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# When convenience is inconvenient: 'healthy' family foodways and the persistent intersectionalities of gender and class

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When convenience is inconvenient: 'healthy' family foodways and the persistent intersectionalities of gender and class.

## **1. Introduction: 'proper' middle-class femininities**

In this article I contend that 'healthy' family foodways<sup>1</sup> have become the legitimate means of presenting 'proper' middle-class<sup>2</sup> femininity, which highlights the significance, and continued persistence, of intersectionalities of gender and class. It has been argued that intersectionality is especially pertinent in discussions of identity, gender and power (Davis, 2008; Nash, 2008; Ratna, 2013), and whilst it is more often used with reference to the intersectionalities of gender and race (Puwar, 2004), it can also be useful for exploring other major/minor categories of gender intersections, such as (in no particular order) class, nation, (dis) ability, sexuality, age, religion, faith and migration. In considering the intersectionality of gender and class in the field of everyday foodways, it is notable that social, cultural, economic and symbolic capitals<sup>3</sup> (Bourdieu, 1986) become gendered resources in boundary work and the demarcation of moral hierarchies. Hence, 'future oriented' middle-classed food 'choices' become part of a reshaping of patriarchy that draws on the success of 'new' femininities, whilst simultaneously reaffirming 'romanticized representations and rememberings' of domesticated femininity (Taylor, 2012, p. 16). Women therefore continue to negotiate classed as well as gendered aspirations, particularly around family, care work and family foodways (p. 10).

Of course, classed associations with food and foodways are not new. Mennell (1985), for example, highlights shifts in 'tastes' across class lines from medieval times when it was prestigious to eat white bread amongst the upper classes, whilst the lower classes could only afford to eat unrefined brown bread. This was followed by a reaction to the excessive industrialisation of food and a movement away from refined products towards 'healthier' foods amongst the upper classes. Charles and Kerr (1988) similarly outline the structural constraints of class and gender on food and foodways in the 1980s, particularly in terms of economics and power relationships. However, in a neo-liberal era, it is argued that the social, political and economic changes of late modernity have weakened the structural constraints of class and gender (Beck, 1992, 2002 and Giddens, 1991) and it was within this context that this study was conducted. It was assumed that there would be fluidity

across gender roles and evidence of 'negotiated family model', as promised by Beck and Beck-Gernsheim (2002), in respondents' accounts of everyday foodways. All of the (mostly) middle-class women with dependent children at home at the time of my study articulated a commitment to what I have termed 'healthy' family foodways, or the production, preparation, serving and eating of 'healthy' food for their families; what Pollan (2013, p. 9) refers to as 'home cooking from scratch versus fast food prepared by corporations'.<sup>4</sup> This was often simultaneously framed in opposition to 'unhealthy', 'junk', 'plastic', 'unreal', 'take-away', or 'convenience' food and foodways. I argue that specific middle-class strategies for 'feeding the family' (DeVault, 1991) that focus on 'healthy' foodways have become a way of establishing elite status and cultural capital for middle-class women in the UK.

## **2. Intersectionalities of gender and class**

Usually, elite cultural practices, including those concerning foodways, are linked to taste, participation and knowledge (Warde, Wright, and Gayo-Cal, 2007, p. 146) within distinct cultural fields. These are associated with 'high' and 'low' cultural forms and/ or cultural omnivorousness (Peterson and Kern, 1996) and, therefore, not the feminised everyday foodwork carried out in domestic spaces. In the culinary field, cultural capital is usually related to a foodie identity, as noted in Canada (Cairns, Johnston, and Baumann, 2010; Johnston and Baumann, 2010; Szabo, 2013), the USA (Naccarato and LeBesco, 2012) and Australia (DeSolier, 2013). This centres on a leisurely pursuit and acquisition of skills and embodied foodways that sediment over time. In the field of culinary arts, the 'foodie' is defined as someone 'who is passionate about the pursuit of good food ... with a long-standing passion for eating and learning about food' (Cairns et al., 2010, p. 591). Further:

*...to be a foodie requires self-absorption, self-love, self-delusion, self-confidence; in other words selfishness to a degree unsurpassed in modern times (Simmonds, 1990, p. 88 cited by Ashley et al., 2004, p. 149).*

In many ways this conceptualisation of a foodie and what counts as 'culinary capital'<sup>5</sup> (Naccarato and LeBesco, 2012) exclude those selflessly committed to

feeding the family (DeVault, 1991). However, by only engaging in 'healthy' family foodways 'upper middle- class femininity' also works (Skeggs, 2004, p. 24) in drawing boundaries and distinctions across and within fields. Here, the intersectionality of gender and class serves to legitimise and normalise 'healthy' family foodways, which become uncontested, hegemonic and dominant discursive constructions of normative femininity. Thus, 'the manner of presenting, serving and eating food fulfils the social function of legitimising social difference' (Bourdieu, 1984, p. 6) and these cultural practices are gendered, as Skeggs (1997, p. 98) notes, 'the sign of femininity is always classed'. Indeed, Bourdieu (1986, p. 105) identifies mothers as significant in transforming economic capital into symbolic and cultural capital for their children; they are what Skeggs (2004, p. 22) refers to as 'sign bearing' carriers of taste.

