


This item is held in Loughborough University's Institutional Repository (<https://dspace.lboro.ac.uk/>) and was harvested from the British Library's EThOS service (<http://www.ethos.bl.uk/>). It is made available under the following Creative Commons Licence conditions.



creative  
commons


C O M M O N S D E E D


**Attribution-NonCommercial-NoDerivs 2.5**

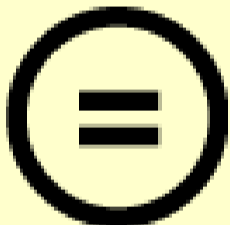
**You are free:**

- to copy, distribute, display, and perform the work

**Under the following conditions:**

 **BY:** **Attribution.** You must attribute the work in the manner specified by the author or licensor.


 **Noncommercial.** You may not use this work for commercial purposes.

 **No Derivative Works.** You may not alter, transform, or build upon this work.

- For any reuse or distribution, you must make clear to others the license terms of this work.
- Any of these conditions can be waived if you get permission from the copyright holder.

**Your fair use and other rights are in no way affected by the above.**

This is a human-readable summary of the [Legal Code \(the full license\)](#).

[Disclaimer](#) 

For the full text of this licence, please go to:  
<http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-nd/2.5/>

Eating your words: Constructing food and eating  
practices in mealtime conversation

By  
Sarah Wiggins

A Doctoral Thesis

Submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the award of  
Doctor of Philosophy of Loughborough University

5<sup>th</sup> June 2002

© Sarah Wiggins 2002

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Over the four years during which this research was carried out, I have been supported and inspired by more people than I can mention here. Special thanks must firstly go to my supervisor, Jonathan Potter, for his unfailing enthusiasm, sharp intellect, and good humour. Working with him has been a privilege and a joy.

The Loughborough DARG group has been a great source of support both academically and socially. I would particularly like to thank Mick Billig for first welcoming me into the flock, and for his continued encouragement thereafter. To Charles Antaki, for the same, and for many happy hours of academic advice and light relief. I have also been privileged to share good friends at Loughborough, most notably, Abi, Jackie, Mary, Rosemary, and Sharon. Thank you all for your time and friendship. Each of these people has taught me professionalism, humility, and a fresh perspective on life.

Others beyond the DARG are equally important. I blame Nick Hopkins and Suzanne Zeedyk at Dundee University for getting me thinking in the first place, and for unwittingly giving me the idea that lecturing might be a fun thing to do. I owe much to the families who gave their time and talk for this research, and the ESRC doctoral research grant that saved me from many tedious hours of data entry jobs. I am also thankful to the administrative and technical staff in the Social Sciences dept, who continue to provide a friendly and supportive working environment.

To my parents, Audrey and Stuart, and brother, Phil, for letting me do my own thing, and for seeing how far I could get with this psychology business. Thank you for many happy memories and some of the best mealtimes I have ever shared. Above all else, this is for H. Without him, food simply would not taste so good.

Sally

## PUBLICATIONS LIST

Parts or versions of chapters of the thesis have already been published in the following articles.

From chapter 2:

Wiggins, S., Potter, J., & Wildsmith, A. (2001). Eating your words: Discursive psychology and the reconstruction of eating practices. *Journal of Health Psychology*, Vol. 6 (1): 5-15.

From chapter 5:

Wiggins, S. (2001). Construction and action in food evaluation: Conversational data. *Journal of Language and Social Psychology*, Vol. 20 (4): 445-463.

From chapter 6:

Wiggins, S. & Potter, J. (in press). Attitudes and evaluative practices: Category vs. item and subjective vs. objective constructions in everyday food assessments. *British Journal of Social Psychology*

From chapter 8:

Wiggins, S. (in press, 2002). Talking with your mouth full: Gustatory 'mmm's and the embodiment of pleasure. *Research on Language and Social Interaction*.

