



NUI MAYNOOTH
Ollscoil na hÉireann Má Nuad

**From housewife to domestic goddess and beyond: an exploration into
the significance of women's role as food providers in a contemporary
Irish context**

A thesis submitted

By

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**For the Degree of
Doctor of Philosophy**

at

**National University of Ireland
Maynooth**

September 2015

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Acknowledgements

In my journey through third level education I have benefited from the support and kindness of many individuals and organisations. The undergraduate programme at Maynooth University along with supports for mature students opened up a world of knowledge and challenges that I embraced with equal measures of joy and trepidation. As a postgraduate student sociology allowed me to engage with and dig deeper into issues pertinent to society.

For their assistance, advice and support I take this opportunity to thank all the staff in the department of Sociology and in particular Professor Mary Corcoran, Professor Sean O' Riain, Rebecca King O'Riain, Laurence Cox, Tony Cunningham, Mary Benson, Trish, and all my fellow students including Jean, Ann, Vivienne, and Emma. I also wish to acknowledge assistance and advice I received from the Academic Advisory Office and the Graduate Office.

I am deeply appreciative for the academic funding that I received from The John and Pat Hume Scholarship (2005-2008) and the award of funding from the Irish Research Council (formally IRCHSS) from (2006-2007) affording me the opportunity to conduct and complete this PhD by research.

I wish to express my heartfelt thanks to all the participants who took time and effort to engage with me in this research, some across all phases. I am grateful for the welcome I received into their homes and (kitchens) in particular, and for freely sharing their views and perspectives on the issues being researched.

For all my friends thank you for your support and assistance particularly Maire who indirectly started me on this journey and has offered support and encouragement throughout. Special thanks must go to my academic friends Antoinette, Ena and Rose who have been with me from the beginning with support, kindness and love, forging bonds of lifelong friendship.

I wish to express my thanks to my colleagues in DIT library Aungier St, Dublin for their encouragement and in particular my thanks to Dr Philip Cohen, Head of Library Services for his assistance and kindness. My special thanks and appreciation also go to Joanna for her technical knowledge and advice.

I wish to express my thanks and gratitude to Mary Murphy the second reader of my dissertation for her insightful comments and relevant advice on the final draft.

My deep appreciation and thanks to my supervisor Jane Gray for her unstinting support, discussion and advice at each stage of the research process leading to the completion of my research dissertation. I also wish to thank Professor Mary Corcoran and Professor Julia Brannen for a stimulating and insightful viva experience.

Dedication

This research is dedicated to the following people who have shaped and inspired me and are of central importance in my life. To my beloved parents Sean O’Leary and Eleanor Redmond (deceased) for their loving care and for instilling in me an interest in learning and a social conscience, and to my brothers John, Jim and Mike and their wives and their families for their love, support and encouragement. For Eleanor my dear sister who has always been there for me with love and support throughout my life. In deepest love and appreciation this thesis is dedicated in particular to my husband Anto for his calm presence, love, and caring support and to our children Sarah and Eoghan for their love and encouragement throughout this academic journey.

*“Hope is not optimism, which expects things to turn out well,
But something rooted in the conviction that there is good
Worth working for”*

Seamus Heaney

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Summary

This thesis is centrally concerned with issues of gender equality in relation to food work in families, in the context of social change in contemporary Ireland. Through the lens of food work it traces how this work as a specific aspect of gendered roles has evolved historically and is enacted in contemporary Ireland and what implication change in this role may have for gender equity in both public and private spheres.

In a legacy from the past women are associated with 'love and emotional' labour in families despite their increasing engagement in paid employment on a par with men presenting challenges for equality to pursue their goals.

I examine this work using qualitative methods in four stages, focus groups, in-depth interviews, participant observation and food diaries with thirty eight participants, thirty five women and three men. I focus on how this role is perceived and negotiated in families and what factors impact on how it is carried out. Women are variously 'apprenticed' into food work by family members or through diverse experiences. As a family practice cooking is 'done' by individuals who bring their tacit knowledge and skills to this task. Social values, rituals, socialisation and connection are enacted through eating together where family is also displayed. Increased pressure is brought to bear on this work through lack of consistent nutritional advice, support, and control at policy level. Changes in food production, fast food usage, and food scares all have implications for health, adding challenges for food work. Overall, women display power and control of consumption practices through their knowledge and planning. An increasing engagement of men in family cooking also offers a tentative change for doing gender differently opening up opportunities for egalitarian food practices and responsibility and positive signals for gender equity over time.

Introduction

Food touches everything. Food is the foundation of every economy. It is a central pawn in political strategies of states and households. Food marks social differences, boundaries, bonds, and contradictions. Eating is an endlessly evolving enactment of gender, family and community relationships, (Counihan and Van Esterik, 1997:1)

This thesis is centrally concerned with issues of gender equality in the context of social change in contemporary Ireland. Through the lens of food work it traces how this work as a specific aspect of gendered roles has evolved historically and is enacted in contemporary Ireland. This research examines women's role as food providers in families in contemporary Ireland. Focusing on food work is important as how and what people eat has significant consequences for their health and wellbeing.

Understanding how individuals go about the work of cooking and consuming food is vital, as economic and consumption practices become a focus of concern across nation states. Yet, the work of food provision remains strongly associated with women, where in a legacy from the past they retain responsibility for this work, despite gaining gender equality in other facets of their private and work lives. This thesis argues that women are influenced by the past and their responsibility for food work is implicated in idealised images of women's gendered role associated with caring labour. It is at the intersection of these issues that my investigation takes place.

The history of food work in Ireland connects past and present as part of long term social, cultural, and economic shifts in society. In the nineteenth century women were central to the domestic economy in families. Their household work of feeding and caring along with the sale of domestic produce helped to sustain their families. Yet

cooking facilities were very basic, often consisting of open hearth turf fires in poor households (Cullen, L M, 1981: 184).

The aftermath of the Famine in the 1850's brought a decline in traditional employment on the land, in factories, and domestic service. When combined with economic growth and structural reform, these factors wrought changes in social and economic spheres, leading to the emergence of women's role as housewives in a privatized domestic sphere. Further, the association of women with domesticity, along with the idealisation of motherhood, were implicated in women taking overall responsibility for family work (Bourke, 2001; Inglis 1998). Thus an understanding of how, and to what extent, long term patterns of social change have created opportunities for women to pursue goals beyond family is important for understanding contemporary patterns of food provisioning

My study is framed within the context of social change in Ireland. From a macro perspective, Giddens (1991) and Beck (1992) utilise theories about the individualisation of family life to argue that women can reflexively make decisions and choices based on individual freedom in modernity. Yet they also contend that societal structures presuppose a level of obligation by women to carry out supporting and caring roles in the micro sphere of family. These factors have significant implications for women and the level of gendered autonomy they can possess.

To understand the extent to which the past continues to inform the present is central to this project where perspectives of both continuity and change are explored to understand contemporary practices. In this thesis I show how family obligations for women have evolved historically so that in the present they are carried out within a

framework of social relations which influence decision making strategies (Finch, 1989; 2007).

Significant change occurred in Ireland in the last decades of the twentieth century. Social, cultural and economic systems were transformed through a period of sustained economic growth. From traditional roots in a strong agricultural base in the past, the country emerged to become a fast growing, urbanised modern state, part of a developing global economy (Kuhling and Keohane, 2007). Economic and social developments have made it possible for individuals to pursue opportunities in education and employment. As part of the modernising project of the state, the introduction of free education afforded young people a way to achieve qualifications that enhanced their future career paths. In the period since its introduction in 1967, girls increasingly availed of education and training, outperforming boys in examinations and thereby improving their employment opportunities. Irish women have become increasingly ambitious and career focused, rising to highly skilled positions of responsibility and power (O'Sullivan, 2007: 65).

As a consequence labour force participation for women grew substantially in recent decades. Central statistics office data for 2011 show that while the overall figures for women's employment had fallen from a high of over half 58 per cent, (CSO 2005b:11) to 46.7 per cent in 2011 (CSO, 2012), the percentage rose again to 55.9 per cent in 2013. These figures show that, despite the recent economic downturn, over half of all women are engaged in employment today.

However, while egalitarian practices in the sphere of education and the economy are providing increased opportunities in employment for women, little appears to have changed in the domestic division of labour. At a social policy level, whereas gender equality is perceived to be achieved in the public sphere of paid labour, inequalities persist in relation to unpaid family roles (Williams, 2008). The traditional roles associated with caring labour are strongly gendered and women largely retain responsibility for this work (Lynch et al, 2009). The absence of official supports along with outdated gendered attitudes are considered a causal factor for a failure to create a work-life balance in which women and men could pursue both paid work while also both caring for the needs of family (Moen and Yu, 2000; Lewis, Smithson and Dores Guerreiro, 2002). Instead women retain the main responsibility for family work whether they are employed or not, (Delphy and Leonard, 1992; Gatrell, 2005; Hilliard, 2006). Recent time use studies support this view, revealing a substantial difference in the gender division of paid work and family work. Findings in relation to food work shows that over two thirds of women and less than one third of men engage in food provision over a weekly period (McGinnity et al, 2005: 29). These results are similar to European trends. Changes in work patterns are also creating a time squeeze for families with implications for food work. When combined with high costs for child care, this creates an additional burden for families (Lewis, 2009:92,110). These issues have a strong bearing on women's work lives and decision making, which are explored in this research.

To examine how gendered roles and decision making are enacted, this thesis engages with theories of preference, economic, and moral decision making to reveal how women use varied and complex reasoning depending on life stage, gendered

influences, values, and experiences, when making decisions related to family commitments. However, while as mothers women in contemporary society are shaped and influenced by societal norms and values past and present, they are also shown to be an influence through their practices in relation to rituals, relationships and consumption (O'Donohoe, et al 2014). At the micro level of family life, past and present, women engage in *family practices* that both reproduce and challenge specific activities and roles (Morgan, 2002). How these practices are implicated in constructing the role of food provision in families is central to this research

As a specific role, the work of food preparation is constructed as part of a gendered set of practices. Theoretically, an understanding of cooking in families as an aspect of household work draws on a number of strands in sociology: social change and gender roles; equality; food values and meaning; health and nutrition; and consumption. Feeding work carried out by women is also considered part of unseen domestic work, within the context of an unequal gendered division of labour: mundane, yet necessary, but difficult to measure in the context of love and caring labour (Lynch and McLaughlin.1995: 286).

This research explores how this role is enacted as a set of family practices carried out within a gendered division of labour. The focus is on all aspects of feeding work. The thesis looks at how knowledge and skills are used together with how this role has evolved and changed. Family meals require organisation where planning and skills are used to provide the best possible diet. Beyond their immediate nutritional purpose, meals are also used to nurture and sustain family and wider relationships and connections. My primary investigation centres on women, since they are identified as mainly responsible for food provisioning work In addition, however, contributions

from a small number of male participants in the study are included to reflect different gendered perspectives in relation to cooking today in the context of societal change.

Internationally, developments in modern food supply and marketing systems have wrought changes in how and what people eat. Developments in food production have altered both the nature and supply of foods making available a vast variety of foods, irrespective of season. Food processing has also rendered food adaptable so little work is required to make it available to eat. Individualised eating patterns along with diverse food choices within global food markets, coinciding with food quality, food scares, and health concerns, are all impacting on cooking and consumption trends. The global nature of food supply also creates an increase in risk associated with contamination of food products, with implications for health. From an economic and health perspective cooking in families presents an increased challenge and responsibility when endeavouring to feed others today.

This research is timely as it takes place at a time when food consumption is a major health concern both nationally and internationally. A significant global crisis is occurring concerning obesity. In 2008 the World Health Organisation has estimated that one billion adults are clinically obese and this figure is rising (WHO, 2008). In Ireland 61% of adults and 20% of children are overweight or obese (Harrington, et al, 2007: Slán report). Official OECD estimates place Ireland mid-table in international comparison in relation to obesity (Oireachtas Research, 2011:2). The figures reveal a substantial health threat to the lives of children and adults today. Considerable concern is also expressed about food, how it is changing, marketed, and the proliferation of questionable practices in food production and safety. In the light of

recent concerns regarding food safety and global consumption practices these concerns are salient and have influenced how individuals make decisions when shopping and cooking for family.

To present the argument used in this thesis I wish to clarify my focus. My argument is presented from the perspective of social change and gendered roles. It explores how particular ideologies in relation to caring labour have been associated with women in the past and continues to be implicated in unpaid work, specifically food provision in families. From this perspective I also endeavour to reveal how and in what circumstances decisions and practices are taken and carried out. In this thesis I attempt to look beneath the surface to uncover what motivates individuals when carrying out the work of food provision. My aim is also to reveal the level of knowledge, skills, and nurturing that are enacted through examining this work along with the pressures, constraints and frustration that impinges on individuals in what can be considered a mundane and thankless role. While I recognize its importance for understanding food provision and consumption, for the purposes of this study I do not deal specifically with class, but instead reveal gendered issues and constraints that are relevant to how respondents carry out this work. My overall aim throughout is to allow the voices of those who participated to reveal their experiences and the implications these have both for them and for our understanding of how food provisioning is enacted within families today.

The structure of the thesis is as follows:

Chapter One traces historical change in connection with women's role as food providers in the domestic economy of households. It presents an historical account of the work of family food provision in Ireland and the specific social, political, cultural,

and economic trends that inform how this role has evolved. Through periods of societal transformation it traces how cooking as part of domesticity became an aspect of family work in the private sphere, where women were socialised into specific domestic roles and duties considered consistent to their gendered status. The chapter traces how the idealisation of mothers created an assumption of the primacy of their caring roles in the past that has continued into the present. It also explores how social change has altered the status of women to a position of equal participation in society while still retaining the main part of responsibility for family work.

Chapter Two provides a critical discussion of sociological theories of modernity as they relate to social change and gender roles. This thesis is also concerned with how changes in modern systems of food production impact on both the nature of food and how it is used, and consumed today in households. It critically examines theoretical arguments relating to the individualisation of gender roles and how this may affect autonomy, individual freedom, and reflective agency. The first area relates to gender and nurturance as feeding others in a family setting implies a relationship based on caring. Secondly, how this role is understood, within a gendered division of labour, in the context of social change is vital. The third area deals specifically with family practices in relation to food, including all aspects of planning, decision making, shopping, cooking, and consumption rituals. Each aspect generates theoretical strands informing the analysis. They are discussed in detail in chapter two.

Chapter Three provides an account of the methodologies used in this research. Women across the life course variously come to the work of cooking for others. In order to gain insight into the role of feeding within the private domain of family life a robust methodology was required. Within the overall context of a life course perspective, this chapter outlines how I developed a qualitative research strategy

combining four elements in order to gain an understanding of this work. A qualitative research approach offered a means of engaging with individuals and gaining insight into their lived experiences and reflections, from their unique perspectives (Marshall and Rossman, 2006). My methodology consisted of four phases, each of which was used to gather data, building the research, step by step, incorporating new insights with each phase in an integrative, sequential process.

Phase one involved making contact with individuals willing to participate and discuss themes surrounding the topic of food provision. Respondents were drawn from four towns situated in north County Kildare. The specific areas of Leixlip, Celbridge, Maynooth and Kilcock were the locations used to recruit participants for my research. I approached a wide variety of local organisations and voluntary groups and sought permission to conduct **focus group** discussions around this topic. I used these sessions to explore concepts surrounding all aspects of food provision and practices in families, taking account of new avenues of concern and interest raised by participants (Berg et al, 2014:167). Recruitment through local groups proceeded and a number of women agreed to participate in **phase two**, comprising an **in-depth interview**.

Interviews were conducted using a life story approach, with particular attention focused on food provision. As the research progressed additional participants were sought through snowball sampling. In total, thirty eight people agreed to become involved, thirty five women, and three men. All respondents participated in an in-depth interview. Ten women also agreed to get involved in **phase three** through completion of a **seven day food diary** (see Appendix 2) which focused on the main meal of the day. Participants recorded details of planning, shopping and the time taken to cook the main meal, stating who was present and any alternative meals cooked. They also presented their reflections, any thoughts or feelings about this

work, the atmosphere around the meal including any changes in routine that occurred. In **phase four** participant observation was carried out with four women doing a routine grocery shopping trip. The findings from these methods combined with theoretical analysis form the basis of this research project. The methodology described above is discussed in detail in chapter three. The research findings are presented in the remaining chapters.

Chapter Four is concerned with gender and the division of labour in families and paid employment. International research indicates that, while there is a widespread aspiration towards equal sharing in family and career work, gender role equality is uneven and not fully realised as part of ‘lagged adaption’ within many societies (Gershuny, et al, 2005). This chapter highlights the emergence of a gendered division of labour once relationships are formalised with the birth of children. It provides an understanding of how traditional gendered roles are (re)enacted differently across the life course. It explores also how pressures and constraints impact on women trying to combine a career with family life where formal supports and policies for a work life balance are lacking or non-existent with consequences for gendered practices.

Chapter Five focuses on the values and practices that inform how individuals perceive and enact their role as food providers. From a life history perspective it reveals the varied ways in which individuals engage with the role of cooking in families. It is concerned with the way they identify themselves in relation to their family commitments and how this is reflected in their practices specifically related to family food work. Theories in relation to family roles show how beliefs and values are connected to what individuals believe to be important and meaningful in their

lives (Hardiman and Whelan 1998). Other perspectives contend that levels of active agency, obligation, and negotiation influence decision making and practices in relation to family (Finch and Mason, 1993; Duncan et al 2003).

This chapter reveals the range of factors that come into play when individuals take on responsibility for food work. For many women their mothers were shown to have been a strong influence (mother centred). This was expressed particularly by older women, many of whom were ‘apprenticed’ into cooking work, learning by watching their mother as a role model. Other respondents spoke of coming to the work of cooking through a variety of different pathways which changed the manner in which they perceived this work (other centred). This has implications for how they go about ‘doing’ gender, and is more likely to open up shared levels of responsibility for this work (West and Zimmerman, 2009). Experiences of fathers taking responsibility for family food, getting children to take on some responsibility, and developing shared interests in cooking through travel are all shown to create broader attitudes which open up this work as a shared activity (Bove and Sobal, 2006). A central aspect of food work revolves around dinner as the main meal of the day. Family meals are also revealed as a means of forging bonds, of socialisation, where women in the main take responsibility for ‘emotional labour’ within families (Morgan, 1996). Through different descriptive narratives, participants also ‘display family’ as a way of being by engaging in food work as a family activity (Finch, 2007).

Chapter Six begins by looking at varied official and media driven images of women as mothers caring for family. Some portrayals indicate mothers as a powerful icon, while others are used to convey the caring aspect of their lives. In contrast from a

gender equity perspective this role is connected with inequality, the unseen work, taken for granted by society. This chapter examines this role from the perspective of those who carry it out and explores how knowledge and skills are used by women provisioning for their families. It highlights planning decisions, specific shopping practices, beliefs, and strategies associated with catering for families. Women and men bring to this work their tacit knowledge and experience to provide the best diet possible. The work involves taking into account different tastes and choices yet is tempered with practical use of the resources at their disposal. How they deal with food scares and global changes in food production and supply, pressure and contradictory advice from peers and official nutritional advice are discussed.

Chapter Seven critically explores food work from a male perspective. While the role of cooking in families has been associated primarily with women it is an activity that men can *choose* to carry out. For some men being involved in cooking is a creative outlet, for others it part of sharing in the work of feeding in families. Unlike many women who were socialised into this role men come to this work in various ways, giving rise to a diversity of reasons for doing food work. For some it was male and female influences in their past which led them to take an active role in cooking. How they go about this work also varies, creating new spaces for enactment of this role. By doing gender differently through taking responsibly for cooking, they represent a change in accountability for this previously gendered role, offering tentative possibilities for future egalitarian practices in providing food in families.

Chapter Eight sums up the key contribution and recommendations of my research. I bring together the key findings in relation to the role of cooking for families in

contemporary Ireland. From a historical past where women carried out this work some levels of continuity and change are evident in the enactment of this role. Women retain the main level of responsibility, particularly when they have children. The importance of this work is highlighted by how participants employ knowledge and skills to give their families the best diet they can provide. Despite a tentative change in which a small number of men are taking on the role of cooking a low rate of gendered change combined with a lack of proactive supports from official agencies show that this work is far from a priority for public policy concerns. Various levels of pressure are experienced by women in attempting to fulfil all their family commitments. The growth and development of powerful food lobbies continue to hold sway in marketing and control of global food supply with consequences for diet and health in the future. Women in Ireland hold a central responsibility for food provision regardless of the fact that they have increasingly diverse lives and desire to participate fully in all societal spheres. How they go about this work and what it means for them is central to my research. Beginning with a historical perspective that traces women's work in food provision and their significant contribution to the welfare of their families I present my argument through engagement with historical and theoretical perspectives related to gendered role of food provision to how this work may be understood in contemporary society

Chapter One

Historical perspective on women's food work

'Without use of history and without historical sense of psychological matters, the social scientist cannot adequately state the kinds of problems that ought now to be the orienting points of his studies'. C. Wright Mills, 1959:143

1.1 Introduction

In order to understand women's role as food providers within contemporary Ireland it is essential to place their work in historical context. As women have a strong historical connection with food work in Ireland, to examine this aspect of family work we need to reveal how wider forces (political, economic, social and cultural) impacted on women's lives and work in the past and present. In order to understand how food practices are carried out today it is important to explore how societal norms and expectations may be influenced by perceptions of the past and the extent to which present practices have been inherited to some extent from an earlier era.

The aim of this chapter is to trace the changes in women's lives and work from the late nineteenth and the twentieth century with particular reference to food. This period heralded a turning point for women's lives with the onset of industrialisation, leading to decline in family economies based on agriculture, a sharp rise in emigration and the consolidation of women's unpaid work role in the domestic sphere (Daly, 1981). My research will concentrate on this period onwards, tracing developments that forged changes for women. Some reference is also made to relevant aspects in earlier periods to enhance understanding of women's lives and work. My central focus and concern is on women's work of feeding others in the household. However as women engaged in varieties of work both within and outside the domestic sphere, references will be

made to other forms of work to gain an overall picture of their contribution to the domestic economy.

1.2 Historical contrasts between public and private spheres

The history of Irish women's work in the past is patchy and uneven due to the fact that their work and activities did not constitute a primary feature of historical interest until the recent past (Mac Curtain and O'Dowd, 1991; Hayes and Urquhart, 2004).

One reason put forward for the lack of focus on women's work centred on the structures of Ireland which prevailed in the sixth and seventh centuries. Historian Donnacha O' Corrain (1978) contends that while there is some evidence from legal tracts that women in early Irish society held status in relation to marriage rights and an honoured and influential position in society these rights were greatly reduced by the time of the imposition of English law in Ireland in the early seventeenth century. He argues that Irish society was patriarchal from early historical times in common with most European societies, with legal, political, social and economic life governed by men (O'Corrain, 1978:11). As male activities predominated in public affairs, the bulk of historical enquiry and recording focused on these aspects of Irish life.

An upsurge of interest in women's lives in the past and the work they engaged in has uncovered the essential contribution they made to their families and the economy (Daly, 1997). Extensive scholarship is now dedicated to uncovering aspects of women's lives in the past, offering a means of exploring areas previously hidden or neglected. Delving into the past and focusing on women's work necessitates framing it within the context of gendered roles, as understood at the time, and how they may be interpreted today. Mary Cullen (1997) in a foreword to *Gender Perspectives in Nineteen Century Ireland*, points out that once women's experiences were brought

into the foreground through historical scholarship new interpretations began to emerge. Firstly, it emerged that there was '*enormous variation in the historical experience of women*' ...and that '*there was no simple, universal women's experience of women's history*' (Cullen, M. 1997: 6). Cullen argues that throughout history being born male or female had implications for individuals, politically, socially, and economically. To be born female, had consequences for opportunities available that were different to those born male in the same manner that class, race or creed had consequences for opportunities. Through analysis inclusive of gender considerations, Cullen argues, that the role of women needs to be uncovered not as separate to male activities, which were the primary concern of historical accounts, but as '*intermeshed and interdependent*' and focused on both the public and private spheres (Cullen, M,1997:7; 2013).

Taking this stance in her work also, historian Maria Luddy (1997) writes that '*the ideology of domesticity*' which portrays women's work taking place entirely within the private sphere is not an accurate picture of the past. She contends, that a public/private dichotomy which was claimed to exist, '*was not as exclusive as has been believed, since public and private life interacted in complex ways*' (Luddy, 1997:100). Bearing this in mind I endeavour to show how public and private spheres are connected within the following sections of the chapter which are structured according to the following historical periods; pre-famine (before the mid-19th crisis known as the Great Famine); post-famine to the early 20th century; independence to the 1970s onwards. Within each period I trace the following themes central to my argument to show that women's lives and work are inextricably linked to developments in Ireland overall; living conditions and housing; gender in the political

economy; social construction of gender; and other relevant perspectives that have a bearing on overall social change in Ireland in the context of women's lives.

In the following sections I sketch the conditions of the pre-famine period to show how women's work both in the public and private sphere was central to the well-being of families.

1.3 Ireland: Pre-Famine

To understand the impact of significant changes that occurred in Ireland, which had a direct effect on family life and work, and particularly the lives of women, it is necessary to begin by tracing developments which had a bearing on the country as a whole. Cognisance must also be taken of the fact that available work rates across the country varied partly due to lack of clarity in early census reporting which under recorded the extent of women's work (Daly, 1997:3). With a strong tradition in agriculture, the main means of making a living outside cities and towns was connected with the land. This factor was to have major influence on the lives and future of the population into the nineteenth, twentieth, and twenty first century.

1.3.1 Housing living conditions.

Before the beginning of the twentieth century houses and land in Ireland were rented from landlords rather than owned. In rural Ireland the most basic homes in the period before the 1860s consisted of one room cabins where many of the poorer population lived (Daly, 1981). Many people lived in houses that they had built themselves with help from family and neighbours. According to O'Reilly (2011) the design of the Irish traditional vernacular house was rectangular in shape, within which the main cooking hearth was the lynchpin of the house with a bedroom off this room. A loft over the kitchen in some designs provided a sleeping space for children accessed by ladder. The central location of the kitchen as the largest room provided space for a

range of activities including boiling water, cooking, baking, washing and sleeping. It was the centre of social activity in the house and also acted as an extension of the farm where animals were nursed and farm equipment stored. Over time however this tradition in housing gave way to policies based on mass production design standards (O'Reilly, 2011:193, 206,214).

Living conditions, along with availability of food and a means of cooking were important factors for families' diet. As a time of growth, by the end of the seventeenth century more food was being produced in Ireland than ever before leading to a large surplus available for commercial export (Daly, 1981: 5). Trade expansion and rapid population growth wrought changes in dietary patterns for the population. By the beginning of the eighteenth century a new crop, the potato, was being grown extensively (initially by the immigrant English during the seventeenth century), which provided an alternative food to grain if the harvest was poor (Cullen, L., 1981: 159). As a result, changes of diet also occurred earlier than in the rest of Europe, and an increased reliance on the potato as a staple food took hold, particularly in the expanding number of small holdings with few other food resources. Diet gradually evolved to include maize, imported wheat grain, and bread products influenced by the influx of Scottish and English settlers to Ireland (Cullen, L.1981: 140-144).

Historical research shows that while developments in the food sector had serious consequences for Irish society it was uneven and had different effects in households depending on class and location (Clarkson and Crawford, 2005: 3).

The Irish diet during the seventeenth and eighteenth century had evolved historically and was a wholesome diet for those with modest means. Regionally, distinct foods became popular over time, with other tastes waning. In more prosperous areas with

historically strong Anglo Norman settlements in eastern and south eastern counties, a greater emphasis was put on grains, different breads of mixed cereals, varieties of peas, and beans. Porridge made from oatmeal was also used, particularly in poorer homes. However, the keystone of the diet for the poor was the potato. This diet while nutritious was monotonous, with a staple consisting of potatoes, combined with buttermilk (Ó Tuathaigh, 1998: 40). A number of bad harvests effected what people ate and at the time of the Great Famine, potatoes were the stable diet for up to 40 percent of the population (Clarkson and Crawford, 2005,133, 197).

1.3.2 Gender in the political economy

Preparation of food in households was at the heart of women's daily work.

Depending on the economic status of the household and the sophistication of cooking facilities, women either provided basic or more elaborate meals. Cooking methods during this period changed little and chiefly comprised of boiling, baking and roasting. This work was time consuming and a 'very skilful occupation' (Cullen, N, 1991: 267). Women from all strata in Irish society were engaged at some level with food provision. For some this may have been in a supervisory capacity to ensure this work was carried out and the members of the household fed. For others the role was much more hands on and may have involved foraging for scarce food resources and endeavouring to make an adequate and palatable meal to nourish and sustain those they catered for. A variety of dairy foods were produced in larger households for consumption. From the nineteenth century many households, rich and poor, also kept hens both for meat and eggs which featured widely in the diet. Trade in eggs, sold informally and in markets, was also a spin off for the household. The sale of butter and eggs was one of the ways in which women's work became part of the formal

economy. The extra work involved in this trade was part of women's duties. There is scant knowledge of how the cash made from this enterprise was distributed within households, but the money made was particularly important for supplementing the household income of poorer families (Cullen, N., 1991: 268, O'Dowd, 2005: 94).

In pre-famine Ireland family economies varied greatly across the country. In rural areas an adequate standard of living depended on farm size, the quality of land, family size and availability of other forms of work should crops fail (Daly, 1981). Work for women in the household was strongly gendered, yet according to Luddy (1995) in the period between 1800 and 1918 women were also involved in varied activities including domestic service, textile and agricultural work, and farm activities associated with supporting the family economy (Luddy, 1995:157).

In addition to the work of feeding a household on meagre resources, and in order to contribute to the family economy, poorer women, and often children, engaged in seasonal work, paid, or unpaid, both within and outside the family. Much of this work was also connected with food. It included tilling land for planting, digging and picking potatoes, binding corn and harvesting crops for which they received a small wage or food as payment (Luddy, 1995:4, 158, 163).

This work varied from county to county. Some women engaged in domestic service, others in home working in the domestic textile industry as spinners or from the mid 19th century onwards, as weavers. Spinning based in households was part of familial economic production predominantly in Ulster and North Connacht (Gray, 1999: 164).

In North east Ulster a high proportion of women were employed in factories

associated with clothing and textiles (Daly, 1997:7). It was clear that women's work was inextricably linked to the economic well-being of the family unit in much the same way as men's work was also (Cullen, M, 1987: 99-100; 2013). How their work lives and gendered roles changed in the aftermath of the famine is examined in the next section.

1.4 Post-Famine to the early 20th Century

As a defining period in modern Irish history the devastating Famine of the eighteenth forties and its aftermath is an important starting point to begin to uncover the major factors that influenced women's lives. This period onwards was important as the structures of household and family life altered, producing changes and upheaval in women's lives and work. Though women's food work took place within the private sphere of the household, it also encompassed linkages both formal and informal to wider structures in society. Economic, political, social and class structures also impinged on and were intertwined with food work though women's engagement with formal and informal economic spheres through their daily activities.

1.4.1 Housing and living conditions

In the post famine period of the nineteenth century a sharp divergence in living standards between the poor and well off classes was visible. Landlords and farmers with viable acreage were considered well off with living standards in marked contrast to the poor. Greater levels of prosperity in turn also led to calls for housing reforms, in standards of sanitation and domestic upgrading (Daly, 1997). According to McCarthy (2011) in the late nineteenth century the overall standard of housing was poor throughout the North and South of Ireland. In many cases both rural and urban dwellers living in tenements had either basic open fires or no means of cooking foods. Because of the poor conditions that prevailed across the country investment in

housing was undertaken. State bodies as part of their plans for social and economic development invested in schemes to renovate and build new houses in both urban and rural areas. The Housing of the Working Classes Act, 1890 granted local authorities the power to provide housing for the working class in urban areas while the Labourers' Act (Ireland) Act, 1883 enabled boards of guardians to provide cottages for labourers in rural areas. These acts formed the basis of future local-authority housing. In the years of 1884--1914 a total of 45,592 houses were built in Northern and Southern Ireland. As cottages they were small and mainly based in rural areas providing living conditions for a reasonable rent. Yet, despite commitments to provide housing to meet rising need both Northern and Southern housing bodies were slow to invest in large scale projects (McCarthy, 2011: 289).

Urban housing in the second half of the nineteenth century also presented significant differences both between different cities and across social classes (Cullen, 2011). Provision of housing in Belfast presented a strong contrast to other cities due to the availability of cheap building materials and green field sites provided through the Town Improvements Act, 1847, which ensured that all new housing projects met minimum standards for hygiene and sanitation, with the same housing standard in evidence in Derry. As a result a large stock of good quality affordable housing was built to cater for the working classes. In contrast, in Dublin, Cork, and other cities (Waterford and Limerick) and smaller towns' poor quality rental housing was dominant during the century. Poor sanitary conditions led to a smallpox epidemic in Dublin tenement based housing resulting in the establishment of the Dublin Sanitary Association (DSA) in 1872. This influential association led to the formation of the Dublin Artisans' Dwelling Company (DADC) and the Improved Dwellings Company

in Cork (IDCC). Both of these bodies provided much needed housing for the working classes (Cullen, 2011:224). However, as a result of high costs in construction and building materials, along with the inability of people to afford rents, the onus to provide housing for the working classes was passed on to municipal corporations. Low standard housing was provided for those who could afford the rent. As Cullen points out while municipal housing was not up to the standard of housing provided by DADC or philanthropic housing groups such the Iveagh Trust Buildings, having a home with running water and privacy created a domestic pride that was difficult to attain in overcrowded tenement living (Cullen, 2011: 248, 250, 251).

The diet and employment of the Irish population was also affected by changes in farming practices. In the post famine period the average size of farms increased, with a focus on commercial markets (Daly, M.E, 1997; Lee, J.J: 2001). As agriculture diversified into livestock and dairy farming, making farming less labour intensive, this change prompted a move from the land by agricultural labourers to work in towns. An increase in wage earning families meant food was bought rather than grown and reliance on potatoes waned, particularly in northern counties (Clarkson and Crawford, 2005, 90, 94-95). Tea also gradually replaced more nutritious buttermilk as a popular drink. It added a little luxury to the bland diet of poorer people where potatoes had formed their staple food.

By the latter part of the nineteenth century living standards gradually rose and a previously almost totally vegetarian diet was varied to include a little milk and butter and bread. The evolution from what was considered a primitive diet to a modern one, from a moist diet based mainly on butter, milk and porridge, a diet associated with

poverty in other countries such as England and France gave way to a more solid diet based on grain and bread. Upper class styles of living were also imitated and filtered down through the social classes. When the consumption of meat and bread became more popular these standards were also eventually followed across the social strata. Potatoes were still a staple food, but they held less importance in denoting status than white baker's bread, or meat (Cullen, 1991). A taste for sugar also entered the diet as a result of successful production and commercial worldwide distribution, trickling down from its initial status as a luxury commodity to widespread use across all social groups (Mintz, 1985: 185).

According to Cullen (1981) a widening gap occurred between the diet of the top two thirds of the population and the bottom third. Commercialisation of the food sector was another factor in changing diet. Foods that had previously been widely eaten were often no longer used as they became more expensive, or less popular. Shop based products such as tea, bread; sugar and meat were increasingly sought after with butter and milk virtually disappearing from the diet of labourers who could no longer afford to keep livestock (Cullen, L, 1981:149). For families living in poorer conditions food scarcity was an ever present problem and increased as the century progressed. Rising food costs combined with an inadequate supply of food products impacted on the daily diet across the country (Crawford, E, M., 1989).

These changes also curtailed the diet available to families living in cities. Whereas a greater variety of foods was now available, the produce was often of an inferior quality (Daly, 1981). As a result, issues surrounding family based economic survival, combined with changing ideas about development became significant for a new vision of women's future role in Irish society.

1.4.2 Gender in the political economy

The social fabric of Irish society was altered and family life and structures changed in the aftermath of the famine. The failure of the potato crop due to blight, combined with poor organisation of alternative provision of foods led to starvation and illness, and ultimately loss of life for many. By 1851 Ireland's population had fallen to 6.6 million from 8.2 million as a result of deaths and emigration which rose steadily during and after this period. Emigration figures were high particularly for Irish women in the nineteenth century both before and after the famine. In the years between 1871 and 1911, 86,294 men emigrated. A greater number of women, 89,407 in total, also emigrated during this period. In contrast to European patterns where the norm consisted of family groups emigrating, Irish women tended to emigrate as single women. This pattern was part of greater social, cultural and economic shifts that took place after the famine which affected working women's lives (Daly, 1997, 2001). For women who remained in Ireland changes occurred in their social and economic status (Luddy, 1995: 6). While in rural areas a woman's economic contribution was an essential part of the family economy, this position also weakened particularly in predominantly agricultural areas. A decline in domestic industries and agriculture affected women's employment and prospects.

As farms consolidated inheritance patterns meant that only the eldest son had exclusive rights to the family farm. Remaining sons and daughters had limited prospects to make a living or provide a dowry for a suitable marriage. Emigration of single men and women was the fate of many. Changing farm structures from tillage to cattle rearing also brought about a huge reduction in requirements for men working as farm labourers. From 1841 when figures show that there were 1,326,000 farm

labourers, this figure had reduced to 277,000 by 1911 with emigration largely accounting for the decrease in numbers. As Daly (1981) points out the population of Ireland at 4.39 million in 1911 was just over half of the 1841 pre-famine figure as a result of deaths, emigration, and later and lower rates of marriage. As a consequence high rates of emigration and lack of economic prospects diminished opportunities for employment for women and men (Daly, 1981: 32, 89).

For poor women other options were few, ranging from unpaid work within families or the benevolence of different institutions. Women with few resources who could not find employment were forced to depend on the support of charitable institutions or the workhouse. In contrast, single middle class women could find purpose in socially important work of teaching, nursing or charitable duties by entering religious communities. In this way convents offered opportunities for work across a diverse range of areas providing positions of authority not open to women elsewhere (Luddy, 1995:10).

Other traditional areas of employment, including textile work and domestic service, underwent changes also. By the early twentieth century a significant divergence occurred between the number of women in paid employment in Northern and Southern Ireland. Industrial development occurred mainly in Derry and north-east Ulster and to a lesser extent in the cities of Dublin, Cork, Waterford and Limerick (Luddy, 1995: 157). The prevalence of textile factories in Northern Ireland and home based industries connected with it continued to create greater opportunities for women to work, whereas in Southern Ireland women were predominantly engaged in work within family economies associated with the textile industry.

Significantly, Luddy, (1995) points out that Ireland in the post famine period was noted for its high levels of celibacy. In 1871 figures show that 43 per cent of all women aged 15 to 45 married. By 1911 this figure had fallen to 36 per cent.

Whereas the average age for marriage for a woman in 1841 was 24-25 years by 1911 it was postponed to 28 years. For men it had risen from 28 years in 1841 to 33 years in 1911 (Luddy, 1995:5). The prospect of marriage therefore was not an option open to all women due to emigration patterns and economic constraints. Figures for 1901 show that 35.02 percent of women were single, 26.16 were married and 9.34 percent were widows (Vaughan and Fitzpatrick, 1978; in Luddy, 1995: 8).

By the beginning of the twentieth century women's work had become scarce and largely concentrated in domestic service, textiles, clothing and food, drink and tobacco and seasonal agricultural work (Daly, 2001: 193; 196). Factories became increasingly unionised and did not employ as many women. Employment in domestic service began to decline also as households consolidated and changed. Unmarried women who were unable to find work were forced to rely on the generosity of family or friends, often fulfilling unpaid household work roles (Luddy, 1995:7). In circumstances where alternatives were limited Daly (2001) argues that marriage was gradually considered the best option for women, because of the low status given to working women's contribution and income, combined with a shift in favour of the status of full-time housewife as the ideal. (Daly, 2001:195

Between 1881- 1911 employment participation for women rapidly altered with a major shift from paid employment to the unpaid sphere. In 1891, 27 percent of women were said to be in employment, this figure declined to less than 19 percent in twenty years. The numbers of women in agricultural employment dropped from

27,000 in 1891 to a little over 5,000 by 1911 (Bourke, 2001:203). Bourke argues that these changes in employment combined with rapid economic growth, along with initiatives for structural reforms in housing, both in Ireland and Britain, were at the heart of the emergence of women's roles as primarily housewives in the domestic sphere in the early twentieth century (Bourke, 1993 22). How this change impacted on women's lives is examined in the next section.

1.4.3. Social construction of gender

So what was it like to be female where one's gender largely determined the place one held in society and the activities that could be engaged in? Did Irish women accept their role or manage to subvert the positions they were assigned? How did they deal with the upheavals that marked and altered Irish life? As Ireland was changing, towards a future based less on employment in agriculture, the role of women in its future became part of public discourse and debate taking place both nationally and internationally.

Timothy Foley (1997) describes a contemporary debate between rational political economy of individual self interest and the doctrine of *laissez-faire* of the public sphere, versus alternative familial based support system as the basis of society.

Central to the debate he cited Arthur Houston (1862), a Professor of Political Economy in Trinity College, who wrote a document on economic development in which he focused on the employment of women. This debate (focused on middle and upper classes) fuelled arguments on what was women's proper sphere, and had at its heart gender based roles and contradictions regarding women's rights to employment on the one hand and what was believed as their 'natural' gendered based moral role as supporters of men within the private realm of the family.

For Foley, this argument was central to Victorian ideas of gender differences based on essentialist beliefs on the nature of male and female genders and their rightful place in society. Both biological and moral Church doctrines were advanced to support different arguments about rightful roles. While this debate opened up ideas which would bear fruit much later in relation to women's rights, it highlighted the central prevailing ideas, based on a moral double standard, which were not critiqued at the time and had consequences for women's allocated roles well into the twentieth century. As he points out;

“For the efficient working, reproduction and growth of capitalism, for the servicing of labour and the investment in human capital, the unpaid labour of women in the home was vital. The values of individual greed and selfishness were crucial to success in the market-place, but a traditional morality of self abnegation and self sacrifice was demanded of women in the home. The future of capitalism depended on the unselfishness of parents, especially of mothers, in relation to their children, an investment in human capital for which there was little or no economic return. Women needed no economic inducement to act morally, for it was ‘natural’ and virtue was, quite literally its own reward. They acted for love, men principally for money, “
(Foley, 1997: 33, 35)

This quote presents a polarised a view of very specific role allocation for both women and men that encompassed a vision of separate spheres in which they would operate for the development of capitalism in the mid nineteenth century. It equated women's role with the moral virtues of self sacrifice supporting men and family as a labour of love. This view was to prevail as part of a specific political, economic and social policies as Ireland became independent, and part of Roman Catholic Church teaching in the twentieth century with particular resonances for women's lives. While the ideas put forward were criticized later by feminists, they had little impact on the realities of life for working class women towards the end of the nineteenth century who were facing profound changes and challenges.

In Ireland the post-famine period did not just entail altered roles for women; it included an overall shift towards an ideal of separate spheres for men and women. Emanating from European conservatism, and British reformist ideals, there was a shift in emphasis promoting what were considered appropriate forms of work for males and females. For men it centred on masculine work roles in the public sphere, whereas women's work roles were consigned to the private sphere of caring for family (Bourke, 1999: 94-95; Kennedy, 2001: 82; Ferriter, 2005: 327).

Economic growth in the period 1890-1914 resulted in the creation of capital for investment in housing and households. As Bourke argues, in rural Ireland changes in housework resulted in a shift from paid employment and familial farm labour to unwaged domestic work, *'there was simply more housework to do...economic growth increased capital (as well as labour) for investment in the household sector'* (Bourke, 1993:206). All aspects of housework underwent changes raising the economic value of domestic work making it an attractive alternative to paid labour for women. Bourke contends that time in terms of social change was a crucial element in increasing levels of domesticity as housework tasks became more labour intensive. Concurring with this view, Fitzpatrick (1997) also points out that timing was an important factor as skills and opportunities for both men and women had diminished and changed after the famine leaving fewer options open to them (Fitzpatrick, 1997: 66-7).

Bourke (1993) also argues that higher standards of living and economic growth increased consumption practices which demanded a bigger investment in household labour. This development required women to focus their energies on domestic work within the household. Further, better housing required more elaborate household

equipment in order to improve overall standards centred more on a 'scientific' movement to combat disease (Bourke, 202,213).

As we have seen diet had improved by the end of the nineteenth century and the quality and variety of food, as noted, changed with rising living standards for those who could afford it. Cooking conditions also improved in middle class homes from the use of basic open turf fires to the introduction of ranges and cookers (Bourke, 1993:219; Cullen, 2011:251). Increasing demand for a wider variety and better quality foods also meant cooking methods had to improve to cater for a more specialised diet for a substantial household with the means to afford it (Cullen, L.M. 1981: 190). As a result cooking as part of modernisation and industrialisation became a skill requiring a level of training and instruction (Mennell, Murcott and van Otterloo, 1992: 88). As a specialised task cooking also afforded housewives a level of control and power over the household that they could not get elsewhere. Men on the other hand rarely cooked but helped in an ancillary way. Traditionally they assisted doing the heavy jobs of digging potatoes, slaughtering animals or growing crops (Bourke, 2001: 204; Beale, 1986:29). Housework and cooking therefore became regarded as almost exclusively women's work. This work became a main form of labour for women when few alternatives were available in the early twentieth century. For Bourke economic motivations were of primary importance and she argues that women believed it to be in their best interests to work in the domestic sphere.

'The increasing movement of women into full-time housework was a sensible strategy for reducing the risk of poverty and for maximizing possible control of their own lives and the lives of their family,' (Bourke, 1993:271).

She argues that economic progress and rising living standards also brought aspirations for improvement leading to increased demand for domestic labour. Household work

while unpaid was seen to bring about improvement in overall standards of living in housing, health, and diet. The work in turn benefited and increased status within households for some women. However, it also lessened women's economic power as they had less opportunity to make money from waged labour or from former enterprises through sale of butter or eggs and were increasingly dependent financially on the head of the household.

According to Bourke (2001) the level of power women wielded was dependent on their status. If they were married and had children they had significant power. By being able to control the use of their own time and also the household budget, using skills of thrift in household spending, they increased the value of the role (Bourke, 2001:205). However, the level of power afforded to women was also dependent on the level of *value* placed on this work as unwaged labour. From advice articles in newspapers at the time, being a good cook held some status and helped to solidify women's value in households (Cronin, T.P. 1905, cited in Bourke, 1993: 267).

The role of housewife in prescriptive literature also set up a range of standards or '*ideals*' to be aimed for not just in her own work but for the family as well ('For Wife and Maid' article in *Irish weekly Independent*, 14 Dec. 1905: 10, and 'Don't for Mothers', *Irish Peasant*, 18 Nov. 1905: 7, cited in Bourke, 1993: 268). Referring to literature of the time concerning the restricted education of girls, Luddy (1995) also shows how educational instruction for females reflected a perspective that their role was concerned principally with practical skills of cooking and cleaning in the domestic sphere (Luddy, 1995: 90, 98).

Internationally from the mid 1880s period onwards, comparable changes were occurring in other countries focused on teaching skills associated with households,

including principles of childrearing, cooking and housekeeping. The Home Economics Association formally emerged in America in 1908 and was set up to provide standards based on scientific principles to the domestic role culminating in teaching home economics and training teachers. While American feminists later in the 1960s and 1970s were critical of the focus on women in what were seen as restrictive traditional roles, others researchers into women's history saw it as an opportunity at the time to develop skills and a pathway to a career for women (Heggestrad, 2014).

In Britain there were also parallels to the developments taking place in Ireland. Women left paid work to take up full time roles in the household. With the development of nutritional science in the late nineteenth century British housewives gained prestige and were seen as keen to concentrate on work in the domestic sphere. As a result, educational courses in household management courses were heavily attended to increase skills and proficiency (Bourke, 1993: 21, 244). Bourke concludes that women's movement into work in the household instead of productive paid work was a strategy taken up within a specific timeframe and economic circumstances because this work gave women some level of economic security, status and power (Bourke, 2001:205). However, the view that women were consciously opting to take up work in the domestic sphere is disputed by other theorists. Discussion of the varied perspectives which influenced and had a profound impact on the lives of women after independence in Ireland is discussed in the next section.

1.5 Ireland: post-independence to 1970s

To understand how gendered work evolved over time, it is necessary to trace how changes in Ireland post-independence shaped social, economic and cultural aspects of Irish life with profound effects on women's role and decision making in society.

Beginning with the social conditions in housing and living standards this section reveals the social, economic and cultural factors which had a major impact on women's place in Irish society and their contribution within the context of social change.

1.5.1 Housing and living standards: post independence.

Following Irish political Independence in 1922 and the separation from the North of Ireland the new government in the South of Ireland took a cautious approach on initiating a long-term housing programme. Some finance for refurbishment along with the construction of approximately 20,000 cottages did take place in rural areas between 1932 and 1942. The cottages were of basic design; most had four rooms, three bedrooms and a living room/kitchen with basic open fires for cooking, but with no water or sanitary facilities (McCarthy, 2011: 288-9).