Furthermore, in terms of contemporary constructions of 'new' femininities, women now have to negotiate the twin poles of traditional femininity whilst embracing neo-liberal values of the autonomous self (Budgeon, 2014) and this has implications for maternal identities. A focus on maternal identity does not exclude women who are not mothers, as it has implications for contemporary conceptualisations of femininity and class that reach beyond the actual activity of mothering. I therefore propose that in an era of healthism (Bendelow, 2009) when neo-liberal discourses promote self-governing, transformative subjectivities, intersectionalities of gender and class continue to be relevant in (re)defining what counts as appropriate femininity. Thus 'healthy' family foodways become associated with class positions, part of a cultural script of normative femininity that reshapes social difference. These moral hierarchies and distinctions between fields of practice marginalise those who are perceived to 'lack' the economic, cultural and social capital to engage in 'healthy' family foodways. Furthermore, an over reliance on educating families to make the correct food choices<sup>6</sup> 'produces an inattentiveness to the way this can reconstitute class and gender inequalities' (Taylor, 2012, p. 19). It obscures the power of health discourses in shaping and framing the classed experiences of everyday foodways.

### **3. Feeding time and intensive mothering**

Neo-liberal discourses conceptualise 'good' mothering as a consumer choice that requires an investment of time<sup>7</sup> if not economic capital, and this ensures that middle-

class mothering is presented as the norm and alternatives pathologised. This has implications for all women and not just mothers as what is considered appropriate mothering practice is not answered internally but can only be understood through a reflexive awareness of what other 'good' mothers do (Dawson, 2012). The 'doing' of 'healthy' family foodways therefore serves to reinforce a cultural hegemony of what is considered appropriate femininity and mothering practice. Here, I follow Risman's (2004, p. 431) model; 'doing gender to meet others expectations over time helps to construct our gendered selves'. On an individual level a commitment to 'healthy' family foodways is a means of reproducing feminine identity; as Morgan (1996, p. 158) notes 'the micro-politics of food revolve around gender' and families tend to be 'mothered rather than gendered' (p. 82). In addition, in terms of interactional cultural assumptions, 'healthy' family foodways reinforce the cultural expectations of appropriate middle-class mothering, with responsible mothers acting as guardians of health, as well as 'moral guardians of family eating' (James, Trine Kjørholt, and Tingstad, 2009, p. 8). In an institutional domain, the ideological insistence on 'healthy' family foodways reifies 'the' family as a site for inculcating appropriate 'healthy' family values. Hence a 'pre-occupation with achieving a "good diet" reflects a middle-class disposition for being "health conscious" and for taking on board "authentic" health and dietary messages, that are sanctioned by (government) experts' (Wills et al., 2009, p. 65). The violent repudiation of mass-produced convenience foodways (or food of the masses) then becomes part of a hegemonic habitus that highlights privileged idealised feminine dispositions. A consensus amongst accounts illustrates how an aspirational model of 'feeding the family' (DeVault, 1991) constructs boundaries and distances between sets of practices. It is notable that an engagement in 'healthy' family foodways requires work, time and a commitment to a particular set of cultural values. These contribute to the symbolic vilification and cultural hostility regarding alternative foodways and the reification and valorisation of 'healthy' family foodways. Put simply, middle-class healthy family foodways are presented as the norm and others pathologised.

The route to exploring relationships with food is through memory; what Arendt ([1929] 1996, p. 15) refers to as 'the storehouse of time'. A reference to 'time' also relates directly to Bourdieu (1984, p. 6) who highlights the significance of time in terms of cultural capital and habitus; the disposition and embodiment of taste inculcated or sedimented like lime scale fixing itself to the inside of a kettle

over time. This is about a disposition for considering the future rather than living in the present that acknowledges a 'temporal power' (p. 315) or what Adkins (2011, p. 349) refers to as 'trading the future'. Hence, as Bourdieu (1986, pp. 214 – 258) claims, the best measure of cultural capital is the amount of time devoted to acquiring it, because the 'transformation of economic capital into cultural [social and symbolic] capital presupposes an expenditure of time that is made possible by possession of economic capital'. This is significant when considering 'healthy' family foodways that demonise convenience foods, because 'other' family foodways undermine the notion of having time to prepare healthy family meals from scratch.<sup>8</sup> Indeed, following Bourdieu (1984) instant gratification, hedonism and the 'lack' of investment in the future are associated with being in the present and as a quality associated with a working-class habitus. On the other hand investing in the future, abstaining from having a good time is associated with the *petit bourgeoisie*.