## ABSTRACT

This thesis examines the construction and action of food evaluations in mealtime conversation. It takes a social constructionist approach to eating, arguing that 'talking food' is inseparable from, and thus constructive of, the practices around food and drink consumption. This challenges current psychological thinking on eating, which is typically based on a cognitive-experimental model of attitudes and intentions to eat. I argue that this does not adequately take into account the social nature of food and the way in which food and eating is embedded in everyday interaction.

The thesis examines instances of family mealtimes, as a way of looking at food in interaction. Data is taken from the tape-recorded conversations during these interactions. Conversation analytic and discursive psychological approaches were used to analyse the data corpus, with a focus on participants' usage of food and drink evaluations. These evaluations were examined as part of the situated activities of the meal such as offering or requesting food, and justifying eating habits. The analysis looks at different types of food evaluations: those that are associated with the food and those associated with the person evaluating the food. These types are seen to be specific to either items or categories of food, and are rhetorically designed to counter challenges. Finally, the analysis considers how embodied eating sensations such as 'gustatory pleasure' are constructed through evaluative expressions.

It is argued that food and drink evaluations cannot be treated as separate mental or physical states (such as food attitudes or preferences) as they are bound up with the structure of interaction at the micro-level of speaker turn organisation. Instead, food evaluations can be regarded as part of, and as constructing, the practice of eating as well as contributing to our notions of food sensations and individual taste. The analysis and approach taken in this thesis therefore suggest that we need to reconceptualise eating and consumption in terms of discursive activities in interaction.

# CONTENTS

	Page
Acknowledgements	iv
Publications list	v
Abstract	vi
1. Aperitif	1
Eating your words	2
Mundane and interesting	4
A recipe for living	6
Aims of the research and key themes	7
Thesis overview	8
2. Setting the menu	12
2.1. Eating for one: Psychological research on food and eating	14
2.1.1. Consumption behaviour	14
2.1.2. Weight and body image	21
2.1.3. Attitudes and taste preferences	25
2.2. Eating for two: Sociological research on food and eating	30
2.2.1. Social structure and identity	31
2.2.2. Families and mealtimes	36
2.2.3. Food, the body, and health	41
Chapter summary	45
3. Kitchen equipment	46
3.1. Basic principles	48
3.1.1. Conversation analysis	48
3.1.2. Discursive psychology	50
3.2. Eating culture: The context debate	54
3.2.1. What people say	56
3.2.2. What people eat	59
3.3. Naming names: The left-hand margin debate	60
3.4. Eating on an empty stomach: The embodiment debate	65
3.5. All talk, and nothing to eat? The application issue	69
3.5.1. Eating your words (again)	72
Chapter summary	73

<b>4. Making a meal of it</b>	<b>74</b>
4.1. Preparation: Collecting and selecting the ingredients	77
4.1.1. Finding the families	77
4.1.2. Additional data	80
4.1.3. Transcription	80
4.1.4. Class, race, and other labels	82
4.1.5. The cook as consumer	83
4.1.6. Ethics	85
4.2. Cooking: Analysing and constructing the family meals	89
4.2.1. Stages of analysis	89
4.2.2. Orientation to the tape	90
4.2.3. Cooking the data	99
4.3. Serving: Presenting the meal and the thesis	100
Chapter summary	102
<b>5. Cooking from first principles</b>	<b>103</b>
Attitude research and food preferences	104
Evaluations in practice: Discursive approaches	108
Analysis	112
5.1. Re-evaluating conversation	112
5.2. Variations on an evaluative theme	117
5.2.1. Compliments and praises	117
5.2.2. 'Fishing' for food	119
5.2.3. Complaints	122
5.2.4. Obligations to eat	125
5.2.5. Persuading others to eat	128
5.2.6. Experience claims	130
Chapter summary	132
<b>6. Dishes from the Orient(ation)</b>	<b>135</b>
Discursive psychology and conversation analysis	136
Attitude research and expressions of taste	138
Evaluative terms in traditional social psychology	140
Subjective/objective and category/item	142
Analysis	145
6.1. Subjective vs. objective evaluations	145
6.2. Category vs. item evaluations	151
6.3. Constructing a gustatory reality	155
6.3.1. Modalities of food evaluations: getting to the 'real taste'	156
6.3.2. Category entitlement	158
6.3.3. Consensus	161
Chapter summary	166

