goes to the butcher and fishmonger and all the rest of it, but I can't do that because I'm at work. So I think when I have the baby I'll do that everyday, which will be really nice.

I: Would you like to be able to spend time shopping?

R: Yeah. I'd love to be able to potter around with a basket and go and get some fish from the fishmongers, butchers, you know, all that. And also we've got the Eco box so we don't ever buy veg anywhere else.

I: Talk to me about these eco boxes and other ways food is labeled do these things have meaning to you?

R: Yeah, all the veg we eat is organic, we wouldn't have it any other way mmm obviously you're really careful about removing soil but you kind of just have this feeling of I don't need to peel it loads to get rid of whatever it's been doused in. You know at university I did lots of studies on ... phosphates and all these kinds of nasty chemicals and you really, I just don't want them anywhere near me and I also hate the way that the food, I've said before, the food is actually farmed, big massive fields, you know, all the rest of it. So organic really important, not so much, I mean organic milk and eggs and things like that, organic meat it's a very different kind of concept mmm, fair trade, free range rather, you know, good animal welfare standards ... yes. Organic meat less so. Farmed fish that old debate very difficult, don't know where I stand on that mmm because obviously wild is so in danger for so many different types, would never eat cod really, unless of course John produces cod ... nothing to do with it. Mmm but I try to keep aware of what's on that kind of list mmm, what else, what else, fair trade yeah, big fair trade coffee, fair trade tea, honey, nuts, mmm and I don't care about paying a bit more for it, I really don't Fair trade where possible, I mean all those things that, you know, are actually important to me when I enjoy a meal, you know, I will kind of if I see fair trade coffee, that will be a better cup of coffee in my head because I will feel less guilty about where it's come from I just think it's. Foods too cheap, it really is just too cheap, like my grandma tells stories about, you know, you used to go and buy food and that would be your big expenditure. You know, it would be a big treat to have a big Sunday roast joint and that would do you for like two days afterwards, a family, you know, she would never dream of throwing out meat and not making soup out of it. Yet we do it all the time, because it's so cheap and I just oh don't understand, so I don't actually mind paying a bit more, bit more reassuring really isn't it.

I: Okay mmm last wee bit, social messages these sorts of things, are you aware of them, do you follow them, are there some that make more sense to you and you're more interested in?

R: I think eat five a day is a brilliant idea, I will actually look and sort of just check not that you can have an idea of how many portions of fruit and veg ... .. pretty much ...



... try my best to get through the bloody Eco box [laughter]. But yeah I think that's a really good idea, it's a really, really good idea. And I know lots of people will probably think it's a waste of government money and all the rest but I don't think it is, I think, you know, people need to know, you know, people aren't taught like that anymore. Mmm and also it's so, the fruit and veg is disproportionately expensive to a bag of chicken bits isn't it, so it's like well people need to know that they have to eat that. I do kind of wonder how people kind of survive eating no veg, but people do I suppose, maybe I'm a bit obsessed about something that doesn't matter, I don't know.

I: Any other of these kind of messages, kind of cut through and make sense to you?

R: Mmm the whole salt thing I guess but I don't really understand that, I'm not very good at that, I reckon that's the one thing that probably both John and I really aren't aware of, we never add salt to cooked food, very rarely but that obviously John will claim that's because it's perfectly seasoned. But is it perfectly seasoned by adding a load of salt, I don't know, so I've no idea whether we're having way too much or not. Mmm I have no idea actually how much you're supposed to have a day. Fat is another thing, I have no idea I think it's about 70 grams but I don't know how much is in, you know, anything that I eat. Mmm I don't really look, you know, mmm if I did have the odd like pack of crisps or whatever at work if I was, you know, ... so I would look and just out of curiosity more than anything, kind of go oh my god, mmm but I don't really, I know the messages are there but I don't really feel like we need to do anything about them because it's probably denial I don't know. I think I'll go on a salt mission next.

I: Unless there's anything that you thought you would be asked that I haven't asked you or other questions that you want to ask?

R: No I'm happy if you are.

END