Notions of 'intensive mothering' (Hays, 1996) also involve an investment of 'time', it is 'child centred, expert guided, emotionally absorbing, labour intensive and financially expensive' (p. 9) and has become the 'proper ideology of contemporary mothering for women, across race and class lines, even if not all women actually practice it' (p. 9). O'Brien Hallstein (2010, p. 108) contends that as a result women now have to negotiate a 'split subjectivity between old and new gender expectations'. There is the added expectation that women need to be both 'successful at work and successful as mothers' (Douglas and Michaels, 2004, p. 12), despite the demands placed on women by the dual burden or 'second shift' (Hochschild and Machung, 2003) in which 'women are still responsible for the care of the house and the home regardless of the presence of a spouse or participation in paid work' (Robinson and Hunter, 2008, p. 479). I argue that a commitment to 'healthy' family foodways is implicit in 'intensive mothering' practices (Hays, 1996), which 'require symbolic and material resources' due to the desire of middle-class parents 'to maximize [their] children's opportunities for success' (Lareau, 2003 cited in Francis, 2012, p. 374). This includes the reproduction of appropriate 'healthy' family foodways, manners and etiquette for example, which are inculcated within the family. If this does not occur, it can be viewed as a failing of the family (mother) in a duty of care and responsibility. This perspective has implications in the field of 'healthy' family foodways, as it contributes to the reproduction of class divisions and the redrawing of boundaries within and between mothers in particular.

Indeed, in taking time to prepare meals from scratch,<sup>9</sup> sourcing organic and/or local ingredients, accommodating each individual household member's food preferences or individual health needs, being able to afford to waste food, to take time over the preparation and eating of a meal around the table together are all aspects of an aspirational model of 'feeding the family' (DeVault, 1991). This type of intensive effort around feeding becomes a legitimate means of demonstrating social, symbolic and cultural capital; it is a field of organised striving (Martin, 2011). It is where forms of 'organised striving can be detected that it is possible to identify the existence of fields' (Savage and Silva, 2013, p. 118). Agents in this field share fundamental interests, though this is not to assume agreement as Savage and Silva (2013, p. 119) demonstrate, even 'a fight presupposes agreement about what it is worth fighting about'. Hence, within an aspirational model of 'feeding the family' (DeVault, 1991), there is a construction of boundaries and a distancing between sets of practices. In order to engage in intensive mothering around feeding requires work and time and a commitment to a particular set of cultural values. It is not that middle-class mothers actually have more time, but that they are concerned with giving time to these concerns.

'Healthy' family foodways have not been considered as a field of elite or legitimate cultural capital. However, I argue that cooking 'healthy' meals from scratch has become a means of demonstrating a particular form of elite or established middle-class habitus; in the child-rearing field, because 'intensive mothering' (Hays, 1996) becomes a means of acquiring cultural capital for the self as well as for the child, because it takes time. Indeed, 'culture' is not a matter of indifference for the powerful, and for some sections of the established middle class, it remains critical and a source of security (Bennett, 2009, p. 259). Again, whether women work outside the home or not, it is the investment of time in preparing healthy meals from scratch<sup>10</sup> as a means of demonstrating appropriate mothering that is important.

#### **4. Public discourses, motherhood and mothering**

There are several on-going public discourses concerning family foodways, which have become increasingly pertinent within the context of a perceived obesity epidemic (Gard, 2011). First, there are arguments to do with the decline of the 'proper' family meal and therefore the decline of the 'proper' family, as identified by Murcott (1997), following earlier research by Charles and Kerr (1988) and Murcott

(1982). In Charles and Kerr's (1988) study, family foodways were largely dictated by men's food preferences. Today, according to James, Curtis, and Ellis (2009, p. 40) 'what still matters is that the proper meal is cooked almost exclusively by Mum', whether she is working full time, part time or not at all. Also, that 'children's food preferences are taken into account... in acknowledgment of their equal rights as family members' (James, Curtis, et al., 2009, p. 42) and as part of a middle-class habitus that encourages responsible individualism.