<b>7. Steak and interest</b>	<b>170</b>
The affective/cognitive distinction	171
Attribution theories and the conversational model	173
Discourse and the internal-external dichotomy	175
Analysis	177
7.1. Taste as evidence	178
7.2. What's wrong with it?	183
7.3. Favourites and food preferences	188
7.4. Differences of opinion	194
Chapter summary	200
<b>8. Consuming pleasure, consuming bodies</b>	<b>202</b>
Redefining pleasure	203
Embodying talk	205
The conversational <i>mmm</i>	206
<i>Mmms</i> and intonational features	207
Analysis	209
8.1. Bringing pleasure to the talk	210
8.2. The <i>mmm</i> -plus-evaluation sequence	212
8.2.1. Immediacy	214
8.2.2. Spontaneity	216
8.2.3. Vagueness	220
8.3. Embodying the experience	221
Chapter summary	224
<b>9. The proof of the pudding</b>	<b>226</b>
The research-application issue	227
Summary of chapters	229
Application in practice	233
9.3.1. Social psychology applications	233
9.3.2. Health psychology applications	236
9.3.3. Discursive psychology applications	238
9.3.4. The next bite	238
<b>References</b>	<b>241</b>
<b>Appendices</b>	
Consent form	276
Transcription notation	277



## Aperitif

And don't let anyone tell you that the food is the only thing that matters. That's rubbish. Where you eat something, who you eat it with and what you do afterwards is just as important. Eating is a whole package, not just what is on the plate. Food always tastes better in the right place, whether it is fish and chips eaten walking along the seafront or *steak frites* in Paris. Why people feel a delicate, perfectly honed plate of food in a three-star restaurant has the moral high ground over a really good hamburger is beyond me. If both are good to eat, fine examples of their kind, and please you, then fine. Good food is good food.

Nigel Slater, *Appetite*, (2000: 12).

Welcome to the gastronomic thesis. This is the academic equivalent of a cookery book, designed to lead you step-by-step through the making of a virtual meal. More specifically, it will take you through the construction of food evaluations, taste, and eating in mealtime conversation. The primary concern in this thesis is with how food becomes constructed, evaluated, and managed as a practical resource in interaction. Food is regarded as being always, already, social. How we talk about personal taste, food quality, and normative eating practices is bound up with other features and activities within interaction. Hence, I argue that one cannot separate food from discourse. Talk both constitutes the nature of food through description and evaluation, and is part of eating practices such as offering, accepting, and providing food. The thesis will involve a reconsideration of our understanding of physical and embodied events as being socially constructed. Talking food is thus talking social life. The rest of the chapter will raise some of the key issues and arguments within the thesis. It is, therefore, an *aperitif* to whet your appetite for the following discussions and delicacies.

### **Box 1.1. Tasting words**

As befits a thesis on food and eating, extracts at the start of each chapter are taken from fictional literature references to food, or from recipe books. These are used to illustrate a specific theme or point in the chapter and to demonstrate the pervasive nature of discourses of food and eating. They should be treated in the same way as my own writing: as situated and rhetorical constructions. Each style and form of discourse tells a particular story about eating practices. Whether food is something to be analysed, created, avoided or lavishly consumed is due, to some extent, to the way in which it is expressed in these texts. A novel such as Joanne Harris's *Chocolat*, for example, presents a gustatory world where chocolate is synonymous with sensual pleasures, community ideals, and spiritual morals. Similarly, Gabriel Axel's *Babette's Feast* shows how food is bound up with cultural norms around morality and sin. Eating a different food may constitute a breaking of taboos in terms of one's culture, and one's religion.