The impact of the First and Second World Wars on resources and finance in Northern Ireland also shifted priorities away from the construction of housing, apart from basic refurbishment and construction of small cottages in rural areas with limited indoor facilities (McCarthy, 2011: 289). No further large scale housing initiatives were carried out until 1942 onwards, when both Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland in the South began to focus once again on housing as a priority.

Northern Ireland favoured prefabricated building methods. The factors of speed and cost were an important consideration. The outward appearance was not attractive but interior designs focused on providing modern domestic space with the latest cooking and storage facilities in the kitchen, bathroom and indoor W.C. in areas where water and electrical supply were available. In Southern Ireland pre-fabricated methods were not favoured. In contrast to northern designs changes to more modern cottages

including an indoor W. C. and kitchens facilities were slow to take hold in the south. Despite a range of contemporary plans available to improve local-authority housing a minimalist approach was pursued. Traditional building methods ensured a well-built housing stock but with little improvement to interior standards. Cooking was still largely carried out over an open fire within a basic kitchen design with little upgrading or storage, no indoor W.C. or water supply (McCarthy, 2011:308-9). The different priorities impacted on the conditions under which women carried out their responsibilities within families.

1.5.2 Gender and the political economy

Overall, figures show that in 1926 only 5.6 percent of married women in the Irish Free State were in paid employment compared with 14.5 percent in Northern Ireland (Daly, 1997: 41, 44). Beale (1986) presents an interpretation of women's work and family life. In contrast to other women in Britain and Northern Ireland where a substantial number of married women were in the labour force, in the Republic of Ireland only one in fifteen of married women worked outside the home. While women had won the vote in a newly independent Ireland, full rights of citizenships were curtailed.

Ideologically the new State was both nationalist and Catholic, in which the dominant views were deeply conservative for both. Two thirds of the population lived in rural areas as the industrial base was small and government policies were isolationist in nature based on self reliance and self-sufficiency.

According to Beale, possible levels of choice or decision making for women in families in the early twentieth century were impaired by the prevailing structures of Church and State. Livelihoods were based predominantly on rural farming or trades,

with family based farming a key social and economic activity, also seen as the basis of Catholic society. Strong protection for the family enshrined in the 1937 Constitution placed men as the head of the household and women at the centre, where expectations as wife and mother and the birth of children predominated, within a strongly patriarchal family setting. Reflecting Catholic thinking, the family was inextricably linked to the idea of the nation. Church doctrine reflected the importance of the family as the basis of Irish society. Accordingly, the family was envisaged as a patriarchal unit in which men were expected to be the breadwinner and women the home-maker and mother (Beale, 1986:5- 7). The imposition of a marriage bar in the 1930s also excluded married women from paid employment in the public sector, cementing their familial role. As a result women had limited access to employment or equality rights in the early years of the State. In families their work was bound up with caring and responsibility. The State, Church, and Trade Unions all endorsed this role, stressing instead the importance of employment for men (Cousins, 1996).

While many scholars have interpreted this period as one in which women's status declined,, Caitriona Clear (2000; 2007) takes a somewhat different stance. She argues that while historical research into this topic can tap into a myriad of sources, how historians evaluate and interpret data and sources relating to women's work can be problematic. In particular, she disagrees with common interpretations about how individuals felt about and made decisions to become full-time housewives. Clear contends that research on this topic should omit presenting opinions about what individuals thought or believed and avoid making assumptions that prioritise either paid or unpaid work as empowering, or as more valuable than each other (Clear, 2000:11).

In an examination of forty years of women's work in the household in Ireland Clear (2000) explores the complex national and international conditions that prevailed during the period 1926-1961. She assesses the impact on policies and recommendations regarding women's lives from different bodies, each with their own agenda, including state agencies, social reformers religious groups and campaigners. While some historians emphasise controlling elements of governmental initiatives, and others were critical of health and welfare measures, she argues that;

'all agree that for better or worse, the dawn of the twentieth century saw a strengthening conviction that governments should play some part-remunerative, admonitory, educational –in women's household and reproductive work' (Clear, 2000:9).

Clear concurs with the assertion that official attention being paid to women's work was part of greater changes emerging in many countries where economic and state agencies constructed policies and systems consistent with an emerging new age of industrialisation. In periods of economic depression where male unemployment was high, female paid labour was resented and a focus on women's role connected with household duties intensified with countries giving priority to *'their household and familial function'*. She points out that fixed ideas about women and household work, and both male and female employment were behind initiatives for the ban on of married women taking on white-collar public service employment.

She also strongly argues however that the construction of images or opinions about women within their household role as a form of 'collective identity' must be questioned from whatever perspective they emerge (Clear, 2000: 10, 12). Yet she accepts that aspects of their lives were heavily influenced by particular State interventions where the State while highlighting the importance of women's work in the home also failed to support or to include them in decision making or issues concerning women's' lives and work (Clear, 2000: 212,214).

Over a span of seventy years Kennedy (2001) shows that figures for the number of women in the labour force scarcely changed from 1926 until 1996 when numbers began to rise. Figures for 1926 show that 32.1 percent of women were in the workforce and this figure rose to 38.5 percent in 1996. Home duties accounted for a major part of women's time with participation in education also increasing over the decade. Kennedy cautions however that these figures may under-represent women's work as census classification for women's occupation status changed from the 1871 census thus under-recording their true labour participation (Kennedy, 2001:72-74).

This point is borne out in studies which reveal how women's paid and unpaid labour show the comprehensive level of commitment they made in farming families.

Byrne, Edmonton, and Varley (2001) provide an introduction to Arensberg and Kimball's hugely influential anthropological study *Family and Community in Ireland*, of a small community in County Clare in the 1930s. They present the economic, political, and cultural context of the study which explores interaction and co-operation within family and community at the cusp of modernity, where community wellbeing prevailed over any individual preferences (Byrne et al, 2001:lxxx1).

In their study Arensberg and Kimball (2001, [1940]) focused on a community mainly involved in family farming. They explored how relationships operated and were shaped both within families which were patriarchal in nature, and with the wider community based on kinship and cooperation. Their study revealed how gendered roles within farming families operated, in which women and girls supported the main work of farming through their domestic labour, making butter, rearing fowl, and seasonal farm labour participation. Women's work and enterprise, while necessary, was considered of secondary value to the main farm work of male members. As part

of an overall division of labour the distinct roles of males and females were regarded as natural to the gendered nature of the sexes upholding conventional norms (Arensberg and Kimball, 2001: 47-49).

In a later study of gender and farming Duggan (1987) reveals that from the 1950s mechanisation and specialisation in farming led to a more rigid gender divide, where women's farm work and active role was diminished. Through analysis of farming publications over a period of thirty years she shows that representation of women's role on family farms changed over time to one focused on domesticity and consumption. While women continued to be engaged in a supportive and administrative role, their work was obscured by the farming media, disguising their contribution within an ideology claiming homogeneity within farming families and community (Duggan, 1987: 55, 68).

In a recent study Kelly and Shortall (2002) examine the implications of women working as off-farm breadwinners for gender relations on farms in Northern Ireland that were not viable without another source of income. They argue that analysis must be carried out within the historical context of the farm household in order to understand gender relations and farming, rather than from an individualistic perspective. Findings indicate that women's off farm working did not lead to any renegotiation in gendered caring roles or household responsibilities; rather that women undertake off-farm work as a survival strategy, motivated to support and maintain the family farm and their husbands' occupation as paramount (Kelly and Shortall, 2002: 328,340-1). These studies reveal how women's selfless labour was

essential to the survival of family economies but remained hidden within the context of a gendered division of labour.

Different perspectives on women's participation in work may be viewed from structural, economic, and social mores that prevailed during a period in which significant upheaval occurred in all areas of society. Significantly, women's unseen work and contribution in households and on farms helped to sustain and support families through a time of economic stagnation. Yet as their work remained unseen and often outside formal validation or acknowledgement, understanding how women's lives were shaped by prevailing structures of the State are crucial.

1.5.3 Social construction of gender

In an introduction to *Women and Irish History* Valiulis and O'Dowd (1997) pay homage to the pioneering work of historian Margaret MacCurtain in bringing women's role and contribution in the life of Irish society to the forefront of academic enquiry (Valiulis and O'Dowd, 1997:7). In 1978 historian Margaret MacCurtain wrote:

“The Irish woman presents one of the enigmas of twentieth century Ireland. Her public face is that of wife and mother, enshrined in the 1937 Constitution as guardian of public morals and repository of the State's regard for family life. Her private face is that of one who has been awarded no place at the conference tables and who, increasingly, knows she has been hidden from history. Her absence from the centres of political power in the country, and her tangible presence in the business life of the island at once conceal and reveal her strength”, (Mac Curtain, 1978: Preface).

This statement throws light on how Irish women may reflect both a private and a public persona within the realms of history, on the one hand, veiled in the concerns of the private sphere, and also be portrayed as a powerful icon representing public values

for the State enshrined in the Constitution. Presented with the varied nature of these images within a historical context the question must be asked to what extent they reflect the reality of women's lives in post-independence Ireland.

As we have seen women in Ireland were central to the economic, social life of Ireland in the past. For Valiulis (2009) the new Irish Free State also sought to create a nation that signified their difference from England by emphasising a culture based on distinct language, Celtic traditions, and superior Catholic morality. Women were considered critical to this definition of a virtuous nation. To that end establishment of a traditional gender ideology '*which sees hearth and home as women's rightful place*' was central (Valiulis, 2009:100-1).

In the same vein, Inglis (1998) also argues that women in their role as mothers were used as an icon in the new state to uphold moral and social standards. Through education and training in household domestic economy females were taught skills for the betterment of family life in line with Catholic social teaching (Inglis, 1998: 196). He argues that by placing women at the centre of a state based on moral superiority, women were discouraged from participation in the public sphere of work or political life. Through the introduction of a marriage bar, women were encouraged by Church and State to concentrate on rearing children and caring for families. A strong emphasis on traditional family values and the introduction of conservative policies was not, however particular to Ireland and was present in a range of European countries where birth rates had fallen in the early twentieth century. Significantly, though Ireland's population had declined at the beginning of the 1900s it remained unique insofar as marital fertility rates from the 1920's were the highest in a European

context where fertility levels were decreasing over time. Women in Ireland were influenced by Catholic social teaching on family life which resulted in high levels of fertility and birth rates in families (Coleman, 1992: 56; Daly, M.E, 1997:116; Inglis, 1998: 199; O'Dowd, L.1987:7).

Alternatively, Clear (2000) argues that despite a dominant ideology placing women in the home fulfilling a caring role, there appeared to be no official focus, control, or idealisation of this work. Early prescriptive literatures and cookery books giving advice on housekeeping and cooking to a standard, presented a broad variety of tips on organisation of the household, hygiene, nutrition, and planning. Yet these literatures, she argues, were countered also with advice to women on caring for themselves. She argues that in organisations supporting women there was no idealisation of household work, insisting instead that women should be civilly and politically active.

The work of two organisations in particular was engaged in support for women in the home. The Irish Housewives Association (IHA) founded in 1942 promoted women to play an active part in all spheres of society and to defend consumer right to safe foods, and The Irish Country Women's Association (ICA) formed originally in 1910 as the United Irishwomen was a co-operative movement. It was later re-named The Irish Countrywomen's Association in 1934 and had specific aims of improving conditions for women living in rural Ireland and encouraging rural skills and crafts (Tweedy, 1992:18). Clear also contends that where there were particular elements in Church and State putting emphasis on women's role within the family this pattern was uneven (Clear, 2000: 80,214) across Irish society. Yet when looking back through history it is clear that women's contribution remained under represented within the

economic, social and political structures of the State until economic and social change created opportunities for change and development for the country as a whole.

1.6 Steps towards political, economic and social change

Garvin (2004) argues that at the time of the enactment of the Constitution in 1937

Ireland was a successful and desirable place in contrast to worn-torn Europe.

However, poor decision making and indecisiveness at both the structural and cultural level led to ‘entrenchment of veto groups in key areas of political, economic, cultural, and religious life’. Fear of power holding groups created a lack of self assurance in decision making at government level. When combined with a conservative stance and anti modernist view, this led to ineffective or non-public decision making, essentially preventing or embracing change (Garvin, 2004: 4).

The introduction of protectionist policies for industry was pursued with the aim of keeping production in Irish control. Widespread use of tariffs and quotas were also used to protect the domestic market from foreign competition. The policies of protection resulted in a modest increase in manufacturing leading to increased employment but this also resulted in an industrial base that was weak and unsustainable. From the 1950s Ireland began to open up to free trade and made efforts to attract foreign firms aimed at improving exports. Through improved management and successful growth in the economy, new opportunities arose for investment in education and training (Kennedy, 1998:78, 81).

As a consequence of these developments employment levels improved in the South of Ireland. By contrast, in Northern Ireland employment rates fell as a result of decline in the two major industries that had formed a strong manufacturing base, namely, linen and shipbuilding. Kennedy (1998) argued that specialisation in narrow

range of industries was vulnerable to more substantial world markets and failure to adapt to new technologies was at the root of this decline (Kennedy, 1998:84-5).

Ireland's entry to the European Economic Community in 1973 furthered developments in both agriculture and industry. Whereas the social fabric of farming communities within rural Ireland was affected by a huge haemorrhage of emigrants in the 1950s, entry to the EEC in 1973 introduced new agricultural policies under which farming consolidated with a stronger emphasis on commercial food production in which a smaller number of viable farming families could participate (O'Tuathaigh, 1998). In tandem with developments in the economy opportunities for women began to improve through the unceasing work of support groups and social movements focused on gaining equal and full participation for women in all aspects of society.

1.6.1 Steps towards equality- women and gendered autonomy

The unceasing work of women's groups (such as the ICA and IHA described earlier), together with the emergence of the Women's Movement and subsequent establishment of the Commission for the Status of Women in 1970, were crucial in paving the way for women to participate in employment on more equal terms to men (Connolly, 2003: 12-13). Significantly, an Oireachtas Report of the Joint Committee on Women's Rights (1992) proposed legislative measures for the creation of equal education policies focused on the education of girls and young women, and on the elimination of gender bias in curriculums, including sex role bias in text books and course content (Second Report of the Third Joint Committee on Women's Rights, 1992: 43, 55, 212). Access to second level education opened up new possibilities for girls and women. Subsequent introduction of free education initiatives also furthered opportunities for females to engage fully in employment.

Investments in education tailored to meet the needs of industry and strategies to attract foreign companies through the Industrial Development Authority (IDA), first established in 1949, combined with the provision of supports for viable Irish companies to increase employment opportunities. Allied with these changes socio-economic development occurred through economic, social, and political strategies that provided opportunities for women in the labour market.

The arrival of the contraceptive pill in the mid 1960s also provided the ability to regulate and plan the birth of children, giving women greater freedom and life choices (Garvin, 2004:203). According to Collins and Wickham (2001) from having the highest fertility rates in Europe in the 1970s, by 1982 the Total Population Fertility Rate (TPFR) for Ireland was 2.96, further dropping to 2.1 in 1989. Thus, despite Catholic Church teaching women were having fewer children. They had also steadily begun to enter the labour force in the 1970s with a major increase in the 1990s (Collins and Wickham, 2001: 1).

The effect of these changes in the 1970s and eighties have been significant for contemporary Irish society where recent data show that, despite the economic downturn, since 2008, women are engaging in the workforce and continuing to forge a strong position within the economic life of the country. Recent CSO figures show that in educational attainment women are outperforming men with over (53%) of 25-35 year olds gaining a third level qualification compared to less than (39%) of men in this age group. Significantly, while employment rates remained greater for men at (75%) in 2009, in recent years this percentage fell to 63.3%. For women the rate was 60% in 2007 falling to 46.7% during the downturn in 2011 (CSO, 2012). Overall, this

figure represents a substantial level of improvement for women's participation in employment today.

1.6.2 Uneven equality and gendered work

This chapter has described significant changes in Irish women's roles from the eighteenth century, where women worked within families, on farms, and in industries supplementing the domestic economy, to the post-famine and early 20th century periods in which women were increasingly engaged principally in home duties, and towards employment on a more equal footing with men from the mid-20th century onwards. However, these changes have been uneven and issues remain unresolved. For example, increased access to educational opportunities is just one step towards equal rights in relation to access to employment and is variously taken up and maintained depending on both class and gender. While in general education has positive benefits it cannot be evaluated without taking account of differences in access in a school system structured to advantage those with the means to purchase a better education through exclusive religious based or private institutions only accessed through class privilege (Clancy, 1995: 490-491). Studies carried out by Smyth and Hannan, (1997) highlight how social background has a significant impact on educational participation and performance where higher socio-economic groups tend to achieve better grades than those from lower social classes.

Gender is also a strong indicator of the extent to which Ireland is characterized by equality of opportunity. While recent figures show that women's participation in the labour market is growing, they are discriminated against in relation to pay rates and unequal access to promotion. They are also discriminated against through lack of gender equity for work life balance in caring responsibilities between women and men

at a policy level (O'Sullivan, 2007:281). As Coakley (1997) argues, the situations of women who combine working and caring are not adequately recognised in social welfare provision (Coakley, 1997:185). As a result, despite many improvements for women in the workforce the role of caring for and feeding their families largely remains women's responsibility. As O'Connor (1998: 4) points out, women in Ireland regardless their age, class or employment status are surrounded by structural and cultural cues which define not just their social and work life but also the 'naturalness' of subsuming their identity within family and caring work. Further, the trend towards increasing numbers of women working part-time, which facilitates combining paid work with caring for family, also reinforces their dual responsibility with negative consequences for gender equality (Fahy et al, 2000:265). Thus women trying to reconcile their commitments to family continue to do so within a system which reinforces their unequal position in society.

By delving into the past to unearth some of the realities of women's lives in the period before and after the foundations of the state I was keen to use different approaches to understand the realities of women's lives and work, presenting perceptions of their past which have relevance to the lives of women today. Providing an understanding of how male and female roles were perceived and enacted in the past also creates a context for understanding both the endurance of gender roles over time and the consequences this may have for gendered obligation within families and for opportunities for participation in wider society.

1.7 Conclusion

This chapter examined women's significant role in families historically. With a focus on food work and encompassing a range of other work, their contribution was central to the wellbeing of their families. It explored how economic, social and political shifts across the centuries altered women's lives and work. Developments in the twentieth century brought about a separation of the public and private spheres consigning many women to a role as housewives for a significant part of the century particularly in the South of Ireland. The idealisation of women's role as wives and mothers in the past is relevant in the present because it created assumptions about their central role of caring and nurturing families, past, present, and future. In contemporary Ireland women continue to remain mainly responsible for the domestic sphere and food work within changing social contexts where higher levels of personal autonomy and equality are expected as a result of education and employment opportunities.

Equality in gendered roles is not yet fully realised and women are often 'torn' between their commitments to family responsibilities alongside a desire for 'a life of their own'. Chapter two presents the theoretical context from which I explore the work of feeding as a family practice in contemporary Ireland. It discusses how theoretical perspectives of modernity, food, and gendered work related to family practices are implicated in how individuals make decisions surrounding to their commitments.

Chapter Two

Contemporary Contexts:

Gender and Domestic Food Provision

2.1 Introduction

Chapter one presents an historical account of women's work including food provision in Ireland and the specific social, political, cultural, and economic trends that inform how this role has evolved and has largely remained an aspect of women's care work in families. While taking past trends into account, this thesis examines gender and domestic food production in a contemporary context, at a time of considerable social change in terms of families and gendered work, and in which the emergence of industrial food systems is changing how food is produced and consumed. Whereas there has been considerable research interest in changing food production and economic development, less attention has been paid to the work associated with the end result, food and cooking in families.

The central concern of this research is how we can understand family practices in relation to feeding others in a contemporary context, both in terms of how food is prepared, and in relation to gender roles, and what social and historical influences are brought to bear on this work. This chapter engages with a range of theoretical standpoints related to food, social change, gender roles and family practices. I examine scholarship on theories of social change as societies move from traditional to modern, and how these changes relate to gendered roles. I outline how macro and micro processes of social change have created possibilities of greater choice and reflexive decision making in relation to gender roles. I also explore the varied manner in which individuals may as active social agents make decisions concerning familial

practices and what processes (cultural, social, economic) influence how they perceive their responsibility and commitments in this area. The chapter is laid out as follows:

(a) Social change and the development of modern food systems: The first section traces developments in the production of food from primitive roots in the past, showing how it has been transformed through technological advances as part of global supply chains of production and distribution. I outline developments in food as a commodity and how it is linked with changes over time, bringing both positive and negative outcomes within and between societies. At a time of global food supply, and with concerns over food safety and obesity, how these factors impact on food practices is central to my enquiry.

(b) Theoretical perspectives on food and cooking: Through theoretical scholarship on food from anthropology and sociology I show how food and food work have been theorised and evolved through different phases and I make connections to rituals and practices associated with food in contemporary contexts.

(c) Women and cooking roles in families: Food work as a gendered family practice is the context for exploring the remaining inter-connected theoretical perspectives central to gendered work and decision making. I show how food and food work has evolved and is embedded in women's roles and responsibility for this work.

I explore how individuals carry out the work of cooking for others in families, what this entails in relation to caring work, skills, and decision making in relation to diet, in addition to the factors that impinge on, or support this work.

(d) Perspectives on family life: As family life is at the heart of domestic food production, this strand looks at how the family is understood through periods of social change. This thesis contends that families show both elements of continuity and

change over time. I argue for the use of a 'family practices' approach to take account of diverse family forms and decision making and further, for the use of the concept of 'display' to look at activities of families that constitute 'doing' family things that identify them as part of a family.

(e) Modernity individualisation-dilemmas for women:

Concepts related to how macro theories of social change in modernity intersect with and inform micro level gendered roles and practices are explored in this section. My focus takes in the macro perspective of modernity, specifically the work of Giddens (1991) and Beck (1995; 2002) concerned with individualisation and social change and how it relates to micro level practices. Outlining theories of individualisation and their critiques, I argue that in order to get a clear picture of the micro processes involved in decision making connected with food practices in families, theories related specifically to family obligations and responsibility for gendered work and decision making are crucial.

(f) Perspectives on gender and gender roles: As women are strongly associated with food work understanding how gender and gendered work is evolving is important. Theories of gender portray the varied changing realities of how gender is enacted, in circumstances where the persistence of old structures and attitudes related to women's roles continue to present challenges for women and men with particular pressures experienced within families. This section examines how idealised gendered roles in the past (including food work) are heavily implicated in work associated with nurturance in families today. It is also concerned with how this role is 'done', how it is worked out in families, and as a changing practice across the life course.

(g) Family relational practices and decision making: Gaining knowledge of how individuals cope with and make decisions about their commitments to family food

work is central to this thesis. My emphasis is on the gendered relational aspect of this role, how it may differ or have similarities between women and men across the life course and within individual experience. I explore how this role is theorised from feminist perspectives in relation to changing gender roles; how economic and preference perspectives may influence decision making; and, alternatively, how moral rationalities frame decisions and choices connected to family roles. In addition I outline how in practice opportunities for decision making and choice are hampered through inequalities at the intersection of class, gender and ethnicity, reinforced at the level of social policy.

In the next section I begin by tracing developments in food from primitive roots in the past, showing how it has been transformed through technological advances as part of global supply chains of production and distribution. I then provide a brief outline of theoretical perspectives from anthropology and sociology related to food to show how food work has been theorised as having evolved through different phases and is connected to rituals and practices associated with food work in contemporary contexts.

2.2 Social change and the development of modern food systems

We have seen in the last chapter how food work was linked with women's roles where they contributed to food production as part of the domestic economy. The emergence of historic distinctions between the public and private spheres which altered women's work lives also occurred in the context of wider macro economic and social changes including industrial developments in food production. The linkages between public/private, macro and micro, also connect food with women's work in contemporary contexts. Thus, how it theorised and understood can encompass cultural, social, political and economic spheres. As Lien et al (2004) point out, how

food is approached and classified is often entrenched in Western ways of ordering the world. It is either approached from the public or private domain, production or consumption, nature or culture (Lien and Nerlich, 2004: 8). Thus food spans a multiplicity of areas.

In a comprehensive study of food, Beardsworth and Keil (1997) outline how modern food systems emerged out of a complex interaction between humans and their environment in an effort to sustain life. They explore how the growth and development of agriculture in early societies stemmed from a range of factors, arguing that the domestication of key plant and animals brought about changes with far reaching consequences, altering human subsistence and social organisation. The evolution of this process involved both elements of continuity and change in shaping how food is produced, distributed, and consumed. Influence was also brought to bear on its development in the form of political, social, and economic controls throughout these stages.

To emphasise the distinctions between traditional and modern food systems and the complexity and scale of change, key features of both, and the contrasts between them are set out in **Table.2**.

Table 2 Contrasts between traditional and modern food systems

<i>Activity</i>	<i>Traditional systems</i>	<i>Modern systems</i>
Production	Small scale/limited Locally based for all but luxury goods High proportion of population involved in agriculture	Large-scale/highly specialised/industrialised De-localised/global Majority of population have no links with food production
Distribution	Within local boundaries Exchange governed by kinship And other social networks	International/global Access governed by money and markets
Consumption	Swings between plenty and want Dependent on harvests and seasons Choice limited and dependent on Availability and status Nutritional inequalities within societies	Food always available at a price/ independent of seasons Choice available to all who can pay Nutritional inequalities between and within societies
Beliefs	Human at the top of the food chain/ Exploitation of the environment necessary	Debate between those who believe in human domination of the environment and those who challenge such a model

(Adapted from Beardsworth and Keil, 1997:33)

The contrasts between traditional and modern food systems highlight the degree to which food production has been distanced from consumers while at the same time a wider variety of foodstuffs are available to those who can afford them. These contrasts also show how levels of control of food have changed as it developed as a global industry and the degree to which management of production has passed to large corporations. Controversially, development of this process in contemporary societies where a supply of foods that are cheap and readily available is both considered positively for consumers in the Western world, but also negatively because of economic dependency and environmental exploitation of Third World countries, and the conditions of workers who harvest and supply food on demand (Tomlinson, 1999: 121). Greater concerns are also being voiced concerning a global threat of

obesity which it is argued has escalated from control by large corporations in which consumption is paramount with increasing supply of convenience, high calorie foods, with strategic marketing towards children (Lang and Heasman, 2004); Kline, 2011).

This overview provides background on the emergence of food production separated from local spheres to a system based on larger scale industrial production using developed scientific technologies of distribution through preserving, canning, and bottling, along with improved transportation systems as part of the industrial revolution. How these changes alter how food is understood, used and consumed is an important aspect of this enquiry.

2.2.1 Food and technological change

Food is constantly changing with technological advances altering foods by different means to render it palatable for human consumption. The status and preference for different foods has also changed as products are classified and given prominence in various levels from high cuisine to basic foodstuffs. Consumption of specific food types is also seen to mark distinctions of class and culture (Bourdieu, 1984).

Food production within global capitalism today provides an endless variety of foodstuffs, including exotic and tropical products, for consumption. This process has altered the rhythm of seasonality attached to specific foods. According to Adam (1998) intensification of farming and food production has resulted in increasing scientific and artificial interference with natural foods to guarantee standardisation, availability out of season, and efficient control of pests and weeds which may interfere with streamlined production. As a product food has been dis-embedded from its traditional roots in local, small-scale production, into a global arena of

agribusiness on a large scale basis, where commodity chains link up production with distribution and marketing (Fine and Leopold, 1993). Growing concern is also expressed for health and food sustainability where global obesity is a growing statistic (Germov and Williams, 2008; Kline 2011). However, food marketing, and control by large corporations as part of international business and economies makes them a powerful lobby in the food industry influencing trends and choices for consumers (Nestle, 2007).

Many approaches to understanding food are concerned with large scale development in which the impact of changes in food production and distribution have consequences for economic development, much less attention is paid to the work associated with food and cooking in families. The following section outlines how theoretical work from the early twentieth century from anthropology and sociology developed an understanding of the social significance of food rituals and social relations including food practices in families.

2.3 Theoretical perspectives on food and cooking

Food and cooking in the domestic sphere did not form a central concern in academic enquiry in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Mennell, et al (1992) explain that historically food and cooking was not a focus for sociologists, rather it may have been, '*taken for granted*,' seen as part of the essential mundane aspects of everyday life. Food was infrequently discussed by early classical social theorists only where it intersected with their principal areas of concern: controls over basic rights to food for Engels, (1969), [orig.1845], and in the case of Durkheim, (1912), [orig.1912], in relation to the religious functions of foods in lineage systems.

Thus academic interests in food and cooking in the past were mainly concerned with large scale issues related to food and broad levels of change within cultures and

societies. Theoretical explorations of food and cooking did not emerge separately as a focus of study until issues related to consumption and nutrition came to the forefront (Mennell, Murcott, and van Otterloo, 1992:1-2, 5).

Scholarship connected with food and cooking from other academic disciplines also reveals a dearth of studies in the past. According to Curtin and Heldke, (1992), early western philosophical thinking did not concern itself with the domain of food; emphasis was placed instead on the importance of abstract theory over temporal practices. They argue that while philosophy has traditionally been concerned with concepts of human value, it neglected a pervasive preoccupation for much of humanity, a concern with food and survival. They contend that the explanation for this neglect was the fact that; *'In many, if not all cultures, food production and preparation activities are women's work and/or the work of slaves or lower classes'* and that *'western philosophies, like the cultures in which they emerge, historically have discounted the value of women's activities'* (Curtin and Heldke, 1992: xiii).

This point is borne out in the various early perspectives that preoccupied food studies. When academic interests of sociology and anthropology merged, aspects of food and eating studies were associated with these trends. Approaches to food broadly followed three orientations; *functionalism, structuralism and developmentalism* (Mennell, Murcott and Van Otterloo, 1992). However, Beardsworth & Keil (1997) argue that due to the diverse range of work concerned with food and eating, some studies cannot be classified within particular approaches, whereas others may broadly reflect cycles of changing thematic interest in the disciplines of anthropology and sociology. They also do not represent a specific time line or progression but the

varied and changing emphasis of broad research concerns (Beardsworth and Keil, 1997: 57).

Adapted from the work of Beardsworth and Keil (1997) and Mennell et al, (1992), I outline a brief overview of these themes to show how theories of food and eating are implicated in deep structures within cultures affecting how and what individuals eat. The rituals associated with food may continue to influence eating norms, or wane over time, but ultimately have a significant impact on food practices. In the following sections key theoretical studies related to food from three main perspectives are discussed, which continue to have relevance to food practices in contemporary contexts.

2.3.1 Functionalist approach

According to Mennell et al, (1992) early functionalists in the twentieth century were concerned with how food production, preparation and consumption expressed specific patterns of social, cultural, and kinship functions in relationships across the life cycle. Research within social groups, was mainly associated with the work of the British social anthropology dedicated to a functionalist analysis of traditional social systems (Beardsworth and Keil, 1997:59). The work of Malinowski, (1935) and Audrey Richards (1939) focused on the functional significance of food and eating patterns of African tribes across the life cycle. Their interest was on how all aspects of food work from the process of production through to consumption functioned to express patterns of social relations. From a sociological perspective Beardsworth and Keil (1997) and Mennell et al (1992) argue that this approach was also linked to nutritional science, focusing on functional aspects of foods to the neglect of other concerns with individuals' diet and relative access to nutrition in societies. The approach was also criticised as having a static view of social groups failing to account for variable

influences and differences across cultures (Beardsworth and Keil, 1997, 58-59; Mennell, Murcott and van Otterloo, 1992: 7-8). From a different theoretical orientation structuralism looked beyond the functions of food to deeper structures within food events and rituals.

2.3.2 Structuralist approach

This approach owes its beginnings to classical anthropology and in particular to the work in the mid twentieth century of anthropologists Claude Levi-Strauss (1963) and Mary Douglas (1975). Levi –Strauss researched the conventions, rules and structures involved in how foods are combined and prepared. He developed a culinary triangle to show the transformation involved in the work of cooking food, which changes nature (raw ingredients) into culture, food acceptable for human groups (Levi-Strauss, 1963 in Beardsworth & Keil, 1997:60-62).

From a different perspective Mary Douglas (1975), with links to structuralism, studied the sequence and structure of meals as a form of communication, and how they may be ranked on a level of importance in a scale of social relations, where they express a *'hierarchy, inclusion, exclusion, boundaries, and transactions across boundaries'* (Douglas, 1975:61). In her influential work 'Deciphering a Meal' the structure of meals throughout a day, presents an order of each meal, type, and quantity of food eaten, and the symbolic importance specific meals portray, (e.g. Christmas dinner). According to Douglas meals such as dinner are structured, containing a variety of foods, usually hot, and are intimate occasions reserved for close family and friends, whereas drinks and informal occasions are associated with acquaintances (Douglas, 1975: 65-66).

While their work surrounding the structure of meals and cooking has been influential, structuralist theorists have been criticised for linking ideas with underlying social and historical factors without taking into account changing historical patterns which have had significant impact on both food consumption (Mennell, 1985; Beardsworth and Keil, 1997). Whereas previous theoretical work relates to structures and patterns connected to food within cultures and to symbolic and social relations aspects of food provision, the third approach, described below, includes theories related to how historical, social and economic developments have impacted on food work and how and to what extent food and food practices have changed over time.

2.3.3 Developmental approach

Theoretically this approach emerged from the work of Elias (1978b, 1982) whose work traced the processes of state formation and how over time it led to change for individuals. In his view a civilising process emanating from the state led to a civilising effect for individuals resulting in a positive change in personality and manners over time. However, unlike the previous perspectives a developmental approach does not represent a unified theoretical stance; instead it contains a range of different bodies of work with common features (Beardsworth and Keil: 1997 65).

Mennell et al (1992) argue that while there is common ground between structural and developmental accounts regarding the power of symbolic meanings of food shaping social behaviour, a developmental perspective focuses on social change as a feature of research within food studies, looking at how taste and eating habits in social groups regarding food practices are changing, and how they differ from past forms (Mennell, et al, 1992: 14).

In his comparative study of taste and eating habits in France and England Mennell examined social change and its effect on food habits. He argues that over centuries individuals' appetite was shaped by a civilising process leading to personal constraints and monitoring of diet (Mennell, 1985: 20-30). Bourdieu (1984) argued also that distinct class based differences and lifestyle are reproduced through different tastes including food across social classes. However, other theorists argue that commodification of food occurred through access to an array of cuisines within globalisation (Tomlinson, 1999; Warde, 1997).

In a sociological study looking at changes in cuisine in cultures Goody (1982) examined how the impact of colonialism altered cooking techniques and food practices. His analysis provides a link towards understanding the development of 'industrial food' through improved methods of processing and preservation leading to global sales and distribution (Goody, 1982: 184). In a similar vein sociologist Fischler (1980, 1988) studied change to food and eating practices through developments in the agricultural food industry. He argues that a proliferation of new products leads to change in traditional rules and meanings associated with food practices. As a result of increasing numbers of food scares, he further contends that increased concerns about food safety along with contradictory information about food products puts pressure on food consumers in contemporary societies creating anxiety and insecurity surrounding food (Fischler, 1988:288-9).

I have shown that theoretical approaches to food from early twentieth century classical anthropological and sociological theorists were concerned with functions, cultural rituals, and the symbolic and structural ordering of food events.

Developmental approaches further linked changes in food production to the

modernisation of agricultural food systems and other large scale issues surrounding food as industrialisation advanced. These theorists focused on development and change over time in food itself, rather than on the work of cooking. In the following section studies focused on women's role cooking in families are examined from historical and contemporary perspectives to present an understanding of how they have changed over time.

2.4 Women and cooking roles in families

Historically cooking in families was associated with women and was part of the private sphere where it was influenced by both class and gender. As outlined in chapter one the role of feeding others was significant for the health and wellbeing of family members and encompassed work both in the private and public spheres in endeavours to keep families fed. International perspectives on family cooking, historically, have presented it as alternatively powerful and autonomous, or as subservient and lacking in status. In a comprehensive study of American family life and kin supports from 1880-1936, Hareven (2000) outlined the central and powerful role that women played in economic decision making, food work, and supports for kin (Hareven, 2000: 96-7). Other studies show that the role of women managing food work within families historically, involved ingenuity and skill, along with exercising control and economic prowess in endeavouring to feed family members (Tilly and Scott, 1978:54; Bourke, 1993:271).

Ethnographic studies of gendered feeding work from the nineteen seventies to the present show that women in many societies shared a strong tradition of food provision, gaining meaning and power from this role (Brown, 1975; Counihan and Van Esterik 1997; Devasahayam, 2005). How power in this sense may be understood is open to question. According to alternative arguments the extent of power women

could exercise was limited based on their gendered selves. Being born female involved being socialised into specific role allocations in societies that curtail the level of autonomy, equality and ultimately power, women can possess (Oakley, 2002; Mausart; 2002; Baker et al, 2004).

Some of the first feminist studies focusing on gendered food practices upheld this view. Delphy (1979) in an ethnographic study of 19th century rural French households found gender and age inequalities in relation to food in which men's diet took precedence. Men were considered to need a greater quantity of food than other family members, particularly meat. Women and children were considered to need less, often going without sufficient food leading to nutritional deficiencies (Delphy, 1979: 223).

Later studies in Britain from the 1980's and 1990's, both ethnographic and survey based, also show a persistence of men's tastes and preferences from the past in which women prioritised men's diet when cooking meals. Exercising deference to and accommodation of dietary choices of others in family cooking was seen as contributing to women's oppression and subordination in the household. The main meal was a central aspect of daily cooking, where meat preferences of men took precedence (Murcott, 1982: 678). Similarly, in a survey of 200 families with young children in the north of England, Charles and Kerr (1988) found that women and children ate frugally and conservatively, frequently below the level of average nutritional standards for families. In contrast the diet of men as the breadwinner took priority consuming more meat and higher quality foods (Charles and Kerr, 1988).

In a later study conducted by Ekström in Sweden using quantitative surveys, diaries and qualitative interviews with over 300 participants, women undertook the bulk of work associated with food, deferring to their husband's tastes (Ekström, 1991: 151). In her research based in America on feeding work in families, De Vault (1991) looked at how the social organisation of 'family' and 'care work' contributes to women's oppression. She argues that the concept of 'family' itself, enduring over time, and within particular material settings and discourses, needs the maintenance and organisation of specific familial work and activities. This role, which could be carried out by anyone, has consistently been associated with women and contributes to *'an enduring association of caring activities with women in the household ("wife" or "mother")*. Further, she argues that individuals when carrying out the work of caring in their own version of family life;

"draw on cultural ideologies of family life (though hardly any household actually look like the cultural ideal). By doing the work of 'wife' and 'mother', women quite literally produce family life from day to day, through their joint activities with others. By 'doing family' in traditional ways, household members sustain and reproduce the 'naturalness' of prevailing arrangements."

(De Vault, 1991:12, 13)

For De Vault, in 'doing' the work of cooking women literally produce and sustain a particular form of family based on an unequal allocation of gender roles. The studies described above developed a strong critique of the subordination of women in relation to food provision in families. Alternatively, studies from a non-feminist perspective suggest a move towards equality in gendered roles, particularly when women are in paid employment.

2.4.1 Changing trends in food work

In contrast to feminist perspectives other studies show alternative trends emerging in food work and a break away from the central role of women in the work of caring and

responsibility for family life. Ward and Hetherington (1994), looking at male and female contributions to food work found that a more equitable division of household work prevailed when women were in full time paid employment. With 81% of women in their sample in employment, they found that 25% of men were likely to cook. Change also occurred in how gendered food work was allocated across the life stages between males and females. Four trends emerged in food work: (1) men's increased involvement in food preparation; (2) changing tastes in food particularly among the middle classes for healthier diets; (3) increasing interest in eating out leading to a gradual shift from the domestic sphere to the market; (4) increased incorporation of snacking and alternative eating patterns into everyday life (Ward and Hetherington, 1994: 776-7).

A study of change in eating habits and food choices when couples decide to formalise their relationship in marriage or cohabitation found similar differences in the behaviours and attitudes of respondents compared to earlier studies. A more equal division of labour in food work was evident and where women were the main food provider they did not tend to defer to their partners food choices but were more concerned and interested in healthy eating practices (Kemmer, Anderson and Marshall, 1998: 68).

In questioning whether these perspectives on food work in families continue to inform how this role is enacted or represent a move towards shared gendered roles I draw on the work of Beardsworth and Keil (1997) who contend that signs of *change and ambivalence* are recurring when looking at food work from a variety of standpoints. Increasing trends of global food production and supply in the food industry have created less emphasis on cooking, and a significant rise in levels of convenience food

usage and increased options to eat out (1997: 256). From another perspective, in tandem with these trends, there is also an increasing engagement by the State in relation to issues of health showing a rise in the use of official expertise to form guidelines for health and nutrition. As a result governments' scientific and nutritional expertise has become a benchmark against which parental food provision is measured (Coveney, 2004: 221).

When relating these changes to responsibility for family cooking the evidence suggests that women continue to carry out this role regardless of whether they work outside the home or not. According to Collins and Wickham (2001), by the 1990s Irish women's participation in the labour force had risen to just below the European average, with 51.4 % of Irish women in employment, compared to 52.6% of women in the EU. Amongst younger women aged 20-24, 70.1% were in the labour force as opposed to 60.3% in the EU and in the 25-34 age group Irish women exceeded the European average (76.4% as opposed to 72.5%) for women in the EU (Collins and Wickham, 2001:2-3).

Yet despite the numbers of women in the labour force in Ireland recent empirical research from within a time diary tradition, examining food and (other) practices, shows a substantial difference in the gendered division of paid work and family work, with 75 percent of women and fewer than 30 percent of men engaging in cooking activities over a weekly period (Mc Ginnity et al, ERSI, 2005). When compared within a European context Irish men spend less time overall on unpaid work, including cooking, than European men (McGinnity and Russell, 2007: 335). This has implications for the increased pressures placed on women to fulfil commitments to paid and unpaid work in families.

Yet while there is recognition of inequality in gendered work roles at a European policy level, there is a failure to reconcile issues between paid work and unpaid work in households, where time spent is unequally distributed between women and men, placing a greater burden on women endeavouring to fulfil both (Gershuny, 2000). These arguments, along with scholarship from the past, provide a strong account of the subordinate role of women providing food in families. The extent to which food work continues to reflect these findings or is changing and following new trends is examined in this research.

As family is the setting of my study before examining theories of change concerning family roles and practices I outline how the concept of family is used in this thesis. Social change in every facet of life has implications for families. As a fundamental part of societies, families have had to adapt to take account of economic, social, and cultural shifts over time. In Ireland, as outlined above and in chapter one, significant change has occurred in social and economic spheres affecting changing gendered expectations. Chapter One showed that women in Ireland from the end of the 1970s have displayed a stronger commitment to labour force participation and thus it is vital to understand how they negotiate paid work with decision making regarding commitments to family life today is vital. This involves looking theoretically at the evolution of family life from within a macro perspective on socio-economic change and at how these changes in turn inform contemporary micro level decision making and practices regarding gendered work, paid and unpaid.

2.5 Perspectives on family life

Ideas of what constitutes 'family' have changed over time. A concise definition of family is problematic as a long history of diversity of family types exists across time and place. Combined with assumptions and generalisations about what constitutes a family, varying accounts as to the timing, and rate of change from traditional to modern family forms are contested in the literature. Historically, according to Crouch (1999) the family as a form of social organisation in Europe adapted to new social circumstances with the emergence of the industrial revolution. This led to the transformation of gender roles, from traditional home based productive tasks to employment in factories for men, and the emergence of the role of 'housewife' for women. Change was gradual however, particularly in rural areas where peasant agriculture continued (Crouch, 1999:16). The concepts of 'traditional' and 'modern' employed by Edward Shorter (1976) are useful in accounting for the differences between the two states of change within families yet cannot be viewed as unproblematic transitions. He suggests that some of the crucial changes which influenced family life were based on changing sentiments. He cites three different areas of sentiment that have dislodged traditional family life:

1. *Courtship*; romantic love changed the way couples decided on personal happiness, as opposed to material considerations of property, or lineage.
2. *The mother-child relationship*; whereas in traditional societies children received a minimum of focus and attention, there was a change in the level of priority in which the child occupied in relation to 'the mother's rational hierarchy of values'. Where previously the focus was on struggles for survival, in modern society children's wellbeing became the most important focus of maternal love and care.
3. *The boundary line between the family and community*; Traditional families operated as a productive unit where extended family and community engaged with

each other with the common purpose of economic and generational survival. In contrast, the modern family emerged as a private nucleus of intimacy and domesticity (Shorter, 1976:14, 15).

Mid-20th century functionalist perspectives on family life centre on the different functions that family members fulfilled in order to survive. Functionalism put an emphasis on the different activities that families do in order support themselves and thrive. When looking at the place of family in society, Parsons et al (1956) saw it having particular norms and roles as part of an overall wider social system:

“Parents are themselves integrated in the cultural value system... both in that they constitute, with the children, an institutionalised social system, and that the patterns have previously been internalised in the relevant ways in their personalities. The family is... and institutionalised system”

(Parsons and Bales, 1956:17,cited in Gatrell, 2005:33).

Parson’s theory of family life emphasising the roles of men and women as a fixed quality within societal structures with little emphasis on agency has been criticised by other theorists (Williams, 1999: 23; Oakley, 2000: 129). Other writers depict the family as evolving and adapting to social change by employing different methods and supports. The use of family strategies employed at a micro level in order to adapt to different circumstances occurring at macro levels of social change is examined Moen et al (1982). They cite the work of Elder (1974), Tilly and Scott (1978) and Hareven (1982) as examples of studies about the adaptive strategies used by kin to support each other through periods of social change. The use of strategies in this way reflects families’ agency in adapting their practices as circumstances change (Moen and Wethington (1992: 248).

In her research Hareven (2000) disputes the idea that family structure altered with the onset of wide industrial upheavals. Rather, in her view families were a lynchpin of social order and a basis of stable governance, acting as a broker between individuals and social processes (Hareven, 2000: 301). From extensive life history research her study of family groups throughout a period of industrialisation in the United States contests the view that the nuclear family was a later formation citing evidence of its formation across early historical periods. She emphasises the complexity of social change and family adaption over time, using evidence of strategies and supports of kin and wider community networks. (Hareven, 2000: 7, 85).

Tadmor (2010) also emphasises the role of kinship in understandings of historical patterns of continuity and change, whether economic, social, cultural or political.

Reviewing contrasting research approaches to kinship ties in early modern Britain and beyond, she outlines the importance of '*enmeshed patterns of kinship and connectedness*' in early modern societies. She further suggests that comparison between present day family formations to those of the past with respect to notions of kinship and 'household-family' ties may also reveal similar patterns (Tadmor, 2010: 15, 34).

In Ireland the family as an institution was enshrined in the 1937 Constitution (Bunreacht na hÉireann) as the foundation of society. Many aspects of daily life, religion, community and economy were structured around family life, which was patriarchal and traditional. However, the notion of a single 'traditional' form of nuclear family in 20th century Ireland is contested by theorists, who suggest the existence of a variability of family forms (Messenger, 1969; Brody, 1973; Hannan and Katsiaounai, 1977).

Employing a broad definition, Cheal (2002), shows the complex nature of attempts to define family, asserting that *'there is no single concept of the family which is true for all historical periods and in all places*, rather he contends; *'definitions of family are relative to the social and cultural environments of people who think about families and talk about families, as they go about their daily lives'* Rather, a broad view of family life is needed to approach how it may be understood during periods of change (Cheal, 2002:4).

In contemporary societies concepts of family have changed along with how roles and functions are understood. As new ideas emerge shaping societal change what constitutes family is shifting, challenging old structures and beliefs. Thus, while the nuclear family may remain as a central part of society, a variability of family forms is also recognised as accompanying an increasing diversity of living arrangements (Hilliard, 2007). State recognition of family diversity, along with flexible policies to accommodate changes in relation to gendered roles, has not kept pace with change. Silva and Smart (1999) argue that there is a lack of account taken at official policy level to how families have changed when instituting policies within contexts of increased diversity of family forms and practices (Silva and Smart 1999:3).

2. 5.1 Distinguishing family roles from practices

Following the argument that family life is changing and that what constitutes family and family roles varies to take account of complex social arrangements in intimate relationships in contemporary society, in this study I use Morgan's concept of *'family practices'* to denote activities associated within a variety of family groups. Morgan (2002) argues that family practices are not just any old practices, *'but are activities that the actors themselves would routinely think of as being distinct, special and of importance in their daily lives'*. He goes on to state that, while not in any way

attempting to link the family to moral absolutes; *'family practices involve the moral evaluation of choices and a recognition that these matters are of consequence in the daily lives of individuals'* (Morgan, 2002: 154).

Further, as I am engaged with individuals with responsibility for feeding family members, gaining understanding about how they reflect on and make often difficult decisions connected with family and work commitments is necessary within the context of contemporary family lives.

Related to the use of 'family practices' to look at food work as a specific set of tasks that families do, I also use the concept of 'family display' outlined by Finch (2007), where she suggests examining those activities of families which constitute 'doing' family things. She argues that *'families need to be displayed as well as done,'* insofar as particular words, actions or gestures are connected with wider social meaning. (Finch 2007: 66-7). She explains the concept of display as; *'processes which are both directly experienced by participants within the network of family relationships, and may be observed by others outside that network'*. (Finch, 2011: 204).