Hence, there has been a subtle shift in the micro-politics of family foodwork, Coveney (2014, p. 33) argues that in research carried out on Australia in the 1990s, they did not find 'patriarchy on the menu', instead children had a 'privileged voice on household food matters'. Similarly, Dixon and Banwell (2004) claim children have metaphorically become the head of the table. Hence, there is an assumed association between 'proper family dinners, proper families [and] proper children' (James, Curtis, et al., 2009, p. 39). Second, there is concern about a decline in cooking skills, associated with the deskilling of housework (Meah and Watson, 2011) and the rise of a UK convenience-food market worth an estimated £26 billion in 2006 (Mahon, Cowan, and McCarthy, 2006). According to Celnik, Gillespie, and Lean (2012), convenience foods have been associated with less healthy diets, obesity and related chronic diseases such as cardiovascular disease, diabetes and cancer (Jabs and Devine, 2006). Further, the rise in consumption of these types of meals is associated with unhealthy diets and therefore unhealthy families'; junk food is linked with a 'junk childhood' (James, 2010, unpaginated). In Jackson's (2009, p. 10) work, 'junk food' is associated with working-class mothers, whereas the 'making and preparing of a proper family meal from scratch', whilst accommodating 'the individual food preferences and tastes of different family members', is part of a middle-class habitus and a means of displaying a 'healthy' family life.

What is notable is that whilst government rhetoric and public discourses debate appropriate family foodways, they are referring to mothers, as the guardians of health (and morality) in the family. The cultural scripts available on motherhood/mothering continue to centre upon dichotomous notions of appropriate/acceptable/adequate or inappropriate/unacceptable/inadequate mothering practices. In terms of family foodways, this complies with Warde's (1997) care and convenience antinomy. It would seem that regardless of the extent to which

wider expectations around gender have shifted towards individualism, somehow when it comes to 'feeding the family' (DeVault, 1991), this is still mainly the responsibility of mothers and part of what constitutes 'doing gender' (West and Zimmerman, 1987). Also, that 'choosing food in order to promote good health signifies a particularly middle-class outlook on consumption' (Wills et al., 2009, p. 55). Furthermore:

*... practices which promote good health require economic, cultural and social capital ... [and] being recognised as "health conscious" also delivers symbolic capital thereby (re)creating further social distinctiveness at the same time as stigmatising those who fail to achieve "good health" through the food they eat (Crawford, 2006, cited in Wills et al., 2009, p. 55)*

Indeed, as Morgan (2011) identifies, family discourses and practices are mutually implicated in each other. He underlines the distinction between mothering and motherhood, in that it is the doing of mothering practices for example that distinguishes them from wider discourses of motherhood. Morgan (2011, p. 69) claims that actors are 'looking in two directions when engaged in family practices'. The discourses that draw on these practices are not produced in a vacuum. This is what Gillis (1997) refers to as the families we live by (discourse), rather than the families we live with (practices).

Despite new models of parenting and the participation of women in the public sphere, along with the growth of 'individualism, the development of the project of the self or the pursuit of personal autonomy' (Morgan, 1996, p. 197), there are rigid cultural scripts of responsible mothering. So that not only is 'responsibility the essence of motherhood' (Fox and Worts, 1999, p. 330), but as Doucet (2009, p. 105) highlights 'in spite of increases in fathering involvement, the persistent connection between women and domestic responsibility remains'. Hence, 'across time, ethnicities, social class, and culture, it is overwhelmingly mothers who organize, plan, orchestrate and worry about children' (Doucet, 2009, p. 105) and 'feeding the family' (DeVault, 1991). Again, in an era of heightened surveillance of family foodways and moral discourses on obesity, it is hardly surprising if mothers express adherence to 'displays' (Finch, 2007) of responsible mothering or 'healthy' family foodways. The family is therefore a theatre for the civilising of appetites, control and discipline of

bodies (those of the children and the self), manners, etiquette and a whole host of 'multiple strands of meaning that are woven around food and eating' (Morgan, 1996, p. 171). There is also an additional value enacted by the middle-class insistence on one family meal, imposed by the mother, and eaten together at the table. This is about inculcating middle-class values around deferred gratification (of the child's immediate taste desires for snacks or for alternative meals).

## **5. Methodology**

As already noted all women with dependent children who participated in my auto/biographical study of relationships with food only fed their children 'healthy' food, mostly cooked from scratch. This was despite a completely open invitation to narrate their life histories around food and no questions being directed at respondents about health or healthiness at any time. The sample was self-selecting; in that the invitation appealed to those already confident that they had 'something' to contribute to research about everyday foodways. I utilised an auto/biographical approach to everyday foodways because it highlights the interconnectedness of the individual and the social, the autobiographical and biographical (Morgan, 1998), the micro and the macro, the private and the public. This enables an exploration of the private troubles and public issues around everyday foodways (Mills, 1959), whilst demonstrating the inter-textuality of auto/biographical accounts. I conducted a series of asynchronous in-depth online interviews over nine months through a series of email exchanges. Respondents' written texts were therefore social products, not unproblematic reflections of reality, but constrained by structural influences beyond their own free will (Stanley and Morgan, 1993).

