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DOMESTIC COOKING AND COOKING SKILLS IN LATE TWENTIETH CENTURY ENGLAND

Frances Short

A thesis submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements of the University of Thames Valley for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

August 2002

To Eleanor

She told them that she would interest them in her business, and pay them a sou a day to assist her in paring her vegetables. During the first few days the children displayed eager zeal; they squatted down on either side of the big flat basket with little knives in their hands, and worked away energetically. Mother Chantemesse made a speciality of pared vegetables; on her stall, covered with a strip of damp black lining, were little lots of potatoes, turnips, carrots, and white onions, arranged in pyramids of four – three at the base and one at the apex, all quite ready to be popped into the pans of dilatory housewives. She also had bundles duly stringed in readiness for the soup-pot – four leeks, three carrots, a parsnip, two turnips, and a couple of sprigs of celery. Then there were finely-cut vegetables for julienne soup laid out on squares of paper, cabbages cut into quarters, and little heaps of tomatoes and slices of pumpkin which gleamed like red stars and golden crescents amidst the pale hues of the other vegetables. Cadine evinced much more dexterity than Marjolin, although she was younger. The peelings of the potatoes she pared were so thin that you could see through them; she tied up the bundles for the soup-pot so artistically that they looked like bouquets; and she had a way of making the little heaps she set up, though they contained but three carrots of turnips, look like very big ones.

Emile Zola, The Fat and the Thin.

CONTENTS

List of Figures vi

List of Tables vii

Acknowledgments viii

Abstract ix

Chapter 1 - Current Debates about, and Existing Research into, Domestic Cooking and Cooking Skills 1

Chapter 2 - Methodological Approach, Design and Process 47

Chapter 3 - Domestic Cooking Skills 88

Chapter 4 - Common Approaches towards Domestic Cooking 111

Chapter 5 - Individual Approaches towards Domestic Cooking 170

Chapter 6 - Domestic Cooking Skills, Cooking Approaches, Cooking Practices and the Interrelationship between Them 189

Chapter 7 - The Meaning of Cooking 212

Appendix 1 - Key Specialists Interviewed (1996 – 1997) 259

Appendix 2 - Written Information about Cooking Diaries 261

Appendix 3 - Information to be Given by Informants in their Cooking Diaries 262

Appendix 4 - A Sample of Completed Cooking Diary Sheets 263

Appendix 5 - Written Information Given to Informants prior to Interviews 286

Appendix 6 - Example of a First Stage Interview Schedule 287

Appendix 7 - Example of a Second Stage Interview Schedule 294

Appendix 8 - First Stage Contact Questionnaire 309

References 312

LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 2.1 - An Example of a Causal Network Used in the Second Stage of Fieldwork 80

Figure 2.2 - An Example of a Causal Network Used in the Second Stage of Fieldwork 81

Figure 6.1 - The Interrelationship Between the Informants Approaches Towards Domestic Cooking, their Domestic Cooking Skills and their Domestic Cooking Practices and Food choice 190

Figure 7.1 - Determinants of Food and Nutrition Choice and Security in the UK (DOH, 1996,4) 231

Figure 7.2 - Suggestions for a Revised Model of the Determinants of Food and Nutrition Choice and Security in the UK 232

Figure 7.3 - A Model of the Set of Relationships Influencing the Domestic Cooking Practices and Food Choice of Domestic Cooks as Hypothesised by this Current Research 246

LIST OF TABLES

Table 2.1 - Examples of the Codes Used in the First Stage of Fieldwork 77

Table 2.2 - An Example of the Clustering and Counting Analysis Method Used in the First Stage of Fieldwork 78

Table 2.3 - Examples of the Codes Used in the Second Stage of Fieldwork 79

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ABSTRACT

This study came about in response to the interest in, and concern about, domestic cooking and cooking skills that has arisen in recent years. It critically reviews the current state of thinking about cooking and cooking skills, provides a critique of both popular and academic discourse and proposes new opportunities for policy and future research.

With little existing empirically acquired knowledge and no theoretical convention for the study of cooking and cooking skills, the primary research was designed to be exploratory and to provide systematically researched insights and understanding. It took a qualitative approach in order to provide intricate detail about people's domestic cooking practices, the skills they use, and their beliefs and opinions about cooking in the home and a systematically researched understanding of these aspects of cooking. The findings revealed that 'cooking skills' could be seen specifically as the skills of *domestic* cooking (as opposed to those of professional cooking) and as either 'task centred' (the skills involved in a particular task) or as 'person centred' (the skills of an individual carrying out a task in a particular context). They also revealed that the informant's (domestic) 'cooking skills' consisted of many different types of perceptual and conceptual skills as well as mechanical skills and academic knowledge. The findings revealed that the informants had very individual approaches towards domestic cooking but that there were many beliefs and opinions that they shared. The research also found that there was a complex 'interrelationship' between the informants' domestic cooking skills, their approaches towards domestic cooking and their domestic cooking practices and food choice.

The findings of this study provide an additional and different perspective of the relationship between domestic food provision, cooking and cooking skills allowing the development of relevant debates and concerns. They clarify that cooking skills are an influence on food choice but show that this influence is complex. They challenge current theoretical explanations of the impact of technology on domestic cooking and food provision, for example, and the deskilling of the domestic cook.

CHAPTER I

CURRENT DEBATES ABOUT, AND EXISTING RESEARCH INTO, DOMESTIC COOKING AND COOKING SKILLS

Introduction

In recent years, various theoretical propositions about the state of domestic cooking and cooking skills in contemporary Britain have been put forward. Some academics have proposed that domestic cooking is being 'deskilled' by the ready availability and use of foods that have been prepared outside the home (Fieldhouse, 1995; Stitt, 1996 and Warde, 1997). Others have argued that there has been a 'revision' of domestic cooking and cooking skills, whereby a greater use of industrially pre-prepared foods exists alongside an increase in cooking as a recreational pastime, (Lang et al., 1999). It has also been suggested that domestic cooking and cooking skills are being 'debased' (Longfield, 1996).

A number of popular and academic debates, concerns and campaigns, related to these suggestions about the state of contemporary domestic cooking, have also arisen. It has been argued that a population with a deficit of cooking skills will become increasingly reliant on commercially pre-prepared foods and on an ever more powerful food industry and that changes to the teaching of cooking in schools will exacerbate this situation (Stitt, 1996). It has also been argued that a decline of cooking skills can be linked with de-socialised eating practices (Mintz, 1996; Ritzer, 1996 and Shore 2002), the subjugation (and also emancipation) of women as food providers (Dixey, 1996 and Mennell, Murcott and van Otterloo, 1994), and, possibly, a decline in the life-enhancing aspects of food and cooking and the health of the nation (Lang et al., 1997b and 1999; Longfield, 1996 and Mintz, 1996). Alongside these academic debates there are also popular concerns that the British public are 'not very good cooks' and 'cannot cook' with raw ingredients (Billen, 1997; Leith, 1997; Orr, 1999). The most developed, research based, arguments lie in the field of health promotion where it has been proposed that people lack the necessary cooking

skills to follow dietary guidelines, cook economically and control their diet with ease (Department of Health, 1996; Lang et al., 1999 and Leather, 1996).

Many academics, including James and McColl, (1997), Warde and Hethrington (1994) and Lang et al; (1999), have pointed out that any debates or arguments about the state of domestic cooking and cooking skills in contemporary Britain remain speculative and difficult to develop because there is a deficit of specific, empirical research about domestic cooking and cooking skills with a clear, theoretical base. Others argue that more detailed research is required to explain the application and acquisition of cooking skills and therefore the processes involved in any ongoing deskilling or restructuring of these skills (Dickinson and Leader, 1998 and Mennell, Murcott and Van Otterloo, 1994). Murcott (1995b, 232) has emphasised the need for a "systematic framework for thinking" about domestic cooking and cooking skills, particularly in "a realm in which industrialised and craft modes of production exist".

A review of literature and research substantiates these arguments and divisions. It reveals that, although studies of domestic food provision and food choice sometimes include a brief examination or discussion of cooking and/or cooking skills, specific information tends to come from research which is policy-based (mainly from the subject areas of education and health promotion), from market research and from surveys organised by popular journals and magazines.

This first, introductory chapter describes and examines the existing research into domestic cooking and cooking skills and provides a review of the relevant, though wide-ranging and multi-disciplinary, literature. It begins however, by describing and explaining the arguments, debates, concerns and academic divisions that surround cooking and cooking skills in the contemporary British household.

The Diversification of the Food Industry and Domestic Food Practices

The massive diversification and restructuring of the food industry and domestic food practices, generally considered as taking place since the Second World War, has been both universally acknowledged and extensively documented (Beardsworth and

Keil, 1997; Lang et al. 1996 and 1999; and Mennell, Murcott and van Otterloo, 1994). In Britain today, an immense variety of raw foods ingredients and ready-prepared and semi-prepared foods are now widely available. Innumerable international food styles and cuisines dominate the menus of establishments as diverse as five star restaurants and hospital canteens as well as domestic cooking. Technological advances have radically changed industrial food preparation, preservation and distribution and domestic food storage and cooking equipment. A profusion of information about food and cooking is available in cookery books and magazines and from specialist cookery programmes on television:

> A whole history of food technology has impacted on home cooking and eating, from refrigerated transportation to the microwave, and from television cookery shows to supermarkets on the internet. (Bell and Valentine, 1997, 202)

Warde (1997, 23), in an investigation of contemporary food consumption, lists a vast number of trends that "readily come to mind" under the chapter heading "New Manners of Food". He talks of increasing sales of recipe books, the availability of fresh produce from around the world and new products that are "constantly made available". He also refers to changes in domestic food practices such as the decline of the cooked breakfast and midday meal and an increase in the consumption of "complete, pre-prepared, chilled or frozen packages and purchases from the supermarket" and takeaway food.

An Increase of Academic Interest in Food

Alongside this huge diversification of the food industry and related domestic practices there has been an accompanying, and steadily increasing, academic interest. Murcott (1998a, 110-11) for example, has explained how it was in an atmosphere whereby "never mind Cuban cafes in Islington - a Mongolian restaurant was spotted in a South Wales valley" that the impetus for a six year, multi-disciplinary study for the Economic and Social Research Council to examine the processes that affect human food choice came about. This interest in food and food practices has inspired

numerous debates and studies in a number of subject areas. These include such diverse topics as the local and global distribution of food and food systems (Goodman and Redclift, 1991; Heasman and Rumfitt, 1996 and Lang, 1997a and 1998); food scares (Beardsworth and Keil, 1997); food and eating disorders, such as obesity (Caraher and Lang, 1998a); the effect of pre-prepared foods in a society where food ideologies sustain gender and family divisions (Murcott, 1998a and Shapiro, 1995); the processes and effects of food 'creolisation' and the blending of national cuisines (James, 1997 and Mintz, 1996); and eating and 'dining out' as a leisure activity (Finkelstein, 1989 and Martens and Warde, 1997).

An Increase of Interest in Domestic Food Practices

As part of this increase in interest over food, there are a number of debates about, and concerns over, domestic food practices. Some academics and specialists are concerned about difficulties in access to food, especially for those people without cars or those who live in 'food deserts' such as inner cities (Caraher et al., 1998; Harrison and Lang, 1997 and Leather, 1996). Others are engaged in debates about whether the possible decline of the family meal and "desocialized eating" (Mintz, 1985, 202) has a negative effect on family life, socialisation patterns and diet or whether this is merely "sentimental reflection" (Goodman and Redclift 1991, 31) and domestic and family eating patterns are actually undergoing a process of restructuring – families share the same food at different times and different food at the same time (Morrison, 1996, 667).

Concerns about the State of Cooking and Cooking Skills in Contemporary Britain

There are also concerns about the state of cooking in contemporary Britain[1]. Numerous journalists and food writers as well as academics have joined this debate. (Two major campaigns to promote cooking were launched in the 1990s. Sustain:

[1] Concerns have also been voiced in other European countries, the United States of America and Australia.

The alliance for better food and farming,[2] established Get Cooking!, which aimed to raise the profile of cooking and encourage people to cook by organising after-school cooking clubs and adult classes in local community groups, in 1993. The Royal Society of Arts' launched its Focus on Food campaign in 1997 and aims to promote practical cooking in schools and lobby for changes to the position of cooking in the national curriculum).

Within some areas of popular journalism, as has been pointed out by Orr (1999), there is a an understanding that phenomena such as the increasing sales of exotic ingredients and growing interest in food related topics and so on is an indicator of positive changes – that the nation is adopting a more sophisticated approach to food and cooking. However the majority of food writers who have become involved in this debate are less enthusiastic about the state of cooking and consider the use of factory pre-prepared food in particular as having a negative effect. Bell (1998, 3), for example, talks of "the weaknesses and potential hazards in British eating and cooking habits". She quotes another food writer, Delia Smith, who Bell says, thinks we are in danger "of losing touch with the basics and the simplicity of good food". There appears to be a general feeling that the British population 'can't cook' and 'doesn't cook' and that this is bad for health and for family life:

> Lack of time and the pressures of advertising, as well as the loss of cooking skills, have played their part in the erosion of the kitchen centred society. (Leith, 1998, 60)

Within academia the focus of concern has been, not so much on a vague notion that people in contemporary Britain 'cannot cook very well' and 'do not cook very much', but on a possible routinisation (through the use of pre-prepared foods) of domestic cooking and a decline in the use of raw foods and cooking skills. Gofton and Ness (1993, 21) suggest that some young people "have grown up with almost no experience of foods in a raw state". Academics from many disciplines, including Fieldhouse (1995), Warde (1997), and Stitt (1996), have referred to 'deskilling' when discussing cooking in contemporary Britain:

[2] Sustain: The alliance for better food and farming, was known as The National Food Alliance when Get Cooking! was first established.

> As more and more sophisticated technologies such as food processors and microwave ovens came into common use the depersonalisation of cooking was exacerbated by reducing the need for skills and personal knowledge. (Fieldhouse, 1995, 71)

Central to this debate is the factory production of food, the development of technology in the domestic kitchen and the ready availability and use of pre-prepared and ready prepared foods. Pre-prepared foods are sometimes regarded as part of a positive restructuring of domestic food practices:

> For all that they are criticised, manufactured foods of all kinds have undeniably introduced a variety to ordinary people's tables which hardly bears comparison with the monotonous diets of the less well off before the present century. (Mennell, 1996, 330)

They are perceived as offering people, especially women (who are more likely to be responsible for food provision[3]), greater choice over the quantity or frequency of food preparation that they do (Davies, 1998; Mennell, Murcott and van Otterloo, 1994 and Ridgewell, 1996a). However, there are opposing claims that through the use of pre-prepared and ready-prepared foods, the individual is deskilled and the choice to cook with raw foods is taken away from them (Fieldhouse, 1995; Stitt et al., 1996, Warde, 1997). With the availability and use of pre-prepared foods, it is argued, the individual not only no longer requires cooking skills to eat or to provide food but also no longer acquires cooking skills. A resulting deficit of cooking skills then compels people to continue using industrially pre-prepared foods, so denying them that choice over the quantity or frequency of food preparation that they do. Marshall (1995, 178) argues that "cooking has been deskilled, or transferred out into the commercial sector". It is also argued that this deskilling and removal of choice is further exacerbated, through the domestic use of pre-prepared foods, as children

[3] Research in the 1980's found that women were responsible for the provision of food and did the majority of food preparation (Charles and Kerr, 1988 and Murcott, 1985 and 1995a). Research in the 1990's has found that women still do the majority of food preparation (Lang et al., 1999; Keane and Willetts, 1996 and Warde, 1997).

cannot then acquire cooking skills (Lang and Baker, 1993; Mennell, Murcott and van Otterloo, 1994 and Street, 1994):

> It has always been the tradition of mothers to teach their children, especially daughters, the basics of cooking and preparing meals. This tradition could disappear as mothers move towards the use of convenience foods as it will result in less time set aside for preparing meals from basic ingredients. This will cause a knock on effect on the younger generation who will not be able to learn the necessary cooking skills. (Street, 1994: 60)

The Complexities Surrounding Concerns Over the State of Domestic Cooking and Cooking Skills in Contemporary Britain

There are, however, suggestions that there are greater complexities to this debate over domestic cooking skills. Jeanette Longfield (1996), co-ordinator of Sustain: the alliance for better food and farming[4], has argued that any debate, policy or action over domestic cooking skills should not ignore the values that people place on skills and the influence that this might have on their domestic cooking practices. Domestic cooking skills in contemporary Britain, she says, have been both culturally and economically "debased". Lang et al. (1999) in a report of the Health Education Authority's 1993 Health and Lifestyles Survey point out that, although people are using more pre-prepared foods, cooking is also becoming a leisure activity for many people:

> The restructuring of the food economy has been exemplified by the emergence of high value-added foods, the rapid up-take of microwave foods and by trends towards what marketing specialists have called 'grazing' of eating patterns. These changes have coincided with, or helped create, a revision of culinary skills. On the one hand there has never been more interest in food and

[4] Sustain; the alliance for better food and farming launched a government funded campaign on cooking skills in 1991 (it was then known as The National Food Alliance).

> cooking, as evidenced by the popularity of cooking shows on television (there were nearly thirty a week at the start of 1997) and the sales of cooking magazines and books. There is strong suggestion that cooking is becoming part of the leisure industry for some. The Henley Centre estimates that over 36% of British adults now cook at least once a week for pleasure. Yet on the other hand, as the Health and Lifestyles survey has shown, the English are by no means wholly confident or fluent in practising cooking and using culinary skills.' (Lang et al., 1999, 31)

They suggest that domestic cooking skills are not undergoing a simple decline but that they are undergoing "a revision", in a process that mirrors a more widespread diversification of food.

The Major Debates that Surround Domestic Cooking and Cooking Skills in Contemporary Britain

Whether undergoing a decline or a restructure, concerns over cooking skills, and the consequent effect on wider food practices such as food provision and eating habits, are the focus of a number of debates in a variety of academic disciplines.

Domestic Cooking, Cooking Skills and the Health of the Nation

Cooking skills are now generally acknowledged to be a determinant of ability to maintain a healthy diet (Department of Health, 1996; Lang et al., 1999 and Leather, 1996). With this recognition, specialists in Health Promotion, Education and Food Policy have become increasingly concerned that any deficit of skills will reduce people's food choice and lessen their ability to prepare and cook fresh, raw foods and follow dietary guidelines and healthy eating advice (Nicolaas, 1995; Lang and Baker, 1993 and Lang et al., 1999).

There is also a more intangible concern that with a deficit of cooking skills people are less able to gauge the ingredients of pre-prepared and semi-prepared foods and thus less able to gauge the nutritional content (Ripe, 1993). The argument is that those "who lack cooking skills have less control over their diet especially in relation to a healthy diet" (Street, 1994,11).

It has also been suggested that, as it has been found that it is cheaper to prepare food that meets suggested dietary requirements with cooking skills than it is without (Adamson, 1996), cooking skills can make a healthy diet more accessible to a greater number of people.

Domestic Cooking, Cooking Skills and Industrial Pedagogy

Specialists in Consumer Studies and Food Policy are concerned that if people lack cooking skills then they become will become increasingly reliant on industrially prepared foods. In doing so, they will not only hand over control of their diet to the food industry but also greater economic and political power:

> If you cannot cook, you surrender your food choices too someone else to cook for you, which increasingly these days is the food industry. You surrender your nutrition, and that of your family, to commercial concerns. (Ripe, 1993, 119-20)
>
> The less cooking skills that people have, the more pre-cooked, pre-processed foodstuffs they will buy from them, the greater their profits. (Stitt et al., 1996, 11)

Domestic Cooking, Cooking Skills and Changes to Food Skills in Education

Concerns have also arisen in a number of different disciplines, including Education, Consumer Studies and Health Promotion, that changes to the National Curriculum (whereby 'cookery' is taught as part of Design and Technology rather than Home

Economics and is regarded as less practically based) may exacerbate deskilling and any deficiencies in domestic cooking skills. This, in turn, it is argued, may have a negative effect on the nation's food practices and diet. A report from a study by Health Which? suggests that many children may leave school without a thorough knowledge of nutrition, health and food safety:

> *Health Which?* has uncovered concerns about how they're [schools] currently tackling food education. And talking to young people about healthy eating, cooking and food safety, we found gaps in what they know about food and how confident they are in dealing with it. (Health Which?, 1998, 14)

Anecdotally, this tends to be regarded as "reaching the age of eighteen without being able to boil an egg, let alone know where an egg comes from or how it is produced" (Bell, 1998, 3).

With a greater focus on the commercial production of food, Stitt et al. (1996) see the teaching of cookery within Design and Technology as the direct opposite of the expressed values (the acquisition of life skills such as knowledge of food and a good approach to healthy eating) of the National Curriculum. They regard this change in focus as a deliberate ploy by the government to increase industrial pedagogy by deskilling the population through forcing them to buy food from mass food manufacturers and processors who, in turn, produce foodstuffs which require less and less skills to prepare or cook. The education system, they say, contributes to the "protection and expansion of profits for the food capitalists by deskilling consumers" (p. 8).

However, Ridgewell (1996a) suggests that food studies within Design and Technology acknowledge the diversification of the food industry and the restructuring of domestic routines in contemporary Britain. She argues that 'cooking' within Design and Technology is taught from the position of empowering the individual with all the food skills necessary (including both practical skills and knowledge) to cope with a modern food environment that makes available both fresh, raw foods and pre-prepared foods. (Davies [1998] has also pointed out that food

studies within Food Technology are not intended to be a new version of 'cookery' but because it is not yet a well developed subject people do not tend to distinguish between the two.)

Domestic Cooking, Cooking Skills, Socialisation Processes and Life Enhancement

For some sociologists, concerns over domestic cooking skills are connected with establishing any possible links between their decline or restructuring and de-socialised eating practices, social mechanisms for self-identity and socialisation processes within the family (Fieldhouse, 1995; Mintz, 1985 and 1996).

This debate is frequently associated with a popular topic of discussion amongst food writers and other journalists, that a possible deficit of cooking skills deprives people's of the pleasure of food and the ability to take part in an enjoyable and satisfying process (Driver, 1983; Grigson, 1993; Leith, 1998).

Domestic Cooking, Cooking Skills and Women's Role in the Home

Debates about relationships between food preparation and provision, household structure and family members have also taken on a new focus in the light of concerns about the potential restructuring of domestic food preparation and cooking skills via the use of pre-prepared foods and new kitchen technologies. (Whether changes to patterns of food preparation and food preparation and provision responsibilities are a cause of, or an effect of, changes to domestic relationships, particularly the role of women, is a key point of debate [see Mennell, Murcott and van Otterloo, 1994]). The availability of pre-prepared food, which tends to be viewed as requiring fewer cooking skills, can be regarded as a means to free women from food provision responsibilities and from any associated subordination within the family. Alternatively, it has been argued that if families no longer require a skilled cook to provide their food then women's position as family food providers may be subjugated (Mennell, Murcott and van Otterloo, 1994). Dixey (1996) warns that any

campaigns to promote food and cooking skills must challenge gender roles in domestic food practices and not put further pressure on women as food providers to be 'more skilled'.

The Existing Research into Domestic Cooking and Cooking Skills

These concerns about domestic cooking skills arose in the late 1980s and early 1990s within a void of existing research and theoretical debate.

The 1995 OPCS study for the Department of Health's Nutrition Task Force also measured domestic cooking skills, and attitudes towards them, against socioeconomic variables. Its aim was to find out "how often people tended to prepare meals and to see whether frequency of preparing meals was related to socio-demographic characteristics, confidence in cooking, cooking knowledge and attitudes towards cooking" (Nicolaas, 1995, 1). The survey questioned the public's knowledge of "basic cooking techniques"; confidence in "being able to cook from basic ingredients"; the importance of teaching children to cook; and where cooking knowledge was "picked up". It also examined what "cooking skills" (such as making a sauce, reading a recipe and freezing and defrosting) respondents would like to learn (Nicolaas, 1995, 3).

The Health Education Authority's study (1998), although it also looked at other determinants of ability to follow dietary guidelines such as kitchen resources, had a specific section that focused on cooking and cooking skills. This survey measured ability and attitudes towards cooking and cooking skills against socioeconomic variables. Questions examined the public's confidence about using a variety of "cooking techniques" (such as shallow frying, stewing, boiling and microwaving), their ability to cook from "basic ingredients" and preparing selected generic, raw foods (such as white fish, rice, root vegetables, and pulses). There were also questions about frequency of cooking; the "number of main meals bought ready prepared"; influences on "learning to cook" and "learning more about cooking; and views on the importance of teaching children to cook and "wanting to learn more about cooking" (Lang, et al., 1999, 8 - 30).

Both the HEA survey and the DOH survey found that although social status, education levels and income appeared to influence differences in both cooking ability and attitudes towards cooking and cooking skills, the most overwhelming differences were related to age and, above all, to gender. Of the 21% of respondents in the DOH survey who said that they never cooked a meal, 18% were men and 3% were women (Nicolaas, 1995). The HEA survey found that "on average, women respondents cooked on 5.8 days per week and men on only 2.5. The HEA survey also found that women were more likely than men to 'learn to cook' from their mother (76% compared to 58%) and men more likely than women to learn from their partners and spouses (18% compared to 3%) (Lang et al., 1999, 8 – 30). Though it used a different phraseology, the DOH study had similar findings. It found that 82% of women but only 53% of men listed 'the family' as a 'source of knowledge'. The study also found that women were more likely to pick up knowledge from a number of sources such as school lessons, family and recipe books (Nicolaas, 1995, 4)

Both studies found that their respondents generally wanted to learn more about cooking and thought it important that both boys and girls should learn to cook. The HEA study found that, on average, just over half of their respondents said that they would find useful more information on such things as preparing fruit and vegetables, food hygiene, and microwave cooking (Lang et al., 1999). The DOH study asked similar questions. It too found that generally it's respondents would like to learn more about cooking but figures for learning more about specific aspects of cooking, such as sauce making and reading a recipe were lower (Nicolaas, 1995). Despite these positive responses to learning more about cooking and the importance of cooking, both studies also found that almost a quarter of their respondents rarely 'cooked a meal'. The the HEA study that a large number of its respondents (38% of men and 21% of women) expressed no interest in cooking (Lang et al., 1999).

Reports of both these public health studies point to the key role of positive attitudes and confidence within domestic food preparation and cooking practices, with confidence increasing with age and frequency of food preparation and noticeably higher amongst women. However, both these reports also suggest that there is not a simple relationship between confidence and behaviour. Nicolaas (1995, 1) suggests that the DOH study reveals "a gap between attitudes towards cooking and cooking

behaviour", pointing out that those who never prepared a meal did not necessarily hold more negative attitudes. Lang et al. (1999) in their report of the HEA study point out that high levels of general confidence about 'cooking from basic ingredients' do not correlate with confidence in using particular techniques and when cooking specific foods.

Ambiguities and Complexities

Other research also suggests that there is a complex and ambiguous relationship between confidence in cooking and cooking skills, cooking practices and other approaches towards cooking. Street (1994) and Demas (1995) have both carried out interventionist studies of cooking (Street in England and Demas in the United States of America). Street reported that, in adults, greater confidence about cooking and cooking skills, was connected not only to higher levels of cooking ability and skills, but also to interest and enjoyment of cooking and greater use of fresh, raw ingredients. Demas (1995) found that, amongst young children in an elementary school in America, an increased experience of food and cooking led to an increased interest in food, greater confidence about food, cooking and eating and greater food acceptance. However, a study of the culinary practices, and related confidence in cooking, of young people in Portugal suggests that the relationship between confidence and cooking behavior may not be a simple one and not solely reliant on levels of cooking skills and cooking experience. This study found that although frequency of cooking was much higher amongst girls, confidence levels amongst both boys and girls was similar (Rodrigues and de Almeida, 1996).

Other studies reveal contradictions and complexities in the relationship between attitudes and behavior, and skill levels. A MORI study for BBC Good Food found that 81% of the 7 to 15 year olds in their survey thought that cooking was fun, that 76% would like to learn more; and that 63% did not think that cooking was too complicated. In contrast, only 23% said that they could make spaghetti bolognese, 45% scramble eggs, 46% cook jacket potatoes and 29% cook a full meal for themselves and their family (Lang and Baker 1993).

Market research also reveals contradictions between approaches, ability and the use of pre-prepared and raw foods. A survey by National Opinion Polls for the Taste 2000 project (National Opinion Polls, 1997) found that, despite 42% of respondents saying that they found preparing and cooking food an enjoyable occupation, 33% of its respondents said that they use fresh prepared foods from the supermarket chiller cabinet several times a week and that 55% prepare and cook a midweek meal in half an hour or less. However, there are also contradictions between surveys. Another survey, by a supermarket food magazine (Sainsburys The Magazine, 1998), had very different findings (though this survey relied on people 'filling in' and returning a questionnaire that was given out with the magazine). It found that 91% of its respondents said they enjoy cooking; that 51% said they give a special 'meal' one to three times a month; that sixty-two minutes was the average amount of time that respondents said they spent on preparing an evening meal; that 61% said that very few meals involve convenience foods; and that 46% regularly try new recipes from magazines (Innes, 1998).

Despite discrepancies between the surveys, these figures from market research do reinforce a widely acknowledged trend towards cooking as a leisure, or recreational occupation. Caraher and Lang (1998b, 3), in their study of the influence of celebrity chefs and television cookery programmes on public attitudes and behavior, refer to estimates from the Henley Centre (1994) that "over 36% of British adults now cook at least once a week for pleasure". They argue that the focus of cooking has changed from "preparing everyday basic dishes to cooking for entertainment" and that this "epitomises an apparent move of cooking from a chore or production skill to a section of the leisure industry".

The Speculation over the State of Domestic Cooking and Cooking Skills

Apart from the few small studies and market research described above, there has been little empirical research, specific to (domestic) cooking, to act as a point of comparison against which to measure and appraise the state of domestic cooking and cooking skills in contemporary Britain. (The surveys for the HEA and the DOH

being ostensibly public health studies that incorporated questions about domestic cooking). Nor is there a theoretical convention for the study of domestic cooking.

A further problem impedes any discussion or study of domestic cooking and cooking skills - the pertinent concepts and terms have tended, to date, to have been used very simplistically and without clear definition or consistency. The term 'cook', for example, has been used in association with the preparation of raw foods only (Lang et al., 1999; Leith, 1998 and Stitt et al., 1996) and in association with the use of both raw foods and pre-prepared foods (Nicolaas, 1995 and Health Which?, 1998). It has also been used to mean the task of food provision as opposed to other household tasks such as washing up, shopping or ironing and so on. (Oakley, 1985; Charles and Kerr, 1988 and Murcott 1995a). There are many other terms and concepts, such as 'basic ingredients', 'dish' and 'ready-prepared' that are used somewhat ambiguously by commentators and academics and without clear definition (Department of Health, ??; Health Education Authority, 1998; Health Which?, 1998; James and McColl, 1997 and Lang et al., 1999 for examples). Phrases such as 'ready-prepared' and 'pre-prepared' tend not to be used with reference to any specific degree of pre-preparation. They also tend to be used alongside, and given the same meaning as, expressions such as 'convenience foods' and 'fast foods':

> It is clear that domestic technologies - the fridge, the freezer, the microwave oven - the improved quality, increased quantities and wider availability of foods, the promotion of pre-cooked and packaged convenience foods have all altered what we eat and how we cook it. (Dickinson and Leader, 1998, 124-5)

The following comments also illustrate how terms such as 'pre-prepared' are frequently invested with an implicit meaning that using them is not 'cooking' and does not require 'cooking' ability or skills:

> Some commentators – not necessarily sociologists - have claimed that women are being deskilled by the advent of convenience foods, and concern has been voiced that poorer women not only do not cook, turning to ready-made frozen meals and so on, but no

> longer know how to use non-processed raw ingredients. (Mennell, Murcott and van Otterloo, 1994, 90)
>
> The capacity of the informed consumer to control his or her intake and to follow health advice may be weakened if they cannot choose whether to cook or to purchase pre-prepared foods. (Lang et al., 1999, 1)

The concept and term 'cooking skill/s' has been interpreted simplistically in the debates and concerns that surround contemporary domestic cooking and cooking skills. 'Cooking skill/s' are largely viewed as a practical set of tasks requiring and utilising mechanical skills. It is a term and concept used vaguely and often connected only with practical abilities and techniques such as 'poaching', 'frying', 'making a white sauce' and 'preparing fruit and vegetables'. For example, surveys have listed 'microwaving' as a 'skill' (HEA, 1998; Lang et al., 1999 and Lang and Baker, 1993) although it is unclear whether 'microwaving' means 're-heating' , 'de-frosting' or 'cooking' foods. It is also listed alongside specific 'techniques' such as grilling and stewing rather than alongside a comparable ability such as 'using an oven'. In addition, many of the 'cooking skill/s' and abilities referred to and used in existing research, such as poaching, braising or casseroling, making a white sauce or making shortcrust pastry (Lang et al., 1999; Lang and Baker, 1993 and Street, 1994) are culturally, or cuisine[5], specific. For example, poaching and braising are not cooking techniques used worldwide or across all cultures but are techniques associated with French professional cooking. 'Making a white sauce' and 'making shortcrust pastry' are techniques that many people associate with British cooking; they are not an intrinsic part of cooking.

[5] Mennell, Murcott and van Otterloo (1994, 194) describe 'cuisine', or "culinary culture", as a "shorthand term for the ensemble of attitudes and taste people bring to cooking and eating" within a particular social group. Fieldhouse (1995, 52) describes cuisine as "a term commonly used to denote a style of cooking with distinctive foods, preparation methods and techniques of eating." Beardsworth and Keil (1997) say that a child is socialised from weaning into a cuisine – the tastes, methods and food preferences of the society in which it lives. James (1997) and Mennell (1985) also point out that cuisines are constantly changing and absorbing attitudes, taste preferences and so on from other cuisines. Mennell points out how English 'haute cuisine' (a higher, elite or more valued cuisine) now includes formerly less valued foods and dishes such as tripe, cassoulet, bubble and squeak and bread and butter pudding.

Alongside a simplification of relevant terms and concepts there is also a shortage of detail or description about domestic cooking and cooking skills that inhibits the progress of examination and discussion about surrounding concerns. For example, literature and commentary provides no detail or explanation about whether a suggested decline in the inter-generational transference of domestic cooking skills because of the use of pre-prepared foods is linked to the frequency of the use of pre-prepared foods or the extent of parents' and family members' individual skill. Nor does literature and commentary provide any detail about how cooking with pre-prepared foods takes, as is often suggested, less skill than cooking with fresh, raw ingredients. This reflects the manner in which both research and commentary tends to view 'cooking' in contemporary Britain as *either* the re-heating of ready-meals *or* the cooking of raw foods. The Health and Lifestyles Survey for the Health Education Authority (1998), for example, asked respondents about the number of ready-prepared main meals they had bought in the past week. It did not ask about their use of foods that could be considered pre-prepared or part-prepared foods such as dried pasta, fruit yoghurts, prepared meat and vegetables and so on.

Many academics have pointed out that existing research, though informative, does not provide any detailed description about such issues as approaches towards cooking and the processes involved in either deskilling (Warde and Hethrington, 1994 and Dickinson and Leader, 1998) or skills acquisition:

> Quite how people (children and men as well as women) learn to cook, and quite what use they make of printed materials in the process, is as yet seriously under-researched. (Mennell, Murcott and van Otterloo, 1994, 90)

They have pointed out that, in consequence, debates about the possible decline or restructuring of cooking and cooking skills in contemporary Britain tend to remain at the level of conjecture. James and McColl (1997, 56), for example, in a proposal for the Minister for Public Health on new approaches to physical activity and food in schools, talk of "indications" that "the home as a source of food skills is diminishing". Dickinson and Leader (1998, 125) argue that there is "little reliable research evidence" in regard to people being "less reliant on the cooking skills of a

[most often] wife or mother for their meals". Warde and Hethrington (1994) and Gillon, McCorkindale and McKie (1993) both use the word 'speculative' in reference to current concerns about foods practices, including deskilling and approaches towards cooking.

Murcott (1995b, 232) has declared that we have to move beyond what is so far only "speculation" and develop a "systematic analytic framework for thinking" about domestic cooking and cooking skills in a "realm where both industrialised and craft modes of production exist". Lang et al., (1999, 31) consider it "time to re-evaluate the significance of cooking in contemporary food culture".

Adding Depth and Detail to the Debates and Concerns About Domestic Cooking and Cooking Skills

The remainder of this chapter reviews the key issues and details about domestic cooking and cooking skills, extracted from a wide-ranging literature search, that add depth and detail to current debates and help pinpoint the areas where research might provide useful information. The review is split into four sections. The first section looks at the deskilling theory, and critiques of that theory. In the second section the literature that explores skill/s (in general) is examined. The third section introduces and reviews the major theoretical studies of domestic food practices and habits (and that include cooking as part of these practices). Section four extracts the detail about domestic cooking and cooking skills from these theoretical studies and examines this detail against a wider literature (drawing from such various subject areas as Media and Leisure studies, Home Economics and Education).

The Deskilling Theory

Current concerns about the potential deskilling of the domestic cook are founded in Braverman's (1974) theory concerning the influence of technological, rationalised systems of production on the collective craft identity and the well-being and happiness of workers in paid labour. Within this type of rationalised system, he

explains, the worker performs only a simplified part, and only the mechanical aspects, of a complete task. He or she is divorced from the complete process, the conception and execution of that task. Braverman argues this fragmented work and lack of a craft identity leaves the worker deskilled and dissatisfied. The industrial deskilling process, he says, is self perpetuating in that the deskilled workers require ever more simplified work and that the ever more simplified work deskills them still further.

> More to the point is the manner in which a precious craft is destroyed and how this destructive tendency feeds on itself. As in so many other fields of work, the simplification and rationalization of skill in the end destroy these skills, and, with the skills becoming ever more scarce, the new processes become ever more inevitable – because of the shortage of skilled labour! (Braverman, 1974, 370)

In contrast, Braverman says, the skilled artisan has greater autonomy over his or her work, greater self-worth through a craft identity and greater control over the means of production.

However, although he briefly relates this to professional cooking, Braverman only regards certain professional cooks of having a craft and of having a craft to lose:

> Chefs and cooks of superior grades, the highest skill of the service category, offer an instructive instance of the manner in which an ancient and valuable craft even in it's last stronghold, luxury and gourmet cooking, is being destroyed [...]. (Braverman, 1974, 370)

Academics have suggested that there are a number of weaknesses in Braverman's hypotheses. These weaknesses are summarised by Gabriel (1990, 11 - 12) in his detailed account of the contrasting working environments of 'traditional' and 'modern' professional catering establishments. Braverman, he explains, has been criticised by the political left for disregarding worker resistance to new systems of production; for underestimating the influence on labour processes of other institutions such as the family, media and the state; for abstracting the workplace

from the rest of society; and for clinging to a rather "mechanistic conception of skill". By the political right, Gabriel tells us, he has been criticised for romanticising the figure of the traditional artisan and "identifying technology with Taylorism"[6]. These critiques, Gabriel explains, suggest that technological change and new systems of production can be progressive in that, although they may destroy old, traditional skills, they may give rise to new, possibly even superior, skills. Those who talk from this perspective, Gabriel adds, prefer to talk of "reskilling".

The Relevance of the Deskilling Theory to Debates about Domestic Cooking and Cooking Skills

The increased consumption of industrially pre-prepared foods and the widespread lack of confidence over cooking with raw ingredients (Lang et al., 1997), suggests to some that domestic cooking and cooking skills are undergoing a process of deskilling similar to that which Braverman (1974) describes as occurring in the workplace. Goften (1992, 31), for example, says that "new technologies for storage and preparation in the home encourage the use of new forms of foods, and have deskilled buying, preparing, cooking and even eating."

Beechey (1982, 54), in an paper that discusses Braverman's deskilling theory in relation to the domestic tasks (including cooking), argues that caution should be taken before transposing hypotheses about labour processes in the workplace onto labour processes in the home.

Beechey argues that suggestions that the housewife's role was originally a kind of "craftswomanship" (p. 64) which has been, and is being, progressively degraded and deskilled (and thus subordinated) as domestic labour processes have been transformed by monopoly capitalism should be approached with caution. She argues that Braverman's evaluation of the craft artisan as the most 'highly skilled' worker

[6] Taylorism, as described by Gabriel (1990, 10), is "the school of management thought whose principles were first articulated at the turn of the century by F.W. Taylor. Taylor argued that management should claim the initiative in production by organizing the work process according to scientific principles instead of relying on the workers' traditional skills, abilities and willingness to work hard"

fails to take into account the fact that work defined as 'skilled' or 'highly skilled' is usually socially constructed as such. Domestic labour (including cooking) she points out, has never been, readily perceived as 'skilled'.

> There are, for instance, forms of labour which involve complex competencies and control over the labour process, such as cooking, which are not conventionally defined as skilled (unless performed by chefs within capitalist commodity production). (Beechey, 1982, 64)

Beechey (1982, 65) argues that a precise definition and detailed understanding of skill/s is essential to any understanding of disparities in ability between different groups of individuals. "The adoption of different criteria of skill has different theoretical and political implications" she points out. Lee (1982, 148 - 149) suggests that there are two ways in which skills can be understood and used; they can refer to either "the requirement of the job", he says, or to "the capabilities of the worker". He explains that 'deskilled jobs' and 'deskilled workers' are very different and that distinguishing between them is of utmost importance for any research or any theoretical discussion.

The Complexity of Skills

Like Beechey (1982), other writers warn about over-simplifying, and being ambiguous about definitions of skill. Wood (1982, 15) points out that alongside debates about deskilling there are accompanying debates about the very nature of skill. Wellens (1974, 1) in a book which examines practical skills training says a short definition of skill is always misleading because it is such a "complex concept".

Though a complex concept, skills specialists have pointed out that 'skill' is often used or understood in a very narrow way because it tends to be associated far more strongly with the mechanical aspect of a task than with any other (Moore, 1982 and Wellens, 1974). However, all skills are both mental and physical, say skills specialists, and are made up of three functions – the input of information, the processing of this information and the output or informed action that follows. The

input and processing of information stage requires perceptual or cognitive skills, and are supported by academic knowledge, whilst the output or response stage requires mechanical skills (Singleton, 1978 and Wellens, 1974).

Therefore skills, even those generally regarded as practical, do not consist of purely mechanical or physical aspects. Crucial to an ability to carry out a task or activity are the perceptual or cognitive skills, or skills of judgement. Perceptual skills are concerned with the senses of sight, sound, smell, taste and touch, and with the kinaesthetic or pressure sense (such as that which is used in operating a car brake pedal) (Singleton, 1978 and Wellens, 1974). Perceptual or cognitive skills are often referred to as 'tacit' skills (Cooley, 1991 and Gabriel, 1990), because they are more difficult to identify than mechanical skills. These skills are also called 'secondary' skills (Pinch, Collins and Corbone, 1996), because they are acquired through experience. It is these skills, because they are linked to the perceptual stage of 'what is going on?', say both Singleton (1978) and Wellens (1974), that provide confidence in ability to perform a task:

> The perceptual sequence usually decides between two alternative courses of action to follow in the procedural sequence. A cook opens the oven door, examines her cake (perceptual skill), and then either closes the oven door for further baking or removes the cake from the oven (Wellens, 1974, 31).

Tasks, jobs or activities that require a high level of tacit skills are often referred to as jobs or tasks that require a 'knack' (Singleton, 1978 and Wellens, 1974). And understanding of that job, task or activity, however, destroys the mystique of 'the knack' points out Wellens.

These perceptual skills, that are acquired through "personal involvement and successful experience" (Singleton, 1978, 5), are the basis of the development of strategy, planning and design skills (Singleton, 1978 and Wellens, 1974). These more complex, conceptual skills are based on an ability to "visualise the whole job through before a single physical movement relative to the job takes place at all" (Wellens, 1978, 128). Experience and perceptual skills can therefore provide prior

understanding of such things as the length or difficulty of a task, even if that task is being carried out with new (not previously experienced, that is) materials or under new circumstances (Pinch, Collins and Corbone, 1996). With experience, organisational ability, creativity, adaptability, foresight and confidence in both the process and the result, can all be acquired:

> You cannot come to experience a situation as less novel, nor be less nervous, nor be more dexterous in routine aspects of manipulation by merely being told that these are what you have to do. (Pinch, Collins and Corbone, 1996, 175)

Perceptual skills, and the more complex planning skills that follow, are about 'knowing how'. In contrast, 'knowing that' is academic knowledge (Singleton, 1978). Academic knowledge is knowledge that can be taught and that can enhance 'knowledge how' and so can help increase confidence in ability to carry out a task (Hardy, 1996; Pinch, Collins and Corbone, 1996; Singleton, 1978 and Wellens, 1974).

Assessing whether an individual is 'skilled' or 'has skill/s' depends on establishing a standard or "measurable criterion of achievement" (Singleton, 1974, 11) that has to be met (Cesarini and Kinton, 1991; Hardy, 1996; Seymour, 1996 and Wellens, 1974). In addition, variables, such as resources and circumstances, have to be acknowledged (Hardy, 1996 and Singleton, 1978) and the less easily identifiable tacit skills have to be clearly understood (Singleton, 1978 and Wellens, 1974).

To many specialists (Cesarini and Kinton, 1991; Hardy, 1996; Seymour, 1996 and Singleton, 1978) being 'skilled' in a job or task involves the more complex planning skills, acquired through experience, that make it possible to anticipate events and to predict the end result, to adapt to new materials and circumstances and to be "more resistant to disturbing forces such as stress of many kinds and to the limitations of his tools" (Singleton, 1978, 12).

Cooley (1991) describes how an individual moves from the novice stage in carrying out a task or job to the expert stage. The 'novice' is at a stage of skills' acquisition

where he or she does not have a coherent view of the overall task. The competent individual has some decision making and strategy skills. The expert is an individual who has knowledge and wisdom and has arrived at the stage whereby judgement or perceptions or associated decisions are intuitive. For Braverman (1974), being 'skilled' involves a "combination of knowledge of materials and processes with the practiced manual dexterities required" (p. 442). Moore's (1982, 6) interpretation of Braverman's notion of the skilled worker is that he or she has an ability to conceive of how different tools, methods and materials might influence the final form of an item worked on. He or she can, and does, use those tools and materials in a manner which most usefully accomplishes his task and gains him livelihood and recognition.

Skills specialists point out that, although terms like 'skilled', 'unskilled' and 'semi-skilled' are commonly used, both colloquially and in the workplace, they are rarely linked to any actual, detailed appraisal of skills (Singleton, 1978 and Wellens, 1974). In the workplace, says Wood (1982, 18) these descriptive terms are the means "by which workers are differentiated and jobs defined" and are "relatively independent of the real or 'technical' skill content of jobs". Others argue that these descriptions are linked to workplace politics and systems of job protectionism and rates of pay rather than detailed appraisals of tasks and activities (Beechey, 1982; Lee, 1982 and Singleton, 1978).

Colloquially, says Wellens (1974), descriptive terms such as 'skilled' and 'unskilled' are usually associated with practical ability. He points out that a driver with good perceptual skills would be far more likely to be described as having 'road sense' than as being 'skilled'. Singleton (1978) argues that phrases like 'skilled' and 'unskilled', when used in the workplace, do not bear scrutiny. An 'unskilled' job, he points out, is not necessarily one that an unskilled person can do because an 'unskilled' job or task still requires certain skills to reach a particular standard or to keep to a performance level.

Singleton (1978), who has analysed and described skills used in the workplace, also points out that skills can be understood or described at many different levels (he likens this to being able to understand or describe a house as made up of rooms, or bricks, or particles and so on). He claims that it is not always helpful to break skills down to an intricate level of stimulus and response but it is very important to

understand or describe the skills of a task at a level of complexity that provides sufficient insight into the nature of the inquiry. (A description or understanding of skills in the workplace for example, he says, should be intricate enough to understand any anxieties about that task or difficulties in performing that task).

A review of skills literature then, from a variety of disciplines, shows that skills specialists generally agree that the complexity of skill/s can be greatly underestimated and that the concept of 'skill', when used descriptively or as a means of appraisal, is often over-simplified.

Major Theoretical Approaches to the Study of Domestic Food Practices

Domestic cookery books, social and historical accounts of domestic cooking would initially appear to be a primary source of information for the study of domestic cooking practices and cooking skills. Many popular histories of domestic cooking describe in great detail cooking practices since the days of the 'hunter and gatherer' (see Brears et al., 1993; Tannahill, 1988 and Wilson, 1973 for example), whilst others concentrate on the twentieth century (see Driver, 1983; and Hardyment, 1995 for example). (There are other, more academic, social histories that combine commentary with research into food practices [Barker, Mckenzie and Yudkin, 1986 and Burnett, 1989] but they focus almost exclusively on food choice). Domestic cookery books have been in existence in Britain for centuries. As well as practical manuals (see Allison, 1968; Francatelli, 1998 [first published 1861] and Leith and Waldegrave, 1991 for example), cookery books have also focused on such precise and diverse topics as, for example, Greek cooking (Theoharous, 1979), fast, low calorie cooking (Weightwatchers, 1986), cooking rice (Jervey, 1957), vegetarian food processor cooking (Findlater, 1985), dressings and marinades (Murfitt, 1989) and the food of particular chefs or restaurants (see Hopkinson, 1994 and Whittington, 1995 for example). Articles in magazines and journals and in specialist food magazines cover a similarly broad and diverse range of topics about food and cooking. Social commentaries and personal journals of domestic food and cooking

such as those by Freud (1978), Steingarten (1997) and Brillat-Savarin (1994 [first published 1825]), might also appear to be a useful source of information[7].

However, these sources of information have no explicit theoretical base and offer no analytic framework with which to study domestic cooking practices and cooking skills. In addition, descriptions, recipes and instruction about domestic cooking in cookery books, articles in journals and popular social commentaries may not represent actual domestic cooking practices. Both Mennell (1996) and Warde (1997), who have researched cookery books and cookery columns in women's magazines,[8] warn that 'cooking' as it is presented in magazines may bear little relation to 'cooking' in most homes. "Cooking as presented in women's magazines" suggests Mennell, "is almost certainly more varied and more demanding in skill than what is actually encountered in most typical homes" (p. 248). Warde (1997, 49) stresses that the evidence he presents in his study "is about the way in which food is represented and not about what people actually eat or cook". Studying representations of food and cooking in magazines and journals, they both agree, is not a good way of understanding actual domestic food and cooking practices.

Studies of domestic food practices that have an established theoretical base largely focus on food choice. There are two main areas of study. Firstly, the economic, psychological and physical factors behind food choice, and secondly, food choice in relation to socio-economic factors such as income and social status. Recent studies have centred on the complexities of food choice, revealing that the physical, economic and psychological factors all work in unison and alongside other determinants such as household structure, the presence of children and socio-economic factors (Fine, Heasman and Wright, 1998 and Gerhardy et al., 1995). Despite this, food choice as an area of study has largely taken cooking skills as implicit and it is only very recently that any recognition of cooking skills as an influential factor in health and diet (Leather, 1996; Lang et al., 1999 and Nicolaas, 1995) has been recognised.

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[7] These examples were drawn from the researcher's own collection of cookery books.
[8] Mennell (1985) has studied cookery books and cookery articles in women's magazines as part of a study of the cooking of England and France. Warde (1997) has used findings from research, which looked at both food choice and attitudes towards food and cooking, of recipe columns in popular

However, there is a strong convention in sociology and social anthropology of the study of food practices and cooking or culinary cultures (not necessarily purely domestic) as a means of exploring wider social and cultural issues from a theoretical perspective. Domestic food preparation or cooking is usually included as part of (and occasionally treated as a distinct part of) domestic food practices. It is to these studies that it is necessary to turn in order to gain useful insight, in particular theoretical insight, into people's domestic cooking practices and their approaches towards cooking and cooking skills. It is mainly from these studies that different perspectives of domestic cooking and cooking skills were established.

The varying theoretical approaches and the content of the major works in this area have been frequently, and thoroughly, described, disseminated and classified (Beardsworth and Keil, 1997; Goody, 1994; Mennell, 1996 and Mennell, Murcott and van Otterloo, 1994). However, there has been a tendency in these descriptions and classifications, as Gofton (1992) has explained, to view these different approaches as distinct from each other and not as alternative ways of looking at and studying domestic food practices. Gofton (1992) himself, classifies the major sociological and social anthropological approaches to domestic food practices, or food habits, into three main areas - symbolic and structural approaches, macro-historical approaches and gender and family based studies. In the following paragraphs these three classifications have been used as a framework under which to describe approaches towards the study of food practices (those writers and studies that are included under each may differ slightly to those included by Gofton because debates and research have developed since this classification was published in 1992).

Symbolic and Structural Approaches to the Study of Food Practices

Those who take a symbolic, structural or post-structural approach (such as Levi-Strauss, Douglas, Bourdieu and Barthes) have studied domestic food practices, particularly food choice, from a mentalist or aesthetic perspective. They have examined the "the ways in which food items are classified, prepared and combined

women's magazines in the 1960s and 1990s to inform a theoretical analysis of consumption in contemporary Britain.

with each other." (Beardsworth and Keil, 1997, 61) in order to establish the ways in which societies construct rules of both attitude and behavior.

Levi-Strauss (1970) argues that humans cook to show that they are civilised and that a universal social coding underlies food preparation. He uses his 'culinary triangle' to relate "the three poles of the raw, the cooked and the rotten to human thinking about 'nature' versus 'culture'" (Mennell, Murcott and van Otterloo, 1994).

Douglas (1975 and 1998 and Douglas and Isherwood, 1979) has examined, what she sees as, the rules behind food choice. Rules that govern the type of foods chosen as well as preparation methods and the frequency of consumption of those foods. These rules, she claims, encode messages about social occasions and social relations that allow people to discriminate between them.

> Food can discriminate the different times of day, and one day from another. As well as the annual events it can also distinguish life-cycle events such as funerals and weddings. [...] the rank value of each class of goods varies inversely with the frequency of it's use: the breakfast is taken separately, more of the family and friends assemble for Sunday dinner, a larger assembly collects for Christmas, and still larger for weddings and funerals. (Douglas and Isherwood, 1979, 116)

Douglas describes (1998) how her research has found that in less exclusive, informal and sharing communities people tend to have simple, non-elaborate rules of food choice (including food preparation) and tend to opt for simplicity even on very special occasions. Elaborate rules of food choice equate, Douglas says, with greater exclusivity and greater social distinctions.

> Obviously, elaborate meal structures, with value set on the right sequence - soup before the solids, the pudding before the cheese, or whatever, and the right sauces and garnishes for each thing - go with a different kind of society. The more that food is ritualised, the more conscious of social distinctions are those who eat it. This

> is a long way from the television programmes that call on us to rejoice in more and more refinements of taste. It casts a slur of bad taste on the extravagances extolled by the food-writing industry. (Douglas, 1998, 108)

Both Barthes and Bourdieu explore society and culture through taste (therefore including that of food) which they consider a learned process, a means of showing status, group membership and individual aspiration and predominantly determined by culture rather than physiology[9].

For Bourdieu (1986) taste and preference (of food as well as dress, interior design, literature and so on) are also cultural but he seems them as an expression of individual identity. Through taste and identity, he believes, class, status and social hierarchy are regenerated. For the semiologist Barthes (1972), taste or food preference is a form of communication, "an item of food constitutes an item of information. All foods are seen as signs in a system of communication." (Beardsworth and Keil, 1997, 63). In his essay, Ornamental Cookery (1972, 78-80), Barthes examines cookery columns in women's journals and their photos of what he claims are unattainable, aspirational and "dream-like" cookery.

Fischler (1980 and 1988) is often described as crossing over between a symbolic, structural approach and a macro-historical approach (as defined by Gofton [1992]). His approach is largely symbolic but he attempts to describe and explain contemporary food practices in order to explain the state of contemporary society. The 'anomie' within contemporary domestic food practices (and hence society as a whole), he argues, is illustrated by the breakdown of long-established rules and meanings of food choice and food preparation, as gastronomy becomes 'gastro-anomie'. A situation that arises from the mass of pressures on the individual food consumer such as the quantity of food advertising and the immense proliferation of available food products.

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[9] Research by Rozin (1982) and Birch (1991) indicates that food acceptance is not governed solely by genetic factors (except possibly for an instinctive preference for sugar) but by learned, socialisation processes.

Mintz (who has also looked at food practices from a macro-historical perspective) argues that the culturally universal structure of the meal which always includes a core or staple food served with fringe and legume properties, is breaking down as people increasingly exist by 'grazing' on bits of fried protein and soft drinks (1985 and 1996).

The Structuralists and post-Structuralists therefore, see food choice and food preparation as cultural; universal rules, they believe, cross cultures and social boundaries and govern food choice and other food practices.

Macro-historical Approaches to the Study of Food Practices

In the 1980s a number of sociologists and social anthropologists, such as Stephen Mennell, Sidney Mintz and Jack Goody, explored and described in detail domestic food practices, as a means of providing holistic descriptions of "state formation" (Gofton, 1992, 31) or the social, economic and cultural processes within societies.

Goody (1994) does this by examining the development of systems of cuisine and the reasons why some societies develop contrasting 'high' cuisines and 'low' cuisines whilst others do not (he studied the domestic food practices of two African ethnic groups). He concludes that elaborate high cuisines develop in hierarchical societies where there are courts, aristocracies and other elite institutions and male involvement in food preparation or cooking. Low cuisines, he says, are connected with domestic food preparation or cooking and female involvement.

In order to examine cultural and social change, Mintz (1985) studies the history of the supply and demand (the production, consumption and associated food practices) of sugar, and of how sugar became a taste preference, in Britain. His "world-systems theory" (Mennell, Murcott and van Otterloo, 1994, 17) demonstrates how this taste preference and demand for sugar was the result of global social and economic processes. Mintz (1985, 211) regards contemporary society as one where industry mass produces food for the "eater" who then becomes merely a consumer of it "rather than the controller and cook of it".