Through engagement with families directly within their homes, how they convey their particular understanding of family life through their interactions as a family, and how they structure their lives around this aspect of their lives is relevant to my enquiry.

However, while family life is the setting for this research, it focuses specifically on individual women and men within families, in order to investigate their perspectives on the work of feeding families in contemporary society. In order to do so it is necessary to develop an understanding of how macro theories of social change in modernity identify the ways in which individuals may engage with society.

2.6 Modernity, individualisation-dilemmas for women

Theories of modernity focus on facets of social change from two main perspectives: those of the structures of society and of the individual social actor. The ideas put forward suggest different ways in which individuals may engage with social change, and in the light of change what strategies they may use to make sense of, and pursue their goals in daily life. As shown in the previous section social theories associated with family strategies and Parson's functionalism attempt to do this also. Large scale macro theories are concerned with understanding how unprecedented levels of change in modernity impact on societies and the implications for individuals going through such upheavals. Anthony Giddens and Ulrich Beck, in making distinctions between tradition and modernity, each in their own way present and give prominence to theorising how the lives of individuals are altered through the impact of key changes in modernity. They contend that as a result of a break from traditional norms and values, together with increased pursuit of individualisation, opportunities may be opened up for individuals, but with uncertain consequences and risks.

Giddens (1991) is concerned with how social change in modernity intersects with individual identity. Within this process individuals in society become more closely allied with social structures, where they can interpret, reflect on and act, transforming both their own lives and in turn social structures. *'The reflexivity of modernity extends into the core of the self... the self becomes a reflexive project... and constructed as part of a reflexive process of connecting personal and social change'* (Giddens, 1991: 32-33). This suggests a high level of choice for individuals to fashion their own lives and in doing so also influence structural change. This portrayal of the individual in modernity is one of a rational being who continually makes decisions in relation to lifestyle and future, and reflexively calculates the best options for self fulfilment.

Beck (1992) is concerned with the concept of 'risk' and also 'individual reflexivity' in his theory of modernity. Though there are parallels in their work, Beck develops in-depth analysis of risk both structurally and individually. He focuses on individual self identity and risk and specifically how it relates to women in society.

2.6.1 Individualisation-Equality for women

For Beck and Elizabeth Beck-Gernsheim issues concerning women are important and they point out that within historical developments change for women has not occurred in a linear fashion but in "*peculiarly wave-like movements of progress and regress*" (Beck and Beck-Gernsheim, 2002: 55). They argue that changes in modernity open up new opportunities in education and working lives for women, freeing them from the bonds of traditional roles to pursue individual choices. Conversely however, for many women in family settings, issues of equality and expectations are complex; conveying contrary messages and constraints.

On the one hand women have built up expectations of equality in both employment and family roles. On the other hand, structures of society are set up in ways that presuppose the persistence of gendered ascribed roles. This creates dependency on the unequal positions of men and women in society (Beck and Beck-Gernsheim, 2002: 105). According to Beck, inequality in this way contradicts the principles of modernity for reflexive modernisation and individualisation. It may also create tensions and conflict within family roles where possibilities for the right to choose and make decisions on lifestyle career options are hampered by a lack of institutional solutions, such as flexible work conditions, or good quality child care.

These oppositions are seen by Beck as part of modern dilemmas for men and women, pointing out that, "*what remains central is that the equalisation of men and women*

cannot be created in institutional structures that presuppose their inequality” (Beck, 1992: 109). When related to family life, this means that whereas for men the freedom to work and make independent choices is a given, women experience greater issues.

As outlined in chapter one, in the past women in Ireland were strongly influenced by the teaching of the Catholic Church which promoted large families. However, data from the 1970s shows that with the introduction of contraception family size fell over time (Collins and Wickham, 2001: 44). Yet, while women today have choice regarding whether to bear children or not, having children and feeling responsible for their care can be an obstacle to working and to occupational competition and advancement for women. As a result, in terms of pursuing one’s own biography, women’s choices may constantly be pulled back and forth between traditional ascribed roles and employment, creating contradictory desires for individuals (Beck and Beck-Gernsheim, 2002:86).

At a structural, political level, Beck acknowledges that changes for women in the individualisation process, and the shift from *‘living for others’* to a bit of *‘a life of one’s own’* may also be uneven and slow. How women experience change is important as they build up a new awareness of issues which ultimately lead to demands for change. He contends that, change does not just occur at a private, subjective level, but in the public political sphere also. So that while the structures of society act on what constitutes, for example, a normal female biography, *‘so do new normal biographies react back upon the structures of society as a whole’*, which can produce tensions and conflict but will trigger change in the long run (Beck and Beck Gernsheim, 2002, 74,76).

This view reflects a sense that women are challenged to become self-reliant and act rationally in their own self-interest in the first instance, as they make their way in the world. Yet this creates a paradox in the sense that structurally societies operate in such a way that they take for granted that supportive roles will be fulfilled so that society can run smoothly.

For Giddens and Beck, modernity opens up a new kind of possibility for reflexive individualisation. However, their theories offer a specific vision of modernity which offers only one account of how social actors engage with society and make decisions in the light of societal change. For women in particular, this is seen as a non-linear process where institutions remain rooted in traditional modes of operation.

There are several points of criticism from different perspectives of Giddens' and Beck's theories of modernity. Firstly, they have been criticised for their work on individual reflexivity and the lack of inclusion of the role of culture in modernity. Lash and Alexander, from different perspectives, argue that their idea of reflexivity is too reductive and they fail to include an adequate understanding of the role of culture in their theory. Lash (1994) also argues that culture plays a significant role in mediating between agency and structure in the form of information and communication structures. Delanty (1999) also points to an inadequate perspective on culture within their work, stating that where it does occur it is reduced to a narrow view. He argues that we are living in a global age where contemporary societies are no longer defined by any particular institutional structures. In this age, culture is seen as a structured form of social knowledge which social actors draw from. Further, that modernity as a concept of social change necessarily refers to an involvement between

a cultural model of society along with institutional aspects of social, economic and political structures for the transformation of society (Delanty, 1999:11).

In examining theories of change and their impact on families, Crow (2002) points out that in Beck's work there is a recognition that change can vary significantly within different state structures which will have a bearing on the extent to which individualisation can proceed. In addition, by focusing analysis on individuals as 'reflexive selves', Giddens and Beck fail to explore the variable access that different individuals and family groups may have to negotiate personal autonomy and power in their lives (Crow, 2002,291).

From another perspective, Adams (2005) critiques their portrayal of pre-modern traditional societies as non-reflexive, where identities were relatively fixed and unchanging, and which rely on accounts of increased reflexivity at a personal and institutional level to make sense of contemporary identity. Drawing on analysis by Heelas *et al* (1996), he argues that traditional societies were sites for exploration in self identity and reflexivity as individuals challenged, forged new insights, and charted new directions within societies with relatively fixed rituals, rules and myths. For Adams (2005: 8) reflexivity was part of traditional identity where changes were wrought by individuals leading to innovation and change, and that Giddens and Beck's view of reflexivity and individualisation as a project of modernity is exaggerated and over stated. .

While Giddens and Beck offer comprehensive theories of modernity their work is criticized for failing to acknowledge reflexivity as part of traditional societies, and also to fully integrate aspects of individuality and reflexivity with structures in

society. For other theorists culture is not adequately represented as part of understanding and negotiating the processes of change from within both structural and social actors' perspectives. Overall, their perspectives on social change and individualisation focused on the reflexive self fail to take account of the uneven and varied access individuals have to exercise personal autonomy. They do not provide an analysis at the level of class which influences the relative access to power and resources individuals may possess. Their emphasis on personal fulfilment for individuals also fails to focus on other aspects of everyday family life and the implications of uneven patterns of cultural and social change occurring over time.

When endeavouring to understand how social change may be understood at family level through historical periods of change the work of Finch (1989) is relevant.

In *Family Obligations and Social Change*, Finch (1989) offers a comprehensive account of patterns of support in families and how they have changed over time. Her work was based on looking at kin support systems and obligations in the wider context of supporting others, of the principles on which areas of responsibility and obligation are founded, understood over time, and in a contemporary context. Her analysis focused on what lies underneath decisions people make in relation to duties towards others. In addition, she explored how state policies and ideas reflect a certain perspective, portraying the naturalness and moral character of taking responsibility and care for others within one's own kinship group. Questioning this perspective, she draws on a variety of evidence from kinship groups, including historical, demographic, economic and social contexts to assess the nature and extent of how family responsibilities and duties may be understood. The conclusions drawn suggest that relationships and duties to kin possess a moral quality that is inescapable, which

does not apply to other unrelated groups. Duties are also negotiated in relation to the sense that people make of their own position in the social world at a given time, and place, and are culturally specific. She also argues that material self interest is a strong force, and that it may work against priorities of kinship needs. She further contends that meaning in terms of kinship is built up over time where relationships are sustained, affirmed and reinforced. On a structural level, the economic climate, demographic issues, and state policies all shape the level to which individuals will take on responsibilities for kin when required (Finch, 1989:228, 232, 236). Finch's study thus offers an overarching view of the complex nature that responsibility and duty to kin involves over time, of pragmatism, along with moral choices, and how it may be understood in a contemporary context by families and the state.

Taking account of increased individualisation as part of societal change in modernity, how the process of change is worked out at a gendered level is important. Drawing on perspectives associated with macro social change the question must be asked; how and to what extent are (traditional, structural, or cultural practices) implicated in understandings of gender and gendered roles? To explore these themes the following sections will focus on theories and ideas as applied to gender roles.

2.7 Perspectives on gender and gendered roles

Macro level theories focused of social change in modernity propose that individualisation can bring increased opportunities for individuals to pursue their own goals. They support the idea of women having a choice to engage equally in family life and career, while creating more freedom for personal fulfilment. Yet for women within families this is not fully realised as they continue also to fulfil a supportive role within the political economy of societies. The right to make choices and decisions is

compromised by a slow rate of change at policy level to provide flexible options for women regarding commitment to family and career. The next section presents how gender and gendered roles are understood from biological, gender relational and feminist perspectives.

2.7.1 Gender and biology

As I have outlined food preparation has evolved as a gendered and privatised practice within families. In order to understand why, different theoretical perspectives on gender are reviewed below. In the past divisions of labour between the sexes and unequal social positions were considered ‘natural’ and taken for granted (Jackson and Scott, 2002). Theories of gender focused on *biological* differences between men and women based on ‘nature’ where women were considered the ‘weaker sex’. Being born as male or female was related to having distinct attributes and roles within the social world. According to early theorists of gender categorising the sexes in this way was used to provide an argument and justification for issues relating to sex roles, and assignment of segregated positions and unequal status in societies (Millett; 1971; Rubin; 1975).

Theories based on biology were challenged by other views. Significantly, French writer and philosopher Simone de Beauvoir made the distinction between biological and socialisation aspects of gender assignment for females emphasising that ‘One is not born, one becomes a woman’ (1973:301). Making such distinction between what were seen as natural attributes of gender, opened up contemporary debates exploring the very nature of sex/gender categories.

In these debates, socialisation became central to understanding how gender is enacted focused on how boys and girls learn male and females roles. Chodorow (1978), working from within a psychoanalytical perspective explored how girls and boys

develop a gendered sense of self. Arguing that as mothers are the primary carer and role model for children in early childhood, their influence reinforces differences in gender identification. For Chodorow, gender identity for females remained continuous from their primary identification and attachment with their mother in infancy. Male identification was more complex due to the oedipal stage where they were expected to shift from focus on their mother and identify with their father. In later work Chodorow (1995), expanded this narrow view to include other influences and experiences that inform gendered identities. Gendered identification was further linked to relative positions and expectations between males and females within societies.

Oakley in her work related to gender (1972, 1981), explored how the main institutions of societies, families, schooling, and workplaces all influenced what roles were considered appropriate for men and women, contributing to unequal and oppressive roles associated with women. Thus from this perspective women engage in food practices predominantly because through the process of socialisation they have absorbed societal expectations regarding feminine roles. Biological and socialisation perspectives show the extent to which a demarcation of gendered roles has persisted as a result of deep levels of societal norms influencing behaviour. Today these depictions of gender are questioned, leading to more fluid understandings.

2.7.2 Gender-relational model

Contemporary theories of gender emphasise changes in the enactment of gender and gendered roles in the context of fluid boundaries and shifting meanings. For Bradley (2013); *'Gender refers to the varied and complex arrangements between men and women, encompassing the organization of reproduction, the sexual divisions of labour and cultural definitions of femininity and masculinity'*. In this sense gender is

seen as relational, actively engaged in and evolving as a lived experience (Bradley, 2013: 6, 16). For other theorists the emphasis on gender is related to performance or acting out gender, challenging the binary aspects of male/female (Butler 1990). Lewis (2009: 15) when looking at how gender is viewed today argues that while there is an opening out of how gender is understood and enacted, inequalities persist between men and women in the division of labour both within families and paid employment. Feminist scholarship highlights how gendered inequalities have persisted both within the private sphere of family life and paid work and how this informs and presents challenges for women in contemporary societies.

2.7.3 Feminist perspectives on gender and gender roles

Debates on gender from within feminist perspectives are diverse with differing views and priorities held depending on the political stance of feminist groups. All share concerns about inequality between the positions of women in relation to the rights of men in societies. Liberal feminists traditionally focused on equal opportunities for women. They concentrate on issues of discrimination against women as the root cause of inequalities, working for change to take place within the social system and structures that operate within society. Socialist and Marxist feminists argue instead that the prevailing system of capitalism is the cause of women's oppression and must be eliminated.

In common with radical feminists they point out that it is patriarchy within both private and public institutions that is a major source of women's oppression (Bradley, 2013). Patriarchy organizes societies in such a way that men hold dominant roles in the social order and can use these positions to make decisions to exploit, control, or oppress women. The concept was also used to explain taken-for-granted practices,

that reinforce control within organisations including the economy, and state organisations; the family; work, paid and unpaid; consumption, and interpersonal relationships (Acker, 1990; O'Connor: 1998).

Hartmann (1979; 1981) used the concept of patriarchy to highlight the unequal position of women within capitalist labour markets, where it was used by men to control and exclude women. She argues that it reinforced a gendered division of labour and solidarity between men, creating dependence by women consigned to unpaid work in the private sphere (Hartmann, 1981: 19). In her work Walby (1986, 1990) distinguishes between the workings of private and public patriarchy in the unequal treatment of women. Private patriarchy involves control of women in the private sphere, through unpaid labour whereas public patriarchy links changes in demand for women's labour in the public sphere, with patriarchal controls within political and labour institutions keeping women in subordinate and unequal roles to those of men (Walby, 1997: 6, 9). Hartmann (1986) points out however, that while unequal divisions of labour can create conflict in families, families tend to support each other in other areas of concern. When faced with capitalism penetrating extensively into areas of social life of households, historically members have used strategies to retain control over resources and decision making in relation to family matters. In this way the enduring interdependence of family members can make them unpredictable and problematic for the interests of capitalism and the State. She argues that both class and gender shape peoples understanding, influencing how they respond to changing conditions (Hartmann, 1986: 496-97).

Within the context of overall change in modernity, family life and obligations, biological, patriarchal, and feminist perspectives offer varied standpoints on how gender differences, treatment, and inequalities are created and perpetuated through social processes at a macro level. Theories of gender also outline the changing realities of how gender is enacted where there remains a persistence of old structures and attitudes, and where new challenges are part of everyday life for both women and men, with particular pressures experienced within families. Understanding how decisions associated with gendered roles are made concerning unpaid work at the relational level of family practices offers a means of evaluating the extent to which these theories are manifested or altering in the lives of women and men today.

2.8 Family relational practices and decision making

A number of theoretical perspectives are relevant in order to provide a framework for understanding how families may make decisions about gendered work both within and outside the household. As my primary concern is on relational practices of how individuals make decisions about their commitments to family food work at a micro level, my analysis centres on family practices as outlined by Morgan (2002), and how they differ and may have similarities between women and men across the life course and through individual experiences. My focus is also concerned with how this role is 'done'.

I also take account of West and Zimmerman (1987, 2009) in theorising 'doing gender' as opening up a way of looking at gender and accountability as an on-going process of 'doing' rather than 'being' arguing that this change; *transformed an ascribed status into an achieved status, moving masculinity and femininity from natural essential properties of individuals to interactional, that is the social properties of a system of*

relations' (West and Zimmerman, 2009:114). As stated, I am also exploring the concept of 'family display' outlined by Finch (2007), to look at activities of families which constitute 'doing' family things, particularly in relation to food, and how this may portray wider social meaning.

As this study is concerned with how we may understand duties and responsibility for food work in family life today, it is necessary to explore how, and to what extent individuals can reflexively make decisions and have a level of choice regarding roles and responsibilities strongly associated with women. In endeavouring to understand how and in what circumstances family practices are worked out between men and women across the life course understanding the way individuals negotiate commitments to family roles are explored initially to generate a framework relevant to my research. As social change has an implication for how individuals make decisions concerning their familial and work commitments, I review below a relevant body of theoretical work focused on issues concerning family decision making related to work roles.

- Economic rational decision making
- Preference Theory
- Gendered moral rationalities

2.8.1 Economic rational decision making

In order to function as part of society families use different strategies to conduct their social and economic commitments. How tasks are divided has been the subject of debate. Traditionally, males adopted a breadwinner role to earn money, with females fulfilling the role and tasks associated with family life and children. This associated the lives of men and women with public and private worlds of separate spheres,

whereas in reality both worlds are intertwined and embedded in complex social relations.

Becker (1965, 1981) used the principles of economics as a basis for understanding gender and the division of labour within families. He employed rational choice theory as it is utilised in neo classical economics, to present an argument about how the division of labour operates in families. In his work *A Treatise on the Family* Becker (1981) argued that as a result of rational decision making in families a division of labour will be enacted which will maximise benefits and minimise costs to the family. In discussing the division of labour between household work and paid employment, it was his contention that it is rational that whoever possesses greater marketable skills for the paid workplace will take on that role, creating greater earnings for the family. Taking Ireland as an example he argued that despite being considered a traditional and religious society it also displays distinctly rational decision making in relation to family life;

“Ireland remains a highly religious country and the Irish constitution guarantees married women the right to remain at home to care for their families. However, rational family responses to powerful economic changes have outweighed church teachings and the constitution. The growing importance to the economy of well trained workers has persuaded parents to substitute fewer, better- educated children for the traditional large families.”

(Becker, 1981:17)

The argument that within families women and men choose to either enter the workforce or carry out unpaid household work, depending on their relative abilities and earning power based on educational qualifications has been criticised. Cheal (2002) argues that this use of rationality as an approach to decision making in families is not in keeping with the varied realities of family life today when it comes to

choices, preferences, or the extent that economic matters are the ultimate consideration when considering caring versus career roles (Cheal, 2002: 114-5).

According to other views, the use of rational choice models based on economics is limited when related to family care decision making. Himmelweit (2002) argues that rational choice assumes people choose their actions for the most feasible outcome from an individualist perspective and that decisions are made on self-interested grounds. She suggests a model that rejects rational choice focusing instead on the choices people make to carry out responsibilities they identify with, as norms of behaviour for members of a social group. In this perspective norms are worked out through identifying with social groups, which are subject to change over time, and may offer alternative ways to caring where a more egalitarian norms are established based on equality of caring (Himmelweit, 2002; 233, 246-248).

Others critique what they perceive to be dualistic thinking in Becker's work and present a strong relational view of individuals rooted in connections with both private and public spheres, which recognises that decision making based primarily on economics does not take account of the complex nature of factors that impinge on priorities, choices, or restrictions when related to family matters. (Ribbens McCarthy and Edwards, 2002; 233; Glover, 2002:264).

Allied to economic and rational choice arguments, applying ideas associated with employment and decision making by women working both within and outside family settings, the work of Catherine Hakim is relevant to understanding different ideological stances in relation to women's roles both within and outside the private sphere of family life.

2.8.2 Preference Theory

Questions about how and in what circumstances women make decisions or choices regarding work and motherhood are pertinent to understanding their commitment and autonomy in respect of work both within and outside family settings. Hakim (2003) developed 'preference theory' as a means to compare and analyse women's employment patterns and lifestyle preferences and differing attitudes surrounding work and family life. Using empirical evidence based on survey data from Spain and England, she put forward a view that women are heterogeneous in their lifestyle preferences and priorities, once they can choose. She identifies three groups emerging from her data; home centred, adaptive, and work-centred women. Distinguishing the work-centred women from the other two groups she contends that work-centred women are distinctly different from either adaptive or home centred women in their attitudes and characteristics. The majority of work-centred women are likely to work full-time, are least likely to be married, reject patriarchy and rigid role allocation of a gendered division of labour in the family. On the other hand, she argues that a majority of home centred women accept patriarchy and specialised family roles with adaptive women ideologically falling between these two extremes (Hakim, 2003:246-247). In terms of commitment to work practices, full-time workers are considered to have a greater determination to work, whereas those employed part-time show less commitment due to their primary identification with the role of housewife and homemaker (Hakim,1996b:178).

Preference theory also proposes that lifestyle preferences are becoming more prominent in all three groups, cutting across class, education, economic or cultural capital. However, Hakim points out that within the countries the three groups may

express *conflicting* value systems. While ideological differences are not fully explored within the surveys she conducted, the three groups differ in their priorities regarding work for pay or family work. According to Hakim home-centred people are more concerned with private/ personal '*family values*' rather than public issues or attitudes, whereas work-centred people showed '*marketplace values*', emphasising competitiveness, achievement and an orientation towards individualism (Hakim, 2003:258-9). Further, she argues for the introduction of policies that reflect lifestyle preferences and heterogeneity of choices and values related to the division of labour and work roles for families in contemporary societies.

Preference theory presents an argument of why women are not as committed to paid work or career particularly when they have a family. It has garnered some support but also much criticism from other writers and researchers concerned with issues of motherhood and paid work. From a macro perspective, modernity according to Giddens and Beck creates new spaces in society for change from prescriptive roles of the past to active agency based on individual choices for women. Preference theory, focusing on relational practices, argues that values and choices favouring family commitments are enacted when faced with decisions regarding paid work roles and for those with strong family values. However, how individuals commit to particular actions and decision making involving motherhood and/or career has important implications for fulfilment and engagement with paid or unpaid work roles. Gatrell (2005) in an examination of parenthood from a number of perspectives including commitments to paid work and motherhood outlines a strong critique of preference theory. Her work based on research carried out with highly educated, professional women pursuing careers combined with motherhood, is not she points out,

representative of all women, particularly women who experience greater difficulties combining motherhood and work due to limited skills or financial supports for childcare.

Her critique of Hakim's research is based on the assertion that there are just two options based on values, which reflect either family or market driven choices, with no consideration of options in between. Rather, Gatrell argues that Hakim's work only validates '*an either/or choice between babies or career*' - a dualism that Oakley (1981:3) challenged in the past (Gatrell, 2005:83). She points out that Hakim's work has given rise to literature that presents a negative view of mothers who pursue careers. Other writers question women's commitment to career after becoming mothers and assert that they are often unhappy and would rather play the role of 'domestic goddess' (Tooley, 2002; Hewlett, 2002, in Gatrell, 2005: 170). Other perspectives have the view that women's choice to stay working is disadvantaging their children (Malthouse, 1997).

Gatrell, arguing against these views, points out the varied dilemmas faced by women trying to combine motherhood with a commitment to paid employment. Recognising that there are many polarised perspectives on the issue of combining motherhood and career she draws on the work of Skevington and Baker (1989), Brannen and Moss (1991), and Vogler and Pahl (1994) which provide an alternate view that women gain a sense of social identity, fulfilment, and empowerment from their participation in the labour market.

Drawing on the work of Foucault (1990), Latour (1986) and Law (1992) regarding the exercise of power and decision making where individuals can act in their own self interest, Gatrell points out that they can resist and shift powerful conventions. She

concludes however, that whichever choices women make in relation to career or staying at home as full-time mothers, they face strongly contested opinions, and multi-faceted perspectives regarding gendered roles, and powerful resistance to changing trends (Gatrell, 2005: 88, 94).

As Gatrell points out powerful conventions persist and are an important element in individual life choices and decisions in the context of women's lives. Gaining understanding from a life course perspective serves to uncover knowledge of key life changes and decision making over time and also elements that may hinder that possibility. According to Elder (1975) a life course perspective refers to a sequence of defined events and roles that individuals enact over time, that do not necessarily proceed in a particular sequence but constitute a major part of a person's experiences over time. This approach has four key elements: location in time and space; linked lives and social relations; human agency; and timing, integrating historical, social, and individual activities (Elder, 1975:22, 25). Taking in a broad view this approach offers a means of gaining knowledge of how different elements over the life course impact on and inform decision making practices for individuals regarding significant life choices and responsibilities.

When examining the complex nature of decision making and or 'choices', related to the work of caring, Lewis (2009), contests the extent to which women have clear choices, or decision making options when opting to work or remain at home. Drawing on a number of studies, she argues that such decisions are often taken depending on the extent that resources are available to support their choices (Liska, 1984). While motivation and preference are often enacted when good quality affordable childcare is in place (Kangas and Rostgaard, 2007), economic necessity can also be a major factor

in decisions to return to work full-time, regardless of the availability of optimum quality child care (Crompton and Lyonette, 2006a). Taking into account the variable personal circumstances she argues while expressing similar attitudes, women may be subject to divergent levels of constraints that influence decisions. (Lewis, 2009: 64-5).

Preference theory presents a view that women are less committed to work particularly when they become mothers. This perspective has led to a variety of arguments which either support or reject this contention. What is clear from the variety of views and arguments is that for women, making choices about their lives in relation to work and family life is far from straightforward, with powerful influences implicated in considerations of women's roles in society.

Other perspectives look closely at specific ways in which individuals approach decisions related to family work and care considerations. According to theorists social change has implications for values associated with moral commitments to family and community. In trends towards individualisation where external moral constraints no longer hold sway and self motivated lifestyle choices are becoming the norm, there is concern that this will lead to decline in moral responsibility. Rejecting rational economic explanations theorists explore how people go about making decisions and exercise individual choice in relation to families, drawing references from studies related to social policies and empirical research findings.

2.8.3 Gendered moral rationalities

Social policy related to families is a key topic concerned with changes that are taking place in family life today and how the role of the State intersects with the challenges these changes bring. Examining Britain's New Labour framework for supporting

policies in relation to welfare and work, Barlow, Duncan, and James (2002), argue that this policy was based on a model of '*rational economic man*' where individuals take decisions based on cost-benefit to maximise their own gains. Challenging these assumptions by the state, they argue that empirical research suggests that people make decisions with reference to moral and socially negotiated views of what is expected as the proper thing to do, and that views of what is right vary between to different social groups, locations and cultures (Barlow et al, 2002: 111).

Duncan and Edwards in a study of lone parents and paid work (1997; 1999) also examine the inadequacy of '*rational economic man*' to explain individual decision-making in caring roles and employment. They found that this model was unsuccessful in showing the process by which lone mothers make such decisions. Rather, decisions were made based on collective relations and understandings about motherhood and work, not based particularly on economic factors. The concept of '*gendered moral rationalities*' was developed to account for the fact that collective gendered factors influence decisions on rational economic matters (Duncan and Edwards, 1999: 3).

In a later study, 'Motherhood, paid work and partnering: values and theories' Duncan, Edwards, Reynolds and Alldred, (2003) focus on issues related to '*gendered moral rationalities*' within different groups making decisions about caring for children and working, using three theoretical approaches to understanding how change and decision making may be understood in the light of empirical evidence. In the first theoretical model using an '*adult worker family model*' replacing the 'male breadwinner model' which dominated both social policy and social ideals in post-war

Britain, they assess the assumption that underpins this model. These are that both men and women are both assumed to be part of the labour market, and when they become parents they will pool their income to support children. Based within Britain, Duncan et al, using semi-structured interviews with 56 mothers in a couple relationships (male and female and same sex couples), of different ethnic and class backgrounds, found that the values systems and moral rationalities used by mothers show both diversity and uniformity. They appeared uniform in that mothers' gendered moral rationalities are still based on their primary responsibility for their children. There were variations in which values inform the division of labour when in consultation with partners, and the rationalities used to do so. These variations were also associated with different social groups, in terms of class, ethnicity and sexuality. They also highlight some of the theoretical implications for new household economics and individualisation theories. Neither of these models explained variations in how mothers act regardless of whether they viewed themselves as primarily workers, or mothers.

The second theoretical model places a causal emphasis on a significant *individualisation of gender relations in late modernity*. This dimension utilises the theories of Giddens and Beck, which sees tradition, gender, and family relationships altered by emancipation of women through greater freedom in career and individual planning of lifestyles. However, Duncan et al.'s findings showed that rather than a level of equality being reached between genders there is a growing discrepancy between expectations of women for equality within an unequal division of labour. They found the model limited in terms of empirical data, regardless of how mothers saw their status in relation to work, or motherhood, and an individualised self. Only a minority of mothers who were also employed saw themselves as primarily workers.

Regardless of how they negotiated gender moral rationalities, or saw their work life as separate from motherhood, they were connected in how they negotiated their roles. Individualisation was also shown to be highly context dependant, and did not capture the process of socially negotiated moral understandings, or commitments. (Duncan, Edwards, Reynolds and Alldred, 2003: 310, 325-327). These findings are relevant in an Irish context also where tax individualisation was introduced in 1999/2000 which doubled the tax band for dual income married couples, but left one-income married couples the same, resulting in single income couples paying a higher rate of tax. As a result individualisation in taxation was thus seen as a reward for women in the workforce versus women in the home (Kennedy 2001:224).

A third theoretical model '*moral negotiation in post-modernity*' developed out of Finch and Mason's (1993) study on family obligations, where family obligations and ideas of the right thing to do were negotiated in particular contexts rather than ascribed duties. Duncan, et al, argue that this negotiated aspect has limited applicability however, as it fails to cover individuals who follow more traditional divisions of labour, or those who would not adopt a moral stance in negotiations. This is particularly true when meeting responsibilities for dependents. They argue that negotiation, can be problematic '*where the notion of negotiation can get stretched to the point where a traditional gendered division of labour can be conceptualized as negotiated, rather than as a non-negotiable pre-given,*' (Duncan et al, 2003: 327)

Smart and Neale (1999) also show that parents after a divorce use a complex range of negotiations and considerations in decision making related to their families. Issues around caring and earning a living are complex, bound up with moral as well as economic considerations and negotiation. The study showed that parents did not use reason in an individualistic or single minded manner when making decisions. Instead

they took the positions of others involved into account when negotiating practical arrangements (Smart and Neale, 1999:195). Gender stereotypes also persist where masculine and feminine identities entailed responsibilities consistent with caring roles for women, and the imperative of employment for men. The element of choice for women and men after separation also involves difficult moral considerations between opportunities and constraints when family needs must be considered. Smart and Neale conclude that policy makers need to take this into consideration by creating flexible policies that are supportive to parents in this situation.

When taking consideration of the extent to which policies reflect and support the reality of changing care needs, Fiona Williams (2004) in a study of family life recognises an increased diversity of family forms and care arrangements and practices. She argues that while the shape of commitment to caring may have changed; there is no loss of commitment to caring in families. Further, that policies need to recognise diversity of family formations, providing a balance between ethics of care, and work, and adequate supports for families to protect against inequality. She outlines the need for social policies that both support caring responsibilities calling for recognition of the commitments in arguments for reform in social policies related to caring in families (Williams, 2004: 10, 83). In further work (2008) re-examining equality policies, expanding the requirements for gender supportive policies, she argues that it is at the intersection of gender, class, and race in increasingly multicultural societies, that equality in policies and understanding is deficient and uneven particularly for women.

This chapter has examined a broad range of concepts relevant to understanding macro levels of social change connected to the role of women in societies, specifically within the realm of family and gendered food work. Tracing theoretical developments in food and food work provides clarity on the central role of women in food provision. An overview of changes in agriculture shows food production moving from local to global industries. It traces how food is used and consumed and how high levels of obesity is a threat to health on a global scale, giving rise to increased levels of official concern.

Individualisation as part of change in modernity reveals one aspect of how change may be worked out at an individual level as societies move from traditional to modern, and to what extent individuals can or are precluded from reflexively making decisions, or choices regarding family work which continues to be associated with women. Cognisance is also taken of feminist views which share concerns about inequality between the positions of women and men forming a strong critique of the subordination of women in relation to caring roles in families.

It is clear that at the level of choice and decision making significant restraints are evident, particularly for women, to achieve equality between caring work and opportunities for personal fulfilment. Taking a life course approach the areas outlined above, along with the concepts of economic rational decision making, preference theory, and gendered moral rationalities form the basis of my theoretical framework to examine the specific ways in which individuals approach and engage with issues related to family work and care considerations, specifically food work. Understanding the contexts surrounding how decisions are made regarding this work is central to this research.

As family life is the setting my focus is on concepts concerned with relational practices associated with families. My emphasis is concerned with how family practices differ or may have similarities between women and men across the life course and through individual experiences. My focus is also on how familial work is 'done' and on how 'family display' may show how individuals engage in activities which identify as specific aspects of family life.

2. 9 Conclusion

The work of cooking in families as a legacy of an idealised role in the past is strongly associated with women and is variously considered a powerful skilled role or part of unpaid duties associated with gendered work. From primitive beginnings food and food work has also evolved and changed. In contemporary societies developments in food production have wrought changes in both the nature and supply of foods making available a vast variety of produce, outside seasonality. The global nature of food supply also shows increasing risks associated with contamination of food products with health implications, and food scares. Theories of social change in modernity present new possibilities for women, yet individualisation and equality did not occur as predicted. Rather than engagement in society on an equal footing to men through employment, women lag behind through their continuing gendered responsibility for caring roles in families. Decision making concerned with family responsibilities and work roles are contested from different perspectives signalling various levels of pressure on women endeavouring to fulfil different aspects of their lives, including food work. To gain knowledge and views from varied perspectives of how this role is negotiated, and enacted in families in contemporary society the next chapter outlines the methods used to do so.

Chapter Three

Research methodology

3.1 Introduction

Historically, the separation of work from home and domesticity hastened a shift of women's work to full-time responsibility for families. In a legacy from the past a set of obligations and idealised roles have inextricably linked women as mothers to the work of nourishing and sustaining family members through food. Today, women endeavouring to combine employment with obligations for family work, often face difficult decisions and or choices to fulfil their varied commitments. Focusing on cooking for others in a family setting, this study examines the practices through which individual women and men manage these conflicting demands in ways that both change and reproduce power relationships within families. Focusing on food work takes in all aspects, from planning, shopping, cooking and mealtimes and the specific attitudes and concerns expressed by respondents surrounding this work. While my primary interest was engaging with women, identified as mainly responsible for this work, I was also keen to include men to explore how this work may be evolving and changing today and the implications this may have for increased equality of gendered roles.

A robust methodology was required to capture the complex nature of this work. This involved forging a close engagement with those who do the work on a regular basis. Firstly, taking account of the changing roles of women today I wanted to explore how individuals came to take responsibility for cooking, by finding out what processes led them to assume this role. The second focus of my research concerned the work itself; how those responsible, reflect on and go about doing this work, what routines,

practices and perspectives they bring to it on a daily basis. The third focus garnered their reflections on cooking in relation to caring for health and wellbeing, and consumption practices, as part of wider economic policies and changes in global food marketing and supply and possible implications they may present for food safety or health risks.

In the context of a diversity of everyday practices, I have argued in previous chapters that cooking is more complex than other household work implicated in economic and social contexts and comprises a number of aspects; planning; preferences; eating rituals; health concerns and investment of time, energy and deeper connections to gendered identities and caring values. How it is worked out is varied, shaped by personal, formal and informal pathways across the lives of individuals.

I begin with two brief vignettes showing the contrasting lifestyles of two interviewees, highlighting their distinct and complex reflections and interests related to family and wider perceptions of life. The vignettes also show some of the varied ways in which individuals see their role in relation to food and feeding and more critically the wider decisions and choices in their lives.

Avril presents as a warm stylish woman who gave up work when her first child was born to stay at home and care for her family. She is now forty and has three children, a girl of ten, and two boys of thirteen and fourteen years of age. She grew up in an urban area. Her mother was a plain cook, but shared with her grandmother a keen interest in baking. Avril also expresses a flair for baking and generally takes a very keen interest in her family's diet. She works hard to give them healthy food within the bounds of having one salary to cater for all their requirements. She is frugal and economical but also enjoys cooking, which is not a chore for her. She and one of her children have dietary problems also, so she incorporates knowledge she has acquired from sessions with a health care dietician to make alternative healthy but appealing

foods. This aspect of feeding has become a central focus and takes up a considerable amount of her time.

Her hobby is interior design and she has used her skills to create a comfortable and tastefully decorated home. While expressing that she is 'lucky' to have been able to stay at home and care for her children she talks regretfully that she is not sure it was the best decision for her 'self' and would have like to work even in a part-time capacity. Her husband's busy work schedule makes this difficult, and she and the children spend most weekday mealtimes eating together, while weekends are the only time they have together as a family. With her children growing up she says that; 'now I feel it has come back to 'my time'. I have done a couple of courses and quite enjoyed them and got a lot out of them....so now they are getting to that good age it's great'.

Avril has always remained at home since her children were born and is only now beginning to see a life outside the home for herself. She expresses some regret for not having been in a position to have a career and is looking forward to a change where she will have more opportunities for herself in the future. In contrast, the second interviewee May has always worked outside the home until recently, when circumstances arose that made working full-time a difficult option for her and she decided to give up her career for the immediate future.

May is a reserved, quietly spoken woman. She is from a rural background. She was brought up as part of a big family. Her mother did all the cooking and their diet was plain, traditional food. She is in her mid thirties and worked for a private company since leaving college. Her husband is self employed and works long hours. May has only recently given up her job to care for her two young children of four and five years old and found the transition "traumatic, hectic, and very isolating" in the beginning. The decision she and her husband reached for her to stay at home was

largely due to the difficulty in combining full-time work with the demands of rearing small children. Issues came to a head when she needed to be absent from work due to the children's illnesses or to take time off for appointments concerning them. Inflexibility within her workplace schedules made it difficult to remain. She also expressed that she also wanted to be more involved in her children's lives at this stage. She is practical, expressing little interest in cooking but following a strict routine providing traditional, plain food of meat, vegetables, and potatoes for her family, Both she and her husband cook but as she is at home full-time, she generally cooks during the week and her husband cooks at weekends. Meals are at regular times, eaten at the kitchen table. She does not cater for different tastes and does not fuss if the children will not eat. She is economical with money as they are living on one salary and now knows the price of everything, whereas when she worked she did not. She shops around for groceries but always buys fresh meat in the nearby butchers shop. She expressed that it is particularly difficult for her, not being able to contribute financially to the family budget, but hopes in the future to return to work, at least part-time. For now she is treasurer of the local mother and toddler group and is involved in other local organisations also. For May being at home full-time is different, both positive and negative, "but sometimes a bit like Groundhog Day, seven days a week".

These interviewees present both different and similar perspectives on how they were raised, their progression through school and employment and their reflection on their life and roles within the household today. Their individual stories and concerns are articulated from their personal standpoint, bringing to it their unique memories and attitudes along with their social and cultural understandings of the world they live in.

From a gendered division of labour standpoint their different accounts range from traditional to contemporary in orientation. The factors that inform their ideas and actions are central to the questions addressed in this study.

Together with the other respondents who took part in this research project, their insights and reflections form the basis of my analysis of food provision practices in families using a qualitative approach. Later in this chapter I provide a detailed account of the research design incorporating four distinct methods that I used to collect and analyse the data for my research. The next section reviews sociological discussions of the qualitative approach used to carry out this research.

3.2 Methodological Framework: A Qualitative Approach

In order to address the research questions central to this project, I needed to gain insight into an aspect of gendered work that takes place in the private sphere, is part of nurturing others, yet that is largely absent from public policy or debate (Lynch , Baker, and Lyons, 2009). I argue that employing qualitative methods was crucial to gain depth of knowledge of this work. By adopting this strategy I aimed to carry out research that took place within the social world of individual social actors. This approach is concerned with how the social world is experienced, understood, and produced by people. My study was carried out using four sequential qualitative research methods;

1. Using Focus group interviews I gathered initial themes and areas of interest surrounding the topic to refine the orienting themes derived from the theoretical literature and inform the focus of subsequent research phases.
2. In-depth interviewing was the main method of data collection used. The interviews focused on how the work is assigned and carried out and the meaning, values and practices based around feeding work.

3. Subsequently, food diaries recorded the daily aspects of making the meal, recording who was present, and reflections and feedback on the process by the participants.
4. Finally, participation observation of food shopping enabled me to examine both the practical aspects of this work and also the reasoning and reflections individuals made about their choices.

Later in this chapter I provide a more detailed discussion of the rationale behind my use of these four distinct, sequential and nested methods.

By employing these four specific methods of data collection I am basing my work within a particular methodological framework of how knowledge about the world can be gained and interpreted. Qualitative research is concerned with meaning and social action. It is based in natural settings and is engaged with...’ *the complexity of social interactions expressed in daily life and the meanings that the participant’s... attribute to these interactions*’. It adopts an inductive approach through discovering patterns, themes and categories in the data (Patton, 2002) Findings are emergent rather than fixed and the approach is interpretative and reflexive (Marshall and Rossman, 2006:2, 3). In this way qualitative research is grounded in the social world of individuals and engaged with their interpretation of their lived experience (Bryman, 2001; Rossman and Rallis, 2003).

The work of cooking and feeding others in family settings is grounded in that everyday world and as such involves emotion work, combined with practical decision making and choices that may only be revealed through close engagement with those responsible for it. As this research is concerned with exploring the role of food provision as part of the lived experience of those who carry it out, understanding

personal interaction is essential. My research question traces women's role in food provision over time, linking how it has evolved and changed and specifically, how it is carried out as a practice and what factors impinge on or support it in a contemporary context. For the purposes of understanding practices, and the social construction of meaning, a qualitative approach was deemed the most appropriate. Understanding of the meanings individuals assign to specific beliefs, and the background to how those beliefs are formed, and/or maintained, or adapted, is central to this study. The research followed a sequential, nested design incorporating four distinct methods: focus groups; in-depth interviewing; participant food diaries; participant observation of shopping. These are described in more detail below.

According to Marshall and Rossman;

'For a study focusing on individuals' lived experience, the researcher could... argue that human actions cannot be understood unless the meaning that humans assign to them is understood. Because thoughts, feelings, beliefs, values, and assumptive worlds are involved, the researcher needs to understand the deeper perspectives that can be captured through face to face interaction,'

(Marshall and Rossman 2006:53).

The position adopted maintains that social reality is interpreted and constructed through social interaction and is continually revised in the light of change. (Kane and O'Reilly de-Brun, 2001:19). This is not to argue that all understanding and knowledge of the world is contingent. This thesis argues that there are underlying factors, historical, cultural, social, and economic, that inform people's beliefs and actions. These factors, combined with their relative positions as social agents within society, influence how they understand, relate to and are active in the social world. In order to investigate the role of cooking in the private realm of family settings my focus required close engagement with individuals who take responsibility for this

work on a regular basis. The next step involved making contact with women and men if possible in family settings where the bulk of this work takes place on a daily basis. In order to do so I looked at locations offering a variety of respondents from different age groups, class, and family formation.

3.3 Choice of research location

I chose a geographic location that could provide access to a sample of individuals willing to get involved and that was within a distance considered feasible to make contact with participants and conduct the study. The research was based in North Kildare with respondents drawn from the towns and hinterland of Leixlip, Maynooth, Kilcock and Celbridge. As part of a large commuter belt located outside Dublin County the four towns have grown rapidly as a result of economic development in Ireland during the boom years of the ‘Celtic Tiger’. Large residential estates have been built with various types of housing, both private and local authority, to accommodate rapid expansion of population in each town. Many residents commute to Dublin for work, while local industries, retail and service sectors, and two multinational groups Intel and Hewlett Packard located near Leixlip and Celbridge also provide employment opportunities. Total population figures for the four towns in 2006 reached almost 50,000 with Celbridge the largest at 17,262, Leixlip- 14,676, Kilcock- 4,100 and Maynooth -10,676 (this figure is subject to change due to transient population of students at NUI Maynooth and rapid expansion in the last four years for all towns) (CSO, 2006).

The towns are located close to the M4 giving easy access to surrounding counties, towns, and to Dublin city. Each town has a considerable historical significance dating back to earliest centuries. Older features are combined with modern developments and amenities. The towns of Celbridge and Maynooth are serviced by both large and

small supermarkets chains, Tesco and Dunnes while Leixlip and Kilcock have smaller local shops and a Super Value supermarket. In addition, the German supermarket chains of Lidl and Aldi have stores strategically located within easy reach to all. Social and cultural interests are catered for in each area by vibrant local sporting groups, leisure centres and drama groups. Educational needs are served by primary and post primary schools and a third level university the National University Maynooth within easy access to all areas.

The population of each town comprises both native born residents and an increasing number of people who have relocated from a variety of areas across the country and abroad. The towns are attractive locations for employment opportunities, yet also contain areas of deprivation where old industries and manufacturing shut down leaving people unemployed. This diversity offered the possibility of gaining access to a broad range of informants for my research.

3.4 Description of the sample

I wanted to contact as diverse a sample of respondents as possible in terms of age, gender, occupation and family organisation in order to garner a wide range of views in relation to this role today. In order to locate individuals willing to be involved I initially made enquiries through local groups in the Leixlip area. I contacted organisers to explain the nature of my research. I was then invited to visit group meetings to speak to those attending. The initial response was not encouraging. I distributed a letter with a sign up sheet attached explaining my research to those attending the groups and also to a variety of other organisations, including a local social and community centre, parish centres, mother and toddler groups, a senior citizens centre, a literacy and adult education centre, sports centres, and adult

education notice boards catering for people in the area (see Appendix One). The letter explained the nature of the research and request for individuals to participate. It guaranteed confidentiality and anonymity and asked those interested to give their contact details to arrange an interview. Response was slow with an initial reply from eleven individuals, two of whom later declined to participate.

As the letter indicated that I would like to interview people about the role of cooking in households I was not very surprised that so few signed up for my first appeal. As part of the private sphere, work to do with the household is associated with intimate social relations within families often making it difficult to persuade people to participate.

In a second attempt to reach more respondents I expanded my search to other locations in Maynooth and Celbridge and I attended two mother and toddler groups, an adult education group, and social information drop in centre to explain the nature of my research. Through consultation with organisers at the centres I was able to arrange three focus groups, two with parents in a mother and toddler group, and one in an adult education centre. This was invaluable as it provided forums for exploring initial ideas around the topic. The focus groups formed a preliminary stage of the research to garner as many views, attitudes, feelings, beliefs and experiences on the topic and also to explore and discuss different ideas arising from literature. I distributed a letter and sign up sheet for the next phase of one to one interviewing and was able to explain the process through direct engagement with those present in the groups. Personal one to one contact and discussion improved the response rate and nineteen people provided contact details agreeing to an interview. Of these five later declined for personal and work related reasons. The remaining fourteen people agreed to participate in the study. Consultation with a voluntary body (St. Vincent DePaul),

involved in a role of helping those with social and financial difficulties, yielded three additional individuals who agreed to be interviewed.

In total my initial sample obtained through letter contact, focus groups, and through the St. Vincent de Paul, was thirty three people. Of these seven later withdrew for a variety of personal reasons. The remaining twelve people supplemented this number through a snowball sample initiated from contacts with other individuals.

As researchers using qualitative methods are often interested in accessing individuals with common issues snowball sampling is useful as the process of this form of sampling; *'involves building a sample through referrals...by identifying someone from your population who is willing to be in your study...you then ask them to identify others who meet the study criteria,'* (O'Leary, 2004: 110).

It proved difficult to include men as interviewees, despite the fact that some locations I visited had both male and female participants. I identified one man who agreed to participate through a parish run mother and toddler group. However, as I wanted as varied a sample as possible I explored the possibility of recruiting additional men through my contacts in the community, and as a result I was referred a second man who agreed to take part. A third male interviewee was referred through his wife, also a participant. Issues relating to the validity and representativeness of this sampling method will be addressed later in the chapter.

In total I interviewed fourteen people living in Leixlip, twelve in Celbridge, eight in Maynooth, and four in Kilcock, a total of thirty eight people. Of the sample there were thirty five women, and three men. Five of the respondents are not Irish; three

grew up in countries in Europe, one in South Africa and one in New Zealand. Their backgrounds are a mixture of urban and rural and they are from varied, working, and middle class socio-economic groups (see Table 3.1 for a summary and Appendix One for a complete list). Interviews were carried out between October 2007 and September 2008.

Apart from five interviews which took place in external locations convenient for the interviewees, all other interviews took place in the respondent's home. Six interviews were conducted in the sitting-room, but the majority of the sessions took place in the kitchen, historically a central hub of women's work (see McCarthy, 2011:31).