I gained full ethical approval from the university hosting the study, and all respondents were given or chose their own pseudonyms. The focus of the inquiry was food over the life course, and respondents were invited to write their own autobiographical food narratives. Once they had agreed to participate I sent them the following instructions:

*What I'm really after is your 'food story'. Perhaps, this will include your earliest food memories, favourite foods, memorable food occasions, whether your eating habits have changed over time and why this may be. Also, absolutely anything food related that you'd like to share with me.*

For some, if this proved difficult, I sent a series of questions along the same lines that centred on eating and cooking. I did not set out to question respondents specifically about 'healthy' food or eating; it was very much open to them to tell their stories in their words and on their terms.

The majority of the 75 respondents (49 women and 26 men) had occupational identities and the majority of mothers in my study were working/had worked. The extent to which these were full time or part time occupations or carried out outside of the home, I did not investigate. There were nine women (from the total of 49) who defined themselves as housewives, including Celia who identified herself as a 'retired housewife'. The majority were middle class as identified by current or previous occupational status and qualifications or that of their spouses. Respondents' ages ranged from 27 to 85. Two-thirds of respondents were parents at different stages in the life course; some were new to parenting, some had young children, others were living with teenagers, for some children had recently left home or they had adult children no longer living with them. Then there were temporary or intermittent family compositions as well, like Henry, a 42-year-old married company director whose stepchildren lived with him and his wife only part of the time. And Sam, a 50-year-old married yachtsman with one child, whose work took him away from the family home for extensive periods of time, so ostensibly he was not living in a family environment on a full time basis. Two respondents were in long-term non-heterosexual relationships at the time of the study. One of these couples had adult children from a previous relationship, who were not living with them. However, just over half of all women (25) and half of the men (13) had dependent children (under 18 years of age), at the time of the study. This included a range of family formations, such as lone-parents, co-habiting and married couples with children (and step-children).

After several levels of analysis running concurrently with data collection, I identified four broad themes: (i) family relationships (food practices as reproducing family and representative of good and bad parenting/mothering), (ii) concerns about healthy and unhealthy foods (food as a means to achieving or practicing 'good' health), (iii) embodiment (issues related to weight management) and (iv) the views and practices of mostly male foodies (who used

food as a means of expressing cultural status and elite taste). The focus of this article is 'healthy' family foodways as a form of privileged femininity and indicative of the intersectionality of gender with class. In these narratives, healthy family foodways became a central aspect of maternal identity, an intensive mothering (Hays, 1996) practice that took time and effort. Hence, despite working full time or part time and/or the blurring of boundaries between home and work, women were committed to feeding the family, healthy meals cooked from scratch. A dualist and absolutist approach to foodways persisted and ensured the demonisation of 'unhealthy', 'convenience' foods. These foods were derided and considered indicative of a 'lack' of care. They were associated with 'other' (working class) mothering practices, whereby a lack of care, indicated a lack of education, economic and cultural capital. Feeding the family continued to be a gendered activity, with rigid cultural scripts of mothering especially for middle-class mothers concerned with distancing themselves from the symbol of the 'working-class mum' who feeds her children convenience food.

In this article I utilise quotes from women and men whose demographic details are listed in the table below. Amongst the men with dependent children at the time of the study, there were self-identified 'foodies' who cooked for pleasure/leisure and for some this included cooking for their wives and children. However, men not engaged in 'foodie' activities only cooked on occasion, if at all. There was little evidence of a 'negotiated family model' (Beck and Beck-Gernsheim, 2002) in respondents' accounts. There was also very little reference to 'healthy' or healthiness as concerns in the men's accounts. This is not to assume that men in the study were not concerned with their bodies or weight issues, but these were framed very differently to the women's (Table 1). All women with dependent children at home on the other hand were committed to 'healthy' family foodways. The majority (though not all) were also employed and this supports the notion that a 'good' mother is employed, which radically reworks the connections between domesticity, femininity and mothering (Adkins and Jokinen, 2008, p. 146). It also reinforces a contemporary social construction of a feminine hegemony, whereby the 'feminist political dilemma of housewife versus career woman has been replaced by narratives of renaissance women' (Allen and Osgood, 2009, p. 7). These centre on the notion that women balance their careers alongside motherhood, that they

‘simultaneously work in paid employment’ whilst working ‘to produce a successful child’ (Hey and Bradford, 2006, p. 61).

Table 1. Demographics of respondents referred to in this article.

No	Pseudonym	Age	Occupation	Quals	Living arrangements
7	Chloe	46	Occ. Health Advisor	Degree	Co-habiting + 2 children
13	Faye	46	Secretary	GCSE*	Married + 1 child
21	Jocelyn	44	Shop Manager	GCSE*	Married +3 children
24	Laura	35	Teaching Assistant	A'level	Married +2 children
28	Melissa	46	Viola Player	GCSE*	Married +2 children
33	Ophelia	53	Author	GCSE*	Married +2 children
34	Otaline	32	Ph.D. Student	P/G	Co-habiting + 1 child
46	Valerie	46	Website Manager	A'level	Single + 1 child
49	Zoe	44	Recruiter	Degree	Married +2 children
57	Henry	42	Director	GCSE*	Married + 2 step-children
71	Sam	50	Yachtsman	HND	Married + 1 child

Notes:

Quals = highest qualification.