Mennell's (1996) study is a comparison of the social, cultural and economic history of England and France. This he does by examining the differences between cuisine and food practices throughout the history of the two countries. In terms of food practices he is asking, in short, why a 'high' cuisine developed in France but not in England. Similarly to Goody, Mennell regards the intricate, professional 'haute' cuisine of France as the by-product of male involvement in cooking in elite and aspirational institutions (the aristocracy and the court) and the cuisine of England as the by-product of female involvement in more domestically based environments (the country house of the gentry). He also points out that England has, historically, had better quality raw ingredients that have demanded less elaborate cooking techniques. He concludes his extensive study with a description and commentary of contemporary, domestic food practices in England and France. Mennell (p. 317 – 331) regards these practices as being characterised by "diminishing contrasts" (less seasonal, differentiation, less differentiation between countries and geographical localities and between professional and domestic cookery and so on) and "increasing variety" (numerous styles of food preparation, eating patterns, diverse foodstuffs and so on). Conservative critics, he says, regard the ordinary domestic cook in contemporary society as being deskilled, and cooking as increasingly routinised, as the mass of the population are becoming ever more indifferent to the art of cooking and increasingly prefer convenience foods. Radical critics take largely the same approach, Mennell comments, but see this as the result of manipulation by the capitalist 'culture industry'. Both groups' claims, he suggests are unfounded as any examples of 'diminishing contrasts' are always counter-balanced by examples of 'increasing variety'.

Warde (1997) attempts to reconcile different theoretical approaches to, and empirical research of, food practices to examine and explore consumption in contemporary Britain. Drawing on Mennell's description of 'diminishing contrasts and increasing variety', Warde identifies four main approaches to the study of consumption (not just of food) that are reflected in domestic food practices in Britain. These range from approaches that consider that social differentiation in terms of class, gender and income is a persisting characteristic of consumption; to those that consider that consumption in contemporary British society is both anomic and pluralist; to those that see contemporary society as made up of individuals formed into groups with

shared identification and similar consumption practices and choices (post-Fordist); and those that view contemporary British society as characterised by mass consumption, whereby an homogenous, rationalized society has shared tastes and preferences.

Warde's conclusion is that some element of all these suggested trends can be found but that there are some key themes of domestic food practices that characterise contemporary British society - rationalisation, individualisation, stylisation, commodification and informalisation. In addition, there is a general anxiety about food practices (including food choice and food preparation), he says, that is the result of the antinomies of economy versus extravagence, novelty versus tradition, care versus convenience and health versus indulgence, that are constantly being played out in media representations of food preparation and food choice. As for the current state of cooking in Britain, Warde claims:

> Some evidence has suggested that a degree of deskilling is occurring with respect to domestic cookery. [...] While Britons enjoy eating and find cooking one of the least unpleasant of recurrent domestic tasks, they appear to remain, in international terms, comparatively unappreciative and uninterested in the aesthetic and gustatory aspects of food consumption (Warde, 1997, 168)

Ritzer (1996) uses rationalised, 'fast food' methods of production (or preparation) and retail as a paradigm to describe society as a mass culture increasingly dominated by the ideology, norms and values of rationalisation – efficiency, calcubility, predictability and control. This he calls the 'McDonaldization of society'. The counter-side of rationality, he argues, is irrationality and its accompanying de-humanising effects. For example, food pre-prepared in factories is marketed as rational and as giving people greater convenience and greater control over their lives. The irrationality, he says, is that food largely prepared by machines requires few and relatively easy skills to finish that preparation:

> Cooking fast food is like a game of connect the dots or painting by numbers. (Ritzer, 1996, 102)

Ritzer argues that, as a result, human skill and judgement declines and control over food preparation is lost, not increased.

In summary, those who take a macro-historical approach, like the Structuralists and post-Structuralists, see food choice as being both cultural and social. However, unlike the Structuralists and post-Structuralists, they regard the food choices and practices of a given society as developing and changing over time in direct relation to the social and cultural changes of that society. 'Deskilling' is regarded as one of these changes.

Gender and Family Based Studies of Domestic Food Practices

Feminist and gender studies have a long tradition of studying domestic food provision as a means of examining domestic, gender and family relationships.

Oakley carried out empirical research of housework and housewives (including food provision and cooking) in the 1970s in which she examined the satisfactions and dissatisfactions that arise from self-imposed, personal standards of housework through the internalisation of external standards. Cooking, she explains (1974 and 1985), is generally regarded by housewives as potentially the most enjoyable and satisfying household task. However, housewives frequently find it the most dissatisfying and unenjoyable task because they do not meet their own self-imposed standards because of external pressures such as, for example, a lack of time to devote purely to cooking.

In a major study in the 1980s Charles and Kerr researched gender relationships and family ideology through the domestic food provision and eating habits of women with small children in Manchester. They describe (1988 and Charles, 1995) how they found that women are generally responsible for food provision and presume to be so. Men, on the other hand, they found to be generally regarded as occasional

'helpers' and as fairly incompetent in the kitchen.[10] In family ideology, they say, women are perceived to be carers and as such their tastes and preferences are subordinate to those of their family. Charles and Kerr describe how, in their study, women's satisfaction and enjoyment in food provision is from their family's appreciation. They also describe how their respondents attributed certain foods to particular ages, genders or eating occasions.

In another empirical study of the 1980s Murcott researched, via food provision, the hierarchical organisation of gender and age in the family. She describes (1985 and 1995a) a similar classification of foods to that of Charles and Kerr but she also found that there were "prescribed cooking techniques" (1995a, p. 229) for particular types of meal. For example, she describes how in the highly ranked 'cooked dinner' the meat has to be roasted or grilled, the vegetables to be boiled and the two have to be cooked separately. Frying and/or stewing the vegetables and meat in one pot does not qualify as a 'cooked dinner'.

In a recent article (1995b) Murcott talks of how her findings may need to be re-examined in the light of the increasing diversification of the food industry. She suggests that these rules and prescribed techniques may have altered and that gendered approaches towards food provision may have changed. Murcott also suggests that, as efficiency, economy and time saving have traditionally been highly valued and linked with female domestic cooks, the recent inclination towards 'leisure cooking' (she refers to specialist tempura cookbooks and fresh-pasta machines to illustrate this) may be an indication of changed gender relationships.

Details about Domestic Cooking and Cooking Skills

The following section describes a number of issues and details, relevant to current concerns and debates about domestic cooking and cooking skills, that have been

[10] More recent studies (Gillon, McCorkindale and McKie, 1993 and Keane and Willets, 1996) of domestic food practices suggest that this is still the case. Gillon, McCorkindale and McKie talk of the "completely different relationship" that men and women have towards "the selection, preparation, presentation and consumption of food in our present day society" (p. 109)

drawn from academic and theoretical studies of domestic food practices (as outlined above) and examines them against a wider literature. It is issues and details like these that, as "important variables relevant to the topic", says Hart (1998, 27), can be used to establish the context of current concerns and debates as well as suggest in what areas further knowledge could be useful in disseminating and developing them.

The Media, Domestic Cooking and Domestic Cooking Skills

With the explosion of cookery books, food magazines, food articles in popular journals and television cookery programmes,[11] the relationship between media representations of cookery and domestic cooking practices has become a main focus of academic and popular debate about domestic cooking and cooking skills. Food writers and television producers have argued over whether television cookery programmes should be educational or purely entertaining (Bazelguette and Fort, 1997). Sociologists have studied approaches taken towards domestic cooking by food columns in women's magazines (Mennell, 1996 and Warde, 1997), people's source of recipes (McKie and Wood, 1992) and the approach of food writers towards food and cooking (Wood, 1996). Specialists in health promotion and food policy have researched the influence of television cookery programmes and celebrity chefs on healthy cooking and other food practices (Caraher and Lang, 1998a).

However, a proliferation of interest in the effect of cooking in the media on the public's approaches towards domestic cooking (Bell, 1998; Leith, 1998; Mennell, Murcott and van Otterloo, 1994 and Orr, 1999) remains based on speculation rather than on actual research.

Media theorist, Corner (1997) has pointed out that there is a lack of empirical research into the effect of the media (particularly television) on behavior and

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[11] Warde (1997), in a 1990 survey of 323 household in Greater Manchester, found that 25% of respondents chose cookery books as one of their three favourite genres of book. He also points out that "cookery books constitute one of the largest sections of the publishing market" (p. 146). Caraher and Lang (1998b), in setting the background to their study of the influence of television and celebrity chefs on food preparation and attitudes towards it, explain terrestrial television in 1996 featured 18 hours of cookery programmes per week and that these programmes could attract up to 6.5 million viewers.

attitudes of any sort. However, there is general agreement amongst media theorists and researchers of all theoretical persuasions that any influence or effect on behavior or approaches is largely indirect. Structuralists, for example, view the media, not as changing attitudes and imposing "false consciousness" but as producing "unconscious categories" through which life is experienced and understood (Curran, Gurevitch and Woollacott, 1987, 73). Similarly, Althiede (1997, 18 - 21) claims that television has become a "friend" and as such a "definer of reality". As expectations of real events are raised by the "larger than life" format of television programmes, he says, the television itself becomes "the measure of quality in everyday life" (p. 21) and the more mundane actuality of real life can therefore become disappointing and dissatisfying.

Caraher and Lang (1998b, 18), who have carried out research into media influence on domestic cooking (the influence of celebrity chefs and television cookery programmes on public attitudes and behavior in regards to health advice), reach conclusions that appear to reflect these theories. They conclude that television cookery programmes have little direct impact on actual cooking practices and "are not a good medium for passing on cooking skills" (p. 20) but "may be good for exposure to broader cultural trends" (p. 2) in terms of general approaches towards cooking.

As for the role of the written media (such as cookery books, cookery and food columns in newspapers and magazines, specialist food and cookery journals and so on) there are a number of debates and discussions but little empirical research.

Wood (1996) argues that food snobbery and elitism is both expressed and perpetuated by food writing in newspapers. When writing about food and cooking, he says, journalists usually take the approach that popular food lacks refinement and good taste. He adds that, not only is the subject matter of interest only to a tiny section of the population but it is given undue gravitas through its inclusion and through it's inclusion next to major news stories so that "the interests of a tiny elite can be expressed almost side by side with reports of Third World famine" (p. 10).

There is conflicting opinion over the effect of the sheer quantity of readily accessible information and instruction on domestic cooking and cooking skills. On the one hand, there are suggestions that it is this vast quantity and variety of information, recipes and techniques that places pressure on the individual to acquire ever greater food knowledge and skills. Conversely, there are suggestions that this huge and ready availability of informantion can be democratising, allowing everyone the chance to try numerous food and styles of cuisine (Mennell, 1996 and Mennell, Murcott and van Otterloo, 1994).

There are also debates about (Mennell, Murcott and van Otterloo, 1994), and a degree of research into, the effect of the approach taken by food columns towards domestic cooking on actual domestic cooking practices and people's attitudes towards cooking. Warde (1997), although he is looking at food practices as a whole and primarily at food choice, has made a detailed examination of food columns in women's magazines. He concludes that the central "ideological precept" (p. 172) of the desirability of variety and the conflict of attitudes towards cooking (the four antinomies of care versus convenience; novelty versus tradition; health versus indulgence and economy versus extravagance) that dominate these columns, may increase people's anxiety about cooking. On the other hand, Mennell (1996) argues that cookery columns in women's magazines since the 1960s have taken a positive approach towards domestic cooking, promoting diversity and enjoyment:

> The magazines have not denied that cooking can be a burdensome routine, and they have paid attention to frozen food, microwave ovens, and other least effort, most efficient means of cooking. They have also, however, as seen in the confusing diversity of their contents in recent decades informed their readers of a great many ways in which from time to time cooking and eating can be de-routinised for enhanced enjoyment. (Mennell, 1996, 265)

However, Mennell (1996) does suggest that media representations (both written and visual) of food and cooking, which interconnect domestic and professional food skills and approaches towards cooking, may increase the weight of expectation on the domestic cook. As Wood (1996) has pointed out, a number of weekend

newspapers suggest that the haute cuisine of vastly experienced professional cooks can be easily prepared in the domestic kitchen and by far lesser experienced domestic cooks.

The Recipe, the Domestic Cook and the Deskilling of the Domestic Cook

It has been suggested that the recipe, as a form of cooking instruction, should not be taken for granted, that it is not a 'natural' part of cooking or method of instruction (Goody, 1978 and McKie and Wood, 1996) but a "cultural construct" (Fieldhouse, 1985, 72). Ritzer (1996) and Fieldhouse (1995) both claim that the recipe is so much a part of domestic food practices that the individual who does not use recipes receives enhanced status and is viewed as the possessor of a special talent.

In comparison with other aspects of domestic cooking and cooking skills, the recipe has received a relatively large amount of academic attention. As with debates about media influence, academics and writers emphasise both positive and negative aspects.

Warde (1997) suggests that recipes are useful as a source of information and for general stimulation and inspiration, if not for passing on actual skills. He also points out that the increasingly greater precision of recipes (he has compared recipes in women's magazines of the 1960s with those of the 1990s and found greater precision in relation to such things as cooking times, quantities of ingredients, preparation time, nutrition contents and even shopping instructions) can be seen as a positive change because it removes any uncertainty and gives the cook greater confidence.

Both Goody (1978) and Mennell (1996) discuss recipes from a historical perspective. They both suggest that written instruction, by allowing comparison, replication and therefore experimentation, has made possible more elaborate food preparation (and therefore consumption) and allowed food choice to transcend cultural and class boundaries. They both also point out that oral learning and the inter-generational transference of domestic food and cooking skills and knowledge is linked closely to socialisation processes and makes for the duplication of food practices from one generation to the next. However, neither Mennell or Goody sees this as necessarily

positive. As Fieldhouse (1995, 70) also points out, bad food and cooking habits and practices, as well as good ones, can be passed down from generation to generation. He suggests that health promotion specialists should not ignore the recipe because it is a "formula for action" that can be used to change food habits and food choice.

Goody and Mennell also argue that there are a number of potentially negative aspects about recipes and their use. For example, they both argue that their use may lead to an, increasingly global, homogenisation of taste and food choice.

Other negative considerations of the use and format of the recipe have a greater focus on cooking and cooking skills than on food choice. McKie and Wood (1992) suggest that the authoritative nature of the written word of the recipe, and the impossible standards that are set by accompanying photographs, may lead to disappointment and dissatisfaction with actual results. Mennell (1996) also points out that cooking with, or following, a recipe leads to less scope for idiosyncratic variation. Goody (1978) is more expansive on this theme. He argues that the recipe is important for the elaboration of "courtly cooking" (p. 142), which is practiced within a construct or craft, but that for the individual domestic cook the use of recipes is constraining as it ceases to be a helpful tool and becomes an inflexible construct of ingredients and methods. Goody suggests that, domestically, recipes can take the form of "programmed learning" (1978, 141)

Ritzer (1996) links the recipe directly to the deskilling of the domestic cook. He argues that although the recipe initially appears entirely rational, because as a precise form of instruction it appears to make food preparation ever more efficient, it is ultimately an irrational device as following precise instruction leads to a lack of skill development. Whilst Ritzer appears to regard deskilling through the use of recipes as the simple lack of development of practical cooking skills or techniques others see this deskilling process as more complex. Warde (1997, 157) suggests that recipes "devalue the skills of domestic cooks by suggesting that simply to follow recipes is sufficient to achieve delicious results". Fieldhouse (1995) regards the recipe as deskilling because it promotes a lack of clear understanding of cooking rules and standards:

> Recipes are also examples of written codified rules which require their users ability and a willingness to follow the rules. This pre-supposes skills of literacy and numeracy and the ability to follow sequential instructions. In the absence of such skills recipes may actually have a deskilling effect in that inability to follow the rules may debar an individual from recognized achievement. (Fieldhouse, 1995, 720)

The Recipe and Professional and Domestic Cookery.

Writers of professional cookery books (Cesarini and Kinton, 1991; Pepin, 1987 and Stevenson, 1985) often emphasise the differences in approach taken by the professional cook and the domestic cook towards using recipes and applying and acquiring cooking skills. The professional cook, they argue, works within a 'craft' or 'cuisine' that has established methods, techniques and standards as part of a (formal) construct. The recipe then becomes a guide, used to understand methods and techniques and acquire transferable skills. The domestic cook, they point out is more likely to use the recipe as a means to an end, without connecting the methods and techniques used with other foods (and recipes) and with the focus purely on the outcome of that particular recipe.

The Role of the Recipe in the Teaching of Cookery

Differences in approach towards the role of the recipe are one of the differences in approach taken towards the teaching of cooking in schools. Some see the recipe (and prescribed methods and standards) as a vital part of cooking and form of instruction. For example, promotional material for the Royal Society of Arts' Focus on Food campaing (Royal Society of Arts, 1998, 4) describes domestic cooking as a process that "often has to follow some pre-determined stages if it is going to 'come out right'" and explains that "there is often a prescribed method of cooking many favourite dishes but it is also possible to add a little something of your own". June Scarborough, of the National Association of Teachers of Home Economics and

Technology (1996, personal communication), defines cooking as "following a set recipe; the exact measurements and ingredients are given on order to produce a successful outcome".

Ridgewell (1996b, 5), however, says that less prescription, more flexibility and less use of recipes is the key difference between a traditional approach towards the teaching of cookery in schools and the approach taken in food technology:

> Cooking is more prescriptive and less flexible than food technology. When cooking, pupils usually use and follow a recipe and have to measure ingredients. There is often a method which pupils follow exactly to produce a successful outcome. [...] If pupils are designing food products for food technology, they apply a variety of skills and knowledge and make some of their own decisions. (Ridgewell, 1996a, 5)

Cooking as a Leisure Activity

In their analysis of the Health Education Authority's 'Health and Lifestyle Survey data on cooking, Caraher and Lang (1998b, 3) argue that cooking in the 1990's is focused around leisure and entertainment rather than on food provision and the preparation of "everyday basic dishes". Mennell (1996, 265), on the other hand, suggests that people only occasionally regard domestic cooking as recreational. Domestic cooking, he says, has not been "transformed into purely a hobby, a freely chosen activity" but that on occasion "cooking and eating can be de-routinised for enhanced enjoyment."

That cooking is to some extent recreational has been widely, and both popularly and academically, acknowledged as a main theme of cooking in contemporary Britain (Bazelguette and Fort, 1997; Caraher, Dixon and Lang, 1997; Hardyment, 1995; Lang et al., 1999 and Warde, 1997). Research into recipe use (McKie and Wood, 1992) also reveals that many people read recipes purely for pleasure. However, despite this, there is no detailed research into the extent of this trend or the effects on

domestic cooking and cooking skills in terms of either application or acquisition or on food choice.

A review of literature from leisure studies indicates that this leisure focus may have important implications for domestic cooking practices. Wearing and Wearing (1991), for example, argue that contemporary approaches to leisure encourage people to constantly seek and desire new experiences. Others have pointed to major differences between men and women in their approaches towards leisure and particularly in the amount of time they feel they are 'allowed' to devote to leisure activities (Kay, 1996 and Gray, 1995).

To summarise, though there is no focused body of research or theory about domestic cooking and cooking skills, key issues and knowledge can be extracted from an exploration of a diverse and wide-ranging, multi-disciplinary literature. This knowledge, described in the paragraphs above, adds depth and detail to current debates and helps pinpoint where research may provide further useful information.

Since I turned sixteen, when I got my first job in the kitchen of a local pub, and my mother began to allow me to cook for myself, I have been continually and closely involved with food and cooking. I have worked as a chef and manager in both the commercial and institutional sectors - in restaurants, pubs, cafes, hospitals and in the dining rooms of a number of businesses. In my twenties I gained a degree in Humanities and Social Sciences and a post graduate diploma in Hotel and Catering Administration. Later studied for six months at 'Leith's School of Food and Wine', qualifying with distinction. Since beginning my doctorate, I have also extended my domestic cooking responsibility as I have become a mother.

Throughout this time I often deliberated over and questioned many aspects of food and cooking. For example, what is the difference between chefs and cooks and why do some chefs hate to be called cooks and some domestic cooks like to be called chefs? Why it is more difficult in Britain's cafes to buy a freshly made scone than a piece of heavily preserved Italian panetone? Why do some people consider cooking an art whereas others consider it a craft? Why is it that 'not quite cooked' scrambled

eggs are considered to be of the highest standard and the most desirable? Why are many people offended by the thought of a chicken tikka pizza?

Whilst writing an article with Dr Michael Heasman, then of the Centre for Food Policy at Thames Valley University, we spent a day at a large supermarket in west London. Ostensibly, we were there to discuss low-fat and 'light' foods but we ended up spending most of the day comparing opinions about numerous different aspects of food and cooking. It was as a direct result of this discussion that I met Professor Tim Lang and became a student again.

The remit for this study was straightforward - to research any aspect of domestic cooking and cooking skills. A subsequent literature review (as described in this chapter) revealed a number of gaps in knowledge. My own feelings were that there was a myriad of questions, riddles, suppositions and ambiguities surrounding domestic cooking and cooking skills, the extensive use and availability of pre-prepared foods and the development of cooking as a recreational and leisure activity. These required examination and explanation, I felt, if knowledge and debate were to be developed. (These gaps in knowledge and reasons for, and aims of, the research are described in the next chapter.)

With a wide-ranging and extensive experience of food and cooking - as a chef, dish-washer, waitress, hospital 'egg fryer', restaurant manager, maker and provider of breakfast, lunch and dinner for my family, private caterer, canteen assistant, and co-author of a cookbook – I felt able to view domestic food and cooking from many angles and perspectives. I felt well placed to inquire and research, to unravel the riddles, suppositions, and ambiguities and to rebuild them into a methodically researched corpus of knowledge based on empirical evidence - knowledge that would facilitate the development and elaboration of the debates and concerns that surround the state of cooking in contemporary Britain.

This research found that there were many complexities underlying domestic cooking and cooking skills in contemporary Britain. It found that there were many 'common' approaches towards cooking shared by the informants but that they also had very individual approaches towards domestic cooking. It found that the informants used a

range of different cooking skills specific to domestic cooking and that their cooking skills, knowledge and abilities influenced their approaches towards domestic cooking. The research found that there was a relationship between the informants' (domestic) cooking skills and their domestic cooking practices (frequency of cooking, regularity of raw foods and so on) and food choice (in terms of the use of raw and pre-prepared foods). However this relationship was not straightforward but part of an intricate interrelationship between the informants' approaches towards domestic cooking, their domestic cooking skills and their domestic cooking practices and food choice[12]. Their approaches influenced their practices, their practices influenced their skills and so on.

The next chapter, chapter 2, describes, examines and accounts for the research process, design and methodological approach taken. Chapters 3 to 6 examine the research findings. Chapter 3, looks at domestic cooking skills, chapter 4 at 'common' approaches towards domestic cooking and Chapter 5 at individual approaches towards domestic cooking. Chapter 6 draws on, and is informed by, chapters 3 to 5. It examines how people's domestic cooking skills and approaches towards domestic cooking are intricately interconnected, not only with each other, but also with their domestic cooking practices and food choice. (Apart from chapter 4, each of these chapters begins by describing the research findings and then discusses the implications of those specific findings for existing research and debate. Chapter 4, because it looks at a number of very different themes and concepts, moves between descriptions of findings and discussion of the implications of those findings. However, each theme or concept is looked at separately and follows the format of a description of the findings then a discussion about the implications of those findings). The final chapter, chapter 7, examines and discusses the implications of the research findings (for current debates about the state of cooking [as outlined in

[12] 'Food choice' is a concept and term used across many disciplines. Atkins and Bowler (2001) list six disciplinary approaches towards food choice: ecological, biological, psychological, economical, physical and socio-cultural. Murcott (1998b) in a report arising from a research programme into food choice commissioned by the ESRC describes at length the numerous different approaches to food choice taken within the social sciences. In these two different sets of definitions and descriptions 'food choice' refers to types of food chosen (whether chosen by individuals, whole societies or smaller groups of people). This current study found connections between people's approaches to cooking, their domestic cooking skills and abilities and the degree to which the food they cook (on a particular occasion) is pre-prepared. The term 'food choice', as it is used in this context in this thesis, refers therefore to the degree of pre-preparation of the food rather than the type of food.

this first chapter] and for future research and policy makers) as a whole. It also includes a review and examination, from the researcher, of the learning process involved in undertaking and executing this research and thesis.

CHAPTER 2

METHODOLOGICAL APPROACH, DESIGN AND PROCESS

This chapter reviews, explains and accounts for the methodological and ethical approaches, design, and methods and processes of data generation and analysis used in this research.

It begins by describing the research aims, including both the wider empirical and policy based aims, and the specific research questions. It then goes on explain and account for the methodological approach towards, and the design and process of, the research.

The Aims and Objectives of the Research

A series of claims about domestic cooking and cooking skills, formulated during the literature review (as reported in the previous chapter), underpinned the research approach and design. These claims were that:

- Cooking skills are far more complex than a simple set of practical techniques.
- People's cooking skills are a significant factor in shaping food choice and domestic cooking practices.
- People's approaches towards, and beliefs about, domestic cooking and cooking skills are a significant factor in shaping their food choice and domestic cooking practices.
- An understanding of domestic cooking and cooking skills, and their meaning for domestic cooks in contemporary Britain, will inform current, relevant debates, concerns, theoretical propositions, research and policy.
- 'Deskilling' and 'devaluation' are notable features of domestic cooking and cooking skills in contemporary Britain.

- Domestic cooking in contemporary Britain is a recreational activity as well as a task of food provision.

The review of relevant research and literature, as described in the last chapter, and discussions with specialists (see appendix 1) provided useful knowledge about, and theoretical perspectives of, domestic cooking and cooking skills and allowed the development of claims given above. However, it also highlighted two main areas where there are significant gaps in research and knowledge; gaps that make difficult the evaluation and understanding of domestic cooking and cooking skills and the debates and concerns that accompany them.

Firstly, there are no detailed descriptions or definitions of domestic cooking skills used in current research and debate. There are no descriptions of cooking skills that are comparative, in terms of complexity, to those descriptions of skills used in Braverman's (1974) deskilling thesis, in critiques of that thesis (Beechy, 1982; Gabriel, 1990 and Moore, 1982) or in practical skills literature drawn from other disciplines (Cooley, 1991; Pinch, Collins and Corbone, 1996; Singleton, 1978; Wellens, 1974 and Wood, 1982).

Secondly, there is little detailed description of people's domestic cooking practices in contemporary Britain and very limited research into cooking and cooking skills from the perspective and understanding of the domestic cook. Despite research in the field of health promotion which has found both links and discrepancies between people's cooking practices and their attitudes towards them (Lang et al, 1999 and Nicolaas, 1995), there is very little detailed research into people's attitudes and approaches towards, and their beliefs and feelings about, cooking and cooking skills. There is little knowledge of how people use and understand the term 'cook' and other terms and phrases related to domestic cooking. There is also a lack of description and definition of domestic cooking skills that relates to actual domestic cooking practices, to the skills used by domestic cooks in contemporary Britain to prepare and cook the food they eat.

The purpose of this research was, therefore, to explore domestic cooking and cooking skills from the perspective of the domestic cook, fill in the gaps in

knowledge and refine the claims described above. Its aims were to unearth details about, describe and explain people's 'real life' practices and experiences of domestic cooking, to develop this relatively new area of study and to provide a systematic "framework for thinking" (Murcott, 1995b, 232), about domestic cooking and cooking skills. Its specific objectives were to: -

- Examine the concept of (domestic) 'cooking skills'.
- Examine people's approaches towards, and beliefs about, domestic cooking.
- Examine and explain any connections, or discrepancies, between people's approaches towards domestic cooking and their domestic cooking practices and food choice (in terms of their use of 'pre-prepared' and 'raw' foods).
- Examine and explain any connections or discrepancies between people's cooking skills and their domestic cooking practices and food choice (in terms of their use of pre-prepared and raw foods).
- Develop theoretical propositions about domestic cooking and cooking skills to act as a theoretical base to be used in future research.
- Provide the groundwork for a typology of domestic cooking skills to be used in future appraisals of people's domestic cooking skills.
- Examine the appropriateness of propositions about the deskilling, restructuring and devaluing of domestic cooking and cooking skills and provide insight into and develop related debates and concerns.
- Provide suggestions for future research and areas of study and policy recommendations based on this direct insight into people's domestic cooking practices and skills and their approaches towards domestic cooking.

In the following sections of this chapter the process of the study and the reasoning behind the choice of methods for generating and interpreting data and building theory are described and explained.

The Methodological Approach to the Research

Research, say Hughes and Sharrock can take many forms:

> From surveys to discover the relationship between various social factors, to persons spending time observing how other people work, to carrying out experiments in laboratories, to scholarly review and criticism of X's ideas, to elaborating a new approach within a field, to a critique of existing work on X, and more. (Hughes and Sharrock, 1997, 10).

Methodologists point out that research takes many forms because the aim of all research is to develop knowledge and there are many different understandings of what knowledge is. They generally agree that all researchers should be clear about their ontological and epistemological beliefs (their understanding of what knowledge is) if they wish to test out existing knowledge, find new knowledge or provide insight into knowledge (Blaikie, 1995; Mason, 1996 and Hughes and Sharrock, 1997).

Mason (1996) describes ontological beliefs as being the beliefs of an individual about what constitutes "social 'reality'" (p. 11) and epistemological beliefs as an individual's "theory of knowledge" or what they regard as "evidence of things" in that social reality (p. 13). Similarly, Blaikie (1995) describes ontology as referring to claims about social reality, "about what exists, what it looks like, what units make it up and how these units interact with each other" (p. 6) and epistemology as referring to claims about "the ways in which it is possible to gain knowledge of this reality" (pp. 6 – 7).

Within the social sciences there is a tendency to regard ontological and epistemological approaches towards knowledge as forming two[13] fundamental, but contrasting, positions, frequently referred to as 'positivism' and 'interpretivism'

[13] Jackson, however, maintains that there are three important approaches to the social sciences – positivist, interpretive and critical. The critical approach is associated with Marx who believed that research should be used to improve the condition of the oppressed. Those who take a critical approach to research, says Jackson, view human behaviour as consisting of groups attempting to exploit others for their own advantage. Their goals are to improve the social conditions of the oppressed to achieve a just society. They use both quantitative and qualitative approaches to research (Jackson, 1995).

(Bryman, 1998 and Hughes and Sharrock, 1997).[14] In turn, these two different philosophical approaches to knowledge are associated with two different methodological approaches to research; positivism with a quantitative approach and interpretivism with a qualitative approach.

Positivism, the philosophical approach to knowledge that underlies quantitative research, is closely associated with the social scientist, Emile Durkheim. Positivists take the view that social facts are expressed by patterns or established regularities (such as birth and marriage rates or suicide rates [a particular interest of Durkheim's]) that can best be studied by means of relevant social statistics than by studying individuals within that society (Bryman, 1998; Jackson, 1995 and Rudestam and Newton, 1992). G.H. von Wright describes how positivism, a philosophy which views the research methods of the natural sciences as a methodological ideal, sees the differences between the natural world and the social world as holding no barrier to the application of scientific research to the study of society. Positivists take the view, he says, that explanation lies in the "subsumption of individual cases under hypothetically assumed general laws of nature, including 'human nature'" (G.H. von Wright, 1993, 10). Positivism necessitates a belief that only those facts that are directly observable can be seen as 'knowledge' (Bryman, 1998; Rudestam and Newton, 1992 and Jackson, 1995). Therefore, it is a position that rules out "incorporating metaphysical notions of 'feelings' or 'subjective experience' into the realms of social scientific knowledge unless they can be rendered observable" (Bryman, 1998, 14). An emphasis is placed on "brute data" (Hughes and Sharrock, 1997, 43) measurement and prediction; the ability to predict being for the positivist researcher a key indicator that adequate explanation has been found. It is thought necessary "to purge the scientist of values which may impair his or her objectivity and so undermine the validity of knowledge" (Bryman, 1998, 15).

[14] Although social scientists and methodologists usually agree that there are two, main contrasting ontological and epistemological positions working within the social sciences they do not all refer to them as positivism and interpretivism. Blaikie (1995), for example, describes these two contrasting approaches as constructivism (interpretivism) and realism (positivism).

Positivism is the philosophy that lies behind the survey, the questionnaire and the methodological approach known as 'quantitative' (Bryman, 1998; Mason, 1996 and Rudestam and Newton, 1992). As a reflection of the positivist tenets described above, the quantitative approach to research classifies observable phenomena by frequency and distribution. The conditions under which they occur are controlled as much as possible as is the researcher's influence (Flick, 1998). The concerns of quantitative research lie in establishing and testing causal relationships, providing numerical data, predicting outcomes and generalising the findings. Therefore there is an emphasis on sampling and the representativeness of those who are studied (Bryman, 1998).

The philosophical approach behind qualitative research is described by many as interpretive (Mason, 1996; Hughes and Sharrock, 1997 and Rudestam and Newton, 1992). It focuses on interpreting the opinions and the meanings of the social reality of those it studies in order to describe the social world they inhabit from their perspective (Rudestam and Newton, 1992). However, Bryman (1998) argues that interpretivism consists of a number of, albeit overlapping, intellectual approaches - phenomenology, symbolic interactionism, verstehen, naturalism and ethnogenics - that provide "qualitative research with its distinct epistemology" (p. 52). Naturalism, he says, is "the philosophical view that knowledge should remain true to the nature of the phenomenon under study" (p. 58). Ethnogenics, says Bryman, is concerned with the belief systems of people and the perspective of the subjects studied. Verstehen, according to Bryman, is linked with the sociologist Max Weber and is an approach which emphasises the need for empathy and 'understanding' in gaining knowledge about the individual and their part in the social world. Symbolic interactionism, Bryman continues, is a belief that people act in response to how they perceive an incident or situation and how they believe their actions will be understood and symbolic interactionists believe that research should "capture the process of interpretation through which actors construct their actions" (p. 57). Finally, phenomenology Bryman explains, is a philosophical approach in direct opposition to the positivist belief that scientific methods of research can be applied to the social world as well as the natural world. Phenomenologists, he says, also take the position that any understanding of social reality must be gained via an understanding of people's (the social actors') understanding of social reality because

it is their understanding of that social reality which influences their social actions. Bryman explains that a phenomenological approach takes the view that:

> A failure to recognize and encapsulate the meaningful nature of everyday experience runs the risk of losing touch with social reality and imposing instead a 'fictional non-existing world constructed by the scientific observer'. (Bryman, 1998, 52).

A qualitative approach to research places more emphasis on the individual in society, their feelings and beliefs, and on detail rather than on grand, causal patterns of behaviour. Qualitative research aims to "achieve 'depth' rather than 'breadth'" (Blaxter, Hughes and Tight, 1996, 60) and "rounded understandings" from the "rich, contextual and detailed data" (Mason, 1996, 4) gathered from people's accounts (qualitative data normally consists of words, not numbers) of their everyday lives. It aims, not to generalise and predict, but to discover, describe, explain and "develop empirically grounded theories" (Flick, 1998, 5). With a developmental and exploratory approach, qualitative research tends to be open and unstructured in terms of both strategy and design (Bryman, 1998). A main preoccupation of qualitative research, with its emphasis on the individual and their beliefs, is on understanding events in their own context and viewing social processes and relationships through the eyes of the people being studied. It is 'inductive' in that it develops this understanding, and the explanations and theoretical propositions that follow, from the data it generates (May, 1997 and Rampton, 1996).

This current research took a qualitative approach. This was done because the primary aim of the study was to produce detailed in-depth data from the perspective of the domestic cook that would allow exploration and theory-building rather than produce numerical data that would allow generalisation and the prediction of outcomes. A qualitative approach was appropriate because the aim of the research was to unearth, to understand and then to explain people's domestic cooking practices and food choice and their beliefs and feelings about domestic cooking and cooking skills. It sought to find out, for example, what people believe are the qualities or skills of a 'good cook', when they are most likely to use pre-prepared foods and why, whether they like to cook alone or with others and so on. It aimed to

find out what cooking skills people have, how often they cook, what pre-prepraed and raw foods they use, what approaches to domestic cooking they have and whether they share these practices and approaches with others. In other words, the research sought knowledge about individuals and the mundane, everyday aspects of their social lives. It sought knowledge about social processes, about the approaches and beliefs of the social actors who carry out those processes and about the meanings behind their social actions and about the social reality that informs those actions. These are phenomena that are difficult to measure – feelings, attitudes, beliefs, meanings, - and that do not "come naturally in quantities" (Tesch, 1995, 1). The knowledge sought was, therefore, of the type that can only be gained by a qualitative approach, by gathering and making sense of people's accounts of their everyday domestic cooking experiences and their beliefs about domestic cooking. As Kyle (1999) points out in the conclusion of her doctorate thesis entitled 'Middle-class men's conceptualisations of food: a sociological investigation', studies of men and food prior to hers had neglected to even mention one of the key phenomena that emerged from her qualitative, interpretative study – that men who had cooked for their partners or families for any length of time found that the planning and organisational aspects of food preparation and provision were the most difficult and stressful. This, she suggests, can "partly be explained by the survey approach" (p. 227) used in studies that have sought to identify men's contribution to household work. Questions about 'planning', Kyle says, were not included by the male researchers in the questionnaires they designed. The quantitative approach that had been taken, she argues, did not allow the feelings and concepts of men, other than the researchers, to emerge.

This chapter (both the previous paragraphs and the paragraphs that follow) describes, explains and accounts for the design and process of this research. In order to assist understanding this has been done in a straightforward, processional manner. (In the preceding sections of this chapter the background to, and reasons for undertaking, the research were explained, a description of the research aims and objectives was given and then the methodological approach taken was described and accounted for. The following paragraphs examine the research design and the data generation and analysis methods.) However, as an exploratory and analytically inductive study taking a qualitative methodological approach, the research aims, questions, data

generation methods and so on were, in the course of the actual study, continually developed, revised and refined, particularly in the early stages of the fieldwork. The study constantly moved between data generation, analysis, refinement of data generation instrumentation, refocusing of objectives and so on. For example the research objectives, though described at the beginning of this chapter, were formulated early in the first stage of fieldwork.

The Research Design

Mason (1996) claims that the key to effective research is the synthesisation of the aims of the research, the ontological and epistemological beliefs that lie behind it, and the most apt and useful methods of data generation and analysis. Miles and Huberman (1994) emphasise that it is finding the correct and most appropriate methods to answer the overall research puzzle and specific research questions that produces successful and useful research. Both suggest that the first stage of designing appropriate and useful methods of data generation and analysis is to decide the extent to which those methods are 'pre-designed'.

If research aims to be "fluid and exploratory" and to begin without formal hypotheses but develop explanatory propositions from the data generated, argues Mason (1996, 9), then an "all encompassing research design cannot necessarily be completed before the research is begun". Miles and Huberman (1994, 16) suggest that pre-designing prescriptive research methods might "blind the researcher to important features in the case" and so hinder the development of themes and explanations. However, they also point out that a total lack of pre-design might lead to a 'data overload' and, therefore, confusion.

As this research took an inductive, theory-building approach, the methods were pre-designed to an extent that would provide adequate structural framework to facilitate the research process but avoid the generation of excessive data. It was only the initial, exploratory, research instrumentation methods, those that would allow key themes and the direction of the research to emerge, that were pre-designed.

Subsequent methods to examine and develop theory were only designed when these key themes and the general research direction became evident.

The research finally comprised two stages with two different sets of informants and data generation and interpretation instrumentation. This 'two-stage design' allowed data to be developed horizontally and then vertically as in the manner described and explained by Bauer and Aarts (2000). It moved from an exploration of the many issues that emerged from the accounts of domestic cooks of their domestic cooking experiences, practices, approaches and beliefs (in the first stage) to a focused, in-depth examination of those emergent issues that appeared to be of key importance for a thorough understanding of domestic cooking and cooking skills (in the second stage). These two different stages of the fieldwork will be referred to, in the remainder of this chapter and subsequent chapters, as 'stage one of the fieldwork' and 'stage two of the fieldwork'.

The research methods, beginning with the data generation methods, are described and accounted for in the following sections of this chapter.

The Data Generation Methods

The principle rationale behind data generation methods in qualitative research lies in the ontological and epistemological tenet that social reality is about social processes and discourses and this 'reality' can only be understood through people's "accounts and articulations" (Mason, 1996, 40). McNeil explains that:

> If we want to explain social actions, we have to first understand them in the way the participants do. We must learn to see the world from their standpoint. We must develop research methods that make it possible for us to do this. (McNeil, 1990, 20)

Data generation methods in qualitative research, therefore, aim to gain access to data (people's accounts and articulations) through interaction with people (the data source) (Alasuutari, 1996; Gregory, 1995; Mason, 1996; May 1997 and Miles and

Huberman, 1994). This interaction, explain Miles and Huberman (1994, 8), is regarded, not as a "gathering of information by one party", but as a "co-elaborated act" between the researcher and the informant, an act which 'generates' data. It is in this way, that qualitative data disclose 'real life' (Mason, 1996) and provide "well grounded, rich descriptions and explanations of processes in identifiable local contexts" (Miles and Huberman, 1994, 1).

Qualitative researchers generate data using a number of different methods such as interviewing, using documents and observing. Documents can be text-based or visual, public or private, legal or political recors, novels or biographies and so on. Interviews can be loosely structured, semi-structured or formerly structured. Observation can be covert or overt; the researcher taking a role somewhere between complete observer of the informants' (or informant's) activities and complete participant (Mason, 1996 and May 1997).

The aim of this research was to investigate and provide detailed insight into, and understanding of, the social action of domestic cooking and of the skills involved, particularly the unseen, tacit skills that experts argue have a greater influence on approaches and practices than mechanical skills ([see chapter one], Cooley, 1991; Gabriel, 1990; Pinch, Collins and Corbone, 1996; Singleton, 1978; Wood, 1982 and Wellens, 1974). (Data about cooking skills that was gathered early in the first stage of fieldwork [see chapter 3] supported these arguments.) The philosophical approach that underpinned this research was that this would constitute knowledge and that this knowledge could be gained through understanding people's accounts of their cooking practices and experiences, their beliefs about cooking and the values they attach to different aspects of it. Therefore, it was necessary for this research to produce accounts and articulations of these actions and beliefs. In other words it was necessary to produce words as data.

Observation, though it was considered as a means of generating data, particularly because of the popularly and generally accepted physical and practical nature of the social action being investigated, was not a technique used in either the first or second stage of fieldwork. There were two main reasons why it was felt that observation, either covert or overt, was not the most useful way of generating data in respect of

this particular study. Firstly, the research did not aim to measure or make an appraisal of the informants' domestic cooking skills (for which covert observation might possibly be considered as an appropriate method of data generation) but to gain insight into domestic cooking and skills from the perspective of the domestic cook; to understand their beliefs, values, opinions, approaches, practices and skills, particularly those that are tacit and unseen. Secondly, it was felt that there would be difficulties involved in carrying out overt, participant observation, despite being a seemingly appropriate way of gaining knowledge from the perspective of the domestic cook (the researcher immerses his or herself in the relevant social actions and environments of the informants in order to understand and interpret those actions and environments, explain meanings and gain knowledge [May, 1997]). It was felt that establishing rapport and empathy with informants who were carrying out a social action that takes place privately, in their own homes and without an obvious 'normal' role for the researcher would be too difficult and lengthy a process for the available research resources.

Pilot studies of both first and second stage data generation methods were carried out. These not only enabled the refinement of the questions and prompts, but also allowed the researcher to learn about the nature of the interaction between the researcher and the informant and the effects of location on this interaction in respect to each method of data generation. For example, pilot studies revealed that in the second stage of data generation the location of the interviews had less impact on the nature of the interaction than it had in the first stage. The reason for this may have been because data generation in the first stage was more 'personal' in that there was a greater focus on generating data about the informants' actual cooking practices (rather than their opinions about hypothetical instances) and because the data source was made up of cohabiting couples. In the second stage, the presence of children, for example, appeared to affect the ease of the informants and the flow of the interview far more than the location of that interview. Informants did appear, however, to be more comfortable and at ease if the interview took place in surroundings familiar to them. The two different stages of fieldwork had different aims (as described and explained above) therefore they also involved different data generation methods and instrumentation. These are described and explained in the following paragraphs.

Data Generation Methods in Stage One

Data generation methods in the first stage of fieldwork consisted of 'cooking' diaries, a 'guided tour' of the informants' cooking resources and semi-structured interviews with each informant. These methods were designed to provide a detailed exploration of the informant's domestic cooking experiences, cooking practices and attitudes towards food and cooking.

Seven co-habiting couples kept a four-day diary of all their 'cooking'. (As a fluid and exploratory, qualitative study the number of couples was not pre-set. The reasons for using a sample of this size and type will be discussed in the following section that looks at sampling and selection.) The diaries were designed to initiate the exploration of people's domestic cooking practices and skills and were therefore loosely structured, requiring detail about what food was being prepared, how it was being prepared, for whom and by whom, and where it was going to be eaten. Pilot studies had revealed that informants tended to have difficulty remembering actual cooking experiences so data from these diaries were used, in part, to create personalised questions in order to prompt the informants' remembrance during the interviews. (See appendix 2 for information given to informants about keeping the cooking diary, appendix 3 for diary format, and appendix 4 for examples of completed diary pages).

After the four-day diaries of cooking had been completed and returned to the researcher to draw up personalised interview questions, semi-structured interviews with each informant were carried out. (These interviews were preceded by a short 'guided tour' of the couple's kitchen and such things as their cooking equipment, recipe collections and so on. The aim of this 'guided tour' was to give the researcher some background detail about which to ask questions and to help with the flow of the interview and generation of data). The interviews were semi-structured in order to remain open to the informants' terminology and judgements and to allow new ideas and themes to emerge (Quinn Patton, 1990). As a "co-elaborated act" (Miles and Huberman, 1994, 8) they also aimed to be "flexible and sensitive to the specific dynamics of each interaction" (Mason, 1996, 40) using topic headings and prompts rather than inflexible, precise questions. Topics discussed with informants included

their childhood experiences of cooking and eating; influences (such as the media and financial resources) on their cooking practices; their attitudes towards food and cooking in contemporary Britain (for example, their attitudes towards the abundance of pre-prepared foods available); and actual cooking practices. The interviews were recorded and took place in the informants' own homes. (See appendix 5 for the information given to interviewees and appendix 6 for an example of a first stage interview schedule.)

Data Generation Methods in Stage Two

The second stage of fieldwork aimed both to find complementary detail about, and so substantiate, those themes unearthed in stage one and to refine, develop and test-out explanations for them. Data generation methods, therefore, were less exploratory than those used in stage one and consisted of semi-structured interviews with a second sample of sixteen informants. (As in stage one this number was not pre-set. The reasons for using a sample of this size and type will be discussed in the next section that looks at sampling and selection.) The interview schedule was designed to generate further data about, and therefore allow the refinement and explanation of, those themes that emerged in the first stage.

Each informant discussed a range of topics with the researcher using a series of flexible questions and prompts that were designed to examine the themes unearthed in stage one. For example, a topic entitled 'making a pizza' was designed to examine the informants' use of, and their opinions and beliefs about, raw and pre-prepared foods. The informants variously discussed making a pizza from raw ingredients, making a pizza with a ready-made pizza base or pizza base mix, buying a ready-made pizza and so on. (See appendix 5 for the information given to interviewees and appendix 7 for an example of a second stage interview schedule). The interviews were recorded and took place either at the informants' workplace or in their own home.

The Sampling and Selection of Data Sources

Sampling and selection are the "principles and procedures used to identify, choose, and gain access to relevant units which will be used for data generation" (Mason, 1996, 83). Representative samples, explains May (1997) "allow a statistical generalization from sample to population" (p. 85). The sample is 'representative' because it is chosen (mathematically) randomly from a population and is therefore representative of that entire population. (The population, universe or sample framework, being anything from a country's entire population to the patients on a doctor's list or the users of a local bus service.) 'Quota sampling' is a variation, says May (1997) in which knowledge is gained of the proportion of people in particular age groups, social classes and so on in a population and the sample is made up of a proportionate quota of people with these 'characteristics'. In both cases, people are classified, described and deemed representative according to 'characteristics' such as age, class, ethnicity, occupation and so on. A representative sample, therefore, allows social explanations such as empirical generalisations about the entire population it represents, to be made (Mason, 1996). Generalisation of this type, explains Bryman (1988, 35), entitles the researcher to move towards prediction, "law-like" findings and theorise about broad social patterns (Bryman, 1988, 35).

Where there is a qualitative approach towards research, representative sampling is not usually practiced. In qualitative research sampling and selection is usually "concerned with the generation and development of theory" (Hunt, 1996) or "theoretical generalization" (Mason, 1996, 153). Theoretical generalisation or 'claims to a wider resonance', argues Mason, is based on rigorous analysis (and evidence of such) and on producing explanations from extreme and pivotal cases which are "central to a developing body of theory" or are "extreme or unusual in other ways which are both definable and relevant to a wider body or theory, knowledge or existence" (pp. 153 – 154). The rationale behind 'theoretical sampling' is to select units (or data sources) that are relevant to the population or universe being studied, the research aims, the ontological and epistemological approach of the enquiry, and that are appropriate for the development and testing of theoretical propositions and generalisations (Strauss, 1987; Mason, 1996 and Miles and Huberman, 1994). Theoretical sampling, says Hammersley (1990) involves

choosing cases in the most effective way to develop the emerging theory. The sampling or selection of these units is not based solely on socio-economic variables but may incorporate a number of qualities, or "range of experiences, characteristics, processes, types, categories, cases or examples and so on" (Mason, 1996, 92) which enables the researcher to develop descriptive explanations, to "make key comparisons and to test and develop theoretical propositions" (p. 93).

In this research it was necessary to select a data source from contemporary, English domestic cooks that could provide in-depth, meticulous data (and ultimately detailed knowledge) about the mundane, day-to-day, social action of domestic cooking from the perspective of the domestic cook. It was necessary to select a data source that would allow the development and testing-out of theoretical propositions and generalisations, via comparative and descriptive explanations of the social actions, processes, approaches, values and so on, about domestic cooking and cooking skills in England in the late twentieth century. Therefore, 'theoretical', or 'purposive', sampling rationale and methods were used in this study for selecting data sources (for both the first and second stages of fieldwork) in order to produce the type of findings that would be most useful in assessing current theoretical understanding of domestic cooking and cooking skills. The samples were both designed to provide a detailed, close-up view of individual data units (informants) and a 'range' of data units that would be relevant to the wider population (domestic cooks in late-twentieth century England) and to allow the development of social explanations and theoretical propositions and generalisations. Although characteristics such as age, gender and occupation were used in the selection of data units (informants) this was done in order to create uniformity and/or diversity where it was felt useful and necessary, rather than in connection with any representativeness. Other characteristics used to select relevant data units included those such as household structure, cooking experience and cooking background. (The rationale for sample selection for both stages of fieldwork are described in more detail in the paragraphs that follow.)

With the sampling logic and design described above, this current research could aim to provide theoretical explanations, propositions and generalisations about domestic cooking, domestic cooks and domestic cooking skills in late twentieth century England. However, this logic and design did not allow representative connections

between the sample and the broader population of English domestic cooks in the late twentieth century, nor empirical generalisations and predictions about broad social patterns and rules (based on characteristics such as gender, age and income), to be made. From the outset, it was accepted that the approach taken in the present research had limitations and that further representative and predictive studies would be necessary to examine these other aspects of domestic cooking and cooking skills in late twentieth century England.

Both Mason (1996) and Miles and Huberman (1994) say that the process of sampling and selecting, whether representative or theoretical, should be systematic and rigorous and should not be so rigidly pre-designed that the study cannot freely develop. They both point out that qualitative research is inductive and calls for "continuous refocusing and redrawing of study parameters during fieldwork".

As has been explained in previous sections, this study was only loosely pre-designed in order to accommodate the flow and development of the research. Samples for (what would develop into) the two stages of fieldwork were not pre-specified at the beginning of the study but a loose "sample framework" (Miles and Huberman, 1994, 30) was drawn up prior to the generation of data in each stage. As the two stages of fieldwork had different aims (see the sections above for an explanation of these aims) they had different sampling criteria to each other - these are explained in the following paragraphs.

(For reasons of accessibility, both first and second stage informants came mostly from the Greater London area. However, the location of the data source or units was not considered a quality relevant to the research as its focus was on domestic cooking practices, approaches and skills and not on types of food chosen and therefore food availability.)

The Sampling and Selection of Data Sources in Stage One of Fieldwork

As the first stage of fieldwork was designed to unearth key themes about domestic cooking the sample needed to be multi-unit in order to find recurrent themes and to

allow for more detailed description, more evidence and greater understanding. Methodologists such as Marshall and Rossman (1995), Miles and Huberman (1994) and Morse (1995) all agree that a multi-unit sample allows for greater understanding of data, greater confidence in the findings and more sophisticated descriptions and explanations of the themes and issues that emerge. However, Miles and Huberman do suggest that a study of more than fifteen cases, or data units, can become "unwieldy" (p. 30).

The sample, or data units, also had to be diverse enough, in terms of domestic cooking experiences and practices (age and co-habiting children were seen as indicators of experiences and practices), to provide sufficient evidence of shared themes but not so diverse as to contain too great a range of experiences and attitudes to be manageable. Therefore the sample framework outlined that couples, who had co-habited for more than five years, be selected. Couples were chosen as a data source because, treated as individual data units, they could provide different viewpoints of the same cooking experiences. They could therefore deepen understanding by providing a 'broader picture' of domestic cooking whilst keeping diversity at a manageable level. Another stipulation of the selection framework aimed at keeping diversity at a manageable level was that only couples aged in their 'middle age' (their thirties, forties and fifties) be selected. In order to promote diversity, the framework also stipulated that couples be selected from a range of occupations (and therefore, it was assumed, income).

Couples were selected, in part, opportunistically via the researcher's friends and colleagues and informants who had already taken part who suggested neighbours, workmates, friends, relations and so on that they thought may be useful informants. They were also selected more directly via informative notices and emails given out at the workplaces of the researcher's colleagues. When people came forward offering their services, further detail was sought. If their characteristics fitted the sample framework they were then given further information about the study and asked if they would like to take part. If qualities and/or characteristics duplicated those of any existing informants or were not deemed particularly useful at that stage of the fieldwork then suggestions were not followed up or people's offers to take part were politely turned down. More extensive personal details about cultural setting,

household structure, work patterns and so on were gathered directly from informants prior to interviews (see appendix 8 for an example of the questionnaire used to gather this information).

After data from interactions with seven couples (fourteen individual informants) had been generated and analysed, it appeared that no new themes were emerging and it was felt that evidence of key themes was becoming repetitious rather than corroborative. It was at this point that it was judged that the key themes, concepts and issues had emerged and that there was sufficient evidence of these themes to consider them worthy of more extensive examination. Further data generation, it was felt, might lead to an overload of data making evidence confusing. (A description of the informants who took part in the first stage of fieldwork is given at the end of this section on sampling and selection.)

The Sampling and Selection of Data Sources in Stage Two of the Fieldwork

The second stage of fieldwork aimed to add complementary detail to, and refine, the themes and issues that emerged in the first stage. It also aimed to provide theoretical explanation and generalisation. Therefore, the sampling framework outlined that people be selected with diverse 'qualities' (cooking experience, practices, approaches, food provision responsibilities and so on) and from diverse cultural settings and household structure in order to thoroughly examine and 'test-out' these key themes. For example, both informants who were 'interested' in food and cooking and informants who were 'not interested' (as far as could be ascertained before they were interviewed) were sought out. In another example, to test-out the theoretical proposition that there is not a simple, clear-cut relationship between an individual's cooking ability and their practices, informants were sought with qualities that suggested ability – an ex-chef, a woman in her late sixties who had cooked for others since her late teens and a second year catering student.

Informants were selected, in part, opportunistically via the researcher's friends and colleagues and other existing informants. They were also selected via notices and direct inquiries at colleges of both

further and higher education and at the workplaces of the researcher's colleagues. This process of selection was appropriate because a diverse sample from varied cultural settings and with diverse qualities was required and a degree of relevant, prior knowledge about those qualities was useful. Friends and colleagues of the researcher suggested individuals who they thought might be appropriate informants; people they worked with, lived with, knew socially and so on. For example, a friend of the researcher who had taken part in an early pilot study suggested a work colleague who he knew had a large collection of cookery books and cooking equipment, for example. Another example would be the suggestion by an informant that the researcher contact a young woman they knew who managed on a small budget but who always cooked with fresh foods, they said, for herself and her son. These suggestions, and offers to take part from other individuals given information about the study at colleges and so on, were then followed up. If their 'qualities' such as cooking experience, practices and responsibilities were useful to the study at that point and other qualities such as age, gender and occupation did not duplicate those of informants who had already taken part (the sample framework stipulated diversity) then people were approached, given information about the study and asked if they would like to take part. (To select a diverse group of people in terms of characteristics such as occupation, age, income and so on, a sample framework was drawn up which stipulated that approximately half the sample would be female and half male; that informants had a broad range of occupations and lived in a broad range of household structures. It also stipulated that the sample come from a broad range of age groups.) If qualities and/or characteristics clashed or were not appropriate at that time of the study then suggestions were not followed up or people's offers to take part were politely turned down. Further personal details about cultural setting, household structure, work patterns and so on were gathered directly at the time of the interview (see appendix 8, an example of a second stage interview schedule).

After interviews with sixteen people had taken place it was judged that sufficient extra detail had been found and that explanations had been adequately refined and tested-out and "theoretical saturation" (Hammersley, 1990, 72) had been reached. It was at this point that the thematic, conceptual coded categories used in analysis (these categories and their use in analysis will be explained in the following sections)

showed a clear relationship; the connections between coded segments were saturated and segued into each other. It was also felt that more data and further analysis might result in explanations becoming over-generalised through there being too many data to deal with and too many permutations to account for (Miles and Huberman, 1994).