Locating the interview in the kitchen provided an additional opportunity to observe the space and the interviewees' attitudes and level of engagement with their surroundings; it was a more relaxed space than formal sitting rooms or locations outside the family home. The majority of interviews lasted from one to one a half hours, with a few being shorter due to other demands on the participant's time. Engagement in general conversation beforehand put interviewees at ease and all were comfortable to have the session taped.

Table 3.1. Sample Characteristics: Marital Status and Children by Age

Age	n	Gender		Marital Status			Children Living at Home		
		M	F	Single	Married	Separated or Divorced	Any less than 12 Years	Any 12 to 17 Years	Any 18 Years or Older
30-39	24	3	21	2	19	3	20	0	1
40-49	10	0	10	0	8	2	7	5	3
50+	4	0	4	0	3*	1	0	0	4
Total	38	3	35	2	30	6	27	5	8

* Includes one widow

Table 3.1 provides a summary of the sample by gender, age, marital status and dependent children living at home. It shows that the interviewees spanned different life stages with the majority aged 30-39 years. Most participants in this age group had young children living at home. The median number of children in the youngest age category was two. Older participants had greater numbers of children on average, with a median of three for those aged 40-49 years, and 3.5 for those aged fifty years or more. All four participants in this oldest group had at least one adult child living at home. Three participants were childless. Thirty of the thirty-eight participants were married (or, in one case, widowed), but the sample also included single, and divorced or separated respondents.

Table 3.2. Sample Characteristics: Employment and Social Class by Age

Age	N	Sex		Employment Status			Social Class	
		M	F	Full-time	Part-time	Homemaker *	Working Class	Middle Class
30-39	24	3	21	12	2	9	4	20
40-49	10	0	10	2	1	7	2	8
50+	4	0	4	1	0	3	2	2
Total	38	3	35	15	3	20	8	30

* Includes six students

Table 3.2 provides an overview of the sample by employment status and social class. It shows that half of those in the youngest aged category were in full-time employment. Table A.3.1 in Appendix One shows that two within this age group engage in occasional paid work, one in product sales and the other as an artist, and they have young children. Six are third level students in addition to working in the home. Two of the interviewees are employed on part-time work contracts, one as a cook and the other as a truck driver.

Table 3.2 also provides details of class background which may have a bearing on both opportunities in the past and present and also how participants perceive their responsibilities and practices in relation to food work. Social class was derived using the International Standard Clarification of Occupations (ISCO) to establish the economic and social status of participants in this study. For those in employment, their social class identity was based on their own occupation. Amongst those who were partnered and working full-time in the home, social class was based on their husband's occupation. In the case of two women parenting alone, my indicator of social class is based on information provided about their family of origin. As the table shows, the sample is predominantly middle class, consistent with the study area in which the research was carried out. A complete list of participant details, including pseudonyms, may be found in Appendix 1 (Table A.3.1 and A. 3.2). Throughout the thesis, each participant is identified by their pseudonym and number in Table A.3.1, for easy reference.

In the following section the four methods of data collection I used to carry out this research are outlined, along with my reasons for the use of each, and practical application of each method. How each method was conducted building the research stage by stage is explored along with profiles of interviewees, and sampling techniques later in the chapter.

3.5 Methods of research

Through a combination of historical perspectives, social theory, and research data I am seeking to provide a detailed description and explanation of contemporary gendered food practices in the context of social change. To capture the complexity of this work (Purcell, 1996) a mainly qualitative approach offered the most meaningful

means of capturing the reality of this work and highlighting the issues and insights to inform theory and sociological debate. In a nested, sequential four stage process I chose to combine different methods of data collection to examine in-depth the complexities of this work.

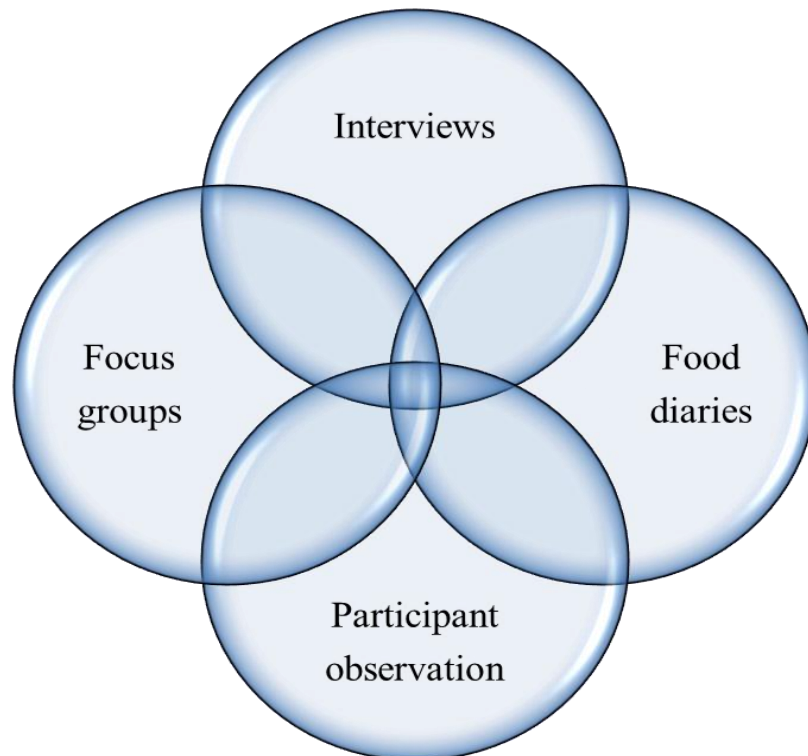
- Focus groups
- In depth interviews
- Self administered 7 day food diaries
- Participant observation

Because I am examining practices in this study I adopted varied qualitative methodologies in order to capture what people do rather than relying only on what they *think* about what they do, or what they would like to do. Using this sequential approach facilitated building the research, stage by stage, incorporating new insights and patterns as I engaged in each phase.

Choosing to use a variety of methods in this way enlarges different aspects of phenomena being studied and also creates depth within findings to cross check and validate results (Flick, 2009). Employing a variety of research techniques also yields information that is distinct to each method (Bryman, 2001). In addition, as Figure 1 (adapted from Kane and O'Reilly de Brun (2001) shows, each method can complement and support the others. The outer areas represent a specific research technique and how each overlap with each other in the central areas. Overlap areas offer a means of checking main findings through use of secondary means to validate and reinforce overall results (Bryman, 2001: 447; Kane and O'Reilly de Brun 2001: 109). I argue that employing a number of research strategies and different theoretical perspectives can increase the depth of understanding an investigation can produce. In

this way multiple methods offers a means of going beyond the quantitative aspects of peoples' lives to explore how they organise and structure their social world and make sense of themselves and others (Berg, 2009: 8).

Figure 3.1: Interconnected research methods



(Adapted from Kane and O'Reilly de Brun, 2001:109)

The next section presents the four fieldwork stages I followed to conduct the research.

3.5.1 Stage One: Focus groups

Qualitative research is focused on how groups and individuals understand the social world and construct meaning through their different experiences. Focus groups formed the first stage in the research process to garner initial ideas around the area of family cooking. Firstly, I piloted a number of topic areas with a small group of people known to me, to check the clarity and relevance of themes, and practice conducting a

group session along with checking and that recording devices were in working order. I then arranged three focus groups in consultation with contacts in the local area. The first group took place in a room used by a mother and toddler group. It was pre-arranged with the pre-school playgroup leader. Through my failure to ask her to limit the number of people to five or six, too many turned up. A group of twelve assembled, and as such a large group were present it was unsuitable for conducting a tailored discussion (Patton, 2002: 386). Instead I used it as an opportunity for a general exploration of ideas and thoughts about caring work in the household and about cooking for families. It was a chance for the group to air opinions and concerns about the topic and it provided a means of engaging with a range of individuals, and use skills to direct the discussion, offering an opportunity to include everyone to get a broad spread of ideas. Many themes and ideas were expressed, including, trying to balance home and working lives, the diet of children, cooking for families, family roles, supermarket shopping, finance, pressure 'to get it right', decision making and choices. In this initial context, where the majority of the group consisted of young mothers, an abundance of diverse of feelings, ideas, and reflections were voiced to form rich areas of discussion but the task of facilitating everyone an opportunity to speak was challenging. Groups used in this way can help to generate hypotheses at the beginning of a study. They also prove useful to develop questions or concepts and guides for the interview process and for clarifying issues and ideas at the start of a research process (Lankshear, 1993; Hoppe et al, 1995; Powell and Single, 1996; Silverman, 2000; 2010).

Taking account of the themes emerging from the first session, I conducted two subsequent focus groups in different locations, with smaller numbers, six people in

the second and four in the third, leading a more detailed focus on issues around the topic. The second group were from a mixed age range of older and younger women, whereas in the last session all the participants were older mothers with grown up families. The process allowed me to gain understanding of what priorities and concerns were most important from the participants' point of view, across the life cycle, and how they relate to theories and scholarship in this area. As a starting point for my study focus groups were invaluable as they generated discussion, showing the varied differences and similarities that people expressed in relation to the topics discussed (Flick, 2009: 204). Analysis of the groups' transcripts along with theories and findings arising from past studies formed an orienting framework for my primary method of in-depth interviewing. From the themes emerging I developed an interview guide that followed a life history format, where cooking and family meals formed a nucleus of discussion around which the larger issues were framed.

They are as follows:

- Historical experience-food provision roles in family of origin/childhood
- Influences and orientation related to cooking skills
- Gender divisions of food work in the present household-role negotiation and/or allocation over time
- Work roles and family roles balances and pressures
- Feelings/attitudes towards cooking for family
- Meaning and values associated with cooking and family work
- Routine work involved with cooking for others
- Autonomy and decision making within gendered roles
- Health and diet
- Health and nutrition advice and concerns

- Impact of globalisation on food and diet
- Growth in use of convenience foods
- Financial concerns
- Pressure and gendered work

3.5.2 Stage Two: In-depth interviewing

In depth interviewing formed the primary method used in my study. I began this phase after conducting pilot interviews with two people known to me to check both the use of a digital recorder and process of carrying out one to one interviews, and how the interviews captured the themes I wished to explore. After discussing and checking nuances around warm up questions to lead into the interviews, format and style, the sequence and progression through the process, I made some adjustments in the interview format. Interviews were conducted in a semi-structured format, through the use of pre-arranged themes. Themes explored followed a life course progression specifically focused on themes surrounding family food and cooking (see Appendix 2). Using this interviewing method allowed for interviewees to respond in their own way while also keeping a focus on the overall context, for comparison with findings from other methods used.

I endeavoured to keep the sessions fluid by using an open conversational style and allowing the participant to relate in their own way. Being flexible in approach was needed to allow new avenues of interest to emerge as interviews progressed (Kane and O'Reilly- de Brun, 2001:114). Building rapport was also vital at this stage to form a foundation of trust and co-operation for a productive and satisfying working relationship (Bailey, 2007:75 and Berg, 2009: 130). I worked to create an open and friendly relationship with those I interviewed. Using qualitative interviewing in this

manner offered the opportunity to engage in the life world of interviewees and explore how they uniquely experience and negotiate everyday activities within a household setting. Gaining understanding from a life course perspective is significant to uncover knowledge of key life changes and decision making over time and also elements that may hinder that possibility. According to Elder (1974) a life course perspective refers to a sequence of defined events and roles that individuals enact over time, that do not necessarily proceed in a particular sequence but constitute a major part of a person's experiences over time. This approach has four key elements: location in time and space; inked lives and social relations; human agency; and timing, integrating historical, social, and individual activities (Elder, 1974::22, 25). Taking in a broad view this approach offers a means of gaining knowledge of how different elements over the life course impact on and inform decision making practices for individuals regarding significant life choices and responsibilities. Through the use of qualitative interviewing techniques I was able to gain rich data and knowledge of individuals' experiences and reflections (O' Leary, 2004: 104).

All interviews apart from five, took place in the participants' family home. The remaining five were conducted in local quiet hotels, or in two cases in the participant's workplace, for their convenience. Significantly, most of the interviews were conducted in the kitchen of participants' homes, the site of the work being discussed. After an initial conversation about general matters to create a relaxed atmosphere I explained the process of the interview, and got written consent to proceed and to use a digital recorder. By going through these procedures the atmosphere shifted to a more formal footing. I also established an emphasis on the

importance I placed on gaining their individual perspective on topics raised (Marshall and Rossman, 2006).

A brief life history section formed the first part of the interview; grounding the focus within the participant's own life and social setting. It also presented a relaxed lead in to the interview for the respondent, while at the same time providing useful background information about family of origin and food practices in their childhood. It was also beneficial for establishing any key influences on the interviewee's food practices and preferences in adult life. My focus in the interviews was to uncover at what stage over the life course the role of cooking was initiated and how this came about. Was it part of a gendered expectation, seen as an inevitable in the context of family life, a division of labour that they followed, as a result of a choice, or a decision? It was also concerned with what value individuals put on family food work, how it was carried out and how global food marketing and supply impact on this work.

The majority of the interviews were one to one and a half hours in length. A few were shorter due to time constraints for interviewees. The atmosphere was generally relaxed. While it was clear in a small number of the sessions that those interviewed wanted to impress me with their proficiency at cooking for their families (e.g. laying out the ingredients for dinner) or having everything prepared for the main meal, this was the exception. As they eased into the interview most of the participants' understood that I was not there to judge their cooking skills, but to explore their experiences, attitudes, feelings, and perspectives on this work within the wider context of their lives.

As a mature woman I was also keenly aware that my appearance could convey a sense of knowledge and expertise around the area of cooking and food, particularly for younger women. I strove for honesty when interviewing and presented myself exactly as I am, a woman who learned over the years to cook and was the main food provider for many years in my own family. I did not hide the fact that I am interested in food and cooking, and contemporary food practices and how they may intersect with changes in lifestyle choices for those who do this work today. My willingness to be open without dwelling on, or offering personal beliefs, attitudes, or opinions, proved to be a positive means of getting individuals to open up about their own reflections and concerns, providing insights into their lives related to the work of food provision and decision making for their family.

As I continued to interview and transcribe the results I took note of new areas arising in discussions and how they could be understood within the context of different theoretical frameworks, pertinent to my work. The inclusion of new insights offered by culturally diverse interviewees, along with alternative perspectives based on social class differences expanded the scope of my sample, adding richness and depth to issues explored. In addition, because my sample included interviewees from across different age groups and from a diverse range of backgrounds and family forms I worked to expand involvement from a diverse range of individuals across stages of the life course. I established a good rapport with many of the interviewees which facilitated an agreement from ten women to complete a food diary, and four others to take part in participation observation of a routine grocery shopping trip.

3.5.3 Stage Three: 7 Day food diary

In tandem with carrying out interviews I secured agreement from ten interviewees (Participants numbers 1, 4, 6, 7, 8, 11, 12, 13, 22, and 26) to complete a 7 day food diary which formed a third part of my methodology (see Table A.3.1). All of the participants who agreed to take part in this phase of the study had young children living at home, and with one exception, all were married. With two exceptions, all were either full-time homemakers, Jill (7) work's part-time and Sinead (13) works full-time but was on maternity leave when she participated in my research. I chose this technique to explore the more minute process of everyday cooking, from organising, timing, choices, and issues arising daily. A personal reflection section offered participants the opportunity to write their thoughts related to this work each day. My intention was to get a sense of the time and effort taken to cook a daily meal, the planning involved and also what thoughts, feelings, meaning, value, or concerns it brought up for those who take responsibility for it on a daily basis. It proved beneficial in uncovering first hand insight into the levels of care taken around family meals, the problems associated with juggling individual choices within daily meals, and the level of interaction and attention to detail within this aspect of caring labour. I also wanted to see how this would relate to themes emerging during the interviews, and to get a sense of the commitment feeding work could entail over a weekly period. Contrasts and similarities provided rich material for analysis.

Before participants undertook filling out a diary I arranged to meet with each individual to explain what was required, to go through the guidelines for diary completion, and to gain formal consent for this phase. To use diaries as a method involves giving clear instructions for filling them in, along with maintaining regular contact to anticipate any problems that may arise during the period of completion (Alaszewshi, 2006:71; Rieman, 1993: 325).

In this research a food diary was used as a secondary method. It comprised of two sections for each day and focused on the main meal only (See Appendix 2). The first section recorded both details of meal planning, time allotted, and possible choices catered for. The second part contained a self-reflective section in which respondents were asked to write about their thoughts, feelings and general comments about each day's meal. In this way the food diary was used as a validation to the main method of interviewing and also to provide a 'rich source of information on participants' behaviour, contradictions, and experience in relation to family food work on a daily basis (Corti, 1993:1).

The diaries provided a means of comparing findings from interviews forging a deeper understanding of issues associated with daily family food provision.

I kept in contact by phone with each participant during the week assigned for filling out the diary to discuss any problems they may have encountered and to encourage them in completion of the task. This worked well and they all succeeded in almost full completion over a weekly period. Ten diaries were completed, and through meeting before and after the process an understanding of the daily work of cooking was enriched, and I forged deeper links with the respondents. It also led to a closer contact within the private world of the participants and to more in-depth discussion and feedback about this work in the context of their lives. I took notes on the process and these along with the diaries form part of my overall analysis.

3.5.4 Stage Four: Participant Observation

Participant observation of a routine shopping trip formed the final stage of data collection. As an aspect of ethnographic approaches to research, participant observation is grounded in a commitment to gaining 'first hand' experience in

particular social or cultural settings (Atkinson, 2001: 4). According to Flick (2009) participant observation has two aspects, firstly the researcher increasingly becomes a participant within the area of interest and secondly observation moves through a process concentrated on aspects essential to the research in question (Flick, 2009: 226). I was keen to gain access to various aspects of the work associated with food, and food shopping as part of consumption encompassed a number of areas I wished to explore.

Shopping for food is a significant part of the work of food provision. As it is connected to the commercial end of global production of food and supply, this aspect of food work reveals how individuals perceive food and make decisions and choices based on their particular circumstances and beliefs. This method was used to observe how individuals literally go about the work of providing food and how this process ties in with the work of cooking and food provision in families. As part of this thesis I took a keen general interest in observing how people shop, what they buy, and what trends and advertising may influence particular purchases. I explored differing types of shopping from small shops right through large supermarkets. I observed men, and women shopping alone, or with children, and different age groups from young to older people. By routine observation I gained a sense of the variety of ways people go about this task which proved useful when I set about conducting formal observation of a routine shopping excursion

The process led me to consider how I was going to use this method with participants. As field work can bring up a myriad of aspects I was concerned with how and what I could observe and what aspects were most relevant to this work. Taking into account

that the choice of setting gives clarity to what aspects of observation are being observed based on the research focus, I took an approach that was practical and feasible based on a routine shopping trip (Atkinson, et al, 2001:6). As food shopping is implicated in gendered work of caring and nourishing through food this was one aspect of interest. It also involves, making choices and considerations for family members along with financial, nutritional, and possible ideological stances associated with food, all of which considerations formed aspects of interest for my work.

Through my contacts I secured a small number of participants from among the interviewees. Initially six people were willing to be involved in this stage but due to problems in organising the trips four were finally carried out. Participants 6, 11, 21 and 22 all agreed to take part in participant observation of a weekly food shopping trip. As Table A.3.1 shows, two were full-time homemakers and two were working in occasional part-time occupations. All four participants in this phase were married with young children living at home. Three of them had also kept a food diary providing a depth of invaluable data adding strength and robustness to the methodology.

According to Becker participant observation is used to gather data by participating in the daily life of the individual or group being studied and it may be used to better understand a group or individual. It can also be used as a theoretical method in its own right or as additional means to validate or test *a priori* hypotheses (Becker, 1958: 652). In my work participant observation formed an additional method to explore ethnographically how individuals engage in this aspect of food provision and the different meanings this may portray.

I arranged to meet two of the participants at the supermarket chosen for a routine shopping session. I travelled together with the other two participants to the store. As pre-arranged each of them went about this task in their usual manner. I explained that I would accompany them and got their agreement to take field notes as we went around the store. All of them were anxious to chat and comment as we made our way along the aisles and I found that each of them wanted to explain their shopping method, choices made, and details of specific purchases. As shopping is generally a social act I engaged in conversation during the shopping trips. My field notes consisted of key word observations which I later expanded into field notes.

Each participant displayed different patterns when shopping. None used the same supermarket but they tended to use different stores to buy specific items, or when they were doing a larger or smaller shop. Two of the trips were for a full weekly shopping and the other two to get a smaller amount of items. Three of the participants had a list which they followed carefully, progressing in an orderly manner around the stores yet voicing their disapproval of the layout and awareness that it was set up to make them buy more. The fourth participant was rushed and only wanted a limited number of items because they were leaving on holiday in a few days. This shop was random, containing extra treats and favoured foods for the family reflecting a 'holiday mood' of relaxation and departure from routine.

Shopping is an integral part of the everyday work of feeding others. It involves thinking about meal planning, choices and prices. Shopping is also an act linked to social relations especially those of care and love for others (Millar, 1998). Themes of concern for the choices of family members, thrift, and devotion, were displayed

during the trips, but also levels of frustration with stores layout and frequent re-arrangement of products on display. Each of the participants spoke freely about different items and presented reasons for purchases that indicated that those they shopped for were central to their rationale of choices. For most this was presented as healthy choices of ingredients but also included, favourites, and treats, including for themselves.

A comprehensive world view of shopping and consumption beyond everyday understanding was discussed and displayed by some participants. For one it was seeking out and purchasing organic meat when on special offer because she explained *'I will not subject my child to hormone treated meat'* (Laura, 22), for another it was only buying local meat and vegetables with *'no food miles'* (Sonia, 6). Their views led them to select specific products and brands consistent with their beliefs. When taken in the context of the meanings they had professed in interviews, and food diaries, the discussion also offered a means of validation and in some cases, contradicting them. For example Beth (11) who spoke of having a strict approach to shopping to a budget for a family of six, following her list carefully, she also included treats, sweets and products she knew her children would like a departure from a healthy diet she spoke of in her interview. When finished we discussed the shopping trip and comments or ideas that arose about it. I recorded our meetings with their permission. The observations and discussion are included as part of the overall analysis.

3.6 Data Analysis

Data analysis took place throughout each of the phases of research. Transcription of discussion areas in the focus groups phase presented themes of significance for inclusion in the interview schedules. On an on-going basis as I interviewed I carried

out a full transcription of each interview. It was a slow and time consuming process but allowed for close analysis of themes emerging as I continued to interview. This also highlighted linkages between emerging themes and I took note of and recorded these areas across all interviews under different categories, also taking note of unusual themes.

Transcription also provided an opportunity to become familiar with each interview and to note interesting, or alternative ideas emerging. I compiled a brief profile sheet to attach to each interview, to facilitate recall and key ideas from each. I organised the thematic categories under different headings for analysis. I then compiled files of emerging themes associated with food work and linked them with respondents' and also theoretical themes from my research strategy. Close reading of food diaries provided additional themes and reflections that validated and in some instances showed alternative findings to the other methods. Field notes and recordings of food shopping observations presented both alternative and consistent observations when triangulated with other data providing a detailed and informed analysis and assessment of the validity of my findings. In this way the data generated in each method informs the others both confirming and in some cases contradicting views offered in other phases they participated in.

3.7 Validity

The issue of validity is a concern in all strands of research. My choice to use multiple methods I argue provides depth and diversity to an exploration of work that is privatised and often unseen. As Bryman (2001: 22) points out, both qualitative and quantitative studies, while employing different means to research phenomena, involve forming questions along with making decisions, choices and judgements which influence how the research is conducted, interpreted and presented. Increasingly, a

diverse range of approaches are being used to research phenomena. According to May, the '*actual practice of science*' within the social sciences shows that there are many different perspectives and explanations that challenge the idea that a unity of method is necessarily a positive thing (May, 2002: 8). The perception that there is one particular version of truth or reality that can be captured in a specific scientific manner is open to question. Rather, as O'Leary points out, it can be argued that there are multiple realities that may all be considered valid and true, provided they are reflexivity and rigorously carried out (O'Leary, 2004:61). As this research is concerned with exploring the role of food provision in a contemporary context it required approaching this role from different perspectives to uncover the varied manner in which this work is assigned and carried out. By employing multiple methods in a triangulated manner analysis of findings were checked to validate results and reveal any discrepancies in accounts leading to robust and transparent findings overall. As Phoenix and Brannen, (2014) point out no one method can produce objective knowledge, instead the use of different methods can reveal knowledge of routine practices that take place in everyday life (Phoenix and Brannen, 2014:24).

3.8 Limitations of study

This study is an exploration into the work of feeding in families and how it is worked out through the processes by which gender is 'done' in everyday life. Food work as part of a daily routine in families and central to nourishing others is used as a means of uncovering, through daily practices, how values and meaning are constructed through idealised assumptions inherited from the past, but also possessing implications for the present and future through changing patterns of food use within a global food markets. By focusing on food work with a sample of thirty five women along with the perspectives of a small number of three male contributions the findings

– as with all qualitative research - are not representative of a large scale population (May, 2011: 98).

A limitation of the sample is also reflected in a greater number of middle class respondents and fewer perspectives from working class participants creating an imbalance of views (Table 3.2). Through the use of snowball sampling which contains an element of self selection there may also be a bias towards those who chose to become involved out of personal interest. The small number of male participants might also be considered a significant limitation. However, their contribution as atypical within domestic food provision can shed light wider societal expectations of what is normal in relation to food practices.

Despite these limitations this research does provide key original insights into how people negotiate gender roles, nurture through food, and make and sustain family relationships through their everyday food practices. It also reveals the varied way food work is carried out within contexts of continuity and change in relation to gendered work and consumption practices and as such provides insights that can be expanded on in future research. This study is an attempt to convey through the use of an in-depth approach the complex and fraught nature of food provision today and possible implications for the future if at a policy level there is a failure to put in place support for gender equality and flexibility at employment level to sustain families (Williams, 2004). Policies of regulation that tackle issues related to food quality are also required to address rising levels of obesity that are pertinent to food work today.

3.9 Conclusion

This chapter set out the methods used to examine the work of cooking in family settings. Through the use of four distinct methods, each building the research stage by stage, I explore through the life worlds of women and a small number of men the significance of this work within families. In the remaining chapters the complex reality of how, and in what circumstances, feeding work is variously enacted through inherited values and gendered norms is revealed, along with different influences across the life course. I examine through the varied perspectives of participants how the work of feeding is undertaken, highlighting the implications of contemporary change, food policies, and concerns for the future of food work and consumption practices.

Chapter Four:

Who is feeding the family?

Division of labour and food work

4.1 Introduction

The role of feeding in families takes place within a larger context of a gendered division of labour, operating both within and outside families. In this chapter and in chapter five I explore this aspect of gendered work, focusing on the factors shaping how the role is identified with and negotiated across the life course within a context where powerful conventions related to gendered roles remain. I examine how the role is enacted within gendered contexts and decision making surrounding it. As food work is also affected by wider cultural, economic, or social circumstances, how it is understood in relation to changes in these areas is relevant. This chapter is concerned with how individuals perceive the role from within their own experience and how this relates to their reflexive decision making strategies surrounding it.

Chapter one showed how women's responsibility for feeding work in families as part of gendered roles in the domestic sphere evolved over time. Chapter two examined theoretical perspectives related to food work and changes in modernity, highlighting that this work remains part of unequal gendered practices in families highlighting significant constraints for women. Feminists argue that gender is associated with and affected by different relationships to power. Understanding how inequality in a gendered division of labour is perpetuated involves examining the concept of power and how it relates to gender.

4.2 Power and gender

How the concept of power is exercised in relation to gender is important when examining gendered work. As we see in chapter two feminists argue that gender is associated with different relationships to power. Social, cultural and economic ideologies have all impacted on and shaped relative levels of access to power men or women could possess. Within patriarchal systems social life divided into separate public and private spheres where work roles were gendered. A greater source of power was associated with the public sphere and the concerns of men, whereas women's work in the private sphere constrained access to power for women. Walby (2011) argues that gendered access to power varies within private and public settings; *'in the domestic gender regimes the processes of power are predominantly exclusionary; they exclude women from locations of power and influence. In the public gender regime, they are more often segregated ...through placement in positions of lesser influence and power'* (Walby, 2011: 105).

Bradley (2007) sees gender linked to relations of power in both public and private spheres, not accepting the view that women can be seen as passive victims with no access to power. Examining power relations from feminist standpoints, which saw women dominated by patriarchal power on the part of the state, and in the private domain by men, she concludes that these approaches fail to see women as other than passive victims. Looking at other theories of power, she draws on the work of Foucault who believed that power was not centrally controlled by any agency or group, but was inextricably part of all social strata. Bradley points out how feminists looking at key aspects of Foucault's (1980) theory of the exercise of power, used in a repressive manner by disciplinary regimes, may also be shown as enabling, when freely chosen, as in exercise and dietary regimes.(Sawicki, 1991). Accepting that Foucault's theories are useful in showing how everyone is enmeshed in webs of

power, Bradley argues that his ideas fails to offer an insight into gendered power relations, in understanding who holds power and in whose interest is it exercised (Bradley, 2007: 188).

Two other theoretical approaches to power relations, that of Bourdieu, (1984) and Giddens, (1991) are considered as ways of understanding gendered access to power. Bourdieu's work focuses on concepts of 'capital' to look at class based access to levels of success, dominance, and power by using various forms. Social capital works through social contacts and networks to access privilege; cultural capital to use of knowledge, educational, and cultural, to gain success and prestige. Giddens approach on relations to power is preferred, and considered more open-ended and applicable to various social levels. It can be applied in terms of rules and resources that can be used by individuals to attain their goals as social agents, as a resource based approach to power, (Bradley, 2007: 189). For O'Connor (1998) women as mothers may through emotional labour possess a level of power, through persuasion or nurturance.

However, this power can also be seen as controlling and vicarious depending on their experience of supports and autonomy (O'Connor, 1998: 139-140).

Different theories offer a means of understanding how individuals may be variously empowered to freely make choices, enact personal autonomy through social/cultural capital, or active engagement with systems as social agents. However, when linking these ideas to empowerment in roles associated with caring account must be taken of the relative status of this work as outlined by Lynch et al, (2009).

4.2.1 Caring work: power and inequality

Caring work in general is accorded an unequal status in the public domain with little public validation or support, despite its essential contribution to society (Lynch et al, 2009:12). How this work and the individuals who carry it out are viewed is relevant

to level of importance it receives. Lynch, Baker and Lyons (2009) present a cogent argument on the influence of neo liberal thinking on Western political economies, where caring work has been consigned to the private realm and largely absent from policy debates. Significantly, they found that carers feel there is little respect for or value put on caring labour.

The devaluation of care work can be attributed to a number of factors. Firstly, this work was seen in the past as the work of women, unequal and unseen, as the supporting role to the work of men. As women increasingly combine paid work and caring there is a tension between care work and modern capitalism where a conflict between paid work and unpaid care work arises for women struggling to combine both. As Lynch et al, point out, caring work acts in a positive way to support social, economic, political and cultural systems by enabling others to engage in these systems. In turn the system acts back by either enabling or constraining this work, through sustaining it, or alternatively neglecting it by a lack of supports or recognition (Lynch, Baker and Lyons, 2009:219).

When the concept of caring work is applied to existing social systems, Baker et al, (2004) show how roles within economic, cultural, political, and affective (love and care) systems are structured and connected. They argue that women who are predominantly involved in the role of care providers are often excluded, or have limited access or engagement in the other systems, that are centrally involved in powerful decision making roles. This absence points to inequitable opportunities to exercise power and autonomy by individuals carrying out caring roles (Baker et al 2004: 6).

Different perspectives of power argue that individuals can be empowered through the exercise of power or through cultural capital or social agency. How and in what way

the exercise of power may relate to food provision in households is explored within this chapter

To place the analysis within this chapter in context, I first provide an overview of the evidence on gendered roles and work, both paid and unpaid, from contemporary large scale international research. Apart from one study of family meals, large scale research rarely makes specific reference to the work of cooking for others.

Nevertheless, evidence on general trends in domestic care work from countries with different historic, cultural, social, and economic affiliations helps to provide an overall context for my analysis.

4.3 Gendered division of labour in families and paid work

In Ireland according to the *Time Use in Ireland Survey Report 2005*, women spend over twice as much time on caring and household work than men (McGinnity et al, 2005:12). The findings when compared to other European countries show that certain groups in the population face a time-squeeze, particularly people who are employed, or those caring for young children (Eurostat, 2004). The research shows that women, in particular, require policies to facilitate work-life balance to lessen the high workload involved in trying to combine paid work with caring (McGinnity and Russell, 2007: 350).

However, according to Gershuny et al (2005), significant levels of change in gendered work are occurring slowly over time due to ‘lagged adaption ‘on the part of men.

Their longitudinal study shows a partial reduction in women’s domestic labour when women resume employment together with some increase in men’s overall

contribution, which is slower, and 'less reliable' (Gershuny, Bittman and Brice, 2005: 664).

A recent cross-national study carried out by Kan, Sullivan and Gershuny (2011), of different policy clusters in sixteen countries (not including Ireland), on trends of gender convergence in domestic work over the past forty years, concurs with findings from earlier studies on the slow rate of change. The gender gap is narrowing, albeit slowly, in routine domestic work. Two specific factors are shown to prolong a move towards a more equal sharing. Firstly, a continuing gendered segregation of domestic tasks defined as 'masculine' or 'feminine' points to the ongoing significance of gender ideologies and the interactional aspects of gender ('doing gender') in the performance of domestic work. Yet research in the past indicates that where sex role attitudes and behaviour are altered through engagement by men and boys in household work this has a positive effect on gender sex roles (Fine-Davis, 1983:128). Significantly however, gendered work schedules also reinforce traditional divisions of labour, particularly in housework.

Secondly, institutional barriers to promoting equal sharing of domestic work are evident in the manner in which policies tend to reinforce existing gender ideologies. Trends vary between different policy clusters with Nordic countries showing a greater drive towards social equality. Kan et al. (2011: 249) argue that promoting change across policy clusters involves; *'influencing change in the gender ideologies underpinning the different policy clusters...and is completely interlinked with the development of specific public and social policies aimed at promoting greater gender equality'*.

Other studies reveal the complex nature of gendered patterns and aspirations related to equal sharing of domestic work. Aboim (2010) examined cross-national cultural aspects of gender and the division of labour in contemporary Europe (not including Ireland) and the way individuals living in different countries value an equal sharing role as ideal. In a comparison of fifteen of the countries included in the *Family and Gender Roles* module of the International Social Survey Programme 2002 three attitudinal patterns were identified: *unequal sharing* within a male breadwinner model, *familistic unequal* showing a gendered segregated pattern and *dual earner/dual carer* model that was favoured by 40 percent of respondents. Despite being the favoured model, this third pattern was unequally distributed across different countries (Aboim, 2010:190). The study showed that the historical pathways giving rise to distinctive gendered cultures, when combined with welfare and social policies, strongly affected outcomes for equality in household roles. When applied to attitudes related to the work of caring in a contemporary context however, perceptions and realities concerning gender roles, equality, and social change are far from clear cut.

Work by O'Connor, Smithson, das Dores Guerreiro (2002), in a European study including (Ireland, United Kingdom, Norway, Sweden and Portugal) focused on young people's understanding of gender roles and choices in relation to work and family life. They found (particularly in Portugal and Ireland) that while participants believed that questions of 'equality' were no longer an issue, traditional gendered ideologies persisted in relation to the division of labour in the home, and that there were tensions and contradictions in relation to issues of equality. Irish and Portuguese women respondents also expressed gendered difficulties in relation to paid

employment and issues of equality. The authors pointed out that contradictions in young people's views may be understood by the historical period in which they have been brought up ... *'where young people start from a position of implicitly accepting a discourse of gender equality' yet lack understanding 'of structural and cultural inequalities and subtle contradictions beneath such realities and ideologies of choice in the context of limited and confused ideas of equality'*, which need to be explored further (O'Connor, et al 2002: 111-112).

Contradictions are also evident in studies focusing specifically on Ireland. An examination of changes in Irish gender role attitudes in the period 1988-2002 was carried out by O'Sullivan (2012), using data from the International Social Survey Programme module 'Family and Changing Gender Roles'. She argued that attitudes are socially constructed rather than fixed attributes of individuals and as such may change as opportunities or constraints arise. In general, the trend has been towards increasingly positive attitudes towards women's participation in the paid workforce, but this has been coupled with concerns about possible effects on young children. Younger and more educated respondents express less support for traditional household roles, while men tend to be more conservative about gender. Overall, trends increasingly show positive attitudes in support women's participation in the workforce, where shifts in behaviour in relation to work roles appear to follow a period of attitudinal change but there is also variation and unevenness in this process (O'Sullivan, 2012:231).

Moen and Yu (2000) used a life course approach to explore the strategies that dual-earner families use to affect a work life balance in what is increasingly seen as an issue for couples in their daily lives. Focusing on work/life strategies of dual earner families using three theoretical strands; the life course; the social construction of

gender, and structural lag, they examine indicators for quality of life through the use of adaptive strategies in a nationwide random sample. They found that trying to manage two full-time careers along with work in the domestic sphere was a disadvantage to women's career as they tend to take on the gendered domestic role reinforcing existing division of labour, structures, and career paths. They argue that flexibility of work arrangements and support are conducive to good work life balance and well-being and that the diversity of work and family lives amongst dual-earner couples suggests the need for a variety of arrangements to enhance quality of work/life balance. Their conclusions revealed that all dual earner couples trying to manage the diverse strands of their lives *'are constrained by existing structural patterns, cultural norms, and cognitive frames about work, family and gender'* indicating that both social structures and social lives are interdependent and entwined (Moen and Yu, 2000: 315-6).

European research exploring the implications of work-family conflicts for dual-earner parents' with children, found that family meals represent an important shared time promoting well-being, particularly for children. Measurement of frequency of family meals in the context of the WHI (work home interference) indicated that they are affected by the levels of support that supervisors and colleagues give, along with provision of flexible working conditions, which influence work/life balance and improve employee work satisfaction (Lane et al, 2011:141,148).

Recent studies suggest that levels of well-being and work life balance are increasingly dominating concerns for families as greater numbers of women continue to work full-time and dual-earning families are a growing trend. There are signs that change in the way work is organized to provide for a balance between work and home life are

indicated, but the implications are as yet far from worked out. In a legacy from the historical past, there remains a strong social and cultural bulwark within the family sphere of gendered role assignment.

Further, from a State perspective, Lewis et al. (2002), assert that across European social systems there remains an endorsement, to a greater or lesser extent, of a male breadwinner model through taxation and social welfare policies. Despite the introduction of individualisation in the tax system, Ireland, they point out, was considered an exemplar of the 'conservative' welfare state regime (Esping-Anderson, 1990), with traditional gendered roles supporting a strong male breadwinner model (Lewis, Smithson, and das Dores Guerreiro, 2002:143-4). For Williams also, changing the balance between paid work and caring is fraught with inconsistency at policy levels particularly for women where their paid work is mediated by their care responsibilities (Williams, 2004: 39-40). In analysis of a policy moves towards an adult worker model Lewis and Guillari (2005) argue that there are limits to this model regarding issues of care and gender equality. For Daly (2011), looking at the comparative welfare regime approach from a gender and family perspective, she argues that it is complex and ambiguous leading to varied reforms in several directions within different countries.

The findings of large scale studies present an overview of how trends in gendered work are complex and evolving, influenced by historical, cultural, and structural constraints, leading to slow patterns of change. These studies show that while both structural and individual attitudes are changing in relation to family roles', bringing about gender equality is hampered by entrenched positions based both at personal and

policy level, with variable opportunities to effect substantial change. From a quantitative perspective these studies present an overall picture of what is occurring in relation to families. This research from a qualitative perspective reveals the processes at the level family practices through which a lag in equality in the division of labour is perpetuated.

Focused on participants contributions in relation to family practices, this chapter explores how individuals interpret, engage with, and negotiate their specific attitudes and decision making in relation to work both paid and unpaid. The work of caring for and feeding others provides a lens to explore these issues within the context of divisions of labour in their daily working lives.

4.4 Historical/cultural Breadwinner model

The transition of relationships between couples to commitment, and/or marriage and the birth of children bring new and often initially subtle changes that eventually become an established part of how relationships are enacted and work roles pursued. Historically, strong cultural and social norms concerning masculine and feminine roles followed a male breadwinner model. According to Hanlon (2009), changes in contemporary Ireland which now favour a dual –breadwinner model, as a more progressive means of meeting the needs of men and women, have not been fully implemented, and instead family care remains reliant on women as primary caregivers and secondary earners (Hanlon, 2009: 187). As my sample of interviewees shows there is a variation in age, lifestyle, class and occupations across the group reflecting diversity. How the division of labour is worked out in relation to paid and unpaid work, specifically food work, is set out below within the context of their lives.

Table 4.1 reveals how levels of responsibility for food work are distributed between participants across the life course taking into account individual circumstances, choices, negotiated compromises and constraints.

Table 4.1. Participant responsibility for food work by partnership status, age, employment status and dependent children

Responsibility for food work	Partnership Status		Age Category (Years)			Employment Status			Children under 18 at home	
	Living as a couple	Not living as a couple*	30-39	40-49	50+	Full-time	Part-time	Full-time in home	Yes	No
Sole responsibility	13	8	11	7	3	1	2	16***	16	5
Part-shared	8	1**	7	1	1	4	5	2	8	1
Shared	8	0	6	2	0	4	4	0	5	3
Totals	29	9	24	10	4	9	11	18	29	9

* Includes participants who are single, separated or divorced, or widowed

** Separated participant engaged in shared parenting

***Includes six students

Table 4.1 shows eighteen respondents take full responsibility for food work. Thirteen of these are living as a married couple or have a partner, one is widowed, and eight are parenting alone. Of the total six are also students and five are working, four part-time. Eight participants' through different circumstances are raising their families alone. How individuals express the varied influences and considerations related to their level of responsibility around food work as part of a traditional gendered division of labour is explored in the next section.

4.4.1 Traditional gendered food work

Patterns of traditional patriarchal norms often began in families of origin when children were growing up where girls helped out and male family members benefited. This taken for granted practice then formed a backdrop for how later roles were worked out and enacted. Acceptance was not unusual when practices tended to

perpetuate the notion that gender roles were natural rather than socially constructed within gendered divisions in households (Tilly and Scott, 1978; Oakley, 1981).

In the interviews participants discussed their experiences of gendered food work both within their family of origin and later when they formed adult relationships and had children. As their accounts reflect their own experiences and trajectory across the life course, a varied picture emerges.

When recalling mealtimes as they grew up, a set order of seating and girls helping serve the meal was part of some interviewees' experience. Older and younger women spoke of their father having a particular seat, usually at the head of the table, from which he maintained order and compliance during mealtimes. Girls were expected to help out whereas boys were not, and were treated differently by virtue of being male. Cora (3) an older woman recalls the distinct difference in how females were treated at mealtimes; *'There was a pecking order. My father was always served first, then my brothers, and it was always the girls, it was the girls that served them and then we sat down with my mother to eat'. But we all sat together like, around the table and ate our meals'*

Nessa (25) a young mother with one child was also brought up in a household where she experienced distinct differences in the way girls were treated as secondary to the males in the family. *'My dad always had his seat, my brother had his seat, I don't remember having a seat like, but I don't know what it is with the men, but that is where they sat, and you were put out if you were sitting in it, if you did sit in'*.

The contradictory nature of the different treatment of children was perpetuated by her mother who also colluded in the distinction;

'Mam made us independent but she always, she still irons for my brother, my little brother is twenty two still lives at home She made us very independent women, but her sons were her sons'.

Similarly, Sara (32) an older mother, explained that food was also provided with gendered distinctions;

'Oh they always got the best of everything... it would have started we'll say with Daddy, he would have got the best piece of meat, the biggest piece and down along the lads, by the time it got to the girls at the bottom,'

When asked if the boys ever helped out as they got older, the emphasis on household and cooking skills was reserved for females displaying a clear line of demarcation between the sexes in relation to this work, where a path of distinct roles operated.

"That was just for the girls [laughter] the boys were busy going off and things like that. They would never need any sort of skills in that way. But funny enough they actually were good at cooking, you know,"

When discussing how caring responsibilities were worked out in their own lives, some of the older participants expressed a sense of inevitability in relation to gendered work in the past. Patricia (1), Aine (2), Eve (4), Avril (8), Rosa (9), Sonia (6) and Joan (17), all followed and at least partly accepted what they saw as the established order and realities of family life when they got married and had children (Parsons and Bales, 1956). The skills associated with cooking were primarily seen as the work of females', as part of the way family life was structured in the past, and this pattern was replicated for many women when they married and had children. When I asked who in the household typically did the cooking when she got married and whether or not it was discussed, Patricia (1) explained, that the role of food provision just automatically became hers on marriage in line with what were seen as appropriate gendered roles, despite her husband's ability (and perhaps willingness) to share the work; *"It was just something that happened. I think it's, you know most people think*

it's the women, the woman, that's her job to do the cooking and the cleaning and stuff, even though the husband's great at cleaning and stuff like that"

For Aine (2) this was also her experience, one she accepted as the norm, *'It was just the way. Well I was at home with the kids. A year after I married I had the first and then a year later I had the second one...where he worked shifts, so I mean he wasn't home at the same time every day... so I cooked and that was just the way it was'*

Sonia (6) initially had little interest cooking when she was working and her first child was fed in the crèche. She began to cook when she gave up work after her second child was born and she gave up paid employment. *'When the kids came along and after my second child, I stopped working and I learned to cook as a necessity because someone had to cook. I had two children to feed and that is the reason I learned to cook'*.

In contrast to the sense of inevitability and acceptance by some of the respondents Magda (21) a young mother with three children from outside Ireland showed a strong level of frustration and unease that on marriage to an Irish husband all work related to household was hers from the beginning. As she was brought up in a household in which men participated in cooking and caring duties, the entrenched gendered roles in Ireland was a shock. *'It was just assumed. I am the one at home so I am the one who has to think of what meals are cooked and you know things like that...even when I was working, yet it was always me'*.

For Magda (21) , Nessa (25), Emma,(26) and Connie (28) as young parents the reality of full-time caring is part of what they experience as an unequal division of labour which constrains their wish to participate fully in all facets of society. Their views and concerns are discussed later in the chapter.

Alternatively, Alison, (16) a young mother with one child, and working part-time, willingly took on full responsibility for feeding her family and general household work. She identifies with the role and believes it is part of her gendered make up as a woman rather than having been socialised into it;

“Because we are just programmed like that [laughter]. I think we are made like that, you know... I honestly think we are genetically made that way...And then maybe it is handed down through the generations that really it is your job to make sure everyone is ok and fed well, you know”.

She also displays an understanding of gender roles that comply with a division of labour in which women take on responsibility for all emotional and physical labour associated with maintaining an ideal family life, whereas her husband attends to the outdoor work (Oakley, 1981; Delphy and Leonard 1992).

‘I suppose well if I don’t do it and if Sean is working shifts no one would eat properly for starters... would everyone come together as a family unit then. It’s about; I think the woman creates the home, the atmosphere in the home... If I didn’t do any of that they would eat rubbish and maybe we wouldn’t all sit down together’

Carl (10) one of three male participants, has one pre-school child and also takes full responsibility for food work and caring while his partner works full-time. He had an expectation of a sharing this responsibility as he works at weekends but it has not occurred. His perspective is discussed in detail in Chapter Seven.

This snapshot of the gendered reality of a division of labour for some of the participants interviewed reveals a familial past that held some common experience for them, across different age categories, and circumstances. Their perspectives based on an unequal division of labour between men and women echo the findings of early food provision studies of Charles and Kerr (1988), Murcott, (1982), on cooking in

families showing a hierarchy of gendered work allocation supporting a continuity of inequality for females and a sense of privilege for males in a contemporary context.

4.4.2 Shared caring and food work

In contrast to respondents' who take full responsibility for food work, others experience shared levels of caring and food work (see Table 4.1). Part shared cooking involves making some meals at weekends or occasionally during the week, whereas a shared cooking role refers to cooking in a consistent manner, on a regular shared basis. Of the respondents who part share responsibility for food work, eight are married. Katy (18) is separated and shares parenting and cooking for her children when they stay with her. Of the remaining eight participants who part- share responsibility for food work, four are employed full-time, (Sinead, Doreen, Sara and Rebecca, work 30-35 hours) two work part-time (Kellie -20 hours and Laura/ occasional) and two are full-time at home. Of the eight who share the work of cooking David (35) works full time (30-35 hours) and takes on overall responsibility for food work except when his work schedule precludes his availability for cooking at home. His perspective is discussed further in Chapter Seven.

Shona (19) and Eoin (29) are a married couple with no children both of whom work full-time (30 hours) and share cooking responsibilities. Irene (20) works full/time (30 hours) and Yvonne (33) works three days (20 hours). They both have children and work flexi time to suit their family commitments. Jan (36) works part-time (15 hours), and Eileen (38) is working full-time (30 hours), both have pre-school children and they all share cooking roles with their husbands on a consistent basis. (See Appendix One for a full list of participants).

Participants, who made a decision to stay at home or work part-time, combining caring with employment, expressed both positive and negative perspectives in relation to this work and the compromises they made in order to fulfil their commitments.