GCSE\* = GCSE equivalent.

## 6. Idealised femininities and maternal identities

Cooking ‘proper’ healthy family meals is a skilled practice (Short, 2006, p. 89) and a significant aspect of meaningful family-integration (Moisio, Arnould, and Price, 2004, p. 265); it is an essential element of doing appropriate mothering. Hence Faye notes:

*My mum was a fabulous, creative cook; she loved reading cookery books and took great pride in her cooking. We didn't have a lot of money when we were young, but my mum was a very creative cook and every meal was completely delicious and homemade.*

Faye, despite working herself and in common with many women juggling the second shift (Hochschild and Machung, 2003), was responsible for feeding her family. Indeed, Faye’s comments are strikingly similar to those in DeVault’s (199, p. 56) research from over 20 years ago; one of DeVaults’ participants was quoted as saying that:

*... as soon as I get up on the morning or before I go to bed I'm thinking of what we're going to eat tomorrow.*

Two decades later Faye says:

*Oh my goodness! I wake up each morning and the first thing I think about is what are we going to have for supper! It's such a drag, as I can never think of anything new or inspirational, despite the fact that we have lots of lovely cookery books!*

In many ways these comments serve to reinforce further the status of 'feeding the family' (DeVault, 1991) as central to maternal identity. Faye in contrast to her own mother has the additional pressure of having to cook new and inspirational food. Indeed, if preparing and purchasing food for herself or her family:

*I would make a packed lunch of something I really enjoyed eating, that's healthy, balanced and nutritious, with a little treat tucked in!... I just buy things that are healthy and nutritious and things that might be interesting to appear in [my daughter's] daily lunch box!*

By 'just buying things that are healthy' Faye is contributing to the notion that feeding the family healthily is easy and natural care work. She positions herself in the mother role and as the 'guardian of health' (Beagan et al., 2008, p. 662). This demonstrates the extent to which the caringscape and healthscape can be intertwined (McKie, Gregory, and Bowlby, 2002, p. 603). Also it shows how health discourses seep into family foodways, whereby a 'good mother' ensures the health of her children through cooking/providing healthy food or by being engaged in emotion (food) work. Faye reiterates this by writing 'if I have time [my cooking skills]... are very good, if I don't they are rumbled together! But everything I cook is cooked with love!' Hence, this emotion work is not considered work at all, but an expression of love. This is what Erickson (2005, p. 338) following Hochschild (1983) considers the 'illusion of effortlessness' and 'part of doing the work (of mothering) well'. It contributes to the pervasive trivialisation of the work of managing meals (DeVault, 1991) and reifies foodwork as part of a naturally occurring female disposition. Jocelyn makes a distinction between cooking to please herself and having to cook for her children:

*I used to spend many hours cooking for friends before I had children; nowadays complicated looking recipes put me off, too busy I guess. I'm really "in" to the 5 a day fruit and veg idea and am much more conscious nowadays of the fat-content of food. I read labels in supermarkets, especially when buying for the children, and tend to avoid stuff with too many additives.*

She contrasts feeding children with preparing meals for her husband:

*When I cook meals for Simon and I, I tend to open up the fridge and create something and hardly ever follow a recipe for a main course ... Though I say it myself I come up with lovely dinners this way ...*

Hence, Jocelyn is making a distinction between foodwork done to provide healthy meals for the children and the more creative aspects of foodwork/play that she carries out for her husband and herself. Jocelyn is thoroughly engaged in the skilled practice of feeding the family (DeVault, 1991) and accommodates government dietary guidelines and advice on appropriate healthy feeding, rather than being creative. The complex character of caring work, the effort and skill it requires, the time and resourcefulness of those involved in feeding the family is highlighted. Ophelia also makes a distinction between cooking for herself and for others, she claims:

*I love to cook for people and I especially love to bake, make chutneys, marmalades and jams and to give the surplus away as gifts; to me making food and giving it to people I care about is 'giving love' in some way ... I'm really not very interested in food for myself but I do love to feed others ... cooking and baking and sharing. I do love that; it makes me feel warm inside. I love everything about it from planning the menu to making it and serving it or bottling it and giving it away. I much prefer to feed other people than to feed myself ...*

Then, she adds that:

*... after 15 years of daily cooking for my family I have become much more confident and proficient in food and what it really means. Today I balance the weekly meals between vegetarian, pasta, fish and meat and we have a lot of salad. I have been trying to cook less meat, maybe twice or sometimes including a roast at weekends, three times a week. Teens need carbs so I cook them most evenings but I don't eat carbs myself in the evening now unless it's a pasta dish we are all sharing.*