Discourses around (and of) food offer us ways of relating to the things we do, or do not eat. These ways of talking may then be used in our interactions with others to justify or account for our eating practices. For example, we may talk about healthy eating as a balance between different kinds of foods. Doing so constructs food in a particular way and is part of our interactions with food and other people. Hence, the things we eat and drink are, to some extent, a consequence of the ways in which we talk. This idea – that food is socially constructed through discursive practices – will be one of the key themes in the thesis. In the following chapters I will demonstrate this in relation to food evaluations expressed in conversation.

### **Eating your words**

The field of food and eating research has expanded rapidly in recent decades, particularly in relation to health and embodied identities (e.g. Hill & Franklin, 1998; Lupton, 1996; Malson 1998). The vibrancy and variety of such work is due in part to the range of psychological and sociological approaches adopted, and the use of various methodologies. Within the psychological literature, the main focus is often placed on cognitive and behavioural aspects of an individual's eating behaviour (e.g. Booth, 1994; Marcelino, Adam, Couronne, Koster, & Sieffermann, 2001; Meiselman, 1992; Rodin, 1990). For example, individual 'attitudes' toward food are measured and used to predict intentions to eat particular foods. Whilst this work has been highly influential, I argue that the predominant use of methodologies based on individual consumption has prevented an examination of

the interactional nature of eating. Food has been separated from other aspects of daily life, and eating has been treated as a mental rather than a mediated activity.

Sociological and anthropological work has been more concerned with symbolic and societal aspects of food and eating. Within this literature, food is often regarded as a system for representing and relaying cultural values (e.g. Counihan & Van Esterik, 1997; Lupton, 1996) and styles of eating are the means by which individuals can define themselves within their culture (e.g. Scapp & Seitz, 1998). Similarly, the body is typically discussed as a representative entity on which social organisations and practices are inscribed (Turner, 1996). These approaches are mainly theoretical or ethnographic, and have as yet paid little attention to specific instances of interaction around the preparation of, talking about, serving, accepting and refusing food. Even where mealtimes have been the focus of study, such as in Makela's (1991) research, interactional issues have not yet been fully addressed (though see Ochs, Pontecorvo, & Fasulo, 1996, for an exception).

Other examples of sociological research have drawn more heavily on individual accounts of everyday eating practices. For instance, recent work by Alan Warde and his colleagues examines household practices and the occurrence of eating out amongst families and other social groups (e.g. Warde, 1997; Warde & Hetherington, 1994; Warde & Martens, 1998, 1999, 2000). Although specific instances are used to illustrate and illuminate these studies, participant responses are still treated as exemplars of a more generic pattern of eating practices. This is appropriate for a sociological approach to food research, but it doesn't capture the detail of interaction required for a more social psychological perspective. More importantly, sociological research typically treats talk as a means by which to 'access' food habits and social meanings. This view of language as representative of mental states is one that is shared by the bulk of psychological research and will be discussed later in the thesis.

A major omission from research in both psychological and sociological fields is an examination of how food and eating practices are managed in talk in interaction. But why should we study the practices of *talking food*? Surely, you may ask, it is more important to examine *how* and *what* people eat and the

consequences of this for their physical and social identities (as seen in work by, for example, Barker, Tandy, & Stookey, 1999; Chaiken & Pliner, 1987; Kennett & Nisbet, 1998; Muir, Wertheim, & Paxton, in press). This may be the case if we were to conceive of food as primarily a physiological and psychological entity, though by regarding food as an inherently social object we may have to reconsider where the focus of our research should lie. In taking a social constructionist stance I argue that we need to examine how food and eating is constructed through, and within, discursive practices. How is food managed and negotiated within daily interaction? How do speakers talk about food and account for their eating practices? Indeed, how does *talking food* both constitute food and form part of food related activities? This involves a shift in focus toward discourses in interaction and to examine the consequences and implications of these for our understandings of eating practices.