4.4.3 Negotiated compromises

Beth (11), Laura, (22) and Joanna (23) are at home full-time. Their commitment to a primary role of caring and provisioning for their family is an integral part of the routines of family life, one which they undertake on a daily basis. However, as they also part share this work it involves a level of negotiation and is not exclusively their responsibility seven days a week. For some of them cooking is more enjoyable and pleasurable than other gendered household work that they carry out. It is connected to what they see as duties they took on that encompass a myriad of tasks and caring work.

Laura (22), an older mother, identifies with the role of nurturer as her commitment to her husband and child. While her husband is willing to help out with cooking, her responsibility for feeding emerged from the early days of her relationship; one is which she took on willingly. Her husband's lack of skill or interest in feeding himself, and her love of cooking, and taking care of others presented a positive outcome for her role; *'He struggled he said, he bought food like vegetables and fruit and then it would go off and then he lost heart... one of the greatest things for him was, that he doesn't have to worry about that because I like cooking'*

As a mother with a first baby she revels in the role she is involved in, finding in it a creative passion for nurturing. While she has taken a decision to be the one staying at home seeing it as a form of 'submission' she was assertive about how she considers it

as two way process, and as 'gender equal' right for the immediate future but possibly changing when their circumstances are different;

'I enjoy it because to me it is the other way of a creative process... I think that it is a form of submission but I also think it is a form of submission on my husband's behalf to go working every day. And so he has my best interests at heart and I have his..., he serves me and I serve him and there is no, he knows that I will go working if I have to and if I can, and if I make that decision and I know he will cook if he has to and if we make the decision. So it is a submission that is voluntary and it is a serving that is willing, not a forced thing which would make me rebellious I think, yes, it would make me rebellious'

However, others who work outside the home and also carry out household tasks including cooking see their commitment as more of a compromise and more complex than that of men.

Jill (7), who works part-time, points out in frustration that while she appreciates that her husband is always willing to cook, his is just a singular task whereas hers is more complex;

'I think it's very easy for men. They don't have to multi-task. I mean he is just cooking... I mean I am here in the evenings and I'm thinking as I'm cooking. I am doing homework at the same time, the washing or the ironing; you are still doing a few other different things'

Identifying with the work associated with being female was not the experience of some other women. Contradictions are evident in how women think about what are important skills for males and females. For some when talking about the ability to cook as a life skill, a gendered bias is also displayed in favour of allocating roles.

Beth (11) who worked full-time until the birth of her fourth child expressed little interest in household work or cooking but has taken on the role since finishing full-time employment. She stated that when she was young she had no interest in learning to cook or other tasks associated with the household, preferring to work outside on the

family farm. She expressed little interest in or confidence when cooking. So despite her own disinterest and her husband's willingness to prepare meals on a regular basis, she identifies cooking as a gendered skill for her daughters, but not her son, indicating the persistence of deep seated thinking regarding gender segregated work.

'I was never interested in cooking and I was always an outdoor person really. I didn't do cookery in school I picked a science subject...in recent years my husband has been my main influence really. I have learned more from him...which when I see my daughter now and all she has done I do regret it.... I would love to have gone through a class and had a teacher teach me properly. So definitely I think it is so important for girls to do home economics, because through life it will just stand to them'.

While women variously experience gender as a specific way of being in the world with ascribed responsibilities associated with it, the different perspectives described above also reveal that gender identity is complex, enacted and negotiated across the life-course, where accountability is perceived in different ways depending on the context. The following perspectives show some of the forces that influence ways in which gender work roles are both sustained, challenged, and constantly shifting (Bradley et al, 2006; Connell, 2002).

4.4.4 Gendered attitudes- mixed messages

Work of caring in families as primarily women's responsibility has been associated with gender inequality and loss of autonomy (Connell, 1995; O'Connor, 1998). As paid work becomes more valued the status of unpaid work in the household is further diminishing (Gatrell, 2005: 151; Lewis, 2009:193). Internationally, as outlined in recent studies there is an increasing trend towards supporting participation in employment and equality for women and creating a gender balance in relation to work paid and unpaid. Other research also contends that gender remains a significant factor in defining women's life choices, and is experienced in a more complex way

than *'by the narratives that made sense in their mothers' lives'*. (Everingham et al, 2007, 421).

Increased media attention is now paid to how women negotiate commitments to family while at the same time forging a career that fits in with their lifestyle. Feature articles focus on women with skills and education showing a successful transition to managing their personal and work lives (Gohmann, 2009; Walsh, 2010). These articles portray a sense that women *'can have it all'* through creatively diversifying to attain a satisfactory work life balance.

These factors increasingly play on and impact how women relate to how their work viewed today. On the one hand, interviewees may accept responsibility for unpaid family work, particularly when they have dependent children and are working full-time in the home. On the other hand, women experience increased pressures, negative attitudes and mixed messages from their peers and extended family causing them to question their role and reassess the significance and value of the work they do.

Eve (4) a mother of three school going children gave up her career to rear her family and stated it was her decision to do so. She has a busy daily life and is an active volunteer in her community. She spoke of going through occasions when she questions her decision to be at home; *'you go through phases...I think this time of the year, will I won't I get a job? And it wouldn't be a financial thing it would be a mental thing. You know for your own sanity'*. Awareness of unsupportive attitudes from contemporaries where her work is considered trivial, and not demanding, leaves her with mixed messages making her feel uncomfortable and unsettled;

'I'm just back from the country and I met a lot of cousins ...and they were like 'are you still at home and are you not doing anything? What are you up to; you're a lady of leisure? I don't like that attitude at all'

Despite the fact that she is a strong supporter of diversity of choices for women making decisions and compromises that suit their family circumstances, and of doing what is best from an individual perspective, she believes that the work of caring is 'not valued at all' and that negative attitudes towards women who choose to stay at home are unhelpful and unfair. It leads her to question her own decisions and to contemplate returning to work which is not feasible in her present situation with a young family, where supports are limited for their care. Her decision to give up paid employment is based on what she saw as the right thing to do (Duncan, et al ,2003) for her family at this stage rather than a specific preference to remain at home full-time (Hakim,2003) .

Joan (17) whose family is now reared never returned to paid work after she had her first child. An outgoing woman she is involved in voluntary work and caring for older relatives. With her family now grown up, even though she has no need financially to work she feels some regrets, and inadequate at times when attending social gatherings with women who are working outside the home. She expressed frustration that despite the fact that she works hard, this work holds little status or value and that others seem to be able to combine roles today ;

"yeah... it's when I feel... should I get a job working and then I think sure I'm doing a job, you know what I mean.,... for instance yesterday we were at a social event, and you have somebody say, are you working, you know what I mean. You think you are the only one sitting at home and then you have nothing to say. You feel Jesus, I have nothing, what do I do, you know, and feel a bit inadequate when you think they are out working and they also do a house, so therefore they are doing two things".

Amongst those who gave up paid work to care for their families some now feel that they have been left out of opportunities to have a career, yet they feel that their decision was the right one at the time where there was limited access to crèches or caring opportunities. For them the options were stark with limited possibilities to make a clear cut 'choice' incorporating their own and their family's needs (O'Connor, et al: 2002).

For these women being female is a lived experience whereby compliance with gendered work is clearly defined, and at least in part, accepted. Some see their work of cooking and domestic work as part of an intrinsic gendered make up, whether they wanted it to be or not. Their gendered way of identifying with this work was learned and followed from within systems with specific structures and beliefs concerning appropriate duties for males and females. For other women what constitutes gendered roles, aspirations, or feelings, is contentious and can be a source of confusion, frustration and misunderstanding around gendered identity and work roles, particularly when they have children.

4. 5 Transition to Parenthood: (Re) establishing habits of gender

As relationships evolve from early stages they are shown to bring a new phase of formalisation and commitment to sharing lives between couples. Part of sharing is involved in establishing routine socialisation practices with eating together as an integral part this process. Food preparation and consumption is a significant aspect of producing and sustaining family identities and also negotiation of gender roles and relationships within the home (Charles and Kerr, 1988; De Vault, 1991; Mennell, Murcott and van Otterloo, 1992; Ward and Hetherington, 1994; Lupton, 1996).

In the early stages of committed relationships couples may tend to share roles attached to the household in an equitable way (Kemmer, et al; 1998, Bradley and Dermott; 2006). However, the long established persistence of a gendered division of labour attached to household work can often be re-established as the norm when relationships become formalised and routine, particularly with the birth of children. Men may revert to culturally established patterns of gendered responsibilities as breadwinner. Much of the re-ordering of gendered roles may also connect to particular notions of masculinity and femininity where feminine roles are viewed as essentially inferior by men, and masculine roles seen as stronger and in control (Connell, 1995; Hanlon, 2009).

The transition to a new stage in life where couples decide to live together and progress to parenthood creates a new set of circumstances that can lead to profound changes in individual's lives. The birth of children can bring about upheaval, both physical and emotional that can have a major impact on both mothers and fathers (Oakley, 1981). According to Fox (2001) parenthood creates change that also produces gender inequality for women and an uneven division of labour in households. The extent to which women can resist being cast in an unequal position depends on the strength of their material position, autonomy, and bargaining power before becoming mothers and the extent to which they actively involve the father in care work (Fox, 2001: 374, 384-5).

However, as Russell et al (2004) point out, while half of all couples Ireland were dual earners by 2000 the institutional and cultural contexts did not keep pace with this change resulting in poor levels of supports for childcare provision or for more

equitable divisions in domestic caring labour. Instead, as Maushart (2002) suggests because of the slow rate of change the bulk of domestic labour becomes women's responsibility on marriage and this is exacerbated when children are born.

For older women a traditional division of labour was not unusual as it was the norm when they married. However, for younger women who had expectations of equality in all facets of their lives it is an unsettling experience. For some of the interviewees, especially (Emma (26), Nessa (25), Connie (28), and Magda (21), changes occurred in the assignment of gendered roles with the transition to parenthood, which then created formative patterns of gendered work that remain part of relationships patterns in the home (Fox, 2001:375). Other women with full-time established careers, whose position exerts bargaining power and resources to support their work commitments, experience more equality in their family commitments.

When examining how family relationships operate when first formalised and routine roles in relation to food work are established, for some participants a set pattern emerged as a result of daily circumstances. Initially when both worked they spoke of how food work was shared in an equitable way. Then, for a variety of reasons such as changed work schedules, being on maternity leave, or where women decided to give up paid work, the bulk of all duties in the home became their responsibility.

This process has consequences for younger women where their individual freedom and equality is compromised (Beck and Beck-Gernsheim, 2002). It also presents the complexity within which they try to reconcile their family commitments with the desire to have a career, and the obstacles that hamper making clear reflexive choices (Cheal, 2002; Himmelweit, 2002). Decisions related to career versus family considerations, rather than being based solely on economic factors (Becker, 1981),

involve a complex array of factors related to work and family life (Ribbens McCarthy and Edwards, 2002).

4. 5. 1 Decisions, choices and constraints

In newly formed relationships couples may generally share household duties and meal preparation when they are both working (Warde and Hetherington, 1994).

This was the routine for May (24) and her husband, as she explains; *'We would have both cooked or whoever came home first, whoever was in first put on the dinner'*.

When asked if it changed when she gave up work later to look after the children, she believed the role then reverted to her, but that if necessary her husband could do it too. *'When I stopped work, when I stopped paid work, I suppose I was at home so therefore I was, I'm here I put on the dinner then...I don't have to necessarily do it, he can do it when he comes in, but I suppose yeah'*

May sees this work as part of her job in the home as a result of a decision she made for practical reasons to give up her paid work role;

'it was a decision, they were in child care and between sickness and my job, them getting sick, me having to try and work, and trying to get time off from a private company, now it is not a public company, absolute nightmare, really hard, so you have to draw the line somewhere'

As she made clear this *'decision'* is not necessarily equated with having a *'choice'*.

She explained that she loved her job and would have liked to stay on if her circumstances were different and plans in the future to return to work.

'Oh yeah absolutely, I did like it yeah. I have the option of going back now, he did say to me you can come back or whatever. I had been there a long time so he kind of, he did give me the option to stay yeah'

Emma (26) also gave up work after the birth of her second child because of the pressure involved with having two children to care for along with the high costs of crèche fees. For her it was not a choice but a ‘necessity’. Being at home also meant that she took on all the responsibility for caring and feeding her family due to her husband’s work commitments, and the negative aspects are very clear for her;

‘Well I think there is a lot involved, a lot more work you know just in terms of the whole role of being at home. I would tend to do everything now as regards them-... me being at home means I do everything like the ironing, whereas when I was working my husband would have done some more of the things. I mean..., he travels quite a bit with his job and things like that, so it is only fair now that I do the house. Oh, it is a job like, just like a job I don’t get paid for unfortunately’.

Taking on the bulk of household work was also a common experience for other women as all aspects gradually became part of their duties.

Connie (28) and her husband had shared an interest in cooking when they were both working; *‘Yeah when we were both working it was really whoever got home first, you know would do the cooking so. Like my husband like he has, he is interested in cooking, now he doesn’t because I’m here or whatever, but he wouldn’t as I’m, always here and I would have the dinner on’.*

Cooking as the aspect of family works she enjoyed gradually became a chore for Connie just like any other;

‘Well for me I enjoy cooking so that at first staying at home, the cooking part of it is actually the easiest part... although you do go through time where you say, oh I’m sick of having to think about what we will have and something that everybody will eat. But I was looking forward to that sort of side of it but not the housework person part; it gets me down a bit alright’

Now she has taken on full responsibility for family work, what she calls a ‘choice’ may be seen in reality a set of circumstances that made it difficult to stay at work.

While she states that the cost of crèche fees for two children was a strong economic

consideration, her reasoning also shows her ambivalence towards the decision to stay at home full-time when she is well educated for a career.

'A lot of my generation have a really good education that our mother's encouraged us to get, well like because there were so many opportunities for us. So it's harder because that is more the norm whereas like our parents that was the norm for everybody to be at home'

In a similar situation to May (24), Connie (28) was relied on in work, to be there regardless of home commitments, so that eventually the costs and struggles to combine work with motherhood proved too much for her;

'I worked for a small company and like I was very close to my boss and all that but being that you are more relied on and if you're not there well they are struggling, you know so. But if you were in a bigger company I suppose or you might have flexi-time' ... I just wasn't prepared to juggle it all, so that is kind of what made me make the choice really'

Her decision, she believes, came about through lack of flexibility in the private sector and lack of supports, but her personal independence and autonomy has she feels been affected by issues beyond her control where she feels powerless to change, leading to questioning and dissatisfaction with the way it has turned out much the same as in her mother's day;

'I don't know why it is so hard for my generation to kind of stay at home. Well not that I don't know, I know why it's hard like because you know we were all encouraged to go to college ... I just think it is very bad... I think that we were victims of our own success because all my generation had good jobs... and when house prices started going up... what did we get? Now we are all struggling because we can't spend time with our kids so everyone is out working, so its not, I wonder what did we actually get, feminism, it's a bit like..., I think it's a bit we are all kind of trying to figure out now what is it we really want, you know'.

This was also the case for Nessa (25) whose early experience of cooking was worked out on an equal basis when she and her partner were travelling. It was a role they had discussed and agreed on until they settled and she stayed at home to look after their

first child. Taking on the habits of established traditional routines was not what she wanted and she expressed unease at being cast in an unsatisfactory role,

'We said that we would have a 50-50 relationship. We both cooked and then it was more of less who was home first. Well more times it ended being me but then Jim would clean up, so there was always that. So it was never kind of the fact that this was my job, and that he doesn't appreciate it...he would always says thank you for a dinner, I always make the dinner'.

Despite the fact that she strongly resists being cast in this role and is trying to establish herself as distinct from caring work she associates with her mother in the past, cooking has become part of her routine now since she gave up paid work;

'It is not that I am, I am not that traditional but he has been out working all day and I am looking after her and if there is a time when I couldn't cook he wouldn't care, he'd do it... but I am not going to put myself under pressure like my mother did'.

Her total frustration with her husband's traditional attitude that motherhood and the work that extend from it should be what women aspire to and feel fulfilled by has shocked her (Scott, 1999);

'What the origin is, I don't know whether going back to when you are pregnant and you have a baby. I remember my husband saying, oh my god my grandmother had thirteen kids and she fed and did everything and we should all be able to do that, because men have this thing about how you should be. And when you become pregnant and you become a mother that is all you should want to be, you are fulfilled you know...and they kind of find it hard that you want to tear away from that, you want to do something else'

Her feelings expressed how the overwhelming experience of motherhood was traumatic and life changing for her, making her feel a loss of power and control over her own life and decisions when faced with strong stereotypical attitudes to gendered identity and responsibility. In contrast however, to some of the other women who appeared to accept the inevitability of their changed role, she actively challenges this way of thinking about her gendered identity and aspirations (Gatrell, 2005:103).

For the young women described above, the transition to parenthood brought about a change in their lives in which they took on the bulk of responsibility for caring within the family. The continuing strength of gender ideologies which reflect a traditional division of labour along with attitudes which see mothers as primary carers influenced their decision making possibilities (O'Connor et al, 2002 ; O'Sullivan, 2012). Their perspectives reflect the lack of significant policies to support employees where they have limited bargaining power to create a work-life balance in which they could continue to work and care for their family. The lack of change and persistence of gendered segregation points out the slow rate of development of public and social policies promoting gender equality (Kan, Sullivan and Gershuny, 2011)

4.5.2 Beyond blue and pink-shared cooking roles

For other women, Jill (7,) Shona ((19), Irene (20), Jan (36) and Eileen (38) who have busy working lives their ability and power to assert their individual rights and to negotiate fairness in relation to household work creates a sense of autonomy and separation from ascribed duties in relation to family. This in turn creates an opening up of new possibilities for steps towards a shared gender status and equal contribution to caring and food work consistent with the pattern of; a *dual earner/dual carer model* (Aboim, 2010).

For Yvonne (33) gaining a shared familial role involved negotiating decisions with her husband that reflected changing circumstances in their lives. She and he travelled and worked abroad for a number of years and shared household work initially before returning to Ireland.

'I don't actually remember talking about it or thinking about it I just took over the role of cooking, funnily enough yeah. We, I suppose we were travelling a lot to begin with but then when we finally did settle in our first apartment I was definitely the cook

and I am not sure if it is because I got in from work first. But I was definitely the one buying the groceries as well and I don't know how that happened but, yeah it was a conscious decision I just started cooking'.

While they were both working there was no pattern or set routine and they did not have to consider cooking for anyone else.

'Now again because, ok there was two of us and we would eat together and again we would have people over and stuff, but it still wasn't a very structured thing, like it wasn't a definite dinner every single day you know that kind of way... a couple of evenings in the week where we would just have sandwiches, get a bit of fresh bread on the way home and you would make up sandwiches'.

It was later when they settled back and with the birth of their children that Yvonne challenged the assumption that she should take responsibility for all of the household work. Returning to work part-time also brought about a need to discuss the work load involved in caring and household duties. With a strong belief in equal sharing of family work she believed she had to tackle the fact that she was taking the majority of responsibility related to family. Her assertive stance had positive results for a balanced sharing of tasks.

'It just sort of happened yeah... I have said that to him about a couple of chores and cooking wasn't one of them, we have definitely discussions around just the increase in laundry with small children and I had to say to him about the ironing that he has to iron his own shirts from now on, and we came to an agreement... But we didn't do that about the cooking, he just, yeah, he just suddenly took an interest in it and like I say he has got a couple of books now that he is really comfortable with and now if we have friends over and its not as often, he will always cook the meal.'

Yet for Yvonne it was not so easy to give over responsibly for the work of feeding others, after having had responsibility for it, and it took time to trust that it would be alright;

'Yeah, it's funny I suppose it is hard, you are handing over that particular responsibility to someone else, and you know there is a bit of that, nervousness involved at the beginning... after you have got a bit of a routine going and everything has gone smoothly, then you start to relax and think well it went ok, you know they are perfectly happy at the end of the day'

For other young women the work of cooking is accepted as a shared activity. Joanna (23) is a young woman from Poland. She is married with one child and not working at the moment; instead she is looking after her pre-school child. She discussed the fact that traditional gendered roles also prevailed at home in the past where women stayed at home and cared for family and men worked. For her generation this has altered and now there is a more equal division within household work, a change she is keen to pass on to her son;

‘No it’s not just my role also my husband’s. I also when I cook I also take Yarik and allow him to do some things in the kitchen so I want him to cook in the future. It’s like the typical Polish family in the past the woman she stays at home and cooks and the man works. But now it is different and men and women they work, they both work and so they both share everything’.

4.6 Conclusion

This chapter has focused on how responsibility for food work and caring is worked out in the context of a division of labour in families. It shows how decision making surrounding gendered work is variously enacted across the life course and shaped by wider social and cultural, economic and policies related to work and family life

International studies convey a list of aspirations and forecasts relating to how gender equality in relation to work and care may come about. They reveal the interplay between social and culturally embedded ideas about gendered roles and work and the varied and slow rate of adoption of structural policies and adequate supports for significant change leading towards gender equality.

The findings in this chapter reflect the complex ways in which gendered patterns are being played out in contemporary society (Moen and Yu, 2000; Aboim, 2010). The

varied perspectives of women on taking on specific gendered work at crucial times over the life course, specifically when entering a committed relationship and with the birth of children, show that while there are powerful historical, social, and cultural precedents that have heavily influenced how they act, there is no overall acceptance of household work as an aspiration or a 'choice', particularly amongst younger women. Instead there are mixed reactions to the specific life circumstances they inhabit, with some challenging and disrupting gendered patterns and division of household labour.

Women with established careers have additional bargaining power to exert control over decision making regarding work roles and family life. For other (especially older) women in the past taking on full responsibility for food provisioning was the inevitable reality when relationships are formalised through marriage and the birth of children. The next chapter looks closely at the role of cooking for the family and what specific factors play a part in how women identify with this work and the varied values and practices that are displayed through food work across the life course.

Chapter Five

Feeding values, practices, and display across the life course

5.1 Introduction

In Chapter Four the division of labour in paid and unpaid work was examined through the lens of food work clarifying the varied ways in which gender is implicated in unequal divisions of work responsibilities, particularly when relationships are formalised through marriage and parenthood. It highlighted the entrenched gendered responsibility for many older women along with the dilemmas and lack of options for many younger women to combine career and family life. This chapter is concerned with the role of cooking itself and how it is understood and enacted from the perspective of those who carry it out. By focusing on this work, how it is organised, who takes responsibility for it, and what beliefs and priorities are highlighted, I look at the overriding practices and concerns discussed by respondents and how these may be interpreted in the context of families today. At all stages of the research process a high value was placed on the role of feeding by the participants. In order to understand how this evolved in relation to their individual lives, themes related to the level of importance of this work were explored.

5.2 The significance of values on practices across the life course

In trying to ascertain how individuals perceive the role of feeding within the context of family relations today, account must also be taken of how they relate their pasts, and further, how the past may influence their present beliefs and actions. This entails gaining a sense of how they identify themselves within their familial and other social relationships and how these factors may impact on their beliefs and actions.

Lawler (2008) exploring identity from a sociological perspective argues that while 'kinship' was seen as a significant aspect of social and cultural formation in non-western societies, as a means towards identity formation, the nuclear family in western societies is considered only one among many central institutions, to the formation of culture. In western societies the formation of identity in individuals is related more specifically to active agency on the part of the individual. However, she argues, that in recent times this model is considered inadequate, and contends that *'families are an important means of transmitting material and cultural privilege...and they occupy a central place in Western social life'*. Taking account of the work of Finch and Mason (2000:5), who argue that *'family relationships lie at the heart of understanding the condition of social life in advanced industrial, or late modern, societies'* Lawler argues that families are central to understandings of identity through the *'doing'* family relationships, and understanding of kin groups and one's place within them (2008:37). Through focusing on 'doing' feeding work across the life course, this chapter examines the varied manner in which individuals take up, identify with, and give significance to this work as part of family practices.

This research is also set within a context where considerable social change has occurred. As a result, the impact of change within different social groups has been the subject of contemporary research. One aspect of this work examined how patterns of change may have affected social values. Hardiman and Whelan (1994b and 1998: 67) argue, building on previous research (Whelan1994), *'that the pattern of value change in Ireland has been sufficiently uneven and complex to resist explanation in terms of a unilinear process of modernisation'*. When exploring how society responds to aspects of social change, they argue, account must be taken of both the unevenness of

responses to new influences and also of how new influences may be selectively adopted across social groups. Rather than assuming a straightforward level of change from a wholly 'traditional' starting point towards a homogenous end-point of 'modernity', they see that-

“It may be more helpful to conceive of societies as organic units, where many customs and values are carried from one generation to the next, and continue to shape developments into the future. The values of the past, its traditions, have an impact in the way change is accepted, rejected or modified. ‘Modernisation’ is often taken to be conflict with ‘tradition’. But in all but the most exceptional circumstances, the pattern of value adaption is itself strongly conditioned by past experiences” (Hardiman and Whelan, 1998: 77).

As discussed in Chapter Two theories of modernity present a perspective on social change in which individualisation would represent a break with tradition and the norms and values associated with it, creating freedom to reflexively pursue individual goals. For women however, the persistence of gendered ascribed roles, through a slow rate of structural change, continued to constrain individual choice and behaviour, creating tensions between traditional and modern modes of operation. So too in this way, how values associated with tradition persist in contemporary society may reflect both past and present within unevenness of social change.

With an awareness of the many varied influences and values that shape how individuals make sense of and participate in society I considered it important to take a broad view to encompass a range of different perspectives. Through adopting a life history approach when interviewing, individuals were asked initially about food in their family of origin to provide the context of past experience. This allowed them to relate how they remembered food and mealtimes growing up. It was important from two perspectives: firstly it provided a historical context in relation to diet and family life and the role of feeding others; secondly, it provided information about specific

practices, skills, and attitudes in relation to food within a family setting and how they may have been developed and interpreted by the interviewees. The focus on a specific task of feeding others thus linked an everyday practice from historical understandings of how it was perceived in the past to how it may have changed in a contemporary context. This perspective takes an understanding of family practices as represented by Morgan as not fixed or timeless but an active constructed process of human interaction (Morgan, 1999:16).

5.3 Perspectives on feeding work

Taking in all phases of the research process, my analysis into how individuals responded when discussing food work looked at both their verbal responses and reflections and additionally, practical examples from the analysis of written responses in completing weekly food diaries and through observations of their engagement in grocery shopping trips. Understanding changes in how individuals at different stages across the life course relate what is important for them was vital also, as their experiences reflect a varied response particular to their personal circumstances.

An understanding of the values associated with feeding others emerged as a theme early on in the focus group phase of this research where it was shown to be of prime importance within the context of caring for family. In attempting to understand how individuals reflect on and apply it in their daily work of caring in families, in a contemporary context, the approach used by theorists in relation to family work and responsibilities in family is pertinent. The work of Finch, (1989), Finch and Mason, (1993,) and Duncan and Edwards, (1999), and Duncan, Edwards, Reynolds, and Alldred, (2003), concerning responsibilities in relation to families, are based on values and norms of behaviour. For Finch and Mason obligations are part of an internal

moral code related to what is seen as the proper thing to do and are negotiated within families rather than laid down through gendered ascribed roles. For Duncan et al (2003), a moral approach as a basis of making decisions connected to caring roles is made on the basis of contemporary social norms of what is considered the right and proper course of action; ‘and *that decision making can vary between different social groups and in different places*’ (Duncan et al, 2003: 327).

By focusing on feeding work and family practices specifically related to this task, I examine how both past and present experiences create patterns that underlie and influence how beliefs and actions emerge within individuals’ social and cultural identities. The levels to which influences from a familial past translate into habitual practices and ultimate responsibility, or are negotiated and shared, are explored also.

For eighteen of the interviewees early experiences in which their mother was a significant role model had a strong influence on their present actions regarding the role of cooking (See **Table 5.1**, below). In some cases this was significant for how they expressed their beliefs and attitudes and ultimately how they explained their role today. For twenty others the work of cooking and feeding was viewed differently shaped by later influences which have significant consequences for how they variously approach responsibility for, and carry out this work. Responses from interviews highlight predominant themes in relation to this work whereas food diaries and participant observation reveal how respondents’ went about food work and reflected on the practice on a daily basis. The following areas emerged as central aspects related to values and practices expressed by respondents.

- Feeding values and practices across the life course

- Family food - gender and emotional labour
- Eating rituals –significance of daily meals

Participants' views expressed in relation to the role of feeding emerged in part through identification with beliefs and practices past and present in their lives. In this way lived experiences shape how social roles are taken on and practices enacted. This is not to contend that other significant structural and societal constraints may also influence and shape social practices.

Recent research in Ireland and Europe indicates that how social roles and specifically gender roles are understood can vary widely according to values and beliefs of a given culture. Surveys carried out in Ireland in the last decade of the twentieth century to determine attitudinal changes towards gendered roles from both male and female perspectives showed the existence of two contradictory sets of cultural values at play. Crotty and Schmitt (1998), draw on the work of Whelan and Fahy (1994) to explore how such values can be understood. The European values systems study which compared cross-national attitudes towards a variety of issues facilitates comparison of values and attitudes across different countries. Whelan and Fahy (1994), in an analysis of survey results for Ireland, concluded that: *'while Irish attitudes are not significantly more traditional than European views, the pattern of results does point to the continuing influence of values that underpin sex-role differentiation'* (Whelan and Fahy, 1994: 97, cited in Crotty and Schmitt, 1998: 118).

Greater differences were accounted for when analysed by age and education with better educated younger age groups showing more egalitarian views on women's roles. In contrast, stay at home mothers held more traditional attitudes toward working mothers, and husbands' attitudes towards gender roles were more traditional

than those of their wives. These findings related to gender roles show the variation of values, beliefs and attitudes that can exist between genders and social groups in different contexts. They do not however, explore how individuals interpret or relate to what meanings their values have in the context of their lived experience.

In my research, qualitative analysis of findings concerning values, and meanings expressed about the work of feeding others was undertaken. Different responses are broadly associated with participants' perceptions of family life across the life course, and are based on their particular social, cultural, and economic perspectives. These come together under a number of themes related to food provision. The concept of display outlined by Finch in (2007), and the linked concept of family practices (Morgan, 1996), are also used to explore how families through 'doing' what they see as family routines around food, convey their sense of being a family.

Taking account of the ideas put forward by Gatrell (2005) that the social world is constructed by beliefs and attitudes about social roles, which may in turn shape practices, and where social and human reality is regarded as multi-dimensional, which may differ depending of the perspective of individuals, the following section examines the various ways in which individuals engage with the specific role of feeding across the life course and the particular values, attitudes, meanings, and display they express through their practices.

5.4 Feeding roles across the life course

The qualitative interviews I conducted included discussions of participants' eating routines from the past to the present. The focus was on how they may or may not have identified with and learned the skills of cooking and to what extent they used or

adapted the skills to organise eating routines in their own homes (**Table 5.1**). In my analysis of food provision roles and practices across the life course, eighteen of the interviewees were shown to identify with, and were strongly influenced by their familial past, in particular their mother (mother centred) The remaining twenty interviewees were (other centred), where learning to cook was either self taught and/or influenced by other family members, including husband's, in-laws, and the experience of travel and friends.

Table 5.1. Principal influences on cooking skills by participant age category

Age category	Principal influence			
	Mother	Other relatives	Friends and travel	Self taught
30-39	7	7	5	4
40-49	8	2	0	1
50+	3	1	0	0
Totals	18	10	5	5

In order to understand the way in which individuals identified with feeding roles, the argument put forward by Lawler is relevant, which sees 'identity' as produced within the context of social relations where *'identity needs to be understood not as belonging within the individual person, but as produced between persons and within social relations'* (Lawler, 2008: 8). Further, account must also be taken of identity when endeavouring to understand how individual memories and narratives of the past may be interpreted in relation to social roles;

'...as not something foundational and essential, but something *produced* through the narratives people use to explain and understand their lives...in narrating a story, social actors organise events into 'episodes'...in doing so they draw on memories... but not only do they interpret those memories, the memories are *themselves* interpretations'.

(Lawler, 2008: 17) emphasis in original

Viewed in this way, memories, while they may be viewed as not always reliable, are essentially social constructs, depending on social context and recounted in specific

narrative ways to produce meaning (Birch and Miller, 2000; Elliot, 2006). How narratives are in turn used to account for aligning with particular perspectives in relation to food work is explored in the next section.

Within the group who mainly take full responsibility for food work there was a mother centred, gendered identification for eighteen respondents which was incorporated into how they, in turn, go about this work in their own lives drawing on the skills learned as a resource within their family circumstances.

5.4.1 Tradition and gendered food work: ‘Just like my mother’.

Aine (2), a grandmother originally from a rural town in Co. Cork has lived in county Kildare for most of her adult life and is now in her late fifties. She presents as a practical, capable woman, very interested in and engaged with all aspects of life. Widowed at a young age, she reared four children alone, on a limited budget, which she supplemented by working at knitting at night. She talked about how she was greatly influenced by her mother whom she described as a ‘strong lady’ who had to provide for a large family on her own using her practical skills as a housewife and cook because her husband worked away for long periods.

“My mother did it all, every bit of it from start to finish. She used to do every bit of the cooking, washing, minding and we were a big family, there were ten of us in it”.

With such a large family her mother had to be organised at mealtimes;

“Oh it was bedlam, [laughter] but yet organised, every one had their, you know what I mean, set the table, whoever was setting the table, whoever’s turn it was at the time and you were given a chore and you did it... we all, boys or girls had our chores.”

Later, as a married woman Aine stated that she drew on what she learned watching her mother struggle to feed a large family and used this experience as a skill when organising meals for her own family.

'Oh, my Mam, yes... watching her trying to, I suppose, stretch what she had with so many of us small, and bake, to know how to do different things you had to make bread to keep us going for two days... that type of thing. She would have had an influence.'

As she spoke of her own way of working and organising mealtimes, she revealed many similarities to her mother's practices, conveying her role as what may be seen an 'embodied' aspect of her gendered self identity and early socialization (Mc Nay, 1999:103). She explained, *'I suppose it was kind of in me'* indicating that she felt this trait was part of her gendered identity, learned through watching and helping her own mother and drawing on this skill later in her own life. *"We would sit down around the table like that... and they all had little chores, the smaller ones, the bigger ones."*

The work of raising her family is modelled on what she took from her mother's traditional way of doing things. With her children grown up Aine has broadened her horizons and returned to education, pursuing a qualification in design. Her traditional attitudes and values around planning food for others have changed little, however, and have carried on to caring for her grandchildren who come to her regularly after school by planning ahead and cooking wholesome food from scratch for them.

'I get my vegetables ... and I make soup then that will last, especially in wintertime and I freeze it in containers or even freezer bags and I take it out then and have it. You know now especially with the boys coming in wintertime, I'll have it straight from the freezer... it would be there when they'd want it.'

This way of identifying with roles represents a strong sense of tradition with values of the past embedded and used in present circumstances. It is also where gendered identity may be seen as rooted in early socialisation and modelling behaviour.

Sara (32), a self assured woman in her mid fifties, also related this as part of her experience. She is married with three grown up boys, and returned to work in recent

years as a staff manager. Her mother was a strong influence on her cooking role. She was raised in a rural area in a traditional gendered household, where her mother was responsible for the household and was also a skilled cook. She spoke of learning cooking skills by watching her work and being encouraged to make things herself from a young age (Knight, et al 2013:3);

“I would have watched her and every day when she was baking when I was small I always got a piece of dough and I always had to make something and if she was making buns, no matter, what it was,”

While Sara presents as assertive and independent, she continues to accept a largely gendered role in much the same manner as in her family of origin. Despite the fact that her husband is a willing and competent cook, preparing the family meal is still mainly her role despite working full-time and sometimes she finds it annoying, *“it is only in latter years that it begun to get on my nerves a bit, you know”*. Her attitude is tempered by the fact that she is an adventurous cook and generally enjoys making family meals. Cooking is a creative process for her and holds a much higher value over other household work; *‘because I like it I suppose I would rank it towards the top, it would be my top priority because I love cooking anyway. To me it is never, cooking isn’t a chore. No, it is not the same at all as the other jobs because I like doing it and I like experimenting with recipes and I like trying out new things’*.

Like the other respondents, Joan (17) an older woman, also adopted a gendered role based on a traditional organisation of family life. Her cooking experience is similar to Sara’s, based on learning the skills of gendered work while growing up. Looking back on how she took on this role, she is at a loss to explain it, as it was an intrinsic part of how life was organised at the time, through learning the skills of gendered work within the family sphere. Joan is now fifty eight and is a full-time housewife since

marriage. From a large working class family her mother was a good cook who worked hard and baked bread and scones on a daily basis to supplement their meals.

Similarly, Joan wished to be able to provide good food when she had children.

'I don't know really how it came about. I suppose my mother. But I did go to a few cooking classes. I wanted to be able to cook right when the kids were small...and I suppose from watching my sisters'.

Her upbringing was at a time when it was the norm to leave home to marry before living together. She followed the values and conventions of her day and the position that went with it without question. Her role models were part of the meaning and understanding Joan expresses of her initiation and unquestioning acceptance into gendered roles in the past which she now sees as 'strange'.

'It just happened; yeah I didn't think about it, or didn't say'' well it's your night to cook'' I suppose because we just didn't live together. We just came from... we got married and... I suppose we just followed the role of what we were used to, strange, but yeah'.

These women portray their gendered lives with a specific grounding in a traditional past which had a strong influence on the present. Their initiation into the work involved in family life shows the extent to which their identity was shaped by the prevailing social mores, values, and practices as they grew up. While considerable change has occurred in every facet of social life some practices also continue to hold significance for some younger women;

For Katy (18), the traditional aspects of cooking work were also part of childhood. Now in her thirties and separated, with two children, she spoke of how she and her sister were 'apprenticed' into the gendered work of the household by her mother through her skills of cooking; *'My mother was the food provider and she had the*

expertise in that area. My Dad's expertise was on doors or something. Myself and my sister then would have been very apprenticed into that. Growing up, we were always stirring gravy or making something to help, making custard from scratch or whatever'.

Katy spoke of how skills of cooking and commitment to nurturing held significant meaning for her when her children were born and she stayed at home to care for them. Food played an important part in her relationship with her children showing the complexity of feeding work within the intimate bonds of parental *caring* and *love labour* (Delphy and Leonard; 1992; Lynch and McLaughlin, 1995). Providing food in this sense is associated with nurture both materially and intimately, linking both work and intimate emotional care, often associated with gendered female roles.

'The meal thing was huge for me... with small children you're pureeing and constantly feeding them, I seemed to be on an endless run of food, like a treadmill of food. ... It's like there's nourishing and nourishment so I nurtured my children through food, sort of...I breastfed... as well... It was very important, the fact that I could feed them myself with my body'.

When reflecting on the gendered role she took on, Katy was aware of the structured nature of the role, but also her own level of understanding of the emotional meaning and motivation for the work she put in; *'I suppose I was socialised into it but I chose to do it as well. It wasn't just impressed upon me in any way; it was a mixture of things'.*

When her marriage ended after some time, she found that food became difficult for her and she could only act as a *'food preparer'* not engaged any longer in the process of sitting down as a family. For her the meaning of her role was changed and her emotional and gendered investment in it has shifted significantly.

'I'd have a scone and I'd eat it standing up. The less centred I was, and focussed on family... the more I had things interfering with that, it affected the whole food preparation. I would have cooked full meals for Paul and the kids, I felt I was more cooking it, but not part of it, as I wasn't sitting down to eat it. I was the preparer'.

Katy's altered status changed how she identifies with, thinks about, and organises her life. While food remains an important element for her and her children, it not as central, and she can see the negative and mundane aspects of feeding others.

Reflecting on her former gendered role she can see it as a particular way of 'doing gender' that no longer holds any meaning for her (West and Zimmerman, 1987).

'When the children are with me, I like to cook them a whole meal, and I still attach a lot of importance to it. But I suppose the fact that I'm no longer a wife and seen in that sort of two-adult household role, I feel the role is sort of taken away from me a little bit. Or I've pushed it away. I don't actually miss it hugely, to be honest about it, because there's a lot of drudgery around cooking as well'.

Jill (7) is married with three children. She works in a job-share role in office administration. From a rural background, the family have settled in an urban area. They are very interested in cooking and eating well and are members of a group of 'foodies' who meet up regularly and cook for each other. Food in the past was traditional and her mother cooked for the family. *'My parents would be very kind of traditional, meat and two vegetables kind of thing. Always you know the roast on a Sunday, two vegetables mashed potatoes, dessert'.*

Jill has a strong sense of identification with the past and her mother's way of organising, which she now carries out in a similar fashion as a pattern she finds useful in her weekly routine;

'I think it's because she worked... at the end of the week, we are going to chill out. And I would be the very same, there is no homework on a Friday ...especially the week I'm working and I think 'great' I don't feel like cooking so it is very simple. I think I am taking after my mother that was always a Friday evening'.

Following her mother's way of doing things in relation to food and family life was described by Eve (4) a mother of three children. She took on a full-time role in the household after her first child was born. She also credits her mother as the one she learned from, matching her way of doing family food within her own family;

'My mother, she would be really, yes, yeah. What she did, I do really. I probably copied my mother. I rang her awful lot about how you cook lamb and how you cook meat and there was a lot of meat and vegetables the same as we used to have at home'.

Though she has also taken on a full-time caring role, Eve expresses ambivalence about spending too much time cooking, as was the norm in her family of origin.

Discontinuing food practices from the past as too time consuming she prefers to do basic food and spend more time in other pursuits (Knight et al, 2013:13);

'I don't know, I honestly don't like spending a lot of time preparing. I don't seem to have the patience. That's why I do basic food..., if I was doing a stew or... a stir fry I would go into the press and just trial and error... I do my own thing'.

While she has a traditional attitude to some aspects of her role she has moved on to adapt and create her method of feeding. She also believes in taking a break away from the routine on one day of the week where the food can be eaten in front of the TV.'

'Maybe once a week or whatever, there would be chips and nuggets or whatever and the younger kids love that. It's funny, rubbishy food, you would let them eat in other places, isn't that weird. I never thought of that before. I wouldn't let them have spuds and meat in there, no way'

Patricia (1) is married with two children. She is originally from an urban working class background where food was basic and scarce when she was growing up. She describes meals as *'potluck and very slapdash'*. Her mother had little time for cooking but she learned the basics of cooking from her and cooks the dishes that she knows for

her own family; *'I feel I kind of just stick with what I know, stick with traditional. Basically there wouldn't be too much difference between what I cook and my mother; except I probably do twice the amount she would [laughter]'*.

Cooking for Alison (16) is similar to Aine's experience. It is part of what she feels is an *internalised* aspect of her identity connected to a very strong sense of gendered responsibility that she identifies with, passed on by her mother to provide healthy meals;

'I suppose it's the inner thing as well, of feeling that you are feeding them properly, you know. Like I could be lazy and not do what I do, so it is the reward, it's knowing myself that I have fed them right ... I think I would just feel guilty that... they have had such bad food two days in a row. But I think that's stems from how you are brought up'

The meanings expressed around feeding work for Alison may be associated with her gendered identity connected to a sense of duty of caring based on *accountability* for doing what is seen as the right way to proceed, laid down by historical and institutional circumstances (West and Zimmerman: 2009:117).

For these respondents the meaning and understanding they attach to the formation of their gendered identity in the past, as mother centred, may have formed a key part of their taking responsibility for a traditional role of cooking as they reared their own families. This may be accounted for by stringent societal norms of the past, on what was seen as prescribed gendered roles in their family of origin, and of their mother in particular, as a strong role model for the skills, values, and practices they adhere to, at least in part, and adapting them in their own feeding routines. For some of the other respondents there is a sense of ambivalence in how they view mealtimes in the past, which influences how they carry out this work in their own lives.

As **Table 5.1** shows, the primacy of mothers as a major influence was not the experience of all respondents. For twenty participants influences on cooking and cooking skills are other centred, which may include a parent, in-laws, friends, husbands and travel. There are some distinct differences in how they learned to cook and it is an important element of their experience and response to this work, and their subsequent way of carrying it out in their own lives. A break with the past was evident in some cases where they had negative rather than positive experiences of family food. These respondents carry out their own way of nourishing, in which parents may have had an early input, but based more on other centred influences, in line with present day norms, and changing practices, incorporating some shared cooking roles (Lupton, 1994). For some, younger women and men, Irene (20), Joanna (23), Yvonne (33) Kellie (37) and David (35) gaining skills and an interest in cooking came from a variety of sources which may, or may not, have included their mother or father. Their different accounts show how the past relates to present enactment of gender roles and how meaning and values are variously incorporated and produced within the context of their individual lives.

5.4.2 Moving beyond tradition-‘doing’ gender roles

Traditional means of transmitting skills and gendered roles account for some of the responses in interviews. Alternative sources of learning to cook were also part of narratives of other interviewees and for some this altered their way of identifying with, and doing feeding work. For them there was no ordered transition from family of origin to established gendered responsibilities. The change may be accounted for by the fact that they grew up at a different time, not bound by strong traditional ties of the past. Yet this is also up for debate as international studies suggest that gendered

roles in contemporary societies continue to reflect a slow rate of alteration despite rapid levels of change in other areas of life (Crouch 1999; Aboim, 2010).

When asked about how they may have acquired cooking skills interviewees spoke of a diversity of experiences which nurtured their interest in food and cooking. For eleven of them learning to cook was a necessity and they were either self taught by experimenting and through some influence from family, in-laws, or friends. For nine others travel and friends were predominant influences. This way of acquiring cooking skills takes account of theories of gender identity which emphasise it as a practice constantly enacted within social relationships (Bradley, 2013; Lawler, 2008).

An alternative approach to gender roles in the work of West and Zimmerman on 'Doing Gender' has also advanced previous theoretical approaches to gender as a *'routine accomplishment embedded in everyday interaction'* (1987:125). Their theory is distinct from gender role theory which may be reflected in how traditional roles are enacted. They accept that there is accountability for specific ways gender roles are assigned from both institutional and historical organisational forces, but also argue that any changes in accountability may also shift orientations within social relations with consequences for *'doing gender'* differently (West and Zimmerman, 2009:118).

The following accounts show how interviewees experienced acquiring skills in cooking through varied means and influences, and how this is reflected in how they perceive and enact this role in their own lives.

5.4.3 Early responsibility and food work

Taking early responsibility for preparing family meals was part of the experiences of some interviewees. This difference is accounted for due to varied work patterns in their family of origin, where one or both parents were working during their childhood, changing the nature of gendered practices and influences in the home.

Shona (19) is married and expecting her first child. She works full-time as a care work professional. Cooking is a shared activity in her home, though she will cook if she is home first. Food during her childhood was basic, based mainly on a vegetarian diet. Her father, a vegetarian, was a key influence on the family's eating patterns when he took up cooking for them. *'It kind of changed. My Mam did when we were very young because she wasn't working. But then she went back to work when my youngest brother started school. So then it kind of got more divided and now my dad would do the majority of the cooking. And he did all throughout our teenage years'*.

Changes in the household routine resulted in increased levels of responsibility to help out; this was also expected from the children early on, regardless of gender, with jobs divided out between them. This factor may be seen as a strong influence on how Shona perceives gendered roles including cooking as shared activities rather than ascribed roles (Leonard, 2004: 78).

'Yeah, very much so but it wasn't only me, I'm the only girl and I've two brothers, but it wouldn't have been only me... we all would have been expected to do things'.

As a result, unlike other respondents for whom their mother was a role model, Shona's skills resulted from other intergenerational sources, including her Dad and her grandmother.

'My dad definitely, he would have done; he was much more into cooking than my Mam, I suppose my granny as well, when my Mam went back to work initially... I would have been, probably only ten or eleven and she called in every day after school and would have been showing me, how to peel potatoes and getting vegetables ready'

As a result she was a competent cook by the time she left home and the range of cuisine she cooks now is also influenced by past exposure to different foods and being allowed to experiment with new tastes and ways of cooking. When entertaining for family and friends at home she prefers to do the cooking, but as her role model she identifies principally with her Dad's skills to help her out rather than other females.

'Like my dad would arrive and he gets a job...because well you know if you are doing a roast he'd finish, he'd either cut the meat or he'd do the gravy or whatever'

Rosa (9) also took responsibility for meals early on and learned to cook with some early influence from her mother in her teens. She cooked when her mother went back to work, after her parent's marriage ended; *"I think probably by the time I was maybe about sixteen I would have been doing, a good bit of the cooking, yeah, because my mother was quite adventurous in preparing meals but, she didn't particularly like cooking"*

When she married she explained that cooking was part of a traditional role she was willing to take on in the early years of marriage as she wanted to 'create' family in a more traditional sense, influenced by intergenerational sources including her grandmother, as an alternative to her upbringing in a one parent household, drawing on her experience of family 'done' differently.

"I don't know whether really... when you get married first there's a kind of excitement really about doing all this ...I would have seen my grandmother cook quite a lot...and she would have been very traditional... because my own parents were separated, it was very important for me to have a family unit that was more traditional. So I think in the early days I was very happy to do that role because I wanted to create a family'.