Again, there is a balance between the desires of the individual and the nutritional needs of children. Hence, the work of feeding the family is complex and incorporates a balance of different requirements; it is very different to cooking/feeding the self or for pleasure/ leisure. It highlights the continued negotiation of gendered and classed expectations around family and care work (Taylor, 2012, p. 10). The need to display appropriate mothering through feeding the family 'healthy' meals cooked from scratch was especially pertinent for women working and living on their own with children, such as Valerie:

*I am also responsible for feeding my daughter Clara. I make a great effort to make sure she is getting a balanced diet. To this end I nearly always cook meals from scratch. I use meal planners to get organised. I also have to budget quite tightly and meal planning helps with this. I aim to ensure we eat fish a couple of times a week, chicken a couple of times of week, red meat maybe once or twice and vegetarian once or twice a week. We always sit down to eat together at the table, even if it is just the two of us. It gives us a chance to talk and focus on each other.*

It is notable that Valerie insists that they sit down to eat at a table. This is a particular aspect of a middle-class habitus and one that distinguishes Valerie's family foodways. Hence, 'proper' mothering is about cooking 'proper' meals from scratch, even or perhaps especially if on a limited budget or having the sole responsibility for childcare. Chloe claims:

*I like to cook from scratch and meals can take time so I have to plan that around work ... I use cookbooks for ideas for quick suppers... thinking about it*

*I do spend quite a lot of time thinking about what I'm going to cook. I shop with meals in mind for each night of the week ... this will depend on what's available in the shops and what looks good, and then what time I get home ...*

Chloe, continues that she is:

*... responsible for family shopping and most of the cooking ... aware of healthy eating and wanting to pass on good eating habits, as well as a positive experience of food ... I am a good home cook and enjoy cooking for family when I have the time ... my skills have improved with experience and knowledge... I'm constantly amazed at the crap food the kids eat and their lack of good food experience in the school I work in... despite government programmes ... also hardly any seem to be able to cook or plan a meal ... I could go on and on here!!!!!! Also is there a move back to more traditional dishes like granny used to make?? foods definitely do come in and out of fashion ... think about beetroot ... it was always something my granny used to do with salad out of a jar ... now I'm roasting it with Balsamic vinegar and having it with the Sunday Roast!!!! (Punctuation as in the original)*

Here, Chloe is drawing distinctions between her family foodways, which are 'good' and 'healthy' with more inappropriate foodways that 'other' children are exposed to. Zoe specifically distances her family foodways from 'other' foodways:

*... Now we eat good interesting food every day at home and a takeaway once in a blue moon (2 – 3 times a year). Ready meals are unheard of here and we eat out sometimes (once a month). But food is a big social thing for us and we have friends and family over a lot to eat.*

The sharing of everyday family foodways was a common theme and centres on inculcating cultural values through the sharing of food, culture and experiences. This is not just about economic capital, though certainly being able to afford to share food is relevant, but also concerns the display of cultural capital around everyday foodways. In previous studies, being able to afford to give food away would have been outside of the experiences of most families, for example those in Charles and Kerr's (1988) study. Here, Zoe dismisses the use of convenience/ take-away foods

as inferior, which runs counter to research carried out by Carrigan, Szmigin, and Leek (2006) who identified a hierarchy of potential cheats when it came to the use of convenience products by women when feeding their families. In my study cooking from scratch was aspirational, a way of accumulating, performing and displaying cultural capital for women.

## **7. Inculcating appropriate healthy foodways and new femininities**

Inculcation is about teaching and learning cultural norms and values around everyday foodways through persistent instruction (Bourdieu, 1984). Respondents repeatedly demonstrated how they had learned about appropriate 'healthy' family foodways, through processes of transformation and improvement (Taylor, 2012). For example, Hannah claims:

*Once I started to work at buying good wholesome healthy foods and making every meal from scratch, I started to dislike the taste of chips and pizza's.*

In terms of middle-class tastes and cultural capital, Hannah, as a consequence of learning to cook 'healthy' meals for her family, claims her own gustatory tastes have changed. This is therefore not just about economic capital. Hence, Laura notes:

*I was determined that my child wouldn't eat food from a jar and that I would feed her the best, freshest food I could. This involved hours of cooking, pureeing and freezing ice cube trays full of various fruits and vegetables that were suitable . . . We never buy cakes and eat very few convenience foods, apart from the odd fish finger in a wrap, or a tin of beans. Ready meals and oven chips don't appeal to me and I want my kids to grow up eating real food.*

In Melissa's account she writes:

*We are passionate about good food and I bake and cook homemade food, bread, cakes etc, every day. Our evening meal is the highlight of our day. We grow our own organic vegetables, which sustain us for about six-seven*

*months of the year, and I'm trying to grow more winter veg to extend that period.*

In Otaline's narrative, she chastises herself for not cooking and freezing (preparing her own convenience food), and cooks fresh food from scratch for her son.