Descriptions of the informants who took part in both the first and second stages of fieldwork, are given in the paragraphs that follow. The informants have been described as groups; the informants who made up the sample used in the first stage of fieldwork forming one group and the informants who made up the sample used in the second stage forming a second group. The identifier codes given to each individual informant and used to identify data segments (quotations) used as empirical evidence and example in this thesis have been given separately and follow each group description. As a consequence of describing the informants and attributing identifier codes in this way, not only is the confidentiality of the informants protected but also data segments can be seen to have been drawn from all of the informants. The main reason for describing the informants in this way, however, is so that data segments used in this thesis cannot easily be traced back to an individual, and therefore identifiable, informant. Data segments from informants are used in this thesis to illustrate or give evidence of themes, concepts, skills, beliefs and so on. They are not used to attribute a particular phenomenon to a specific cultural setting, social or economic variable. It was felt that if connections between data segments and individuals could be (easily) made then bias, stereotyping and a feeling of (false) 'representativeness' may result. For example, a data segment about using pre-prepared foods, generated in an interview with a 'middle aged' man in his forties with two teenage children and employed as a bookkeeper is used to illustrate an approach towards using pre-prepared foods found generally amongst the informants. It is not used to illustrate how middle class men, people living with teenagers, or bookkeepers feel about using pre-prepared foods. It was that an 'at hand' description based around characteristics such as gender, age, occupations and so on might promote connections of this type to be made. As Morse (1998, 302) says, it is unnecessary when reporting qualitative research to attribute each quotation to a particular participant because the quotation used is "representative of a perspective, dimension or characteristic of the phenomena [being discussed], and the person reporting it is only representative of that particular viewpoint."

A Description of the Informants who Took Part in the First Stage of Fieldwork

Fourteen informants, who lived together as seven couples, took part in the first stage of fieldwork. Four of the couples had lived together for between five and ten years, the remainder for over ten years. All the couples described themselves as both being in either their thirties, forties or fifties (three years appeared to be the greatest difference between individuals in a couple). Four couples had two children under the age of ten living with them; three couples had no children living with them. All the informants said that they had lived in England for twelve years or more although two said that they had not not been born in England. All the couples said that they 'kept regular hours' (in that they tended to work [however they were employed] between the hours of seven o'clock and ten o'clock).

In terms of occupation the couples were very different. One man described himself as unemployed whereas his wife said that she worked as a marketing manager. A male informant was in, what he called, "occasional employment"; his partner described her employment as "secretarial". Another couple consisted of a self-employed painter and decorator and a part-time school meals' supervisor. One couple both described themselves as self-employed and as Barristers. One female informant described herself has having a administrative occupation whereas her husband said that he was employed on a part time basis in delivery work. Two of the female informants described themselves as full-time housewives (though one said she would shortly be working, on a part-time basis, in administration). One described her husband as a self-employed writer and the other said that her partner worked as an editor.

These fourteen individuals have been given the following identifiers (which correspond to the order in which they took part in data generation) when quoted in this thesis: -

1A, 1B, 1C, 1D, 1E, 1F, 1G, 1H, 1I, 1J, 1K, 1L, 1M and 1N.

A Description of the Informants who Took Part in the Second Stage of Fieldwork

Sixteen informants took part in the second stage of fieldwork; seven were male and nine were female. Their given ages ranged from nineteen to sixty-nine; two were in their late teens, four were in their twenties, five in their thirties, two in their forties, two in their fifties and one was in her sixties. All sixteen said that they had lived in England for more than twelve years although two said that they had not been born in this country.

Two informants lived alone. One lived with her nine year-old son. Three of the younger informants lived, at least part of the week, with their parents and one described herself as 'flat-sharing' with a friend. The remaining nine informants all said that they co-habited with partners; two of these nine had teenage children living with them, four had one or two children under ten and three had no children.

In terms of occupation the sixteen informants were very different. Two women described themselves as housewives; one said that she was claiming income support and the other that she was claiming her pension. There were three people who described themselves as having clerical or secretarial positions. Nanny, bookkeeper, hospitality student, doctor, musician, youth worker, receptionist, restaurant manager and accountant were other named occupations. One informant said that she worked part-time as an adult education teacher and another said that she worked part-time as a journalist. Another said that he worked in theatre education.

These sixteen informants had very different experiences of cooking. (The experiences described here were ascertained prior to interviews). Two had professional cooking experience, although one of these was a hospitality student and had only a little experience as a professional cook. He was, however, taking cooking classes at college. Two of the informants were enrolled on adult education cookery classes at the time of the interviews. One young woman lived with her parents but also worked as a nanny and had to cook for the children in her care. Another woman lived with, and often cooked for, her mother. Two informants were single men who lived alone (although one was divorced and often had his teenage children to stay).

One woman was nearing her seventieth birthday and had been cooking and providing food for others since her early twenties. Another had to cook for herself and her nine-year old son on a very limited budget. Yet another had two part-time jobs and cooked for her husband and her two teenage children. Two of the informants had very young children, under the age of five, to cook for. One of the younger informants lived in a shared house and, therefore, cooked for herself but shared a kitchen. Two male informants had very little experience of cooking because (they said) they lived with partners who did all the cooking. Another male informant lived with a partner but as he worked 'nights' ate, and cooked, at different times to his partner.

These sixteen individuals have been given the following identifiers (which correspond to the order in which they took part in data generation) when quoted in this thesis: -
2A, 2B, 2C, 2D, 2E, 2F, 2G, 2H, 2I, 2J, 2K, 2L, 2M, 2N, 2O and 2P.

Analysing the Data

Methodologists point out that approaches to qualitative data analysis are not all identical. For example, some approaches seek complete immersion in the data and total understanding, some aim solely to describe, and some seek explanation through underlying relationships and structures. However, all are based on the interpretation of data from an interaction with a data source and share common analytic processes and methods (Mason, 1996; Miles and Huberman, 1994 and Tesch, 1995). Tesch (1995, 113) describes interpretational qualitative analysis that aims to provide explanatory propositions as "a process which entails an effort to formally identify themes and to construct hypotheses (ideas) as they are suggested by data and an attempt to demonstrate support for those themes and hypotheses".

The aim of this research was, via empirically generated data, to unearth key themes about domestic cooking and cooking skills and then to examine those themes in more

detail and provide theoretical, explanatory propositions. Therefore, this research uses interpretational qualitative analysis.

The process of multiple-case, interpretational qualitative analysis that seeks explanation is widely described as having two main parts that take place concurrently; the first being the organisation of the data and the second being the interpretation of that data (Alasuutari, 1996; Mason, 1996 and Tesch, 1995). Miles and Huberman (1994, 10 – 11), however, argue that there are three concurrent activities – data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing or verifying. Data reduction they describe as "the process of selection, focusing, simplifying, abstracting and transforming the data"; data display as the "organized, compressed, assembly of information that permits conclusion drawing and action"; and conclusion drawing or verification as consisting of "noting regularities, patterns, explanations, possible configurations, causal flows, and propositions".

Whether they are of the opinion that there are two main parts or three, methodologists agree that the key analytic procedure in multiple-case, interpretational qualitative analysis that aims to provide explanatory propositions is that of 'comparison'; comparing data to find both similarities and differences (Mason, 1996; May, 1997 and Miles and Huberman, 1994). Comparative analysis is the procedure by which the researcher constantly compares different pieces of data and notes, memos and explanations with data, and in doing so gradually moves towards abstract and general statements or explanation (Rampton, 1996).

This research aimed not only to provide in-depth, descriptive insight into domestic cooking but also to provide theoretical, explanatory propositions and generalisations. Therefore, both the analysis process and methods (as with the methodological approach to the research) had to be appropriate to meet this aim.

The analysis process was appropriate to meet this aim in that it had a two-part design that allowed the emergence of themes and issues in a first exploratory stage and the examination and explanation of these themes in a second. The qualitative analysis approach, in which both data analysis and the refinement of data generation

instrumentation was continual, also helped the research to focus on the relevant themes and issues and move towards explanatory propositions.

The analysis methods were appropriate to meet this aim in that a number of different methods were used to display, organise, reduce, compare and interpret the data, and then verify evidence and test-out explanations. These methods are described in the following sections. They are methods recommended by methodologists (Alasuutari, 1996; Erickson, 1986; Hammersley, 1990; Mason, 1996; Miles and Huberman, 1994;m Richards, 1998; Rose and Webb, 1998 and Tesch, 1995) as appropriate and useful for the analysis of qualitative data and for research that aims to provide theoretical propositions as well as to describe. These methods include transcribing, attaching descriptive, thematic and conceptual codes, making notes and memos, comparing for differences and similarities and refining, elaborating and developing theoretical generalisations and explanations (whilst remaining aware of, and comparing with, existing research and theory).

Transcribing, Reading and Understanding

Transcribing is the process by which recorded interviews or handwritten documents are transformed into data, a process that necessitates that the researcher reads, interprets and attempts to understand what they hear. It is because of this interpretative dimension, that transcribing is generally regarded as part of analysis (Alasuutari, 1996 and Mason, 1996).

Mason (1996) describes three different 'readings' of interviews that can influence the form and content of transcription in interpretative analysis. Firstly, there is the 'literal' reading, concerned with the content and the form and sequence of dialogue. Secondly, there is the 'interpretative' reading concerned with the researcher's understanding of the underlying meaning of the informants' words. Thirdly, a 'reflexive' reading explores the researcher's role in the "process of generation and interpretation of data" (p. 109). Alasuutari (1996) points out that the manner of extracting data from, or 'reading', interviews is dependent on the approach and aims of the research:

> Just how much hesitation, staggering or repetition one is allowed to edit, or how much vernacular or spoken language expressions are changed into a written language format, depends on the aspects the researcher is going to concentrate on in his or her analysis. (Alasuutari, 1996, 43)

In this research, interviews from both stages of the fieldwork (including the guided tours from stage one) were 'read', or transcribed, literally, interpretatively and reflexively. They were transcribed literally (all spoken words were considered to be data) in order to explore, examine and understand the informants use of terminology. (They were not however transcribed to the level of detail that might be done in a linguistics study, for example, as the sequence of words, the structure of sentences and so on was not considered data.) The interviews were transcribed interpretatively, (the pauses, utterances and so on of the informants were considered data) in order to gain a deep understanding of the informants' beliefs, opinions and practices. They were also transcribed reflexively. Notes were added to the transcription of the interviews to explain any interaction between the informant and the researcher thought relevant. This reflexive reading allowed the researcher to be aware of these interactions and incorporate this awareness into the analysis. It allowed the researcher to take into account a male informant's desire to prove his knowledge of food and cooking to the researcher[15], for example, or a female informant's determination to show that both effort and skill are required to provide healthy food for a family, with or without the use of pre-prepared foods.

The data was also read 'creatively'. A creative reading of data, say Rose and Webb (1998), is one in which the researcher builds up a 'bigger picture' by using their knowledge and understanding (gained from interpretation and analysis of data) but also their imagination. It helps the researcher, they argue, to develop ideas, issues and concepts and therefore to refine explanations. In this research a creative reading allowed the researcher to build up a picture of how cooking fitted into an informant's way of life, for example, and how each informant had a very individual approach to domestic cooking. Richards (1998) argues that this type of reading, which involves

[15] A phenomenon also observed by Kyle [1999] in her study of middle class men's conceptualisations of food.

'standing back' from the data, is as important in interpretative analysis that aims to construct explanations through ideas, themes and abstractions as literal and interpretative readings which are very 'close' to the data.

So as to keep meanings intact and not to confuse, or lose, interpretation or understanding, the transcribed data was not 'smoothed over' into sentences with conventional punctuation until the final stages of writing up this thesis.

Sorting and Coding, Comparing, Describing and Generating Meaning

Erickson (1986, 146) says that qualitative analysis that aims to generate meaning and explanation does so by conducting "a systematic search of the entire data corpus looking for disconfirming and confirming evidence, keeping in mind the need to reframe the assertions as the analysis proceeds". This 'search and comparison' is generally conducted via a process of categorising and coding 'analysis units' of data. Tesch (1995, 116) describes these 'analysis units' of data as segments of text that contain "one idea, episode or piece of information". Analysis units are retrieved from one body of text and then compared with analysis units from another body of text (Mason, 1996; Miles and Huberman, 1994 and Tesch, 1995). Tesch (1995, 115) calls this process "de-contextualising and re-contextualising". Through constant comparison of these "multiple data segments judged to belong to the same category" the "central features of that category" are identified (Hammersley, 1990, 174). Through the continued comparison, abolishment, revision, and refinement of these coded categories, the researcher moves from the initial identification stage to the testing of ideas and findings, then to understanding the underlying structures, and finally to constructing explanations (Miles and Huberman, 1994).

However, there are other methods to interpret, generate meaning and construct explanatory propositions that can be used in conjunction with codes and categories. Miles and Huberman's (1994) sourcebook of qualitative data analysis describes a number of these. For example, to aid in the early exploratory stages of analysis they describe and explain methods of noting patterns and themes and of clustering themes into categories. For the comparative, refining stages of analysis they describe and

explain such methods as making metaphors out of themes, counting, contrasting and looking for differences and similarities. For the final stages of establishing underlying structures and theoretical explanation they describe and explain how to build networks of evidence.

In the first stage of fieldwork of this research, coding and categories were initially descriptive and closely related to the questions contained in the interviews. (Examples of these descriptive codes can be seen in table 2.1.) Through a systemised retrieval, comparison and examination of these coded analytic units, the process which Tesch (1995) calls 'de-contextualisation and re-contextualisation', themes and concepts were revealed which were then categorised themselves, treated as analytic units and examined still further in the second stage of fieldwork. Data displays, clustering (in which phenomena are put into categories which may pre-exist or may emerge from the data) and counting were also used as methods in this first stage to organise, compare, describe and begin to generate meaning from the data. (Table 2.2 shows an example of 'clustering and counting' as it was used in the first stage of fieldwork.) For example, the 'qualities of a good cook', as referred to be the informants, were 'clustered' in fourteen different themes (these themes emerging from the data) and then the number of times these themes were found in the informants accounts were 'counted'. This revealed that the ability to cook 'interesting' food and produce a 'variety' was found to be the quality most frequently mentioned as being desirable.

In the second stage of fieldwork analysis methods such as categorising, coding, building chains of evidence and making metaphors were all used to gradually inch towards the construction of explanation and theoretical propositions through comparison and examination. Through 'de-contextualisation' and 're-contextualisation' coding now involved more conceptual 'themes' such as 'pre-prepared foods as the norm' (the accepted and expected use of pre-prepared foods), 'effort' (perceptions of the effort involved in cooking) and 'planning skills' (skills used to organise food preparation and provision). (See table 2.3 for examples of the 'conceptual codes' used in stage two of the fieldwork.) Causal networks, whereby "the most important independent and dependent variables in a field study" are displayed to show the correlational and directional relationships between them

(Miles and Huberman, 1994, 153) were particularly useful in the latter stages of the analytic process. (See figures 2.2 and 2.3 for examples of causal networks.)

Table 2.1. Examples of the Codes Used in the First Stage of Fieldwork.

THEMES	CODES
Food Habits	FH
REPERTOIRE	FH – REP
Patterns to food preparation	FH- REP –PAT
Introduction of new dishes	FH – REP – NEW
CHILDREN	FH – CH
Preparing food with their children	FH – CH – DO
Children preparing their own food	FH – CH – OWN
Using food information to prepare food with children	FH – CH – FI
Influences	IN
FRIENDS AND FAMILY	IN – FR
The people they talk with	IN – FR - WHO
The types of conversation	IN – FR – HOW
MEDIA – TELEVISION	IN – TV
What food programmes?	IN – TV – WHA
Reasons for watching food programmes	IN – TV – REA
Usefulness of watching food programmes	IN – TV- USE

Table 2.2. An Example of the Clustering and Counting Analysis Method Used in the First Stage of Fieldwork

	F A	F B	G A	G B	H A	H B	I A	I B	J A	J B	K A	K B	L A	L B	*T*
Qualities of a good cook															
'rustle up' / instant	X	X											X	X	**4**
not follow instructions	X				X								X		**3**
variety / interesting				X	X			X		X	X			X	**6**
take time over			X												**1**
take care / thought over			X				X	X							**3**
good presentation			X				X				X	X			**4**
well prepared						X		X							**2**
quantity										X	X				**2**
quality ingredients					X			X							**2**
consistency of result					X				X						**2**
their food is inspiring									X						**1**
cook with control										X			X	X	**3**
cook with confidence												X	X		**2**
appropriate use of ingredients					X							X			**2**

Table 2.3. Examples of the Codes Used in the Second Stage of Fieldwork.

THEMES	CODES
Effort	
Perceptions of effort	EFF – EFF
Perceptions of effortlessness	EFF – EFFLESS
Reward	TH –REW
Knack	
Practice / experience	K – EXP
Natural / talent	K – TAL
Misc.	
pre-prepared foods as the norm	MISC – PPNORM
individualism	MISC – IND
sharing	MISC –SH
Definitions	DEF
cooking	DEF – COOK
not cooking	DEF – NOTCOOK
Skills	SKV
creative	SKV-CREATIVE
planning	SKV – ORG
mechanical	SKV – MECH
timing	SKV – TIM
knowledge (history, geography, nutritional etc.)	SKV - FOODIE
knowledge (reactions, properties etc.)	SKV – KNOW

Figure 2.1. An Example of a Causal Network Used in the Second Stage of Fieldwork

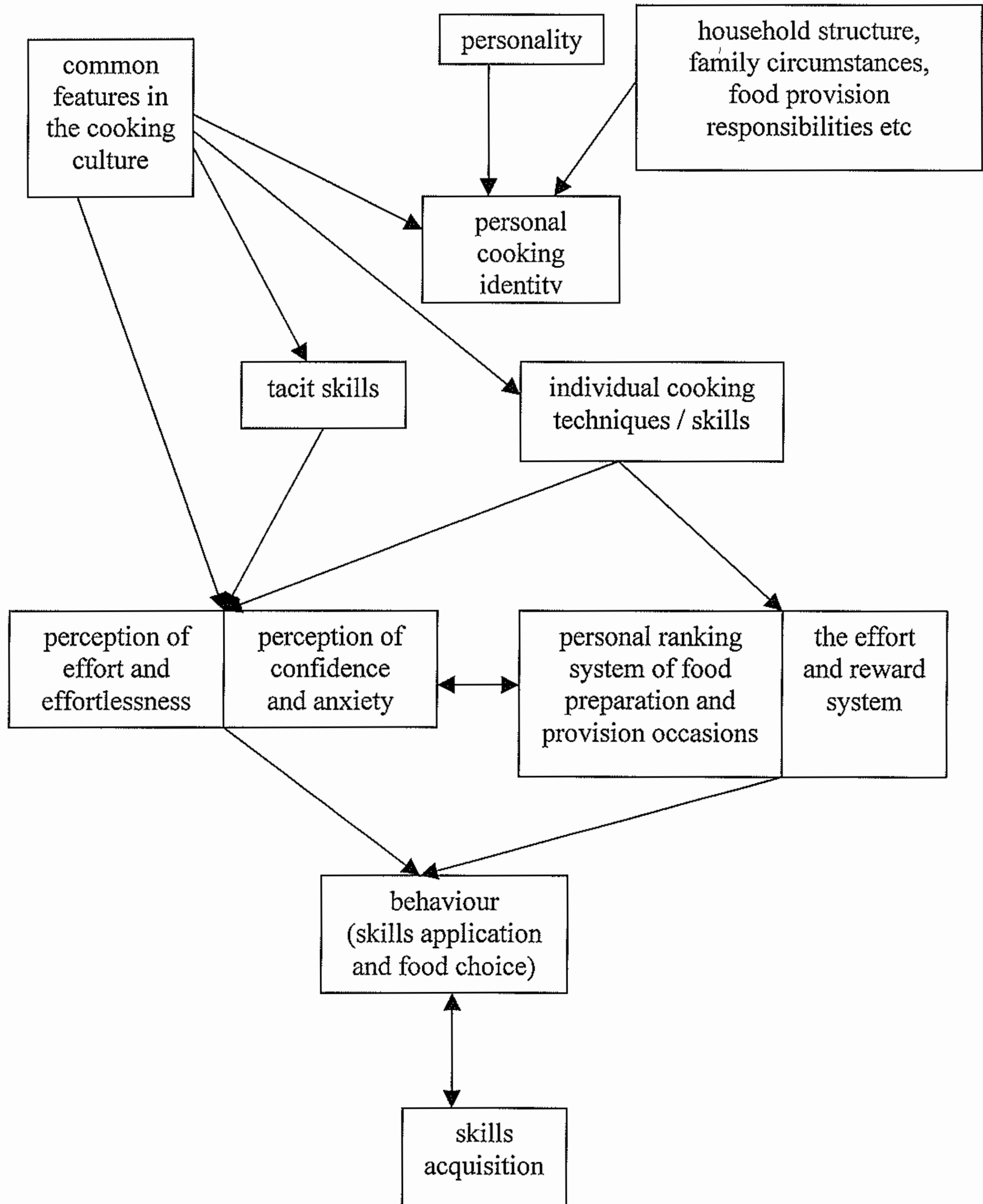
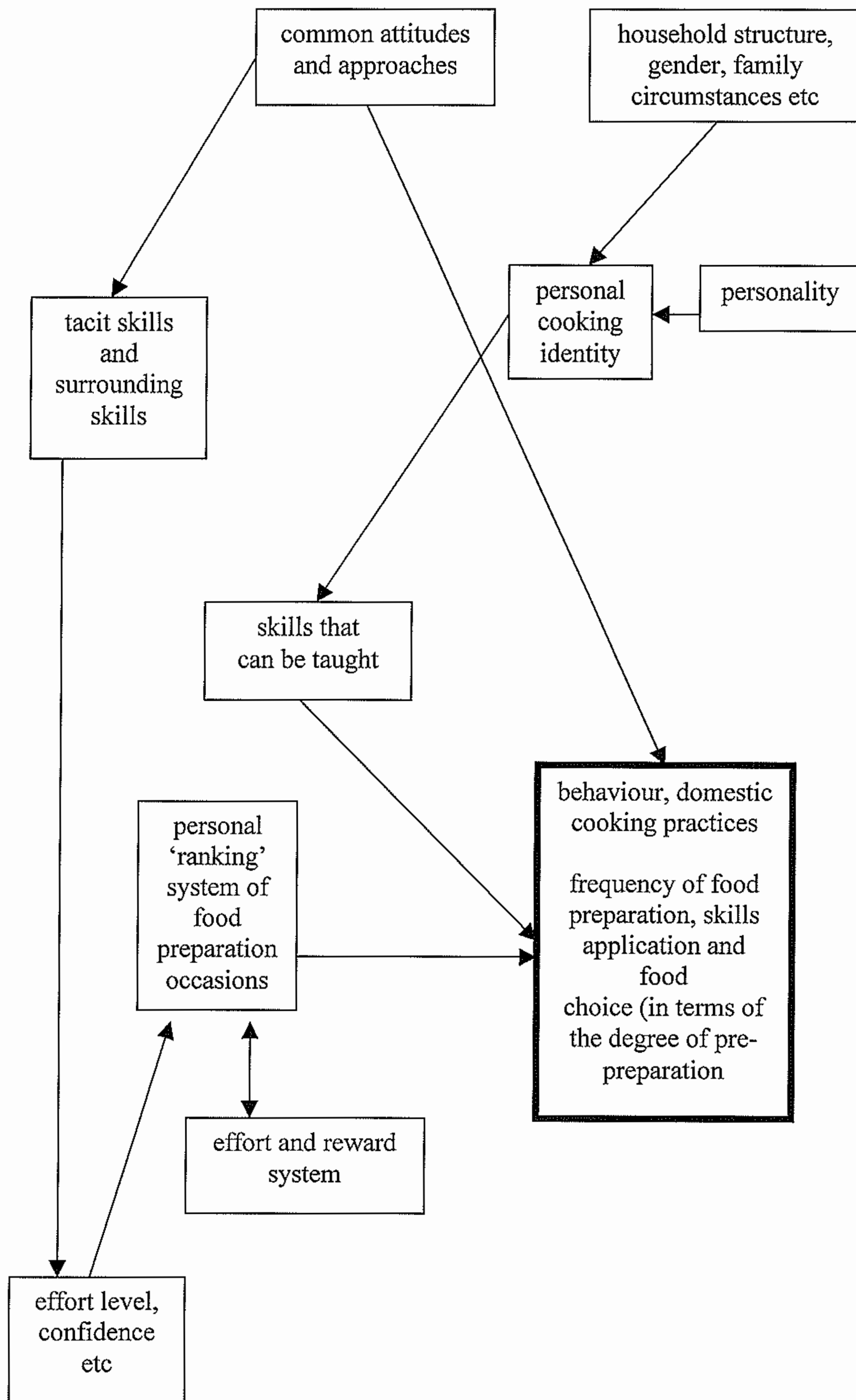


Figure 2.2. An Example of a Causal Network Used in the Second Stage of Fieldwork



Using Qualitative Data Analysis Computer Software in Analysis

As Richards and Richards (1998) point out, ease of access to data to support understanding, the development of concepts and explanations and so on, is of the utmost importance. The use of computer assisted qualitative data analysis software, they say, can help gain that access and can be particularly useful in speeding up the coding and retrieving of data segments. However, there are also many methodologists and researchers who warn that the use of computer assisted data analysis software can also lead to over quantification, distance from the data and homogeneity in analysis methods (Barry, 1998; Tesch, 1995 and Seidal, 1991). Mason (1996) argues that software might not be compatible with the ontological and epistemological philosophies that underlie the research. Richards and Richards also point out that explanation and theory construction in qualitative research is creative and not purely mechanical and therefore computer assisted data analysis software is potentially unsuitable and should be used and treated with care:

> Concepts are captured; links are explored, created and tested; ideas are documented and systematically reworked, in textual memos, models and diagrams [...] How can computers support this? (Richards and Richards, 1998, 216).

Qualitative data analysis computer software (QSR NUD*IST) was used in this research as "just one tool in [the] analysis armory" (Barry, 1998, 3). QSR NUD*IST was used to cross-sectionally code, sort and retrieve analysis units of data (de-contextualise and re-contextualise analysis units). However, tables and diagrams and a word processing package were all used to aid the processes of presenting data, 'understanding', generating meaning and constructing explanation. As Richards and Richards (1998) have commented, "the modern word processor offers some features unmatched in most QDA [qualitative data analysis] software" (p. 221) such as good text, diagram, table and annotation facilities, and the ability to handle multiple documents in separate windows.

Making Credible the Research Findings and Conclusions

Research that does not claim validity through empirical generalisation and "replicable outcomes" (Tesch, 1995, 304), such as that which is qualitative and interpretative, demonstrates in other ways that its findings are credible by establishing rigour in it's approach, aims and methods. Credibility, or "a result that others can accept as representing the data" (Tesch, 1995, 304), is sought and accounted for, through the harmonisation of analytic and data generation methods, research aims and ontological and epistemological approach (Mason, 1996). Miles and Huberman (1994) suggest that there are five (overlapping) issues - objectivity, reliability, internal credibility (the findings are plausible and make sense), external validity (the findings have a wider importance) and pragmatic credibility (the findings are useful) - that should be considered when questioning " ' How good is this piece of work?' " (p. 277 – 280).

This research sought, and demonstrates, objectivity, reliability and credibility or validity (internal, external and pragmatic) in the following ways:

- The research came about as a result of both popular and academic debates and concerns (from a number of disciplines) about domestic cooking and cooking skills in contemporary Britain.
- The research aimed to add insight to current academic and popular concerns, provide theoretical propositions as a base for future research, make policy suggestions and develop a new, and topical, area of study.
- The research was ethical in both practice and purpose (see next section).
- The design of data generation and analysis methods allowed exploration, examination and verification.
- Extreme cases or data sources to 'test-out' meanings and explanations were used in the second stage of fieldwork to verify findings. For example, a woman with home economics qualifications who declared that she preferred to use ready-prepared foods was used as a data source to test out the theoretical proposal that there was not a clear-cut relationship between a domestic cook's cooking ability and their actual practices. 'If-then' tests, whereby a statement of an expected

relationship are declared and then tested to if it can be upheld, were also used in this stage.

- The design of the research approach and methods (including multi-case data generation, data generation largely through semi-structured interviews, systematic theoretical and purposive sampling techniques and descriptive, conceptual and theoretical categorising and coding) was appropriate to its overall aim to be interpretative and explanatory.
- The ideas, concepts, findings and explanations that emerged were continually compared with existing research, debate, theory and commentary during analysis.
- Notes and comments about the research process and methods, made throughout the design, data generation and analysis procedures, were compared, studied and acted on.
- Constant objectivity checks, checks for researcher bias, were made throughout the research and writing-up processes.
- Regular supervision was given throughout both the research and the writing-up processes.

That rigour was established in this research, and the consequent "goodness" (Miles and Huberman, 1994, 262) of the findings and conclusions, has been shown in this chapter. This has been done via a "careful retracing and reconstruction of the route" of the research process (Mason, 1996, 152); by describing the rationale behind the choice of design and methods and the synthesisation of the research approach, aims, design and methods of data generation and analysis. In addition, details of data generation instrumentation, and examples of analysis techniques have been included in the appendices. The following chapters, which describe the findings and conclusions of the research, have also been written in a manner that demonstrates the rigour of approach and methods in two ways. Firstly, the findings and conclusions have been split into topics and examined and disseminated against current research and academic discussion in self-contained chapters. Secondly, to underline the developmental nature of the research, the findings from the first exploratory stage of fieldwork and the findings from the second stage, which focused on generating greater detail, complimentary evidence and explanation, have been described separately.

Ethical Considerations and Practices

Although the problems and complexities that surround ethics in the research process have been frequently debated, that research should be ethical is undisputed (May, 1997). Mason (1996) argues that all research should be ethical in terms of both practice (the processes of data generation and analysis) and purpose. Being ethical in terms of purpose, she says, means being aware of the intentions and aims of the research, in other words, being aware of such issues as personal gain, the parties or bodies that will benefit, and the parties affected. Once ethical purpose has been established, she adds, then suitable ethical codes of practice can be adopted.

Mason (1996) also points out, like Rampton (1996) and Miles and Huberman (1994), that ethical research practice does not solely include ensuring informant confidentiality and anonymity. Ethical research practice during data generation, they say, requires that informants give 'real' and informed consent (they have clearly understood what they have agreed to do and do not feel obligated to do that to which they have agreed) and that they have control of the data generation interaction (for example, the freedom to answer an interview question how they wish, if at all). Ethical research practice during data analysis and presentation of the findings involves honouring confidentiality and privacy as well as acting "in the spirit of the informed consent" (Mason, 1996, 159), and remaining aware of making unacknowledged value judgements (May, 1997).

This research sought to be ethical, in purpose, practice and representation, in the following ways:

- The aims of this research originated in academic concerns over the relationship between domestic cooking and cooking skills and health, social and educational processes. The remit and the proposal for the research were policy oriented. Therefore, this research did not set out to measure or judge individual domestic cooking practices, skills or abilities but to be descriptive and to provide explanations. It aimed to be objective and to provide impartial practical and intellectual recommendations for policy and research.

- Pilot studies of data generation methods and the use of reflective notes made during data generation and analysis facilitated the understanding of ethical practice because they made evident the issues surrounding the interactive process of data generation and sensitivity to culture and gender.
- All informants were approached on a personal basis rather than through other bodies or groups in order to gain 'real' consent. They were given a detailed explanation of the research by the researcher, and were given additional, written explanatory information prior to interviews (see appendices 2 and 5), to ensure their consent was informed.
- All informants had the opportunity, either through the design of the data instrumentation or through being informed by the researcher, to give only as much information as they wished. In situations where the researcher perceived that an informant was particularly sensitive to an issue (this was particularly important in part one where couples were interviewed individually), that issue was not pursued.
- Informant confidentiality and anonymity was upheld throughout the entire research process, from selection and sampling to the writing up of this thesis. Any names and addresses taken were kept separately from taped interviews and raw documents and the data generated from them. All notes and documents produced during the data analysis and writing of the thesis used reference codes in place of real names.
- Constant checks were made during the data generation, analysis and writing-up processes that any value judgements made acknowledged contextual and reflexive issues.
- The research worked within the ethical guidelines of good practice established by the Thames Valley University Research Committee (1997).

The following four chapters describe and discuss the primary research findings. The next chapter, chapter 3, examines domestic cooking skills. Chapter 4 looks at 'common' approaches towards cooking, those shared by informants, and Chapter 5 at individual approaches towards domestic cooking. Chapter 6 draws on, and is informed by, chapters 3, 4 and 5. It examines how people's domestic cooking skills

and approaches towards domestic cooking are intricately interconnected, not only with each other, but also with their domestic cooking practices and food choice. In chapter 7, the findings are discussed in the light of the initial reading of the surrounding literature and discourses about domestic cooking and cooking skills and proposals for improved theoretical understanding and social response are made.

CHAPTER 3

DOMESTIC COOKING SKILLS

The preceding two chapters have reviewed the background and the methodological aspects of this research. In this, and the following three chapters, the findings of the research are described and the implications of those findings discussed. This first chapter of research findings looks at domestic cooking skills.

The research found that the skills used by the domestic cooks who took part in this study were both complex and diverse. The findings revealed that the skills involved in domestic cooking include practical abilities, skills of judgement, conceptual skills and skills of organisation and design amongst others. The findings also revealed that both cooking with raw foods and cooking with pre-prepared foods involved these skills.

The Research Findings

Analysis of the exploratory first stage of fieldwork raised questions about how best to define and understand the concept of 'cooking skills' in order to gain useful insight into people's domestic cooking practices and so develop current debates about the state of cooking. In particular, the findings raised questions about the suitability of using simple definitions based around practical techniques and mechanical abilities (as has tended to be done in previous research and commentary [for examples see Adamson, 1996; Bell, 1998; Lang et al., 1999; Rodrigues and de Almeida, 1996, and Street, 1994]).

Analysis of the informants 'cooking' diaries revealed that, for example, the preparation of a salad dressing from the 'raw ingredients' of olive oil, mustard, salt, pepper and vinegar, as described by one couple, would require the same practical techniques of 'mixing' and 'stirring' as the preparation of a prawn cocktail sauce

from 'pre-prepared' mayonnaise and tomato ketchup, as described by another. This suggested that understanding 'cooking skills' as a set of practical techniques might not be the most useful way of gaining insight into the informants' domestic cooking practices and use of raw and pre-prepared foods. Another more complex example provided corroboration of this proposition. An informant described how she made Chicken Zorba from raw chicken (the diary did not include details of how she prepared the raw chicken) marinated in lime juice squeezed from a fresh lime, chopped fresh mint from her garden and freshly ground spices. She described how she fried the marinated chicken strips and served them in pitta-bread with yoghurt (both pre-prepared) and a salad made from lettuce leaves and tomatoes. She served this, she wrote, with a broad bean salad made from fresh broad beans which she had 'blanched' (briefly boiled), skinned and then mixed with lemon juice, squeezed from a fresh lemon, and olive oil. When the practical abilities used to prepare Chicken Zorba from a number of fresh foods were listed - preparing vegetables, frying and boiling - they were similar to those listed in connection with the preparation of a pasta 'dish' as described by another informant. The sauce for which was made from 'fresh' mushrooms and a chilled, super-market pasta sauce.

Analysis of the accounts of the first stage informants' accounts of their cooking experiences and practices and approaches towards cooking raised further questions about understanding and describing 'cooking skills' and indicated that it might be a complex concept.

What is the difference in skill between toasting a slice of bread in an electric toaster and toasting it under the grill? Does cooking a jacket potato in the oven require less skill than cooking one in the microwave? Is there a difference in the skills required to grill a fish finger and the skills required to grill a fillet of mackerel or smoked haddock? How do the tasks of opening, and heating the contents of, a tin of peas; opening, emptying, and then cooking the contents of, a fresh pea pod; and opening, and cooking the contents of, a packet of frozen peas compare in terms of skill and difficulty[16]? Does preparing "sushi" from raw ingredients but with the help of a

[16] The difficulty of a task, activity of skill is generally measured in terms of how many attempts it takes to acquire a consistent standard of result (Pinch, Collins and Corbone, 1996 and Singleton, 1978).

recipe require more, less, or similar levels of cooking skill to preparing "chicken and vegetables" with an instant gravy mix and (pre-prepared) jointed chicken but with no formal instruction?

As referred to above, one couple's diary described the preparation of a broad bean salad from freshly picked broad beans that had been blanched and then peeled. However, analysis of data from the interview with the cook (informants were asked about the information they had previously given in their cooking diaries) revealed that she used cooking abilities other than the practical techniques and preparation she had described in the diary. For example, she had utilised an ability to judge the optimum moment at which to remove the broad beans from boiling water, during the process of blanching them, in order to peel them most easily. Analysis of an interview with another informant revealed how the preparation of 'chicken and vegetables served with chips', from "Bisto vegetarian gravy granules" and other pre-prepared foods, also required abilities other than the practical. This task required, for example, the ability to time different components of the meal to be ready simultaneously and to judge when the oil was at the best temperature to cook the 'pre-prepared' chips to the desired 'golden brown'. More evidence of judgement skills came from an informant who explained how she makes pancake batter by putting all the necessary dry ingredients into an electric blender and then adding sufficient liquid until the batter is "the right consistency for what I want to make". A consistency she could only judge as 'right' from prior experience of making batter and pancakes.

Analysis of data generated from the interviews revealed that there were huge variations in the amount of 'spare time' during a cooking task in which the informants felt they could take up another activity (be it a recreational activity, another cooking task or a domestic task other than that of cooking). This suggested that domestic cooking can involve timing and organisational skills and abilities. For example, two informants mentioned that they would never do anything else when they are cooking something where only the 'cooking process' (the application of heat or other energy source) remains, such as a "Sunday breakfast", "sausages" and "burgers". In contrast, another informant said that she would never devote her time to this part of a 'cooking' task:

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> You don't stand and watch fish fingers cooking for ten minutes. So I put them on and then I go upstairs and get a load of washing, bring it down and put it in the washing machine and then turn the fish fingers over and then take the washing I've got upstairs and hang it up to dry. I do it all day. (1A)

The following quote from a male informant, who relates how through practice he has found that the process of preparing Sunday dinner has become smoother and quicker is a further indication of the existence of timing and organisational skills:

> Traditional Sunday roast with all the traditional trimmings, like the roast potatoes, the gravy and all that, can be quite hectic. You have to be very organised to do it, I think, otherwise you just end up with everything being cooked at the wrong times. Having done that several times you kind of get into a routine. I can sort of almost wash up as I go sometimes. Use this pan… put some stuff here…wash the pan… and by the time I've washed it I can go back and do something else. (1D)

Another informant's words suggested a further organisational skill involved in domestic cooking, that of planning meals in advance:

> I've got to be organised because I've got to do so much in so little time at home. [...] It drives John daft. "What do you want for your tea?", "I haven't finished my breakfast yet", "Yes, but I might have to get something out of the freezer and defrost it!", "Just cook me anything", "How do you want your anything, fried or boiled?" (1J)

As informants talked about their cooking practices and experiences, and their approaches towards cooking, they often referred to how they would adapt recipes, and prepare foods and meals from the ingredients they had available. These accounts of their domestic cooking practices, as the following quotes reveal, suggest that domestic cooking involves skills of creativity and design:

> The dinner tonight is definitely a bit of an adventure. I like doing what I call hotch-potch meals. I don't have any recipes or quantities. I just get an idea. (1G)

> I might ask [my friend] "well did you put that in with that?" or "did you do that first?". But say it was a cheesecake then I basically know how to make a cheesecake. Or if it was a fruit salad type thing and it was just a really lovely sauce with it then I'd just say "what did you put in that?" (1A)

The following description of making a casserole suggests that domestic cooking may also involve academic knowledge:

> I would get a piece of lamb and then cube it and then I'd brown it off. Then I would take it out of the pan and then 'in goes the onion' and 'in goes the garlic'. Maybe I'd use some kind of pulse in there, or some flageolet beans or something like that. I'd put the lamb back, and I'd have pre-cooked the beans, so I would put those on top. I'd put some red wine in there and I'd tie up a little bouquet of parsley, thyme and bay leaf and drop that in and then let it all cook through. (1F)

This quote reveals the informant's knowledge of the terminology, such as "brown it off" and "cook through", used in professional cookery. It also reveals his knowledge of specific cooking techniques and that he 'knows' a bunch of herbs is often referred to as a 'bouquet'.

The findings from this first exploratory stage of fieldwork also suggested that domestic cooking involves the use of a number of different types of cooking skills concurrently. The following quote is one of a number of examples that illustrate this. Here, a mother describes how her children aged one and five, cook with her in the kitchen. In doing so she reveals how they use mechanical skills, academic knowledge (their knowledge of tools and where things are kept) and the knowledge

or skills that they have gained through experience (their acquaintance with different foods and tools):

> They wouldn't have a clue about how to make a meal but if you asked them to go and find some pasta, or find some crisps or whatever, they would both know where they were stored and what you did with them. They're both quite well aware of food you need to cook and what food you don't need to cook, even her and she's only one. They know what I keep in the freezer and why things need to be in the fridge [...]. If I was doing something with vegetables he would chop the vegetables for me. He would know where to find them and he would know how to chop them. He's learned to mind his fingers and which knives to use. (1A)

Therefore, the indications from this first stage of fieldwork were that the skills used by domestic cooks to 'cook' are both complex and diverse and do not consist purely of practical abilities and techniques. The findings suggest that understanding the concept of 'cooking skills' at a higher level of complexity and in greater depth might provide more useful insight into people's approaches towards domestic cooking and their domestic cooking practices and food choice. In response to these findings, the second stage of fieldwork examined domestic cooking skills more systematically and in greater detail.

Second stage interview discussions covered a whole range of topics. The informants were asked about such things as their everyday food practices, their use of pre-prepared and raw foods, recipes and kitchen equipment and about the food they prepare for friends, on holidays and for everyday. They were asked about when they disliked preparing food, when they enjoyed it, when they felt confident about cooking, when they felt less confident and so on. They were also asked for their opinions on a number of issues such as using recipes, the differences between professional and domestic cooks and the qualities that make someone a good cook or a bad cook (see appendix 8 for an example of a second stage interview schedule). In the account that follows, for example, in which an informant describes making a pizza, it is possible to identify many types of knowledge and skills in addition to

such practical techniques as frying, 'knocking back' and garnishing. This description of a domestic cooking experience by a domestic cook shows how academic knowledge and skills of perception, organisation and design, amongst others, are all involved in this informant's (seemingly) confident preparation of a pizza, largely from raw ingredients:

> I would make the dough, get that started and leave it to rise. Then I would start thinking about my tomato sauce for the topping. I would fry off some onions and garlic in some olive oil, extra virgin for flavour, and then add some tomatoes and reduce that, I would probably use a tin of chopped tomatoes. Then I would think about what herbs I'd got and whether I'd got any fresh herbs for my tomato sauce. At the moment I've got some basil on the windowsill and that would be very nice. Then I would forage round for things to put on top, mushrooms and cheese and things like that. By the time my sauce has been cooking away and reducing the bread would have shown some indication of actually rising and I then would knock that back and shape it, depending on how fast I needed it. I would rather it had two rises. But if there wasn't time then I would knock it back and shape it into whatever shape I wanted, usually into a circle but not always - I've made oblong pizzas in my time depending on the size of oven. I would season the sauce and put that on top and then garnish it with whatever vegetables and things I'd found, mushrooms, peppers, olives, perhaps a few capers from the fridge and cheese and then I would cook it. The only thing that would bother me slightly is that it can be quite difficult to judge when your pizza is cooked, I find, depending on how much tomato sauce you put on top. (2K)

Academic knowledge can be seen in the fact that he knows what foods, ingredients and methods make up a 'pizza' and that extra virgin olive oil has more flavour (though this could [also] be an acquired skill from experience). He explains that he would make the pizza base dough first and then, whilst it rises, make the topping; in doing so he shows that he has timing and organisational skills. Design skills can be

seen in his making a topping by selecting from ingredients that are available to him and making a shape of pizza that best suited, in that it will cook most evenly and easily, to the oven he is using. Perceptual skills can be seen in his description of judging when the pizza is 'cooked'.

Identifying domestic cooking skills from the informants' accounts of their domestic cooking practices, experiences and beliefs made it possible to describe those skills in relative detail. It also made it possible to describe and explain the connections and relationships between the informants' domestic cooking skills and their practices, approaches and beliefs (these connections and relationships will be discussed in chapter 6).

In the following paragraphs of this chapter, the different domestic cooking skills that were identified in the second stage of fieldwork are described.

Perceptual Skills

The informants' accounts of their approaches towards cooking and their domestic cooking practices revealed that their domestic cooking skills and abilities included perceptual skills, such as an understanding of the properties of foods (in terms of taste, colour and texture) and how they will react when combined or when heated.

Examples of these perceptual skills were numerous. One male informant's explanation of why he would not follow, word for word, the recipe for watercress and potato soup (as used as a reference in interviews) revealed how he uses his perceptual cooking skills of judgement:

> I think that by being sensible about things you can often tell how much should go in. Just by looking at this [recipe] you can see the ratio of how much butter to the potatoes you want. It's just obvious how much butter to put in. You just get a wodge on your knife and that's usually the right amount. And you just want the

> flour to thicken the soup so you don't want so much in that you start tasting the flour and getting it stodgy. (2O)

The words of a female informant in her late thirties, describing how she might improvise when following a recipe, revealed her perceptual domestic cooking skills and the ability to pre-empt and adjust foods for a desired outcome:

> I think I'd just improvise at that point. If I'd followed the recipe and the recipe just didn't feel right, like the pastry is just falling apart or something, then I would think "right it needs more flour" or something and bung a bit more in even if it is not what the recipe said. (2C)

The ability to conceptualise the outcomes (in terms of taste, colour and texture) of mixing foods, heating, chilling or other preparation techniques was found by the research to be another domestic cooking skill used by the informants, the domestic cooks.

The description from a former chef of making a pizza 'from scratch', as referred to above, reveals how he uses knowledge about the size of the oven, and an ability to visualise how a pizza will cook in that oven, to determine what shape to make that pizza. A woman in her late forties said "you've got to get the consistency just right for a scone to be nice and light". These words showed that she had an understanding of the link between the texture during the process of preparation and the final, cooked result.

Analysis showed, as the following quotes illustrate, that these perceptual and conceptual skills were acquired through practice and experience. The first quote shows how a three-year-old boy is acquiring 'cooking skills'. He is learning about how foods change when heat is applied and the time they take to 'cook'. In the second a female informant explains that it is her cooking experience that has helped her develop her 'sense of timing':

> He's [her three year old son] starting to take a little bit more interest now. He knows that the cooker is hot and he wants to look in and see things happening. He's trying to grasp a concept of the time and how long things take in the oven. (2F)

> My friend Kate can't even boil an egg. She's got no sense of timing. Because I'm used to cooking, even if it's only frozen fish or something like that. I've got a rough idea of how long it's going to take. (2M)

Design Skills

The words of the informants who took part in the second stage of fieldwork often revealed their use of design or creative cooking skills. A number of them spoke about 'using up leftovers', in other words, designing meals or 'dishes' around available ingredients.

The informant quoted below used her creative cooking skills, which included a conceptual ability, to re-create a ready-meal she had seen in a supermarket. Her words suggest that, even though she has never used those particular ingredients in combination, she had the ability to conceptualise how the end result is reached and the practical skills to achieve that result:

> Sometimes I'll just look at something in the supermarket, like a ready meal for example, and see what ingredients are in it and think 'oh that's a good idea I would never put those things together' and then just make it. (2C)

Another informant's lengthy description of confidently preparing a pizza from mainly raw foods (as quoted previously in this chapter), reveals that he applied design skills to prepare it by using ingredients available to him. His description also reveals that these design skills were based on his prior experience/s of making a

pizza and an ability to conceptualise the result he desired and the manner in which he will achieve it.

However, the informants' design abilities did not necessarily include conceptual skills. The words of the informant quoted below, who is describing making a 'stir-fry' from fresh vegetables and a pre-prepared sauce, suggest that he does not have a fixed or desirable result in mind when he starts. He does not, therefore, use or indeed, in this circumstance, require conceptual cooking skills:

> When I'm cooking, cooking is getting some vegetables and some sauce, some stir-in sauce, and doing it like that [...]. I would take the sauce and mix it with stuff that could cook quite quickly. Maybe I've got some oxo cubes and some vegetables and some rice. I just make it up as I go along. (2A)

Accounts of their domestic cooking practices and their approaches towards domestic cooking often revealed that the informants had creative and design abilities. The informants quoted below used their creative cooking skills to make, in the first case, a sandwich and, in the second case, a pasta sauce and salad:

> I may do a sandwich or something. Look at it and think "yeh, I'll put this in and bung some mayonnaise on top of that as well". (2G)

> I would probably go for pasta [if I came home from work and had not planned a meal]. I could make a tomatoey based sauce and add whatever else I'd got to it. I don't tend to have much meat in but I've usually got cheese to shove on top. And I usually have vegetables of some kind, so I either chop them up and make a salad, or chop them up and make a sauce for a pasta. (2D)

Organisational Skills

Many types of organisational cooking skills were revealed in the second stage of fieldwork. These skills appeared to be based on the ability to conceptualise the

length of time, or the degree of effort, necessary to prepare the foods or meals concerned. As the following quote shows, organisational skills could be involved in the preparation or cooking of a number of foods simultaneously or in the preparation or cooking of foods to be 'ready' for a specified time.

> [I would cook something] freshly prepared probably, but it would be quicker and more on the lines of a pasta in a crème-fraiche sauce or something like that [if it was for the two of us]. Something that you can cook right at the last moment and that you can just plonk down and eat because there are just two of you. You can organise your time if you are not trying to entertain people that have arrived and travelled half an hour or two hours to get here. It's a subtly different thing. I don't actually enjoy the timing aspect of a dinner party. I don't like aiming at the "we're going to sit down at eight o'clock and eat". (2K)

The research findings also revealed, as illustrated by the quote below, that organisational skills allowed informants to 'fit in' other tasks and activities whilst preparing food or 'fit' food preparation into a busy day, afternoon or evening.

> If I've got a lot do then I might think "right, I'll do a quick and easy meal tonight" so I can get on with everything else. Or I might just make a stew. You can literally throw it all in a dish, put it in the oven and leave it to get on. And then you can get on with whatever you're doing. (2M)

A number of other informants talked of using up 'leftovers', in other words, designing meals or combinations of foods around available ingredients.

Other Skills

There were other more general skills involved in domestic cooking and used by domestic cooks identified in this second stage of fieldwork. The informants'

accounts of their domestic cooking experiences and approaches towards domestic cooking revealed that they had menu-planning skills, skills to cook under pressure (for example, with small children present) and the skills to prepare food to suit the tastes and preferences of others amongst others.

The informants menu-planning skills appeared to be made up of many types of skills and abilities. The quotations below show how these menu-planning skills comprised the ability to choose techniques and foods appropriate for the available resources and/or the occasion and/or the preferences of those for whom they were 'cooking':

> [I] just baked [the salmon] in foil with some asparagus and [served it with] some salad. That's just a standard way of doing salmon and that's the way I usually do salmon. I have done it in the microwave for quickness but normally I would bake it in foil. (2B)

> Normally [when cooking for guests] I do something like a roast dinner, a lasagne or a pasta dish or just something to that person's taste because some of my friends are vegetarians or whatever. I would just judge it on whoever was coming. I know what somebody likes and what they may not like so I judge it on the person. (2M)

Many of the informants who appeared to have the responsibility of preparing food for others spoke of having to plan meals on a daily basis. This ability to menu-plan might include, for example, knowledge of what ingredients are available (the food that they have in store), the tastes and preferences of those for whom they are preparing food and, in the following case, even consideration of the weather:

> You ask your husband what he would like and says 'meat and potato pie' and the temperature's about seventy. (2B)

One female informant described how she shops on a weekly basis and plans food for specific meals. This planning was complicated, she explained, and had to take into account the divergent tastes and preferences of her children, herself and her husband and different times that they (her children would usually eat earlier than she did and

her husband would often eat later) would require food. In addition, she said, she had to consider the tastes and preferences of friends who may visit (and she frequently had guests).

Another informant's domestic cooking practices involved both organisational skills and the ability to 'cook' efficiently. She explained how, in order to 'save time and effort' and eat with their children in the evening, she and/or her husband often prepared food for their evening meal that was suitable to be adapted with other ingredients and served, in a slightly different guise, on the following evening (also requiring design skills therefore).

As the following quotes illustrate, the ability or skill to cook under pressure, perhaps when preparing food for a special occasion or with small children to look after as in the following quotes, was also identified as being involved in domestic cooking:

> I don't want ten million people flapping around me and increasingly as you get older the kitchen can become the hub of everybody's social activity and I very often feel "get out of the kitchen", "I can't concentrate", "I need some quiet", "if you want the meal burnt then all mill around me and if you don't then go into one of the other rooms" . The worst scenario in the world is if kids are trying to pull your legs when you're at the hot cooker. It's dangerous and you are constantly moving you're child away. I find cooking can be very stressful. (2F)

> Once when I was cooking for some people I was running really, really late and it was supposed to be a relaxed and recreational thing. It turned out to be quite a stressful event because I was running late and things weren't ready and I knew they [my friends] were going to be arriving soon and that was stressful. (2N)

Preparing food to a consistent standard was another skill that emerged from the informants', the domestic cooks', accounts of their domestic cooking experiences and approaches towards cooking. One man said that he thought "consistency" had

once been the main quality of a 'good cook'. Another described how, when he was younger, a good cook was someone who provided "dependable" food.

Another skill identified, as the following quote illustrates, was that of being able to prepare food that was acceptable to those for whom the food was being prepared (knowing, and being able to prepare and provide food that satisfies the tastes, preferences and requirements of others):

> I use the [pre-prepared] curry sauce. Only really because my husband is so fussy. If it's not exactly to the right temperature and if it's too hot and if its ... It's so much easier [to use a pre-prepared sauce] although I would prefer to make everything myself. (2J)

The research findings also suggested that using recipes can, though does not necessarily, involve a wide range of skills. Following a new recipe appeared to be far easier for those informants with, not only a greater knowledge of techniques, ingredients and cookery terms, but also prior experience of similar ingredients and techniques and the ability to conceptualise (in terms of textures, colours and so on) the different stages, and the final result, of the recipe.

Similarly, it appeared that it was easier for the experienced cook to extend their repertoire of foods, techniques and dishes. In other words, it appeared that acquiring cooking skills and knowledge was also an ability or skill. An informant and ex-chef in his forties described how, if he wished to prepare 'something new', he would "go and look up several different recipes" and "see if I could amalgamate the bones out of each of them and sort out what was going on". In order to 'sort out what was going on' he would need the perceptual skills to understand how the foods and techniques used in the recipes combine and possibly the skills to conceptualise the different stages of the process as well as the result. He would also need a degree of knowledge about the techniques and the chemistry of 'cooking'. In contrast, a younger informant explained that she did not find television cookery programmes a useful source of information or instruction because she did not have sufficient

understanding or experience of domestic cooking to be able to relate the food preparation she saw on television to her own prior experiences.

Academic Knowledge

Brief remarks and observations from the informants who took part in the stage of fieldwork revealed that domestic cooking also involved academic knowledge[17]. One man, for example, mentioned that he makes a "Margherita" pizza, a pizza with a cheese and tomato topping. His words show his knowledge of the ingredients that make up this 'style' of pizza. A female informant showed knowledge about food hygiene when she explained how red kidney beans are dangerous to eat if you don't cook them for long enough. Another informant said that half a tablespoon of flour is equal to half an ounce of flour revealing knowledge about weights and measurement.

A female informant said that when making a casserole she uses mixed dried herbs because she does not know "what herbs go with what". Her words revealed that domestic cooking involves knowledge about the combinations of ingredients that are considered complimentary and preferable (within a generally recognised cuisine[18]).

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[17] Academic knowledge, says Singleton (1978), is 'knowledge *that*'. It is knowledge which can be taught or learned and is not acquired through experience.

[18] Mennell, Murcott and van Otterloo (1994, 194) consider cuisine or "culinary culture" to be a "shorthand term for the ensemble of attitudes and taste people bring to cooking and eating" within a particular social group (that is not necessarily regional or national). Fieldhouse (1995, 52) describes cuisine as "a term commonly used to denote a style of cooking with distinctive foods, preparation methods and techniques of eating." Beardsworth and Keil (1997) say that a child is socialised from weaning into a cuisine – the tastes, methods and food preferences of the society in which it lives. Taste preferences, preferred cooking methods, and even what it considered 'food', are therefore, not innate or absolute, but learned and specific to certain cuisines or culinary cultures (see Goody, 1994; Mennell, Murcott and van Otterloo, 1994 and Mintz, 1996). James (1997) and Mennell (1985) also point out that cuisines are constantly changing and absorbing attitudes, taste preferences and so on from other cuisines. Mennell points out how English 'haute cuisine' (a higher, elite or more valued cuisine) now includes formerly less valued foods and dishes such as tripe, cassoulet, bubble and squeak and bread and butter pudding.

Analysis also revealed other aspects of academic knowledge involved in domestic cooking such as knowledge about nutrition, about the history of cuisines and about trends or fashions in food choice and food preparation methods.

Practical Skills and Techniques

Findings from the second stage of fieldwork showed that domestic cooking involves numerous practical skills and techniques. The informants' accounts of their domestic cooking practices and experiences and approaches towards domestic cooking include references to preparing vegetables and fruit, grilling and frying different foods, reducing sauces, kneading and rolling bread dough, mixing foods, boiling pasta, roasting meat, making pastry, casseroling meat, making omelettes, meringues and mayonnaise amongst many others.

Points for Discussion and Implications for Existing Research and Debate

As reported in chapter 1, skills specialists have explained that 'skills' can be defined, described and understood in many ways and at different levels of detail and that any research into skills should employ a definition that is useful for the aims of that research (Beechey, 1982; Lee, 1982 and Singleton, 1978).

The first stage of fieldwork suggested that a simple understanding or definition of 'cooking skills', associated with practical abilities and techniques, was not the most suitable for an in-depth examination of people's domestic cooking practices food choice (in terms of the raw and pre-prepared foods they used). Nor, therefore, would a simple definition be the most useful to provide insight into the wider debates described in chapter 1 about such issues as the deskilling of contemporary domestic cooking and the domestic cook, the intergenerational transference of cooking skills and people's control over the food they eat. As a result the second stage of fieldwork, informed by a review of skills literature, identified and described the domestic cooking skills and abilities that emerged from the accounts of domestic cooks of their cooking practices and experiences, and their beliefs and opinions about

cooking. In doing so, the research identified and described the cooking skills that were most closely associated with, and were the most useful to provide insight into, those practices and beliefs. (The following three chapters examine those approaches, practices and beliefs and the connections between them and domestic cooking skills. Chapter 7 examines the wider implications.)