Family obligation (Finch, 1989) and a sense of gendered responsibility were what drew Sonia (6) a young mother to learn to cook. She was a fussy eater as a child and disliked mealtimes. Her mother cooked but rarely sat down to eat with the family. When Sonia married she worked full-time until her second child was born and had little interest in, or time for cooking; *“when we bought our first house we were both working and we had no children so whoever was home first got the potatoes and put them in the microwave and found something in the freezer to go with it, very, horrible food. But when you are working and you only had half an hour to eat you don’t care, and you are not feeding children”*

Unable to find a suitable babysitter after her second child was born Sonia decided to give up work and this required learning to cook by necessity as part of the role of a full-time mother, which was the norm, with reluctance she took on this role; *‘ I learned to cook as a necessity. I had two children to feed and that’s the only reason I learned to cook. Yeah, I learned to cook because someone had to. My husband is can’t cook won’t cook, which is fair enough’*

While she appeared to accept this work as her responsibility, Sonia found the task daunting with a level of frustration that she had to take it on. Her experience was difficult as she had nobody to ask for help; *‘Kind of traumatic to be honest, I hadn’t a clue. Mam was dead just before I got married and I had no one to teach me. I just learned by books... I found it very difficult at first to try to feed two children I didn’t know what they ate, which was a bit scary’.*

She spoke of disliking the routine demands of cooking in the household, and the gendered role it entails. Cooking for other adults is where she gets most enjoyment, a

creative activity where she can experiment and exchange ideas with friends as part of a 'foodie' social circle; *'Sometimes on a Sunday evening we might invite people up and then I'll cook. But I will cook something adult; not with the kids... just adults...it's a social thing and because the people we know are food people they love cooking as well'*.

Cora (3) an older woman who is separated with a grown up family recounted that food was basic in her childhood and her mother was what she termed 'a bad cook'. She did not learn to cook until she married and needed to be able to feed her family. She learned by experimenting and went on to become a cook herself;

'I knew nothing about cooking till I got married to be honest. I learned to cook, my mother-in-law handed me a book from her GEC cooker and she said, anything you need to know you will find in that, and she was right. It taught you basic things like how to make a stew, how to make scones, how to make brown bread'

Early levels of responsibility and obligation in families reveal how individuals attach significance to acquired roles in different ways, both altering how they perceive and enact roles later in life but also how they adhere to a strong sense of responsibility to carry out the role of feeding others to create and sustain family life. It also reflects how familial ties and narratives of the past still exert significant influence on caring behaviour as individuals take on adult roles themselves.

5.4.4 Consuming cultures- alternative pathways to cooking

For nine others particularly younger participants, and from other cultures, interests in cooking is other centred and creative, in which different cuisines were explored and picked up while travelling abroad, or through experimenting with friends when they left home. Exposure to different cultures and developing an interest in food in this

way is also shown to create a shared focus on cooking, promoting greater gender equity in cooking roles (Bove and Sobal, 2006).

Kellie (37) is in her mid thirties, and married with two children. She works part-time and shares the role of cooking with her husband. Exposure to different types of cooking while travelling has been influential on her skills, *'I would say travelling was more influential than my parents cooking. I suppose I would have been interested in different cultures and different foods and that kind of thing so I suppose it was important, just tasting other things and then bringing that home yeah'*.

Irene (20) is married with one child and also learned to cook while working as an au-pair in France and travelling within different cultures, rather than from her family of origin. Food is a pleasurable activity she shares with her husband, and a way of relaxing with family and friends.

'I won't say my mother was really an influence because she never was that adventurous so I suppose travelling. I lived in France for two years and I loved the food there... I was an au-pair so I lived with a family so the way the mother in the house cooked, she would have been an influence'.

Joanna (23) from Poland is living in Ireland with her husband and son, and has picked up the skills of cooking from a variety of sources. She shares cooking tasks with her husband, *'I think it's my friends because where I go, I pick up something new, because we have friends from India and from Asia... now I can change it and I have some favourite internet websites and I take recipes from there, so internet and friends'*.

Laura (22) also credits a variety of other sources for teaching her about food rather than from an unhealthy diet at home in South Africa. She learned to cook food that she now enjoys to cook for her own family.

'I think first of all ...the way I was brought up, that was an influence, about what I don't want, and my mother was a very bad... she had a bit of a food problem in that she would over eat..., comfort eating and I think I took that from her...Then I moved to Europe ...and I saw how they cooked how healthy they ate and I realised I was almost vegetarian, and didn't like meat ... that influenced me on how they eat and then I moved in with friends ...and I learned a lot from the brother and sister that I lived with, ...she was very good at cooking. And then I sort of slowly developed'.

Moving beyond the local cultural influences has opened up broader attitudes to different cuisines and created a shared interest in food for some respondents' both with family and friends. It has also loosened the connection of food provision as part of caring and as solely the work of women to some extent. Analysis of traditional and alternative influences on the role of cooking and the meanings expressed also highlights how both continuity and change are part of how the role is perceived by those who carry it out. For some respondents it means holding on to traditional attitudes, beliefs, and a moral conception of what is the right way as the mainstay of how they engage with this work. For others, while tradition is one aspect of their experience, they cite other more diverse, creative means of acquiring skills, outside the familial, as in learning from other cultures, friends and by experimenting when cooking.

In most of the narratives food work is seen as an important aspect of their lives. The variety of cooking experiences recount how different pathways to acquiring skills reveal both a break in traditional modelling what were perceived as ascribed gendered roles based on care, alongside a varied re-connection with taking on roles as a necessity, to new forms of 'doing gender' (West and Zimmerman, 2009).

Acquiring skills and the significance of different pathways to cooking form one aspect of food work. Cooking is also seen as a central part of the daily routine both from the perspective of feeding others and as a ritual for the transference of social and cultural aspects of family life.

5.5 Eating rituals: Significance of the daily meal

A central aspect of food provision revolves around the daily main meal, or dinner. In discussion in interviews and responses from weekly food diaries in this research, a major amount of thinking about, planning, shopping and cooking goes into ‘getting the dinner’. When examined theoretically food and eating patterns are considered to possess symbolic meanings that are central to a sense of identity for both individuals and groups. Fischler (1988) argues that eating patterns within groups assert a sense of identity, both individually and collectively. Further, he argues that food is part of the transmission of culture from generation to generation, through the process of socialisation and internalisation of norms and values, and learning to perform social roles (Fischler, 1988: 279-80). De Vault (1991), in her research on feeding within the family from a social constructionist perspective argues that the social organisation of food in families as part of ‘care work’ contributes to women’s oppression. The role, she argues, could be carried out by anyone but has consistently been associated with women and contributes to ‘*an enduring association of caring activities with women in the household*’. Further, she contends that individuals when carrying out the work of caring in their own specific version of family life;

“draw on cultural ideologies of family life (though hardly any household actually looks like the cultural ideal). By doing so the work of ‘wife’ and ‘mother’, women quite literally *produce* family life from day to day, through their joint activities with others. By ‘doing family’ in traditional ways, household members sustain and reproduce the ‘naturalness’ of prevailing arrangements”

(De Vault, 1991:12-13)

These positions show food in culture as implicated in altering (through time and social change) and at the same time sustaining taken for granted social identities (through gendered ideologies). These varied perspectives on how food in families is theorised offer contesting visions of how it may be understood and are drawn on to explore how family meals may be perceived through the meaning assigned to them by those who carry out the work.

5.5.1 Family food: memory and meaning

When relating memories and thoughts from the past, some interviewees recounted vivid recollections of food occasions as mother centred, associated with care, warmth and close connection within family spheres. This is not to suggest that family life can be always displayed in this way. It occurred amongst particular interviewees as part of recounting the past in relation to family meals and how visions of the past may inform their present actions and attitudes in their own lives. For Lawler narratives of the past are in this way linked to the present and are interpreted and re-interpreted producing identities within '*webs of social relations*' (Lawler, 2008: 19). For other women, whose experience was of food scarcity, their memories are more negative yet recounted with an understanding of the limited resources open to their families in the past.

Jill (7) presents the past as a vision of warmth and closeness when recounting mealtimes as a child. This sense of connection as part of a family routine is of such importance, that she incorporates it into her way of carrying out family work of feeding in her own home:

'It was lovely. I was brought up in the country ...so we had a range and when I was younger my grandfather lived with us and he was always head of the table. And my mother and father, you know and all of us would sit down. Always, I think that is

where I got it from; always sat down for meals together...And always do you know, fighting sometimes,, it's the same as my own house now but always kind of happy and I always kind of remember being warm'

For Alison (16) also, mealtimes have an association with memories of eating together in the past and connecting with others, and as central to the work of family life for forging on-going relationships over food

' Yeah, well it's just from growing up, it's a way of knowing what another is doing, what's happening in their life, like if you don't sit down with your children to eat, ... and ask them well what did you do today. You are not going to get very much out of them.

Eve's (4) memory of the past associates eating with a conscious effort by her mother to create an atmosphere of sharing conversation; this was a gendered activity, carried out with the female side of the family rather than the male members;

'When we were young they were, I was the eldest of four so I remember my mother being very fussy about us all sitting at the table at a certain time ...it was nice to sit around and we would talk for ages after it. My Dad would leave the table and my brother but the girls would all stay, the girls and my mother would stay chatting''

Susan (5) an older woman associates food with the smells of cooking and being hungry as central aspects of eating together which she carries on in her home;

'I remember from home the smells of cooking and being hungry and sitting around together ... I find that there is so much more involved then, the sitting down together, there's the conversations, there's the taste, there's' the smells in the kitchen'.

The scenes recalled of family mealtimes in the past present a particular sense of family life and 'displaying' a sense of warmth, closeness, and connection where family was seen as a social unit, regular and unchanging with rules and conventions set in time and place. This understanding and recall of family life and mealtimes may be seen as narratives about family that are 'deeply cultural' and also convey a sense of how family meals reflect a traditional notion of what family life should be, and for these women an 'ideal' to be lived up to (James and Curtis, 2010:170.)

For some interviewees this was not the case where food was scarce within large families and mothers had to stretch resources to feed them all. Their experience of family life was more chaotic and less than ideal around meals, reflecting hardship for women trying to feed their family with varied skills and the lack of means to do so.

Cora (3) spoke of being from a large family living in Dublin at a time where fresh food was scarce and expensive, and her mother was a poor cook. Meals often were made from cheaper cuts of meat, or beef hearts, which she hated. However, mealtimes were consistent, and dinner was ready when they came in from school;

'You could nearly tell what day you were going to have what meat, you know that way. Sunday would be depending whether she could afford it or not, a choice of corned beef or heart, you know like a bit heart, a big cow's heart, But I hated it. I couldn't bear anything with fat... and I still have this thing and I think it's because a lot of meat, the cheaper cuts had a lot of fat on them, you know. She was consistent in regard to dinner... she was one of those type of mother; she would never let you down, but had no real imagination when it came to foods.'

As part of a large city based family of six children, close in age, Patricia (1) also spoke of her mother, who was very young getting married, having little skill or interest in cooking. As they grew up she depended on the older ones to help out;

No she was very slapdash altogether, I'd say it was just thrown into a pot and that was it then pot-luck. My Gran would have been alive then so she spent two days, she would go to see my nanny. So she would more or less leave it there and of course there were no microwaves so we probably just heated it up in a pot or something, a bit of stew or that. So my mother would leave an awful lot to us... as time went by and we got older, yeah'

Nora (14) came from a family of ten children. They lived in a semi-rural area in a small cottage where her mother cooked on a small Calor gas cooker and endeavoured to feed them all;

'I say now she was a great cook she could make a meal out of anything....stew was our main dish and bacon and cabbage of course. Meat was something you might have, but then again you mightn't. Sometimes we had porridge three times a day because there wouldn't be money to have food... it was hard on her...we didn't really realise how hard until we were older...we used to queue for our meal... then some sat in the kitchen, others in the hall, or in mother's bedroom...we took turns, you know'

The accounts of these women show how food work in the past varied depending on the resources and skills available to women and reflected in the level of hardship they experienced. Their memories of the past reveal how the past may also be implicated in how food work is interpreted and carried out in a contemporary context.

5.5.2 Family meals: socialisation and connection

Providing meals for many of the respondents goes beyond nurturing through food. Women spoke of the importance, particularly today, of forging strong bonds, of socialisation, communication, and connection through the medium of family meals. Many of the interviewees described sitting together at the kitchen table for the main meal in much the same way as they did when they were growing up with the kitchen as the central hub for this activity as it was in the past (O'Reilly, 2011). The majority of interviewees focused on the main meal (or dinner) as the most important when cooking for others. For some women this entailed meals mainly for family, for others this expanded to a larger social circle, particularly at weekends. However, the extent to which they were all able to partake in the main meal was varied over the week depending on work schedules, and family circumstances, with weekends mainly reserved for meeting extended family and friends.

The significance of the main meal is consistent with the work of Mary Douglas et al, (1974, 1975), who outlined how meals are structured, based on specific rules, and sequences with different participants depending on levels of connection and relationship. For other researchers the centrality of 'dinner' was confirmed as an ideal proper main meal. As a part of routine eating it also symbolically stands for the home

and the social relationships within it (Murcott, 1982, 1983a, 1983b; Charles Kerr, 1988).

Many of the interviewees viewed family meals as a central aspect of daily routine. For others this was not always possible due to work schedules and family circumstances. Kellie (37) a woman with a young family and working part-time expresses a concern to have family mealtimes as a regular part of the week. For her, the fact that they lead busy lives working makes it essential to have some time together as a family unit, and that eating a meal fulfils her idea of family time. This vision of family is constructed as what she sees is a 'proper' way for families to live and eat (Bourdieu, 1984);

'Oh yeah definitely, the ritual of us eating together is hugely important and like for the kids as well, it is a family time for us and we always eat around the table, we don't eat inside. And that's something I am very conscious of. I don't want us to be a family that sit in front of the TV that take the food and go in'.

When reflecting on her experience and how things have changed for her when her relationship ended, Katy (18) still considers food a central aspect of how she negotiates her social life and relationships with family, friends, and hospitality towards others. She spoke of associating food with forging bonds with family and friends and an intuitive way she can have an on-going relationship with her family and can connect into what they are interested in and significant events in their lives;

'I suppose you touch base with people, through ordinary conversation... and to pick up what's going on with different people's lives. It's good because you tend to see your parents in a fairly one dimensional kind of way, they're the doers of things, they're not normal people... So sitting down to eat is a good way to see what's going on and to see, my dad's interested in that, and if we hadn't sat down to eat, I would never have found that out'

Connection is also part of how Ella (31) a young single woman with one child explains what providing food means for her. With parenthood her interest in food and cooking has come to the fore. In her care for her son and she considers it vital to cook

his main meal when he is in crèche as a nurturing link with her. *'I have a son; he is two... you know since I had him, this thing of food really came back. I don't see him for the whole day so my cooking is the only thing that he senses of me during the day; it is the only part that I can still be with him in one way'*.

When discussing how they perceive food occasions, for many participants, most notably Rosa (9), Shona (19), Irene (20), Joanna (23), Sara (32), , Kellie (37) and David (35), it is associated with engaging in and often initiating socialisation and communication through both routine food practices and within relations with extended family, and friends, which may be seen as 'creating family' in a specific way, as part of forging bonds across the life course.

For Ella (31) as a lone parent getting together and connecting with friends around food is an important part of her social life; *'No it is the conviviality, it is the way, it is that idea of sitting at the table and chatting over some nice food and... maybe I had prepared it all, or people bring other stuff. I find it is just, it is really important for me'*.

5.5.3 Gender, emotional labour, and family display

Food may also be used by women as a means of emotional nurturance particularly when family life changes with fewer opportunities to forge social bonds and positive experiences (Hochschild, 1983; Dunscombe and Marsden, 1993). When discussing their own family practices, participants highlight aspects of family life that may be understood as specific to families. Finch (2007) sought to extend analysis of family life by looking at how activities of families portray ideas of what family is and what family does. While descriptive narratives only present a picture of specific events as a

snapshot family occasions, they do convey for these respondents how their family life portrays meaning for each other, as well as for outside observers. They also reveal how emotional labour is significant regardless of family formation and supports.

Collette (30) a single mother raising two children on her own, stresses the importance of food for the creation of memories and communication. She sees it as a central concern for the socialisation of boys because she considers that they are less inclined to talk freely and is concerned about their emotional growth in the future;

'particularly with boys, you know, I want to keep the communication thing going and there is only the three of us, just that there's family time of some degree, now I am usually sitting there going shut up and eat, like they would be jovial and I mightn't be but, ... just build in a routine and maybe build memory banks as well, ... because you just don't know. I mean boys, they tend to not maybe to talk as they get older and they don't really have a male figure in their life,, so just to keep those bonds strong... I am quite stressed all the time between money and everything else, so I am sort of nearly setting this as a rule that eventually it will be more pleasurable... that we can build up to that. Yeah, planting the seeds for future friendship between the three of us... because I look forward to the day when the three of us can go places and be chatting, but if I don't put in the groundwork that is not going to happen'.

Orla (27), also on her own rearing two boys, considers eating together is important both for connecting with them and forging relationships both in the present and for the future, but also educating them to handle social issues as they are growing up:

'Even though I am on my own I would have got them to sit at the table from very young. Because I continually work at it and there is more communication, you find out more of what's going on, you are involved in conversations, even if some days they don't talk, you can tell it they are moody by, body language.

She spoke about the tensions and moods they go through as they are growing up, so for her having meals is about socialisation and instilling healthy options and choices along with keeping the channels of communication open with her children.

'It just means getting together it means company, it means finding out things particularly where my sons are concerned, and I think it's good because they'll carry that on. You see what it really is when my son was younger it was really important because drink is problem in the country. I was trying to associate having a drink with food because I used to say to him if you want a beer I will give a beer, you know'

Eve (4), also reflecting on mealtimes growing up explained that communication was a key part of eating together. This aspect of food work is also strongly gendered and involves the responsibility of women for emotional labour by their endeavours to create strong social and emotional bonds (Oakley, 1993). She expresses an idealised vision of mealtimes from the past which associates meals with communication and, and has endeavoured to re-produce this in her own family;

'It was about your day and you would let off about your day and my mother would talk about what she did and Dad would, Dad wouldn't talk as much, as Mam and the women did... it would tend to be about the teachers in the school and then as we got older it was about work and waiting for the bus or cycling home whatever. You know there were stories told at the table. They were great. It was a great communication unlike my husband's family which was all boys and the mother and they used to come out and just eat and they were allowed to leave the table'.

She has taken on this role with her own family also, as her husband comes from a background where communication was minimal and she voiceded concerns to create an atmosphere where her sons will chat and socialise around the table. She showed a strong belief in teaching her family to socialise and express themselves, while at the same time understanding that it cannot be forced ;

'And I must say that is what I miss here because I'm living with four men. So I try to time, I actually do time them when we are sitting and I say you must sit for at least ten or fifteen minutes, and 'how was your day, what were the good things that happened or the bad things that happened? And I do that maybe three, four times a week'.

This role that many women take on involves having responsibility for the emotional aspects of family life, along with the work of feeding, and thus requires an array of skills and insights into the needs of others (Ribbens, 1994; Morgan, 1996). Alison (16) when reflecting on the role, believes, based on her own upbringing, it is a bigger commitment, one in which (as argued by de Vault, 1991:90) the woman literally 'produces family'; *'I think the woman creates the home and the atmosphere in the*

home... If I didn't do any of that they would eat rubbish and maybe we wouldn't all sit down together you know...it's just from growing up'.

The ideology of selflessness is also conveyed in how women learn from the past, from how their own mothers portrayed sacrificial traits of looking after everyone else first, and how this is passed down to their daughters as a gendered way of caring for others (Cancian, 1987). As Connie (28) points out it is an aspect of motherhood, one she is somewhat ambivalent about;

'I suppose it is a kind of a nurturing thing, it's your instinct to like, to feed, or it's to show your love... because you kind of think of that from your parents, you know from your mother. Even though she mightn't tell you she loves you but you know that's a way of showing it. It's like I always remember..., my mother, and I see it in Stephen's mother, they will always give you the best, I can remember my mam, I was really fussy and I can remember her giving me the nice chicken and she would have the bad bit..., or giving you the most, she might have a small portion or somebody arrived in and she'd always leave herself. And I suppose it is what you would do, you know'.

Eileen (38) a woman who is married with two young children and works full-time believes family meals should be taken together as this was the way she experienced meals when she was young. She is trying to re-create it in her own family and described how, as much as possible they do as they see so little of the children during the day; *'Mealtime is family time, as such, eating is family time'*

'We try to sit together, it doesn't always work out but we try. My husband feels as strongly as I do that because we see so little of them during the week, you know that half an hour or twenty minutes to sit together and talk about things. We put the baby in a booster seat so he can be at the table too so now like it's the four of us at the table together and we try to make a family time out of it'

Mealtimes that are set aside as a specific time in which Jill (7) and her family can all be together having a family dinner at weekends are particularly associated with being exclusive and special to family life. As she explained;

'It is a lovely atmosphere... Michael is never with us really except at the weekends, so it's me and the children all the time because of the hours he works. And, on Sunday...we light our candles... and we have our tablecloth on and there is never; it is called family day because we don't allow any friends in and they are not allowed to go to anyone else's house on a Sunday and the Sunday dinner was a big thing. So we would always do a starter and do dessert because we don't really have dessert during the week. I think it is extra special as well on Sunday because Michael is with us'

The private routine of family meals is also, for Sara (32) who works full-time, a time where the events of the day and any special announcements are discussed, displaying family time as an intimate space in which family members have a sense of belonging and importance and where each can share the events that happened with each other.

'I think the best thing about cooking for the family is that it brings us all together and we all sit down together and from the time they were small it was always the time, that we all sat down, had the chat, when they were very young going to school, it was always talk about what happened in school, who did what, and there was always big banter at the table...even now as they are older, there is always chatter about what things have happened during the day...if you had something to tell them it is nearly always the time when... say if we were going on holidays, it would be at the dinnertime we would tell them or if we were doing something... going away for the weekend or whatever it might be, it is nearly always told at the dinner table'

The effort that families put in to make space for getting together around food indicate the level of importance it has. Jan (36) a working mother of two children sees getting together for food as based on her upbringing and is continued even when it not always easy, with work schedules, she explained;

'that is probably just what I'm used to really- I don't know now but maybe when we get older, you have your chats when you are sitting down- like at home definitely the kitchen would have been the centre- we would have sat around the table even if you weren't eating, so I suppose, or after food, you would sit down and talk- so at the moment I wouldn't see it as very enjoyable because you are spooning for somebody on either side but I think it is good practice really'.

For Yvonne (33) making an effort to sit together for meals creates a sense of wellbeing, security, and satisfaction that they are providing for their family

'I kind of made it that way, without really thinking about it when we are sat down together I really like that feeling. I am trying to think what sort of feeling it is, maybe

it is thinking back to when you were a child yourself, yeah I like the feeling of the four of us together and there is something rewarding about putting food on the table for the kids ... the fact that we are providing for them and, yeah, it is like our little family time together, because we are all so busy. So yeah I like it because it is that time where it's usually just the four of us and there is something kind of safe about it'.

The positive aspects of family meals expressed by some women are not part of the reality of others respondents who through varied circumstances had negative experience of this aspect of family life.

5.5.4 Loss of family cooking role

The centrality of family life and routines for some women brings a strong sense of loss when family life ends highlighting the influence it retains despite change over time. Family meals and communication were always important to Nora (14). From large close knit family she has strong memories of being surrounded by loving parents and close bonds with siblings. As a separated mother of one son, now twenty years old, she spoke about the acute sense of loss she experienced when her marriage broke down;

'And I always felt if we had one day where the three of us could sit down you know like and talk, yeah it was important to me but it never really worked that way. You know where you might get it once, you wouldn't get it for a long time again, and that's the way that was...this bringing in dinners and watching television, there is no conversation, there's no nothing ...that happened a lot with us...

Katy (18) spoke of the negative side of how family eating together may be important to mothers who bring the family together and the loss that is felt when it changes;

'The negative side is that it becomes extremely important to you and when it's not so important to other people, you can be very disappointed that people don't give it the same amount of meaning that you might. I see that in my mother an awful lot, she would try to get us all together for dinner, and it'd be a job to get us all together because someone would be out or someone else arrives late and I would see the disappointment in my mother'.

The loss of roles strongly associated with nurturing is keenly felt by women who have committed themselves to do this work. They show the extent to which commitment to the work of cooking and caring in families may go beyond the work itself to a deeper attachment of gendered emotional labour and meaning at the heart of personal relationships. There may also be a power struggle to hold onto and control this important element of family life even in the event of inevitable change over time.

These perspectives related to family food provision reveal a representation of different views, ideals, emotional labour, and aspirations that parents express and endeavour to achieve at least on some occasions with their families. However, as the analysis so far suggests, the work of feeding in families is carried out and influenced also by how individuals perceive and enact the role of feeding, along with the extent to which it is shared or not within a gendered division of labour. In part, it is also affected by life course stage where some respondents tend towards traditional mother centred roles based on caring within a gendered division of labour. By contrast other respondents with expectations based on equality of opportunities tend to be other centred and experiential in their orientation. However, as their individual accounts reveal, neither of these orientations are clear cut with mixed experiences of gendered influences and accountability, along with similarities in practices taking place.

5.6 Family practices: daily meals

As this research is focused on family food provision, it is centrally concerned with practices surrounding this work. In theorising what constitutes practices, in this case cooking practices, Alan Warde (2013) sees cooking as a complex practice which involves social organisation. Eating practices involve four aspects, food supply, cooking, organisation of meal, and judgement of taste. He argues that as a complex

practice involving different components making meals is increasingly difficult to organise as a regular collective practice (Warde in Shove and Spurling, 2013: 23-25). These ideas are relevant to understanding the organisation and practices of eating family meals. As Warde (2013) points out the work of food provision in families contains a number of organisational stages.

When examining eating practices my focus was on routine family meals within households, the work involved in providing them, how they were carried out on a daily basis over a weekly period. It involved different aspects of planning, shopping, cooking, and timing, in relation to how mealtimes take place within households daily along with who was present or absent. Any factors which impinge on, alter, or support how routine family meals are carried out were also explored. **Table 5.2** provides a summary of typical mealtime patterns according to days of the week including changes that occur at weekends. Respondents' reflections on each stage of food provision were examined based on interviews, food diaries, and participant observation of routine food shopping. As I discuss in more detail below, the family lives of participants present both similarities and differences in relation to gender, age, marital status, class, employment status, parenthood, number, and age of children.

Table 5.2. Typical family dinner arrangements Monday to Thursday, by participant family status

Family type	Monday to Thursday*			Fridays and Saturdays			Sundays		
	One parent eats with children	Two parents each with children	Couple eats without children	Traditional family dinner	Take out/ fast food	Partner cooks dinner	Participant cooks traditional dinner	Partner cooks dinner	Visit family or dine out
Two parents children under 18	9	15	0	8	13	3	14	3	7
Lone parent children under 18	4	N/A	N/A	3	1	N/A	2	N/A	2
Couple, no children under 18	1	1	3	2	3	0	4	0	1
Lone parent, adult children	3	N/A	N/A	5	0	N/A	3	N/A	2
Totals	17	16	3	18	17	3	23	3	12

- Aine (2) and Cora (3) not included because they have varied arrangements and sometimes eat dinner alone

Organisation of mealtimes also reveals similarities and differences in how participants eat together during the week. As **Table 5.2** shows for the thirty eight participants different patterns of mealtimes occur over a weekly period. The ten participants' who are married with young children, and do not work outside the home, either eat with the children or later with their spouse due to variable work schedules. Seven lone parents eat a meal with their children, in one case a snack supper as the child has dinner in crèche. Some participants also spoke of cooking meals for two days at a time, adjusting the main meal, changing an ingredient or liquidising food to suit children's tastes. A further seven families with one parent working all eat their

evening meal together. Where both parents work full-time, or part-time, three had dinner together, whereas for five others it varies depending on work schedules. Flexibility of work schedules, and part-time working facilitated shared time for eating together for some parents (Moen and Yu, 2000). Three participants without children eat together most nights depending on work commitments. Two women with young adults living at home have varied mealtimes over the week and may also eat alone. The data reveal a commitment to eating together on a daily basis from Monday to Thursday. How this works out in practice varies in families where work commitments impinge on family time. Having a family meal is also reliant on one parent being at home to prepare food and for a number of families, eating this meal with their children. In families with very young children meals were adapted and provided at an earlier time to facilitate bed-time. In some families, regardless of whether either parent is working or not, or on different work schedules, or are parenting alone, they create time to eat a meal together. For parents who work full-time and whose children eat in a crèche, they endeavour to eat a snack or supper with their children in the evening. The routine around food work changed from Friday to Sunday with significant differences around food provision which could have variations from week to week.

In interviews and diaries twenty two participants recounted a break away from weekday routines on Friday in which a take away, convenience, and fast foods were eaten instead. For a number of families children were allowed to eat their food watching television (Patricia (1), Eve (4), Sonia (6), Karen) (12), and thirteen parents have a separate take away meal later. Some families did not cook a meal on Saturday which was often taken up with sports activities. Instead they either had rolls and soup

or take away food. Other families cook either traditional or special dishes over the weekend, or they may eat out. While there is no set pattern for the weekend, some interviewees (Sonia (6), Irene (20), and Yvonne (33)) spoke of going visiting, or having family or friends to their house for a meal. On these occasions a meal was cooked specifically for the adults and the children ate a separate meal of pizza or nuggets and chips as a 'treat' on these occasions. Nine husbands often cooked meals on Saturday or Sunday and twenty eight participants spoke of having a family meal which may include visitors on Sundays.

The analysis of food practices in this research suggest both similarities and differences when compared with a recent study carried out by Brannen, O'Connell and Mooney (2013), which found that a sample of British dual earners experienced significant difficulties in synchronising work schedules in order to eat together during the week due to timing problems based around family routines, activities, and food preferences. This study differs insofar as the sample includes a greater number of stay-at home parents, lone parents, and a smaller number of dual earners or shift workers. This means that the interviewees in this study exhibited greater co-ordination of mealtimes and a regularity of eating a main meal together most days of the week.

A second difference is shown in the provision of one main meal which most of the family eats at least some of, or adapts to suit children's ages and preferences. There are similarities in relation to overall responsibility of mothers for cooking and for adapting their time schedules to suit family schedules, and also with respect to the number of fathers who do not eat with the family during the week, together with a

significant loosening of family meal provision at weekends. Yet making meals at weekends also shows a desire to connect with and socialise over food with family and friends. Overall, there remains a strong commitment to eat together in families in this study, which work around activities and schedules where possible. However, a strong reliance on gendered work is also evident where stay at home mothers to continue the work of nurturing and caring labour within a system based on unequal policies for a gender balance in caring commitments (Williams, 2004).

5.7 Conclusion

This chapter examined the varied ways in which cooking in families is taken up and understood by women and some men. For some participants the role is mother-centred where skills were learned and strongly focused on caring labour. Other participants take their influences from other-centred experiences which shape how they identify with differently with cooking. How food work is carried out shows the interplay between a complex range of meanings, values, and practices and how they are given prominence for some women whereas others come to cooking in varied ways with implications for how they 'do' gendered work.

The significance of sitting together for a daily meal is highlighted in this chapter. Considerable weight is put on this ritual as central to family life, nurturance and connection. Eating as a family practice, broadened out to include a wider circle of individuals, is also implicated in emotional labour, involving efforts to forge socialisation, connection and positive experiences of eating together. Family is also displayed as a specific ways of being and doing family things. Loss of this 'ideal' is felt most keenly by those mothers who invest heavily in it physically and emotionally.

The routine for family practices in food provision is consistent for most families from Monday to Thursday with some variation over the weekend. Families endeavour to eat together most evenings where provision of this meal is reliant mainly on the work of women. There is a loosening of routines from Friday to Sunday shown by eating differently, visiting, activities and getting together with family and friends.

Chapter six is concerned with the specific work involved in feeding. It examines how provisioning- planning, shopping and cooking are carried out. The focus is on the perspective of those who do the work of cooking, and the varied levels of knowledge, skills, and decision making power they use. It explores how contradictory advice within health and nutritional discourse and food policies along with a lack of trust in global food production and marketing impact on and create pressures and concerns on those responsible for food provision in families.

Chapter Six:

Representations of women's work as food providers

6.1 Introduction

Cooking for family today involves a significant amount of planning and decision making taking account of perspectives that did not exist in the past. Global food production, marketing and supply chains battle for position daily to win customers to buy their products. In urban areas an array of supermarkets are within easy reach, each offering inducements to get customer business. As we saw in Chapter five the organisation of daily meals must also take into account increasingly complex daily routines of family life. Those responsible for feeding others also have the task of choosing what and where to buy food that will suit their family's taste and budget. Women have been at the centre of this work in the past and continue to take the main responsibility for this work today (Lynch and McLaughlin, 1995). At a time when work demands are part of everyday life, how individuals go about negotiating and carrying out this work is the focus of this chapter.

Cooking for others in a family setting constitutes one aspect of caring work or 'love labour' within the private sphere (Lynch, 2007). To explore this work a life course perspective is used to represent the various views of participants spanning different age ranges, family organisation, class, and occupations. The focus is on the micro process of thinking about, planning, shopping, and cooking food within the household. Significant responses are based on reflections of participants, based on their own perspectives, and themes that arose as they described, displayed and carried out the various elements of this work. When discussing different perspectives use is

made of narratives from interviews, food diaries, and participant observation of routine grocery shopping trips. The layout of the chapter is as follows. I begin by exploring perceptions of women who undertake caring work for families specifically by nurturing through food work and how this role creates specific representations of women.

6.2 Images of women- From housewife to domestic goddess

In contemporary Ireland images of women cooking and caring for families are changing. Though vestiges of the past remain in portrayals of women as idealised national icons of self sacrifice in their domestic role (Ryan, 2002), and a controlling force in the lives of family members, the purpose of these portrayals today is often commercial and they have gained popularity specifically for marketing purposes. Recent advertising campaigns favour nostalgic images of motherly women providing food as an effective means for selling a wide range of products including butter, tea, meat, pasta, and electricity. Through a variety of mediums the image the ‘Irish Mammy’ is shown as an iconic figure, a holder of strong opinions, who exerts a powerful influence on others. While these images are used for commercial purposes, they also portray a connection between women and selfless caring within the realm of home and family. Further, they link women as ‘housewives’ to the commercial world of consumption.

Similarly, cookery programmes on television, portray women possessing creative cooking skills in a manner that links glamour with the notion of a fulfilling role within a domestic setting. Series featuring Rachel Allen and Nigella Lawson are at the forefront of this genre. Both programmes, located within a family setting connect

home with positive comforting experiences of food and care. According to Gatrell (2005), Lawson's portrayal of cooking in this setting, constructs the notion of women having one been at the heart of family life, and having abandoned it, needing to reclaim it, when she states,

'I do think that many of us have become alienated from the domestic sphere, and that it can actually make us feel better to claim back some of that space... we don't want to feel like a post-modern, post-feminist, over stretched woman but, rather, a domestic goddess, trailing nutmeggy fumes of baking pie in our languorous wake,

(Lawson, 2000: vii, in Gatrell, 2005:69).

Despite the fact that the realities of family life for women rarely match any vestiges of this portrayal it is ideal for marketing purposes. Recent studies on mothers, marketing, and perspectives on consumption, also focus on diverse conceptions of motherhood and the varied ways in which images of motherhood are portrayed through consumer goods. They examine how women as mothers variously go about 'doing' motherhood, shaped by diverse norms and perceptions through consumerism surrounding mothers and mothering roles (O' Donohue et al, 2014: 2-3).

While these images are variously focused on commercialism and entertainment they also present contrasting views of how the work of women in families is used to represent ideas associating them with responsibility for the physical and emotional well-being of others (Lynch, 2007). When contrasted with how this role is perceived within official discourse the difference is significant. Overall, when looking at the role of women caring for families, this work is part of invisible labour, unseen, privatised, and taken for granted in the public sphere. In addition, contemporary discourse associated with parental roles does not reflect an in-depth engagement with the realities of family life today. Official government reports favour a gender neutral stance when discussing aspects of parenthood and caring work. State funded

guidelines, public policy literature, and studies on health, food, and nutrition for families, for example, tend to present general trends with little tailored discourse for lay people or focus on promoting egalitarian gendered practices (Slán Report, 2007; Growing Up in Ireland Survey, 2007; North South Nutrition Survey, 2001).

In other instances as Collins (2006) points out, official discourse targets women as food providers negatively, as those responsible for food hygiene lapses. A focus by *safe*food Ireland in a television campaign on food safety at Christmas used images of women specifically, showing them in a negative light and as the stereotypical individual bearing responsibility for family health (Collins, 2006, 96-101). In this way the work of providing food and nurturing families often remains one sided, part of an invisible gendered supportive network outside the general focus of policies or debate.

While it is doubtful that many women identify with commercial images and caricatures of caring roles, what would a realistic portrayal of people who do the work of caring for, and feeding their families look like? In reality this work has changed as the lives of those who take on responsibility for their families adjust to take account of living in present day Ireland in which they increasingly juggle family caring duties with full-time or part time work roles.

Social theorists argue that caring work does not feature as 'real' work, as it is not part of work undertaken for pay (Lynch, 2007). This understanding of work has historical roots where the focus on work predominantly centred on employment in the public sphere, and the work of men. In contrast, the work of caring for and feeding others in

family settings has been primarily carried out by women (Kittay, 1999; Daly 2001, Delphy and Leonard, 1992).

In Ireland images of women in this role are made visible in accounts from the past to the present day in political, religious, and social contexts of media, literature, poetry and song. Historically, as we saw in Chapter One, a host of prescriptive literatures, both lay and religious, relating to household skills flourished in the nineteenth and early twentieth century. They were aimed at women from all walks of life, promoting virtuous values of hard work, diligence, and selflessness. Females were trained in skills considered appropriate to household duties of caring for others. In formal education, curriculum subject choices for girls were geared towards areas compatible with what was assumed to be their future role. Advancement in acquiring skills and expertise in managing domestic resources were seen to confer a level of power on women within households (Beale, 1986; Luddy, 1995; Bradley, 1999a).

6.2.1 Images of women as consumers

Focusing on this work in contemporary society Miller (1995) contends that the image of women in this stereotypical role, while declining, also epitomises many contradictions of contemporary consumer power. He argues that while women may no longer carry out the role of primary consumer in households through shopping practices, as men increasingly may take on this task; *'she continues to stand as image of consumer decision-making...and there remain vast numbers of women for whom such generalisations may usefully be retained as a description of the obligations they are required to fulfil'*. Further, women as consumers, rather than being seen as wielding a level of power through their choices, or acting as individualistic rational shoppers, are seen to act in accordance with their level of knowledge, experiences and

skills to extract the best value, and meaning, *'to create through consumption the moral and affective qualities that sustain and reproduce social relations'* (Miller, 1995: 8, 34-37).

In contrast, Chapman (2004) when exploring arguments connected to gendered roles and power relations, argues that while ideological role assumptions underpin ideas of what constituted a 'breadwinner' or 'homemaker' are linked by perceptions of 'masculinity' and 'femininity, these assumptions are subject to change. As societies change, power relationships in wider society impact on domestic practices and these in turn are subject to renegotiation by women and men. (Chapman, 2004: 20). When connecting these perspectives to research into women's roles in the household, the evidence suggests that patterns of autonomy and decision making, power and agency, are in evidence. Thus while subordination and inequality in both public and private spheres may persist for women and continue to impact on their lives the argument put forward in this chapter shows how the work associated with food provision varies according to personal knowledge, agency, and circumstances along with influences from the past, and prevailing trends in cultural, economic, social, and political spheres.

6. 3 Representations of women's food work

The analyses in Chapters Four and Five show that women continue to take on principal responsibility for the domestic sphere and food work within changing social contexts where higher levels of personal autonomy are expected as a result of education and employment opportunities. As outlined in the previous chapters equality in gendered roles is not fully realised and women are often 'torn' between

their commitments to family responsibilities alongside a desire for ‘a life of their own’. The focus of this chapter is concerned with how individuals understand and negotiate their commitments to cooking for others in practice, utilising the beliefs, skills and knowledge that underlie this work.

6.3.1 Food provision as ‘love labour’

The work of feeding others is a time consuming practice which takes effort and skill. While not all the respondents expressed a specific interest in cooking, they all had a commitment to give those they care for the best possible diet they can provide. This attitude is consistent with an understanding of this work as part of ‘love labour’ as outlined by Lynch (2007). The features of this work involve a mental, physical and moral commitment along with emotional attachment and concern. As it takes place within a context of caring relations it is also undertaken to support and sustain those in relationships of dependency, especially where there are children. Lynch argues that the features of ‘love labour’ – mutuality, commitment, trust and responsibility make it distinct from other forms of care (i.e. general care work, solidarity work) showing why its centrality to primary relationships at specific times, may render it non-commodifiable (Lynch, 2007:550, 557). When bringing this understanding to the work of food provision as a specific aspect of caring labour, consideration must also be taken of how it is connected to wider global food production contexts which also have a bearing on this particular work.

6.3.2 Global contexts of food provision

In the past, the bulk of food in Ireland was locally produced and purchased, where consumers had some knowledge of the source of their food. This process has shifted for many commodities creating a separation between production and consumption. Providing food in a family setting today takes place within three social contexts; the

intimate, where individuals are nurtured through food; the locality where food is sourced; and the global, where influences impact on, and can in turn be influenced by how and what, individuals may choose to eat.

Within families early food experiences are developed and sustained. Household diet, as part of an economic production/consumption process, is also connected to a greater extent to understanding the nature of food, of food properties, and nutritional benefits to promote health, family cultural routines, food safety, security and monitoring.

Through changing political contexts globalization has wrought many alterations in food production and supply loosening it from local to global markets. As outlined in chapter two changes in the scale of production practices, and processing technologies, also led to the creation of industrialised foods. These changes have resulted in a distance between consumers and the processes of production (Busch, 2004).

Predominantly in the Western world international consumer tastes dominate demand for specific foods, influencing production patterns for growing produce, particularly in developing countries, affecting global ecological balances in cultivation (Goodman and Redcliff, 1991: 29).

Outlining the political relevance of food, Lien (2004) points to a number of connections. Food is significant biologically because unlike other products it is literally transformed when consumed, becoming a part of the body system.

Insufficient food makes individuals vulnerable in this way as firstly, '*food is entrenched in structures of subordination, governance and domination*'; secondly, food and eating as routine practices are a medium for expressing distinctions and meaning symbolically within structures of power and inequality '*as a symbolic system*

of meaning , food is both structured and a structuring force ; thirdly, the development of '*nutritional science*' to enhance bodily functions and abilities brings food into the realm of '*preventive medicine*'. When food is seen in this way as nutrition; '*it serves also as a structuring agent in relation to food choice*'. In a larger context, the use of scientific nutritional advice and healthy eating regimes may in turn be in conflict with the interests of agriculture, food industries, and governments' food policies (Lien, 2004: 6-7).

From these understandings of the food system, responsibility for feeding others takes place within the context of a global food market where food production and supply has developed to such an extent that it is possible to access a vast variety of foods from across the world and also foods grown outside traditional seasonality.

Industrialisation of food has also brought about a proliferation of convenience foods and to an extent a homogenisation of taste across cultures (Delpeuch et al, 2009).

Other perspectives on food highlight concerns about the extent to which food industries influence what individuals eat with implications for health and wellbeing (Nestle, 2007). These factors have increasing relevance for domestic food provision. As a result while access to reliable wholesome foods is considered to have improved overall, there are also significant concerns about food risks within public battles to replace older production models with ones based on biology and food technologies (Lang and Heasman, 2004, 3). Concerns are also expressed about increased health risks due to food scares in this system, along with the proliferation of a vast array of choices, which create anxiety about what to eat (Lupton, 2000). In addition, a growing trend of food marketing using subtle and technologically advanced means,

aimed specifically at children, are also creating new issues within a 'risk society' (Beck et al, 1992). Outlining the growing epidemic of obesity Kline (2011) argues that personal choices surrounding food require increased knowledge to navigate competing marketing strategies aimed at consumers, particularly children (Kline, 2011:15).

The extent to which these factors are understood and have influence within local family contexts has consequences for domestic food work. How food provider's deal with the many decisions associated with feeding others varies according to personal autonomy, knowledge, levels of skills, life stage, along with the way they negotiate their gendered commitments. The manner in which individuals commit to and undertake the work of food provision is the focus of this chapter.

Four main perspectives are identified from focus groups, interviews, food diaries and participant observation carried out in relation to all aspects of food work. Each perspective foregrounds a number of important themes emerging over each phase of the research process;

- Provisioning: planning, purchasing and trust
- Food knowledge, timing, choices and control of food
- Health and nutrition: discourse and pressures
- Globalisation of food: knowledge and consumption

6. 4 Provisioning: planning, purchasing and trust

From the outset taking on the task of feeding others is, to a greater or lesser extent, part of a routine for the majority of interviewees. In Chapter Four we saw that taking on the responsibility for food work mainly occurred when relationships entered a

formal commitment phase in which couples were sharing a home and there were dependent children requiring care (Beagan, et al, 2008). The outlook and attitudes of interviewees without children reflect their perspective of not being responsible for others in this aspect of their lives. Instead they had a varied approach to meals, including cooking for themselves, sharing a meal where they both contributed, cooking for each other and friends, or eating out. Individual choices are also more prevalent in this group than taking into account the wishes of others.

In the case of lone parents in this study, the task of feeding was sometimes shared by both parents Karen (12) and Katy (18), but other lone parents took the responsibility for feeding their children alone. Amongst all participants with children the task of catering for the food requirements of a family involves a considerable commitment on a daily basis. Making meals is a fundamental part of their daily routine. Their accounts provide an understanding of the level of care, knowledge, and skills they use to ensure that their families are provided with the best diet they are capable of giving them. Just as the interviewees present as a diverse groups in terms of ages, skills, and social circumstances how they go about this work has similarities and also variations that reflect their social circumstances, uniqueness, and personal agency.

6. 4.1 Planning and purchasing

Planning, shopping, and daily cooking involve both mental and physical preparation. Participants' accounts from interviews and food diaries discussed the routine of daily shopping to buy fresh produce along with weekly purchasing for staple items. A primary focus for many women was providing a daily main meal. Respondents generally displayed a high level of organisation and skill in forward planning to cater for a variety of different household situations. For some of the older participants however this work was so much part of routine family life that it was dismissed as,

'just something I have done for so long now, I don't have to think too much about it...just get on with it' Patricia (1). Others with a limited budget find it a source of anxiety trying to provide healthy food with limited resources (Karen, 12, Collette 30). For the majority of women being organised and planning ahead was a common feature of their accounts when discussing how they go about deciding what to cook each day. A process of thinking about meals and budgeting were a central part of preparing the diet for families. Many plan a weekly shopping trip but as diaries and interviews reveal, they also shop on a daily basis, particularly for meat or vegetables for the main meal. Diary accounts indicate that shopping is thought about early in the day and carried out when children go to school in order to prepare a daily meal to fit in around sports or after school activities. Amongst individuals who work outside the home, and whose children do not have meals provided by child minders or a crèche Jill (7), Doreen (15), Jan (36) planning is more rigorous, where meals have to be organised over a weekly period, with some prepared in advance.

For other women, particularly those who work to a strict weekly budget, finance dictates where they shop and the variety of foods available to them. Shopping is organised to take account of essential purchases' first, and any incidental or individual choices were included or excluded depending on the budget surplus. Collette (30) a single mother with two children operates on a strict budget as she has limited finances. She spoke of planning her shopping carefully using a list of what she needs to buy; *'I would be making my shopping list and I suppose I don't have much money either... and I have started shopping in Aldi now because I get a lot more fruit and vegetables and like they are good with that type of stuff'*.

Monetary constraints dictate how, where and what she buys, and also unessential purchases are carefully monitored to occasional treats.

'I am looking now, I cleared out the fridge; they had chicken dippers for breakfast. I am very conscious of using up everything, but making sure, like I don't buy sweets really, there is a new rule now sweets on a Friday. So I would be conscious of what they are getting'

Managing on a reduced budget was also an important criterion for those who gave up paid employment to care for their family. A number of women Nessa (25), Emma (26) and Connie (28) who previously were in employment spoke of how operating within a restricted household budget on one salary made them very conscious of prices, and of finding the best value within the limits of their finances. For May (24), it was a difficult transition from not having to be concerned about prices to finding where she can get the best value;

'Looking for value...when you are looking at the cost of shopping and you are looking at the cost of a particular item, now I am very aware of prices, definitely before the kids arrived ...and there was two incomes coming into the house, it didn't matter how much a pint of milk was, it was just bought on the way home... any shop it didn't matter. But now I can tell you, it is down to the penny, I know exactly'.