*Today Angus had his first bit of toast. I was anxious but Jon and I were both delighted – gleeful – watching him sucking marmite on toast! He loved it. I cook all his food. On occasion I will buy an organic pouch but I want to cook for him because I love him. I am deeply concerned about what he eats. I do not want him to even know the tastes of my childhood. There are no 'grandmother's recipes' to pass on. He eats three meals a day now and mostly I cook it fresh because I never seem to have the time to cook and freeze – though I know life would be easier if I made the time.*

Again, the overriding concern is the effort and time devoted to 'healthy' family foodways. Otaline is keen to distance herself from the foodways of her childhood and 'healthy' family foodways are a means of demonstrating appropriate 'intensive mothering' practices (Hays, 1996).

## **8. Conclusion**

In an era of heightened neo-liberal individualism, there was little evidence of a 'negotiated family model' (Beck and Beck-Gernsheim, 2002) within respondents' narratives. Instead mothers emphasised how they fed their children 'healthy' food prepared from scratch, despite working full time or part time and the blurring of boundaries between home and work. Indeed, 'healthy' family foodways became a central aspect of middle-class maternal identity, because intensive mothering practices (Hays, 1996) tend to be associated with elite cultural capital, or time and money. There is a persistence of dualist and absolutist approaches to food and foodways, which ensures the demonisation of 'unhealthy', convenience foods. These foods/foodways are derided and considered indicative of a lack of care. They are associated with 'other' (working class) mothering practices, whereby a lack of care indicates a lack of education, economic, cultural, social and symbolic capital (Parsons, 2014). The study suggests

therefore that medical, media and popular discourses regarding 'healthy' food and 'healthy' families have a powerful impact on how mothers perceive themselves and their roles in everyday foodways. Mothers in the study positioned themselves as the guardians of health (and morality) in the family.

'Feeding the family' (DeVault) and 'healthy' family foodways continue to be a highly feminised and classed activities, despite men's accomplishments as cooks. In these cases, men might share some of the responsibility for feeding the family, but never all aspects of it. Instead there continue to be rigid cultural scripts of classed femininity, especially for mothers concerned with distancing themselves from the cultural symbol of the 'working- class mum' who feeds her children convenience food. Hence, 'healthy' family foodways are part of a material and cultural display of middle-classed normative femininity, an uncontested hegemonic cultural norm. This contributes to long-standing discourses that pathologise the poor (working class) and highlights the need to consider the intersectionalities of class and gender in everyday lives.

**Notes:**

1. I use 'family' following Morgan (1996) definition of family as practice rather than as a fixed institution and 'foodways' which refers to the production, preparation, serving and eating of food. Together the emphasis is on embodied, affective, everyday food practices and ways of 'doing' food that connect past, present and future.
2. I use the term middle class based on data gathered from respondents on occupational status and highest qualification. However, this was also about how respondents positioned themselves in terms of economic, cultural, social and symbolic capitals.
3. Bourdieu's (1986) forms of capital include economic capital (wealth and income), cultural capital (embodied, objectified and institutionalised), social capital (networks and relationships) and symbolic capital (the conversion and legitimisation of other forms of capital).
4. Pollan (2013) discusses cooking from scratch at some length, this is either 'to prepare a main dish that requires some assemblage of ingredients' or 'real scratch cooking', which is the kind of cooking that requires chopping onions ... ' (pp.129 – 30). Respondents' narratives can be located somewhere between these two poles,

they were not necessarily engaged in making all ingredients from scratch. They may have bought bread or marmite for example. It was, however, distinct from convenience food or ready meals

5. Naccarato and LeBesco (2012) argue that sustainability, health and dietary restraint are markers of 'culinary' capital in white upper-middle-class America.

6. For example, in a UK government white paper from the Department of Health (DOH, 2010) 'Healthy Lives, Healthy People', 'families will be supported to make informed choices about their diet and levels of physical exercise' (2010, p. 35) and to make 'healthy food choices easier'(2010, p. 39).

7. It is not that middle-class mothers actually have more time. In reality they may have less, it is the cultural and symbolic value of 'time' that is important.

8. 'Home cooking' is identified by Cunningham (2003, p. x) as 'healthier and more economical than convenience or take-out food, [and more] rewarding'.

9. See, note 4 from Pollan (2013), this does not necessarily mean that all ingredients of a meal are prepared from scratch.

10. The interconnection of healthiness and home cooking/preparing food from scratch is significant in reinforcing class boundaries and cultural distinctions.

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