This research examined the skills used by people, domestic cooks, to carry out the tasks of domestic cooking. This approach to skills, where the focus is on the skills of people as opposed to the skills involved in a particular task, makes it necessary to acknowledge that domestic cooking skills change according to the situation, context and resources. (And cooking tasks can only take place within a particular set of circumstances and with a particular set of resources.) For example, making a chocolate sponge cake to a 'high standard', with the help of a recipe and without interruption would involve a different set of skills to making that same type of cake in the presence of children and with no instruction. However, both tasks would involve similar practical abilities, ingredients and techniques (such as 'mixing', 'beating' and 'baking').

Therefore, this research identified and described 'domestic cooking skills'. A range of skills pertinent to domestic cooking and distinguishable from 'cooking skills' where the focus might be on the skills involved in a particular food preparation task and need not take into account situation, context and resources. (A professional cook and a domestic cook may both have, and use, 'cooking skills' such as the ability to chop quickly, to make a white sauce, or to make up a curry paste without recourse to instruction. However, they prepare food in different circumstances and with different resources and have skills that the other may not. A professional cook may be more likely to have the cooking skills necessary to prepare food to consistent standards day in and day out; to share tasks with others; to organise simultaneous preparation of a number of different foods and so on. A domestic cook may be more likely to have the skills necessary to fit cooking around other tasks and activities; the skills to use up leftovers; and to prepare food to suit a range of tastes and dietary requirements and so on.)

Existing research has tended to take a simple, straightforward approach to the concept of 'cooking skills', generally treating them as a set of practical cooking techniques and abilities (see chapter 1). There are, however, many hints within research and debate that domestic cooking skills are more complex. Adamson (1996), for example, though she uses the term 'cooking skills' to refer to practical techniques and abilities such as baking a potato and grating cheese, acknowledges the skill involved in 'timing' a Sunday lunch. Discussions of cookery in schools refer to "designing and making skills" (Davies, 1998, 38) and skills of organisation and management, judgement and evaluation, measurement and creativity (Green et al., 1988, 61). Demas (1995), in describing the cooking skills that children acquired in an interventionist study in an American elementary school, refers to the skills of 'estimation':

> Another skill that was developed in this style of cooking was that of estimation, the theory being that one has a conception of what a cup holds, it is possible to throw the cup out and estimate amounts (Demas, 1995, 94)

Those who are involved in the teaching and training of professional cookery comment on the necessity of judgment skills (Sewell, 1996) and to the importance of academic knowledge in furthering practical skills (Ceasarini and Kinton, 1991 and Seymour, 1996).

The description of domestic cooking skills in this chapter is drawn from a limited number of informants, who mostly lived in south-east England discussing a limited number of domestic cooking experiences and so does not constitute a definitive typology of the domestic cooking skills used by domestic cooks in contemporary Britain. The findings from this research do support, however, suggestions that 'cooking skills' consist of more than just practical techniques and abilities. They reveal that domestic 'cooking skills' are both complex and diverse.

The informants domestic 'cooking skills' were made up of a number of different types of knowledge and skills. These included practical or mechanical skills (such as the ability to chop quickly, grate cheese, knead dough or open a tin); academic

knowledge (such as knowing what ingredients usually combine to make a Margherita pizza or a lamb Korma and knowing the ideal temperature at which to store fresh meat); perceptual and conceptual 'tacit' skills (such as relating the texture and softness of a bread or scone dough with the final, cooked result or timing the preparation and cooking of separate components of a meal to be ready at the same time), creative and design skills (such as making a curry or pasta sauce from leftovers or re-creating a 'ready-meal' from available, raw ingredients). The informants' domestic cooking skills also included 'tacit' abilities to cook with limited resources or under pressure from external factors, meet others' food preferences or requirements, plan meals and use recipes and instruction.

The findings of this research allow the development of debates about the nature of domestic cooking skills and the skills of contemporary domestic cooks.

For example, these findings highlight the difficulties involved in classifying the skills of domestic cooking. Lang et al. (1999), in their report of the Health Education Authority's Health and Lifestyles survey, extend the concept of 'cooking skills' and refer to "general food skills, not just cooking, such as handling techniques, hygiene, shopping and storage knowledge". However, it is difficult to fit such skills as carrying out other tasks and activities whilst cooking, designing food with available ingredients and preparing food that will meet others tastes and preferences into even this more developed classification of 'cooking skills'.

The findings from this current research also reveal that if contemporary, domestic 'cooking skills' are understood to be the skills used by contemporary domestic cooks, and those domestic cooks use both raw and pre-prepared foods, then 'cooking skills' cannot only be associated with the sole use of fresh, raw foods and ingredients. From this perspective, 'cooking' with pre-prepared foods also requires cooking skills. However, existing research and commentary, as the quotes that follow illustrate, has tended to associate 'cooking skills' with the use of raw foods only:

> Fieldhouse notes that the devaluation in the importance of cooking skills is usually suggested to be a consequence of the availability of

> ready and cheap food (takeaway and fast food). Although he also says that in fact it is difficult to distinguish case and effect, because they probably feed off each other: "if prepared food is so easily accessible, why bother to learn to cook? If you haven't acquired cooking skills then fast foods are the most efficient answer". (Rodrigues and de Almeida, 1996, 400 [quoting Fieldhouse, 1995])

> It can be argued that in the modern world with pre-prepared food, cooking skills many not be necessary for health. (Caraher and Lang, 1998b, 4)

When the concept of domestic 'cooking skills' is understood in this way (that using both pre-prepared and raw foods requires 'cooking skills' and that 'cooking skills' vary according to the situation and available resources), then these findings also raise questions about how to appraise people's skill levels and how 'skilled' they are. It is difficult to compare the skills, or the skills levels, involved in devoting an entire afternoon to preparing sushi with the aid of a recipe to the skills involved in preparing fish fingers, chips and peas whilst simultaneously washing up and looking after three children. It becomes impossible to say whether the person who regularly prepares a pasta dish for their family with 'what's left in the fridge' is more, or less, skilled than the person who occasionally makes scrambled eggs to a consistency deemed 'correct' by food writers and television chefs. It becomes difficult to argue that the person who never eats breakfast, buys a sandwich for lunch and regularly re-heats a pre-prepared 'ready-meal' in the evening but who, once month effortlessly prepares a Sunday lunch of roast shoulder of lamb, roast potatoes, peas, mint sauce, and bread and butter pudding, without recourse to recipes and cookbooks, has been 'deskilled'.

These findings suggest that Warde and Hethrington (1994, 764) when they assert, in a report of research into food practices in English households, that 'barbecuing' is "relatively unskilled" are focusing on the practical skills involved and not on the tacit skills employed in cooking on unregulated heat in crowded, noisy and wet circumstances.

Understanding and defining 'cooking skills' in this way also develops, and raises questions in connection with, the wider debates over domestic cooking and domestic cooking skills in contemporary Britain (see chapter 1 for a review of these debates).

When academics talk of the 'deskilling' and 'restructuring' of domestic cooking skills and increased routinisation of domestic cooking in contemporary Britain, are they referring to the skills of the domestic cooks themselves or to the skills that are required to prepare the foods that are available?

How exactly does the increased use of technology, the use of pre-prepared foods, microwaves and so on, in the domestic kitchen affect the skills of domestic cooking? What types of 'cooking skills' give people greater control over diet? In a society where the use and availability of pre-prepared and ready-prepared foods is prevalent, does academic knowledge about the contents of these foods improve people's control of their diet? Does experience preparing similar foods give them greater skills and therefore control?

In what way does the use of pre-prepared foods contribute to the decline of the intergenerational transference of cooking skills when the parent who often 'cooks' with pre-prepared foods may not necessarily be 'less skilled', or using less skills, than the parent who usually only cooks with raw foods? (This research found that informants who appeared to be experienced domestic cooks, who frequently cooked with raw foods, used pre-prepared foods when cooking with their children. One informant, for example, described how she made jelly, using pre-prepared jelly cubes, with her children. "They can get a thrill out of it and see it turning to something different when it sets" she said. Another informant explained that, although she was quite capable of making a cake from raw ingredients, she would use a pre-prepared cake 'mix' when making one with her son. She did so, she said, because it suits his short concentration span and makes less mess - therefore she is more likely to bake a cake with him.)

These questions and issues will be returned to in the final chapter. The following three chapters use this definition of domestic 'cooking skills' as they examine approaches towards domestic cooking, both 'shared' (in the next chapter, chapter 4)

and individual (in chapter 5) and the relationships and connections between domestic cooking skills, domestic cooking practices and food choice and approaches towards domestic cooking.

CHAPTER 4

COMMON APPROACHES TOWARDS DOMESTIC COOKING

Chapter 3 looked at domestic cooking skills. This chapter describes and examines the common themes that surround domestic cooking in contemporary Britain. (The common themes being the beliefs about, and approaches towards, domestic cooking and the domestic cooking practices, that were shared by a majority of the domestic cooks who took part in this research.)

The research found that the informants all considered that the use of pre-prepared and ready-prepared foods entirely acceptable and normal and all used and understood the term 'cook' in a number of different ways. The domestic cooks who took part in this research did not purposefully 'learn to cook' but acquired new abilities by chance. They generally viewed the recipe as 'right and proper' and the 'trying out' of new recipes, dishes or combinations of ingredients as an accepted part of cooking. Most regarded cooking as something they could 'get right' or 'get wrong' and as something that requires a degree of natural ability. Generally, these domestic cooks cooked alone, did not differentiate between domestic cooking and professional cooking, and valued being 'novel' and 'creative' more than the ability to prepare healthy and nutritious food.

These common themes, the shared beliefs, values, approaches and practices of the domestic cooks who took part in this study, have each been given a title and examined separately. The first theme to be examined is the diversity of the meaning of the term 'cook'.

The Research Findings

The Diversity of Meaning of the Term 'Cook'

The research found that the term 'cook', and others connected with domestic cooking and used in research, commentary and debate, were interpreted and used in a number of different ways by the informants and with little consistency of meaning. The findings showed that the meaning of 'cook' was contextual and often reliant on intonation.

The first stage of fieldwork revealed that the informants used the term 'cook' in up to seven different ways. There were uses of 'cooking' or 'cookery' as meaning a craft or pastime, such as references to "cooking" as a school subject, "cooking articles" in magazines and the "art of cooking". There was the occasional use of the term 'cook' to mean the application of heat as in "I like my vegetables cooked but I don't like them cooked to death". However, it was also used to refer to food preparation that did not involve the application of heat. One informant, for example, spoke of how she enjoyed "fiddley cooking tasks like boning out a breast of lamb. 'Cook' was also used to mean the task of food provision as in:

> The thing is when I used to work full time, before we had children, I would do most of the cooking. When I used to work full time and we had one child I would do all the cooking. And after I had the second child and I stopped working I'd still do all the cooking. (1A)

Some of the informants' usage of the term 'cook' suggested a more complex and ambiguous meaning. For example, the informant quoted below used 'cook' to refer to evening food preparation only:

> I used to cook all the time for both of us. That arose from when Jason was a baby and Claire used to put him to bed whilst I used to cook the food. (1F)

They also used the term 'cook' in another more abstract way in which the word itself was often stressed (indicated in the following example by the use of italics).

> I very rarely do cook for myself. When I do cook for myself it's just to do something quick but I never really experiment, cooking wise. I think I would like to be better, a better cook than I am because I like the idea of being able to cook. (1C)

This use of 'cook' by informants appeared to refer to a type of food preparation both highly valued and thought 'proper'. However, 'proper' cooking did not necessarily involve the sole use of, or the greater use of, 'raw foods'. For example, in the excerpt below "cooked" refers to this notion of 'proper cooking' although the informant later commented that he had used a packet sauce mix:

> My wife says my Pasta Carbonara is quite mean. It's the only thing that I've ever really cooked, usually I just cook the kids' meals and that. (1I)

The second stage of fieldwork developed the examination of the meaning of the term 'cook'. The opening question of the second stage interviews asked informants 'how much cooking do you do?' Their replies revealed that there was no universally shared interpretation of 'cooking' as it was used in this question. Some informants interpreted 'cooking' as meaning all food preparation. Others interpreted it as meaning the preparation of food for the evening meal only or the highly valued 'proper' cooking described above.

Five of the sixteen informants' replies revealed that they interpreted 'cook' in the context of this question to mean all the food they prepared or cooked (although there was considerable variation amongst these informants as to what constituted 'food preparation' or 'cooking'). One informant, for example, said that she did "quite a lot of cooking". She went on to describe how she shared the cooking with her partner, preparing "breakfast in the house every morning as a family" and "dinner in the evening". Another said that he did "minimal" food preparation, I hardly do any, just the odd sandwich here or there. Yet another informant, who also spoke from this perspective, described how she does the majority of the food preparation in her

household. 'Cooking', for this informant, included such tasks as making coffee and pouring glasses of water:

> Per day, I start off in the morning when Peter and I have breakfast before I go to work. On a workday the children will have their breakfast at nursery. So typically a workday would involve a bowl of cereal for both of us, a coffee for Peter and water for me. (2F)

Eleven of the informants' replies revealed that they interpreted 'cook' in this opening question as meaning food preparation for the evening meal only. One informant quickly responded that she 'cooked' "every night", another said "probably every other night". All eleven needed prompting to talk about 'cooking' on other occasions, such as in the morning or at mid-day, and did not appear to consider preparing food such as "toast and things", "just sandwich or soup", "cereal or egg on toast and things", as 'cooking':

None of the informants appeared to interpret 'cooking' in this opening question as the application of heat, or other energy source, to food.

Some of the informants' answers to the question 'how much cooking do you do?' suggested that they interpreted 'cooking', in the same way as many informants in the first stage did - as meaning some kind of more highly valued 'proper' cooking. One man, for example, who said that he lived on his own and whose accounts of his cooking experiences and practices suggested that he 'cooks' all his own food, nevertheless replied "none" when asked 'how much cooking' he did. Two other informants, who both described being involved in a considerable amount of the cooking for their respective households during the course of their interview, answered similarly. Both said that they only cooked at the weekend.

Findings revealed that all the informants who took part in the second stage of fieldwork would sometimes use or interpret 'cook' as meaning 'proper' cooking. The term 'cook' took on this meaning through intonation and the context in which it was used. For example, when one male informant in his early thirties was asked if

he had ever done 'more cooking' he appeared to interpret this as referring to some sort of 'proper' cooking rather than to a greater quantity of 'cooking':

> When I've been living with someone I've done a lot more [cooking]. I'll sort of progress a bit further into experimenting with different things, but not hugely. But that's usually when I've been living with someone else. When I'm living on my own, well there's not the incentive to cook something that's tasty and to spend a lot of time over it because it's just for you. (2A)

In another example, a female informant in her early twenties interpreted 'cooking experience' as meaning the preparation of food for dinner parties and for "nice dinners" only.

The following quote illustrates very clearly how the term 'cook' can be used to mean some sort of 'proper cooking'. In this case, through context and vocal emphasis (indicated by the use of italics), '*cook*' is used to mean the preparation of "more interesting things" that require more time and energy than would more normally be expended:

> I enjoy sort of doing the non-routine cooking because we tend to eat very routine stuff during the week just because we haven't got a lot of time. As we're both working, when we get in there's not a lot of time, so we do things that are sort of easy and straight forward during the week but at the weekend we try and *cook*. We don't necessarily eat with the kids at the weekend we try and cook slightly more interesting things and spend a bit longer over it and try out new recipes. (2C)

Therefore, although this concept of 'proper' or 'real' cooking' had no precise, singular meaning, analysis of both interpretation and use of the term 'cook' in this second stage of fieldwork revealed a number of recurring themes. 'Proper' cooking was more likely to be connected with food prepared in the evening, for special occasions or for guests. It was also more likely to involve a greater use of foods

considered 'interesting' and a greater use of raw foods and ingredients than that individual would consider 'normal'. There was, however, no evidence of the informants connecting their notion of 'proper cooking' with the sole use of raw foods.

The second stage of fieldwork also found that there were other terms used by informants in connection with domestic cooking, such as pre-prepared, 'from scratch' and 'basic ingredients', whose meaning was vague and inconsistent.

The terms 'pre-prepared', 'pre-cooked', 'bought' (as in "bought foods"), 'convenience', 'ready prepared' and 'packet' (as in "packet foods") were all used to refer to foods which had been prepared or processed to a certain extent before they entered the home. No consistent use of these phrases, in terms of meaning, was found. Their use appeared interchangeable and not linked to any particular level of pre-preparation. The informants' interpretation of 'pre-prepared', the only expression used by the interviewer to refer to foods that have undergone a degree of pre-preparation before entering the home, also revealed a lack of consistency. 'Pre-prepared' was understood by informants as meaning foods, such as a chilled Lasagne for example, that only require re-heating. It was also interpreted as referring to foods that require 'cooking' (chemical change through the application of heat or other energy source), such as frozen pizza, and vegetarian sausages as well as to foods that require both further preparation and cooking, such as batter mix and diced and filleted meat.

The domestic cooks who took part in this second stage of fieldwork did not necessarily associate the phrase 'from scratch' only with the preparation of fresh, raw foods. They interpreted making a pizza 'from scratch', for example, in a number of different ways. For one informant this meant using fresh tomatoes, for another tinned tomatoes and for yet another, a pizza tomato topping mix. In the following quote a young male informant is describing how he makes Thai green curry 'from scratch'. However, he adds at the end that he uses a jar of green curry paste:

> I'll get as much as I can fresh [to 'make' Thai Green Curry from 'raw' foods]. I'll get fresh coriander. The rest of it is difficult to

get fresh but I won't get it out of the jar. I will use the ground, dried spices though. Actually, I haven't done one in ages but I can tell you the ingredients that I use, mind you saying this I do cheat a little bit. I use onions, garlic, lemon grass, coconut milk or cream, fresh coriander and I get one of those little jars of Thai green curry paste. (2O)

As the following quotes illustrate, the findings also revealed that the informants used the term 'make' food, not only in connection with the use of 'raw' foods but also with the use of 'pre-prepared' foods:

> The custard is always either instant or 'boil it up yourself', so I suppose I'm sort of making it ... (2H)

> From what I have heard [prawn cocktail sauce] is tomato ketchup and mayonnaise. I think that's what I made it with, and it's soy sauce or vinegar or something with that, and just a bit of pepper. (2E)

'Basic ingredients' was another expression used by the informants with little consistent meaning. It was used by one man to refer to foods that he says he does not keep 'in store', such as salt and pepper, whereas another used 'basic ingredients' to describe the foods necessary to make bread. Yet another informant, quoted below, used the expression 'basic ingredients' to refer to "simple" or "proper" ingredients:

> [A good cook] is someone who is able to use apparently basic ingredients and just come up with simple dishes. They taste different to how you have had them before, they've got a touch of class about them. A friend of the family's has written some books on cooking and she will take time over preparing something. By basic ingredients I mean the simple ingredients, she will go out and buy the proper stuff. (2O)

The phrase 'cooking skill/s' was used, unprompted, by only three of the informants. (This research also examined the informants' recognition and understanding of the skill/s involved in domestic cooking. The findings are described and discussed later in this chapter). It was used very vaguely, usually in association with practical abilities. One informant used the phrase 'cooking skill' to describe making pastry whereas another used it to describe "opening packets". When the term 'cooking skill' was used in a question or prompt without being precisely defined it was interpreted as meaning a general ability to 'prepare food', including pre-prepared foods.

'Basic skills' was another expression used on occasion by the informants who took part in this second stage. It too was used vaguely and with little consistency of meaning. One man used the phrase 'basic skills' to describe "how to use a knife" and "how you know when something is cooked" whereas others, such as the woman quoted below, used it to mean 'practical techniques':

> I think it [cookery at school] taught basic skills and it gives a certain level of confidence. I think when you've seen boys who've done o' level cookery you see a big difference. By basic skills I mean roasting, pastry cooking.... (2F)

Murcott (1995a) explains how the term 'cook' can have numerous meanings. It can be used, she says, to refer to the application of heat to raw foods and to the mixing, chopping and preparing of food that does not involve the application of heat. It can also be used, she says, to distinguish a food preparation task as other than 'baking' and to refer to a general domestic task (one that is not 'washing up' or 'shopping' for example).

As has been explained more fully in chapter 1 of this thesis existing research and commentary has tended to used the term 'cook' in a number of different ways and without clear definition and in a number of different ways, reflecting the variety and complexity of meaning described by Murcott. In surveys by the Department of Health (Nicolaas, 1995) and Health Which? (1998), 'cook' is used to mean 'all food preparation'. It's meaning in other research, such that carried out by the Health

Education Authority (1998) and Street (1994) and that reported on by Lang and Baker (1993), is more closely connected with techniques of applying heat, or other energy source, to food, such as 'grilling', 'boiling' and 'microwaving'. In studies by Charles and Kerr (1988), Murcott (1992 and 1995a) and Oakley (1974 and 1985) 'cook' is used to mean the domestic task of 'food provision' (a task other than cleaning for example).

Recent media commentaries have used 'cook' in a manner that suggests a more ambiguous meaning, one connected with using only raw foods, prepared to a specific standard. Billen (1997) states that in contemporary Britain people 'do not cook' they merely reheat food. Lawson (1998, 6) declares that as a nation "we can't cook". Ripe (1993), though she is referring to Australia, makes a similar claim that "people no longer know how to cook" and goes on to explain what she means by 'cooking':

> By 'cooking' I don't just mean following the numbered pictograms on the back of the packet, and microwaving for x minutes. I mean taking fresh, raw ingredients, and turning them into a meal. (Ripe, 1993, 119)

Academic work has also tended on occasion to use and understand 'cook' in this more ambiguous way. For example, Stitt et al. (1996), in the following quote, appear to highlight the word 'cook' (as both verb and noun), and 'homemade' to suggest that using pre-prepared foods is not 'real' cooking:

> Supermarkets are loaded with other kinds of products that increase 'efficiency' for those who want to 'cook' at home. Instead of starting from scratch, the 'cook' can use pre-packaged mixes to make an array of 'homemade' foods – cakes, pies, pancakes and waffles. (Stitt et al., 1996, 10)

Recently, researchers and academics have begun to query the meaning of the term 'cook' and other phrases and expressions connected with domestic cooking, and whether this influences survey results:

> Despite most pupils stating that they were not taught enough about cooking at school a 'whopping' 9 out of 10 said they could cook good meals themselves! However, it was evident from the focus group discussions that 'cooking' often meant heating and eating convenience and ready made dishes. (Royal Society of Arts, 1999b)

> When asked how often they cook a meal, that is any meal, less than half said they did every day. This could be because of some plasticity in what is meant by 'cooking'. Also what is the meaning of a ready prepared meal? Is cooking a transformation of raw ingredients? Is the key task an assembly process? A matter of energy? Or defined as an act of re-heating? If we cook today, but re-heat half tomorrow, is that cooking? This is a conceptual matter which can be glossed over in everyday speech. (Lang et al., 1999, 10 - 11)

The findings from this current research confirm that the term 'cook', as well as many other terms and expressions associated with domestic cooking and used in research, debate and commentary, has numerous meanings. The findings also revealed that the informants used these terms and expressions with little consistency, either by each individual or across each sample, and that their meaning tended to be ambiguous and highly contextual. 'Cook', for example, was used in connection with preparing sandwiches or pouring cereal into a bowl. However, when given vocal emphasis or used in a particular context it could mean some sort of more highly valued 'proper cooking' such as the preparation of food considered 'different' or 'interesting', for example, or food prepared to a 'high standard' for a dinner party or other 'special' occasion. Dowler (1996), in a study of nutrition and lone parent families, has observed a similar use of 'cook'. Here, she describes how 'cook', when emphasised by the speaker, means the preparation of food for a special occasion using a number of 'different' foods:

> Parents nearly always said they cooked "soup" at the weekend, or that "Saturdays is when I *cook*" – in both instances meaning they

> prepared a traditional dish containing many different ingredients. (Dowler, 1996, 114)

This research also revealed that the meaning of these terms as used and understood by the informants, the domestic cooks, tended to be different to the meanings used and implied in research and commentary. Phrases such as 'pre-prepared' and 'ready-prepared' used solely in connection with pre-cooked, chilled or frozen meals by Dickinson and Leader (1998), the Health Education Authority (1998) and Sainsburys The Magazine (1998), were also used by the informants to describe cuts of raw meat and fish, dried pasta and vegetarian sausages. Similarly, whereas Stitt et al., (see quotation above, 1996, 10) use the expression "from scratch" to mean the preparation of food from raw ingredients, many of the domestic cooks who took part in this study used it in a less precise manner. Preparing a pizza 'from scratch', for example, might involve using a pizza bread mix, tomato pizza topping or a pre-prepared pizza base.

The use of the term 'cook' to refer to the preparation of raw foods only, as found in both academic and popular debate and commentary (see Bell, 1998; Health Education Authority, 1998; Leith, 1998 and Stitt et al., 1996), was not found amongst the informants.

To date, research has tended not to define the terms and phrases used in association with domestic cooking. A report of an OPCS survey for the Department of Health (Nicolaas, 1995, 1) openly states, for example, that "concepts such as 'meals', 'preparation' and 'cooking' were not defined – these were left to the informants' interpretation". The findings from this current study emphasise the importance of future researchers being aware of the diversity and ambiguity of the meanings of the terms and phrases associated with domestic cooking. To avoid confusion and queries about results (quotes from Lang et al., 1999 and the Royal Society of Arts, 1999b above) these findings suggest that they should be defined clearly and specifically.

The Acceptability of Using 'Pre-prepared' Foods

All the informants used 'pre-prepared' foods and viewed their use as totally acceptable, generally regarding many foods, such as dried pasta, fruit yoghurts, curry pastes, salad dressings, breakfast cereals and so on as foods that they would never consider preparing from 'raw' foods and ingredients.

Findings from the first stage of fieldwork revealed that all the couples who took part in this study used both 'raw' and 'pre-prepared' foods, albeit not all to the same extent. Indications that there were many 'pre-prepared' foods that the informants presumed never to 'cook' (prepare food from raw ingredients, that is) emerged early in this first stage. Analysis of the cooking diaries revealed that there were many 'pre-prepared' foods, such as 'burgers' and 'mayonnaise', about which informants gave little or no preparation details and no explanation of their reasons for this. For example, one couple gave detailed descriptions of how they prepared 'shepherd's pie' and vegetable kebabs but not of how they prepared 'veggie 'burgers' or 'onion rings'. This lack of description and explanation suggested that these were 'pre-prepared' foods that the informants did not expect to 'cook'. The informants generally gave no preparation details about such foods as jams, marmalades, breakfast cereals and fruit yoghurts amongst many others.

The second stage of fieldwork corroborated the findings from the first. Analysis revealed that the informants tended to regard many 'pre-prepared' foods almost as 'basic provisions' – foods that they would never, or very rarely, consider preparing from raw ingredients. Although there were variances between informants, foods such as jams, marmalades, peanut butter and so on, salad dressings, curry pastes, pasta, bread, breakfast cereals, prepared and cooked meat and fish, ice cream, yoghurts, mayonnaise, 'baked beans' and fish fingers fell into this category.

Second stage informants used pre-prepared foods to some extent and to consider pre-prepared foods as 'part of cooking' and totally acceptable, as the following quotes show. The quotes are, firstly, from a woman in her late thirties who described cooking with raw foods on a daily basis and, secondly, from an ex-chef:

> I do think it is sad that there is such a big trend towards using pre-prepared foods. But I think it is fine and we do use it. I'm sure there is nothing wrong in conjunction with cooking. (2C)

> I do like being able to produce a reasonable, edible and attractive meal and I don't necessarily do it from scratch either. If it involves knowing where to buy the best tart that's going to be really nice that's exactly what I'll do. (2K)

The previous section of this chapter described how this research found that terms such as 'ready-prepared' and 'pre-prepared' were used inconsistently and ambiguously by informants and were not used to refer to any particular level of preparation. The findings of this study also highlight how difficult it is to understand and clearly define the concepts of 'pre-prepared' foods and 'raw' foods and differentiate between the two. It is relatively easy to see why a chilled tray of Chicken Pasta Bake might be deemed a 'pre-prepared' food and flour and eggs as raw foods, but what about dried pasta? Is a loaf of bread a 'raw' food or is it 'pre-prepared'? A tinned 'cook-in-sauce' or a 'fresh tomato sauce' from the chilled cabinet of a supermarket might be readily described as 'pre-prepared' (or as ready-prepared, ready-made and so on) but what about Thai green curry paste or black bean sauce from the delicatessen or Chinese market?

Gofton (1995) has commented on the ambivalence of the term 'convenience' (when used in association with food), pointing out that it can be used to refer to junk foods, fast food, ready meals and partly prepared food and takeaways. "As with other common sense categories" he says "we know what we mean, but when asked for a clear definition, the vagueness of the concept becomes apparent" (p. 156). The findings of this current research show that this is true for many of the terms connected with domestic cooking.

These findings suggest that it is important for any research that wishes to gain insight into people's approaches towards domestic cooking, domestic cooking practices and food choice should be aware of the ambiguity of concepts such as 'pre-prepared', 'ready-made' and 'raw'. It should also acknowledge that there are many foods that

are readily thought of as 'pre-prepared' that domestic cooks, even those who are both experienced and capable, view as 'basic provisions' and do not assume to 'cook' from raw ingredients.

The Guidelines for 'Cooking' (with 'Raw' and 'Pre-prepared' Foods)

This research found that there was an underlying set of guidelines connected with the informants' domestic cooking practices, particularly their use of 'raw' and 'pre-prepared' foods. It found that the informants regarded 'cooking' occasions as having different levels of importance. They valued some 'cooking' occasions more highly than others. It also found that there was a complex relationship between the informants' perceived importance of a 'cooking' occasion, the 'effort' they applied, and the 'reward' they felt they received.

The first stage of fieldwork yielded suggestions that the informants viewed some 'cooking' occasions as more important than others. Generally, they viewed evening 'cooking' occasions as being more important than day-time occasions, weekend occasions more important than weekday occasions, adult's meals more important than children's meals and preparing food for guests more important than preparing food 'just for us', as one woman quoted below said:

> Once every three or four weeks [I cook chicken and vegetable kebabs] I would imagine. I wouldn't generally do it just for me and my husband. I would do it if people are over. It's not something I would do for a dinner-party but something for tea. (2E)

The second stage of fieldwork examined this notion of 'cooking occasion importance' in more detail.

The informants who took part in the second stage were asked to describe their usual domestic 'cooking' practices (including shopping, use of 'pre-prepared' and 'raw' foods, preparation practices and so on) for a selection of 'cooking' occasions – a Saturday evening meal for guests, a Saturday evening meal for partner or family, a

weekday breakfast, and a weekend or holiday breakfast. The findings revealed that the informants differentiated between 'cooking' occasions according to how important they perceived them to be. They also revealed that their food preparation practices varied accordingly. Although all the informants ranked the importance of 'cooking' occasions similarly, there was considerable variation in the food preparation practices (such as their use of 'raw' and 'pre-prepared' foods) they associated with a particular level of importance.

All the informants thought a Saturday evening meal for guests more important than a Saturday evening meal that was not for guests. They all differentiated between the 'cooking' practices they associated with each. However, how they differentiated, and the degree to which they differentiated, varied between each informant. Fifteen of the sixteen informants said that they would always spend longer, although this varied from "all day" and "as long as it takes" to "an hour", preparing food for guests. Most of the informants said they would be inclined to make a special shopping trip, provide more courses and use new foods or use foods that were 'different' to those they would use for meals and occasions they considered less important. Some, but not all, the informants associated a greater use of 'raw' foods with 'cooking' occasions they thought more important. One informant, for example, described how she would tend to prepare more courses and use more "fresh foods" for a meal for friends than she would for a meal for herself and her partner. She explained that she would make a special shopping trip if 'cooking' for friends and would spend two hours preparing food rather than a more 'normal' half an hour. Another described how, on a Saturday night, she would spend an hour or more preparing food for guests but might just make a sandwich if she was 'cooking' for herself and her boyfriend.

Informants made less differentiation in importance, and in associated 'cooking' practices, between a weekday breakfast and weekend breakfast. Although thirteen of the sixteen informants did differentiate between these two occasions to some degree, differentiation between a weekday breakfast and a holiday breakfast (in other words, a very special or highly valued breakfast was more marked). Foods prepared and provided for weekend and holiday breakfasts were likely to be different to those prepared and provided for a weekday breakfast and were more likely to vary from

occasion to occasion than would the foods for weekday breakfasts. Typically, a weekday breakfast was always toast or cereal but a holiday or weekend breakfast could consist of a variety of things such as "fresh croissants", a "full breakfast", "eggs" or "sausage and eggs". Many informants also explained that they might make a special trip for breakfast food at the weekend, when they are on holiday, or for guests, because these 'special' foods were less likely to be included in a weekly or regular shopping trip than foods for a weekday breakfast. They generally appeared more likely to use a greater quantity of 'raw' foods for breakfasts that they valued highly and to spend longer preparing them using a greater variety of kitchen equipment (for example, 'pots and pans' as well as a toaster and/or kettle).

Findings from this second stage of fieldwork also revealed that these 'guidelines' for domestic cooking practices had links with concepts other than the perceived importance of a 'cooking' occasion. These guidelines were also linked to the degree to which cooking (for a particular occasion) was felt to be an 'effort' and the degree to which it was felt there was a 'reward' for that effort.

The informants associated 'effort' with a vast range of domestic cooking practices. Preparing large quantities of food or a number of courses was referred to as requiring effort, as was preparing small quantities of food. Informants also thought such practicalities as washing up and using recipes as an effort, as they did preparing 'messy' foods and making a special trip to the shops. 'Cooking' 'dishes' and foods that could be bought pre-prepared, 'cooking' everyday food and 'cooking' for guests were all sometimes referred to as being an effort. All of the informants considered 'cooking' with a greater quantity of 'raw' foods than they would normally use as being an effort.

As with effort, the informants associated the concept of reward with many aspects of cooking and food provision. The domestic cooks who took part in the second stage of this study found reward in others' enjoyment or appreciation of their 'cooking', in their own satisfaction with the result of their work and in others' appreciation of them as either a cook or a host. For the following informant, the reward for preparing a 'fry-up' appears to be leisurely eating:

We have a fry-up [at the weekend] … bacon, eggs, sausage, mushrooms … because we tend to have a laze around at the weekend so it's more like a breakfast come lunch sort of thing. (2L)

Analysis also revealed that the informants sometimes found 'reward' in the cooking process itself:

When I have the time I love it [cooking]. I actually really enjoy doing all the preparation and spending the time because its quite a relaxing thing to do then. But if I come home, and I'm not usually home till half past seven or eight, then the last thing I want to do is start cooking. I don't find it relaxing then. (2N)

Reward was also associated with more obscure issues such as the achievement of personal 'food and cooking related' goals. One informant, for example, described how she and her partner had a policy whereby they always ate an evening meal with their two young children, a meal they purposefully tried to make healthy and prepare from 'raw' ingredients. Achieving this goal, she said, gave her great satisfaction (her reward). Another informant, who explained that she felt she had a duty to 'cook' with her children, described how she always felt fulfilled when she did so.

With closer analysis this second stage of fieldwork revealed that there was a connection between the perceived effort that a task (or 'cooking' occasion) required and the perceived reward for performing that task. The findings revealed that the 'effort applied' had to balance the 'reward received' or the cook would be unsatisfied and/or disappointed. The woman quoted describes how she was frustrated and disappointed when she recently made 'beef in red wine' because it had taken an effort to increase quantities, find suitable equipment and so on but she was not happy with the flavour:

So in tripling the quantities [of a recipe for beef in red wine] I didn't have the appropriate size pan and everything and I didn't get the proportions quite right and I was disappointed with it and it

> didn't taste quite as flavoursome as normal. I was disappointed. It can be so annoying when you spend time on something. (2F)

Cooking for guests was generally seen as requiring an effort because it was usually thought stressful, perhaps requiring the use of a recipe, a special trip to the shops or more 'raw' foods than the cook would normally use. However, reward from the guests' appreciation of the food and the cook's enjoyment of the cooking process was often seen as balancing that effort. 'Cooking' for a weekday breakfast was usually regarded by the informants as 'not worth the effort'. Nor was cooking with 'raw' foods for children who would probably not eat the results and not appreciate the 'effort' applied.

In short, this research found that there was a complex relationship between the informants' perceived importance of a 'cooking' occasion, the effort they felt they applied, and the reward they felt they received. The effort and reward associated with a 'cooking' occasion being influenced by the perceived importance of that occasion, and vice versa. This relationship was the basis of a set of guidelines underlying the informants' domestic cooking practices and food choice. The quote that follows illustrates how one informant, by putting effort into the preparation of a meal for guests, 'elevates' the occasion and increases the reward he receives from their appreciation and his own enjoyment:

> When you've got guests around you want to make the meal a bit of a ritual or it would be over just like that. You want a meal that will have a number of courses so that it goes on a bit longer and something quite special that you have gone to some effort for. In that way you feel good about it and they respect the fact that you've gone to some effort. (2A)

When it came to the use of 'raw' and 'pre-prepared' foods, the informants generally regarded the use of raw foods as requiring greater effort than the use of pre-prepared foods. As a consequence, they were more likely to be used, or more likely to be used in greater quantity, for more highly valued 'cooking' occasions or when greater reward was a possibility. For example, a female informant said that she would be

more likely to prepare a hollondaise sauce 'from scratch', and use a recipe, if she had the time to enjoy preparing it or if she had guests (particularly guests she did not know well). She added that for herself and her husband, or her close family, she would use a pre-prepared sauce. Another informant described how she would prepare a pizza 'from scratch' for a picnic with friends as this would 'add to the occasion'. However, she said that she would use a ready-prepared pizza base, which she said she viewed as less effort, if she was preparing an evening meal for her family only. Many informants, such as the man quoted below, said that they would be more likely to 'make' pastry for a quiche they were preparing for an 'important' 'cooking' occasion but would buy a quiche, or maybe ready-made pastry, for less important occasions:

> I would consider buying a quiche case or something if I was doing it but I think I'd probably ... if I had people for a meal then I would probably do it myself. (2D)

There is a well established body of work which argues that there are underlying structural rules behind food choice and, to an extent, the accompanying 'cooking' practices (see chapter 1 for a review). Douglas (1975 and 1998) initiated this approach to food choice when she and her colleagues examined the 'meal' and found that there were strict rules governing the types of food chosen, the preparation and 'cooking' techniques applied and the frequency of consumption of particular foods. These rules, she says, encode messages about social occasions and social relations that surround meals and allow people to discriminate between them. Douglas explains that Christmas dinner is a special and rare occasion governed by strict rules about food choice and food preparation methods and which is comprised of a number of highly valued foods eaten in a rigidly sequenced order. Breakfast on the other hand, is usually eaten on a daily basis, is a less special occasion, has informal rules about food choice and food preparation and is comprised of food that is not generally of high value.

Two studies of household food provision in the early 1980s developed this approach. Charles and Kerr, in a study of food and families in Manchester, also found that foods that were more highly valued were associated with celebratory eating. They

also found that 'fresh' foods were more highly valued than pre-prepared foods. Murcott's study of young mothers in Wales examined, in part, the rules underlying preparation methods. In particular she looked at the specific rules behind the food choice, the serving methods and the food preparation techniques of the highly valued 'proper meal' or 'cooked dinner'. To qualify as this meal, Murcott found, (1995a), the meat had to be roasted or grilled and there had to be two types of vegetables, one of which had to be green, which must be boiled.

Marshall (1995) has also used a structural approach to examine people's use of 'convenience' foods. By drawing up a conceptual framework for understanding how people construct meals at home he shows how eating occasions become more informal, more individualistic, more unstructured and require less time for planning, shopping, food preparation and cooking as they become more of a 'snack' and less of a 'meal'. "The acceptance" he says "of highly processed foods is less likely in special meals and occasions where guests are present."

Marshall also points out that entertaining guests requires an "investment in time and effort" (1995, 283). That there is connection between perceived levels of 'effort' and domestic cooking practices has been pointed out by both Cline (1990) and Wood (1995). In a discussion of the sociology of the meal, Wood (1995, 64) refers briefly to the "effort and reward relationship" that lies behind food preparation and provision. Cline, whilst examining women's relationship with food, quotes a London woman who says she 'cooks' with raw ingredients because using a 'ready-meal' does not 'show effort':

> I always start with raw ingredients so that my meals show effort. Pulling out a Marks and Spencer packet never shows effort. (Cline, 1990, 113)

However, in recent years, explains Marshall (1995), it is the breakdown of the grammar or rules underlying food choice has been the focus of domestic food studies. Concerns have arisen about the decline of the 'meal', he says, and the rise of the informal, unstructured 'snack' requiring less planning, shopping, and 'cooking'.

Fischler (1980), Marshall goes on to say, sees this as a move towards a state of 'gastro-anomie'.

Though not the sole focus of this research, and more research is required, these findings suggest that in contemporary Britain there are complex guidelines underlying domestic cooking practices and the use of 'pre-prepared' and 'raw' foods. They support Wood's (1995) assertion that an 'effort and reward relationship' underpins domestic cooking and Murcott's speculation that the rules underlying food choice and associated practices may be changing within "a realm in which both industrialised and craft modes of production exist" (1995b, 232 and 1997a). They also support Marshall's argument that:

> The first decision for the consumer is not "What food do I buy?" but "What is the occasion?", or "Who will be present?", "What type of meal is befitting?" and then "What food do I serve on this occasion?" This, in turn can drive decisions about whether fresh, frozen or canned products are acceptable and how the food is to be cooked. (Marshall, 1995, 284)

The findings suggest that people do not necessarily use 'pre-prepared' foods because they do not have the practical cooking ability or skills to use 'raw' foods but because there are many occasions when they assume to use them. This issue will be explored further in Chapter 6 (that explores the connections between approaches towards domestic cooking, domestic cooking skills and domestic cooking practices).

The Acquisition of Domestic Cooking Skills and Abilities 'by Chance'

It was found that the domestic cooks who took part in this research did not purposefully 'learn' to cook but extended their experience of foods and food preparation techniques in a haphazard, fortuitous manner.

Stage one of the fieldwork found that the informants had difficulty in answering questions about preparing new 'dishes' or using new foods and ingredients. They

found it difficult to remember when they had cooked with new foods or tried new techniques and to articulate how they felt they acquired new abilities and knowledge. However, the informants' accounts of their domestic cooking experiences and approaches towards cooking revealed that they generally 'picked up' new ideas and hints about food and cooking by 'flicking through' cookery articles in magazines and journals, from the casual observance of television cookery programmes and through informal chats about food with friends or relations. One informant, for example, described how on a visit to a friend she had noticed that her friend studded a joint of meat with whole cloves of garlic before roasting it and that she now frequently uses this method of preparation. It was only for infrequent, highly valued 'cooking' occasions that some informants said they would carry out a purposeful search for advice and/or ideas.

Most informants assumed that television food and cooking programmes were primarily a source of entertainment whereby something "sinks in sometimes". Although, these programmes were generally seen as a positive source of ideas and tips and as a general inspiration to 'cook', none of the informants spoke of writing anything down during programmes or of sending off for a recipe. Similarly, food columns in magazines and newspapers were usually read infrequently and 'by chance' and none of the informants who took part in the first, exploratory stage of fieldwork subscribed to, or regularly read, a specialist food magazine. As one male informant put it, "every now and again one picks up a magazine in the doctors and sees a wonderful recipe". The following quote illustrates clearly how experience with new foods and new combinations of food occurred 'by chance':

> My wife's sister gets it [Hello!] from work, she's in public relations, and she gets these magazines so she brings them over. I'm not interested in 'Hello' at all but some of the recipes at the back are really good. There's one that we read and we must have made it ten times or fifteen times since. It's a red cabbage stew with a lot of cheese and butter beans and onion and stuff in it and it's just fantastic. (1N)

Many informants also described how they might pick up food and cooking leaflets in shops and supermarkets but would only occasionally use them. Most of these leaflets seemed, as once informant put it, to "just end up in the bottom of the vegetable rack and from there into the bin".

The informants used cookery books more purposefully than any other source of information and instruction. They were used to check methods or quantities and occasionally to find something new, particularly for a 'cooking' occasion considered important or of high value. However, cookery books were far less likely to be acquired as a purposeful way of extending repertoire, 'learning to cook' and/or 'self-provision' than in an informal and haphazard manner, as presents or gifts.

Stage two of the fieldwork examined this phenomenon whereby people did not purposefully set out to 'learn to cook' but 'picked up' new abilities and gained experience with new foods and techniques 'by chance'. As in the first stage, it examined the informants' use of cookery books, food columns, cookery programmes and so on but it also looked at their approaches towards these sources of information and instruction and at how they applied information and instruction from these sources.

Three of the informants in this second stage had attended, or were attending, non-professional, adult cookery classes. However, they all appeared to regard these classes more as a recreational activity than as a means of 'learning' how to cook. Indeed, two of these three informants initially replied in the negative when asked if they had ever had lessons.

Eleven informants said they looked at food and cookery articles in magazines at least occasionally. Only two of the sixteen however, said that they regularly used advice or recipes from them.

Eight informants could remember picking up or looking at leaflets (from shops and supermarkets and so on) that contained some cookery information or instruction, but none of them could clearly remember any that they had used:

> I've picked them [leaflets] up once or twice. I saw something in Sainsburys recently, I can't remember what it is but I know I've still got the leaflet in a draw at home. It looked really nice but I can't even remember if it was a starter main course or a pudding. (2H)

Although all the informants said that they watched television cookery programmes at least occasionally, only a few appeared ever to 'set out' to watch cookery programmes. Only one informant said that he watched television cookery programmes to purposefully gain knowledge and instruction. As was found in stage one, most regarded cookery programmes as entertainment, perhaps as a source of ideas or tips to be picked up 'by chance' or to provide general enthusiasm for cooking:

> I don't think "oh I've got to watch that every week" but if I see them [cookery programmes] coming on then I do enjoy watching them [...] certain tips and things that they give you [are useful] like "how to stop this happening or this happening". But I haven't actually copied any of the recipes off the television. (2M)

Interpersonal sources, such as talking with friends about food and cooking, eating at friends' houses or preparing food with friends or in a cookery class were described by many as a particularly useful source of information, new ideas and tips. This means of acquiring new ideas and hence new skills appeared to instil greater trust and confidence in informants as the following quote illustrates:

> My friend made a gorgeous spicy pasta which she just literally made off the top of her head. That was beautiful and I asked her for that recipe and tried that myself with a bit of fish and things [...] I often do that now. She does a lot of Chinese cooking and things and she just tells me the different spices and what not to put in and then I just have a list and follow it from there and phone her up if I get stuck. (2M)

Conversations about food with friends and family however were far more likely to be about food and eating than about cooking. When the informants were asked whether, having enjoyed a meal or food prepared by friends or family, they would ask for instruction or tips, most informants said that they would only do so from very close friends or relations. Many found the thought of specifically asking for advice or instruction about cooking odd or amusing:

> It would depend on which relation or friend it was. If they were close I would ask them to write it down. If it was quite a formal do I would make a guess. If it was just having a laugh and I wasn't that bothered I would ask them to tell me and if I couldn't remember then I would try something out. (2P)

As was found in stage one, cookery books were the source of information and instruction that informants were the most likely to use in a purposeful way. They used cookery books to look up quantities, methods and ingredients, to search for new ideas and inspiration and to increase their confidence about a particular aspect of food preparation:

> If I fancied doing something and I wasn't sure how it was done I would go through my cookery books to find out.[...] I would go to a cookery book if I'd got stumped [about planning what to eat] and think I'd like to do something different and if I'd got a bit of time I might get some cookery books out and thumb through them to do something different. (2B)

However, cookery books were not used by informants as a purposeful means of extending their repertoire of 'dishes', methods and techniques. They were usually only referred to for food preparation occasions that informants thought most 'important', such as 'cooking' for guests.

This second stage of fieldwork also revealed that, not only did the informants' use of sources of information and instruction in a haphazard and non-purposeful manner, but that frequently they applied any 'tips' or advice they 'picked-up' in a similarly

haphazard way. As the following quotes illustrate, the informants would often see a new technique, food or combination of foods on the television or in a book or magazine and then adapt it, cooking that new food in a familiar way or trying a new recipe with foods they prefer:

> [Things I have prepared have] been inspired by seeing something on telly and then I've kind of, well not really done it, but I might have thrown together similar flavours, like putting sherry in something. So it's more a case of throwing together flavours rather than following a recipe, thinking "oh maybe I could try that with that". (2A)

> I have done [found cookery books useful for new ideas]. I've seen something in the book and thought "that would be better if I did that with it" and I might pick from the book but add my own ideas to it. (2J)

Most existing research has tended to regard extending repertoire and experiencing new techniques and foods as a purposive, formal process, using words like 'learn' and 'teach'. It has concentrated, not on 'how' people learn to cook, but on sources of learning. "Who taught you to cook?" is the title of one section of an article detailing the results of a survey by Sainsburys The Magazine into domestic cooking (Innes, 1998). It then lists 'TV', 'books and magazines', 'mother' and 'evening and school classes' as sources. Leith (1997, 58), introducing the survey, talks of how "few parents teach their kids to cook". The 1993 Health and Lifestyles Survey (Health and Education Authority, 1998) asked questions such as 'when you first started learning to cook, which of any of these did you learn from?' and 'later on, which, if any, of these were useful to you in learning more about cooking?' Sources offered as choices by the survey included 'mother', 'articles in magazines', 'booklets from food producers' and 'cookery programmes on TV'.

Although providing only a snapshot of how people learn to cook and acquire new domestic cooking skills, these findings suggest that experiencing new foods, techniques and combinations of foods and extending repertoire, is a complex process,

worthy of further investigation. They reveal that, not only is the use of sources of information and instruction haphazard but that the application of any information or instruction acquired is equally so. There is not a straightforward process between looking at a recipe, watching television cookery programmes, or talking to friends and family about food and cooking and 'learning' or acquiring new abilities and knowledge about food and cooking techniques via practical experience. The domestic cooks who took part in this study 'picked-up' cookery tips, ideas and inspiration 'by chance', by watching part of the occasional television cookery programme, flicking through a magazine and glancing at a recipe or chatting about food with friends. They would never try out many of these new ideas and methods. If they did, they would often "do something similar but do it their way", perhaps adapting something already in their repertoire or trying out new foods but using a familiar technique.

When domestic cooking skills are understood as complex and consisting of practical, perceptual and creative skills amongst others, as they are in this study, then the findings of this research provide indications that 'learning to cook' is even more complex. The following quote suggests that the next stage, acquiring skills of judgement, timing and so on from experience of these new methods, is an equally haphazard process:

> [I've learnt to cook] watching other people, from programmes on TV…through trial and error. […] When I was first starting to cook, I would chop up all my vegetables, the onion and the garlic, chop it all up and put it all into a pan. And then it would be "that's cooked but that's not", "the onion is raw and the garlic is burnt so there has got to be some sort of system here". So I eventually learned to cook things in some sort of order, put different vegetables in at different times so it's not a case of "the mushroom are shriveled to bits and the carrots are raw". (2P)

Despite revealing a greater level of complexity in the process of domestic cooking skills acquisition than has previously been acknowledged, these findings do support those of existing research that interpersonal sources (Caraher and Lang, 1998b and

Lang et al., 1999) can be of most importance. Findings from this study suggest that this source tends to provide more confidence, through trust and through the direct experience of results. The informant quoted below, for example, was eating the cous cous salad as the method of preparation was described to him. Although he did not appear to be a generally 'confident cook' he appeared confident about preparing this new 'dish', or combination of foods:

> Recently somebody at work made cous cous salad with roasted vegetables and then he told me how to do it. He said you just get some cous cous and ... that takes thirty seconds in a kettle ... and then roast your vegetables with some onions and tomatoes and some goats cheese and then serve it. You mix it with the cous cous that's had chicken stock in. That's the newest meal I've come up with. (2A)

A Preference (and Assumption) to Cook Alone

This research found that informants generally assumed, and preferred, to cook alone, particularly on those occasions when they viewed cooking as recreational, as an activity to be enjoyed.

The first stage of fieldwork revealed that there was a general assumption amongst the informants that 'cooking' is an activity or task usually carried out by one person alone. One informant, for example, exclaimed with surprise how "on Sunday we even shared the cooking". Another described with amusement, an occasion on which she and her husband had prepared a meal together, adding that she thought people would consider this "unusual". When couples did prepare food together they were most likely to prepare different courses.

There also appeared to be a definite preference amongst some informants to cook alone, as the following quotes show:

> I suppose in the beginning [when we lived together] we took it [the cooking] more in turns but he was always looking over my shoulder and sort of saying "but what about this" or "can't you cut them a bit smaller". He was always around while I was cooking something and so in the end I just thought "well, you can do it yourself." (1C)

> He does not like to cook with anyone else around. He doesn't mind if I do some tasks like shelling the peas or whatever but he gets extremely annoyed at any suggestions made relating to the cooking so we don't tend to do it. He just isn't at all comfortable with it. And I don't mind that. (1E)

Findings from the second stage underlined those from the first. Again, informants said that they would only occasionally prepare food with partners or other people and if they did would tend to prepare different parts of a 'dish' or meal. (Some did say that they would like to 'share' food preparation with someone else but further discussion revealed that they were referring to 'sharing out' 'cooking' occasions as opposed to 'cooking' for a single occasion.)

Generally, informants who took part in this second stage of fieldwork did not appear to particularly enjoy sharing food preparation with anyone else. Seven said without prompting, as the following quotes illustrate, that they found it difficult to prepare food with other people (or that other people found it difficult to prepare food with them!):

> We'll have arguments about how to make a sauce or something. I'll do it a different way to him. He'll use cornflour and I'll try and do it with butter and flour. Then we start watching each other and the other person gets dead upset. (2N)

> If I think I know what I am doing then I'm much happier doing it myself. If I think the person who I am with doesn't know what

> they are doing then I find that quite frustrating because it's actually quicker to do it yourself in that sort of situation. (2K)

> I'm a bit difficult to share with in my own kitchen I think. I tend to get a bit obsessive about tidying things away and washing knives and things which drives whoever I'm cooking with mad because they haven't finished with the knife or something ... (2D)

The closer examination of this theme in the second stage revealed that 'cooking' became a more individualistic activity when it was considered recreational and potentially enjoyable or on those occasions thought 'more important', such as for guests or at the weekend. On occasions such as these, eleven of the sixteen informants said that they would prefer something to be considered as 'theirs' or as "my meal":

> There are times when you want to say "this is my meal". Having people round whoever they are then you want to do something that is kind of "yours" and a way of saying "I've gone to this effort for you". (2A)

> There have been times when perhaps we've had family, particularly in-laws, over and I've wanted to prepare things in 'my way', in inverted commas, rather than to do it in somebody else's way. [...] ... traditional Sunday lunch can be done in a million ways and there are certain ways that I absolutely hate. (2F)

Many researchers (Beardsworth and Keil, 1997; Mintz, 1996 and Warde, 1997) see contemporary domestic food provision and eating practices as characterised by informality, individualism and 'convenience' foods. They suggest that the rise of new food preparation technologies and 'pre-prepared' foods allows any individual, even those without 'cooking' skills or abilities, to 'cook' their own food as and when they require or desire it and makes them less reliant on a household cook:

> The growth of the foodscape, combined with advances in domestic technologies (such as the microwave) which are making food preparation in the home quicker, cleaner and simpler, mean that it is easier for contemporary individuals to prepare their own meals to suit their own schedules and lifestyles regardless of their culinary skills. (Mintz, 1985, 79 – 80)

> New domestic technologies and new supermarket products have increased people's capacities to prepare a meal for themselves, using tinned food and a microwave oven for instance. There has probably been a commensurate decline in skill and time invested in food preparation overall, which has somewhat reduced dependency on household members with developed culinary skills. (Warde, 1997, 182)

The findings from this research connect 'individualism', not only with pre-prepared foods, but also with 'raw' foods and 'raw' ingredients. They reveal a preference and assumption amongst domestic cooks in contemporary Britain to 'cook alone'. A preference and assumption that becomes stronger the more that cooking is connected with recreation, enjoyment and more highly valued, or 'important', 'cooking' occasions (occasions when raw foods and ingredients are more likely to be used).

In the light of existing research, which suggests that cooking has an increasing leisure focus (Caraher and Lang, 1998b and Henly Centre, 1994), these findings could be of significance for current debates and concerns about the state of domestic cooking and cooking skills in contemporary Britain. The findings from this current research reveal that those 'cooking' occasions considered 'important', and for which raw foods were most likely to be used, were also those for which people preferred or assumed to 'cook alone'. In other words, they were less likely to desire or allow the participation of others, including their children, when they 'cooked' with raw foods - perhaps hindering the transference of (domestic)'cooking' skills?

The Ubiquitous Recipe

The domestic cooks who took part in this study viewed the recipe (in its contemporary form with a list of specifically measured ingredients and brief, delineated or numbered instructions) to be the only form that written cooking instruction takes. They considered recipes to be an implicit part of 'cooking'.

The first stage of fieldwork revealed that there was a general assumption amongst the informants that written instruction about 'cooking' took the form of a recipe and that a recipe would tend to be included in any article (on television, in magazines and newspapers and so on) about 'cooking'. The informants often interchanged the terms 'recipe book' and 'cookery book'. There were also indications that they regarded recipes as autonomous and as 'a means to an end'. Recipes were often described by informants as 'not working'. They also used expressions such as "messing around" and "fiddling with" to describe altering or adapting recipes.

A more detailed investigation of the informants' use of recipes, and their approaches towards them, was included in the second stage of fieldwork. The themes of ubiquity and autonomy that seemed to surround recipes and their use was a focus of this investigation.