Beth (11), also found that she was unaware of prices when working, but has become very conscious of finding good food at reasonable prices and will shop around for the best value, going to a number of different stores for specific items. When I accompanied her on a main shopping trip to Lidl, as part of participant observation, she adopted a set route along the aisles noting any special offers, while also sticking closely to what she needed to buy from her list. Economy is a priority for her but also trust in the quality of food to feed her growing family. She struck a balance between buying healthy foods and also allowing for occasional needs for her family;

"And ...because now with a family of six I do feel in the last few years the small piece of meat you were getting has now become a bigger piece... I go to the butcher for better value... the vegetable and fruit and all that in Lidl's is absolutely brilliant, it is

very reasonable... then I go to Tesco for yogurt and different things, every two or three weeks”

Despite her admission that cooking is not something she ever took an interest in preferring instead to be an ‘outdoor girl’, she has learned the basics, mainly from her husband. She is committed to providing home cooked meals and treats as she feels it is part of the fabric of family life, and important for the health and well-being of her family.

For Rebecca, (34), a change in circumstances has led to her husband taking on caring duties while she works. As the one who was the main planner and meal provider in the past she has taken on a ‘guidance’ role to assist him in his new tasks. As an accomplished cook and organiser she finds it difficult to just let him get on doing meals; instead she still retains the main responsibility for food work. She is economical and plans shopping and meals ahead:

‘I would still do the shopping; the majority of the shopping because John has a tendency in the supermarket to buy the most expensive thing... without looking at labels just throw it in the basket and don’t worry about it, he wouldn’t plan ahead I would be thinking, the meals for the week in my head, but he wouldn’t, hadn’t a clue, had to write a list if he was going shopping and then it would cost double the amount... I am quite thrifty’

Keeping control of food work may result from having a greater knowledge and expertise in this area, where she has greater power and ability to budget, but it also conveys her continued gendered feeling of being responsible for feeding. She cannot hand over this work despite the fact that she engaged in paid employment as well. Speaking of her husband’s ability to cook she admits; *“He is quite capable of doing things, but you know with a little bit of guidance or whatever. “Now he wouldn’t able to plan..., but he’s quite capable of doing what I do now more or less”.*

However, for her cooking and feeding her family are also more complex, connected with incorporating meals that offer variety along with an opportunity to pass on a skill and have an enjoyable activity with her children.

'I go through the meals in my head when I'm shopping..., I would be standing over the breakfast cereals, lunch boxes for the kids and then how many days I'm cooking this week and then what will we have... depending on the humour I'm in then I might buy supplies for baking most weeks. I try and bake something, and get the children to help me...so that the children know what baking is, because I know so many children don't'.

Thinking and planning ahead is also very important to Aine (2), as she pre-prepares food both for herself and her grandchildren. She holds strong views about making good food, without much expense, by planning ahead of time. Incorporated in her thinking is her care of her grandchildren and desire to provide nourishing food for them.

'I get my vegetables in Lidl because they are fresher, they have two days during the week when they are fresh and I make soup then that will last, especially in wintertime and I freeze it in containers. You know now especially with the boys coming in wintertime, it would be there when they'd want it...if apples are in I make pies and put them in the freezer and they have that then... If one of them comes in and says is there anything nice Gran I just take it out and re-heat it in the microwave'.

Engaging with the work of cooking in this way may be seen as a specific construction of women as the bearers of the nurturing work and physical health of their families (Hochchild, 1983; De Vault, 1991; Erickson, 2005).

Planning ahead is not a routine for everyone as circumstances differ and individuals organise in a way that suits their own situation. Yvonne, (33), who has recently returned to work for three days a week after the birth of her second child, finds following this routine a big adjustment. She and her husband share the task of shopping and cooking but as schedules are difficult to predict from week to week,

planning, shopping, and cooking are carried out in an un-structured way to meet the present circumstances of their household. She is quite relaxed about it and just buys items as they are needed, a few times a week.

'It just suits for the moment, yeah, to cope with the stages we are at, so it is not quite structured... though I can nearly always tell you, there will nearly always be tomatoes when I go shopping and there will always be a couple of pieces of chicken, there are standard bits and then it is just to see what I can make with it then'.

As her husband cooks most of their meals when he is home he shops in a different, quite structured way,

'It is a bit ad hoc. Now Ken is quite different in that if he is making the meals for the weekend he writes his list, to a tee. He is very methodological about exactly what he needs because he is tending to do things with a certain amount of this herb and this spice so he is quite structured about it. Whereas I am kind of, oh just throw it in because I am thinking this will probably do us for the next three or four days, you know'.

Her attitude presents a difference from women who do most or all of the shopping and cooking for their families. As the work is shared and the children are still at a stage where their diet is basic she feels less pressured in not having to take on a full sense of responsibility for this work at the moment.

Shopping for the interviewees takes place in a variety of locations, large supermarkets, local supermarkets and also smaller local shops. Many use large chain stores like Tesco, Superquinn and Dunne's Stores for weekly shopping. Smaller chains such as Super Value are favoured for food bought on a daily basis, including staple foods such as bread, milk and meat and vegetables. For those who operate on a strict budget, Aine (2), Susan (5), Beth (11), Karen (12), Magda (21), and Collette (30), Aldi or Lidl are used as they provide a low cost alternative. Larger supermarkets are favoured for the variety they provide; however some interviewees

prefer local smaller shops where they have a sense of control and communication with people. Cora (3) explains that;

'It's not a pleasurable experience because Tesco is too big.... You see I'd talk to people and get to know people... I spend more money that I don't need to, unnecessary money... I'm not in control no, buying things in a big supermarket. Because I'm buying things I feel that we don't need and that everything is bursting out of the presses which I don't like'

Most of the respondents shopped between different stores to get the best value but for others who believe in buying locally produced, high quality foods, and can afford to do so, the value resides in the food not the price. It involves knowledge and trust in how products are produced and stored.

6.4. 2 Trust in food

Giddens, (1991) and Beck, (1992) theorising concepts of modernity looked at ideas of reflexivity in relation to institutions and trust or lack of trust within what they saw as increased 'risk' in modern society. In contemporary society levels of risk and trust have been tested with concerns about food safety. The BSE, and CJD beef scandals, Bird Flu and dioxins in chicken, along with changes in how food is structured and produced using GMO 's (genetically modified organisms) have led to a concern for consumers to balance getting value for money with issues of trust/distrust in food quality (Lien et al, 2004: 3).

Increased levels of distrust and lack of confidence in safe food production are concerns for many consumers affecting how they make decision when shopping for food. For women to source the best quality healthy food within a household budget requires developing a level of knowledge and skill about food systems and food production, balanced with a judgement of trust or distrust in food products being

purchased (Lang and Heasman 2004: 228). Some of the interviewees expressed deep concerns about how food is produced and the level of chemicals it contains. Their knowledge of the food system and distrust of global production led them to shop differently and source foods they felt were safe and suitable for their families by resisting global trends.

Laura (22) a mother of one child shops locally as she has no car. Her priority when I accompanied her shopping was to source organically produced meat when on special offer. She shops for meat mainly in Tesco as the local butcher's shops do not always have organic produce. If organic meat is not available she buys fish as an alternative. Her stance when buying meat is based on her knowledge and distrust of the use of hormones and antibiotics in meat. She voiced her concern based on the health of her family; *'I do not want to subject my child to hormones or antibiotics so I buy organic meat and chicken...I will not eat hormone induced things with antibiotics... because we as a family don't take antibiotics'* Favouring smaller amounts of meat, she feels it is a better choice for their optimum health.

Katy, (18), also expressed strong views on locally produced food, sourcing meat and vegetables from local producers. She showed a strong lack of trust in large scale global meat and vegetable production. Living on a budget she has to balance it with her finances but favours buying smaller amounts of better quality foods directly from the producer.

'I can't trust the stuff in the local supermarket as much as I can't trust what's in Lidl's, it's all the one. I try and pick up my fruit and veg off the farmer down in the farmer's market, who has grown it himself and put a lot of thought into it...it's his livelihood. I know a local butcher ... and he rears his own cattle, I can get that in the farmer's market... I pay a bit more, but we tend to eat smaller amounts and it's good'.

Ella, (31) a single woman with one child also talked about her distrust of mass produced products, and as a result she sources as much of her food as her budget will allow in organic outlets and from specialist food producers. She spoke about missing the markets in Europe near where she was brought up, where produce was produced and sold in the locality at a fair price. She selectively chooses foods that are good quality for her and her son using local growers and farmer's markets as much as possible.

' I try to buy local produce and organic... I don't particularly like supermarkets... but sometimes I have to go. I set a menu, not a strict one and outline what vegetables I am going to use this week and buy them in the organic market... they keep, and fill me... and all the cheeses from Cork or Wexford, and small amounts of meat'

She believes that her commitment to eating the best quality of good food she can afford is based on her early experience and knowledge of healthy food and diet;

'I am very much like that because I knew I grew up in a very healthy way eating wise, and it was only in my teens that I started eating rubbish... and so then I went back to my good ways. So if in the first ten years you have that healthiness...you just know'

For these women a high level of distrust in large scale commercial foods has led them to shop differently. Other interviewees expressed a general trust in the foods they bought, with the exception of meat. Price was a priority for individuals living on a basic income or with a large family to cater for. Meat purchase was a specific concern; women spoke about being very particular about where they bought it. Most respondents spoke of having trust in local butchers to provide good quality Irish produced products. Women from a farming background base their knowledge from seeing firsthand how meat is produced and marketed. Beth, (11) shops in various stores to feed her large family and is very particular about where she buys meat; *'Well I would be conscious around the meat yeah, I definitely check that it is Irish meat and*

the label on it to say which factory it was processed in or whatever, like they are all standard now, yeah definitely I would be conscious of that'

Others no longer trust the quality of meat in supermarkets after a number of meat scares and have changed their purchasing practices specifically around meat.

Jill, (7), has changed her practice when buying chicken after a meat scare;

'I don't buy any meat in any supermarkets, I would always buy the chicken in the supermarket but I don't do that any more. I think it was the poultry scare about a year ago or two years ago. So we have a very good butcher so we get all our meat from him including our chicken and they are free range'.

Emma, (26) from a rural background was brought up on food produced locally and has followed that practice with her family; *'I would like to buy stuff that is produced locally, especially vegetables and meat as well. I wouldn't like to be buying foreign meat, and maybe that's just from my background as well, and I do whenever I can buy Irish even if it is a little bit more expensive'.*

While some of the participants showed distrust of large scale production, and meat sold in supermarkets in particular, others believe that food bought in supermarkets and other commercial outlets is safe. Shopping on a restricted budget largely dictates where individuals shop to get the best value, and while they may have some concerns, they trust that the food they buy is good quality and safe to eat.

Nessa (25) a young woman from an urban background refuses to be influenced by others, or by food scares, trusting her instincts to buy the best quality she can afford;

'I wouldn't be as fussy as my parents were ... but I would be particular. I mean chicken I am always thinking ... I would like to be able to buy free range or organic but is very expensive and I would like to be able to buy it because I think about those battery hens with hormones and antibiotics... and we do eat quite a bit of chicken so. But I wouldn't let it stop me from buying meat from wherever had good bargains. But I would like to always try and buy the best, mince, the round steak mince, you know good quality'

Magda (21) also voiced less concern about food safety. Working within a restricted budget to feed her husband and three children she shops where she finds the best value. As she has no transport she depends on her husband to bring her shopping. She prefers to shop alone and her husband looks after the children as he expresses little interest in shopping. When I accompanied her grocery shopping she carefully worked out what she needed with a detailed list. She buys the best quality she can afford, including little treats for her husband and family. As she went around the store systematically, there was very little deviation from the list in order to stay within her budget. In budgeting to shop fortnightly she buys in bulk, supplementing what she has by purchasing fruit and vegetables as she needs them. She spoke of the pressure to get enough to cater for meals over the period. Planning ahead is her priority and her list indicated meals organised in advance. Trust in meat was not a concern and she buys mainly in the supermarket where the prices are better and she was unconcerned about risks.

'If I'm completely honest when the BSE hit I said, well, if I don't have it already why change now because they copped on to it, it was so far into it, you know...we had moved away from red meat for quite a while anyway and we don't have it so often... and the Bird Flu thing, they love their chicken so no I wouldn't say it scared me off them, but I would buy a lot of Irish products, so''.

Central to her reasoning was being able to feed her family; it strongly outweighed any anxiety about food safety. Knowledge of cooking and planning ahead combined with trust in the food system were more important for her.

Trust in local Irish products was also significant among the respondents due to the system of traceability that is in place, but also to a perception of a close local connection with the source of products. As an experienced cook who has raised her

family to adulthood Sara (32) places her trust in Irish produce and will shop around to access produce she trusts.

'I look at labels on everything, I, wouldn't buy unless now they are exotic vegetables, I wouldn't buy anything other than Irish vegetables because it is what I know better than what is coming in from anywhere else, but I would never buy New Zealand lamb, or I would never buy chicken ...from anywhere, it would always be of Irish origin. I would trust certain supermarkets... Superquinn because they were the first to source of the meat from the farm ...and they could always trace it back... the same with Super Value and ...I would trust the butcher's because very few of the butcher's would be able to bulk buy ... I would definitely trust the butcher's and just those two supermarkets, other than that no'

Trust in food is thus varied and includes taking account of the origin of foods, their nutritional value and tractability status in relation to meat in particular. These respondents rely on their tacit knowledge and experience growing up, and connections with local production. While a high value is put on good quality, value for money and price are significant considerations when making decisions to purchase foods. Allied with knowledge of food and experience is the ability to cook meals which involves a level of skill and expertise to provide an adequate diet.

6. 5 Food knowledge, timing, choices and control of food:

The work of feeding in families is portrayed as mundane, routine work, yet it contains complex considerations (Warde and Martens, 2000). In contemporary society, where global food production offers a vast variety of raw unprocessed, and convenience foods, food work involves making daily decisions about what is cooked, often taking account of different tastes and choices of family members. It can also involve having awareness of an array of different types of food; nutritional value and health properties versus health risks. The task of cooking also requires acquisition of specific knowledge related to preparing, timing, cooking, and having food ready when needed.

In contemporary society it is argued that knowledge of foods and cooking skills are in decline in the domestic sphere, threatened by a proliferation of convenience and fast foods that require little skill to prepare (Belton, 2003: 103).

According to theorists' global changes in farming practices, food production, processing, and supply are all linked to transformation of food preparation skills and ultimately diet (Goodman and Redclift, 1991; Ritzer, 1996). Examining consumer de-skilling in the food system, Jaffe and Gertler, (2005), consider it in relation to capitalism and the consequences for consumer autonomy, diet and health. They argue that while the processes of food production are valued as part of corporate capital; the process of consumption including the gendered work of domestic cooking is being devalued and undermined through prevalence of industrially transformed convenience foodstuffs. Additionally, *'the growing distance and separation between producer and consumer means that farmer-producers receive information on "what the consumer demands" only via food processors, manufacturers, and retailers'* thus creating a loss of understanding or connection to how foods are produced for consumers. They also argue that growth in convenience food production removes traditional stages of learning to cook which often took place in the home leading to a loss of these skills today (Jaffe and Gertler, 2005: 146-147).

In Ireland historically food and the means to cook it varied depending on social status. For poor families food and cooking methods were very basic whereas in wealthier homes with access to a better variety of food, more complex cooking skills were required (Clarkson and Crawford, 2005). The extent to which there was a diversity of cooking skills in the past is however not clear, leading some scholars to question claims about the atrophy of skills in the contemporary context (Lyon et al, 2003).

Other studies have indicated that when examining cooking skills in contemporary societies a complex picture emerges. Short, (2003) in her analyses of domestic cooking skills found that cooking abilities and knowledge were ‘contextual in nature’ using a range of perceptual and person centred approaches combining both fresh and convenience food ranges (Short, 2003: 20-21). While studies indicate that health risks are on the increase due to poor diet, there is also evidence that resistance to the dominance of convenience and fast foods with re-skilling and diversity in cooking also on the rise (Short, 2003; Jaffe and Gertler, 2005).

Chapter Five revealed how knowledge of food and the acquisition of cooking skills varied, with some individuals learning skills from their mothers, others later through interest, the influence of friends, or by necessity. For some respondents cooking is an activity that they enjoy, for others it was a skill they learned in order to nourish themselves and others, while others consider that it is just another household task. Strong cultural and social precedents influenced a number of participants to be ‘mother centred’ and focused on caring and nurture through food, whereas others, particularly younger participants expressed learning out of interest, or from travelling and experiencing other cultures, or just when the need arose. For ‘other centred’ participants food work is about self expression and for ‘foodies’ in particular Sonia 6), Irene (20), and David (35), cooking can be developed as an interest, not as a specific gendered role but rather a skill they see as creative and ‘central to their sense of self’. However, as Cairns et al (2010) argue this specialised food interest cannot be considered apart from class privilege (Cairns et al, 2010:590).

While this may be so, when discussing how knowledge and an interest in cooking developed with respondents there was notable variation across social class.

Significantly, when exploring with respondents how resources including finances may influence how cooking skills are used, and what is cooked, a mixed picture emerged.

Collette (30) who is managing on a very restricted budget believes it may be determined not necessarily by finances but knowledge and experience of foods that were part of her life growing up;

“I don’t think there is a real truth on it, I think it can for some people, like my friend when he was growing up they would have had feck all money but they would have always had... more interest in stuff and would have had things like pate whereas as very few had, and I wouldn’t have much money and a friend who is very much in the same socio-economic position as me, she would buy loads of tins of rubbish and Tesco value and all that, whereas I wouldn’t. Now we have the same money brought up the same so I think it can with some people and it doesn’t with others”.

Sara (32) who has grown up sons sees a huge change and atrophy in the skill of cooking amongst young people. She believes it will only be passed on if it was part of early experience in families, but will decline if it is not part of the daily routine (Jaffe and Gertler, 2005).

‘It just depends on what would have happened at home, you know your kids would be able to cook because you always cooked at home, mine would be able to cook because I always cooked..., even if they never were asked to do it, but subconsciously they know how to because they have seen it being done, whereas if you have never seen it being done you just wouldn’t have a clue how to do it, to start it. So I think there is a huge shift that way’

Gaining knowledge of food and food work may be seen to develop from varied sources and influences and how skills are learned and used today are changing also in tandem with modern lifestyles which adapt to present day circumstances in which time constraints are a significant element.

6.5.1 Time constraints and food work

The element of time is clearly shown as a significant factor in determining the organisation of meals. Respondents in interviews spoke about how planning dinner was determined largely by time during the week, whereas at weekends a relaxed approach was taken. The timing of the main meal takes into account the routines of all family members, work routines, along with children's ages and activities during the week. Food diaries also revealed how planning daily is focused on a meal that will suit the particular activities taking place. Pasta and rice dishes, stews or shepherd's pie were all favoured as they could be adapted to suit individual tastes, and re-heated to cater for different family member's activities. For women who are full-time at home, planning can take place daily, with an option to buy fresh meat and vegetables as needed. For Jill and Sinead who both work shopping and cooking meals ahead of time was a vital part of their routine requiring greater and more strategic planning.

Jill (7) spoke of the limitations put on what is cooked where this is the case;

'I would say it is a time element because when I got married first and when I had them, I wasn't working, so I had plenty of time to cook. But they are all working so ...when you get in at half five in the evening the thoughts of a roast beef in the oven would be... totally ridiculous. So I think that's why it's changing. It's the way things are done now with the two of them out at work all day. It's time more than it is anything now I would imagine'.

For Shona (19) time constraints and limited knowledge are important factors when speaking of her friends and cooking. She sees cooking changing for a variety of reasons, based on different tastes, and a time element, proving to be significant factors;

"I mean, a roast, they would be very few of them who would know how to do something that they would have grown up with and they probably got every Sunday at home... whether it is lack of practice or they were never taught I don't know. But yeah things like stir fry's they are quick easy simple and supposed to be healthy, people would do them a lot more now than they would sit down and do their meat and two veg, or steak ...so yeah it is changing".

The acquisition of knowledge and cooking routines are changing and adapting to fit in with contemporary lifestyles and routines. Yet for those responsible for the daily provision of food, this work still involves caring for the physical and emotional needs of the family (Ribbens, 1994). Everyday cooking often consists of relentless work and varied skills to provide food that will sustain family members and also keep them healthy. This process also involves monitoring and controlling food choices.

6.5.2. Choices and control of food

In Ireland there is a growing use of convenience foods in evidence yet there is also an adherence to mealtime structures, particularly in families where there are children (Slán Report, 2007: Department of Health & Children). Providing a healthy diet involves commitment, skill and organisation. In this study the main meal or dinner was considered a central aspect of daily food consumption for the respondents. Much of the discussion in interviews' revolved around the work of preparing this meal. Diary accounts focused on all of the elements involved in getting a main meal ready. Responses indicate that this meal was generally planned early in the day. Entries show a diversity of organising strategies according to work schedules, children's ages, and different after school activities.

From interviews and diary accounts there is generally one main meal cooked each day for at least five days of the week (Table 5.2). Organisation of this meal revolved around providing food that would be eaten and this was controlled almost exclusively by women. From their accounts in interviews and in food diaries one main dinner was cooked each day. In some cases different substitutions were included for some members of families with specific likes and dislikes or health implications, or the

meal was adapted for very young children. Other women just cooked one dinner and did not account for different choices. As Jill (7) explained;

“They enjoy their food, I mean, we have something like, ‘I don’t like peppers and what’s that green stuff’ and I’d say spinach which I discovered recently and ‘I don’t like that green stuff’ ... that’s what we have sometimes but, you know they just get on and eat it and actually in our house and again it is what I’ve been brought up with, there is no such thing as I don’t like, you eat it and you try it and you get on with it”.

Cooking for Jill is a managed process during the week as she has to provide dinner for the children in the child minders when they are at work. Her husband shares in meal preparation making it a less arduous task. Her weekly diary showed the advanced level of preparation involved. Friday and Saturday are less structured and providing they eat something healthy the children are allowed to eat fast food alternatives. Jill’s commitment to provide healthy food is based on her own upbringing; where she learned to be practical in her control of the family diet,

“I suppose that I would love the kids to have good food and fresh vegetables, always try to have fresh vegetables and I just like them to eat well. We don’t do pizzas or chips except on a Friday evening and we don’t do any processed food if we can. We try to keep away from it. Don’t get me wrong there is a tin of peas in there sometimes... when you can be stuck but very, very, seldom...it is because I grew up with it like that. And I think we are all more conscious of what we are eating as well. And I just like that, to eat healthily”

Other diaries and interviews also show that from Monday to Thursday diets were quite structured and dinners consist of meat, vegetables, or another staple of rice or pasta. Families tended to eat together except if there are sports activities, or late shifts. Respondents’ detailed accounts in the diaries also show the amount of work, planning and monitoring, involved in daily cooking and the high level of concern about giving those they care for healthy food. As Table 5.2 shows easing up on this routine occurred at the weekend, mainly Friday night or Saturdays where a more relaxed

approach to meals including having take away, eating out, or convenience foods, as alternatives to weekday meals.

In addition whereas food studies on feeding in the past found that meals were cooked mainly to reflect men's choices (Murcott, 1983a; Charles and Kerr, 1988), in this sample the focus has shifted. Instead parents discussed their attempts at trying to get children to eat, as a constant concern and priority. Some women Eve (4), Sonia (6), Avril (8), Beth (11), Karen (12), and Yvonne (33) spoke about having difficulty with a faddy eater and about the efforts they used to find a solution that does not change the whole meal being prepared, by offering a compromise or substitute that fits in with what is available. Eve, (4) will offer a compromise that suits;

"I kind of would..., like Dean my middle guy he is not mad on chicken so I might actually take out a lamb chop or pork or do something for him. And my youngest guy loves spaghetti. He is going through a phase of loving just spaghetti on it's own but I do broccoli with that".

Avril, (8) also compromises on foods her children are not keen on by adding an alternative; *'I don't even think about choices. I know what they like so I cook what they will eat. Two of them like carbonara but my other boy does not so I will do scoop out a bit of pasta and put something else with his'*

Taking in the individual choices of children in this way shows a break from the past where only one meal was cooked with no alternatives offered (Murcott: 1982). It is consistent with changes in society today where constructions of childhood and levels of childhood autonomy and decision making are encouraged, and power relationships within families are shifting to adapt to new family practices (Smart and Neale, 1999; Kline, 2011; Brannen, et al: 2013).

6.6 Health and nutrition: discourse and pressures

The work of food provision today is taking place in circumstances where the nature of food itself has altered considerably. As outlined in chapter two significant large scale changes have occurred in how food is produced, marketed and sold. In Ireland many of the changes are relatively recent where food has been loosened from a chain of production to purchase, in its natural state. High levels of processing are more commonplace at an industrial scale, altering raw foods into an array of new spin off products by adding sweeteners, salt, and colourings to enhance flavour and appearance. Health food fads, convenience foods, advertising, and huge availability of food at all times, all impinge on and influence decisions on what to eat when promoting a healthy diet in families (Nestle, 2007; Kline, 2011).

In a study contrasting gender in relation to priorities on issues of diet and health, Beardsworth et al (2002) found significant differences between men and women. Beginning with divergent attitudes to ethical concerns of food production and selection, and on nutritional concerns and food choices, two distinctive patterns emerged. The term ‘virtuous’ was applied to women and that of ‘robust’ to men. Men showed a more uncritical view of eating and tended to favour a more traditional meat based diet with little ecological concerns related to foods and less interest in trying new foods. In contrast, women displayed more ethical concerns about foods and *‘were less inclined to take an unreflective and unworried stance’*. However, as women are more involved in food work and have greater gendered concerns about body image, through undertaking a significant responsibility of managing the diet within families, they also take a keener interest in health concerns (Beardsworth et al, 2002: 487-488).

In Ireland attitudes to the promotion of healthy eating according to a health and nutrition study of adults found that over half of adults (62%) perceived that they made a conscious effort to eat a healthy diet. Women, particularly those in older age brackets (51-64) were most likely to make a conscious effort to eat a healthy diet (Kearney, J. et al, 2001). However, a recent investigation into food poverty and health among schoolchildren in Ireland in 2007 indicated that a substantial level of food poverty is occurring among Irish schoolchildren consistently across social classes (Molcho, M. et al, 2007). These results indicate that health and nutrition is a significant issue of concern in Ireland.

The concerns women express about their families' diet is part of being responsible for both physical health and wellbeing of their families (Oakley, 2002; Beagan et al, 2008). Significantly, intergenerational differences and ambivalences also occur where everyday practices adapt to changing social situations (Knight, et al 2013: 13). As those with responsibility for feeding their families, respondents in this study discussed the health of their families as a major concern. As outlined in the previous section a level of adaption of family meals is carried out to encourage children who have specific dislikes. Other women spoke about the fact that food and healthy eating is a constant issue for them. Increasing numbers of fast food outlets and availability of confectionary and snack foods, even in schools, combined with advertising aimed at children, add new pressures in monitoring and controlling their children's diet.

Patricia (1) spoke of particular concern about her daughter;

'I think especially my daughter now, well she is not chubby or anything but I do watch what she eats without her knowing it...I would kind of control her diet because I think even you see kids here and they would eat all around them, rubbish, rubbish and more rubbish'

She finds that as food availability has changed and as people have more access to convenience foods she has to monitor the amount and type of foods her children eat;

'I think we are eating a lot more than we used to because... now we have more food whereas years ago it wasn't there so we are kind of making up for it now, you are enjoying your food more. The little boy is not too bad, he is a little skinny fellow but you must not give them too many treats, you know, when I was growing up every Friday you might have a bar of chocolate whereas now it's every day of the week'

As mothers explained trying to provide a balance between healthy foods and allowing some lee-way to enjoy occasional fast foods was an issue, where they felt it necessary to be flexible and adapt meals to meet different tastes in order to provide food that will be eaten. Karen (12) a separated mother worries about how tastes have changed, and tries to adapt home cooked food to take account of this trend;

'I do worry that they want the fast food all the time. I take note of times a week they would have any kind of junk food, and let's say there are burgers and chips often. And then sometimes you have to say, if that is all he will eat for me at times well at least you're getting some food into him ...if I was doing the burgers I would try and do my own ones that they are not getting ones full of fat and sugar or whatever, and salt, have to be careful'.

Consideration of how diet impacts on family health led some women to source and cook foods that they consider will provide the optimum benefits for their family.

Katy (22) explains;

'I would be concerned about them and I suppose that the only way I have any control, in that suspicious food chain supply is to try and source local and cook locally grown food that don't have many food miles on them. Or to have food that hasn't been grown under intensive chemicals or anything like that. I think mostly, it's the cooking from scratch and not relying on jars and sauces'.

She also showed a pragmatic approach, trying not to be too rigid about foods but working on a common sense strategy of self reliance on her own knowledge gleaned in turn from her mother;

'Again, it comes back to balance... if you haven't been eating a lot of fruit, just up your apples and oranges for the week or get in some grapes. You have to buy in

season as well... I don't really rely on the expertise, because I already have it. My mother has given it to me really. I feel I'm already doing it'

Alternatively, Avril (8) a mother with three children, had a high level of concern about her own health and two of her children and looked for answers based on expertise in nutrition, leading her to change her family's diet;

'I was struggling for a long, long time and hadn't been feeling well and a girl told me about a nutritionist ... it opened my eyes as to what was in anything that was frozen and processed ...and it just brings you back to what we had years ago, very plain food... I am looking at going down that route, doing it slowly.

She is gradually altering the family diet to plainer food and home baking. Yet she is ambivalent about the level of power and influence she can exercise over her children's diet as they are growing up can access fast food if they want it;

"I think very little really... I feel I have power now over the children because I decide what is coming into the house but I feel outside as they get older and they have their own money. But my oldest son now he would be very particular; he likes good food, nice food and he knows himself, he can make good choices himself".

Some of the women's concerns about the diet of their children and young adults were intense where they spoke of the dilemma of literally '*getting food into the family*'.

They mentioned a variety of methods they try to keep them healthy which they saw as part of the role they have taken on. Cora (3) spoke of constantly trying to get her grown up daughter to eat vegetables; '*I have a squash there and I'm going to make a big pot of soup later because Niamh will bring soup to work and it's my way of getting vegetables into her*'.

Eve (4) who has three boys has also tried a number of ways to bring fish oil into the family diet; she feels it is part of the work of caring for her family's health;

'I tried the fish oil on the children, they didn't like it. I tried to put it in their food, they didn't like it. But I just feel that they aren't getting enough fish oils because we

don't eat a lot of fish...they don't like fish, I would be conscious of it... to me it's just part of the family's life. It's in-built into it".

For these women getting the balance right for their family's diet is fraught with problems of fussy eaters, or refusal to eat certain foods, making the work of cooking a time consuming endeavour on a daily basis. Increasing amounts of convenience and fast foods being marketed also make providing healthy options more challenging for those with responsibility for feeding.

Respondents expressed varied concerns about their family's diet within a global food market, and their different approaches to dealing with it are consistent with the work of O'Connell and Brannen (2014) who argue that the extent of power parents have varies as food work is embedded in power relations between adults and children. Analysing different patterns of control and negotiation about who should or does control children's food within a highly focused market driven industry, they argue that while some parents may be able to exert control by overt or covert means, increased regulation of the food industry may be important to support parents in protecting children's health and well-being (O'Connell et al, 2014: 98). Yet nutritional advice and discourse is fraught with inconsistencies which cause confusion and frustration for parents responsible for food provision.

6.6.1 Discourse and pressures

Themes related to health and nutrition was raised by respondents as an important concern when discussing feeding in a family setting. They found that nutritional information and advice changes so frequently that it is frustrating, and that expertise and advice can be confusing. For women pressures emerge not just from the fact that there are so many places their children can access unhealthy foods but they also spoke

of being pressured and confused when faced with a proliferation of both official and market driven nutritional advice that can be contradictory and ever changing, and rarely supportive of their concerns. Connie (28) a mother of one child explains;

'I am always trying to think of something different to cook, what I find terrible now is I am going to the shops and I'm trying not to buy loads of processed foods with salt and all sorts of things. But yet you are trying to buy something convenient...you are looking at everything and you have got kids with you. And then you are trying to be environmentally friendly... you'd never do a shop, you couldn't do all the things...it is quite hard to sort out'.

Patricia (1) is also frustrated by contradictory advice; *'I think it is quite annoying because every day in the newspapers there's something else. I think you have to just go by what you believe in because every day it's—coffee's bad coffee is good for you, this is good/bad for you so what do you believe'?*

Cora (3) also wonders if it is a fad with a lot of things, but she would be inclined to buy items based on information that focuses on the benefits associated with the products:

'Somebody decides to write an article about blueberries and the new super food and blackberries the next time and you know seeds and all that. I mean I suppose I kind of believe half and disbelieve. I probably would, if I read an article about something being good I will probably go out and buy it. But I use common sense as well'.

Women also discussed the pressure they feel to conform to a particular regime of feeding today from their peers, based on competing commercial strategies promoting particular ways for infant feeding. Doreen (15) a mother of two children found it pressurising to have others try to tell her how to feed;

'I remember when I went to feed at first,, even my in-laws as well... don't feed them baby rice start off with pureed carrots. Now I did my own thing and I did feed baby rice first but there was a lot of pressure'

It is her belief that the focus on children today is connected to the fact that people are having fewer children and waiting until they are older to start families

'I think a lot of it is that people are having their babies at an older age... and they are having less, and there is so much focus on babies and children nowadays and what they do, whereas mothers would have had their babies in their twenties and would have just let them play. Now it is like so much and big focus, too much about it'

Emma (26) also found that feeding discourse favouring specific feeding strategies create uncertainty for first time mothers when they need to be supported;

'I would feel there is a lot of pressure as regards feeding... about whether it's organic or things like that. It's frowned upon now in my group to be feeding them unhealthy foods, oh yeah, like I didn't, I used just buy all organic for my first and no jars, with Aisling now I give her the odd jar but I think, for a lot of first time mums in my group there is a particular book Gina Ford, and she has recipes and it's all healthy'

Shona (19) experienced pressure from her peers and marketing discourse about diet and lifestyle changes when pregnant but with her knowledge and self reliance she is deciding for herself what is right for her;

'I kind of gave up listening to it, in the past I would have listened to everything and done exactly what they told me but now I'm kind of going, it hasn't done me any harm so far so what's the point, especially now I'm pregnant... I could listen to all the stuff but no you have to be, practical, we have all survived...I think people are very gullible, not gullible but I mean they are preying on people'

Women expressed a high level of frustration and unease about advice both from official sources and their peers concerning the best way to feed their families. Many of them feel that they already have the skills and ability to do what is right for health and well-being but that different discourses and contradictory claims are disempowering and do not support their efforts, instead adding to their concerns.

Respondents also use their knowledge as a form of resistance to at the overall picture of food in a global context where political, economic and ecological issues may have consequences for food provision, food safety and health in the future, both positive and negative. Their stance is consistent with a recent emergence of urban agriculture

in Dublin in which young women and men are connecting with traditional forms of knowledge of food production by growing food in allotments to provide local traceable and nutritional food. This stance represents a form of resistance to disconnection associated with globalisation of food production (Kettle, 2014:30). Other respondents use their knowledge to look at the overall picture of food in a global context expressing how political, economic and ecological issues may have consequences for food provision, food safety and health in the future, both positive and negative.

6. 7 Globalisation of food: knowledge and consumption

As outlined in Chapter Two food produce has been loosened from local production and globalisation has provided a vast array of foods outside traditional seasonality. Through a network of supply chains food is easily distributed around the world and available to all who can afford to purchase it. The availability of a variety of foods is seen in a positive development which enhances taste and experimentation.

Nessa (25) is positive about the fact that there is so much choice and believes that it broadens individual tastes and ideas about cultures and cuisine;

'I like that there is so much choice. I think it's a cultural thing an understanding of other countries... I think we need to have different tastes, different cultures and ideas because it broadens your mind. I think it's great that when you are cooking you don't just have the same things to cook, it's great that you have the choice'.

On the other hand, Eoin (29) a married man from a rural background is more concerned about globalisation of food production and resultant food miles involved in distribution. He is concerned with the effect this has on local produce and production, and being able to freely choose from a variety of sources, particularly local outlets rather than a monopoly in supermarkets (Lang et al, 2004:163);

'the way I look at it if you buy organic apples that have been growing in New Zealand and you are eating them in Ireland well you are as well off just eating an Irish apple or a French non organic because to be honest the harm to the environment is probably equal...It would be probably the fact that I would have been used to things being seasonal...so and maybe just seeing the way the countryside has changed with food production is very, it is geared towards mass production and supermarkets'.

He dislikes the fact that in many places in Ireland today supermarkets control the level of choice for many people by the products that they promote and sell.

'It is like in Sligo last week and walking down to all these individual shops with different products, if there was a delicatessen they sold certain things, like in France, they have supermarkets but they still have individual shops. The supermarkets have done away with that and at one level you have this idea that you have got more choice but realistically I don't think you have because they control what choice you do have largely'.

Laura (22) also voiced a strong concern about food and interference with natural growth by changing the structure of seeds going against natural law and what she believes is the cycle and rhythm of seasonality (Germov and Williams, 2008:86-7; Lang and Heasman, 2004: 180-1);

"I can't believe it, it is an absolute outrage that something so huge and so massive is swept under the carpet and people are not being informed... it is massive... the single most threatening question, it is more threatening than aids...than nuclear war. It is the most important issue for me because if people don't have food, you will have riots, you will have political instability and they are using genetically modified things and they will create an imbalance... it's wrong, it goes against the natural law and we will pay dearly for that. And we have these huge companies like Monsanto creating a massive imbalance and it is very dangerous. And I can't believe that there is no labelling that this is genetically modified food. And I think that people, the average person will buy it because it's cheap'.

Katy (18) who strongly supports locally produced foods expressed a deep suspicion of the global food industry and signing up to anything that will change our control over what we eat, given the recent food scandal crises.

'I'm very suspicious about food, especially in the last year. This morning on the radio I heard people talking about the Lisbon treaty, that would have a huge impact on trade preferences and trade agreements and food comes in there hugely in terms of imports and exports. There's been mad cow and a lot of crises where we intensively fertilised food, and forced food and it's just come back to haunt us. Over time...I have

noticed a difference in the way food tastes and there's a big reliance on processed food. I do eat processed food, I mean, cheese is processed. Butter, even though I eat block butter, that's also processed to a certain point. It's the over-processing and the additives even children..., the amount of trash on the market, my children now will go for things like Coco Pops,... chocolate for breakfast you must be joking me'.

Ella also spoke strongly against global food corporations and the increasing regulation of the European Union in relation to locally grown foods. Her stance is based on wanting to eat healthily and feed her son food she considers wholesome, traceable and in its natural state.

'And I am quite against whole-global, corporate, but I am not naïve there should be some regulations linked to a homogenisation instead of embracing particularities. They are all trying to tell you that you need the fat chicken, that doesn't have even legs any more. And it is also the European Union's fault because they started to regulate the traditional ways of making food, saying it is not healthy and safe. But I mean they were there two hundred years and we all survived...at times I buy the packet of peas, you know frozen peas and I go right, I wonder where these peas come from .Holland no, Holland is all genetically manipulated things I don't want that... or when you get that cucumber grown out of fibreglass and water... so I really don't want to give that to my son and myself'.

Food provision in families takes place within the context of a gendered division of labour. As it is officially related to the work of caring it remains largely invisible. Women bring to this work their knowledge and varied skills which provide them with a level of power as a resource when making decisions related to their family diet. Within an increasingly powerful global food market as consumers they have to rely on their tacit knowledge to provide healthy food for their families within a myriad of available products all vying for their business. Their knowledge and skills also presents them as a potentially powerful lobby for the regulation of safe affordable food and egalitarian food provision practices in families. As we see their knowledge is also increasingly specialised and a possible challenge to official discourse and powerful food lobbies.

6.8 Conclusion

In contemporary Ireland images of women are portrayed through commercial means to represent the iconic 'Irish mammy'. This image, though far from the reality of women's lives, conveys a sense of an unchanging role for women sacrificing their own lives for their families. It is a role that does not appear in official discourse yet has been relied upon to care for and nurture families. As a gendered stereotype used to show nurturing through food, this image can also be used to focus blame when food standards fail. This chapter revealed how women variously go about the work of shopping and cooking for their families. It traces the perception of this work as powerful but under-valued, as work that women perform daily in the private sphere. Women bring to cooking roles their own knowledge, skills and ideas about the best way to feed their families. As consumers they employ this knowledge and trust, or lack of trust when deciding what and where to purchase food, taking into account their family members needs and preferences but also holding a level of control on what is purchased. Getting value and having trust in the food they buy are priorities, particularly for meat products, where local traceable meat products bought in butchers shops are favoured in the light of recent food scares. There is considerable trust also in supporting Irish foods. However what available funds they have can dictate where they shop and what they buy.

Cooking is also a managed process where the needs and to some extent preferences of children are taken into account to ensure that they eat. Healthy eating is encouraged but alternatives are also catered for through a balance of variety and treats. In general women find nutritional advice contradictory and often confusing, expressing a negative reaction to it. They also experience different pressures in the face of

growing demand for fast foods, treats and food fads, along with trends in feeding regimes for infant care that support specific orthodoxies.

A number of respondents express significant knowledge and opposition to global food production and supply, where there is a loss of local, traceable foods. Concerns about changing global trends in agriculture were voiced about genetically modified foods being promoted with possible consequences for future food provision. Overall women exhibit power in monitoring and controlling their family diet and health through their practices, knowledge, and skills in an increasingly market driven food sector. The perspectives outlined in this chapter are mainly from women, who retain gendered responsibility for this work. In contrast chapter seven explores how the work of food provision is evolving as a small number of men are becoming involved in food provision. It also explores the changes their involvement may bring to gendered responsibility and family work.

Chapter Seven

What about Men?

Changing dynamics of cooking roles

7.1 Introduction

The emphasis in this research has focused on women identified as primarily responsible for food provision in families and showing a high level of commitment and skills. Yet, there are also some signs of change in food work leading to shared responsibility for cooking roles. This chapter explores some of these changes in feeding practices. It examines how some men are taking up cooking as an aspect of gendered work that they have developed a skill in, get enjoyment from, and carry out as their contribution to the essential work of feeding in family settings. It highlights how this change may be seen as ‘doing gender differently’ by breaking down the stereotypical perception that cooking is equated with female gendered work that women predominantly engage in once relationships are formalised in family settings.

As the majority of the participants in this research are women, analysis in previous chapters concentrated mainly on themes central to women’s perspectives about food work. While focusing on women identified as food providers in families, I was also keen to garner the views of men to assess their perspectives, and any change in their contribution to cooking in the home, along with what implications this may have for this work in the future.

Central arguments put forward in this chapter explore how changes in gendered practices provide a counter-balance to perceptions that cooking remains totally

women's responsibility. Bringing male perspectives to the work of cooking also opens up possibilities for reflecting on new approaches to food work. It throws light on the dynamics associated with gendered food work and possibilities for positive developments for shared caring roles. Building on three male participant's accounts of cooking through in-depth interviews, along with women's second hand accounts of their husband's participation in family cooking, new insights unfold regarding male perspectives on this work. While I acknowledge that second hand accounts of men's contribution to food work, combined with the input and reflections of three male respondents in interviews has limitations, it does reflect a small prism through which to explore change.

7.2 Re-framing gendered work

As we have seen, historically gendered roles based on a breadwinner model underpinned a division of labour between the private sphere of families and the public sphere of paid employment. This does not imply that all males and females dutifully accepted or complied with notions of appropriate roles for their gender, yet strong social norms influenced behaviour. Providing for family through economic means has been a central definition of masculine roles, whereas cooking in families associated with feminine work is part of care and nurturance (Lupton, 1996; Hanlon, 2009: 187; Lynch, 2009).

In contrast, contemporary perspectives view gender roles not as natural but constructed through social experiences and influenced by broad levels of social change. In Ireland rapid developments in every facet of society, social, cultural and economic have altered the extent to which structures of Church and State influence specific social norms for individuals. Educational opportunities have increased

participation by women in the workforce altering traditional roles for women, and ultimately also for men. Yet, while change has occurred in relation to gender equality and work roles this period also reflects ongoing constraint, as women continue to carry out the bulk of responsibility for family work (O'Sullivan, 2007; Kuling and Keohane, 2007). Consequently, while there is an uptake of caring roles by men, there is also evidence of resistance to change (Hanlon, 2009:198). Men continue to reap the benefits of roles which confer privileges and power associated within economic and social spheres (Connell and Messerschmidt, 2005).

However, evidence from international studies of male and female work roles in employment and time use in the domestic sphere reveals signs of convergence between women and men in relation to family roles. Changes in work practices for dual-earner couples towards more flexible schedules combining work and family roles, contribute to an increased engagement and time use by men in household chores including cooking and caring duties (Coltrane, 2000; Haywood and Mac an Ghail, 2003; Sayer, 2005; Wharton, 2012). Conversely, despite the fact that female employment rates have grown and are sustained, uneven patterns of support for families are also evident from studies across European countries (Doorne-Huiskes and den Dulk, 2011). They show where institutions lag behind in putting in place policies for gender equality in the work-force for women along with supports for a male involvement in caring roles, to affect an overall work-life balance (Doorne-Huiskes and den Dulk, 2011: 228).

Yet while this research shows that women take overall responsibility for cooking in families, there is also evidence of engagement by some men in my study. The next

section shows how and in what way men are involved in food work and the implications this may have for gendered work over time.

7.3 Men and food work

Research on how domestic cooking work has evolved continues to show that women take responsibility for the bulk of family food work, whereas men's interest in cooking is often presented as a hobby, something they do for enjoyment (Coxon: 1983). As part of a growing trend food and cooking programmes present images of men cooking as a manly engagement in a pleasurable leisure activity, rather than as a form of domestic labour with responsibilities for feeding others (Hollows, 2003).

When involved in family cooking men have been associated with taking on the role of 'helper' through shopping for food or assisting for special occasions cooking (De Vault, 1991; Gatrell, 2005).

International research into domestic cooking undertaken by men reveals a varied picture. Bove and Sorbal (2006), working with married couples in New York found that food work was negotiated and shared, with male participants showing significant involvement in cooking family meals. However, they state that this position was voluntary for men, whereas it remained an assigned role for women (Bove and Sobal, 2006: 86). This finding is consistent with that of Kemmer, et al 1998, of men showing a willingness to contribute to making meals at the early stages of new relationships. From a different perspective, Aarseth and Olsen (2008) studying food and masculinity with dual career couples in Norway found three different patterns of change emerging in a process toward equal gender contributions to family cooking. The first pattern shows men that 'just do some cooking' for practical reasons, a second group 'do it their own way' by making food they like, and in the third, food preparation is a

‘joint interest’, part of family living, opening up new constructive opportunities for changes in gendered identities in relation to family work (Aarseth and Olsen, 2008: 286).

Researching men’s domestic cooking in Toronto, Szabo (2012), takes an approach based on ‘work-leisure’, where cooking can be variously experienced positively, as meaningful, satisfying, or alternatively negatively as tedious and laborious. The study revealed that men experience domestic cooking variously as work or leisure depending on race, class, and on their level of responsibilities for childcare, but may experience less interruptions (from children) when cooking, or emotional associations with this work , making it distinctly different than the role women carry out (Szabo, 2012: 636).

These findings are also reflected in a study of ‘foodies,’ people with a passion for cooking and eating. Cairns et al (2010) found that there were different implications involved for men and women. While ‘foodies’ were shown to have changed gender specific relations around food work, men were able to concentrate on performing cooking roles for pleasure and personal fulfilment, whereas when women engaged in cooking for pleasure they also retain gendered responsibility for food work associated with caring (Cairns, Johnston and Baumann, 2010: 610).

From this research a mixed picture emerges of men’s experiences of family cooking which reflects an increasing engagement with this work, but also differences in how they perceive it, compared to women. It is important to note that not having full accountability has implications also for how it is experienced variously as work or leisure.

Ultimately my efforts to gain male perspectives for this research yielded results through the snowball phase of recruiting participants. A small sample of three men agreed to be interviewed. They are all in their early thirties. Carl (10) has a partner and one pre-school child. The other two men, Eoin, (29) and David, (35) are married with no children, Whereas Eoin and David are employed full-time, Carl works at weekends on a flexible basis (Table 3.1). His partner as the principal earner is employed full-time. Eoin is married to participant Shona (19) who is expecting their first child. All of the men expressed some interest in food and cooking, taking responsibility on a regular basis for family meals. Their diverse perspectives offer distinct differences in how they perceive the work of cooking for others, both in terms of gendered work and in contrasting outlooks to each other.

7.4 Men: ‘doing’ gender differently

Carl (10) originally from New Zealand, is living with his partner and pre-school child. His partner is the main breadwinner and works full-time and he looks after their son during the week carrying out all tasks related to their home including cooking. At the weekends he has a delivery job. From a working class background his family were engaged in sheep shearing. An early level of responsibility for preparing food for others was part of Carl’s experience as a child in New Zealand, where everyone helped out regardless of gender, or age, due to their parents work pattern and long hours away from home;

‘Mum and Dad were from a sheep shearing family and they were away a lot during the shearing season. So, we would have to come back from school, peel potatoes and get vegetable ready, Mum would prepare the meat, when she got home’.

Everyone took on the task of cooking and hard work was seen as part of the normal routine with each family member sharing tasks and expected to learn the skills to

provide meals for the family. *'It was a rule; everyone in our house took their turn. If you couldn't cook for your brothers and sisters by the time you were eleven or twelve, then you were really no good.'*

Carl spoke of developing a strong work ethic from his childhood so as a result carrying out a role reversal in his own home poses no problem for him;

'Jean goes to work, she's number one. She's doing the work, getting the bills paid so I feel it's my responsibility to do everything around here. I treat it just like I used to when I was little, she comes home and everything is ready. Her home is clean, her dinner's ready, our son is well fed'

Planning was central to how he saw his role. Working to a monthly budget he plans family meals in advance and also enjoys cooking for friends. However, Carl also expressed that when he works on Saturdays his expectations of a similar division of labour should be in place;

'When I come home I'd like the same as I give her during the week. When I come through the door at five or six at night, I really want a nice meal and I really want to walk into a house that has been cleaned, it doesn't always work'

Carl's understanding of fairness in a gendered division of labour is modelled on his parents and family of origin and reveals contradictions between male expectations of equality and sharing which does not occur for women in a caring role.

Whereas, as we see in Chapter Four women have been expected to accept an unequal role allocation once they enter formal relationships, men unused to experiencing unfairness in relationships find it difficult to understand. Carl also wants to assert some power and control over his domestic situation in which he is experiencing the opposite scenario to the norm in gender relations for men.

Yet he has a view of cooking that is focused on connection and nurturing others also; *'it's more of less connecting with people on lots of levels. They know you are going to*

provide for them and you're doing the best you can and it brings everyone around the table. I think that would be it, just giving. If you come to my house for a meal, you know I can cook reasonably well, you are going to be fed well'.

With contrasting experiences to Carl, David (35) a middle class man is the eldest in his family. He states that he was brought up in a traditional household where watching his mother and grandmother instilled an initial interest in cooking. From a large family there were always occasions to get together over food and a lively atmosphere. He helped to prepare food from a young age but it was as a teenager 'experimenting' with making food to eat himself, that he developed a 'passion' for cooking. He spoke of how the skill was beneficial when he moved away; 'When we were away on working trips as students I would have always been the one who took on the cooking for the other lads after work or a game of football'.

Since marrying he is the main cook also taking care of most of the food shopping except when his work schedule does not allow. He loves to cook for family and friends finding it a creative and relaxing process. As he and his wife both work full-time, when at home he takes responsibility for making meals, and feels that the kitchen is his domain. "I love to put on music and cook alone. I find it relaxing and a way to unwind and be creative". He encourages his wife to relax and watch TV while he cooks. As a self confessed 'foodie' taking a popular term for those who love good food, he goes to great lengths to produce exceptional meals; he also admits that to a certain extent;

'there's an element of ego- sort of thrown in there, I suppose you know I am creating something and am putting it out there, and I am interested in what people are going to say and what they think of it, you know, and I am waiting to hear that... mmm... this is gorgeous, you know'.

In contrast to understandings of family cooking focused on nourishing others David expresses a singularly individualist view of cooking centred on his own creative and passionate interest in making food for himself and others. His concentration is on developing skill and competence as part of a creative drive, where his interest in cooking may be seen as essentially a project for self fulfilment and not a shared interest. This may be partly explained by the fact that while he is married and takes on the responsibility to cook for his wife, as they do not have children, he has no dependents to cook and care for. As a result his cooking may be viewed as in part a leisure activity, without a continual level of responsibility for the routine practices involved.

Eoin (29) who is married to Shona (19) grew up in a rural town land and as the eldest child he had early responsibility for chores at home. He spoke about being influenced by different sources when learning to cook. While he acknowledges his mother as the first influence, her control of the kitchen as her domain did not encourage any great interest in cooking; *'I suppose, well obviously Mam would have been the first, but I think if you tried to help you were told no, it would just create more work than help. But we would help out maybe peeling potatoes or at certain times put things on'*.

Her control over the kitchen meant they were discouraged from experimenting resulting in his younger siblings not developing any cooking skills for themselves. Instead he explained that he learned to cook in the scouts; *'I was in the scouts ...the leaders were a husband and wife and it was like an extended family. Like they are like another Mam and Dad in a way. You would have learned a lot, so my cooking would have come from that'*. He also looks on his grandfather as an important role model

for taking on what was considered 'gendered' work when his wife died and Eoin identifies with his altered practices as informing his own beliefs and attitudes;

'Granddad now, like grandmother died a number of years ago, he would have done the ironing and... the shopping and... a certain amount of the cooking at home, so that would be in my head, as normal.'

He spoke of cooking in his home as a shared activity. As he and Shona work full-time, whoever gets home first cooks the evening meal. Eoin sees their roles as equal and believes in gendered fairness when carrying out household tasks;

"I don't think it's any one person's... like both of us work and now obviously with the baby that might change but ultimately both of us still work, and because if Shona isn't going out, she is working here at home. So I wouldn't see that I am going to come in and have my dinner ready. I don't think it's fair. I don't see it as very level playing field in a way. I just think I am capable of cooking so".

He also expressed a belief that gender education needs to be tackled early where both boys and girls are taught skills connected with household work where a gendered neutral stance is the norm rather than separate roles, and that children see this in action;

'Maybe the child isn't seeing the process of one parent going shopping while the other cares for the child, so they don't actually see shopping and what's involved in it. And I suppose, I would see education should be about life skills so everybody learns, certain subjects in school would be mandatory and Home Economics if you want to call it, we did it in transition year and that would be a standard you know. You need to know how to cook basic things and understand food and the pyramid and you know basic things'

These accounts portray different pathways to taking on the work of cooking. Of the three male participants Carl is the only one who had to take some responsibility for cooking from an early age. His expectation of equal participation in a division of household labour stems from his experience, along with taking responsibility for care and nurturance of their son. For Eoin and David cooking is an activity with less

accountability that they have taken on through interest or a belief in fairness and sharing.

During analysis it also became apparent that some change is evident in men's contributions to family cooking. While women continue to carry out the major part of domestic cooking, a varied picture emerged when analysing participants' accounts of this work in interviews and food diaries. Including the three male participants already discussed analysis of who took responsibility for cooking presents a mixed picture.

In fact, no sharing of food work occurred for twenty one of the thirty-eight respondents in this study. Within this group eight women are sole food providers, of which one is widowed and seven are either separated/ or lone parents. Of the remaining thirteen, twelve are married and one has a partner and all take full responsibility for cooking for family. Five respondents work outside the home and five are students who combine their studies with caring duties for family. For women who spoke of doing most or all the work involved in cooking a pattern of male non-involvement emerged which reflected particular notions of masculinity and what this involved. Some husbands in this group contributed to family work through shopping, house maintenance, or gardening. As may be expected different stages across the life course presented particular patterns. A number of women in an older age bracket revealed that their husbands had very specific ideas about gendered roles. A strongly masculine attitude was evident, in which a gendered division of labour applied regarding household work versus paid work. Among women in this age bracket a certain level of resignation was expressed about stereotypical gendered roles at the time 'as just the way it was'. This pattern was consistent with men taking a passive

role in the household, 'ceding' control of their dietary needs to their wife or partner upon entering marriage (Newcombe et al, 2012:394). As a result the work of cooking was entirely women's responsibility.

Long working hours for men also lessened their involvement in cooking roles or participating in family mealtimes during the week. While accounts from Chapter Four show that older respondents expressed acceptance of this pattern as the norm in the past, younger women showed disappointment and frustration at their partner's unwillingness or inability to contribute, particularly if at an earlier stage in their relationship they had shared the role of cooking.

In contrast, for seventeen participants, food work is either part shared or shared: of these thirteen are working; eleven full or part-time, and four are full-time at home. One of the four is engaged in study and one doing occasional work. Amongst these respondents cooking is shared when possible depending on work commitments and time schedules.

In contrast with the participants who have full responsibility for cooking, these women acknowledge the supportive cooking role of the men in their lives. Their narratives include references to the interest that men, as husbands, partners, and friends, brought to the work of cooking. In a number of interviews women discussed the enthusiasm and commitment their husbands and sons have for cooking. As Table 5.2 revealed, however, there is a varied commitment to this work. Where cooking is part- shared men cook at weekends, when entertaining family or friends, or taking turns to suit work schedules. When cooking is shared husbands of six participants take equal or greater responsibility, with Carl and David doing most or all of the food

work in their families. For Beth (11) and Eileen (38) their husbands were also a significant influence on their cooking skills. These interviewees reflect a tone that shows a more relaxed attitude to the work of cooking when it is a shared activity. It is important to note however that men's contributions are recounted mainly through women's narratives, and also diary reflections from Beth, Jill, Sinead and Laura, on shared food practices in their homes. While they are not all firsthand accounts they do reveal an important level of change in the work of cooking, within the overall context of domestic food provision.

Significantly, for most of the men cooking appears to be an activity they enjoy, not a chore, but a skill they gladly participate in. This may result from the fact that they do not generally have full responsibility for feeding others routinely, and so miss out on the mundane aspects of repetitive food work. The following section explores through the lens of women's narratives and food diary reflections men's commitment to cooking and how it shapes differences in gendered patterns of household work.

7.3.1 Donning the apron: men and changing cooking roles

Jan (36) is a professional woman who work part-time and explained that she had no interest in food growing up. She is a vegetarian and has little interest in cooking, particularly meals containing meat. She spoke of her husband being the main cook in the family throughout the week, and for special occasions, whereas she will cook only for the children when her work schedule allows. Describing their different relationship to cooking in terms of 'feeling' she states; *'No I wouldn't be a feely cooking person, my husband would be, like he would say I think I will throw that in,*

that would be good'. Explaining her connection to cooking she sees herself as secondary; *'I would be the second branch or the fall guy as regards cooking'*.

Whereas for her husband;

'I would say that predominantly my husband would do the cooking...he loves it, yeah... he would be good at cooking and now and then, like I would cook now for the kids. Just because maybe, I work a three day week... and it would just make more sense that I would. But at the weekends if he was around he would cook really. So he would be the main person I only do it because of convenience'

For Jan this gendered arrangement for cooking meals reflects how food work was carried out when she was growing up. Her father cooked when her mother went to work. She explained that her husband learned to cook through helping his father who cooked dinner when his mother worked. As a result her husband's keen interest in food and domestic tasks means they also share general cleaning and domestic work, easing household chores, and giving her more time to spend on activities with the children. She expressed a very relaxed attitude to food work, and eating routines around it showing a distancing and separation from feeling a specific sense of responsibility for this work.

Similarly, Eileen also spoke of her lack of culinary skills when she entered into a formal relationship where she took up an interest in cooking and eating healthily through her husband's enthusiasm around food. She explained that her husband's interest in cooking was fostered by his mother and other relatives. It came about because his mother worked and he assumed some early cooking responsibility. This perspective on parental co-operation and involvement in family work including cooking is consistent with the work of Gupta (2006) who found that an early experience of maternal employment along with a supportive father's attitude; *'may create a broader repertoire of masculine behaviour among men, one that includes*

helping out in the home' (Gupta, 2006:82). The findings are consistent also with a study by Fine-Davis (1983) in which early sharing of household work between genders within families was found to have a strong effect on later sharing of family work.

Cooking for Eileen (38) is seen an important life skill and she spoke of her husband's love of good food and cooking and feels she is privileged to have a husband who likes to cook;

"I'm very spoiled as my husband is a very good cook, he's a brilliant cook...his mother was a nurse and brought up three kids. I don't think they knew what a crispy pancake or a potato waffle was because everything in that house was fresh and home cooked. She obviously had a very big influence on nutritional values and all the rest"

While Eileen spoke of not learning cooking skills she was expected to help out at home. She described how family meals held strong memories of family rituals where extended family gathered for big occasions;

' When I moved out from home I couldn't even boil water half the time, while I helped out at home I didn't do any cooking much, so I started to learn and with his help I have come on'.

Having concentrated on her career early in marriage, Eileen and her husband now have two small children and she recently returned to work after maternity leave. The children are fed during the day in crèche, but the family endeavour to eat together at least some nights of the week. Time is an important element in how often this can occur, and both she and her husband have a relaxed attitude to meals during the week;

'Obviously, we can't have a big dinner every night, sometimes you might just skip and have soup and sandwiches, or something. ...when it is nearly seven getting home nobody wants a big meal, sometimes we would try to cook the night before... but I don't believe in making food an issue'

Cooking is a shared activity, balanced according to time schedules. Whoever is home first takes responsibility, and her husband mainly cooks at weekends. With two small children this arrangement works well for them and Eileen feels she is 'lucky' to have a shared role that takes the burden of accountability for cooking. This form of change in the division of labour around food work may, as Aarseth and Olsen's (2008) study of dual-career couples agrees, *'involve creating new gendered identifications and new configurations of practices... of a traditional gender division of labour that always connected femininity, food and care'*. Instead they suggest that the redefinition that men contribute to through their food work facilitates a transformation of specific gendered association between women and food provision (Aarseth and Olsen, 2008: 286-7).

As we have seen in Chapter Five for some women learning to cook was out of interest, or from traditional maternal role models within the family. Beth (11) revealed that she never had an interest in cooking, preferring to do outdoor work on the family farm. When she married she continued working until recent years. Lacking confidence in cooking skills she credits her husband with learning to cook and sharing the role with when possible; *'I was never interested in cooking and I was always an outdoor person really. So I suppose in recent years my husband has been my main influence really'*. Her interview narrative, food diary and observation when shopping reveals that while she takes responsibility most of the week for food work her husband cooks some evenings and at weekends and for special occasions.

Laura (22) who also takes the main responsibility for daily food work spoke of how entertaining is an important part of their family life and she and her husband like having friends and family visit. They associate cooking with doing special things to

'delight and honour guests'. Preparation of food is shared on these occasions and her interview, diary and shopping trip show, they plan these occasions with each of them doing what they are good at, where her husband does his speciality and she hers.

'My husband makes the puddings he is good at pudding making, that's his job. Yeah he is good at baking. He is no good at cooking meals and I am no good at baking'

When discussing changes in food work practices where younger men are getting involved in cooking, Cora (3) and Susan (5) acknowledged that cooking knowledge and skills are changing and the gendered element is shifting for younger people, with fewer women taking it on. They talked about their sons taking up cooking as their partners show little interest in learning to cook. They also spoke of their sons coming to them for tips and cooking queries as they have taken on responsibility for meals. Both women expressed the belief that this is a positive development, one they would have welcomed when they were raising their families. As Susan points out she is agreement with this trend, in which her sons take on the cooking role;

"I've noticed, it's not as female orientated as it used to be. I have lads that have girlfriends that 'can't cook won't cook'. And not that it bothers me because... they place the emphasis on the cooked meals. But they tend to go home for them... They don't seem to think that they can have a family dinner, even though now they have children together...But if they come to Mam's they have a home cooked dinner; my eldest son does all the cooking in his house...and he would say, no, Mam she doesn't know how to, she can't. And I'm going, oh right, maybe it is changing for the better".

As a sign of changing norms and behaviour around food work younger women also expressed different expectations about sharing caring work including cooking.

A number of younger women with children, combining family roles and employment, accept as the norm having partners who share cooking duties, but are also aware that it remains unusual for many of their peers.

The task of cooking for Kellie (37) and her husband has always been shared and is a relaxed arrangement. The fact that both she and her husband have cooking skills makes sharing easier; *'I don't, I mean in this day and age, I don't think it is just the woman's role. I don't think I have ever thought about it, it is just something that one of us does'*.

Irene (20) also shares cooking with her husband with both of them working and enjoying an interest in food and cooking; *"No we divided it really, and it's not a thing whereby I do it one night and Terry does it another, it depends on who's home first, I would generally be home first and I'd start dinner but if he comes home a little bit early he will give me a hand and at weekends its very equal and he does a lot, yes definitely he is quite a good cook"*.

As we have seen in Chapter Four the birth of children also brought about a shared cooking role for Yvonne (33) and her husband but it is considered unusual by their friends; *'Now where we are now, we are sharing it a lot more so because, [a] because the girls arrived and [b] because Ken just suddenly took an interest in cooking a couple of years ago and he found that he really, really liked it'*

Yvonne is very happy with the new arrangement but encountered entrenched ideas about gender roles from their friends' attitudes to Ken doing the cooking for occasions;

'So it must be that the majority of people expect to see the woman cooking in the kitchen when they come over...I suppose for them it is unusual... probably for everybody that did say something about it when they came in... maybe it just really didn't look the norm to them... it must have seemed that we had reversed roles for some reason'.

Of necessity as part of a hectic schedule associated with active two year old twins, Doreen (15) and her husband share cooking, with one caring for the children while the other cooks. *'Since the kids came along, sometimes I find it easier just to cook when he would mind the kids. So if it's not cooking it's minding the kids so it's one or the other, you know. Yeah, sometimes it's a break nearly to cook if you are not minding them, you know if it's the kids all day and then it's a chance to do something different'*.

For her cooking is a break from caring; to carry out an activity she normally gets enjoyment from, but as the role is shared her husband can equally carry out this work.

Analysis of the different patterns related to men and food work prove relevant to findings from my study. It must be noted also though that accounts of men's participation in cooking occur mainly within families where women are also either working full-time or part-time in paid employment, which is consistent with findings in studies of dual-earners (Haywood and Mac an Ghail, 2003; Aarseth and Olsen, 2008).

The accounts of wives and mothers of male involvement in cooking show how changing patterns of engagement in food work are emerging. Based on second hand narrative accounts, along with food diaries and observation of food shopping they reveal changes in men's involvement in food work. While they may not carry the same weight as reflections and insights from first hand narrative accounts of male participants, taken together with the contributions from male participants, the narratives show that some level of change is occurring in practices and responsibility for cooking in families. Whether out of interest or for practical reasons when both

parents are working, engagement in cooking by men may be seen as a step towards changing the gendered alignment of family food work as women's work. As accounts show some of the men gained their interest and sense of responsibility for cooking from a role model in the past. This finding reveals how an opportunity to affect some level of gender balance in family food work may be possible if encouragement, opportunities, and a level of responsibility are nurtured in both boys and girls from an early age. By de-gendering what is essentially a life skill possibilities are enhanced for creating gender balance in family work overall.

7.5 Conclusion

The work of feeding in families is part of a gendered role that has been traditionally assigned to women, whereas for men it is an activity they can choose to take up. As we have seen, some men enjoy cooking and readily take on the role. Having developed a skill and or enjoyment of this work it offers a creative means of contributing to family work. In this chapter the task of cooking is enacted in various ways by men, for some as helpers at specific times, whereas others share or do the major part of this work.

Yet unlike women who continue to hold gendered accountability for food provision the three male participants in this study show varied influences on learning cooking skills and have distinct ideas about what it means to them. Apart from Carl they did not have to take significant responsibility for this work growing up, but are very willing and interested to engage in cooking as adults. Their heterogeneity implies that Eoin and David can express their interest in cooking in a singular individual way because they are free from a level of gendered accountability for cooking. Their level

of interest and willingness to cook is a choice rather than a role they feel is assigned to them. In contrast, as Carl has responsibility as the main food provider his food work is part of a gendered division of labour, which he argues should be shared equally. Significantly, in contrast to men's cooking, for women this work is one of an array of household activities, whereas for men it can be a pleasurable activity, a break in their routine. They can approach it as a creative process, a pleasurable aspect of family life. For men also their decision to take up this role can be a choice with no strong gendered precedent, but may be influenced by role models showing example in enacting a gendered equal stance. It is important to state that while men's input may be small when compared with women's level of responsibility, this aspect of changing a way of 'doing' gender is an important step at the level of practices that opens up possibilities for future egalitarian practices in providing food in families.

Chapter Eight

Discussion and conclusion

8.1 Introduction

This thesis is centrally concerned with issues related to gender equality. Through the lens of food work it traces how this work as a specific aspect of gendered roles has evolved historically and is enacted in contemporary Ireland. I explore what implication changes in this role may have for food work itself and for gender equity. Women past and present have had primary responsibility for this work as part of an unequal gendered division of labour in families. Historically, Church and State in Ireland associated this work with motherhood, part of an idealised nurturing role of women. Social change has provided new opportunities for women to contribute and engage fully in equal participation in paid employment in contemporary society yet the work of providing food in families remains the responsibility of women also.

Theories of modernity outline how women can engage fully in society on an equal footing with men, but also acknowledge the vital role that they have carried out in supporting economic and social development as nurturers within families. Different theoretical stances explain how micro-level practices and decision making evolve and contribute to macro-level changes. At the level of gender roles and practices individualisation is shown to depend on the context, where negotiation between partners includes a moral dimension when making decisions regarding family commitments. As Duncan, points out individuals make decisions through ‘bricolage,’ pragmatically bringing together a range of different factors, considerations and experiences when making decisions (Duncan, 2011:262).

This is highlighted in Chapter Four in the varied manner in which women think about, negotiate and make decisions based on their commitments. Differences occur across age ranges and attitude spectrum and these come into play when individuals are involved with pragmatic decisions about personal situations. This study found that when relationships are formalised women often have to take on responsibility for family work, particularly where hegemonic gendered attitudes apply. Decisions connected with family are also variously dependent on supports from within family along with opportunities for a work life balance between paid work and family life. Significantly, policies to facilitate a balance between paid work and caring roles are inconsistent at for women when their paid work is mediated by their care responsibilities (Williams, 2004). Highlighting the slow rate of change developing policies towards an adult worker model, Lewis and Guillari (2005) argue that there are limits to this model regarding issues of care and gender equality. Daly (2011) also argues that from a gender and family perspective, affecting change is complex and ambiguous leading to varied levels of reform within different countries.

The findings of large scale studies also provide an overview of how trends in gendered work are complex and evolving, influenced by historical, cultural, and structural constraints, effecting slow patterns of change. Results also show that while both structural and individual attitudes are changing in relation to family roles and responsibilities, enacting a gendered equality approach is hampered by entrenched positions based both at both personal and policy level, with variable opportunities to affect substantial change.

This research draws on the work of Morgan (2002) who argues that family practices, while not connected to moral absolutes do involve an evaluation of choices and a recognition that these matters have consequence in the daily lives of individuals (Morgan, 2002: 154). It is at the level of family practices that this research provides an in-depth insight into the processes by which women make decisions on significant changes that have a profound impact on their lives. The study highlights differences across age, class, and family circumstances showing an uneven pattern, from traditional to progressive, connected to decisions and/or choices, along with varying attitudes and feelings around these issues. By focusing on private and personal issues the study opens up an avenue of discussion surrounding what this may mean for policies supporting a freedom to choose without restrictions based on assumptions of gendered responsibility for care in families.

As I outlined in Chapter Five, it is through an evaluation of practices that this study looks at feeding others in families. Food work is a central aspect of daily family life. For many women cooking skills are passed down within families, particularly from mothers to daughters leading to a strong association of this work with females where some women continue to display traditional attitudes in how this work is passed on. I show how gaining knowledge of food and cooking passes on tacit skills which have positive implications for healthy eating regardless of class privilege. The role of men cooking in families also creates an added possibility for increased gendered equity, with consequences for egalitarian family practises in the future (Fine-Davis, 1983). It is significant to note that the way in which younger respondents pick up cooking skills from alternative sources beyond gendered assignment, through travel, or other influences, presents an alternative possibility for shared practices of ‘doing’ gender

through food work. This aspect of the research offers pointers towards enhancing understanding through further comprehensive study.

In their work, Finch and Mason argue that *'family relationships lie at the heart of understanding the condition of social life in advanced industrial, or late modern, societies'* (2000:5). They found that women today retain responsibility for 'emotional labour' linking food and eating with forging connection and socialisation within family life. This study revealed meals, in addition to nourishing family members, were used as a site to socialise children and to enact specific ideas surrounding family life, of bonds, and relationship building. This aspect was also highlighted as particularly important to maintain emotional connection and communication in situations where parents are raising a family alone. This finding has important resonances for the level of supports families receive when going through difficult transitions. The concept of family display (Finch, 2011) also presents a view of how families go about doing activities associated with family life that are described and displayed as distinct and of special importance in their daily lives, particularly family meal occasions or special celebrations. These aspects of this study, while based on a small number of families, are fascinating and have possibilities that warrant future investigation.

I have argued that influences from historical norms on gendered cultures when combined with welfare and social policies affect outcomes for equality in household roles. At social and policy level attitudes to the work of caring in contemporary society, and to gender equality and social change are not clear cut revealing that the extent of power women can exert in connection with gendered practices can still be questioned. Bradley (2013) drawing on Foucault's theories (1980, 1990), Bourdieu

(1984) and Giddens (1991) shows how theoretically power may be variously enacted through the exercise of power, through social and cultural capital, or through rules and resources. In Chapter Six when the concept of caring work is applied to existing systems (Baker et al, 2004), it reveals how roles within economic, cultural, and political and affective (love and care) systems are structured and connected. Baker, Lynch, Cantillon and Walsh (2004), argue that women who are predominantly involved in the role of care providers are often excluded, or have limited access in the other systems, that are centrally involved in powerful decision making connected with issues pertinent to their lives and work. This absence points to inequitable opportunities to exercise power and autonomy by individuals carrying out caring roles.

From a past based on local food production to contemporary society where food consumption is now implicated in concerns for healthy eating, women's role as food providers is increasingly complex. Food provision in families presents a number of challenges and requires a level of organisation and planning, to fulfil individual tastes and requirements. This work involves knowledge and skills in order to negotiate a vast level of choices. For participants' tacit knowledge, trust, and nutritional awareness are used when choosing specific foods. This research shows that consumers have considerable power when food information is consistent and clear. For some women local foods are favoured where tractability is possible. For others knowledge at a deeper level can offer them a means to express their choices as informed consumers giving them power at the level of choice. However, powerful lobbies also operate at a global food level which impact on policies and choices connected with food. In addition, nutritional information is shown to create

frustration in consumers adding to pressures associated with feeding work. Increasingly, greater levels of childhood autonomy and decision making are encouraged, and power relationships within families are shifting to adapt to new family practices adding new pressure on parents (Smart and Neale, 1999; Kline, 2011). These issues have strong implications at the level of food policy required to support parents with responsibility for feeding in families.

Issues of knowledge and power related to food work are also tempered by gendered accountability. In looking at possibilities of creating egalitarian practices in connection with food at a gendered level tentative change appears to be unfolding. Aarseth and Olsen's (2008) suggest that when men contribute through their food work it facilitates a transformation of specific gendered association between women and food provision. I suggest based on a small number of accounts in this study, that where men participate in cooking for family the dynamics of responsibility and control of feeding by women is altered. As Fine-Davis's (1983) study shows where egalitarian practices exist they can offer a model to encourage both women and men to further equality in family work. This follows the argument that whereas gendered identity in the past was connected to a sense of duty of caring based on *accountability* for doing what is seen as the right way to proceed, reflecting historical and institutional circumstances, by 'doing gender differently' this can break down stereotypical precedents (West and Zimmerman: 2009:117).

The small number of male respondents in this study show different patterns of taking up food work. Apart from one they took up this work by choice and interest and were not socialised into this role. This is an important distinction and points out a possible avenue at the level of gender practices for changes in food provision roles. By

presenting cooking as a life skill and promoting engagement by males and females through education and at all stages in families, possibilities open up for more egalitarian practices in the future.

8.2 Limitations

There are limitations to this research. The composition of my sample reflects an uneven SES of middle class respondents with fewer perspectives from working class contributions, leading potentially to an unbalanced understanding of views and practices views. However, I found that respondents from working class backgrounds possessed a broad knowledge and competence in food organisation and skills which benefited them in budgeting on limited resources while giving their families substantial diet. Through the use of snowball sampling which contains an element of self selection there is also a possible a bias towards those who may also have chosen involvement out of personal interest. In addition, the small number of male participants is also a significant limitation to present a balanced viewpoint. However, their contribution as atypical within domestic food provision can shed light wider societal expectations of what is normal in relation to food practices.

Despite these limitations this research provides key original insights, (a) on the division of labour and how it is worked out in contemporary Ireland between men and women for both paid work and family caring roles highlighting some shared practices and also varied constraints for gender equality between caring and paid employment (b) on the varied way responsibility for the role of cooking is taken up as either 'mother' centred' or 'other centred' and the implications this has for practices in families, how emotional labour through family food work is used to sustain memory, connection and socialisation in families along with how it is displayed as part of family life.

8.3 Conclusion

Through the lens of food work this research traces how responsibility for this work as a specific aspect of gendered roles has evolved historically and is enacted in contemporary Ireland. I explore what implication changes in this role may have for food work itself and for gender equity. From within the private realm of family life how people negotiate gender roles, nurture through food, and make and sustain family life offers a myriad of perspectives to expand and enrich future research. By focusing on private food practices this research opens up avenues of discussion for what this mean in terms of policies supporting egalitarian gender practices for food work in families.

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Appendix 1

Table A. 3.1: Profile of Respondents

Name Pseudonym	Gender	Age	Occupation	* married couple	
				Marital Status	Children
1. Patricia	Female	40+	Full-time at home	Married	2
2. Aine	Female	50+	Full-time at home	Widow	4
3. Cora	Female	50+	Full-time at home	Divorced	5
4. Eve	Female	40+	Full-time at home	Married	3
5. Susan	Female	40+	Work at home/student	Separated	5
6. Sonia	Female	46	Full-time at home	Married	3
7. Jill	Female	40	Office work	Married	3
8. Avril	Female	40	Full-time at home	Married	3
9. Rosa	Female	44	Work at home/student	Married	3
10. Carl	Male	30	Work at home/truck driver	Partner	1
11. Beth	Female	46	Full-time at home	Married	4
12. Karen	Female	30+	Work at home/student	Separated	2
13. Sinead	Female	36	Public Health nurse	Married	1
14. Nora	Female	47	Cook-p/t	Separated	1
15. Doreen	Female	30+	Medical Rep.	Married	2
16. Alison	Female	31	IT Manager	Married	1
17. Joan	Female	50	Full-time at home	Married	3
18. Katy	Female	37	Work at home/student	Separated	2
19. Shona	Female	30	Child care worker	Married*	0
20. Irene	Female	33	Receptionist	Married	1
21. Magda	Female	30	Full-time at home Product sales- p/t	Married	3
22. Laura	Female	38	Work at home/Artist	Married	1
23. Joanna	Female	33	Full-time at home	Married	1
24. May	Female	30+	Full-time at home	Married	2
25. Nessa	Female	30	Full-time at home	Married	1
26. Emma	Female	30+	Full-time at home	Married	2
27. Orla	Female	40+	Social care worker	Separated	2
28. Connie	Female	36	Full-time at home	Married	2
29. Eoin	Male	30	Project manager	Married*	0
30. Collette	Female	30	Work at home/student	Single	2
31. Ella	Female	30+	Work at home/student	Single	1
32. Sara	Female	50+	Staff Officer	Married	3
33. Yvonne	Female	35	Office Manager	Married	2
34. Rebecca	Female	30+	Teacher	Married	2
35. David	Male	30+	Project Leader	Married	0
36. Jan	Female	35+	IT Consultant	Married	2
37. Kellie	Female	37	Information Officer	Married	2
38. Eileen	Female	40+	Executive	Married	2

Table A. 3.2: Respondents by age, marital status, children, and class

Name	Age	Marital Status	Children living at home & age	Class
1. Patricia	40+	Married	2 aged 6, 8	Middle class
2. Aine	50+	Widow	1 adult 25	Working class
3. Cora	50+	Divorced	1 adult 22	Working class
4. Eve	47	Married	3 aged 6, 10, 14	Middle class
5. Susan	40+	Separated	1 adult 18	Working class
6. Sonia	39	Married	3 aged 2, 10, 11	Middle class
7. Jill	40	Married	3 aged 6, 9, 12	Middle class
8. Avril	40	Married	3 aged 10,11,13	Middle class
9. Rosa	44	Married	3 aged 12, 18,22	Middle class
10. Carl	30	Partner	1 aged 2	Working class
11. Beth	46	Married	4 aged 3,8,12,14	Middle class
12. Karen	30+	Separated	2 aged 5, 9	Working class
13. Sinead	36	Married	1 aged 18 months	Middle class
14. Nora	47	Separated	1 adult 20	Working class
15. Doreen	30+	Married	2 twins 18 months	Middle class
16. Alison	31	Married	1 aged 18 months	Middle class
17. Joan	50	Married	1 adult 20	Middle class
18. Katy	37	Separated	2 aged 6, 9	Middle class
19. Shona	30	Married	0	Middle class
20. Irene	33	Married	1 aged 18 months	Middle class
21. Magda	30	Married	3 aged 6 months,2,10	Working class
22. Laura	38	Married	1 aged 10 months	Middle class
23. Joanna	33	Married	1 aged 3	Middle class
24. May	30+	Married	2 aged 4, 5	Middle class
25. Nessa	30	Married	1 aged 15 months	Middle class
26. Emma	30+	Married	2 aged 18 months, 3	Middle class
27. Orla	40+	Separated	2 aged 15, 20	Middle class
28. Connie	36	Married	2 aged 3, 5	Middle class
29. Eoin	30	Married	0	Middle class
30. Collette	30	Single	2 aged 8, 9	Working class
31. Ella	30+	Single	1 aged 2	Middle class
32. Sara	50+	Married	2 adults 19, 21	Middle class
33. Yvonne	35	Married	2 aged 6 months, 3	Middle class
34. Rebecca	30+	Married	2 aged 4, 7	Middle class
35. David	30+	Married	0	Middle class
36. Jan	35+	Married	2 aged 14 months, 3	Middle class
37. Kellie	37	Married	2 aged 2, 4	Middle class
38. Eileen	40+	Married	2 aged 1, 4	Middle class

Appendix 2

CONSENT FORM-INTERVIEW

Title

From housewife to domestic goddess and beyond: An exploration into the significance of women's role as food providers in a contemporary Irish context.

Researcher: Mary Phipps Department of Sociology National University of Ireland Maynooth, Co. Kildare Tel: (01) 7083659

Supervisor

Dr. Jane Gray, Department of Sociology, NUIM, Tel :(01) 7083596

I would like you to take part in my research. It deals with the role of food provision in the household. I am looking at how this role is carried out today, what meaning and value it has, and how it is affected by changes in food production and marketing. The questions I will be asking are directly about your experience of carrying out this role.

If you agree to participate I will come and interview you at your convenience, at a time and location of your choosing. With your permission, I will tape record our conversation.

All of the information that I obtain will be kept confidential. Your identity will be assured by replacing your name by a code number. I will keep your identity confidential, and I will use a code number on your data and keep your name and code number in a separate place. I will ensure that the tape and field notes of our sessions will be kept in a secure place. At your request you can access your transcripts at any time.

With your permission the information will be archived and may be used for future research but the same confidentiality guarantees will apply.

Your participation is voluntary. You are free to withdraw from the study at any time. You are also free to refuse to answer any question or may stop at any time.

If you have any questions or concerns about your participation in this research you may contact me Mary Phipps at National University of Ireland Maynooth Tel: 7083659 or Dr. Jane Gray National University of Ireland Maynooth Tel: 7083596.

If during your participation in this study you feel the information and guidelines that you were given have been neglected or disregarded in any way, or if you are unhappy about the process please contact the Secretary of the National University of Ireland Maynooth Ethics Committee at pgdean@nuim.ie of 01 708 6018. Please be assured that you concerns will be dealt with in a sensitive manner.

Signed: _____ Date: _____

CONSENT FORM/FOOD DIARY

Title of research:

From housewife to domestic goddess and beyond: An exploration into the significance of women's role as food providers in a contemporary Irish context.

Researcher: Mary Phipps Department of Sociology National University of Ireland Maynooth, Co. Kildare Tel: (01) 7083659

Supervisor

Dr. Jane Gray, Department of Sociology, NUIM, Tel :(01) 7083596

I would like you to take part in this part of my research. It deals with the role of food provision in the household. I am looking at how this role is carried out today, what meaning and value it has, and how it is affected by changes in food production and marketing.

The food diary is for a period of seven days. You are asked to complete two sections for each day of the week based on the work involved in providing the main meal of the day. All of the information that I obtain will be kept confidential. Your identity will be assured by replacing your name by a code number. I will keep your identity confidential, and I will use a code number on your data and keep your name and code number in a separate place. I will ensure that the diary and field notes of our sessions will be kept in a secure location. At your request you can access the transcripts of your diary at any time.

With your permission the information will be archived and may be used for future research but the same confidentiality guarantees will apply.

Your participation is voluntary. You are free to withdraw from the study at any time. You are also free to refuse to answer any question or may stop at any time.

If you have any questions or concerns about your participation in this research you may contact me Mary Phipps at National University of Ireland Maynooth Tel: 7083659 or Dr. Jane Gray National University of Ireland Maynooth Tel: 7083596.

If during your participation in this study you feel the information and guidelines that you were given have been neglected or disregarded in any way, or if you are unhappy about the process please contact the Secretary of the National University of Ireland Maynooth Ethics Committee at pgdean@nuim.ie of 01 708 6018. Please be assured that you concerns will be dealt with in a sensitive manner.

Signed: _____ Date: _____

Code no:

CONSENT FORM/PARTICIPANT OBSERVATION

Title

From housewife to domestic goddess and beyond: An exploration into the significance of women's role as food providers in a contemporary Irish context.

Researcher: Mary Phipps Department of Sociology National University of Ireland Maynooth, Co. Kildare Tel: (01) 7083659

Supervisor

Dr. Jane Gray, Department of Sociology, NUIM, Tel :(01) 7083596

I would like you to take part in my research. It deals with the role of food provision in the household. I am looking at how this role is carried out today, what meaning and value it has, and how it is affected by changes in food production and marketing. The participant observation session will relate directly about your experience of carrying out this role.

If you agree to participate I will meet you at your convenience, at a time and location of your choosing. With your permission, I will observe you carrying out your routine food shopping. Afterwards I will discuss this event with you and will record our conversation. I will also write up field notes on the participant observation.

All of the information that I obtain will be kept confidential. Your identity will be assured by replacing your name by a code number. I will keep your identity confidential, and I will use a code number on your data and keep your name and code number in a separate place. I will ensure that the tape and field notes of our sessions will be kept in a secure place. At your request you can access your transcripts at any time.

With your permission the information will be archived and may be used for future research but the same confidentiality guarantees will apply.

Your participation is voluntary. You are free to withdraw from the study at any time. You are also free to refuse to answer any question or may stop at any time.

If you have any questions or concerns about your participation in this research you may contact me Mary Phipps at National University of Ireland Maynooth Tel: 7083659 or Dr. Jane Gray National University of Ireland Maynooth Tel: 7083596.

If during your participation in this study you feel the information and guidelines that you were given have been neglected or disregarded in any way, or if you are unhappy about the process please contact the Secretary of the National University of Ireland Maynooth Ethics Committee at pgdean@nuim.ie of 01 708 6018. Please be assured that you concerns will be dealt with in a sensitive manner.

Signed: _____ Date: _____



7 DAY

FOOD DIARY

Introduction

Thank you for taking part in an interview. It is invaluable to my research. I am also very grateful to you for agreeing to fill out a food diary which is used to record the work of the providing food in the home for one week. It will focus on the main meal of the day only. The purpose of the diary is to record the various tasks and issues that may effect how this work is carried out. It will provide a detailed account of what is involved in cooking the main meal over the course of seven days. The first part (A) looks at the amount of time and planning that goes into getting dinner ready each day and how you cater for changes in the mealtime routine. In the second part (B) the food diary offers an opportunity to think about and explore your thoughts and feelings about cooking for others as you carry out the task. The diary is also used to record how the work may vary over a weekly period. The last page (C and D) are used to allow you comment on filling out the diary and record any suggestions you may have, and to list all the members of the household.

If you have any questions or concerns about your participation in this research you may contact me Mary Phipps at National University of Ireland Maynooth Tel: 7083659 or Dr. Jane Gray National University of Ireland Maynooth Tel: 7083596.

If during your participation in this study you feel the information and guidelines that you were given have been neglected or disregarded in any way, or if you are unhappy about the process please contact the Secretary of the National University of Ireland Maynooth Ethics Committee at pgdean@nuim.ie of 01 708 6018. Please be assured that you concerns will be dealt with in a sensitive manner.

Signed: _____ Date: _____

INSTRUCTIONS FOR FILLING OUT THE DIARY

The focus is on the main meal of the day only. The diary covers a period of seven days. There is a page for each day. This is divided into two sections A and B. For each day record the sections as soon as possible after you carry out the work. At the end of the diary sections C and D ask for additional details for the completion of the diary.

SECTION A

- This section deals with planning and preparation of the main meal and could be filled out as you complete this task.
- In this section record the approximate time it took to think about, plan, shop and carry out cooking the meal.
- Record any alternative meals/choices or different mealtimes you took into account for members of the household and who was present for the meal.

SECTION B

- In this part of the diary you are asked to think about and record your thoughts and feelings, positive and negative, about the work of preparing the main meal that day, the atmosphere at the table, and any other details that occurred around mealtime on that occasion (a visitor arriving unexpectedly, or someone not coming home for dinner, etc).
- On each day, please state exactly what happened and feel free to be as open and frank about your thoughts and feelings on that occasion.
- Record any changes in the routine of mealtimes over the week.
- If for example, the main meal is a take-away, please state how the routine may be different from a meal cooked at home. For example does everyone sit at the table or eat watching TV, is the atmosphere different or not.
- In the case of eating out for the main meal, state how this mealtime may differ from eating at home, and in what way from your point of view.

SECTIONS C and D

- In Section C please write any comment and suggestions on the task for filling out the diary, positive and negative.
- In Section D please record the first names, ages, and relationship to you of all members of the household.

Monday

Section A [state time it took to plan, shop and cook main meal, and any alternative meals cooked and who was present at this meal]

Section B [record your thoughts and feelings about the work of cooking the main meal, the atmosphere, any changes in routine, or eating out] (please continue on the back of this page if necessary)

Tuesday

Section A [state time it took to plan, shop and cook main meal, and any alternative meals cooked and who was present at this meal]

Section B [record your thoughts and feelings about the work of cooking the main meal, the atmosphere, any changes in routine, or eating out] (please continue on the back of this page if necessary)

Wednesday

Section A [state time it took to plan, shop and cook main meal, and any alternative meals cooked and who was present at this meal]

Section B [record your thoughts and feelings about the work of cooking the main meal, the atmosphere, any changes in routine or eating out] (please continue on the back of this page if necessary)

Thursday

Section A [state time it took to plan, shop and cook main meal, and any alternative meals cooked and who was present at this meal]

Section B [record your thoughts and feelings about the work of cooking the main meal, the atmosphere, any changes in routine or eating out] (please continue on the back of this page if necessary)

Friday

Section A [state time it took to plan, shop and cook main meal, and any alternative meals cooked and who was present at this meal]

Section B [record your thoughts and feelings about the work of cooking the main meal, the atmosphere, any changes in routine or eating out] (please continue on the back of this page if necessary)

Saturday

Section A [state time it took to plan, shop and cook main meal, and any alternative meals cooked and who was present at this meal]

Section B [record your thoughts and feelings about the work of cooking the main meal, the atmosphere, any changes in routine or eating out] (please continue on the back of this page if necessary)

Sunday

Section A [state time it took to plan, shop and cook main meal, and any alternative meals cooked and who was present at this meal]

Section B [record your thoughts and feelings about the work of cooking the main meal, the atmosphere, any changes in routine or eating out] (please continue on the back of this page if necessary)

COMMENTS AND/OR SUGGESTIONS

Section C

MEMBERS OF THE HOUSEHOLD

Section D

Thank you for taking the time to fill out the food diary I appreciate your participation.

Code No:

PhD: Research Interview Guide and broad format for Qualitative Interviewing.

Themes: Historical background data of past experiences regarding food in the household. Beginning with childhood and foods that were part of that time, what were mealtimes like? Who cooked, who helped out, atmosphere.

Can you talk to me about the kind of food you ate as a child?

Can you describe the general routine work that went on around the daily mealtimes?

Who was mainly responsible for cooking for the family?

Was everyone (boys and girls) expected to help out?

Were you expected to help out?

What would your duties have been?

What were mealtimes like can you describe them and who would have been present?

How were special occasions different and what food would be cooked then?

What was the atmosphere like?

Did that differ on any day of the week?

How were the ingredients for meals sourced? (E.g. shop, garden etc).

Themes: Gender and the division of labour: In terms of today what are the key differences between the past and now. How the role of feeding is worked out and what influences any change in taking on this work. (Gender, division of labour, responsibility, birth of children, obligation, sharing).

Can you talk about the kind of food do you like to eat today- examples?

How does it differ from the diet of your childhood?

Who in your household typically does the cooking?

How was role worked out? : was it worked out; by discussion, bargaining, who does what etc, or assumed)

(If her/his role) Can you talk about how did you feel about taking on this role?

How/when did you develop the skills of cooking?

Can you talk about who/what may have influenced your cooking skills?

Within the routine of working how are daily meals worked out?

And the main meal - can you tell me about trying to get food ready when you have been out most of the day?

What happens if you are not home, or late, who cooks then are mealtimes different?

(If they have children) how did the role of cooking change when you had children / if it did?

Can you describe a typical weekday meal?

(Prompts -do you all sit together, for what meals, is it different for each meal, do you have different mealtimes, why? does everyone do their own thing? how does that work?)

Can you tell me how do you decide what you will cook each day? (Examples)

How much time goes into planning and preparing meals daily – OR

How does time play a part in what you cook?

What do you feel about the amount of time you spend cooking?

Can you tell me about how you manage if your circumstances have changed?

(Prompts: full-time work, doing a course, having children etc)

Can you talk about what way you prepare meals that differ from your mother's day-examples of how it is different?

What you see as the most important meal in the day, and why?

How does the routine around mealtimes differ at weekends? (Examples)

What happens then?

In what way (if any) does cooking food for others compare with carrying out general household work? (Prompts: is it seen as the same or different, skilled practice, or mundane-anyone could do it)

Do you consider different family choices of food when deciding what to cook? (Examples)

Do you see providing food as your responsibility/
Why?

Themes: Meaning and/or value of the role (attitudes, family, socialisation, social connection, caring, mundane)

From your point of view how important are family meals?

Can you tell me what you find are the good aspects of cooking for others? (Examples)

And the negative side of cooking for others, can you tell me about them? (Examples)

Can you describe what you feel are the benefits eating together?

What kinds of foods do you like and why? (Examples)

How often would you entertain/cook for others beyond the family?

How you feel about cooking for others (family, friends work colleagues)?

Can you describe what kind of meals you feel are the most satisfying? (Examples)

Can you describe how you and your family most like to eat meals/ what is the general routine around daily meals? (Prompts: all together, trays in front of TV, mixed routines)

In what way do people show gratitude for having a meal prepared for them? (Examples)

Themes: Level of control over food and diet (control, power, attitudes, routines)

Who or what would most influence what you cook?

Do you think the kitchen is your domain? (why/why not)

Can the family help themselves to food during the day?

What rules have you about snacking or eating between meals, or making their own food?

Can you tell me how do you feel about others taking control of the kitchen?

Can you describe the difference between when you cook for others and eating out?

Themes: the changes in food production and its effects: (globalisation, industrialisation, time and choice, constraints, skills, individualism,) Today there are many changes in how food is produced and supplied so –can I ask

Has your cooking pattern changed over the years and if so how?

Can you tell me what you think about the greater availability and variety of foods now in a global food market?

Can you describe how you go about choosing what to cook? (Examples)

In what ways does your income influence what you buy and cook?

Where do you generally do your shopping?
Why there?

Can you tell me how often you and your family eat convenience/fast foods?

What do you think about them?

Can you tell me how often you eat out?

How do you find the experience of eating out influences what people like to eat at home?

If so, how has it changed your diet?

In your household has the routine of mealtimes changed over the years, and in what way? (Examples)

How do you think the skills of cooking are changing?

Themes: Health and nutrition, concerns about food: (Food safety, obesity, control, food policies, labelling, knowledge)

While we have a great variety and choice in foods there are also concerns about foods and increasing health risks -so can I ask-

As someone who feeds others how concerned are you about health/obesity problems?

Can you what you think about the quality of food available? (Health concerns, food scares, what is in foods now, etc)

How do you deal with concerns?

What is your reaction to new information about the value of certain foods over others?

What is your reaction to new information about food scares?

How might articles you see in newspapers or on TV influence what you cook (examples)

Are you inclined to look at food labels?

Do you find that you can understand them?

In what way might your diet change in the light of new ideas about food? (Examples)

Themes: Media, advertising, and TV images of food: food programmes, advertising, advice, all types of cookery programmes –a regular features on concerns about food, diet and health.

What impact has advertising on the choice of food in your household?

In what way do you think food advertising influences children and young people in their food choices?

How often would your children ask you for foods seen in advertisements or TV programmes?

How do you deal with different requests for new meals/ food items in the household?

Describe a typical trip to buy food that you made with your family?

What was the last programme on food or cooking you watched?

Do you watch other programmes?

What do you see is their function?

Are you inclined to try out what you see?

How did it work out?

Do you have cookery books?

Would you use it and what do you make out of it?

Do others in the household use them when cooking? (Examples)

Finally, can I ask you how do you think cooking in the home may change in the future, what do you see happening?

How much of your weekly income would you spend on food?

Ask for details of how many people ages in household, ages and occupations.

Ask: Can I call for clarification on any issues that arise in the interview?