As in the first stage, second stage informants used the terms 'cookery books' and 'recipes books' interchangeably and appeared to regard recipes as an implicit part of 'cooking'. Examples were numerous. When asked about their confidence in 'making a pizza' most informants assumed that 'making a pizza' included the use of a recipe. One of the younger informants described 'learning to cook' from her mother as "learning her recipes", another described 'cooking' with her flat-mates as "dabbling and trying and following recipes". Yet another said that she will provide her children with cookbooks "when they are old enough to read a recipe". The ability to "just make recipes up" and not having to "follow a recipe" were typical of phrases used by informants to describe both a 'good cook' and a 'professional cook'. One informant appeared only able to refer to his creative abilities, or his design skills, in terms of 'not following a recipe':

> I did some sort of Conchigle, pasta shells with tapenade, and I did a sort of garlic sauce and poured it all over the peppers and covered it in Parmesan. [...] I didn't actually follow a recipe then, it was a vague recipe that I sort of remembered from somewhere but I didn't have it to hand so for once I just sort of did it. (2D)

As in the first stage, the informants' words suggested they connected a certain autonomy with recipes:

> I kept tossing the pancakes like it [the recipe] told me to. (2E)

> If the pastry is falling apart I would think "right it needs more flour" or something and bung a bit more in even if it's not what the recipe said. (2C)

The ubiquity of the recipe has often been commented on by academics examining or discussing contemporary domestic food practices and food choice (Goody, 1978; McKie and Wood, 1992 and Wood, 1996). Goody, in discussing oral and written cultures, describes how the recipe "reigns supreme" in contemporary society. He points out how a 'cookery book' is almost always a collection of recipes, how a food column in a magazine or journal will usually include at least one and how recipes are generally regarded as "the right and proper thing to do" (p.140). Attar (1990, 14), researching Home Economics classes in schools, found that teachers assumed the recipe to be the starting point for the cookery process and that "the use of written recipes was presented to all pupils as normal and necessary".

Many researchers and academics appear to take this approach to the recipe themselves. Demas (1995), in a report of her interventionist study of food education in an American elementary school, advocates 'experimental' cookery, in other words, learning through experience and creativity and not through rules and prescription. Despite this, she describes how the study inspired the children who took part to "create their own recipes" and how it gave them sufficient experience to allow them to "develop their own recipes" (p. 225). A 1997 survey by a supermarket magazine (Sainsburys The Magazine, 1998) asked it's readers specific questions

about 'cooking new recipes' and 'trying recipes/dishes'. Consuming Passions. Food in the Age of Anxiety (Griffiths and Wallace, 1998), an academic book which discusses contemporary food choice and food practices at the end of the millennium, includes a recipe in most chapters.

The findings from this current research suggest that domestic cooks in contemporary Britain also take this approach to the recipe, regarding it as an implicit 'part of cooking' and as 'proper'.

There has also been much academic discussion about the influence of recipe use on domestic food practices. The use of recipes has been viewed as both a positive influence and a negative influence on domestic cooking practices.

As a positive influence, the use of the recipe has been seen as a mechanism that promotes the development of complex, elaborate cuisines (Goody, 1978), the inter-generational transference of cultural knowledge and, by transcending cultural and regional boundaries, the democratisation of food practices (Fieldhouse, 1995 and Mennell, 1996). Recipes are also regarded as a tool of health reform, used to change and improve food habits (Fieldhouse, 1995).

As a negative influence, Fieldhouse (1995) and Ritzer (1996) have both argued that recipes, being a prescriptive tool of instruction, reduce the need for cooking skills. They suggest that the use of recipes, particularly the exclusive use of recipes, is directly linked to the deskilling of the domestic cook. Four sets of findings from this current research throw doubt on the direct influence of recipes on domestic cooking practices and skills and on the theory that their use is, therefore, an integral and direct part of any deskilling process. Firstly, despite recipes being seen as 'proper', analysis of the informants' accounts of their domestic cooking experiences suggested that they were rarely used exclusively and/or on a regular basis. Indeed, they were used most frequently on infrequent, important cooking occasions. Secondly, none of the informants used recipes as an exclusive form of instruction and, when they did, they rarely followed them word for word. Thirdly, although there were a few informants who said that if they were using a recipe they would always follow it 'to the letter', most said that they changed and adapted them whenever they used them:

> I always believe in doing what the recipe says first time (you use it) and I get criticised for that. They [my family] make fun of me. I say "no, no … it says cayenne pepper" and my wife says "we've got something similar" and I say "lets do it the way it says there and then if you don't like it change it after" (2L)

Finally, analysis also revealed that the informants had very different, individual approaches towards cooking (as will be explained in the next chapter), including their use of recipes. Only a few informants said that they would actively and regularly 'try out' recipes and there were some who said that they never used recipes.

However, academics have also suggested that it is the format of the recipe that has an influence on people's domestic cooking practices and skills because it promotes a mystique about 'cooking'. It has been said that recipes set 'difficult to achieve' standards, through their use of the written word and glamourised photographs (McKie and Wood, 1992), and their emphasis on the result not on the process (Mennell, 1996). Professional cooks have argued that recipes, because they focus on the result and not on techniques shared with other recipes or styles of cooking, mystify 'cooking' and slow down the learning process (Metz, 1991; Pepin, 1986 and 1987 and Stevenson, 1985).

Findings from this current research suggest that any negative influence that recipes may have on domestic cooking practices and skills is indirect and arises more from their role in promoting a mystique about 'cooking' than from their actual use. This research reveals that even though recipes are not used regularly and are not often used as a tool of direct instruction, they are seen as 'proper', even 'autonomous'. It also reveals that the skills used by domestic cooks to 'cook' consist of a wide range of skills including mechanical skills, academic knowledge and tacit skills of judgement and organisation amongst others (see chapter 3). Recipes however, usually focus only on mechanical skills. They provide little academic knowledge to explain their choice of methods or ingredients and usually rely on precise measurement of quantities and 'cooking' times because the tacit skills related to desirable textures, smells and colours are difficult to describe, particularly in the short format of the recipe. Regarded as 'proper' and 'autonomous', and with little

emphasis on explanation and the 'wide' range of skills involved in 'cooking', it is possible to see how the prescriptive recipe may promote a mystique about 'cooking' and be a negative influence on domestic cooking practices and the acquisition of skills.

Further findings that suggest the recipe's potential negative influence on domestic cooking practices and skills is connected to the mystique about cooking that it helps create are described in the following section. This research found that the informants considered 'cooking' as something that could be 'right', or 'wrong', correct or incorrect and that recipes, which are prescriptive by their very nature, were closely connected with this belief. McKie and Wood describe a similar phenomenon:

> [In recipes and illustrations] food is presented in idealized form, the ideological purpose of which is to direct the cook towards a 'good' outcome while lending a spurious justification to the role of the cook. The recipes and illustration say 'your dish should be like this'. (McKie and Wood, 1992, 17)

'Cooking' as a Success or Failure

As has been reported above, this research found that the informants thought that 'cooking' could be 'right' or could be 'wrong', correct or incorrect, a success or a failure.

The first stage of fieldwork revealed that the informants often used phrases such as 'it didn't work' and 'it came out right' and 'it worked'. Although it appeared that expressions like these were sometimes merely a 'turn of phrase', at other times, as the following quotes illustrate, the use of these type of expression appeared to be connected with the informants' approaches towards 'cooking':

> I would like to learn to do different dishes, like chicken dishes and that. I can do them but they still don't look right, as other people do them. (1L)

> I don't think I'm particularly confident cook that's why I will always rely on a recipe whereas my husband is more confident, he's not so worried about failure. So I'll go to recipes because then if it goes wrong I can say "Well it's the recipe. I followed the recipe". (1N)

The second stage of fieldwork therefore, examined the informants' use of, and the underlying meaning of, such expressions in more detail. It found that, as in stage one, these expressions were sometimes used as a 'turn of phrase', as in "you can't go wrong if you've got that basic garlic onion and tomato". However, their use also appeared to be connected with an underlying belief that 'cooking' could be 'right' or could be 'wrong', correct or incorrect. Texture, taste and appearance and aroma could all be seen as being 'right' or 'wrong'.

Initially, it appeared that this was a straightforward belief associated with certain foods or 'dishes', such as cakes, mayonnaise or the bread base of a pizza, that tend to be *generally* thought of as being potentially correct or incorrect. However, further analysis revealed that this was a more complex belief, one that varied between individuals and according to the 'cooking' occasion and which was strongly associated with 'dishes', recipes and 'pre-prepared' foods.

Some informants appeared to have a far more prescriptive approach to cooking than others, and to have very specific standards, or prescribed results, that they wished to meet or thought that they should meet. In other words, some informants appeared far more concerned about 'getting it right' than others. One female informant, for example, constantly referred in her interview to her cooking being 'wrong'. It was these informants who were most likely to associate the notion of 'cooking' being 'right' and 'wrong' with their understanding of the characteristics and qualities of a 'good cook'. They viewed a good cook as one who can "mend" something "if anything goes wrong", for example, or who knows "when it goes wrong", or who's 'cooking' is "right all of the time".

The perceived importance of the cooking occasion appeared to have an influence on the strength of this belief. As one informant said, when cooking for special

occasions or occasions deemed more 'important' "you are more worried that it might go wrong" and more concerned that "you've cooked it right". In other words, the 'standard' the domestic cook wished to, or felt that they should, reach appeared to vary according to the cooking occasion (showing how domestic cooking skills can vary according to the cooking occasion).

'Dishes' (generally fixed and sometimes titled, combinations of ingredients) and 'cuisines' (associated with specific foods, combinations of foods and methods of preparation) were strongly associated with this belief. Dishes and cuisines such as Chicken Kiev, Risotto, Apple Pie, Lasagne, Japanese food, Italian food and Lamb Pasanda (all referred to by informants) were far more likely to be viewed as 'right' or 'wrong' than combinations of foods without titles and more tenuously linked with any specific cuisine, such as 'meat and two veg.', a 'fry up' or a tomato pasta sauce made with leftover vegetables.

Recipes, as explained in the section that precedes this, were also strongly associated with this belief:

> [I will follow a recipe] exactly as it is. The first time I would always do it as it is because it makes me feel confident. You had the recipe, you used it and you followed the instructions right so if you get the consistency wrong, for example, [then you can say] "Why did it go wrong?" (2L)

'Pre-prepared' foods also appeared closely linked with this belief. For example, one informant described how she had made both gingerbread men and a lemon meringue pie from raw ingredients but had been disappointed with the results. Her words suggested that her disappointment arose because neither the gingerbread men nor the lemon meringue pie looked like any she had bought, 'pre-prepared', in the past. The gingerbread men she had made 'from scratch', she bemoaned, were not a regular shape. The lemon meringue pie was not bright yellow. Another informant described how he might be disappointed with a scone he has made if he compares it with one that he's bought and finds he has 'got it wrong':

> Well [making] the scones would be difficult because you are working with flour and getting the consistency right and because you are going to say "Does it look like ... ?" something you have eaten before or you've bought somewhere. If it doesn't then you didn't get it right. (2L)

A literature review suggests that a prescriptive approach to domestic 'cooking' is fairly general. The Royal Society of Art's Focus on Food campaign (Royal Society of Arts, 1998, 4) remarks in promotional material for primary school teachers that "there is often a prescribed method of cooking many favourite dishes but it is also possible to add a little something of your own". The Chambers Concise Dictionary (1991, 225) defines 'cookery book' as a "book of recipes for cooking dishes".

That this approach to cooking exists, and that there may be negative repercussions for the confidence of domestic cooks and domestic cooking practices, has been noted in previous work. In a discussion of their findings from research of people's source of recipes, McKie and Wood point out that:

> [In recipes and illustrations] food is presented in idealized form, the ideological purpose of which is to direct the cook towards a 'good' outcome while lending a spurious justification to the role of the cook. The recipes and illustration say 'your dish should be like this'. A failure to produce a 'copy' of the original - however approximate – is a matter for regret, perhaps even shame." (McKie and Wood, 1992, 17)

In a discussion of experimental cooking, Brown and Cameron (1977, 6) argue that prescriptive approaches and instruction to 'cooking' can impede the acquisition of confidence because standardisation and consistency are hard to achieve. As they point out, if twenty people follow a recipe for a Victoria sandwich cake the huge number of variables, such as variations in ingredients, equipment and oven temperature, would make it "surprising if any two cakes are exactly the same". Similarly, Lawson (1998) has commented in a newspaper article about domestic cooking in contemporary Britain, that confidence is a prerequisite 'in order to cook'

and that "believing that there is always some higher authority telling you what is right and what is wrong is not going to help you acquire that."

This approach towards 'cooking' and the potentially, negative implications for domestic cooking practices, skills and beliefs, in a contemporary 'cooking' culture where the prescriptive recipe "reigns supreme" (Goody, 1978, 140), food and cooking follows "manifold fashions" (Mennell, Murcott and van Otterloo, 1994, 90), and new products and 'pre-prepared' foods are "constantly made available" (Warde, 1997, 23) require further research. The 'proper meal' or 'cooked dinner' of meat and two or three separate vegetables, found by Murcott (1985, 1995a) to characterise 'cooking' in the 1980s, had prescribed cooking techniques but would have had a less prescribed result or final standard. It could be argued that the 'cooked dinner', with no title, no distinct, single recipe, probably no photograph of the result and unavailable 'pre-prepared' requires less confidence to 'cook' and, being less likely to be perceived as 'wrong', less likely to influence the domestic cook's confidence levels.

This prescriptive approach to cooking may also have more simple, practical implications for domestic cooking practices and economy and efficiency in the household. As Goody (1978, 140) points out, "one can substitute more easily if one does not think one is preparing tripe a la mode de Caen, but simply cooking a dish of tripe for supper". In other words, the less prescription there is the more that the cook can use available foods or food that they desire to use.

The Relative Importance of 'Cooking'

The domestic cooks who took part in this study thought that an ability to 'cook' with 'raw' foods was beneficial for health, social and recreational reasons but they did not necessarily think that cooking ability was 'very important' or that 'learning to cook' was as important as 'learning to read and write'.

Findings from the first stage of fieldwork raised questions as to how important the informants who took part in this study viewed the ability to 'cook'. None of the

informants who had children, although they all said that they thought it important that children learnt to cook, had sought advice about how to teach their children or information about lessons at, or outside of, school. None of the informants who took part in this first stage purposefully set out to 'learn' to cook or 'self provision' (as has been described earlier in this chapter) and none had taken cookery classes as an adult.

Therefore, to reveal more about these contradictions, the second stage of fieldwork examined the informants' views on the importance of 'cooking' ability in greater detail.

The informants generally responded very positively to initial questions about whether it was important that people were able to cook and whether children and young people should be taught to cook at school. However, with follow up questions about the importance of adults being able to cook with 'raw' foods and ingredients, and comparative questions about learning to 'cook', learning to read and write and learning to drive, a different picture emerged.

As the quotes that follow reveal, the majority of the informants thought that the ability to 'cook' with 'raw' foods was, as one woman put it, "one of those things that is 'nice to have' rather than an essential ability:

> [Being able to cook from raw ingredients] is not nearly as important as it used to be. Basic cooking skills, yes, but slightly more complex ones like making pastry and things like that I think you could quite happily live without. (2K)

> I think it would be nice to know but it's not something that I would get up and learn. (2G)

> Socially I think there are some nice skills to have. I think it helps because you're able to then have people round and give them an experience. You can show that you've gone to the effort rather than going to the shops and getting a couple of tin foil things. (2A)

> I think it is less important now than it was simply because you could survive nowadays with not knowing ... not having cooking skills. (2L)

> I would say it is [important] if you've got ingredients. I suppose when you get older you've got to eat sensibly. I think it's a good experience, something you should have a basic knowledge of and better than just going out and buying some frozen food. So I would say it's important … to a certain extent. (2P)

> It's quite important but not that important [to be able to 'cook'] from scratch because there is so much convenience and things you can buy at the shops. (2M)

Similarly, although a few of the informants said that they thought that it was important, or very important, to teach children and young people to cook with 'raw' foods, many (including two with young children) viewed cookery classes at school as non-essential and 'a nice extra', as the following quotes show:

> I don't know if they [children and teenagers] need to have formal lessons. I mean, my daughter learnt to cook from just picking it up from her Mother, even from me at some latter part, and my son doesn't seem to have had a problem either. (2D)

> I don't think it's vital [that children are taught to cook from raw ingredients]. As I said before you've got the supermarket and so forth. But I think it's good that they have [lessons] because then they can form their own opinion on what they want to eat and if they want to entertain people and so on when they get older. If it's something they're interested in then obviously it is important. Unless my son wanted to go and learn to cook then I wouldn't send him along because I think swimming and things like that are higher on the agenda. (2G)

> I think it's a good thing [for children and young people to have cookery lessons at school]. It's a nice thing to have but if you look at the national curriculum there are lots of nice things to have. I think music lessons are important for children. (2F)

Only one informant thought that learning to cook from 'raw' ingredients was as important as learning to read and write. Most, but not all (four were unsure), thought that learning to cook from 'raw' ingredients was more important than learning to drive.

Academics and specialists often stress that people think 'cooking ability' and 'learning to cook' are important. Lang et al. (1999, 37) in a report of the Health Education Authority's 1993 Health and Lifestyles survey write that there was "overwhelming agreement" amongst respondents "that cooking skills are important and should be taught to both boys and girls". A report of a study for the Department of Health (Nicolaas, 1995, 1) declares that "nearly all men and women thought it important for both sexes to have basic cooking skills and to teach children how to cook". The findings from this current research, because they reveal the ambiguity of terms and concepts such as 'cook', 'raw' (foods) and 'pre-prepared' (foods), add depth to these previous findings. For example, many of the domestic cooks who took part in this research said that they thought 'learning to cook' was important but appeared to understand 'learning' as 'picking up' the abilities and skills to 'cook' with 'raw' and 'pre-prepared' foods. They did not necessarily think it important for children to have formal lessons to learn how to 'cook' with 'raw' foods.

To an extent, the findings from this research also contrast with the findings of previous research. Only one of the domestic cooks who took part in this study, for example, thought being able to 'cook' with 'raw' foods and ingredients was as important as being able to read and write. In contrast, a joint survey by the Health Education Trust and the Royal Society of Art's Focus on Food campaign found that 90% of the young people questioned thought that learning to cook was very important. The recognition of this importance, says a report of the study (Royal Society of Arts, 1999b, 2), "equates" to young people's recognition of the importance of learning to read and write.

A Belief in 'Natural Cooking Ability'

Findings from this research revealed that there was tendency amongst the informants to view the ability to 'cook' as including a degree of 'natural' ability.

The first stage of fieldwork gave indications of this tendency. Some of the informants used words like 'flair' and 'penchant' in their accounts of their domestic cooking habits and views about cooking. A creative reading of their accounts also suggested that, generally, the informants did not view domestic cooking ability as something to be acquired through practice and experience.

To examine these indications more closely the second stage of fieldwork asked the informants to comment on two statements, 'some people are natural cooks, they just seem to know what goes with what' and 'cooking is a craft that with practice anyone and everyone can acquire'.

Two informants totally disagreed with the first statement and understood domestic cooking ability to be the product of experience:

> If you really want to test for natural ability you would have to completely isolate someone from any cooking environment and then present them with a dish and say "What does that need?". I doubt very much whether anyone would go "I've never tried this before and I've never heard about it but if you put a bit of basil in there....". (2O)

> I don't think anybody automatically knows 'what's going to go with what'. You can have a good idea but it is based on past experience. (2K)

The other fourteen informants were less clear about their views. They saw cooking ability as being acquired through experience but also as requiring a degree of natural talent. The following two quotes, from the same informant, exemplify this contradiction:

> [Cooking] is a craft only in the sense that you need to work on your skills like any other type of craft or hobby. I think the answer is that with time you can acquire the skill. (2L)

> Yes, that is true [some people do have natural talent]. Otherwise, why is it that you try to do the same dish and somebody is always good at it and you are not? Because they just have a gut feeling of how it is going to come out. Cooking is all about having the ingredients in front of you and what comes out at the end. You just don't know until you've done it. So how can somebody consistently get it right and some people can't? I mean they must have got some natural flair for it, something innate that comes from within them. (2L)

The belief that cooking ability was acquired by practice but that at the same time there was such a thing as natural ability, or aptness, was an underlying contradiction found throughout this stage. In the following quote the informant speaking describes how she has learned over the years that experience and practice is the key to learning. She then adds quickly at the end, however, that she feels some people do appear to have a natural ability:

> Well I used to think that there was a plot out there that everybody knew better than me. But I've learnt over the years that its not so, that in fact a lot of people are trying it out as they're going along and they find out as they experiment. Although people do seem to have this natural ability don't they? (2J)

Alongside this belief that domestic cooking involves some sort of natural aptness, this research found that there was a lack of clarity amongst the informants about the nature of 'domestic cooking skill/s'.

The informants who took part in the second stage of fieldwork were asked whether they thought a scone, or a strawberry tart, would require 'more skill' to make from 'raw' foods (after establishing that they understood what each was and could

describe both of them). Their replies revealed that they did not all interpret 'skill/s' in the same way.

Six of the informants interpreted skill, as used in this question, as meaning either practical techniques such as rolling, chopping, mixing and glazing or more complex practical tasks such as making pastry and custard:

> Probably the strawberry tart because it involves more [skills]. You've got the pastry, it usually has sweet pastry for the base, that's a skill in itself. You've then got the... I don't know what the name of the custard is, but that's another skill. Then there's putting the fruit in [...] and then the syrup. There are more stages involved in doing the tart, more specific skills. (2F)

> The strawberry tart ... because you have to roll out the pastry and put it in a nice cup and bake that then come back and get the strawberries and chop them up and probably put some sort of glazing on it then get some sort of cream. Whereas with a scone you just mix up the ingredients, then dollop it on the foil and then cook it. (2A)

The other ten informants interpreted skill as meaning the knowledge and skills associated with judging consistency, timing, 'how' foods are transformed during the 'cooking' process and so on:

> I think there is more hanging in the balance with scones because the oven could affect them. I mean something like that could go bad whereas if you're just making a pastry case and putting the fruit in, then there's not too much to go wrong. (2J)

> Well the scones would be difficult because you are working with flour and getting the consistency right. (2L)

The informants were also asked to comment on two descriptions of making a casserole. (The descriptions were adapted from the accounts of two first stage informants about preparing a casserole [or something similar]. See appendix 8 for the two descriptions). They were asked which, if either, of the two descriptions required greater skill. Analysis revealed that they interpreted skill in this context in a number of ways ranging from having "the right terminology" and "more knowledge", being "more professional", "more interested" or "more bothered" to using "conventional cooking practices [not] just making use of rather tired ingredients". When asked to comment on any differences between the skill/s used in the two descriptions, the majority of the informants were unsure what to say. "I don't know" and I'm not sure" were typical of responses.

Overall, therefore, the findings from this research reveal that the domestic cooks who took part in this study did not have a clear-cut, universal understanding of the different skills and knowledge, the mechanical and tacit skills, that make up domestic cooking skill as a whole. Most also believed that some sort of innate 'knack' was required in order to be a 'good' cook.

Skills experts say that, in the workplace, those tasks that are seen as requiring a 'knack' are those where the tacit skills, the perceptual, conceptual and organisational skills, involved are neither recognised nor appreciated (Singleton, 1978 and Wellens, 1974). Gabriel (1990) has also found that, in a comparative study of job satisfaction in traditional and modern catering establishments, a lack of recognition of the tacit skills involved in a task is linked to an undervaluing of that task.

The findings from this research suggest, therefore, that it may be the lack of recognition and understanding of 'cooking skill/s', particularly tacit skills, that contributes to the belief amongst domestic cooks that domestic cooking ability requires a natural aptness or 'knack'. These findings also suggest that the 'devaluing' of domestic cooking and the domestic cook, as referred to by both Longfield (1996) and Fieldhouse (1995), may be linked to the domestic cooks' lack of understanding of the nature and complexity of the skills and knowledge that make up domestic cooking ability.

The 'Creative Cooking' Ideal

The domestic cooks who took part in this study valued using 'different' foods, being 'novel' and preparing food 'correctly' or 'professionally' more highly than the ability to self-provision, to prepare, cook and provide food efficiently and economically on an everyday basis.

Indications that the informants valued certain aspects of domestic food preparation and provision more highly than others arose in the first stage of fieldwork. When asked what they would mean if they called someone a 'good cook' the most frequently mentioned qualities were the ability to prepare 'interesting food', a 'variety of food' and 'food that looks good'. There were no references to such qualities as the ability to prepare healthy food or to feed a family within a budget. Even the frequently mentioned quality of being able to make 'something from nothing' was not connected with being economical but with being spontaneously creative and able to "make something interesting from relatively few ingredients", for example.

Informants who took part in the second stage of fieldwork were also asked what they would mean if they called someone a 'good cook'. The most frequently mentioned quality, referred to by eleven of the sixteen informants, was the ability to make 'interesting' or 'original' food. Five of the informants referred to the ability to prepare or provide food that 'looks good'. Again, there were no references to self provisioning, cooking efficiently, cooking food economically, preparing healthy food and so on. The following quotation typifies responses:

> I suppose [a good cook is someone who can make] a variety of food with novel ideas and nice presentation, looking completely stress free as they were doing it. Someone who can make different types of food that I wouldn't try usually. (2N)

Answers to the question "Is there anyone you would like to be able to cook like?" revealed that the qualities admired and desired by informants were similar to the qualities associated with being a 'good cook'. Again, their responses did not include

qualities such as providing healthy food, economically but those such as "not needing recipes", "doing great desserts" and being able to cook like "just about everyone on the telly because they make it look so easy when they do really difficult dishes".

The informants were also asked to comment on two different descriptions of making a casserole. Many of the informants thought that the first description gave the impression that the cook was using up leftovers, using available ingredients and preparing the casserole quickly. The second description of making a casserole sounded "more skilled" said many informants. They thought that the casserole in this description was being prepared as it "should be" and by "somebody who is a bit more interested in cooking". The second description was generally seen as including more 'interesting' ingredients than the first and, with less emphasis on economy and speed of preparation and a less 'domestic approach', was held in greater esteem than the first.

The findings from this research therefore, suggest that using 'different foods', being 'novel', preparing food 'correctly' or 'professionally' and 'creativity', were more readily and more frequently referred to by informants than 'preparing healthy food', 'cooking economically' and so on. As the informants associated these qualities with taste preferences, being more skilled and being a good cook, it appeared that these were the qualities they valued most highly.

Oakley (1985), in a study of women and housework, found a similar set of values surrounding cooking which she called the "creative cooking ideal" (p. 58). The aim of 'cooking' under this ideal becomes, she says "not simple efficiency" or "how to get the most nutritious meals prepared in the shortest possible time" but "how to get beyond the usual range of meals with time consuming inventiveness and culinary skill" (p. 58). She suggests that this 'creative cooking ideal' puts pressure on the person responsible for domestic food provision (usually a woman) and results in dissatisfaction with 'cooking':

> In reality husbands' demand meals at specific times, small children cry when their stomach's are empty, the hour that might be cooking

> competes with the hour that ought to be spent washing the flour or changing the beds. 'Thinking what to eat' is an endless duty, however creative the actual task may be. This one latent function of the creative cookery ideal is the production of dissatisfaction. Standards of achievement exist of which the housewife is permanently aware, but which she cannot often hope to reach due to the other demands on her time. (Oakley, 1985, 58 - 59)

Warde (1997), as a result of a study of domestic cooking practices in Greater Manchester in 1990, suggests that the values people place on domestic cooking and their cooking practices may be connected. Warde found a "rising status of cooking" (p. 147), which he argues was possibly connected with "the higher proportion of occasions on which men in households prepared family meals".

The findings from this research suggest that the 'rising status' found by Warde may only be connected with certain 'creative' aspects of domestic cooking and the use of 'different and interesting' foods, and not with the efficient, daily, preparation, 'cooking' and provision of food. As Warde points out, the increased status of cooking that he found did not appear "to encourage people to invest much of their effort in self-provisioning tasks like baking" (p. 147).

In the light of Oakley's (1985) and Warde's arguments, the findings from this current research raise questions about the effects on domestic cooking practices of the high value that domestic cooks place on 'creativity', and on 'interesting', 'professional' and 'novel' food and cooking. Does this placement of values negatively effect the mundane, everyday provision of food, and the 'cooking' of healthy food efficiently prepared from raw ingredients?

A Lack of Differentiation between Professional and Domestic Cooking

That 'professionalism' and the qualities of a professional cook are highly valued has already been briefly noted in the section above. This research also found that the

domestic cooks who took part in this study, did not clearly distinguish between professional cooking and domestic cooking.

Findings from the first stage of fieldwork hinted at this lack of clear differentiation. For example, one man referred to his wife (who was not a professional cook and said that she never had been) as a "good chef". Another described how he was not interested in cookery lessons at school because he did not want to become a chef. In answer to the question "who you would like to be able to cook like" a number of informants, including the man quoted below, referred in their answers to professional cooks, particularly celebrity cooks such as Delia Smith or Keith Floyd:

> Some nights I'd like to be able to cook like the people at Ma Cuisine, some nights I'd like to be able to cook like Rick Stein. I wish I could do all that. I've never eaten at the Roux Brothers but that's the sort of thing. (1F)

Findings from the second stage, which sought to examine this theme in more detail, revealed that informants made many comparative statements about professional cooking and domestic cooking. For example, one man said he was "seriously impressed" by certain television chefs and bemoaned, "that's something I just couldn't do". In another example, a female informant described the difference between a domestic cook and a professional cook as "one has learnt his skills and the other is still teaching themselves as they go along". Five of the informants talked of how a professional cook may be 'more successful' than a domestic cook, suggesting they may have "a higher success rate in things being nice", for example, or that they might "make fewer mistakes".

When asked about the differences between 'what somebody who cooks for a living does and what the cook at home does' most informants found it difficult to describe any differences. Many referred, briefly, to the greater quantity of food that the professional cook prepares and the speed at which that food is prepared. A male informant suggested that better presentation was the "only difference" between professional and domestic cooking.

Only one informant clearly differentiated between the two and was surprised to be asked about the differences:

> The pressure, having to organise others, the stress, not just having to get things done to a certain time but to have consistency. I don't think they could really be further apart. They are doing it to earn money. Its their job. I just think the difference between doing anything at home and doing it as a job is just completely different. (2O)

The findings from this second stage also suggested that the qualities and themes that the informants' associated with the professional cook or chef were similar to those associated with the 'creative cooking ideal', as described in the previous section. For example, the informants' answers to questions about the differences between professional cooks and domestic cooks included references to the chef's "ability to produce something original and fantastic" and a willingness to "attempt different things" and to their presentation being "more artistic". This association between professional cooking and the 'creative cooking ideal' could also be found in the informants' comments on the possible advantages that the trained or professional cooking might have in the domestic kitchen. Three informants suggested that professional cooks would be more able to "experiment" and another that they would be able to "produce nicer things". One man said that a trained cook would "be ideal for a dinner party".

A broader view was initially taken by one informant who explained that she thought the experienced, trained cook might be able to cook more efficiently and spontaneously. She then added however, that a trained cook could also be "more adventurous":

> Certainly they [the professional cook] would be quicker and they're probably going to be more thrifty because if they've got a few bits leftover they probably know how to put it together to make a meal whereas I'm not very good at using things up. I usually have to make a special shop if I'm going to cook something even if I've got

> bits left over. I can't seem to decide what to do with the bits that are leftover. I think they would probably save money. And they can be more adventurous. (2N)

A further indication of the link between the 'creative cooking ideal' and professional cooking was that virtually all the informants' references to professional cooking in this second stage of fieldwork were to its more 'glamorous' aspects. References were to 'up-market' restaurants and to celebrity chefs who appear on television and publish books, not to the 'cooking' that takes place in cafes, hospitals and other institutions or to the chefs who work in them.

Mennell (1996), in his study of social and political development in England and France via an examination of their respective culinary cultures, suggests that media representations of food and cooking, which do not distinguish between domestic and professional cooking and cooking skills, may put pressure on the domestic cook. As Wood (1996) has pointed out, in a paper about food commentators and food snobbery, a number of weekend newspapers suggest that the haute cuisine of trained and experienced professional cooks, prepared in professional kitchens, can be easily prepared in the domestic kitchen by the domestic cook. Lawson (1998, 6) has also made this point in a newspaper article that discusses "the rise of the chef book". She argues that this lack of distinction between domestic and professional cooking "places an intolerable burden on the home cook" with the result that "people who think they can't cook can".

These arguments, however, suggest that it is a lack of distinction between the technical abilities of the domestic cook and the professional cook that forms the basis of this 'burden' or 'pressure'. Further research is required to find out more about the existence and nature of this burden, however the findings from this research suggest that any burden that does exist might arise from a more complex set of pressures. It may arise from the high value and esteem placed on 'professional style', creative cooking using 'interesting' ingredients that exists alongside a lack of clear distinction between professional and domestic cooking and cooking skills. (That connections exist between people's attitudes towards cooking and their actual practices has been

revealed by previous research [Lang et al., 1999, Nicolaas, 1995 and Warde, 1997] and is a topic that will be returned to later in this thesis.

The High Value Placed on 'Different' and 'Interesting' Food and 'Cooking'

This research found that variety, or 'difference', in foods and techniques, and the 'trying out of new things', were both highly valued aspects of domestic cooking.

The first stage of fieldwork found that the informants frequently used the words 'different' and 'interesting' in reference to food and cooking, particularly in reference to food and cooking that was highly valued. Many informants used words like these to describe the food of a 'good cook'. One informant said that 'eating well' is about food being "different and interesting". Another said that he particularly likes to prepare and eat pasta because he can make "all different sauces with it" whereas his wife said she would like to learn to make dishes that are "different". Two informants said that they like to use "interesting recipes" whereas another said that she likes the Guardian food page because there are "some realistic recipes in there but they're a bit different". Another said that she likes using pre-prepared foods because "you can make a really interesting meal in twenty minutes".

The informants also talked of 'experimenting'; they generally saw cooking experimentation as something positive and 'of value':

> I started to experiment with things and use people as guinea pigs. I'd invite somebody round for dinner and cook something unusual rather than something that I would cook for just me and Jenny. (1D)

> Soups ... I tend to experiment with them. I don't know why soups particularly. And desserts. I haven't done so much recently but I used to more. I like making cakes and deserts and things like that. I never really experiment with main meals. (1C)

The second stage of fieldwork examined more closely use of terms such as 'different' and 'interesting'.

The domestic cooks who took part in this second stage used words like 'different' and 'interesting' in relation to food and cooking, just as frequently as those who took part in the first. Their enjoyment of 'cooking' seemed to be greatest when preparing "something a bit different", "producing something original" or "adventurous" and "giving past recipes a new feel". They appeared to enjoy and place great value on aspects of cooking such as "experimenting", "non-routine cooking", trying "new recipes" and "constantly trying different things" and "things done in a different way":

> When I'm cooking a lot I do really enjoy it. I will go out and specifically buy interesting things because I enjoy preparing and cooking interesting dishes. (2O)

Many of the informants used expressions like "interesting", "different", "original", "something different", "kind of interesting" and "not just run of the mill stuff" to describe the food of a good cook. One described her boyfriend's mother as a good cook because "she puts a lot of variety into it and everything's different" another said that a good cook is someone who is "constantly trying different things". The following descriptions were typical:

> [A good cook is] someone who is able to use apparently basic ingredients and just come up with simple dishes. They can present them well and they taste different to how you have had them before. (2O)

> [A good cook can prepare] a variety of foods with novel ideas and nice presentation. And they would look completely stress free as they were doing it. And they would prepare different types of food that I wouldn't otherwise try. A friend did a chicken and pine nuts sort of salad. It was a cold salad and it was very filling but it was very nice and it was something different. (2N)

However, when questioned in more detail it appeared that words like 'different' and 'interesting' used in connection with food and cooking had little precise meaning. They were used to refer to broad notions of variety and change. For example, one informant explained that she enjoyed preparing food when she is doing "something a bit different" but when asked what this meant she became vague and said "more than the usual peeling carrots, cooking pasta or something like that". Another informant said he enjoys preparing something "unusual" but found it difficult to explain what he meant by 'unusual':

> Something you would experiment with out of a recipe book perhaps? Something which the family hasn't eaten for a while or something you wouldn't normally get in a restaurant perhaps? Something unusual because of the nature of the ingredients. (2L)

This second stage of fieldwork also revealed that informants would often 'try out' recipes or 'dishes'. They appeared to do so primarily for the enjoyment and satisfaction of the experience of preparing that particular combination of ingredients and methods and not in order to extend their repertoire or purposefully acquire skills and/or knowledge:

> At the weekend we try and cook slightly more interesting things. We spend a bit longer on it and try out new recipes. (2C)

> I would make a bit more of an effort if somebody was coming round and maybe try out a different dish or something, do something different. (2M)

As the following quotes show, this 'trying out' of new recipes, foods, combinations of foods and methods, seemed to be acknowledged by the informants as an accepted part of 'cooking' in contemporary Britain:

> They [people who were interested in cooking] would ring each other up and I would presume exchange cookbooks and try out the recipes and so forth and throw lots and lots of dinner parties. (2G)

> Just for two people it [cooking] gets a bit "oh I can't be bothered" to try out a new recipe or something that I haven't done before. (2B)

> There's a couple of soups I've tried in there [a cookery book], carrot and coriander I've tried, they've come out all right but I haven't got really into it. (2M)

Generally, the informants were more likely to prepare 'different' and 'interesting' foods and 'try out' new ingredients and styles of cooking for those 'cooking' occasions that they thought more important, or valued more highly. They associated 'different' and 'interesting' foods and cooking methods most strongly with 'proper cooking' and 'creative' cooking.

It is widely accepted that 'variety' is a key theme of food choice in contemporary Britain. Mennell (1996, 330) examined food columns in women's magazines as part of his historical and social study of food practices in France and England and found variety to be "the most striking feature of women's magazines in recent decades". In his study of contemporary consumption, food and taste, which included an empirical study of food columns in women's magazine, Warde (1997, 161) talks of the overriding ideological precept of the "desirability of variety of food choice". He also found that the diversity of ingredients used in recipes increased substantially between the 1960s and 1990s:

> A single issue of the most popular monthly, Prima, contained 39 recipes which used 176 different ingredients. [...] The 27 herbs and spices included garam masala, Chinese five-spice powder, chilli powder, cayenne pepper and garlic salt; bottled sauces included hoysin, soy, Worcestershire and gravy browning; almonds were required in five different states; three types of margarine, seven types of sugar and seven different fresh herbs were mentioned. Incidentally, an equivalent magazine in 1967, Family Circle, contained 31 recipes but only 87 ingredients, many of

> which were fruit, nuts and sweet spices needed for baking cakes. (Warde, 1997, 160)

'Variety and its association with domestic cooking practices' has been a lesser subject of discussion amongst academics than variety and food choice. Beardsworth and Keil (1992), however, do briefly refer to an "ever increasing variety of food preparation and presentation techniques, combinations and recipes" used in contemporary Britain, in a paper that explores 'menu pluralism'.

The findings from this research, when taken alongside those from a study of cooking in schools carried out by Health Which? (1998), suggest that this approach to domestic cooking, in which the central desirability is for variety and difference, is deeply ingrained in the 'cooking culture' of contemporary Britain. The young people who took part in the Health Which? study thought that more hands on experience with "a wider range of more experimental and exiting foods" (p. 15) would make cooking in schools more relevant to adult life.

Lupton (1996, 194) has noted how a search for difference and "for new taste sensations and eating experiences" is "highly culturally valued". She suggests that "the search is considered a means of improving oneself, adding "value" and a sense of excitement to life." Gabriel and Lang (1995) argue that this constant search for difference, which they refer to as 'exploration', is a motif of contemporary society:

> Consumer explorations are not searches into deep unknowns, inner or outer. Instead they are explorations of minute variations, of infinitesimal idiosyncrasies of style, products, brands signs and meanings. This type of exploration is the discourse of difference, the discovery of difference, the establishing of difference and the appropriation of difference. (Gabriel and Lang, 1995, 72)

Many academics have discussed the connection between the constant search for new and different foods, and combinations of foods, and anxiety about food choice (Beardsworth and Keil, 1992 and 1997, Fischler, 1980 and 1988 and Warde, 1997). Finkelstein (1989), who has made a detailed, theoretical study of dining out, argues

that a culture that values novelty throws people into a state of anxiety. The individual, she says, becomes overwhelmed by the extensive and numerous goods that readily available and constantly 'on offer' to them.

The findings from this research suggest that any anxiety connected with 'cooking' and a constant search for the new may also have a practical basis. The random, 'trying out' of new foods and styles of 'cooking', found by this research to be a feature of domestic cooking and learning to cook, may result in domestic cooks failing to acquire those tacit skills (cooking skills of creativity, organisation, perception and so on) that are acquired through experience and that skills specialists say promote confidence [Singleton, 1978 and Wellens, 1974]. This could have important implications for domestic cooking practices because research has shown that confidence in cooking ability is connected with positive domestic cooking behaviour (Lang et al., 1999 and Nicolaas, 1995). This issue will be returned to in the following chapters.

This chapter has described and examined the common themes that surround domestic cooking, the shared beliefs, values and opinions of domestic cooks. The discussion of the implications of these beliefs, values and approaches is continued in chapters 6 and 7. (Chapter 6 looks at the complex interrelationship between domestic cooking skills, approaches towards domestic cooking and domestic cooking practices and food choice. Chapter 7 disseminates and examines the concerns and debates about the state of domestic cooking in the light of the findings from this current research.) The next chapter, chapter 5, looks at people's individual, personal approaches to domestic cooking.

CHAPTER 5

INDIVIDUAL APPROACHES TO DOMESTIC COOKING

The previous chapter focused on the approaches towards domestic cooking that were shared by, or common to, the domestic cooks who took part in this study. This research also found that these domestic cooks also had their own, very personal, approaches towards domestic cooking. This chapter examines their contrasting, individual approaches.

The Research Findings

Analysis of the first stage of fieldwork gave indications that the informants had very individual approaches towards domestic cooking. It revealed a number of ways in which the informants' approaches towards domestic cooking differed (and that these differences were not connected with the their evaluation of, or response to, a particular 'cooking occasion'). For example, analysis revealed that some informants' domestic cooking practices and beliefs appeared to be based around recipes, 'dishes' and set combinations of ingredients:

> I tend to have my favourites [dishes] though funnily enough I lost my favourite but I can remember the recipe - Pork Chops Charcutiere - do you know that? (1F)

Whereas others, such as the woman quoted below, had a disregard for recipes and the use of recipes, preferring to cook 'creatively':

> You're just following instructions [if you use a recipe]. Anyone can do that, that's easy and its a pain in the bum especially if you're using Delia because it's just so convoluted. It always seems to be made more complicated that it needs to be. Her mashed

> potato recipe, for example, is a page long and all it's basically saying is to add a bit of creme fraiche to it. [...] Well yes, I could have thought of that myself. If you add cream to anything it tastes nicer, full stop. I know that. [...] Even if I did use a recipe I would probably think "oh no I don't have to do it that way I can do it that way" and "no I don't actually have to have a red pepper it could be a green pepper". (1A)

One female informant saw recipes as 'proper', she described herself as "Mrs Recipe" and said that she will always cook from one. However, she understood that she took a different approach to that of her husband:

> I'm always 'Mrs Recipe'. My husband is more ... well he tries to chuck things together [...] I'll tend to see a recipe and think "oh I'll make that" and next time I go to Sainsburys try and remember what ingredients I didn't have. Whereas he'll just have an idea, maybe he's kind of half seen it on television or he'll make it up. Sometimes that annoys me and I'll think "If you're going to do it, do it properly". (1M)

Analysis also revealed that the 'cooking' responsibilities each informant felt themselves to have varied considerably. One woman, for example, explained that she felt that she should always provide and 'cook' nutritious food for her two children but that her husband was satisfied if they had eaten anything:

> If the kids haven't had a fresh vegetable or some fruit for two days in a row, or something, say they haven't had a green vegetable, then something from my home economics background, from the two years I did at school, tells me, starts niggling at me, that they should. Jim doesn't have that, he just thinks, "as long as they've eaten something". (1M)

Some informants, the research found, felt that 'cooking' was, except on rare, important cooking occasions, an activity or task to be carried out simultaneously with others:

> Oh yes, I'll do the washing, or if the washing's on the side I'll hang it out or if it's out in the garden I'll get it in. I'll fold it and put it in the airing cupboard. Or if I've got washing in the machine and its finished, whilst the dinner's cooking I'll get that out and hang it out. (1L)

> Well I think anyone who's a parent multi-tasks. You don't stand and watch fish fingers cooking for ten minutes. (1A)

Others would always devote all their energies to cooking, even for those occasions that they did not deem 'important':

> When you've done a lot of preparation and you've put the joint in or something and it's got to be in for an hour and twenty minutes, then I'll come and chat. But I don't do anything that demands too much attention that I would forget what I'm doing. (1C)

> I might be reading something but more likely than not I'll have a glass of wine in my hands and be staring out to sea [whilst I'm cooking]. (1F)

It emerged from this first stage of fieldwork that enjoyment and satisfaction from 'cooking' came from many different aspects and took a variety of forms. One man described how he finds cooking "therapeutic". Another explained how, when he is cooking he gets his "cooking head on" and does not think about anything else. He appeared to gain great satisfaction from the process of cooking. In contrast, his partner said that she gains more satisfaction from seeing people enjoy the food she has cooked than from "the actual preparation for it". One informant said that he was more than satisfied if he can 'cook' something "without messing it up" or "without the kids interrupting".

The findings also revealed that the informants' 'interest' in cookery varied considerably. For example, one man said that he would purposefully contrive not to watch television cookery programmes as 'cooking' was not an interest of his. However, two other informants who claimed to have an interest in cookery, said that they would watch "as many as I can" or "anything that comes up on telly". Three informants referred to reading specialist cookery magazines but there was a feeling amongst many of the others that there was something slightly absurd about a magazine that was devoted entirely to food and cooking. Some informants had huge collections of cookery books and/or articles cut from journals, others had none or just a few. Some had a huge quantity of cooking equipment whereas others had very little. The quotes that follow illustrate how the informants' individual approaches towards 'cooking' varied considerably:

> I think it's nearer to a hobby than a chore. It's an interest. It's definitely creative and it's ... well some people like to do quizzes and so on in their spare time and I think that you can get a lot intellectually from cooking. (1H)

> It's not a chore or a hobby it's somewhere in between. It's something that I do and it's part of my life. (1A)

> I'm not really interested in it [cooking] basically. All I'm interested in is the taste after and whether it's nice or not. It doesn't interest me how it was made or anything like that. (1I)

The informants' descriptions of making a casserole (or something similar) gave further insight into just how different their approaches towards domestic cooking could be. The approach glimpsed in their descriptions reflected their general position seen in the interview data as a whole. The cook who gave the following description seemed to be trying to show how she can cook creatively but also efficiently and economically:

> I buy a pre-prepared dish from the supermarket of diced lamb or pork or whatever. I just sling that in and then I chop up a couple of

> potatoes, chop up some carrots, chop up some onion and put that in. Then throw a few herbs, probably dried, in. Crumble up a couple of oxos and pour some boiling water in it. If I've got a bit of red wine left I'll throw that in, or if I had some vegetable stock or if I'd made soup and had some left, I'd put that in. (1A)

Whereas the cook who gave the description that follows appeared keen to illustrate his academic knowledge and understanding of professional cooking techniques and terminology:

> I would get a piece of lamb and then cube it and then I'd brown it off. Then I would take that out of the pan and then in goes the onion, in goes the garlic and then maybe I'd probably use some kind of pulse in there, some flageolet beans or something like that. I'd put the lamb back and I'd have pre-cooked the beans so I would put those on top. I'd put some red wine in there and I'd tie up a little bouquet of parsley, thyme and bay leaf and drop that in and then let it all cook through. (1F)

With these indications that the informants had very individual approaches towards domestic cooking (underlying approaches that did not vary according to the occasion or circumstances) the second stage of fieldwork examined each of the sixteen informants and their individual approach towards domestic cooking. It found that every one of the sixteen informants who took part in this study had a very individual and personal approach towards, and experience of, domestic cooking.

The rest of this chapter describes the individual approaches of six of the informants. The approaches, beliefs and values of only six of the sixteen informants have been described so that sufficient detail and evidence to build up a thorough picture of an 'individual approach' can be given (as there are rules governing the length of this thesis). Each of these six informants has been given a name (not their real name) to emphasise the individuality and personal nature of their approaches.

These six informants were not chosen for any specific reason. The findings from this study show that *all* the informants had very individual approaches towards domestic cooking. One young informant, for example, was a student chef who could talk in detail about many aspects of 'cooking' and restaurant service but who usually only ate 'ready-meals' for his evening meal, chicken-Kiev being a favourite. He saw himself as a 'chef' and did not appear to see any connections between learning to be a professional cook and 'cooking' at home and did not find it ironic that he did not cook with 'raw' foods at home. Another informant had once been a professional cook. Although he said he usually cooked with 'raw' foods, and sometimes enjoyed doing so, he did not see cooking as an 'interest' or hobby. One female informant in her twenties had to manage her household and food provision on a tight budget. She nearly always cooked from raw ingredients because she found it cheaper. Although she enjoyed cooking for her friends and cut out recipes from quick, cheap meals from weekly magazines, she usually found the day-to-day cooking for herself and her son a chore. She believed that she would enjoy it more if she could afford to buy 'nicer' ingredients. In contrast, a female informant of similar age who also had a young child used 'pre-prepared' foods frequently. This was because, she 'admitted', she lacked confidence as a cook. She felt that she could not cook and that pre-prepared foods tasted better, were more reliable, that her family were more likely to eat them and there would be less 'waste'. She enjoyed 'cooking' on 'important' occasions, for friends and guests, but would use a number of 'pre-prepared' foods for fear of 'getting it wrong'. Any six of the domestic cooks who took part in this second stage could have been chosen to illustrate the individual nature of their approaches towards domestic cooking.

Jim

Jim described himself as being in his early thirties and said that he lived alone. On a weekday, he said, he may cook some rice and add some vegetables and/or chicken to a pre-prepared sauce for his evening meal or he might have a pre-prepared chicken Kiev or something similar. When he was asked "how much cooking do you do?" Jim said "none". However, in the course of the interview he described how he had made a pizza 'from scratch', a Sunday dinner and cous-cous with roast vegetables.

He said that he mostly shops for food on a day to day basis and said that he does not have "basic ingredients" (in which he included salt and pepper) in the house. Jim said that, in the past, when he has been living with a partner he has done 'more cooking' (in other words he has cooked more frequently with new, 'raw' foods, prepared new 'dishes' and taken more time to do so). However, he said that now he lives on his own he rarely does because there is no incentive to:

> I have done a lot more, and progressed a bit further into experimenting with different things, although not hugely, but that's when I've been living with someone else. When I'm living on my own there's not the incentive to cook something that's tasty and spend a lot of time over it because it's just for you and really you just want to eat.

Any satisfaction or enjoyment that Jim acquired from food and cooking appeared to come from eating the end result with his friends or family and not from the process of cooking itself:

> It's nice to have people round 'to eat something' rather than 'to want my food'. I want the food to taste nice but I'm not really interested in thinking I'm a great cook so I wouldn't make a beef bour-whatsitcalled or something, I would make something like spaghetti that just tastes nice

Although he said he watches the occasional food and cookery programme on television and sometimes picks up a food or recipe leaflet from the supermarket, Jim also said that he neither reads food articles in magazines nor talks about cooking with friends or family. Jim seemed to feel that food and cooking is 'an interest' for some but appeared at times to be almost cynical of this approach and seemed to want to distance himself from it. He described himself, very specifically, as being "not interested" in cooking and was dismissive of those who are. He said that he could never imagine spending "hours cooking" or "going home on my own and thinking, 'oooh I'm going to cook a lamb Pasanda. Unplug the telly, unplug the telephone and let's get going'".

Jim said that he thinks it a good thing that it is no longer necessary to "grow your own parsley and prepare everything yourself". He said that he thought it no longer important to be able to prepare food from raw ingredients and cook raw food because there is "so much convenience stuff that you can eat quite well without having to".

Jim said that he does not feel under any pressure to be a 'good cook'. He added that "socially, there are some nice skills to have" and that "as a bloke you think it would be good to be a good cook because it shows you're a bit sensitive".

Karen

Karen described herself as in her mid thirties and said that she lived with her husband and two small children, both under the age of five. She appeared to do the vast majority of the 'cooking' in her household. Karen had taken cookery classes at school and during the course of the interview described making from raw ingredients such things as Sunday lunch, apple pie, beef in red wine, quiche and leeks in cheese sauce.

For a "typical week-day meal" Karen said that she would "pull out [from the fridge or freezer] something pre-prepared, very often some sort of pasta or some sort of low-fat food that is in a tray that I can just stick in the oven". She explained how, because of this, she rarely has either raw foods or 'leftovers' in the fridge or cupboard.

Karen said that she has about fourteen cookery books, mostly presents from friends and relations, which she looks through if she wants to make something for a "special dinner party". She explained that she might watch cookery programmes on the television in the evening if she is in the house on her own, although she says she "couldn't tell you the names of the programmes I have watched". Karen said that she sometimes flicks through books and cookery articles in magazines and occasionally cuts out recipes, using them more "for ideas" than for specific instruction. She said that she may talk about food she has eaten, and restaurants she has been to, with her friends and family but that she rarely talks about cooking.

In response to the question, "how much cooking do you do? Karen included the tasks of pouring a glass of water and putting cereals and milk in a bowl. However, she also appeared to strongly associate the term 'cook' with 'dinner party food', being 'creative'," using raw foods and making 'dishes' with prescribed techniques and ingredients:

> If I was doing a casserole it wouldn't be to use up anything that was leftover it would be because I was wanting to create something 'nice'. So if I was going to do a casserole I would tend to follow a recipe and I would actually go out and buy specific ingredients for it.

Karen described how she has enjoyed preparing food and cooking in the past, particularly "preparing food for dinner parties" and "not weekday food" but that since she has had children she finds it "a complete and utter chore". She said that she feels that she is "constantly thinking about food", washing up and "preparing mundane foods like sausages and chips" and that this has dampened her previous enjoyment and interest. Karen found cooking stressful due to the constant presence of her two small children in the kitchen:

> I mean the worst scenario in the world is if kids are trying to pull you're legs when you're at the hot cooker. It's so dangerous, you're constantly moving your child away. [...] I can't actually cook when they're up and around. It's yet another thing that has to be done after they go to bed and there's only so much you do between eight and eleven.

Now, she said, she finds eating and reading about food more recreational and enjoyable than cooking it:

> I'm very into looking at food magazines. I mean most of the time I don't want to eat but at weekends I find it quite recreational to eat nice food. I love going to restaurants and looking at menus. I'm very interested in food but I'm not interested in cooking it.

Karen said that she wanted to disassociate herself from domesticity and that meant, it appeared, disassociating herself from 'cooking' and using 'pre-prepared' and 'ready-prepared' foods:

> I suppose since the children have been around I've been feeling quite domesticated and I haven't previously thought of myself as such. I don't feel that any link with domesticity is particularly good.

Jilly

Jilly described herself as in her early twenties and said that she lives with her mother during the week and with her boyfriend and his mother at the weekend. She took cookery classes at school. Jilly explained that she rarely eats breakfast, buys lunch ready pre-prepared, and that she might have something she "can chuck in the oven", or "quick and easy" like a jacket potato, for an evening meal on a working day. At the weekend, she said, she might make a 'fried breakfast' with bacon, eggs, mushrooms and tomatoes. Jilly also described how she recently held a dinner party for friends and served stuffed mushrooms and peppers, chicken marinated with orange, lemon, honey and garlic, pan-fried potatoes and steamed carrots and mange-tout – all 'cooked' from raw ingredients.

Jilly said that she always looks at food articles in magazines and cuts them out if "something looks appealing" and "keeps them for one day in the future". She added that she has not used any to date. Jilly described how she talks about cooking with her friends and swaps recipes and tips "about how my friend roasted her pork and how I did mine, how I got my crackling better than hers and that sort of thing".
She said that she would do 'more cooking' if her boyfriend would eat "nice dinners" and if she had "more time".

> I'd like to be a better cook. I would like to try a few more things myself but, as I keep saying, this does boil down to time. I'd rather not [cook] after working from seven in the morning to seven thirty

in the evening. Cooking from scratch to me, well that takes an hour.

Jilly was quick to associate the term 'cook' with 'dinner parties' and 'nice dinners':

> Ooh one day [I would like to be thought of as a good cook] but I haven't had enough experience yet although I've had three or four dinner parties since the beginning of the year so I'm really getting into them. Like I say, when I have the time I love cooking, I really enjoy it, but after work when you get in at eight o'clock you don't fancy doing a nice dinner do you?

She appeared to enjoy both the process of cooking, finding it "quite therapeutic", and the result, "having people enjoy it". However, Jilly said that she only finds 'cooking' for special occasions enjoyable and considers 'cooking' on other occasions to be a chore.

Jilly said that she thought it important that children learn such things as "how long to cook vegetables" but that learning to 'cook' is not as important as learning to read and write because "you can get by".

Andy

Andy described himself as in his mid-twenties and said that he lives with his girlfriend and his nine-month old son. He said that he had cookery lessons at school but since then he had not "done much cooking" and that he does not "do any cooking of the dinners or anything like that". Andy talked about 'cooking' for barbecues and preparing toast and sandwiches. He also referred to having once 'cooked' "a dinner" and once baked a cake.

He explained that he watches the occasional cookery programme on television and that he might sometimes see a picture of something in a magazine that he thinks looks nice but that it never occurs to him to want to cook it. Andy appeared to feel

that cooking was 'an interest' to some, describing how those who are interested in cooking might "exchange cookbooks, try out the recipes and throw lots and lots of dinner parties", but said that he does not have that approach himself. He presented himself as someone who is not very 'successful' at cooking and as someone who finds this amusing and of little concern:

> I baked a cake once and that was a disaster and I cooked a dinner once and that was a disaster as well so I try to steer away from the kitchen. It [the cake] was just too dry and it just didn't taste very nice. I don't know why. I don't know what went wrong but no-one liked it apart from Lydia who was five at the time and adored me. Nobody else liked it, not even the dog touched it. So no, unfortunately it wasn't that successful and I haven't been brave enough to try it again. Well I say 'brave', I've just not really tried. I gave up.

He said that he did not think that being able to cook with raw foods is "as important as it was because convenience is coming into it now". As the following quotes reveal, Andy seemed to feel that cooking with raw foods is 'optional', that it is a hobby or 'interest' that he has no wish to take up:

> It all depends on what your outlook is. I personally think it is great if you make your own stuff but for me it's convenience stuff straight away. It's easier. I'd rather go home and just flake out then carry on in the kitchen.

> If I was any good at it then possible I might be a little more interested because if the end product was worth going through all that and I could be proud of the result and I would probably do more cooking. But I don't have any inclination to 'get into it' in that respect at all.

Andy linked school cookery lessons with 'being interested in cooking' and 'entertaining' guests and did not appear to think is essential, or even very important, that his son take lessons as school:

> I don't think it is vital that children [have lessons at school]. As I said before you've got the supermarket and so forth although I think it's good that they have them because then they can form their own opinion on what they want to eat if they want to entertain people and so on when they get older. If it is something they are interested in then obviously it is important. Unless my son wanted to go and learn to cook then obviously I wouldn't sent him along because I think swimming and things are higher on the agenda.

Richard

Richard said that he is in his mid-fifties and lives alone (although he said that he has two children who occasionally stay with him). He described how, if he has friends or family for a meal on Saturday, he might prepare brushetta or a salad to begin, cous-cous with vegetables or a lamb tagine for a main course, and then maybe a souffle omelette or cherries baked in an almond custard for pudding. When preparing something for himself on a Saturday evening he said he would have a salad or pasta for which he "just chops up all sorts of things".

He said he likes to "read a lot about food" and has "thousands of cookery books", so many he does not know "what's in them". He also said he is "gadget mad" and using his huge range of cooking equipment is part of his enjoyment of cooking. He explained that he watches a number of television programmes from which he says he gets ideas and that he will occasionally copy down a recipe from ceefax. Richard says he is "keen on" food articles in magazines and will sometimes cut them out and that he also collects leaflets from shops and supermarkets and talks about cooking with his partner. He likes to use recipes "virtually all the time", following them "religiously". John tended to use a wider range of cooking and food terms, such as

lamb Tagine, Brushetta, and even referred to pasta by the name of the pasta shape, "Conchigle".

When cooking for himself, Richard says he is not "that bothered" and will "tend to do fairly simple things and rush through". Often, he said, he will buy "stuff at M&S" and "use that as a base and add things to it". However, when he cooks for others, he explained that he is more likely to, for example, prepare the pastry for a quiche than use a "quiche case" or make a pizza "properly" from raw ingredients. On these occasions, he said, he might spend a whole day preparing food.

When Richard first began to cook he found himself surprised that it was easier than he thought:

> I always assumed that there was a great mystique about cooking somehow, that it was going to be something that I was never going to break down. But faced with having to do it, well now I realise there is no mystique whatsoever.

Despite this, Richard seemed to see cooking as a challenge. He described himself as "not a natural cook" and said that he is "constantly being faced by people who are good cooks, probably better than me". He talked about certain foods, such as mayonnaise, that he has not tried because he believes that they are "difficult" to prepare. He said that he would like to be a good cook who can "just be given some ingredients and told to produce something with it" and has no "need to follow recipes". Richard also ended the interview by saying:

> I've come out of this thinking I'm actually a rather better cook than I thought I was. I've always thought I was fairly basic but I've come away thinking I might be quite imaginative.

He then asked the interviewer her opinion on whether she thought he was a good cook.

Richard said that he thinks it is "pretty vital" to be able to cook from raw ingredients because then "you can eat more healthily" and if "friends come round it is nice to give them a home-cooked meal, something you've done yourself, that you've obviously taken a bit of trouble over". However, he did not think it necessary that children and young people "have formal lessons". Both his children had 'picked up' cooking skills without them, he explained.

Liz

Liz described herself as in her late forties and said that she lived with her husband and daughter (in her early twenties) and her daughter's boyfriend. She had done cookery classes at school. Liz said that in the past she has done 'more cooking', both in terms of frequency and use of 'raw' foods and ingredients:

> I used to do a lot more cooking when the children were younger but I've found as they have grown up and left home I don't as much. [...] I would make stews, curries, spaghetti bolognese, I suppose I still do that now, shepherd's pies, roasts, anything really. When the kids were younger and there wasn't much money around then you made use of what you could. [...] I used to [cook from scratch] but not any more. I'm afraid I cheat now.

Liz described how she has made soups, casseroles, biscuits, pasta dishes, scones, pancakes, Sunday roasts, pastry, bread and trifles (including the trifle sponge), all from raw ingredients. At Christmas or special occasions, she said, she might spend the whole day preparing food and cooking. She is usually told, she said, that she does too much food but said that she likes to 'spoil' her guests and likes to think they have been well fed. Liz said that she has watched television cookery programmes occasionally but has found them entertaining rather than useful. She described how she has "a few" cookery books but only one, a really old one, that she uses regularly to check methods and ingredients. She also said that she rarely reads articles in magazines but that she "used to cut them out years ago" but stopped because she

never used any of them. Similarly, she said, she used to talk about cooking, and swap tips, with her friends and family, but that she does not do this any more.

Liz said she only enjoys cooking when she is "doing something new", preparing something for a "special meal" or when she is "organised" and has done all the housework and the "bits and pieces" and the phone is not ringing. She described how on other occasions she tends to find cooking unsatisfying and a chore, not only because her husband has many food dislikes and her children come and go at different times, but because she is always carrying out other domestic tasks simultaneously:

> Do you know I've got myself into such as spin some days. I've gone to put the washing in the dishwasher and vice versa because I'm not thinking about it, I'm on auto-pilot. My hands are everywhere like an octopus. Sometimes you're just not concentrating on what you are doing. I'm always doing other things and trying to fit everything in at once.

Liz appeared to acknowledge that cooking can be 'an interest' for some but said that she has always cooked "through the necessity of three children than my own desire to be a wonderful cook".

Despite the fact that she is obviously a capable and experienced cook, Liz talked of being "not particularly good at it [cooking]" and of how she would like to be "a little more adventurous". Notions of success and failure seemed to have a strong influence on her confidence, both positively and negatively.

> If I'm trying something that is quite interesting, it's quite exciting to see if it works. If it goes disastrously wrong I don't want to cook ever again but if it turns out nice them I'm onto a roll for it, it gives me a bit of encouragement.

Liz said she thought that it is "quite important" to be able to cook from raw ingredients and that children are taught "not be reliant on pre-prepared and pre-

packed food". She added that she feels "it is cheating" to "get something from the freezer". She also said, however, that she " can understand people who say they have absolutely no interest and they would much rather just open up the freezer and stick something in the microwave".

Points for Discussion and Implications for Existing Research and Debate

The relationship between food choice, the individual and their identity has been explored by a number of academics. For Fischler (1988) food preference is an integral part of an individual's self-identity and belief systems. He cites the example of red meat being associated with conferring strength on the individual who eats it. Beardsworth and Keil (1997, 63) explain how Barthes argues that all foods are "signs in a system of communication", pointing to the associations that are made between bitter, dark chocolate, good taste and the upper classes, and sweet, milk chocolate, lack of taste and the lower classes. The connections between food choice, social class and taste (of clothes, food, literature and so on) have also been examined by Bourdieu (1986). He argues that taste is actively used to express class difference. For Bourdieu, says Warde (1997, 40) " food is less about eating enough to survive, more about social meanings." Warde himself believes that, although food is used to express identity – "the vegetarian and the gourmet make statements about themselves through their practice" – it is a "comparatively marginal way of expressing personal identity" (p. 199). Only a few people follow fashions in food or choose to be connoisseurs of food and wine, he argues, and very few people know enough about food to read the messages sent out by others' food preferences.

To date, the connections between the individual, their identity and their domestic 'cooking' practices have been the focus of very little research or debate.

Mars and Mars (1993) have, however, carried out a study of how two couples, from the same social class and income group, construct and convey their social relationships through the manner in which they entertain and 'cook' for guests. They argue that individual approaches and social identity can influence a whole range of tasks involved in the 'cooking' of food. They describe how the Browns and their

friends, other couples, entertain each other in strict rotation. The Browns serve a different drink (red *or* white wine) with each course, prepare established 'dishes' such as Beef Wellington to set recipes and use brand names like 'Mattesons' and 'Bisto' to adhere to tradition and familiarity. In contrast, they describe how the Jones' more capricious approach to their life and social relationships is reflected in their cooking practices and choice of guests and menu. The gender and marital status of their guests is irrelevant to the Jones', Mars and Mars explain, and they create and prepare an eclectic menu of champ and Greek sausages with spontaneity and innovation.

This current research revealed that, even though the informants' approaches towards cooking varied according to the 'cooking occasion' (on less valued occasions such as breakfast or children's tea 'cooking' was more likely to be seen as an effort [see chapter 4] each informant also had their own, very personal approach towards domestic cooking. The findings show that this 'personal approach' was related to their cooking responsibilities, approaches towards food and cooking (both professional and domestic), status, household circumstances, daily and work routines, personality, cooking resources and so on. However, the extent and nature of this relationship between an individual approach to domestic cooking, their social world, relationships and self-identity requires further research. In addition, although each of the sixteen domestic cooks who took part in the second stage of this study had their own individual approach, further research is also required to ascertain whether, in a larger population, *every* individual, has a unique approach or whether there are discernible patterns of approach.

This 'personal approach', complex in itself, adds a further layer of complexity to any understanding of domestic cooking practices and skills in contemporary Britain. Debates about issues that surround contemporary domestic cooking, cooking skills and food choice (such as the trend towards recreational 'cooking', the empowering or deskilling nature of the recipe or the increased use of 'pre-prepared' foods and technology in the domestic kitchen) have not acknowledged this diverse and 'personality led' difference in approach.

The implications of this 'personal approach' for current domestic cooking debates and future research, acquire greater importance when it is taken into consideration that, as the findings show, a person's individual approach to cooking is connected with their domestic cooking practices such as their use of 'raw' and 'pre-prepared' foods and frequency of 'cooking'. (They acquire still greater importance when considered in the light of findings that show an individual's cooking skills and abilities are acquired from their practices and experiences.) For example, one informant, and experienced cook, admitted that being a "foodie" and someone who enjoys "fiddley", practical tasks [such as are often involved in 'cooking'] as well as being a perfectionist meant that she found cooking with her children tiresome. She found it difficult "not to mind about doing it properly" and, being a full-time, working mother, did not like to share what little 'cooking time' she had with them.

This connection is examined in the next chapter the subject of which is the complex interrelationship, as found by this research, between domestic cooking skills, approaches towards domestic cooking [both individual and shared], domestic cooking practices and food choice.

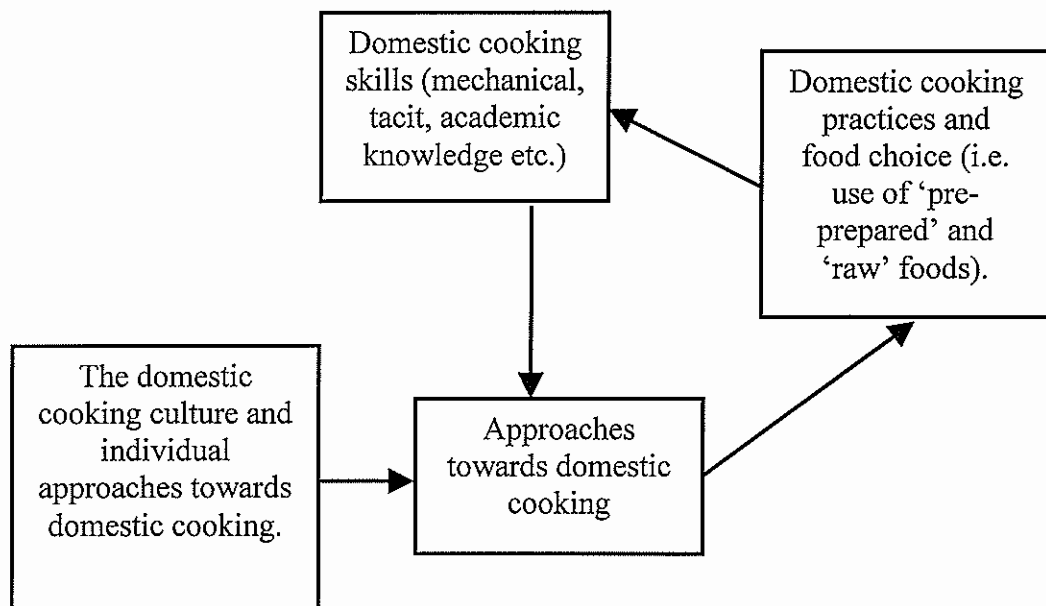
CHAPTER 6

DOMESTIC COOKING SKILLS, COOKING APPROACHES, COOKING PRACTICES AND THE INTERRELATIONSHIP BETWEEN THEM

The last three chapters have looked at the skills that are used by domestic cooks in contemporary Britain, the domestic 'cooking culture' and the individual, personal approaches towards domestic cooking of those cooks. This chapter examines the relationship between these three aspects of domestic cooking and domestic cooking practices and food choice (frequency of 'cooking', use of 'raw' and 'pre-prepared' foods and cooking and so on).

The findings from this research revealed that, though (domestic) cooking skills were an influence on domestic cooking practices and food choice, there was not a simple, straightforward connection between the two. They revealed that there was an 'interrelationship' (see figure 6.1) between the informants' approaches towards domestic cooking (their individual, personal approaches and those they shared with the other informants), their domestic cooking skills and their domestic cooking practices and food choice. It found that it was the informant's tacit skills and knowledge, rather than their mechanical skills, which played a key role in this interrelationship.

Figure 6.1. The Interrelationship between the Informants Approaches Towards Domestic Cooking, their Domestic Cooking Skills and their Domestic Cooking Practices and Food Choice



Indications that there was not a Straightforward Relationship between Practical Domestic Cooking Ability and Domestic Cooking Practices and Food Choice

That the relationship between the informants' domestic cooking ability and their domestic cooking practices and food choice was neither straightforward nor simplistic began to be apparent in the first stage of fieldwork. Analysis revealed that all the informants who took part in this first stage used 'pre-prepared' foods at least occasionally, yet all but one of the informants, when asked, could describe the techniques of steaming and simmering. (However, this one informant had been providing food for her family for over forty years. It appeared that her inability to describe these techniques was more strongly connected with her unease about taking part in an interview than an inability to carry them out). All but one was able to describe how to make a casserole (or something similar), even if, as in the case below, they had never made one before:

> I would probably fry some onions and leek or garlic or whatever first. Then I would boil some vegetables in stock and put that in with the meat. Then I'd just chuck it all in the pot and put some herbs in and some tomato puree and tinned tomatoes. Or something like that. Then just leave it [in the oven]. (1N).

All but two of the informants could give a fairly good description of how to make pancakes describe how to make pancakes. However, indicating that there is not a simple relationship between ability and practice, one woman who said she had often made pancakes from raw ingredients (and appeared able to do so with ease) said that on certain occasions she would use a pre-prepared batter mix:

> Well I'd either make a batter or I'd buy an instant batter mix. I mean it's just flour, egg and milk isn't it? And a bit of salt. Isn't it? Then I'd put some vegetable oil in a pan and make it very hot and then put it [the batter] in ... drizzle it in. (1A)

There were other indications that the informants had practical abilities that they did not always use. For example, one informant explained how in the past she 'made' pizzas, using either ready-made pizza bases or bread mixes for the base and 'raw' ingredients for the topping. Now, she said, she buys them fully, 'ready-prepared' because she does not think that those she used to make tasted any "nicer".

Analysis of the first stage also indicated that the informants' approaches towards domestic cooking were connected with their practices and food choice (frequency of 'cooking', use of raw and pre-prepared foods and cooking, techniques and skills applied and so on.). One woman with two small children, for example, explained that although she felt perfectly capable of 'cooking' a casserole (from raw foods) that would be ready to eat when she returned from picking her children up from school, she usually, and quite happily, 'cooks' something from 'pre-prepared' foods. A male informant described how he spends as much time as necessary preparing his evening meal when he so desires but added that there are occasions, such as when he wants to watch the news on television, when he prefers to use pre-prepared alternatives:

> If it's a rush job, you know, if get in half past eight and you want to watch the nine o'clock news then out comes the pasta and a tin of clams. (1F)

Another informant said that she buys mayonnaise ready-made even though she is capable of making it from raw ingredients. This is because she explained, she likes to be 'economical' and it can only be made in large quantities, and also because she is quite happy with the taste:

> When you make it you tend to have quite a large quantity and it's got a limited shelf life. We don't use enough of it usually to go through it before it goes off. And the stuff you buy is okay. (1H)

As in stage one, all the informants who took part in the second stage of fieldwork used pre-prepared foods on at least some 'cooking' occasions even though the sample included informants who were deliberately picked because they were experienced cooks (see chapter 2). A male informant, an ex-professional cook,

described how he often uses ready-prepared pasta sauces. He added that he then tastes them and wonders why he did not bother "using some crème fraiche, some Parmesan and frying off a few mushrooms", revealing that he has the skills to make similar sauces to those he buys 'ready-prepared'. Both a final year catering student and a woman in her late sixties who had been providing food for her family and others for over fifty years spoke of how they frequently 'cooked' with 'pre-prepared' foods. A female informant described how she often 'cooks' "casseroles and stews" from raw ingredients but 'cooks' fish fingers and frozen things for when her son's friends came round because "a lot of them don't like the meals we eat". Another informant, who said she had lessons at school and who, during the course of her interview, described making casseroles, pies and many other things with 'raw' foods, said that she frequently uses 'ready-prepared' meals:

> A typical weekday meal I would pull something pre-prepared out [of the fridge or freezer]. Very often some sort of pasta or some sort of low fat food that is in a tray that I can just stick in the oven. (2F)

Analysis of this second stage revealed many other examples, such as those seen in the quotes below, where the informants used pre-prepared versions of foods and dishes that they were capable of cooking from raw ingredients:

> We have pizza at least once a week. We do cheat quite often and buy pizza bases though. I can make them ... it just takes longer. (2C)

> Paneer was something that you just had to make at home [...] because it just wasn't available. Now Paneer is available in almost every shop and supermarket, which is surprising, and so I think there is a tendency to mix and match, not to cook everything yourself, but just to cook certain parts. (2L)

> I used to make steak and kidney pies and apple pies and crumbles and stuff. I think now I buy ready made pastry due to time constraints because I was actually good at making pastry. (2H)

Findings from stage two provided another indication that there was not a straightforward relationship between the informants' practical domestic cooking abilities and their domestic cooking practices and food choice. The informants' accounts of their domestic cooking experiences revealed that there were lifetime fluctuations in 'how much cooking' they did. They did not necessarily do 'more cooking' (the phrase 'more cooking' generally meant, for the domestic cooks who took part in this study, a greater and more frequent use of raw foods and cooking instruction and a greater amount of time dedicated to cooking and the surrounding tasks) as their experience, and therefore their skills, increased. A woman in her late sixties, for example, explained that, though she does "less now", when she first finished being in paid employment she did "more cooking" because she suddenly found more time to cook. Another informant said that he used to do 'more cooking', or "progress a bit further into experimenting with different things", when he lived with a previous partner. One of the younger informants, in his early twenties, explained that he had done far 'more cooking' when he once lived in a shared house and was responsible for all the cooking. Now, he said, he was far more likely to eat out or buy ready-meals and pre-prepared foods.

The Interrelationship between Approaches towards Domestic Cooking, Domestic Cooking Practices and Domestic Cooking Skills

There were, therefore, indications from the first stage, and more detailed evidence and support from the second, that there was not a simple, straightforward relationship between the informants' practical domestic cooking abilities and their domestic cooking practices and food choice. Further data generation and analysis in this second stage revealed complex interconnections between the different aspects of domestic cooking that were described in the three chapters preceding this - domestic cooking skills and approaches towards domestic cooking (both the informants'

individual approaches and those they shared with other informants) – and domestic cooking practices (see figure 6.1).

(The different 'connections' that make up this 'interrelationship', and that emerged from analysis of data generated in this second stage of fieldwork, will be described and explained in the paragraphs that follow. Because of their complex nature, these different connections are examined separately. The first connection to be looked at is that between the informants' domestic cooking practices and food choice and the approaches, beliefs and values that surround domestic cooking, those shared by informants and found to be 'common themes' (see chapter 4). Next, the connection between the informants' personal and individual approaches towards domestic cooking and their practices and food choice is explored (see chapter 5). Thirdly, the connection between the informants' domestic cooking skills (particularly their tacit skills), their approaches towards domestic cooking and their domestic cooking practices and food choice is described. Finally, it is explained how these different connections were found to form the complex interrelationship illustrated in figure 6.1.)

The informants' shared approaches towards domestic cooking were an influence on their domestic cooking practices and use of 'pre-prepared' and 'raw' foods.

That the use of 'pre-prepared foods' was an entirely acceptable aspect of domestic cooking in contemporary Britain, and not an alternative to cooking with 'raw' foods, was one approach shared by the informants that had an influence on their domestic cooking practices and food choice. The use of "ready made meals", considered one young woman for example, was wholly appropriate for those occasions when she would prefer to spend time with her boyfriend than 'cook' with 'raw' foods. Indeed, as the following quote from a young male informant illustrates, most of the domestic cooks who took part in this second stage turned quite happily to 'pre-prepared' foods when they had a preference to do something other than 'cook':

> We're both really busy during the day and, to be honest with you, we would rather sit down and watch a bit of TV or have a chat or play with our son than sit in the kitchen and cook. (2G)

There were also many 'pre-prepared' foods, such as bread, tomato ketchup, breakfast cereals, biscuits and so on, that the informants viewed as basic provisions and therefore presumed never to prepare from 'raw' ingredients. The informants also used 'pre-prepared' foods because they preferred the taste to that of their own versions made from 'raw' ingredients. Four of the informants in this second stage spoke of a preference for ready-made pizzas from the supermarket over those they made at home. Similarly, the ex-chef explained that, though he was able, he never made mayonnaise because his partner prefers the pre-prepared version:

> I haven't made mayonnaise for years. I used to enjoy making mayonnaise but my partner doesn't like it. He prefers the bought. So although I can make it taste like Hellmans I think what the hell is the point in that? (2K)

These words also reveal how the informants used pre-prepared foods on occasions when they felt that cooking with 'raw' foods seemed too much 'effort' for the 'reward' they gained. The concepts of effort and reward and the 'effort and reward relationship' formed another shared approach of the informants that had an influence on their domestic cooking practices and food choice. One female informant with two small children, for example, said that she generally made pizza for her family with a ready-made bread base but would prepare one "from scratch" for a 'more important' occasion:

> I suppose, if I'm honest, I haven't really made any [pizza] dough for a quite a long time. Since we discovered those ready-made bases. Some of them are so good. We generally would just use one of those but if we were having a picnic or something with friends then maybe we'd make it from scratch, make a bit more of an effort. (2C)

Another said she was more likely to 'cook' with 'raw' foods than use 'pre-prepared' foods if she has got all her housework done and can relax and enjoy the process. If his children would "sit down for an hour" and enjoy their food rather than "be finished in fifteen minutes", said a father of two teenagers, he would be more likely

to spend time and effort 'cooking' breakfast and more likely to 'cook' with raw foods.

Analysis also revealed that the informants generally shared the view that certain domestic tasks, such as washing up and menu-planning require 'more effort' when 'cooking' with 'raw' foods as opposed to with 'pre-prepared' foods. This would often discourage the use of 'raw' foods and encourage the use of 'pre-prepared' foods as the following quote illustrates:

> Making something like mash, veg [sic] and gravy you're talking more than an hour … and a pile of washing up. With a pizza you through it in [the oven] and throw the bit of foil away and it's done. (2A)

Other informants explained that, for example, porridge was not made during the week because "it seems so messy" and that pastry was made infrequently because it entails "scraping all the gunge off the surface".

There was also a connection between the informants' general belief that the results of cooking could be 'right' or 'wrong', correct or incorrect, and their domestic cooking practices and food choice. For one informant it was the lack of prescription surrounding a pizza (he felt that, because the bread base is topped with tomato sauce, vegetables, cheese and so on, its 'correctness' or 'incorrectness' was difficult to ascertain), that encouraged him to 'cook' them from 'raw' ingredients. More practically, another informant regularly made pizzas from raw ingredients because she felt she could make pizza toppings from a whole variety of different foods and therefore use up leftovers. She did not view pizza as a 'dish' requiring a fixed combination of ingredients and methods of preparation. In contrast, a male informant in his thirties said that he had once made onion soup, by following a recipe, and would never make it again because "it hadn't worked". Another said he is 'put off' cooking because when he "tries to reproduce what my Mum did nothing comes out the same".

The second stage of fieldwork also revealed that the informants' individual approaches to cooking were an influence on their domestic cooking practices and food choice. A female informant, for example, explained that her frequent use of ready-prepared meals and 'pre-prepared' foods was part of her wish to disassociate herself from domesticity. She felt that cooking, except on certain special occasions, was very much a domestic duty. Some of the domestic cooks who took part in this second stage described how they enjoyed the 'challenge' of preparing 'dishes' (generally accepted prescribed combinations of ingredients with prescribed outcomes) and this encouraged them to cook with raw foods. One man acknowledged that his domestic cooking practices, particularly his frequent use of raw foods, are influenced by his approach that "it is better to make something yourself rather than buy it". Similarly, a female informant described how she and her partner had made it a 'policy' to eat their weekday evening meal with their children and to cook this meal with 'raw' foods wherever possible.

There were three informants who viewed cooking as a challenge and talked of "tackling" new foods and ingredients. A female informant, who described herself as a 'foodie', explained that she gained great satisfaction and enjoyment from both the result and the process of cooking. She added that, having this approach, she found it difficult to cook with her children because of this as she found it very difficult "not to mind about doing things properly":

> [When you cook with children] you have to mind about not doing things properly. You have to just enjoy it and hope things come out edible and I'm not terribly good at that. (2F)

In contrast, an informant who said he was "not interested" in, and did not really enjoy, 'cooking' described how he would automatically include his two year old daughter. He would allow her to collect things from the fridge or cupboard and perch her on the kitchen worktop to watch him or to see food cook under the grill.

Some of the domestic cooks who took part in this second stage of fieldwork 'cooked' and provided food for their families, children and partners and therefore, when cooking, they had to heed the dietary requirements and/or food desires of others. In

other words, their domestic cooking responsibilities influenced their domestic cooking practices and food choice. For one woman this meant using ready made curry sauces, because her husband "is so fussy … and if it's not exactly to the right temperature …" even though she would prefer to make curries from raw ingredients and has often done so in the past. For another informant, it was the responsibility of 'cooking' for his children after his divorce that forced him to expand his repertoire and to try new foods. For yet another, it was a lack of cooking responsibilities, he admitted, that allowed him to 'cook' when he wished and with whatever ingredients and foods he wished. He did not have to cook, he acknowledged, and therefore he could ensure that the rewards he received always balanced the effort he put in:

> I would never attempt [to cook] those things which I think are just too complicated or can only be done in certain quantities because it is just not worth it. Not because I would not like it but because it is just not worth me taking the trouble. If I was in a position where I had to [cook] and if it was required of me, and I do not see myself in that way in the family, then I would do, yes. Because I am only doing it because I like it then it's just too much trouble. (2L)

The second stage of fieldwork also revealed that the informants' domestic cooking skills and knowledge influenced their approaches towards domestic cooking (and it was via this influence on their approaches that the informants' domestic cooking skills influenced their domestic cooking practices and food choice).

Analysis revealed that it was not generally mechanical or practical cooking skills (see chapter 3) that were important in the relationship between cooking skills, approaches and practices but the underlying tacit skills (understanding and pre-empting how foods will combine or react to heat, organisational abilities and so on). The words of one female informant, for example, show how she is confident about the technique of kneading dough but not about adding the 'correct' quantity of water or judging the consistency of the dough:

> Oh no I don't mind that no, I get practice at that on my husband, no I don't mind the kneading. I suppose it's the mixing the water and everything else and putting too much or too little in … (2H)

For another informant, it was not the practical aspect of making a quiche that would discourage him from doing so but his concern over the end result, his lack of ability to conceptualise the finished quiche and to understand the process by which he would achieve that result:

> I'd be happy about actually doing it [making a quiche] but I'd just be worried about the actual result probably. I think it's probably simpler than it looks. It's probably nothing really to make the dough and pastry sort of thing but you just worry about the end result. (2A)

Yet another had similar concerns about making a quiche:

> The practical stuff [would not put me off making the quiche] but there are so many ingredients in there and there's the pastry, the shortcrust pastry, which is always supposed to be tricky, Maybe it isn't, I don't know, but there are some dishes that you never try simply because you think they are tricky and you don't know. This bit about kneading the dough say, "knead the dough very quickly and lightly until it is …" and then "wrap in cling film and chill for half an hour …" well that must be a very important part of how the recipe will come out I would think. (2L)

He too appeared lacking in confidence and worried about the end result. He did not appear to have either sufficient academic knowledge to understand why certain techniques are applied or the tacit skills and knowledge to judge what effect these techniques would have on the food. These concerns would 'put him off' 'cooking' a quiche from 'raw' ingredients, he said.

Generally, a lack of understanding about the processes of 'cooking', the changes in consistency and appearance brought about by mixing, heating and chilling and the chemistry that underlies them (both tacit skills and knowledge and academic knowledge) instilled a lack of confidence in the informants:

> The bulk of this [the pizza base] doesn't seem to exist. You have to create it and it goes a bit against the grain there. [When you make a cake] you've got this floury, powdery stuff and you've got to add an egg and a bit of water and it suddenly becomes a cake. I don't get that. I understand that it rises but ... And then you talk about making a roux and it's "how can a solid go to a liquid" and all that. (2D)

Analysis also revealed that the informants' tacit domestic cooking skills were not only closely connected with their level of confidence about domestic cooking but also with the degree to which they felt a domestic cooking task to be an 'effort'. As the following quotes show, the findings showed that 'confidence' and 'effort', both as approaches towards domestic cooking and as influences on domestic cooking practices and food choice, were very closely connected. In the first quote, a female informant describes how it was her lack of knowledge and inexperience of making scones that made her lack the confidence to 'cook' them. It appeared that, as a consequence, she viewed preparing and 'cooking' scones as requiring a great deal of time and effort, partly because of her lack of confidence. In the second, another female informant relates how a previous attempt at making mayonnaise from raw ingredients was a "nightmare". As her words show, though she had the practical ability to make mayonnaise she did not appear to have an understanding of why it did not thicken nor the skills to 'correct' or improve it and also felt that preparing mayonnaise was a great effort for little reward. In the third, a young male informant explains that he has only made a cake once because a prior attempt was a 'disaster' and now he lacks the confidence to do so and because 'he can't be bothered':

> Now that I've actually made [scones] I realise that it's not that difficult, it's just knowing what to do and things. [...] There's

> always been this mystique about "oh it's going to take ages" and "oh I'm going to make a mess of it". (2N)

> I've tried to make it [mayonnaise] myself and I had a nightmare with it. It was a real bad move. I had my brother and sister in law over and I was trying to make home-made mayonnaise and it seemed to be a bit hit and miss whereas with vinaigrette you just shake a few things round and it just seems to just generally happen. Well the mayonnaise didn't thicken [...] and I seem to remember spending a lot of time in the kitchen while everyone else was chatting thinking "what the hell am I doing here?" (2F)

> I haven't been brave enough [to make a cake again]. Well, not brave, I've just not really tried. I gave up. (2G)

It is tacit cooking skills, the ability to conceptualise and to design, of the woman quoted below that allows her to "just make" (cook effortlessly and with confidence) a specific ready-meal that she has seen in a shop:

> Sometimes I'll just look at something in the supermarket and see what's in it, like a ready meal for example, and think "oh that's a good idea". I would never put those things together" and then I just make it. But I wouldn't buy the ready meal. (2C)

It emerged from analysis of the second stage that the connections described above – between the informants' domestic cooking skills and their approaches towards domestic cooking and between their approaches towards domestic cooking and their domestic cooking practices and food choice - formed a complex interrelationship.

For example, it was previously explained in this chapter how some informants' were discouraged from 'cooking' and from 'cooking' with raw foods because they perceived it as a messy activity involving washing up and cleaning, particularly when it involved 'raw' foods. One woman was quoted as saying that she did not 'cook' porridge during the week because "it seems so messy". This quote was used to

illustrate how the informants' approaches towards domestic cooking tasks, such as cleaning and washing up, were an influence on their domestic cooking practices. However, it was only on weekdays that the woman quoted said that she would not 'cook' porridge because it was messy and an effort. This suggested that she would do so at the weekend (weekend cooking occasions being more highly valued than weekday cooking occasions [see chapter 4]). Her belief that cooking with 'raw' foods is messy influenced her practices in conjunction with her belief that weekend cooking occasions provide greater reward for her efforts than weekday occasions.

For a woman with two small children and frequent weekend guests, a combination of her cooking responsibilities, her desire not to be viewed as 'domestic', her prescriptive approach towards cooking (she tends to value what she regards as 'dishes' over 'made up' combinations of foods) and a 'once a week' shopping regime, that influences her domestic cooking practices and use of 'raw' and 'pre-prepared' foods. She buys ready-meals and specific ingredients, mostly pre-prepared, on a weekly basis to 'cook' specific dishes. As a result, she explained, she rarely has many provisions or leftovers and could not cook spontaneously, 'make up' combinations of ingredients and meals, even if she wished to:

> I tend to buy portions of things so we don't have things leftover. When they are leftover, I sometimes use things up for the children's meals. But I don't often have a large amount of something left over that I would use in that way ['make up' a meal]. (2F)

Her willingness to use 'leftovers' for children's food but not for adult's food suggest that she values children's food and meals less than those of adults, and shows that this is yet another approach towards domestic cooking that influences her domestic cooking practices.

The two quotes that follow, from the same informant[19], reveal how the very different domestic cooking practices of another woman with two small children are connected

[19] Both quotes have been used previously, but separately, in this thesis. They are used together here to show the complex interrelationship between domestic cooking skills, attitudes and practices.

with her individual, personal approach towards domestic cooking, with her (tacit) domestic cooking skills and with those approaches towards domestic cooking that she shares with others:

> I mean we always buy lots of vegetables and if you've got those and you've got your staples, like rice and pasta, in the cupboard, which we always have, then you can always do a risotto or pasta and sauce or something. (2C)

> Sometimes I'll just look at something in the supermarket, like a ready meal for example, and see what ingredients are in it and think 'oh that's a good idea I would never put those things together' and then just make it. (2C)

This informant appeared to 'meal plan' and shop for specific 'dishes' less than the informant quoted above. She explained that she cooks 'spontaneously' from a wide-ranging store of provisions and 'raw' foods. Her words revealed that she does not have a prescriptive approach towards domestic cooking, dislikes using recipes and values 'creativity'. She also has a personal 'policy' (an individual approach to domestic cooking) whereby she aims to cook for her children with 'raw' foods whenever possible. This woman also appears to have the tacit domestic cooking skills that make her a confident domestic cook, allow her to "just make" a ready-meal, "improvise" and find 'cooking' relatively effortless:

> I think I'd just improvise at that point. If I'd followed the recipe and the recipe just didn't feel right, like the pastry is just falling apart or something, then I would think "right it needs more flour" or something and bung a bit more in even if it is not what the recipe said. (2C)

The young male informant, quoted previously, who described his one experience of making a cake, said that he had not made a cake since his last 'unsuccessful' attempt and would not do so again. Analysis showed that he was uncertain about making another cake and believed that it would require a great effort. This appeared to be

because he made the cake by following a recipe but lacked the knowledge and experience, and therefore the tacit skills, that would enable him to understand the process of making a cake and where he 'went wrong'. However, the findings also revealed that there was another angle to the relationship between his skills, approaches towards domestic cooking and domestic cooking practices because he then added that he may make a cake again "if it was just a case of 'oh lets make a cake'". These words showed how he was more hesitant about making a cake for a special occasion, an occasion where his cake would be more likely to be judged as being a 'success' or a 'failure', than for a less important, everyday occasion.

Analysis of this second stage of fieldwork also revealed one further level of complexity to this interrelationship between domestic cooking skills, approaches and practices – it appeared that an individual's personality and general outlook was connected with their domestic cooking practices by influencing their personal, individual cooking identity or approach. In the following quote a young, male informant is talking about using a recipe to make watercress and potato soup, something he has never made before:

> [reading] "Add the watercress and simmer for thirty seconds", well that's presumably to just slightly cook the watercress and soften it. And if the watercress is softened whether it takes a minute or ten seconds then it has done the job. When someone writes a recipe they want to make sure that the basic thing is done. Obviously it's not vital that it is thirty seconds, what they mean to say is "soften the watercress". But some people will say "well it looks soft but is it soft enough yet? So you say things like thirty seconds so you'll guarantee they'll be soft by then. So I wouldn't sit there with a stop watch. (2O)

Although his age, twenty three, single stature and accounts of domestic cooking experiences suggested that he was probably not a very experienced domestic cook, he appeared very confident about following and making a recipe for soup that he was given by the researcher. A reflexive analysis of data from his interview as a whole showed that he was generally confident and that it was this general confidence that

probably helped make his individual, personal cooking approach or identity a confident one. In contrast, a slightly older female informant who had to provide food for herself and her son on a limited budget and who's account of her cooking practices suggested she was a more experienced and 'skilled' domestic cook, said that she lacked the confidence to make a Lasagne. This, despite the fact that she had made Lasagne on previous occasions and had received instructions from a friend who was also a chef. She described the cheese sauce she made as a "disaster" and said that in future she may use a pre-prepared cheese sauce mix rather than make it from 'raw' ingredients:

> I'm not very good at making lasagne. I just can't get the cheese sauce right. I've tried it a couple of times. I would like to be able to make lasagne because everyone loves it, my friends like it and my son's friends like it. [...] it just always turns out badly. It just didn't seem to work [the last time I prepared it]. It was bland and tasteless. I followed the recipe. I actually got a friend of mine who's a chef to tell me what to do with the minced meat and what herbs to put in and how to make the cheese sauce up. I was thinking of making it with a ready made cheese sauce to see how that goes because the sauce I made was such a disaster. (2J)

A reflexive analysis of data from this woman's interview as a whole revealed that she lacked confidence generally and that this general lack of confidence was related to her specific lack of confidence about making a Lasagne.

Points for Discussion and Implications for Existing Research and Debate

As has been explained in previous chapters, and is illustrated in the quotes that follow, the concepts of domestic 'cooking' and 'cooking skills' tend to be used simplistically in discussions and debates about the state of domestic cooking and cooking skills in contemporary Britain:

> Deskilled families are buying more ready-made meals from supermarkets than ever before. Ready-cooked dishes – especially chicken and pork – are, despite their relatively high prices (a crucial issue for poor households), proving a boon for consumers who have less and less ability to domestically produce meals in the kitchen. (Stitt et al., 1996, 10)

> Few parents teach their kids to cook. They go out to work, are exhausted on return – and many couldn't anyway because they can't cook. (Leith, 1998, 58)

> The growth of fast-food outlets, microwave ovens, TV dinners, etc. makes it relatively easy for anyone, regardless of culinary skill, to get a meal or a substitute for a meal, at irregular times. This has led to speculation in debates on the sociology of food about the increasing prevalence of the habit of 'snacking' or 'grazing'. This has been said to reduce the importance of household meals in several ways. First it makes them less significant in collective time discipline: whereas for many households daily routines used to be organized around meal times, snacking allows greater flexibility. Some authors bemoan the demise of the family meal as it becomes more easily possible for individuals to prepare and eat their food alone at a time, or in the place, of their choice. [...] This may be seen to have effects either on the quality of the food consumed or on the social relationships of the household. (Warde, 1997, 149)

The response to these concerns, in terms of suggested solution and policy, has been similarly straightforward. The emphasis has been on technical 'ability', or lack of it, and the teaching of practical cooking skills. Schemes to promote the teaching of cooking skills to both adults and young people have been launched by Sustain[20] in 1993 and the Royal Society of Arts in 1997. The Department of Health has also taken this approach in response to concerns about the state of domestic cooking and

[20] Sustain: The alliance for better food and farming, was known at that time as the National Food Alliance.

skills in contemporary Britain (Department of Health, 1997 and 1998) as has the Food Standards Agency (Food Standards Agency, 2001). The inclusion of compulsory cooking lessons within the National Curriculum has been demanded by many (Leith, 1998b; Royal Society of Arts, 1999a and Stitt et al., 1996).

Within the field of Health Promotion, however, the complexity of the concepts of domestic 'cooking' and 'cooking skills', and their relationship with domestic cooking practices, has begun to be acknowledged. It is within this subject area that research has shown a connection between approaches towards domestic cooking and domestic cooking practices (Lang et al., 1999 and Nicolaas, 1995). Lang et al., (1999) in a report of the Health Education Authority's Health and Lifestyle Survey, point out that there has been little attention paid to what the public thinks about cooking and cooking skills and to "whether this has any impact on food choices and behaviour" (p. 2). They suggest that "the choice not to cook from basics is not always related to a lack of skills but to aspects of food culture" (p. 3).

This current study found that people's domestic cooking skills were a factor of influence on their domestic cooking practices and food choice. However, it found that there was not a simple, straightforward relationship between a person's practical cooking ability and their domestic cooking practices but a complex interrelationship between a person's approach towards domestic cooking, their domestic cooking practices and their domestic cooking skills, particularly their tacit skills and knowledge. It was these tacit domestic cooking skills (skills of perception and conception, judgement, design and creativity, timing, organising and planning), by increasing confidence and diminishing the degree of effort associated with 'cooking', that played a key role in this interrelationship.

The findings from this study, therefore, support the view of Lang et al. (1999, 34) that "important though cooking skills are as a dynamic component of food culture, they should not be taken in isolation." They also expand on the same authors' acknowledgement of the complexity of the relationship between people's (domestic) cooking skills and practices and that approaches, beliefs and values (or attitudes) also play a role in that relationship:

Tackling the issue of cooking as a skills deficit is probably doomed to failure as it fails to account for the cultural attitudes of the public towards cooking skills." (Lang et al., 1999, 35)

This research found that domestic cooking skills formed part of a complex interrelationship. People's domestic cooking skills, particularly their tacit skills and knowledge, influence their approaches towards domestic cooking. Their approaches towards domestic cooking (consisting of those that are personal and individual, those that are shared with others as part of a 'domestic cooking culture' and those that are connected with an individual's domestic cooking skills and knowledge) influence their domestic cooking practices and food choice. And people's domestic cooking practices influence the domestic cooking skills they acquire. (Though not explored in this chapter, findings from this research, that are described and examined in chapter iv, show how a person's domestic cooking skills and ability are 'picked up' from their cooking practices and experience. The literature about skills that was reviewed for this research also explains how tacit skills are acquired through experience and practice [Cooley, 1991; Pinch, Collins and Corbone, 1996; Singleton, 1978 and Wellens, 1974].)

That there is a complex interrelationship between people's approaches towards domestic cooking, their domestic cooking skills and their practices, as found in this current research, may go some way to explaining the discrepancies and ambiguities found in existing research. The lack of a straightforward connection between people's approaches towards domestic cooking and their cooking practices, and the complexity of 'attitudes', may explain the "gap between attitudes towards cooking and cooking behaviour" highlighted by Nicolaas (1995, 1) in a report of a study for the Department of Health. For example, the inconsistency found in a study of the culinary practices and related confidences of young people in Portugal, that although the frequency of cooking amongst girls was much higher confidence, levels amongst both boys and girls were similar (Rodrigues and de Almieda, 1996), may be explained by this complex interrelationship. The findings from this current research show that, although confidence in domestic cooking can be linked to experience or frequency of cooking, it can also be connected with other approaches towards

domestic cooking (the person who does not have to cook for others and cooks out of choice, for example, may be a more confident cook) and to 'confident personalities'.

Despite efforts to examine and explain the many aspects and nuances of this relationship in greater detail, it was decided that data did not provide sufficient evidence to do so. (A hypothetical model of the set of relationships influencing the domestic cooking practices and food choice [in terms of the use of 'raw' and 'pre-prepared' foods] is given in the next chapter.) However, the findings from this study do point towards where further research might provide useful.

Future research should examine in more detail the influence of the 'domestic cooking culture' (such as the high values placed on 'different', 'interesting' and professional food and cooking, the belief that there is 'correct' and 'incorrect' cooking and that cooking requires a 'knack' and so on) on domestic cooking practices and, therefore, on skills acquisition. It should also examine more closely the role of personal approaches towards domestic cooking on practices and skills. In doing so, it may be possible to ascertain which approach is most closely linked with the domestic cook who cooks effortlessly and frequently from raw foods, which with the domestic cook who is most likely to transfer their skills to their children, which with the potential teacher or chef and so on.

Findings from this study also suggest that future research focuses on, and examines in greater detail, *tacit* domestic cooking skills, their acquisition and their part in the relationship between approaches, skills and practices. This current research reveals that it is tacit domestic cooking skills (such as the ability to judge when food is 'cooked', to time foods to be ready simultaneously, to 'adjust' combinations of ingredients, and to organise cooking tasks so that they can be carried out simultaneously with other domestic tasks and so on) that play a key role in the relationship between domestic cooking skills and domestic cooking practices and food choice (via approaches towards domestic cooking). The findings from this study suggest that it is the tacit skills gained through experience that are most likely to promote confident and frequent cooking with raw foods. They support those of Demas (1995) who, in her interventionist study of cookery classes and children in an elementary school, found that once the children who took part in her study had

required skills and knowledge about timing, estimation and judgement they became more confident about cooking. She concludes that "once this type of insight about a food is developed, the cook is confident to explore further experiments and be creative (p. 95). The findings of this current research also suggest that the greater a person's tacit domestic cooking skills are the less they perceive cooking as an 'effort'. The findings also hint that it is tacit or secondary skills, gained from experience, that are the skills most likely to help the individual 'side-step' a general lack of confidence and/or the cultural approaches towards domestic cooking that can discourage cooking with 'raw' foods. As skills specialists have pointed out it is secondary or tacit skills, because they are linked to the perceptual stage of 'what is going on?', that provide confidence in ability to perform a task. It is secondary or tacit skills that allow planning and organisation (Pinch, Collins and Corbone, 1996, Singleton, 1978 and Wellens, 1974).

Another key area where findings from this study suggest future research may provide useful knowledge is the relationship between approaches towards domestic cooking, domestic cooking skills and *actual* food choice (the *types* of foods chosen rather than the degree of pre-preparation of those types of foods).

The implications of these findings for the wider concerns surrounding domestic cooking skills, such as deskilling, and for research and policy will be discussed in the next chapter.

CHAPTER 7

THE MEANING OF COOKING

The previous four chapters have set out, described and examined the findings of this research and the implications for current concerns and further research specific to those findings. Taking the findings as a whole, and informed by the new, broader, perspective and 'way of thinking about' domestic cooking and cooking skills they provide, this chapter begins by re-assessing the debates and concerns that surround domestic cooking and cooking skills. It does so in three main sections. The first section examines theoretical propositions about the state of domestic cooking and cooking skills in contemporary Britain (as described in chapter 1). The second section looks at the relationship between people's domestic cooking practices and skills and their food choice. The third section examines the contribution made by the findings of this study to current debates about social processes, family relationships and domestic cooking and cooking skills. This chapter then moves on to provide a hypothetical model (developed from the findings of this study) of the set of relationships influencing the domestic cooking practices and food choice of domestic cooks, make suggestions for further research and discuss the implications of these findings for campaigners and policy makers. The researcher's reflections on the process of carrying out this study and a summary of the seven key findings conclude this chapter and the thesis as a whole.

Cooking Skills

As has been discussed elsewhere in this thesis (see chapter 1 and chapter3), there are many different ways of looking at and interpreting the concept of 'cooking skills'. For example, the focus can be 'task centred', on the skills involved in cooking tasks, or it can be 'person centred', on the skills of a person carrying out those cooking tasks and doing so in a particular context (such as providing food for a family in a domestic kitchen). As a review of the surrounding literature reveals, even when the

focus is specifically 'task centred' and on practical techniques, the level of complexity associated with 'cooking skills' can vary considerably. Many studies of domestic cooking (Adamson, 1996; Lang et al., 1999; Nicolaas, 1995; Rodrigues and de Almeida, 1996 and Street, 1996) refer to such tasks as 'preparing vegetables', 'making a white sauce', 'grating cheese', 'microwaving' and 'making custard'. These simply described tasks are called 'cooking skills'. In contrast, an article in the professional catering magazine 'Restaurants and Institutions' uses 370 words to describe the skills and knowledge involved in 'poaching'. The following quote is just a short excerpt:

> Various ingredients may be added for flavor or garnish. They should be added in such a way that they are properly cooked without being overcooked and have the best flavor, color and texture. [...] Poach the food until it is fork-tender [...]. Poached foods that are served hot should be fully cooked, then removed from the poaching liquid and served. A brief resting period may be beneficial for items that need to be sliced or in those cases where the poaching liquid will become part of the sauce. (Restaurant and Institutions, 1993, 191)

'Poaching', as it is treated in this article, is a complex 'cooking skill' involving mechanical and perceptual skills and abilities, technical standards and knowledge about the foods being poached or the manner in which those foods will be served.

Early findings from this current study indicated that the most useful way in which to gain insight into, and examine the connections between, people's approaches to domestic cooking, their food practices and food choice and their domestic cooking skills and knowledge was to view 'cooking skills' as both 'person centred' and complex. Therefore this research examined 'cooking skills' from the perspective of the domestic cook preparing and providing food for themselves, their partners, their families and, on occasion, their friends, relations, children's friends, work colleagues and so on, in the domestic kitchen. 'Cooking skills' were interpreted as, not only the informants' practical cooking abilities, mechanical skills and use of techniques, but also as their timing, planning, budgeting, judgement and organisation abilities.

Understanding and interpreting domestic cooking and cooking skills in this more complex and 'person centred' way is not new. The Royal Society of Arts' Focus on Food campaign magazine (Cook School, 2002, 55), for example, describes how "compiling a week's menu [for a household] will mean making complex planning decisions, balancing cost against other factors such as people's likes and dislikes, convenience, health, nutrition, occasion, personal skills and available equipment". Similarly, many studies and debates, other than this current one, have noted how people's shopping patterns and cooking practices are connected with their cooking skills. (In chapter 6 of this thesis it was shown how one informant shopped almost entirely on a 'one-trip to the supermarket' weekly basis, planning entire meals for the week ahead for each separate member of her family and for any guests that might visit. In contrast, another informant shopped on an almost daily basis for foods that looked particularly good or fresh and then, using a store of staples such as rice, pasta, flour and so on, she and her partner 'made up' meals. Davies and Madran (1997, 81) in their study of approaches to time and food preferences describe how some people plan meals whilst shopping "using the retailer's shelves as prompts". Dowler (1996) describes how families with low financial resources who took part in her study of lone parent families had complex routines for shopping, buying only those foodstuffs that would, not only stay within budget, but also maintain their household food stocks for cooking). However, a clear acknowledgement that this approach to 'cooking skills' is 'person centred' (as opposed to 'task centred'), and therefore necessitates taking into consideration the context - the resources, the desires and preferences of others, fitting tasks in and around other non-cooking tasks and so on - is new. This current research, in doing so, contributes an additional, clearly defined perspective to understanding and knowledge of domestic cooking and cooking skills in contemporary Britain and raises new issues and questions relevant to the various surrounding debates and concerns.

Firstly, when 'cooking skills' are understood as being 'person centred' it becomes difficult to clearly ascertain at what point they could be understood and defined as, for example, 'shopping skills' or 'home management skills'. This difficulty is a pointer as to how complex and intertwined the relationship between domestic cooking practices, food choice and cooking skills and knowledge is, and how difficult it is to treat these aspects separately.

Secondly, this more apprised view of 'cooking skills' then raises questions about the level at which an individual can be considered as 'having' a cooking skill? In the case of poaching, for example, does the cook have to be to produce food that is generally considered edible or are there other technical standards to be reached? Should poached food simply be that which is no longer raw or should it be cooked, perhaps, to the point of being perfectly 'fork-tender' as in the description on the previous page? Does the person who is 'able' to poach need to know how this technique fits into, say, British or French (professional) cuisine? Do they have to be able to poach a range of foods, perhaps attaining a certain technical standard, without recourse to recipes or instruction or under pressure of time? Examining what constitutes 'having' a cooking skill then leads to consideration of what constitutes 'being able to cook', particularly when both popular and academic debates suggest that people not only 'do not have cooking skills' but 'cannot cook' (Bell, 1998; Billen, 1997; Gofton and Ness, 1993; Leith, 1998; Ripe, 1993; Stitt, 1996 and Stitt et al., 1996). To be 'able to cook' does a domestic cook need to be able to cook effortlessly with all the foodstuffs and ingredients available to them in the locale in which they live or shop for food? Does 'being able to cook' refer to an ability to prepare healthy food, that fits dietary requirements, for a family or household? Does it necessitate an ability to achieve certain technical standards? 'Being able to cook' could also be interpreted as the ability to prepare the myriad of different foods and cuisines available in Britain today (this 'myriad' being illustrated here by Warde and Marten's [2000] description of the different ways steaks were described by their respondents in a study of eating out):

> Steaks were described [by respondents] in many ways. They were, for instance, identified by type (T-bone steak, rib steak, sirloin steak, rump steak, beef steak and (double) fillet steak were all mentioned), by accompanying sauces and ingredients (steak with mushrooms and mushroom sauce, onions, barbecue sauce, as well as peppered steak, Chateaubriand steak, steak diane, steak with baluchi dressing and tampaquina steak with chilli were all eaten, as well as by cooking technique (respondents commented on eating rare rump steak, medium rare steak, well-done steak, grilled steak, plain steak and steak burger). (Warde and Martens, 2000, 79)

'Being able to cook' might also refer, as is suggested by the words of the professional cook Gary Rhodes in the magazine Cook School that supports the Royal Society of Arts' Focus on Food campaign, to the ability to reach certain accepted standards and/or to cook within the style and preferred tastes of a particular cuisine:

> I believe that young people should be taught to make and cook well-crafted, good quality dishes. [...] It is important to know about and use foundation recipes. These are the basic recipes that are traditionally used in cooking where the proportions of the ingredients remain the same unless variation is added. (Rhodes, 2002, 56)

Current debates about the state of domestic cooking and cooking skills and suggestions that deskilling is a feature tend to be stronger on ideology than on evidence (see chapter 1 for more detail). What constitutes 'cooking skills', and indeed 'cooking', has been the subject of very little empirical research (though Gabriels's [1990] study of the work and workers in the catering industry, including cooking and cooks, is an exception). By showing the ambiguity surrounding domestic 'cooking' and 'cooking skills' the findings of this research reveal how these debates can only develop once a firm understanding of concepts such as 'cooking', 'cooking skills' and 'cooking ability' is established. For example, an explanation of why British cooks 'cannot cook' or 'do not have cooking skills' may not lie, as is widely accepted, in the ready availability and use of 'pre-prepared' foods and domestic and industrial technology. It could be that the generally accepted state of 'being able to cook' becomes ever-more difficult for the domestic cook to attain because it necessitates an ever-increasing ability to use, perhaps even accomplish certain technical standards with, the ever-increasing variety of foods, techniques and cuisines, available:

> In comparison with earlier days, domestic cooks must know a lot more about the composition of meals and techniques of preparation, and be able to follow manifold fashions. This makes the task of cooking for a family a more demanding one. (Mennell, Murcott and van Otterloo, 1994, 90)

The following paragraphs re-examine, in view of the new perspective and 'way of thinking about' domestic cooking and cooking skills that the findings from this research provide, the debates (as described and explained in chapter 1), about the state of domestic cooking and cooking skills in contemporary Britain, deskilling and the use of industrially, 'pre-prepared' foods.

Academics from many disciplines, including Fieldhouse (1995), Warde (1997), and Stitt (1996), have stated that 'deskilling' is a feature of domestic cooking in contemporary Britain. In his book on the McDonaldization of society - the 'rational' pursuit of efficiency, calcubility, control and predictability at the, unacknowledged, expense of the environment and human social processes and relationships – Ritzer (1996) argues that domestic cooking is being deskilled by the pursuit of rational 'ideals' via the use of pre-prepared food, recipes and technology such as the microwave. For Ritzer, the deskilling of domestic cooking, and the associated disintegration of the family as well as bad diets high in sugar and salt, is the result of the proliferation and ubiquity of pre-prepared and fast foods, the recipe and kitchen technology. He regards fast food and microwaves, tv dinners and pre-packaged food mixes as examples of the efficiency dimension of McDonaldization; cookery books and recipes as examples of calcubility and efficiency. Freeze dried foods and microwaveable meals and the merging of regional and ethnic foods he sees as examples of the predictability ideal; the use of pre-prepared food as an example of the control dimension.

Ritzer, however, tends to treat 'cooking', and therefore 'cooking skills', as 'task centred'. 'Cooking' with microwaves and recipes and an ever-increasing array of pre-prepared foods and packet mixes, he argues, "requires few and easy skills" and resembles a "game of connect-the-dots or painting by numbers" (p. 102) therefore 'cooking' is being deskilled. He tends not to see 'cooking' as being carried out by individuals, whether alone or with others, as taking place within a particular context, either domestic, commercial or institutional, or under particular circumstances, such as catering to others needs, keeping within a budget or coping with limited resources. However, once 'cooking' is seen as taking place within a particular context and as consisting of different tasks carried out by individual cooks, as in this research, then

deskilling becomes a more ambiguous and complex issue as will be explained in the following paragraphs.

Most of the individual domestic cooks who took part in this study could be viewed as 'cooking' with pre-prepared foods by 'connecting-the-dots' on at least some, if not numerous, occasions. However, most did not 'cook' in this manner all the time. This finding supports that of Warde (1997, 177) who reported that, in a study of food practices and choice in Manchester in the early 1990s, he found "no whole-hearted embrace of the ready-prepared products of the food industry." In other words, as in this study, he did not find that people *only* used 'pre-prepared' and 'ready-prepared' foods. (The findings of his study revealed that people generally valued convenience and 'pre-prepared' foods very highly but they also, on at least some occasions, preferred to use 'raw' foods to show care and effort.) By revealing the complexity of domestic cooking skills and by showing how they can be interpreted as both 'person centred' and 'task centred' this current study highlights how, although the individual may only *require* simple, technical skills to provide food, they may not always only *apply* simple, technical skills in doing so. Many of the informants who took part in this current study spoke of 'cooking' a 'fry-up' or porridge for breakfast at the weekend but would not consider doing more than opening a cereal box during the week. Many spoke of how they would 'cook' with 'pre-prepared' foods or maybe even re-heat a ready meal for weekday evening meals especially if it was 'just for themselves'. The same people might, however, sometimes 'cook' with a higher proportion of 'raw' foods, use instruction, make a special trip to the shops and so on when 'cooking' for guests or for a special occasion. At other times they might 'create' a sandwich, snack or meal from leftovers in the 'fridge. The informant who, in the course of making sushi one Sunday, made a special trip to the shops, used more than one cook book and prepared a number of different types of fish was the same one who, the next day, made a chicken casserole from a ready-jointed chicken and instant gravy granules. When 'cooking skills' are interpreted as 'person centred' then, the theory of 'deskilling by pre-prepared foods' (as proposed by Fieldhouse, 1995; Ritzer, 1996; Stitt, 1996 and others) seems to be an over- simplification.

The contextual nature of cooking (cooking takes place, and cooking skills are applied, only in a particular context), as revealed by this research, also calls into

question the approach taken to deskilling and domestic cooking taken by Ritzer. Cooking with limited resources of money and time, under pressure from children to eat immediately or by their mere presence in the kitchen, and cooking to suit others tastes, requirements and preferences, can be all be seen as elements of 'cooking' that require 'cooking skills' even if pre-prepared foods are involved. In addition, the well-documented rise of cooking as a leisure and recreational activity (Lang et al., 1999; McKie and Wood, 1992; Mennell, 1996 and Warde, 1997), (supported by findings from this current research), where the emphasis is on trying out new foods and recipes and devoting time to the task, provides a further argument that Ritzer's approach to domestic cooking and deskilling via the rationalised domestic cooking ideals of efficiency, calcubility, control and predictability, is oversimplified.

Findings from this research also raise questions about what tends to be seen as the straightforward deskilling properties of 'pre-prepared' foods and their use (Fieldhouse, 1995; Mintz, 1985 and 1996 and Stitt, 1996) by domestic cooks. They show that the concepts of 'raw' or 'fresh' and 'pre-prepared' are both vague and complex and raise questions as to what terms such as 'basic ingredients', 'fresh foods', 'from scratch', 'raw foods' and 'pre-prepared foods' actually mean. Is dried pasta a 'raw food' or 'pre-prepared food'? Is it correct to describe a loaf of bread, a jar of marmalade, sausages or burgers as 'raw' or 'pre-prepared'? Most of the informants who took part in this study viewed whole, ready-cooked meals as 'pre-prepared' but there was no consistency in their understanding of such food items as tinned tomatoes, chicken fillets or portions and even ice-cream, baked beans and fish fingers as being either 'pre-prepared' or 'raw'. Indeed, foods such as ice-cream, baked beans and breakfast cereals were seen by the majority of the informants as 'basic food commodities', that is foodstuffs that they would never consider cooking 'from scratch'. The findings also raise questions as to the differences between the skills involved in 'cooking' with 'pre-prepared' foods and 'cooking' with 'raw' foods. A fish finger and 'goujon' of fresh fish made with flour, egg and breadcrumbs, for example, both require similar skills to 'cook'. They both need to be 'cooked', either by grilling, baking, frying and so on, to a desired or preferred texture, colour and 'doneness' (although the fresh goujon would require more skills in that it would have to be prepared beforehand). When the concept of 'cooking skills' is interpreted as being 'person centred' and specifically domestic then the

difference in skills becomes even more ambiguous as does the role of 'pre-prepared' foods in any deskilling. Being able to concentrate and cook when children are desperate to eat immediately or cooking for someone who will only eat it when food is cooked 'just so' would involve similar domestic cooking skills whether it was fish fingers or fresh, 'raw' fish goujons that were being prepared. The domestic cook who cooks the pre-prepared fish finger may also, of course, be the one who prepares and cooks the fresh fish goujon. In this way these findings show that it can be an oversimplification to say that using 'pre-prepared' foods requires only simple skills and that cooking with them requires less skills than cooking with 'raw' foods. They show that the role of 'pre-prepared' foods in any deskilling (if, that is, deskilling is a feature of domestic cooking in contemporary Britain) cannot be taken as implicit and straightforward.

Technology, not only that which is used to produce the industrially 'pre-prepared' foods discussed above but also that of the domestic kitchen, is likewise seen as being a key part of deskilling (Lang et al., 1999; Mintz, 1996; Ritzer, 1996 and Stitt, 1996). However, with the added insight, understanding of the concept of 'cooking skills' and intricately researched 'way of thinking about' domestic cooking skills provided by this research, it can be seen that this too may be a debate that has been over-simplified and that requires further research. The findings of this current study raise questions about how cooking skills differ according to the use of different, or no, technologies, when carrying out the tasks of 'cooking'. How do the skills involved in the preparation of 'scrambled eggs', for example, differ when they are 'scrambled' in a microwave as opposed to when they are 'scrambled' in a pan on an electric or gas hob? Both require that eggs are broken and mixed together (unless ready-mixed egg is used), seasoned as desired and stirred to some degree as they cook. The cook, in both cases, has to judge when they are 'cooked' to the desired degree. This may even require greater skill when unseen and happening at a much greater speed in the microwave. Domestic kitchen technology might therefore, in a case such as this, be seen as giving rise to new skills, as being a force for "reskilling" (Gabriel, 1990, 11). The Royal Society of Arts' magazine to accompany its Focus on Food campaign, Cook School (2002), gives two recipes for making 'The Perfect Pie Crust'; one for making it 'by hand' and one for making it in a food processor. Apart from 'rubbing the fat into the flour', for the 'by hand' recipe, and 'pulsing the processor' to mix the

fat and flour, for the food processor recipe, most of the skills referred to are similar. Both tasks require the collection, measurement and preparation of ingredients. Both tasks require that the fat is cut by hand, that the cook judges the best time to add sufficient water to make a dough of 'correct' and useful consistency and that the dough is formed into a ball and rolled out. The skills involved in both methods of making the 'perfect pie crust', and the scrambled eggs, might be even more similar if 'cooking skills' are interpreted as being specifically domestic and 'person centred' for they would both then include such (tacit) skills as timing, organisation and so on.

For Braverman, deskilled workers are artisans set to work to perform detail labour and stripped of decision making and planning responsibilities (they carry out part of a whole task and none of the design or planning stage of making a product) in an environment of industrial technology. The tasks involved in domestic cooking, however, are more complex in that the same tasks can take place in variable contexts and settings and with different resources (for example, different amounts of finances available or time to devote to the task). In addition, as Oakley has pointed out in a report of her study of domestic housework and 'housewives' (1985), unlike industrial technology, domestic kitchen technology tends to only carry out part of a whole task. A food processor may speed up pastry making slightly but it does not measure out ingredients, judge consistency or roll the pastry dough out. Nor does it go to the shops, decide with what it will be filled, wash itself or help in keeping the children occupied. Gabriel (1990) also makes the point that even industrial technology (as used in the catering industry he studied) can vary from workplace to workplace; only in some is it used to totally replace "the human factor":

> Some catering technologies allow the worker some scope to affect only the speed of production, the quality of the product or its presentation. Some, however, have been designed with the expressed intention to remove the human factor from catering, to 'stop workers messing about with the recipes'. (Gabriel, 1990, 162)

The findings from this research raise a further issue and one that may have important implications for cooking, eating, nutrition and other food practices. Supporting and expanding on an American study by Sweaney (1993) which found that there was

significantly greater use of microwaves in households where there were children, this current research found that microwaves were used most frequently for cooking occasions not thought particularly 'important' such as 'cooking' for children. The findings suggest, therefore, that there is a relationship between the use of microwaves, 'cooking occasions' thought less important and a lack of concern about achieving the same technical standards as when 'cooking' with a more 'traditional' oven. It might be in this way that domestic kitchen technology plays a role in any 'deskilling' of the domestic cook or domestic cooking.

Fieldhouse (1995) suggests that the oldest form of kitchen technology is the recipe. Ritzer (1996) views the recipe as a clear-cut agent of deskilling. Its consistent use, he argues, can be seen as providing a "major contribution to efficient home cooking" (p. 36) but also as an ultimately inefficient tool in that the cook does not acquire 'cooking skills' (and therefore does not have 'cooking skills' to pass onto children and others). In chapter 4 it was explained how the informants in this study, though they saw recipes as a ubiquitous part of cooking and almost as autonomous, did not solely use recipes for instruction or use recipes on a frequent basis. As a result of these findings, therefore, it was suggested that Ritzer's view of the straightforward, deskilling process effected by the use of recipes might be an over-stressed one. Recipes, it was argued, may well play a role in any deskilling that exists but they do so via their ubiquitous and prescriptive nature. With their titles and glossy photos of finished, correct 'dishes', it was argued, they may promote the view amongst domestic cooks that cooking and cooked foods can be 'correct' or 'incorrect', a success or a failure. This, it was suggested, might form an underlying pressure on 'cooking' and discourage people from 'cooking' with 'raw' foods (and hence contribute to any deskilling in this way). It was also suggested that it might be the recipe's lack of emphasis on understanding ingredients and processes and the tacit skills of judgement, timing and so on (the skills that are most heavily associated with confidence and more frequent use of 'raw' foods) that was potentially deskilling. In an article about writing recipes, Sokolor (1988) takes a 12 word nineteenth century recipe for peach ice-cream and transforms it into what he considers to be a useful recipe if the aim is to understand and learn how to make ice-cream. The result is 572 words, of which the following is an example, with an emphasis on knowledge, the visual and textual aspects and desirable consistencies and flavours:

> Combine the yolk-sugar mixture with the milk in a heavy bottomed saucepan. [...] You are in fact making a custard. Thickening occurs well before boiling at just over 160F. [...] Chop the peaches very finely [...] the idea is to leave shreds or specks of recognisable peach flesh in the ice cream. If the peaches are too large they will freeze solid because of the water they contain. (Sokolor, 1988, 41 – 42)

The deskilling aspect of recipes may well lie in their lack of emphasis on, and appreciation of, those skills and knowledge that are learned through experience and form an integral role in the complex interrelationship between approaches towards domestic cooking, cooking practices and food choice and cooking skills. Indeed, as will now be examined in the paragraphs that follow, the findings from this research as a whole skew debates about the state of domestic cooking in Britain today away from the technical aspects and towards the way in which people appreciate and value domestic cooking and cooking skills.

Overwhelmingly the people who took part in this study valued far more highly the making of 'different and interesting' food by 'professional-like' domestic cooks, than the efficient, effortless making of healthy, nutritious food within a budget by the domestic 'provider' cook. Though many of the informants valued creativity, for example, it was not the creativity of the domestic cook using up the contents of their fridge or visiting the supermarket for some fresh ingredients and 'making up' something for tea or supper from what they found. This was generally viewed as 'bunging things together' or 'just using things up' not as a specific skill of design and creation. Nor did they value the creativity of the professional cook preparing food, perhaps for thousands, keeping within a strict budget and avoiding leftovers, in a hospital or other institution. It was the creativity of the restaurant chef or cookery writer, or the enthusiastic 'chef' in their domestic kitchen, 'creating' and preparing new, interesting and exiting food and 'dishes' that was valued most highly by the people who took part in this study.

A love of variety and difference has been well noted as a feature of food choice and other food practices in contemporary Britain (Beardsworth and Keil, 1997; Caplan,

1997; Mennell, 1996; Mennell, Murcott and van Otterloo, 1995 and Warde and Martens, 2000). Caraher and Lang (1998b) describe how, in a report of their study of the influence of celebrity chefs on public attitudes and behaviour, learning from television cookery programmes fell into six categories. Four of these categories involved themes of difference and novelty – 'new ingredients', 'different cultures', 'the exotic and different' and 'new insight into the familiar'.

This love of variety, novelty and difference may have practical consequences in terms of people's domestic cooking skills and food choice (in terms of their use of 'raw' and 'pre-prepared' foods). The more different foods, cuisines, styles of cooking and techniques that the cook tries (and this research provided evidence that the 'trying out' of recipes, new ideas and foods was a generally recognised concept associated with domestic cooking [see chapter 4) the less practice he or she will get at each. Less practice means less chance of acquiring the tacit skills of experience. The less tacit skills the domestic cook has, this research reveals, the more likely they are to lack confidence about cooking, regard it as an effort and use 'pre-prepared' foods. However, as will be examined and discussed in the following paragraphs, the findings from this study suggest that the domestic cooking value system itself may have important consequences for domestic cooking practices and people's use of 'raw' and 'pre-prepared' foods.

As was explained above, this study's informants placed a high value on a selection of very esoteric concepts to do with creativity (of a particular kind, see above), glamour, professionalism, interest, variety and difference. The findings revealed that it was the domestic cook who displayed attributes that reflected these values that they were most likely to view as being a 'good cook' and as being a 'skilled' cook. The notion of the domestic cook and provider of everyday food in the household as a 'skilled' person did not exist in the accounts of domestic cooking experiences and approaches to cooking given by the people who took part in this study. The informants did not recognise a specific set of skills related to domestic cooking and food provision.

Gabriel's (1990) research into the working lives of people (cooks and others) in the catering industry provides clues as to how to understand the concept of 'craft' in

relation to cooking (though it must be acknowledged that he is looking at the waged labour process and not the domestic labour process). Gabriel examined, not only what the people who took part in his study did in practical terms, but also what they recognised, if they did so at all, as being their 'craft'; how they identified with it and how they valued the associated skills. In an examination of the catering services and catering workers of a large hospital he describes how:

> Cooking at Saint Theresa's allowed plenty of room for talent, individual creativity and skill [...] Saint Theresa's cooks never threw out meat bones without extracting stock, nor did they thicken sauce by merely adding flour. Meat was always quickly fried before being stewed, and the salt was added at the correct moment. (Gabriel, 1990, 33)

These comments are about the cook's skills in terms of the accepted and correct ways of cooking and standards to be met within a professional 'craft' of cooking (though he does not expressly define this 'craft', or use the term 'craft', these words and others suggest that it is akin to the 'French-professional' cooking that is usually taught as 'professional cookery' in British colleges and cookery schools). Gabriel is not making a detailed, objective appraisal of the skills used or commenting on *actual* cooking skills. Thickening many litres of sauce with flour does not require less skill than thickening it with fat or reducing it by boiling but it is a far less valued method (within this craft). A reading of Gabriel's work shows clearly how it is only within a 'craft', where there is generally accepted, even if wide, understanding of what is 'correct', 'good' and 'skilled', that technical standards and desired outcomes in terms of appearance, taste and texture, can be readily and easily acknowledged and appreciated.

Beechey (1982, 64), in a critique of Braverman's theory that industrial capitalism has deskilled the housewife and eroded the family and the household as a centre of production and institution of social life, argues that cooking involves "complex competencies" but that 'cooking' is not "conventionally defined as skilled (unless performed by chefs within capitalist commodity production)". The findings from this current research, as shown above, support this argument as they suggest that

domestic cooking and the domestic cook are less valued and less associated with 'skill' and 'being skilled' than the professional cook (albeit only certain types of 'glamorous' professional cooks and cooking). They also suggest, as will be explained in the paragraphs that follow, that the 'recreational cook', and the food they cook for guests and special occasions, is valued more highly than the everyday, mundane provision of food for families, partners and so on, and the 'day-to-day fare' they entail.

It is well recognised that cooking in the contemporary British household is often recreational and can take the form of a specific leisure activity (Lang et al., 1999; McKie and Wood, 1992; Warde, 1997 and Warde and Martens, 2000). Caraher and Lang (1998b, 3), in their study of the influence of celebrity chefs and television cookery on public attitudes and behaviour, refer to estimates from the Henly Centre (1994) that "over 36% of British adults now cook at least once a week for pleasure". They suggest that this "epitomises an apparent move of cooking from a chore or production skill to a section of the leisure industry." Findings from this current research show that for many cooks 'cooking' is a leisure activity on at least some occasions and for some cooks it is only ever a leisure activity. They also show that it is the 'leisure cook' who produces glamorous, 'different' and 'interesting' food and 'titled dishes' from recipes and cookery books, the cook who cooks for dinner parties and openly demonstrates their knowledge of food and cuisine and their technical expertise who is highly valued and likely to be thought of as 'skilled'. The findings also reveal that the food and skills of the domestic cook cooking 'recreationally' for an important 'cooking occasion', such as a dinner party for guests, are more likely to be highly valued and associated with 'being skilled' than the food and skills of the cook who cooks the everyday food that feeds and nourishes people and families.

These findings support the view of Bell and Valentine (1997) who suggest that there is prevailing value system surrounding domestic cooking that places greater value on having a sophisticated knowledge about food (about the geography and history of numerous foods, cuisines and techniques, about the nutritive qualities and so on) than on the ability to feed a family a healthy diet. Findings from a survey of schoolchildren and young people by Health Which? (1998, 15) suggest that this leisure focus may not be related solely to adult behavior but may reflect more

widespread and general approaches towards cooking in contemporary Britain. The survey found that when the children who took part were asked what they would like to be able to make "roast dinners with all the trimmings, authentic Indian and Chinese dishes, luxury cakes or puddings, fish and pasta dishes" took precedence over methods and techniques such as freezing and defrosting, preparing food, basic hygiene and using recipes. For Gofton (1995, 174), discussing the use of 'convenience' foods, it is deskilled cooks who "use the realm of leisure to demonstrate their personal abilities". A person's/domestic cooks chance to show their (domestic) cooking skills and abilities (and receive recognition or even appreciation for those skills and abilities) is therefore limited to times of recreation, play and leisure when they can easily be viewed as trivial and of little consequence. It is this, he says, that is the de-humanising aspect of deskilling.

A critical issue to be explored in further research is how this value system affects domestic food practices, the use of 'pre-prepared' and 'raw' foods, frequency of cooking, cooking skills and so on. Perhaps most important is an exploration of how the high value placed on the glamorous aspects of domestic cooking ('cooking' interesting food for guests, 'cooking' recreationally and so on) affects the mundane, daily preparation, 'cooking' and provision of food to households and families and the transference from one generation to another of the 'cooking skills' required to do so.

It is this leisure aspect of domestic cooking in contemporary Britain, as well as the restructuring of the food economy and the rise of 'pre-prepared' foods, that has led Lang et al. (1999, 31) to argue that, rather than a deskilling, recent years have seen "a revision of culinary skills". The same authors, discussing similar themes in another article (Lang and Caraher, 2001, 2), put forward the "Cooking Skills Transition thesis" or "the process in which whole cultures experience fundamental shifts in the pattern and kind of skills required to get food onto tables and down throats". Their argument is that "cooking skills are being re-structured and fragmenting with different lifestyles". This current research, by revealing the complexity and individualist nature of cooking skills supports their thesis whilst simultaneously highlighting the potentially changeless and constant nature of many domestic cooking skills. Skills such as judging when food is 'cooked', timing the preparation and cooking of different foods to be ready simultaneously and planning and

organising when food can be prepared during a busy day, are used when cooking with both 'raw' and 'pre–prepared' foods.

The issue of 'cooking skills' will be returned to later in this chapter when the discussion shifts its focus to the implications of the findings for further research, policy makers and specialists. The next section re-assesses the debates and concerns surrounding domestic cooking and cooking skills and food choice.

Food Choice

Food choice, or food preference, is a simple, commonly used term for a complex and multi-disciplinary subject (Murcott, 1998b). Even Atkins and Bowler's (2001) straightforward overview of food choice lists six disciplinary approaches – ecological, biological, psychological, economical, physical and socio-cultural.

In her introduction to the collection of reports arising from a research programme into food choice commissioned by the Economic and Social Science Research Council, Murcott (1998b) points out that within the social sciences there are many differences in approach. For example psychologists, she says, focus on the individual and the cognitive processes involved in choice within a given array of foods. Sociologists and social anthropologists, on the other hand, focus on the collective, many taking an approach that "denies the existence of choice" (p. 19). Those that take this approach, Murcott says, argue that people act in accordance with social groups and identities and "cultural conventions running right through the social organisation of eating, whole cuisines and the economic systems in which they are set" (p. 19). Those who carried out research for the programme have examined a vast number of issues either connected with, or an influence on, people's food choice and preference. Williams et al. (1998) looked at religion and ethnicity, Wrigley (1998) at retailers and their development of new products, Kemmer, Anderson and Marshall (1998) at 'life-stage' and Macintyre, Reilly and Eldridge (1998) at marketing and so on.

Experts in health promotion have long acknowledged that people's approaches to cooking and their cooking skills may be connected with their food choices, though they have questioned the extent of that role (Dowler, 1996; James and McColl, 1997; Lang and Caraher, 2001 and Lang et al., 1999.) It is within public health research and information that approaches to cooking and cooking skills are clearly acknowledged as influences. The tendency however is to see both approaches to cooking and cooking skills as simple concepts having a straightforward influence (whatever the extent of that influence) on food choice. Cooking skills are seen as having a simple, practical, ability related influence on food practices and food choice. A person's confidence in cooking is seen as arising directly from their practical skills and abilities and as a similarly direct influence on the individual's food practices and food choice. This can be seen in a model of the determinants of food and nutrition choice and security in the U.K., contained in a report by the Low Income Project Team for the Nutrition Task Force of the Department of Health (Department of Health, 1996), as given in figure 7.1. In this model, 'cooking skills' and the "ability and confidence to prepare healthier foods" are seen as "food preparation practices" that (guided by "foods households can buy", "eating patterns" and "cooking facilities") directly affect food choice and foods consumed by individuals. They are also seen as separate determinants distinct from others such as "food availability" and "national and local policies" but also from "food tastes and preferences", "family food hierarchy", "family food acceptability", "information" and "social and cultural norms".

The findings from this current research show that cooking skills and abilities do not influence food choice (in terms of their use of 'raw' and 'pre-prepared' foods), and other food practices, in a straightforward manner untouched by other factors. Rather, they are an influence as part of a complex interrelationship in which it is difficult to separate people's domestic cooking skills, their approaches to cooking and their domestic cooking practices and food choice. An individual's domestic cooking practices and food choices have an influence on the skills and knowledge they acquire. Their approach towards domestic cooking is influenced by their domestic cooking skills, their personal, individual approach to food and cooking, the structure of their household, the domestic cooking culture and so on. In turn, their approach towards cooking (including domestic cooking) influences their cooking practices.

(See chapter 6 for an explanation of, and diagram illustrating, the complex interrelationship revealed by the findings of this study.)

A suggestion for how this model may be revised and allow for the more complex interpretations of 'cooking skills' and 'approaches to domestic cooking' revealed by this study, is given in figure 7.2. (This model has only been revised in terms of domestic cooking and domestic food and nutrition security, this research did not look at cooking outside the home so does not comment on or revise these aspects of the model.) In this revised model it is shown how (by use of italics) different aspects of domestic cooking feature as part of determinants such as "information", "intra-household distribution", "choice" and "foods households and individuals choose to buy". It is also shown how (by the use of dotted lines) the relationship between an individual's cooking skills and food choice is not simple and 'one-way' but 'feeds back on itself' as their food practices and food choice influences their domestic cooking skills, approaches to cooking and so on.

(A hypothetical model of the domestic cooking process, formulated from the findings of this study, is given later in this chapter [see figure 7.3].)

Figure 7.1. Determinants of Food and Nutrition Choice and Security in the UK (DOH, 1996, 4)

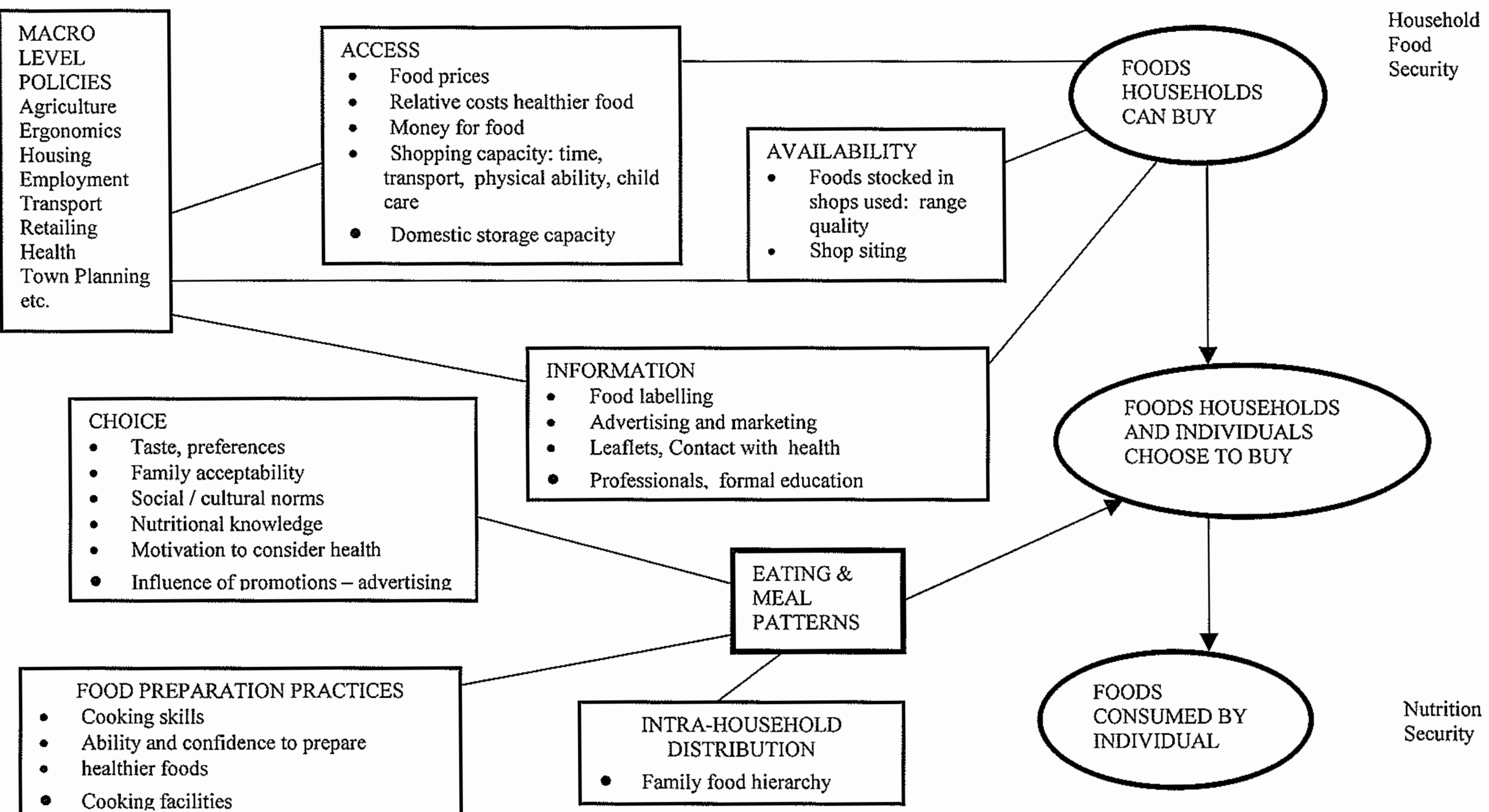
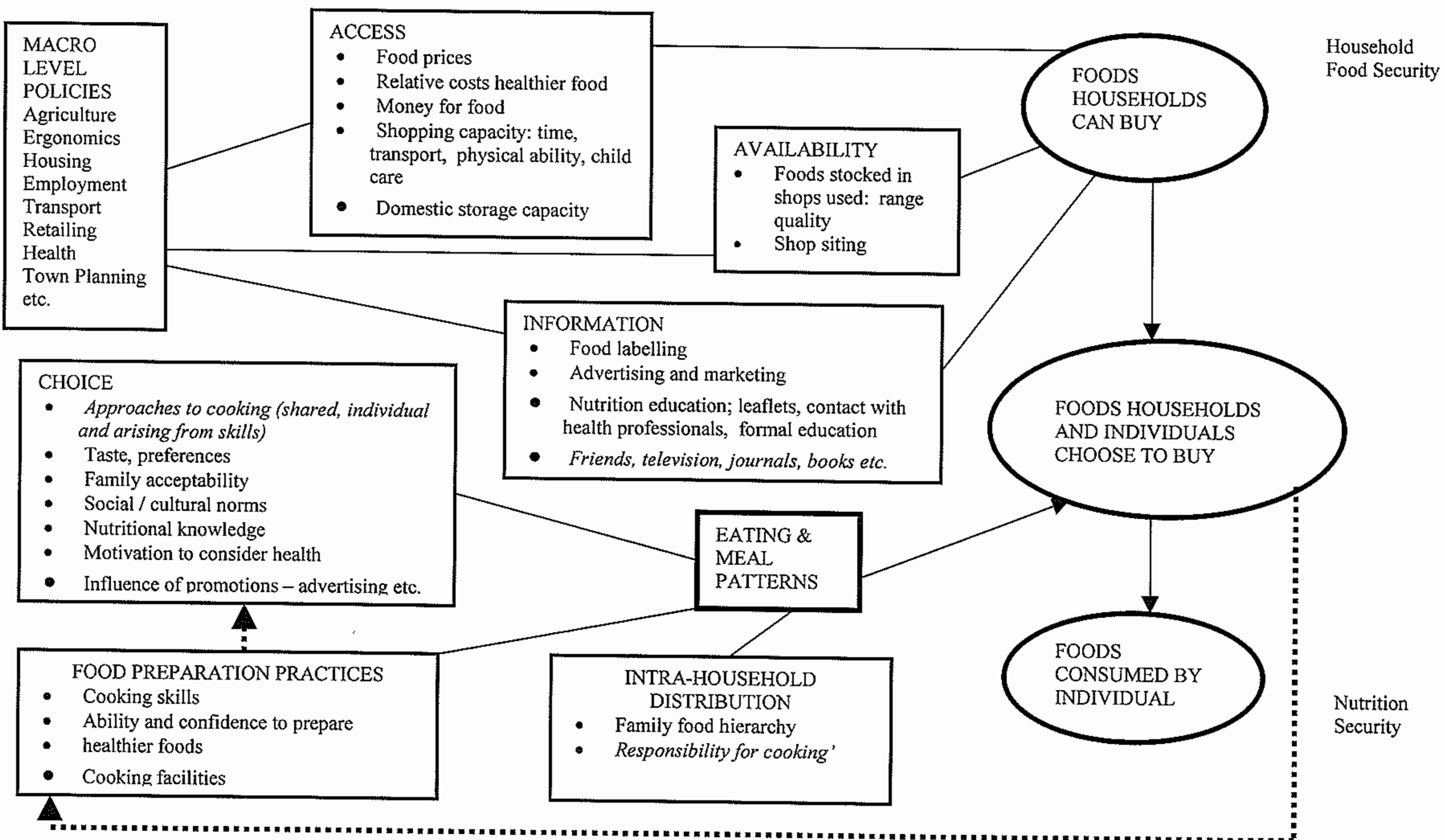


Figure 7.2. Suggestions for a Revised Model of the Determinants of Food and Nutrition Choice and Security in the UK



As was explained in the introductory, first chapter of this thesis a number of sociologists and social anthropologists have studied food habits and practices as a means of exploring wider social and cultural issues. Although the emphasis in these studies has been on the food choice aspect of food practices, food preparation or cooking are also examined, at least to a degree. These social-anthropological and sociological studies, by providing theoretical and empirical insight, were used to develop the design of this current study of domestic cooking and cooking skills. They were used to establish the views and perspectives of different disciplines and individual specialists, the context of the concerns for the research and what would be useful knowledge to develop. In turn therefore, the findings from this current research can provide insight into, and enhance understanding of, these studies of food practices. (They can also, of course, inform specific studies of domestic cooking and cooking skills and popular debates about the state of cooking in contemporary Britain). These insights and interpretations are the focus of the next section of this chapter.

The findings of this research can provide insight into a number of key areas of concern for studies of the social aspects of domestic food practices. They are discussed under five headings that take into account both these key areas for concern and the findings of this current research – self and group identity, the family and individualism, gender, anxiety and mystique and life enhancement.

Identity

In chapter 5 it was explained how this research did not aim to discover whether an individual's self-identity was linked to their domestic cooking practices and skills and their approach to domestic cooking. Therefore the findings cannot really extend debates about food choice and consumption, taste and self-identity (debates about the connections between food choice and lifestyle groups, class position, social divisions and mass culture [Bourdieu, 1986; Beardsworth and Keil, 1997; Fischler, 1988 and Warde, 1997] that form a large part of sociological and social anthropological interest in food practices. They do, however, show that people have their own personal approaches towards domestic cooking and suggest and that these 'cooking

identities' are intricately connected with their domestic cooking practices, food choices, cooking skills, the 'cooking culture', cooking responsibilities, personality and so on. The second stage of research revealed that each of the informants who took part had their own, very individual approach towards, and beliefs about, domestic cooking. For example, a male informant readily admitted that cooking was a hobby for him, something he could 'tackle' and 'make achievements in'. He could take this approach, he explained, because he could choose what he wanted to cook and when to cook it as preparing and providing food for the family was not generally his responsibility. In contrast, other male informants spoke very definitely of 'not cooking' and of not being 'interested' in cooking and were scathing of those who are. One young woman viewed 'cooking' as something you did with recipes and 'raw' foods for guests, friends and special occasions only. Another female informant explained how she and her partner felt it was their responsibility to cook for themselves and their children from 'raw' foods whenever possible (at least from Monday to Friday) and that this had a direct impact on their working patterns and hours.

Davies and Madran (1997, 82), in a report of a time and attitude study of shopping and cooking, argue that there is a particular approach to cooking that "can be expected to influence the time taken in cooking and shopping". This approach, they say, is not just a "positive attitude towards meal preparation" but a very personal sort of "joy of cooking". The findings from this study reveal that the domestic cook who uses 'raw' foods (rather than 'pre-prepared' foods) on those cooking occasions not thought 'important' as well as those that are is opting out of the 'domestic cooking culture'. In other words, it is normal (both in practice and opinion) for domestic cooks in contemporary Britain to use 'pre-prepared' foods especially for cooking occasions not thought important. Therefore, those who use 'raw foods' on these occasions have taken a personal, policy-like decision to do so and have opted out of the 'domestic cooking culture'.

Gender

The findings of this study provided insight into men's and women's experiences of, and approaches towards, domestic cooking and cooking skills. In doing so it supports social research (Coxon, 1983; Keane and Willets, 1996; Murcott, 1995a and 1995b; Warde and Hethrington, 1994 and Warde and Martens, 2000) by showing that, as Gillon, McKorkindale and McKie (1993, 9) say, men and women "have a completely different relationship" to each other in regards to the "selection, preparation, presentation and consumption of food in our present day society." It also supports public health research (Lang et al., 1999) which has shown gender to be key difference in people's confidence about cooking and their domestic cooking practices. These findings also contribute to debates about food practices and consumption theories

It was only the men who took part in this study who saw themselves as having a choice whether to cook or not, hence it was only men who could see food and cooking purely as 'hobby' or as something they were definitely 'not interested' in. As Warde and Martens found (2000, 98) "a woman's contribution [to food tasks] does not vary with respect to her general interest in food" whereas a man's contribution relies on his choosing to do so:

> If a man cooks, it is something he enjoys and is not equivalent to mundane work. Such men use this attitude to 'explain' their involvement, and why they are different from other men. (Warde and Martens, 2000, 98)

Only women saw themselves as 'domestic providers of food' on a day to day basis. Only men used expressions such as 'my speciality' or 'my recipe for' or the term 'chef' to describe a domestic cook. As Keane and Willetts (1996) found in a study of household food practices in south-east London, men were far more than women to view their cooking as 'an art' or as being 'creative'. Men, far more frequently than women, saw cooking as something that could involve 'achievement' and success or failure. There were also suggestions from this research that men were less likely than women to take responsibility for, or feel responsible for, their children receiving

a healthy diet or learning to cook and acquiring cooking skills. This reflects the view of Lang and Caraher (2001, 5) in an article that discusses the 'revision of cooking skills' that men do not tend to "take responsibility for teaching children to cook". (Though it must be pointed out that neither the male nor female informants who took part in this study specifically aimed to 'teach' their children or sought information about doing so).

This current research, therefore, lends support to Warde's (1997) concluding remarks, following an extensive study of food choice, consumption and taste, that, despite evidence of hierarchical class differences, neo-tribal behaviours and mass rationalisation, it is gender that has the biggest influence on people's experiences of, and approaches towards, domestic cooking.

The Family and Individualism

Warde and Martens (2000) talk of the family meal as a "private, intimate, relaxed and participatory event" (p. 93). Though some have argued that there is no clear evidence (Morrison, 1996; Murcott 1997b and 2000 and Wood, 1995), the family meal is generally seen (Demas, 1995; Leith, 1997 and Mintz, 1996) as having a positive and important role to play in social relationships and processes within the family:

> The symbolic significance of mother's cooking, which is central to the achievement of emotional security, a token of care and love, as well as the basis for the maintenance of dominant gender and generational relations ... (Warde and Martens, 2000, 93)

Current debates and concerns about the state of domestic cooking and cooking skills tend to see the increasing availability and use of 'pre-prepared' foods as detrimental to the family meal. They are generally viewed (Fieldhouse, 1995; Mintz, 1996 and Ritzer, 1996) as encouraging an individualised, therefore de-socialised, way of obtaining and eating food:

> The apparent increase in the atomization of meal scheduling is related both as cause and effect to the proliferation of 'convenience food' options: fast-food restaurants, ready-made foods, microwave ovens, and individualised 'heat and eat' portions. Food companies have targeted 'individualized portions' and 'heat-and-eat' meals as a growth area for company profits, giving them a strong financial incentive to promote the modular approach to meals over the traditional communal one. (Shore, 2002, 4)

This study contributes to these debates and concerns because it looks at domestic cooking from the perspective of the domestic cook. What it reveals is that the cooking occasions most frequently viewed as the most important by domestic cooks were those where food was prepared and cooked for 'guests' (friends, family and acquaintances from outside the household). These were the 'cooking occasions' most strongly connected with greater 'effort' and use of 'raw' foods, instruction and recipes, special shopping trips, time devoted to cooking and so on. Food for the family or household was seen as food and cooking 'just for us'. As a 'cooking occasion' children's meals were often very low in 'importance'. These findings support Warde's (1997) suggestion that, as a result of a comparative study of women's magazines from 1968 and 1992, 'family care' in terms of food and cooking is in decline. In the 1968 magazines he found references to the family in food columns were frequent and specific. 'Pleasing the family' was seen as a justification for cooking, he says. In 1992 there were less references to families. Guests were more likely to legitimise cooking. By 1992 says Warde, "the food stands for itself, the result of effective performance, a demonstration of culinary expertise or knowledge about food. By the same token it is less an emotional expression of familial care and concern" (p. 137 – 138). Warde's findings also reflect other findings from this current research – that people place greater value on 'creative', 'correct' cooking and technical standards than on the provision of healthy, nutritious food for the household on a daily basis.

This research raised another issue, one that has been discussed earlier in this thesis (see chapter 4), that is pertinent to debates about individualised and de-socialised domestic food practices. Cooking became more individualistic (and was assumed by

the informants to do so) the more 'important' that the 'cooking occasion' was thought to be. Therefore cooking became more individualistic on those occasions when there was a tendency to use a greater quantity of raw foods. These cooks, when they were cooking for 'important cooking occasions', rarely allowed other people to be involved in the cooking because they wanted the food to be 'theirs'. Nor did they let their children help or join in as they felt this might result in their enjoyment of the process of cooking being hampered and/or the lowering of the 'standard' of the food cooked. Similarly, the more that they thought of cooking as an 'interest', as being 'creative' or associated with the attainment of certain technical standards, the more that they cooked alone and the more that they desired to do so. There were also suggestions that the cook whose 'cooking identity' was that of a 'domestic provider of food for the household' was less likely to cook individualistically and was more likly to involve their children in the cooking process. The 'interested' domestic cook, cooking recreationally, perhaps seeing 'cooking' as being 'creative' and involving the achievement of technical standards and using a higher proportion of 'raw' foods, appeared far more likely to choose to cook alone.

Anxiety and Mystique

Theoretical discussions of food choice, taste and consumption often focus on the notion that anxiety, associated with the breakdown of the rules and grammar of food choice, is a theme of food practices (therefore including food preparation or cooking) (Beardsworth and Keil, 1997 and Fischler 1980 and 1988).

Only three of the domestic cooks who took part in this study appeared overtly anxious or lacking in confidence about cooking and/or their cooking abilities and this seemed to be more strongly connected with their personality and individual approach to domestic cooking than with a generally anxious cooking culture.

However, this study found that there was a type of 'myth' or 'mystique' about the difficulty and/or effort, involved in 'cooking, particularly 'cooking' with 'raw' foods, surrounding (domestic) cooking. This did not appear to leave people obviously

anxious about cooking but it was clearly linked with their seeing it as an 'effort'. This 'mystique' appeared to arise from issues related to domestic cooking practices and from approaches towards, and beliefs about, domestic cooking and cooking skills. (See chapter 4 for a description and explanation of the concept of 'effort'.)

The 'mystique' of cooking appeared to arise, in part, from a lack of clear understanding about the skills involved in the tasks of domestic cooking, particularly the tacit skills that are not clearly discernible or observable. Those thought 'good cooks' by the informants were often accredited with a degree of 'natural talent'. So too were many professional cooks whose far greater experience of the practical aspects of cooking than that of the domestic cook and the different skills they used was only clearly acknowledged by one informant. They often referred to a chefs' ability to produce 'interesting' food and 'create' new dishes and recipes but this creativity was seen as being the result of some innate talent rather than experience and the development of skills and existing recipes, combinations of ingredients and so on. . That professional cooks usually cook, at least to a degree, as part of an established 'craft' with its own set of technical standards, preferred food combinations and tastes and so on was not clearly acknowledged by the domestic cooks who took part in this study.

The 'mystique' of 'cooking', or the effort and difficulty associated with 'cooking', also seemed to be connected with the informants general understanding that 'real' or 'proper' cooking involved making a 'dish', perhaps from a recipe with specific ingredients, techniques and standards, and making that dish 'correctly'. Cooking was seen as something that the individual could be successful at or a failure at; cooked food as being 'right' or 'wrong'. As a result, on many cooking occasions it appeared that the informants' could not 'be bothered' to cook 'properly' (see chapter 4 for a fuller description and explanation). This reflects findings from a needs analysis conducted by a Scottish intervention, called Cookwell, designed to investigate a potential low cooking skills base amongst low income communities (Stead et al., 2002). As did this present study, the Cookwell study unearthed a concept whereby cooking and foods were regarded by the domestic cooks who took part in the study as either 'working' or 'not working'. This approach was found to have a very clear influence on their domestic cooking practices and food choice:

> Attempts to cook 'from scratch' which ended in apparent failure (for example, a lumpy cheese sauce, stodgy rice) had the effect not only of reinforcing repondents' poor ratings of their ability but also of encouraging them to turn to convenience and 'easy cook' products such as packet sauces and boil-in-the-bag rice. Because these products 'worked' more often and did not result in wasted food, many had come to rely on them, despite their being less economical. (Stead et al., 2002, 8).

(Despite the well-established convention within both sociology and social anthropology for studying the grammar and rules of 'making meals' [Douglas, 1975 and 1998; Gofton, 1995; Mintz, 1996 and Murcott, 1985, 1995a and 1995b], rules that do not refer to 'dishes', this understanding of the 'dish' as central to 'cooking' can be seen in much of the literature that discusses current concerns [see chapter 4 for a longer discussion of this issue]. Warde and Martens [2000, 3] in a study [for the Economic and Social Research Council's programmed entitled 'The Nation's Diet: The Social Science of Food Choice] that looks in part at the relationship between public eating and domestic cooking suggest that "when people talk of cooking it usually connotes combining and assembling ingredients to create a dish." Similarly, a leaflet issued by the supermarket Waitrose in conjunction with the Royal Society of Art's Focus on Food campaign describes that the 'cooking bus' [a travelling kitchen and teaching centre] is suitable for both pupils and teachers to learn "to prepare and cook a range of dishes".

Practically, the individualistic nature of people's domestic cooking practices may also contribute to the 'mystique' and the 'difficulty' and 'effort' involved in (domestic) cooking. As has been discussed in chapter 4, the informants who took part in this study preferred, and assumed, to cook alone, particularly on those cooking occasions that were considered 'important', thought recreational, and were perhaps more likely to involve 'raw' foods, instruction, information, new ingredients and new techniques. This 'lone' cooking means that people may have only 'perfect' photos from glossy magazines, cookery books and television shows and the standardised products of the food industry as points of comparison. Neither of these points of comparison can show how 'cooked' food and 'dishes' can vary from one

occasion to another and therefore may increase the notion of 'effort' and 'difficulty' involved.

Though it has not been defined or conceptualised specifically as such, the 'mystique' of domestic cooking and its affect on people's approaches towards domestic cooking and their actual practices and food choice has been observed by previous research. This can be seen in the following quotes. The first is from a woman quoted in a study of housework by Oakley (1974) who describes how she feels the need to prepare interesting 'restaurant style' meals for her husband, often finding the 'effort' of doing so somewhat tiring. The second is from a study by Warde and Martens (2000) of the relationship between public eating and domestic cooking. They describe how a woman who took part in their study used ready-made Lasagne because she did not feel she could make it 'correctly' herself:

> Probably my trouble is that I'm trying to be better at it than I need to be. Tom's home so little that when he is at home – even if it's for a fortnight – I feel I've got to cook something interesting, and the effort that goes into that every night is a bit much really. If I were to provide him with just some chops and vegetables, he wouldn't think much of that. He's not a very critical person, but he's appreciative of good cooking – any man is. It's silly really, because he out all the time filming and eating in good restaurants, and I try to keep the standards up by doing it at home. Perhaps it would be better to just have ordinary food. (Oakley, 1974, 119)

> In Anne's case, eating out and the ready meal market offered her the opportunity to eat lasagne, something she might not eat otherwise because 'I'm no good at making lasagne, the pasta is never right.' (Warde and Martens, 2000, 152)

Warde and Martens (2000, 152) also refer to other interviewees who said they made "certain dishes at home" although they knew "professional cooks made superior versions".

The findings from this current research also suggest that this 'mystique', and any consequent increase in the use of 'pre-prepared' foods or decrease in the frequency of 'cooking', may be connected with media representations of domestic cooking. Media representations of domestic cooking are usually of 'interesting' dishes and foods and focus on technical standards to be achieved. They frequently depict the lone, household 'chef' preparing food for guests and for 'important' cooking occasions such as dinner parties. These representations of domestic cooking have little to do with the domestic cook preparing breakfast in a rush or preparing sausages, peas and chips for their children, worrying about the nutritional aspects and trying to get the washing up done simultaneously.

An investigation of the connections between media representations of domestic cooking, the values people place on different aspects of domestic cooking and their domestic cooking practices and food choice, seems more important in the light of work by media theorists and research by health Caraher and Lang (1998b). Both media theorists and Caraher and Lang (working within the field of health promotion) show media influence as impacting on the way in which people understand and interpret their lives and experiences. Media theorists and researchers talk of how television has become 'a friend with a point of view'. Altheide (1997, 18) explains how the media helps shape the "logics and perspectives we use in perceiving reality" and "expectations of everyday life". Kitzinger (1997, 7) explains the way in which "media messages are incorporated into day-to-day talk and interact with broader cultural values". Caraher and Lang (1998b) found, in a study of the influence of television celebrity chefs on public attitudes and behaviour, that was influential "in the area of reinforcing and expanding messages once people have basic skills".

Life Enhancement

A recurring topic of both academic and popular debates (Billen, 1997; Cook School, 2002; Fernandez-Armesto, 2001; Mintz, 1996; Leith, 1998, Royal Society of Arts, 1997 and 1998 and Ripe, 1993) has been about the greater life enhancement associated with cooking 'raw' foods rather than pre-prepared foods. The usual approach taken being that eating a meal or food cooked 'from scratch', perhaps with

other members of a family, is more life-enhancing than 'cooking' with 'pre-prepared' foods and, perhaps, eating individually and alone.

This research found that its informants felt that 'pre-prepared' foods greatly enhanced their lives. Having 'pre-prepared' foods to use when they desired meant that on those occasions when they preferred to do something other than cook (which for some were very frequent) such as spend time with their family, watch television or go to the gym, they could. They liked the taste of 'pre-prepared' foods and generally did not think it as inferior to that of food cooked from 'raw' ingredients. Indeed, many informants saw the taste and technical standards of 'pre-prepared' foods to be superior to that of foods they 'cooked' themselves. For many of the informants using 'pre-prepared foods' was the norm and they viewed the wide range of interesting 'raw' foods available as useful for those occasions when they wanted to take their time over cooking and produce something that they could consider 'theirs'. Without 'pre-prepared' foods they wearily envisaged having to carry out more tasks such as washing up and cleaning and preparing meat, vegetables and fish. The life-enhancing aspects of such things as baking a cake or sitting down with their family to a freshly prepared Sunday lunch was readily acknowledged by most. Few, however, could see how having less free time and spending a greater part of the day cooking and carrying out such tasks as washing potatoes, scaling fish and portioning chicken was life-enhancing. This appreciation and enjoyment of 'pre-prepared' foods, of the convenience, the flavour and taste, and the freedom it was felt they afforded, echo Schlosser's (2000) favourable comments about 'fast food' (in a book that explores fast food ideals and fast food production):

> During the two years spent researching this book, I ate an enormous amount of fast food. Most of it tasted pretty good. That is one of the main reasons people buy fast food; it has carefully been designed to taste good. It's also inexpensive and convenient. (Schlosser, 2000, 9)

A Hypothetical Model of the Set of Relationships Influencing the Domestic Cooking Practices and Food Choice of Domestic Cooks

The findings from this current research have been used to develop a detailed and theoretically based "framework for thinking" (Murcott, 1995b, 232) about domestic cooking and cooking skills. This 'framework' is illustrated in the model given in figure 7.3 and extends the model of the interrelationship between domestic cooking skills, approaches towards domestic cooking and domestic cooking practices and food choice (in terms of the use of 'raw' and 'pre-prepared' foods) given in chapter 6. The model draws on the findings of this current research and, in part, the findings of other, existing research, to hypothesise on the set of relationships that influence the domestic cooking practices and food choice (in terms of the use of 'pre-prepared' and 'raw' foods) of domestic cooks[21]. In doing so it reveals where further research may provide useful information and knowledge. The following paragraphs of this section describe this hypothetical model.

The model shows how the domestic cook's approach towards domestic cooking and cooking skills (on a particular cooking occasion) influences their cooking practices and use of 'raw' and 'pre-prepared' foods (via their confidence levels and the degree to which they feel cooking is an effort). This approach is influenced by their tacit cooking ability/skills (see chapter 3), their individual domestic cooking approach/identity' (see chapter 5) and the general approaches towards domestic cooking and cooking skills that they share with other domestic cooks (see chapter 4). The model shows, therefore, how it is argued in this thesis that 'cooking skills' are an indirect influence on the domestic cooking practices and food choice of domestic cooks. It also shows how tacit (domestic) cooking skills are acquired via the application of mechanical cooking skills (domestic cooking experience) and are the types of cooking skills that have the greatest influence on confidence and perceptions of effort and therefore on practices and food choice (see chapter 6). The model also shows how mechanical cooking skills and academic knowledge about cooking are acquired from learning sources such as friends, cookbooks, cookery classes and

[21] A 'domestic cook', as used here, refers to any individual who prepares and cooks food for themselves or others in a non-professional capacity.

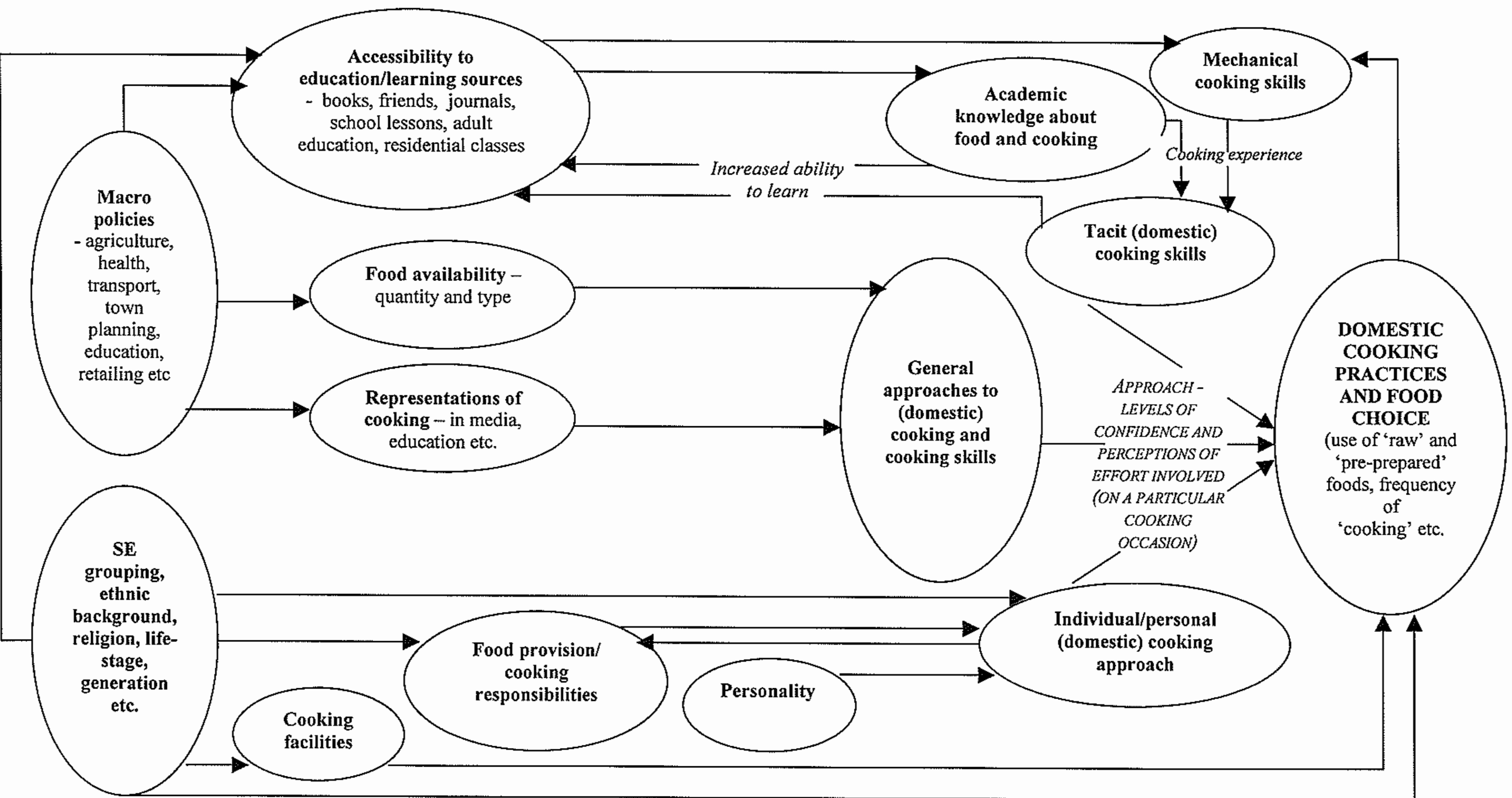
television programmes and how mechanical cooking skills are also acquired from domestic cooking practices (Hardy, 1996; Singleton, 1978; Wellens, 1974).

It can also be seen in the model how it is hypothesised that the domestic cook's academic knowledge about food and cooking' supports their 'tacit (domestic) cooking skills' and hence their ability to learn and acquire new skills and knowledge, thereby increasing the range of learning sources available to them (see chapter 3 and Cooley, 199; Pinch Collins and Corbone, 1996; Singleton, 1978; and Wellens, 1974).

The model also shows how' as has been found by other research, macro policies influence the types of food (such as the wide range of 'pre-prepared' foods)to domestic cooks (DOH, 1996; Fine, Heasman and Wright, 1996 and 1998; Lang et al., 1999; Leather, 1996 and Murcott, 1998b). It shows too, how in doing so, they influence domestic cooks' 'general approaches to domestic cooking and cooking skills' (an acceptance of 'pre-prepared' foods as 'normal' and so on) and, in turn, their domestic cooking practices and food choice.

It can also be seen in the model how, as is hypothesised by this study (drawing on existing research and debate [Attar, 1990; Caraher and Lang, 1998b; Lawson, 1998; Oakley, 1974 and 1985) that representations of domestic cooking in education, the media and so on are related to the general approaches to domestic cooking and cooking skills that domestic cooks share (and are therefore also related to their domestic cooking practices and food choice). An example of this type of relationship would be that, hypothesised by this current research, between the media's focus on 'glamorous' aspects of cooking rather than on everyday domestic food provision, the 'creative cooking ideal' and the lack of appreciation of the skills of the *domestic* cook (see chapter 4).

Figure 7.3. A Model of the Set of Relationships Influencing the Domestic Cooking Practices and Food Choice of Domestic Cooks as Hypothesised by the Current Research



Other relationships represented in the model are, firstly, the influence of a domestic cook's gender, life-stage, social and economic grouping and so on, on their access to learning facilities and, secondly, the direct influence of their gender, life-stage, cooking facilities and so on, on their 'domestic cooking practices and food choice'. (These relationships were not specifically researched in this study but they are a main focus of other relevant research and literature [Charles and Kerr, 1988; Dowler, 1996; Keane and Willetts, 1996; Lang et al., 1999 and Murcott, 1998b] and therefore are a necessary inclusion.)

The model also shows how it is hypothesised that an individual's food provision responsibilities and personality influence their 'individual domestic cooking approach/identity' (see chapters 5 and 6). The (hypothetical) relationship between 'food provision responsibilities' and 'individual domestic cooking approach/identity' is represented as 'two-way'; a domestic cook's cooking responsibilities influence their approach/identity and a domestic cook's approach/identity influences the cooking responsibilities they take on. Social and cultural factors such as gender, life-stage, ethnic background and so on are also shown as being an influence on a domestic cook's personal domestic cooking approach/identity. The findings of this current research reveal that gender influences an individual cook's personal approach/identity [for example, only men appeared to have the choice of being 'not interested' in cooking, and not cooking]. Other research [Caplan et al., 1998; Charles and Kerr, 1988; Dowler, 1996; Kyle, 1999; Lang et al., 1999; Mars and Mars, 1993; Murcott, 1985, 1995a and 1995b; Stead et al., 2002; Warde, 1997 and Warde and Martens, 2000] suggests that social and cultural factors such as ethnic background, life-stage, social and economic grouping, generation and so on might also.)

Suggestions for Policy Makers, Campaigners and Future Research

As has been explained above, this multi-disciplinary study provides empirically based evidence and a thoroughly examined, disseminated and theorised 'way of thinking' about domestic cooking and cooking skills. It's findings, therefore, can provide information and act as a base for further research in the different disciplines

(such as education, health promotion, sociology, food policy, social anthropology and so on) where there are concerns and debates and interest about domestic cooking and cooking skills. (See chapter 1 for an introduction to, and explanation of, these various concerns and debates). Despite this, it is a small, qualitative study and further research, suggestions for which have been made throughout this thesis, into the issues and concepts it has raised, and the theoretical explanations it has developed, could provide useful information and knowledge. The hypothetical model given and described in the section above provides a basis for any further research. In addition, a 'testing-out' of the findings from this current study amongst a wider population might also provide useful information and knowledge.

Concerns about issues related to cooking and cooking skills are not only a British phenomenon (Lang et al, 1999; Mennell, Murcott and van Otterloo, 1994 and Murcott, 1998b). One practical approach taken to tackling these concerns, by The Slow Food Movement, has been to develop and teach "sensory education and food culture" (Slow Food, 2002, 5). It has set up the European Academy of Taste in northern Italy and also works in schools to promote and teach 'sensory education' with the aim of encouraging children to enjoy their food, especially 'strong-tasting' local and artisan products. This use of the senses can also be seen in the Sapere method which originated in France (Sapere, 2001). It is a method of training children to use their senses to appreciate food and cooking and so improve their food choices (in terms of health benefits) and encourage them to 'cook' (use 'raw' foods). The ultimate aim of the method, say its exponents, is to produce critical consumers who affect trends in the food industry. In Britain, the focus of campaigns and suggested policy has tended to be on the practical, on 'cooking' and on learning the practical techniques of cooking (Food Standards Agency, 2001; Longfield, 1996; Nicolaas, 1995; Lang et al., 1999; Leather, 1996 and Royal Society of Arts, 1997 and 1998).

The findings of this current research reveal that there are complex connections between people's (domestic) cooking skills and approaches towards domestic cooking and their domestic cooking practices and use of 'raw' and 'pre-prepared' foods. The findings of this study, therefore, have implications for policy makers and campaigners who wish to promote 'cooking' (in order to, in turn, influence food

choice, frequency of 'cooking', cooking standards and so on). However, the most significant implications of these findings lie in an understanding of the complexity of those connections and the importance of people's 'approaches towards (domestic) cooking'.

As a multi-disciplinary study providing a general 'framework for thinking' about domestic cooking and cooking skills, these implications will be discussed in general terms as suggestions and advice for policy makers and campaigners rather than as specific directives for education, for example, or health promotion. There are five key issues, discussed in the paragraphs that follow, that the findings of this research suggest policy makers and campaigners should take into account.

Firstly, the findings of this current research suggest that any policy or practice concerning domestic cooking and cooking skills should acknowledge that the use of 'pre-prepared' food is an entirely normal and acceptable part of domestic cooking. As discussed earlier in this chapter, the informants who took part in this study usually liked the taste of 'pre-prepared' foods; some even said that they preferred the taste to that of versions they 'cooked' themselves. They all liked the freedom to do things other than cook that they felt 'pre-prepared' foods allowed. None of the people who took part in this study 'self-provisioned' – none of them regularly made bread and cakes, preserved fruit, vegetables or meat and so on – and none felt that they should.

Secondly, domestic 'cooking' can be seen on many levels and have many meanings. In existing research and debate, for example, 'cooking' has been used and understood to mean both 'the preparation of raw foods only' (Adamson, 1996; Lang et al., 1999; Ripe, 1993 and Stitt et al., 1996) and the household task of 'all food preparation' (Charles and Kerr, 1988 and Oakley, 1974 and 1985). This difference in the meanings given to 'cooking' can be also be seen in debates about the teaching of cookery in schools. Within the Royal Society of Arts' Focus on Food campaign 'cooking' tends to be treated as being 'task centred' and involving, at least to an extent, the achievement of certain technical standards. 'Cooking' is seen as a process that "often has to follow some pre-determined stages if it is to 'come out right'" (Royal Society of Arts, 1998, 4) and the campaign's Magazine (Cook School, 2002,

3) has a section entitled 'Masterchef' which looks at ways of achieving a "high quality product. In contrast, Ridgewell (1996b, 5), in her book that acts as a resource for teaching food technology in primary schools defines food technology as "designing and making something to eat", arguing that 'cooking' is "more prescriptive and less flexible". Her book contains a 'design a fruit salad' exercise, for example, in which it is suggested that children design one suitable for a packed lunch, one that only contains yellow fruits and so on. The aim of the exercise being to teach children about useful design, mixing colours, flavours and textures, and preparing and storing different foods.

The findings from this study suggest that those who seek to promote 'cooking', in schools and colleges, for example, or as a community initiative, should have a clear idea of what they mean by 'cooking' so that their aims and practices are complementary and useful. The findings of this research indicate that cooking design skills and abilities to 'make up' food from available ingredients may encourage the use of, and the more frequent use of, 'raw' foods by lessening the (perceptions of) 'effort' involved in 'cooking'. Campaigners and policy makers who wish to promote greater and/or more regular use of 'raw' foods may find it more useful, therefore, to focus on an exercise to 'design soup', for example, or an exercise to 'design curries and casseroles' than on specific recipes or dishes with set ingredients, standards and results. However, it must be remembered that the findings of this study also revealed that domestic cooking skills (including conceptual, design skills) only influenced domestic cooking practices in conjunction with 'approaches to cooking' (see chapter 6 and also the fifth key issue, below). This suggests that a focus on prescribed methods and ingredients and practical skills might be more useful if the aim is to improve the technical standards of domestic cooks.

Thirdly, 'cooking' means different things, not just to different researchers and campaigners, but also to different domestic cooks. It can be a chore, for example, or a hobby, a set of skills to be mastered, a means of providing a good diet and food for others, of being a good host and so on. It can also mean different things to the same domestic cook on different occasions. For example, an individual may generally approach cooking as recreational and on certain 'important cooking occasions', say when they are cooking for friends or guests they know well, enjoy the challenge of

cooking with new foods and recipes, making an effort and attempting to achieve certain technical standards. However, the same person when cooking for guests they know less well may feel unsure about cooking, find it 'too much effort' and use 'pre-prepared foods' and techniques they are more familiar with. On other less 'important' occasions, they may quite happily use 'pre-prepared' foods because they consider it quite normal and proper to do so and because they do not feel they have the time to enjoy the process of cooking. Other people may take an entirely different approach to these same occasions, depending on their individual approach to domestic cooking.

Dixey (1996), in a paper on gender perspectives of food and cooking, has argued that any teaching of 'cooking' in schools must challenge the very different gender roles connected with domestic cooking. The findings of this research suggest that policy makers and campaigners need to take into consideration not only that there are gendered approaches to domestic cooking but that people have very different individual domestic cooking identities and approaches towards domestic cooking. They must consider these different approaches and identities in the light of their aims. The domestic cook who enjoys cooking, views it as a hobby and regularly seeks to achieve desirable technical standards when they cook, for example, may not be the one who is most likely to cook and provide healthy food or regularly use 'raw' foods. The promotion of domestic cooking as a 'hobby' might not be appropriate for the aims of those who have concerns about the health of the nation, the findings of this study suggest.

A fourth policy point arising from the findings of this current research is that it is important that those who are responsible for policy suggestions remain aware of the complexity and diversity of domestic cooking *skills* (as found by this study [see chapter 3]). The findings of this research suggest that different types of skills and knowledge may affect domestic cooking practices and food choice in different ways. The findings reveal, for example, that it is tacit domestic cooking skills (skills of judgement, timing, planning and so on) which can increase the cook's confidence, decrease the effort they associate with 'cooking' and in doing so can encourage them to 'cook' more frequently and use more 'raw' foods. These findings also suggest that those involved in policy and practice may consider focusing on the skills of

domestic cooking. They suggest that a population that is able to appreciate (acknowledge and understand) the skills and effort required to cook and provide food for a household may place greater value on those skills and that effort. A more valued 'craft' of domestic food preparation and provision may encourage an increased frequency of 'cooking' and a more thorough understanding of it's social role. This study's findings support suggestions by Street (1994, 17), in a report of her interventionist study of adult cooking skills, that policies that seek to increase people's use of 'raw' foods should educate household members "about the time, effort and skills required to prepare a meal from raw ingredients, day-in-day-out."

A final policy point concerns the general understanding in existing research and debate that domestic food choice is "circumscribed by the ability to prepare foods" (Fieldhouse, 1995, 70) and therefore that cooking skills and abilities are intergral to changing that food choice. In response, policy makers and campaigners have tended, to date, to take a practical and technical approach. The Royal Society of Arts' Focus on Food campaign (Cook School, 2002 and Royal Society of Arts, 1998) has stressed the importance of 'making' food. James and McColl (1997, 57), in a proposal to the Minister for Health regarding health and schoolchildren, argue that "a more hands-on practice in cooking skills is needed". Similarly, The Food Standards Agency (2001) also stresses the importance of practical cooking skills in education in their strategic plan to improve the diet and nutrition of the UK population:

> Education is an important part of this process [the improvement of diet and nutrition in the UK] and part of our strategy will be to get this information through to children in a way that is meaningful to them, and to ensure that they have practical food and cooking skills. (Food Standards Agency, 2001, 19)

As was discussed in detail in chapter 6, the findings from this research show that the relationship between a person's practical ability and their practices and food choice is not a simple, straightforward one. Figure 7.4 shows a model, developed from the findings of this current study, of the hypothetical model of the complex interconnections, or set of relationships, influencing domestic cooking practices and food choice. It shows how the influence of 'cooking skills', or cooking ability, has

been found to be just one of a number of influences on domestic cooking practices and food choice (in terms of the use of 'pre-prepared' and 'raw' foods).

The findings from this research suggest that policy that focuses on practical cooking ability may not be sufficiently acknowledging and dealing with this complexity. This resembles the way in which, as Caraher explains (2001, 57) the psychological 'Health Belief Model' of public health, once used to explain health behaviour, took the approach that people's health practices would improve if they had the correct and sufficient information. In a similar way, current approaches towards policy regarding domestic cooking and cooking skills tend to assume that people would use, or would at least have the choice to use, more 'raw' foods and cook more frequently if they had the relevant practical cooking skills and abilities. The more sophisticated 'Theory of Reasoned Action' Caraher (2001, 59) goes on to explain, takes into account that 'normative beliefs' and the attitudes of others often skew or alter peoples health behaviour. The findings from this current research suggest that any policy regarding domestic cooking and cooking skills take into account that domestic cooking skills are an influence on domestic cooking practices and food choice only as part of a complex set of relationships and influences. They indicate that campaigners and policy makers, in order to change domestic food and cooking practices need to focus on the 'food and cooking culture' in its entirety rather on particular aspects of it such as 'practical cooking skills'.

Conclusions and Reflections

In the early stages of generating data for this thesis I went to a Shrove Tuesday pancake party. All guests were asked to contribute by bringing pancakes or ingredients to make pancakes or accompaniments. Apart from myself, none of the dozen or so guests brought pancakes or pancake batter made 'from scratch'. Some had brought packets of dry pancake mix and others ready-made pancakes. One guest had brought something new from the supermarket shelf - a plastic bottle of pancake mix to which the cook added cold water, shook the bottle up and down to make the batter which they could then pour straight into a frying pan. "Deskilling!", I informed my supervisors, "people cannot cook".

However, incorporating a discussion of making pancakes into early interview schedules I found that many people used pancake mixes and ready made pancakes but most had a good idea of how they were made and some could describe preparing them in great detail. They used mixes and ready-made pancakes for reasons, they explained, other than inability or uncertainty. This was a very clear lesson that research involves keeping an 'open mind', finding real tested, evidence and focusing on the possibility that there may be other explanations or a 'bigger picture'. By the final stages of the research I could see how there may be positive ways of viewing the practices and food choice, for example, of a young male informant who said that he rarely ate an evening meal with his parents, with whom he lived, and often 'cooked' himself a 'chicken Kiev type thing'. Although, as a catering student, he was likely to have some cooking skills and knowledge, he felt that without 'chicken Kievs' (pre-prepared foods) he would still be relying on his mother to cook for him. The ease with which he could cook and serve 'chicken Kievs' to his friends, without leaving a huge mess in his mother's kitchen, gave him a certain autonomy as a 'young adult' and an introduction to cooking and providing food for others and to the skills required to do so. It was also interesting that of the 20 to 30 people I interviewed in their homes only one offered me something to eat – that one person being the one (with school cookery qualifications) who frequently and regularly used ready-meals.

In the first, introductory chapter of this thesis I described how my involvement in this research and the Centre for Food Policy emanated in part from my questioning of numerous aspects of cooking. 'What is the difference between chefs and cooks and why do some chefs hate to be called cooks and some domestic cooks like to be called chefs?' 'Why do some people say that scrambled eggs are 'best' when the egg is still slightly runny?' 'Why are many people offended by the thought of a chicken tikka pizza?'. These are just a few examples. I have finished this study and the writing of this thesis with more idea of how to answer these old questions and have a new set of questions that are more focused - theoretically, empirically and academically. What are the 'basic cooking skills' so frequently referred to as those our children need so that they can grow into informed and empowered consumers – do they need to know, for example, how to make scrambled eggs 'correctly'? Do we welcome the chicken tikka pizza as a brilliant junction of design and people's taste preferences, as a

triumph of 'fusion cooking'? Or do we treat it as something to be avoided, a symbol of the breakdown of cuisine with its social and cultural understandings and beliefs of what something consists of, how it should be made and how it should taste? How do we increase people's appreciation of the skills of the domestic cook – the provider of food for the household?

This study has its limitations. It examined the cooking practices and cooking skills of a relatively small group of people mostly from the south-east of England. Despite this, it provided much detailed and interesting data and a notable insight into the practices, experiences, values, beliefs, opinions and interpretations of a very diverse group of domestic cooks. In doing so it added a new 'way of thinking' about domestic cooking and cooking skills to current discourse.

With a very broad remit - to look at cooking and cooking skills – I was given an opportunity by Professor Lang and the Centre for Food Policy to gain experience of the entire process of research. I learned continually, from unearthing the key areas in need of research in the early exploratory stages, to writing the thesis and organising the mass of data, evidence, issues and theoretical explanations into a readable and logical whole. I learned, not only about domestic cooking and cooking skills, but also about the process and the possibilities of research. For example, though I originally set out to provide specific recommendations for policy and practice, a review of literature and early findings from the exploratory stages of the fieldwork revealed that more general recommendations and an overall 'way of thinking about' domestic cooking and cooking skills would be more useful. The appropriateness of choosing to carry out a qualitative, exploratory and developmental study became very clear.

I not only gained knowledge but also greater understanding of what knowledge is and how to acquire it. I also learned how to be an independent researcher. This learning came less from suggestions and advice from supervisors and specialists that I followed than from suggestions and advice from them that I chose not to follow. The greatest learning experience came from explaining why I chose an alternative route or course of action. In choosing what not to do my decisions about what to do became thought out processes, considered in the light of other's opinions and

experience. In this way I was able to find my own boundaries and limitations rather than have them set by others. In undertaking and carrying out this study I learned about this process of learning.

Summary

As has been pointed out previously in this chapter, concerns and debates about domestic cooking and cooking skills are a world-wide phenomena (Lang et al., 1999). This thesis has referred to research and discussion from the United States of America (Demas, 1995 and Shore, 2002), Portugal (Rodrigues and de Almeida, 1996) and Australia (Ripe, 1993). Campaigns to promote cooking have been set up throughout the world – in the United States of America (American Culinary Federation Chef and Child Foundation, 2002 and Freile, 2002), Canada (Foodshare, 2002), Denmark, Japan, Finland, Switzerland, America, Australia, Ireland, Korea, Germany and Greece (Slow Food, 2002).

In Britain (as explained in chapter 1) concerns and debates about domestic cooking and cooking skills have tended to remain as speculation and theoretical conjecture through a lack of empirical research, clearly defined understanding of terms and concepts such as 'cook' and 'cooking skills' and a convention for studying domestic cooking. There are seven key findings from this study that any research into, or debates about, domestic cooking and cooking skills can usefully employ. These are:

- Terms and concepts such as 'cook', 'cooking skills', 'basic skills' and 'pre-prepared' have no precise or consistent meaning either as they are used in research and debate or as they are used and understood by domestic cooks themselves. When used by domestic cooks meaning can only be clearly understood when interpreted in the light of the context in which they are used.

- The concept of 'cooking skills' can be interpreted at different levels of complexity and detail. Significant and useful insight into people's domestic cooking practices and food choice can be gained from understanding and

interpreting 'cooking skills' as 'person centred', situated in particular (domestic) contexts and made up of mechanical skills, academic knowledge and tacit of timing, judgement, design, planning, cooking to suit others desires and requirements and so on.

- Theories that domestic cooking is undergoing a process of deskilling appear to be an over-simplification when the concept of 'cooking skills' is interpreted as being 'person centred' and specifically related to domestic cooking and skills other than the mechanical are taken into consideration.

- There is no clear-cut, simple relationship between an individual's domestic cooking skills and their domestic cooking practices and food choice (the frequency with which they 'cook', their use of 'raw' and 'pre-prepared' foods and so on).

- There is a complex 'cooking culture' in contemporary Britain in which a domestic cook's approach to domestic cooking (their beliefs and opinions about [domestic] cooking, the values they place on [domestic] cooking and so on) are a key influence on their domestic cooking practices and food choice. (Each cook's 'approach towards domestic cooking' is formed from their individual cooking identity, from 'ways of thinking' about cooking that they share with other domestic cooks, and from the influence of their cooking abilities and skills on their confidence and the degree to which they find 'cooking' an effort.)

- The domestic cooking value system that pertains in contemporary Britain places greater value on a particular type of glamorous 'creativity' based around on the cookery writer or enthusiastic 'chef' in their own domestic kitchen, 'creating' and preparing new, interesting and exiting food and 'dishes'. There is no clear recognition and appreciation amongst domestic cooks of the skills of preparing, cooking and providing healthy food on a daily basis and in an efficient, economic and organised manner.

- There is a 'mystique' about the difficulty and/or effort, involved in 'cooking, particularly 'cooking' with raw foods. This 'mystique' appears to arise from the individualistic nature of people's domestic cooking practices whereby lone domestic cooks have only 'perfect', 'glossy' media representations of cooking to act as a point of comparison, an understanding that 'proper' cooking involves making a 'dish' and making that dish 'correctly', and a lack of appreciation of the skills and knowledge involved in (domestic) cooking.

APPENDIX 1

KEY SPECIALISTS INTERVIEWED (1996 – 1997)

Scott Anthony, The British Food Heritage Trust.

Mary Day-Lewis, Head of Cookery Department, Kingsway College.

Dr. Elizabeth Dowler, Centre for Human Nutrition, The London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine.

Prof. David Foskett, Department of Tourism, Hospitality and Leisure, University of Thames Valley.

Susan Freeman, Assistant Editor, Health Which?, Consumers' Association.

Dr. Yiannis Gabriel, Senior Lecturer, The University of Bath

Dr. Susan Gregory, Department of Agriculture and Food Economics, Reading University.

Nadine Hardy, Partner, Hospitality Training Foundation.

Jeanette Longfield, Co-ordinator, National Food Alliance

Aggie MacKenzie, Food Editor, Sainsbury's 'The Magazine'.

Karen McColl, Freelance Food Policy Researcher.

Dr. Michael Nelson, Department of Nutrition and Life Sciences, Kings College London.

Jenny Ridgewell, Author, Ridgewell Press (Design and Technology).

June Scarborough, National Association of Teachers of Home Economics and Technology.

APPENDIX 2

WRITTEN INFORMATION ABOUT COOKING DIARIES

(Information given to informants taking part in the first stage of Fieldwork prior to keeping the cooking diaries.)

- Keep the diary over a period of four days, making sure you include the weekend and two days during the week.

- Each time anyone prepares food in the kitchen of your home they should fill in one of the sheets with the necessary details.

- A separate sheet should be completed for each occasion that food is prepared.

- There is no need to complete a sheet each time you make a cup of tea or coffee but please fill one in if, for instance, you have a sandwich with the cup of tea.

- You do not have to include any information about quantities and portion size.

- Information from the diary may be used in the interviews.

APPENDIX 3

INFORMATION TO BE GIVEN BY INFORMANTS IN THEIR COOKING DIARIES

(Information to be given by first stage informants in their cooking diaries [on each cooking occasion].)

Day

Time

What food is being prepared?

How is the food being prepared?

Who is preparing it?

Who is going to eat it?

Where will it be eaten?

Who wrote this?

APPENDIX 4

A SAMPLE OF COMPLETED COOKING DIARY SHEETS

(See following photocopied pages [informants' names have been removed].)

Day Thursday

Time 9.45pm

What food is being prepared? Dinner.

Ham salad & toast

+ Diet coke.

How is the food being prepared?
(please use the other side of the paper if necessary)

- Mixed salad – mixed prepared salad leaves + chopped parsley, sliced tomatoes & avocado.
- Ham sliced from bacon joint boiled previous evening.
- Home made (previous day) seeded bread + flora.

Who is preparing it?

Who is going to eat it?

Where will it be eaten?

Who wrote this?

Day THURSDAY

Time 7-30 P.M.

What food is being prepared?
SWEET-SOUR. CHICKEN WITH BOILED RICE.

How is the food being prepared?
(please use the other side of the paper if necessary)
CHICKEN BREAST COVERED IN SWEET SOUR SAUCE (JAR)
COOKED IN OVEN FOR 40 MINS.
WHITE RICE BOILED TILL SOFT. DRAINED, AND COVERED WITH
CHICKEN AND SAUCE. FOLLOWED BY DILUTED BLACKURRANT
DRINK.

Who is preparing it?

Who is going to eat it?

Where will it be eaten? Kitchen

Who wrote this?

Day FRIDAY

Time 7.30 P.M.

What food is being prepared?

COD IN BATTER WITH WEDGES (CHIPS) AND GARDEN PEAS (TIN)

2 TEAS 1 GLASS OF WATER.

How is the food being prepared?
(please use the other side of the paper if necessary)

COD IN BATTER PUT IN OVEN FOR 20 MINS ON 200 C
PEAS EMPTIED IN SAUCEPAN WARMED UP,
POTATO WEDGES COOKED IN SHALLOW SUNFLOWER OIL IN CHIP PAN.

1. BAGS IN CUPS
ADDED MILK AND SUGAR.

Who is preparing it?

Who is going to eat it?

Where will it be eaten? KITCHEN

Who wrote this?

Day Sunday

Time 8pm

What food is being prepared? Dinner.

Sherry + Wine

Cold starter + barbecued chicken, potatoe salad, sweetcorn, green salad.

Fresh fruit & creme fraiche

How is the food being prepared?
(please use the other side of the paper if necessary)

Starter: Cold barbecued meat cut into squares with sliced tomato & square of toast.

Barbecue chicken: Chicken brushed with mix of olive oil, vinegar, soy sauce, salt & pepper, then barbecued outside, 9 minutes each side x 4 & brushed with oil mix each time. Herbs added to barbecue halfway thru to smoke meat.

Potato salad: Potatoes (cooked previous day) sliced & mixed with dressing of yogurt, chopped fresh mint, salt & pepper

Sweetcorn: Cob cooked in boiling water for approx 6 mins, corn cut off husk + mixed little butter.

PTO

Who is preparing it?

Who is going to eat it?

Where will it be eaten?

Conservatory

Who wrote this?

Day Wednesday

Time 1.45pm

What food is being prepared?

boiled egg + bread , cheese on toast
taramasalata + pitta bread
bananas
baby cauliflower cheese
coffee

How is the food being prepared?
(please use the other side of the paper if necessary)

cheese on toast grilled in oven
egg with sliced butter bread (white)
pittas heated in microwave
coffee with semi skimmed milk
baby food heated in microwave

Who is preparing it?

Who is going to eat it?

Where will it be eaten? kitchen

Who wrote this?

Day Wednesday

Time 8 am

What food is being prepared?

cereal - coco pops

baby muesli

marmite on toast

coffee

How is the food being prepared?
(please use the other side of the paper if necessary)

cereal + coffee with semi skimmed milk

marmite with butter + presliced brown bread

baby muesli with boiled water

Who is preparing it?

Who is going to eat it?

Where will it be eaten? kitchen

Who wrote this?

Day Friday

Time ~~Evening~~ 6pm

What food is being prepared? Evening meal for boys.

Scrambled Eggs
Toast
Spaghetti Hoops.

How is the food being prepared?
(please use the other side of the paper if necessary)

Scrambled Eggs - cooked in microwave. 2 eggs, dash of milk, S&P & knob "clover"

Toast; cooked in toaster, buttered & cut into ¼ triangles with no crusts

Spaghetti Hoops - small tin heated in microwave.

(All food allowed to cool slightly before kids get it)

Served with grated cheese

Who is preparing it?

Who is going to eat it?

Where will it be eaten?

Dining Room

Who wrote this?

Day Sunday

Time 950

What food is being prepared?

Lunch & sandwiches for Monday!

How is the food being prepared?
(please use the other side of the paper if necessary)

(All cooked in oven)

Part cooked 2 large potatoes in microwave & then finished in oven
Sliced 2 red peppers largely, drizzled with olive oil & put in oven to roast.

Sliced scallion into small rounds. Mixed up pizza base with dried basil, tomato paste and a little water. Put this onto English muffins (halves) topped with grated cheese & scallion & ripped wafer smoked ham. Cooked in oven & cooled.

Who is preparing it?

Who is going to eat it?

Where will it be eaten?

Who wrote this?

Day 1230 – Sunday

Time

What food is being prepared? Lunch.

Salad
Potatoes
& Cheese / Ham / Pizza

How is the food being prepared?
(please use the other side of the paper if necessary)

Salad leaves bought prepared with grated carrot & sliced red pepper.
Potatoes
Pizza – cooked earlier.

Boys – little salad & ½ jacket potato with butter & grated cheese. Some wafer thin smoked ham & muffin pizza. Salad cream

Mum! – salad & salad dressing (preprepared). Large jacket potato, butter and low fat cottage cheese & pineapple. 2 slices wafer ham.

Boys have milk – Jill has lemonade. Biscuit afterward

Who is preparing it?

Who is going to eat it?

Where will it be eaten?

Dining Room.

Who wrote this?

Day Friday

Time 8.40 am

What food is being prepared?

Packed lunch for Conor
Sausage Roll, ~~Hard~~ Boiled Egg
Banana + Grapes
Drink - Ribena

How is the food being prepared?
(please use the other side of the paper is necessary)

Egg boiled earlier - removed shell + wrapped in foil
Sausage Roll wrapped in foil.
Put foil wrapped food in lunch box
+ added Banana + Grapes removed from stalk in separate pot.
+ drink

Who is preparing it?

Who is going to eat it?

Where will it be eaten? school

Who wrote this?

FA

FB

Day Friday

Time 8.10am

What food is being prepared?

Children breakfast

Cereal + Toast with Grapes + Orange juice

(Boiled Eggs for lunch)

How is the food being prepared?
(please use the other side of the paper is necessary)

Rice Crispies in bowl with milk
Weetabix in bowl with milk
Grapes washed + left on stalks - in 2 small bowls
2 beakers of fresh orange juice

Put 3 eggs in pan of boiling water
Left for ten minutes. Removed pan from heat + emptied into sink leaving eggs + adding cold water to cool.

Who is preparing it?

Who is going to eat it?

Where will it be eaten? lounge at small tables

Who wrote this?

Day Sunday

Time 1.15 pm

What food is being prepared?

Lunch – Burgers in Bun w. cheese
tomato sauce mustard + mayo -
American style oven chips
Cucumber + Tomato side salad
Orange Juice / Squash

How is the food being prepared?
(please use the other side of the paper is necessary)

Switched on oven + placed in chips on baking tray for 15 mins
Grilled frozen meat-free burgers for 10 mins
Defrosted burger buns + lightly toasted
Sliced Cheddar Cheese + placed on burgers under grill
Sliced tomatoes + cucumber
Put relishes on table with cutlery
Placed burgers in buns, put on plates, added chips and side salad
Everyone helped themselves to relishes and drinks

Who is preparing it?

Who is going to eat it?

+ 3 children

Where will it be eaten?

Children at dining table + Diane

Who wrote this?

Janet + Ambrose in lounge watching TV.

Day Wednesday 21.5.97

Time 3:55

What food is being prepared?

Tomato and broccoliquiche

How is the food being prepared?
(please use the other side of the paper if necessary)

Out of packet, into oven - 25 mins.

Who is preparing it?

Who is going to eat it?

Where will it be eaten? Living room

Who wrote this?

Day Wednesday 23rd May

Time 9.45pm

What food is being prepared?

Omelette, chips + beans.
~~Omelette~~

How is the food being prepared?
(please use the other side of the paper if necessary)

Whisked egg with some milk, salt, (oregano) herbs + (black) pepper. Fried egg in sunflower oil. Added grated cheese (cheddar), melted + served.

Chipped potatoes in sunflower oil

Heated tin of baked beans.

Who is preparing it?

Who is going to eat it?

Where will it be eaten? livingroom

Who wrote this?

Day 8th June (Sun)

Time 3.15pm (Eaten between 7-9.00pm)

What food is being prepared?

Sushi < norimaki / nigiri

chicken Domburi

tempura

spiced rice

How is the food being prepared?
(please use the other side of the paper is necessary)

Sushi :- preparation.
finely chopped + sliced ingredients
assemble ingredients.
present assembled

Domburi :- fried marinated chicken with rice & chicken Stock.
Tempura :- Deep fried prawns + vegetables (mushroom broccoli/Stringless beans) in sunflower oil. Served with sake and soy ~~sauce~~ sauce.

Who is preparing it?

Who is going to eat it?

Where will it be eaten? Living room.

Who wrote this?

Day Tuesday

Time 1pm

What food is being prepared?

lemon curd sandwiches, apple, fromage frais
cream cheese + cucumber sandwiches
marmite sandwiches, bread butter + banana
crisps
coffee + ribena

How is the food being prepared?
(please use the other side of the paper if necessary)

All sandwiches with fresh white unsliced loaf
and spreadable butter
Coffee instant with semi-skimmed

Who is preparing it?

Who is going to eat it

Where will it be eaten?

Who wrote this?

Day Friday

Time 8.10am

FA

FB

What food is being prepared?

Children breakfast
Cereal + Toast with Grapes + Orange juice
(Boiled Eggs for lunch)

How is the food being prepared?
(please use the other side of the paper is necessary)

Rice Crispies in bowl with milk
Weetabix in bowl with milk
Grapes washed + left on stalks - in 2 small bunches
2 beakers of fresh orange juice

Put 3 eggs in pan of boiling water
Left for ten minutes. Removed pan from heat + emptied into sink leaving eggs + adding cold water to cool.

Who is preparing it?

Who is going to eat it?

Where will it be eaten? lounge at small tables

Who wrote this?

Day Tuesday

Time 8.30 p.m.

What food is being prepared?

~~Veg~~ Sort of bubble & squeak

How is the food being prepared?
(please use the other side of the paper if necessary)

A potato cooked & mashed with milk, mixed up with remains of yesterday's tortilla & more swiss chard – fried.

Who is preparing it?

Who is going to eat it?

Where will it be eaten? Sitting room

Who wrote this?

Day MONDAY 7th JULY 1996

Time 6.45

What food is being prepared? BAKED PASTA WITH CHEESE SAUCE.

How is the food being prepared?
(please use the other side of the paper if necessary)

BOIL SPIRALI PASTA. MAKE ROUX WITH UNSALTED BUTTER & FLOUR. ADD MILK. GRILL SMOKED BACON. GRATE STRONG CHEDDAR & PECORINO ROMANO CHEESE. ADD CHEESE TO SAUCE. CRUMBLE BACON ONTO PASTA. ADD CHEESE SAUCE + BLACK PEPPER. PUT INTO BAKING DISH. BAKE FOR 20 MINS c 8.45 PM.

Who is preparing it?

Who is going to eat it?

Where will it be eaten? IN SITTING ROOM

Who wrote this?

Day TUESDAY 8TH JULY 1997

Time 1-10pm .

What food is being prepared? FRENCH BREAD, GERMAN SAUSAGE, MIXED SALAD.

How is the food being prepared?
(please use the other side of the paper if necessary)

POACH SAUSAGE 15MINS IN WATER. SKIN & SLICE IT. PUT ON PLATE WITH SALAD, BREAD & MUSTARD. RED WINE

Who is preparing it?

Who is going to eat it?

Where will it be eaten? KITCHEN

Who wrote this?

Day TUESDAY 8th JULY 1997

Time 8.25pm

What food is being prepared? SPAGHETTI WITH CLAMS AND TOMATO SAUCE

How is the food being prepared?
(please use the other side of the paper if necessary) HEAT WATER IN SAUCEPAN, BOIL SPAGHETTI IN IT. DRAIN. ADD PREVIOUSLY HEATED SAINSBURYS NAPOLITANA SAUCE INTO WHICH A TIN OF CLAMS HAS BEEN MIXED. COMBINE SAUCE AND PASTA. GRATE PARMESAN CHEESE. SPRINKLE ON TOP.
RED WINE.

Who is preparing it?

Who is going to eat it?

Where will it be eaten? SITTING ROOM

Who wrote this?

Day Monday

Time 7 – 8 pm.

What food is being prepared? Vegetable tortilla (sort of)

How is the food being prepared?
(please use the other side of the paper if necessary)

Potatoes, courgettes, Swiss chard all cooked & layered in gratin dish with left-over peas & broad beans, ~~egg~~ beaten egg with milk, parsley, salt & pepper poured over & baked in oven.

Who is preparing it?

Who is going to eat it?

Where will it be eaten? Sitting room

Who wrote this?

APPENDIX 5

WRITTEN INFORMATION GIVEN TO INFORMANTS PRIOR TO INTERVIEWS

(Written information given to informants taking part in both first and second stages of fieldwork, prior to interviews.)

- This interview forms part of my research into food preparation and cooking in the home. The research aims to find out about attitudes and approaches towards cooking. The interview is not an appraisal or a test of your cooking skills.

- I am going to tape the interview. Please let me know if at any stage of the interview you feel uncomfortable about this.

- I might make a few notes during the interview. If you wish, you may read them when we have finished.

- Everything you say will be treated in absolute confidence. You do not have to answer any question that you do not wish to. The tapes of the interview will be stored anonymously.

- Material from the interview will be used anonymously.

- During the interview, if you are uncertain what a question means or if you have any comments please let me know.

APPENDIX 6

EXAMPLE OF A FIRST STAGE INTERVIEW SCHEDULE

(An example of an interview schedule used in the first stage of fieldwork.)

Practices

Thanks again for agreeing to talk to me. We're going to begin with a look at who prepares the food in your household, where you eat, where you shop and so on. Let's start by talking about the food diaries that you have kept.

Was there anything that 'struck you' or 'came to mind' whilst you were keeping the diaries or after you had completed them? (Prompt only if necessary)
Patterns of eating?
The type of food you prepared?

Would you describe this as a fairly typical four days?
Is this how you normally split the food preparation in this household?
Does this apply to all food preparation - in the morning, mid-day, evening etc?
How do you decide how to split it?
Are you happy about this set-up/situation?

On Monday (for example) you prepared *x* and ate it in ...
Do you often eat there?
Do you do anything else whilst you eat? On all occasions - even in the morning?
Who did you eat it with? Do you often eat together?

What do you feel about couples/families eating together?
Is it important or not? For what reasons?

On Saturday (for example) you ate *y*?

Do you prepare this often?

What things do you eat regularly? What things do you prepare often?

Have you tried anything new recently? What? How did it go?

Will it become something you make regularly?

Do you ever find yourself doing other things whilst you prepare food?

(prompt with example only if necessary)

Can you give me an example?

When is this most likely to happen?

(Do you ever prepare food with your child/children?)

What kinds of things do you make together?

Do you use any help - such as a book or a video?

(Do your children/Does your child ever prepare food?)

Who for? Regularly?

Any reasons?

Roughly how often do you go shopping?

With anyone?

Where do you usually shop for food?

Do you find these shops you go to satisfactory?

When shop for food would you say that you normally buy food and then decide how you are going to prepare it or do you buy your food and then decide what to do with it?

Or does this vary according to the occasion (trying something new or entertaining)?

Influences

Now I'm going to ask you a bit about food programmes on TV, books, magazines and so on.

What food programmes, if any, do you watch on the TV (or listen to on the radio)?

Do you watch or listen to them regularly?

Any favourites? Any reasons?

Do you find that watching (or listening to) these programmes helps or is useful in any way, when you're preparing food? How?

Do you ever read food magazines or articles about food on other magazines, journals or newspapers?

Any favourites? Any reasons you can tell me why you read them?

Any reasons why not?

Do you keep them?

Are they useful when you prepare food? In what ways?

What about leaflets produced by food manufacturers or supermarkets - do you ever pick them up?

Do you read them? Do you keep them?

Are they useful when you prepare food? In what ways?

Do you ever talk about food with friends?

Who with? Usually the same person?

Do you swap tips? Recipes?

Would you give me an example?

Is there anyone who's food you would like yours to be like/emulate/be as good as?

Anyone (or anything) who makes you think 'I wish I could make food like them'.

Does the occasion make a difference?

Can you think of anything which has an influence on the way you prepare food?

(Prompt only if necessary but try and cover ...)

Time?

Money?

Eating for a healthy diet?

Family wants (who chooses what to eat)

Childhood Exploration

Now I'm going to ask you to try and remember some things from your childhood.

Would you describe for me a meal eaten, one that 'springs to mind', that you ate at home when you were a child or teenager?
Did you eat it often?
Do you ever cook it now? Have you ever cooked it?
Would you say that the food you prepare is similar or differant to the food you parents/guardians cooked when you were young? In what ways?

Who did you eat with [as a child]?
Regularly
Just in the evenings or ther meals/snacks too?

What memories, if any, do you have of preparing food yourself when you were young? (give example of first cookery experience)
Did either of your parents/guardians, or anyone else, help you? Did you use a cookery book or something similar?
How old were you?
Did you often prepare food with either of your parents?

Did you have cookery classes at school?
What sort of things did you make? What did you learn about? [prompt for nutrition etc. if necessary].
How old were you?
Would you say those classes have been useful since?

Cooking Skills

We'll move on to another area now. This section is about cooking techniques.

As an adult, have you ever done any cookery classes of any type? ... or worked in the food industry?
What did you do?
How was it/were they useful?

Do you ever use cookery books, magazines, videos etc. when you're preparing food?
Some people follow recipes 'word for word' and others use them for ideas, changing ingredients and so on? Which are you most like? Any reasons why?
Does it vary according to the occasion? For what reasons?
How do you feel about this food photography in books and magazines? Do you expect to be able to produce similar looking food?

If a recipe said to 'steam' some vegetables but gave you no more information, would you feel confident about what to do?
What would you do, step by step?
Do you ever use this technique?

How confident would you feel about making a meat or vegetable casserole (or similar)?
Any reasons not?
Describe for me, step by step, how you would do it.
What sort of stews/casseroles do you make?

What do you understand by the term to simmer?

Would you feel confident about making some pancakes?
Describe for me, briefly, how you would do it.
Do you ever make them?

Describe any ways you prepare food (any techniques you use), if or when, you are trying to eat a healthy diet. (Give examples such as 'grilling' if necessary).

And the last question in this section ...

Would you like to learn more about food preparation?
Any sorts of things in particular?

The Meaning of Food and Cooking

This next section is about 'what food means to you' or 'how you feel about food'.

In Britain today food is 'everywhere' - all sorts of TV programmes, hundreds of books and pamphlets about food and in the shops you can buy all sorts of things - exotic fruits and hundreds of semi- or pre-prepared foods. How do you feel about this?
... is a lot expected of you? ... and better standards ... more variety?
Overwhelmed ... or not?
What makes you feel that way?

What do you think about pre-prepared and semi-prepared foods?
When do you use them? *(check diaries)* What for?
(Probe semi-prepared or pre-prepared).

Have you ever called someone a 'good cook'? What did you mean by that expression?

Would you describe for me, in your own words, the kinds of feelings you get when you prepare food?
Say, (sorts of things they've talked about) when you prepare the evening meal or when you entertain friends.
A chore? A hobby ever?
Does it vary on different occasions? How?
power to impress?
praise?
control?
satisfaction with skills?

Would you describe the food that you prepare and eat at home as typically 'British'? For what reasons?

And the final question ... Do you have any comments or is there anything you feel strongly about that we haven't discussed?

APPENDIX 7

EXAMPLE OF A SECOND STAGE INTERVIEW SCHEDULE

(An example of an interview schedule used in the first stage of fieldwork.)

Setting the Scene

This first section is just to get an idea of what you do in terms of food preparation ... whether you enjoy it and so on.

How much food preparation/cooking do you do?

Would you say that there been times in your life when you have done a lot more, or a lot less, food preparation/cooking than others? When?

How much do you enjoy preparing food? On what occasions do you most enjoy preparing food?

Are there ever occasions when you feel that preparing food is 'recreational'... a leisure thing? Can you remember a particular occasion when you felt this way?

Are there ever occasions when you feel that preparing food is a drudge/chore
Can you remember a particular occasion when you felt this way?

How does preparing food make you feel then? Does it vary on different occasions?

Have you ever described anyone as a 'good cook'? What did you mean by that expression?

Would you like to be thought of as a 'good cook'? For what reasons?

Do you feel that you, that you personally, should be a 'good cook'?

Is there anyone you would like to be able to cook/prepare food like?
What else, if anything, do you do whilst you prepare food?

Do you devote yourself to preparing food?

How does this vary according to the occasion, if at all?

How does this make you feel? Do you think that this has any influence on your cooking/what you are doing?

On what occasions, if any, are you willing or happy to share cooking with somebody else? To what extent would you share?

Are there any occasions when you absolutely wouldn't share? Are there any when you feel you would really like some help?

Cooking and Meal Importance

This second section looks at what types of things you prepare, or would choose to prepare, for different types of occasions.

Would you describe a meal for me that you might make if you had some friends or family coming round to eat on a Saturday evening?

What would you do [skills]?

Have you ever made this? On this same type of occasion?

Would you be likely to make a special shopping trip? For what?
How long would you be prepared to spend preparing it?

What about if it was Saturday evening and no guests were coming ... would you prepare something similar or not?

What would you do?
Would you need a special shopping trip?

How long do you think you would be prepared to spend making this?

For what reasons, do you think, does this vary from what you would do for when you had guests?

What would you prepare, just roughly, for breakfast on a Monday to Friday?

How long would you be prepared to spend making breakfast during the week?

What would be a typical breakfast at the weekend or on a bank holiday or something?

Would this require a special shopping trip? What about breakfast during the week?

How long would you be prepared to spend making breakfast at the weekend?

Would you ever be prepared to do that during the week?

Values Placed on Skills

This next section looks at how we view different skills involved in food preparation ... some of the questions may sound that there are 'right and wrong' answers but this isn't so ... I am just looking for different viewpoints.

Have you ever had a scone? Have you ever made a scone?

Have you ever had one of those strawberry or fruit tartlets with the glaze on top? Have you ever made one?

Which, if either, do you think takes more skill (greater skill) to make? For what reasons?

Do you think that would affect how you felt about making them?

If you were asked to make one of these two, which would you like to make? For what reasons?

Which would you like to be able to make (*and not which would you rather eat*)? For what reasons?

Here are two descriptions that people have given me of how they would make a casserole. *[are you a vegetarian?]*

"I buy a dish of diced lamb or pork from the supermarket and I fry that with a bit of garlic and then put it into a casserole dish. Then I chop up a couple of potatoes, chop up some carrots, chop up some onion and throw that in with a few, probably dried, herbs. Then I crumble up a couple of stock cubes, put that in and then pour some boiling water over. If I've got a bit of red wine left I'll throw that in, if I had some vegetable stock, or if I had some soup left I'd made that was left over, then I'd put that in."

"I get a piece of lamb and then cube it and I brown that off. Then I take that out of the pan and in goes some onion, in goes the garlic. Then maybe I would use some kind of pulse in there, some haricot beans or something like that. I put the lamb back, and I'd have pre-cooked the beans, so then I put those on top with the cooking liquid. I put some red wine in there and I put a little bouquet of parsley, thyme and bay leaf. I tie that up and drop that in. Then I let it all cook through. "

Which would you rather eat? For what reasons?

Do you think one of those involves more skill (greater skill) than the other? For what reasons?

What do you think about the actual cooking/what each of those people are doing? What are the differences?

I'm going to read you two quotations and then I would like you to comment ... say to what extent you agree or disagree ... for what reasons and so on ...

1. "Cooking is a craft ... with practice anybody and everybody can cook."
2. "Some people are 'natural cooks' ... they just 'know' what goes with what ... and what to add that makes something taste better ... things like that."

Pizza

... this section looks more closely at cooking ... in particular at pizzas ...

Have you ever made a pizza ?

When was the last time?

Would you feel generally confident about doing it?

What would you do?

Would you use a recipe? For what reasons?

If you were to make the pizza from scratch would there be any part of this that you felt a bit uncertain about? - kneading, using yeast, consistency, tomato sauce, quantities, knowing when it is cooked, using correct tin etc.

How long would you would you set aside to prepare a pizza from scratch with the yeast dough and everything?

Would you fill in the rising times and so on? Do you generally do that when preparing food/cooking?

On what occasions, if any, would you be prepared to spend that time?

Which, if any, of the ingredients needed to make a pizza [of any sort] would you already have in the kitchen? Which would require a trip to the shops?

Under what circumstances, if any, would you use a pizza base mix when making a pizza? Can you describe a particular time?

What about a ready-made pizza base? Can you describe a particular time?

What about prepared tomato topping? Can you describe a particular time?

What about grated cheese? Can you describe a particular time?

Would you ever buy ready made pizza takeaway or a frozen pizza to eat at home? On what occasions would you be more likely to do this than use a base/make a pizza?

What other pre-prepared foods, if any, do you use in similar circumstances? - *cook-in-sauces, batter mix, salad dressings, ready meals, oven chips* ...

Practice

This section is about making new things or using new ingredients or whatever ...

Can you think of anything that you have <u>never or rarely</u> prepared/cooked that you would like to [be able to] make? What?

Would you be prepared to have lessons? Why haven't you?

Imagine that you made it and you weren't really happy with the result, would you, perhaps not immediately, but would you make it again?

How many times would you make it again in order to be happy with the result?

In what way would you expect to improve (speed, organisation, confidence ...)?

Sources of Food Information and Instruction

This section is about where you get ideas and help about what you cook ... television, books and things like that.

Do you ever watch food programmes of any type on television?

Do you [or would you ever] expect to make something that you have seen on television?

In what ways, if any, do you find them useful when it comes to cooking?
Do you ever watch videos, pre-recorded or otherwise, of any tv programmes?

Do you ever read cookery books ?

Do you have any? How many?

Do you ever read food articles in magazines?

Do you ever read leaflets from supermarkets or manufacturers or so on?

Have you ever had any lessons of any sort ... as an adult ... as a child/youth?

What about talking about cooking or swap tips with friends and family?

Which of all those, or any other, do you find the most useful?

How do you think, in terms of how useful or helpful you find them, the media (television, magazines etc.) compares with friends and family?

If you went to a friend's or a relation's house and had something to eat that you really enjoyed and you wanted to make it when you got home ... which of these following three processes would be closest to what you would do?

- ask for your friend or relation to write down what they did and then follow that
- ask them exactly what they had done and what the ingredients were and follow that (but if you couldn't remember you probably wouldn't bother)
- Work out what was in it or how it had been made for yourself, and then adapt something similar that you already make

Can you think of an actual occasion when this has happened?
What was it?
Were you happy with how things went/the result?

What sorts of things would you be most likely to eat and then want to make yourself?

Is there anything that you probably would not attempt to do yourself (in these circumstances)?

Using Recipes

(Recipes provided on separate sheet in interviews).

This section is called 'using recipes'.

What does the term 'recipe' mean to you?

When you pick up or you're given a recipe, do you expect to be able to follow it or do you expect to ask someone or look a few things up?

On what occasions are you most likely to use a recipe for something?

Here is a recipe ... would you just quickly read it through please.

Watercress and Potato Soup

serves 4

30g / 1oz butter

1 medium onion - chopped

15g / 1/2oz flour

225g / 8oz potatoes - diced

570ml / 1pint chicken stock

2 bunches of watercress - trimmed and then chopped

290ml / 1/2 pint full fat milk

salt and freshly ground black pepper

pinch of nutmeg

fresh chives - chopped

- Melt the butter, add the onion and cook slowly until soft but not coloured.
- Stir in the flour, cook for 1 minute, then add the chicken stock and the potatoes. Simmer for ten minutes or until the potatoes are tender.
- Add the water cress and simmer for thirty seconds.
- Liquidize the soup and push it through a sieve. Pour into the rinsed out pan.
- Add enough of the milk to get the required consistency and season to taste with salt, pepper and nutmeg. Re-heat until the soup is just below boiling point.
- Serve, garnished with chopped chives.

How would you feel about using that recipe?

How closely would you follow it? To the letter?

Would you measure everything?

For what reasons?

What about the timing?

Would you taste it as you went to see if you liked it?

Is there anything in the ingredients that you might feel a bit uncertain about using?

Is there anything in the method that you think you might feel a bit uncertain about doing?

Would there be any circumstances when you would take that recipe and adapt it or change things?
What would you do?
Would this be for preference ... you didn't have the ingredients ... or both?

How long would you set aside to do it?

Do you like using recipes?

Do you ever feel disappointed with the result? For what reasons?

Can you describe an occasion when you've been disappointed with something? - and pleased?

Do you ever look at something and think 'oh I wonder if it should be like that?' or asked somebody if that's how something 'should be'.

Can you think of an occasion when you have thought that?

How does that sort of instance/feeling make you feel about cooking?

Are there ever occasions when you're more likely to use something pre-prepared because of this feeling?

Here is another recipe would you just quickly read it through please.

Spinach and Bacon Quiche

serves 6

for the shortcrust pastry:

200g / 7oz plain flour, plus extra for rolling etc.

a pinch of salt

100g / 3 1/2oz unsalted butter - cut into 2cm / 1in cubes

3 - 4 tbsps cold water

for the filling:

1 tbsp olive oil

6 rashers smoked streaky bacon - chopped

1 medium onion sliced

175g / 6oz fresh spinach leaves - washed, dried, stems removed and roughly chopped

75g / 2 1/2 oz mature Cheddar - grated

5 eggs

225ml / 8fl oz single cream

salt and pepper

- Begin by making the pastry. Place the flour and pinch of salt in a bowl. Add the butter to the bowl and rub into the flour with your fingertips until the mixture resembles fine breadcrumbs.
- Add just enough cold water to bind the butter and flour mixture together (start with three tablespoons of water and then add more if necessary). Mix to a firm dough, first with a round-bladed knife and then with one hand.
- Knead the dough very quickly and lightly until smooth (over handling the dough will make it tough). Wrap in cling film and chill for at least half an hour before using.
- Pre-heat the oven to 200C/400F/Gas 6.
- Next make the pastry case. On a lightly floured surface, roll out the dough to a 3mm/1/4in thickness and use to line a 23cm/9in round, loose bottomed flan tin. Prick the base lightly with a fork, then line with foil or greaseproof paper. Fill

with dried beans and bake for 15 minutes. Remove the foil and beans and then bake for a further 8 to 10 minutes until the pastry is pale and golden.

- Reduce the oven temperature to 180C/350F/Gas 4.
- Now make the filling. Heat the olive oil in a frying pan, then fry the bacon and onion for 4 to 5 minutes until golden. Remove the bacon and the onion from the pan. Add the spinach to the pan and cook for 1 to 2 minutes until it starts to wilt, then drain if necessary. Mix with the cheese, onion and bacon and place in the pastry case.
- Beat the eggs lightly in a bowl then stir in the cream and season. Pour into the pastry case and bake for 30 to 35 minutes until golden and set.
- Cool slightly and remove from the tin to serve.

How do you feel about that one?

How closely would you follow that one?
Would you measure everything? For what reasons?
What about the times given? For what reasons?

Is there anything there that you think you might feel a bit uncertain about?

Would there be any circumstances when you would change anything in that recipe?
What would you do?

How long would you set aside to do it?

Equipment

This next section is about using kitchen equipment

What kitchen equipment (electrical equipment such as deep fat fryer or food processor or blender) do you have?

Do you use it any of it on a regular basis?

Is there anything that you make, using this equipment, that you wouldn't do if you didn't have the equipment and had to do it by hand? For what reasons?
Can you think of any example?

Are there ever occasions when you have seen a recipe, or instruction of some sort, that uses a particular piece of equipment that you don't have?
Would you try it without? For what reasons?

The Professionals

This is a short set of questions about professional cooks.

Have you ever worked in a professional kitchen?
Have you ever watched a chef or a trained cook at work?

What do you think are the differences between what somebody who cooks for a living does and what the cook at home does?

What advantages, if any, do you think the trained cook have when they prepare food at home?

Have you ever seen Ready Steady Cook on television? At the beginning they have a member of the public/audience bring on five ingredients (their favourite things) and the chef has 15 minutes to think of the dish that they will make from these ingredients [and I'm assured that ...] . Of course they always do something that looks amazing even if as a viewer you never taste it?
How do you think they go about deciding what to make with those five ingredients?

How would you feel about doing that … not on television of course … but being given some ingredients and so on …?

Do you ever do that?

When are you most likely to do that?

The Importance of Food and Cooking

This final section is about how important you feel cooking is.

How important do you think it is for adults to have food preparation skills ... that is to be able to prepare food from raw ingredients?

How do you think you, personally, have picked up your cooking skills?

Do you think that it is important that children and teenagers are taught to cook?

Do you think it is as important as learning to read and write?

And as important as learning to drive a car?

For those with children or who have had children

Do you, or did you, ever cook with your children?

Do they have books? Do they watch you? Do they play?

Have you any comments about anything we've talked about or about your own experiences of cooking and food preparation that you would like to make?

Personal Information

Which of these following age brackets do you fit into?

18 - 24 25 - 29 30 - 34 35 -39 40 - 44 45 - 49 50 - 54 55 +

What is your occupation?

Are you self-employed or employed?

Which of these following earning brackets (gross per week) do you fit into ...that is your personal money not the household budget?

£149 -   £150 - £249   £250 - £349   £350 - £449   £450 - £549   £550 +

Did you stay at school after fifteen or sixteen?

Did you go to university or equivalent?

Do you live with anyone? With whom?

Does anyone share your household budget?

Do you have any children? How old are they?

Have you always lived in Britain/England?

APPENDIX 8

CONTACT QUESTIONNAIRE

(Questions from the contact questionnaire completed by informants who took part in the first stage of fieldwork.)

1. Individual ID

2. Date of Interview

3. How old are you?

20 to 29 __ 30 to 39 __ 40 to 49 __ 50 plus __

4. Could you please give me details of the members of your household (that is all the people who share your household budget other than yourself)?

6. Which of the following, if any, educational establishments have you been to?

Elementary/primary

Comprehensive/Secondary

Polytechnic/University

Evening classes

Others?

7. Which of the following educational and/or professional qualifications, if any, have you got?

CSE/GCE/O Level/GCSE

A level

Technical/Professional

Degree/Higher Degree

Vocational (for example, Teaching, nursing …)

8. Do you do any voluntary, unpaid work? If yes, please give a brief description. *(Including the number of hours and times you work)*

9. Are you currently working in paid employment?

10. Do you work more than 30 hours a week or less? Are your hours regular?

11. What is your work?

12. Are you an employee or self-employed?

13. Including any voluntary/unpaid work, would you say that you keep regular working ours (Monday to Friday and between 8am and 8pm)?

14. Without including any benefits (such as Child Benefit or Income Support) what is your approximate personal (not total household) gross income per week?
£99 or less
£100 to £199
£200 to £299
£300 to £399
£400 or more

15. As for as you know, does anyone in your household receive any benefits (such as Child Benefit or Income Support)? Please give details?

16. Which of the following best describes your ethnic group?
Bangladeshi
Chinese
Indian
Irish
Pakistani
White - British
White – other

Black – African

Black - Caribbean

Black - other

Other ethnic group

17. Do you consider English to be your first language

18. Have you always lived in Britain/England? If not, what other countries have you lived in and how long did you live there/in each of those places?

19. Do you own or have use of a car?

20. How long have you lived with your husband/wife/partner?

21. Is your house/flat/accommodation –

rented?

rent free?

owned outright?

owned with mortgage?

shared ownership?

Black – African

Black - Caribbean

Black - other

Other ethnic group

17. Do you consider English to be your first language

18. Have you always lived in Britain/England? If not, what other countries have you lived in and how long did you live there/in each of those places?
19. Do you own or have use of a car?

20. How long have you lived with your husband/wife/partner?

21. Is your house/flat/accommodation –

rented?

rent free?

owned outright?

owned with mortgage?

shared ownership?

Dupe page
Please ignore
Thanks

APPENDIX 8

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