### **Mundane and interesting**

The motivation for this piece of research – to conduct a detailed analysis of everyday food talk – arose from the great wealth of research on this topic that neglected or overlooked eating in interaction. Topics such as gender, eating disorders, and the control of eating practices seemed to be more prevalent in both psychological and sociological literature. In particular, I was frustrated and concerned by the overwhelming focus on women's 'abnormal' relationships with food, and with dieting and body image concerns (e.g. Bordo, 1997, 1998; Brook & Tepper, 1997; Davies & Furnham, 1986; Germov & Williams, 1996a, b; Gilbert, 1986; Nasser, 1997 – to name but a few). Very rarely are there accounts of men and food, or of non-problematic eating practices amongst women. Beyond research at the micro-level of nutrients, food is often theorised in terms of gender differences in eating, or as gendered foods (e.g. Lupton, 1996). While such research is important and necessary, I feel that it has resulted in a pathologisation of food and eating as a psychological topic. Certain eating practices are marked out as being problematic or 'abnormal' and it is hard to find research that does not feature notions of control, anxiety, or the health implications of food practices.

This thesis is an attempt to counter this trend by focussing on more mundane examples of interaction around food<sup>1</sup>. In doing so, the aim is to highlight how seemingly inconsequential talk has substantial implications for our situated understandings of eating practices. The research reported here examines food evaluations as an example of such talk, and marks the beginning of a new approach to food and eating. By focussing on mundane talk, we can examine *how* and *where* food becomes part of everyday life. This is not just as part of mealtime schedules, but as bound up with the detail of conversational practices. The key point here is that because food and eating is part of social and daily activities, we must examine it as such. To isolate and study eating as part of a research project (for example, as a topic in an interview schedule) is to construct it as a separable variable or topic, and to remove it from the context in which those present understand it.

Using a mundane setting for the thesis also avoids explicitly topicalising food. In the data used here, talk about and around food arose as a participants concern, and as part of everyday mealtime practices. By contrast, psychological research often focuses on problematic aspects of food, eating disorders, or dieting as a specific, categorised activity. Food is topicalised in specific ways as part of research agendas. The concern with this is that it may be making food and eating relevant in ways and in situations where this would not usually occur. The 'normal' aspects of food are often left to biological or physiological studies of nutritional content. Food is rarely discussed in the realm of social psychology unless it fits a particular category, such as dieting or body image. As a result, food is problematised and made unduly relevant to fit research hypotheses.

Finally, examining everyday talk allows us to slow down the pace of research a little, in order to get to the detail of episodes of interaction. This is inevitably more specific and focussed than other research, and may be frustrating for some readers as a result. However, this is exactly the point. Too often, social psychological research attempts to tackle broader questions or issues by going straight to the topic. For instance, if we want to know about why women diet

---

<sup>1</sup> The lack of research on mundane interaction is not restricted to the area of food and eating, as Watson (1997) has noted.

more than men, we might use a questionnaire to ask people their reasons for dieting. This kind of direct approach is often driven by the needs of social policy and funding bodies. As Howitt (1991) has argued, these bodies need manageable and general answers that can be used for quick solutions to societal problems. What is being argued here is that this haste is at the cost of detailed and focussed empirical research. We need more research that looks at specific instances of everyday social activity to have a better understanding of the practices that are carried out in interaction.

### **A recipe for living**

Let me now take a step back to consider the style of the thesis. The chapters are broadly laid out as if they were in a cookery book. There are two reasons for this. First, the layout highlights the different stages of the research process. This is not in the sense that doing research is like following a recipe<sup>2</sup> but that it is like the process of preparing, cooking, and serving a meal. So this cookery book shows you how to 'do a meal' rather than how to make the dishes that constitute a meal. This will be discussed in more detail in chapter 4 on method. The use of this metaphor also points to the constructed nature of research. Just as a meal is something to be worked at and may not suit all consumers, so research 'findings' are created and may be spat out or otherwise disputed by other researchers.

The second reason for this style of thesis is that it mimics the proliferation of cookery books as guidelines for living. Cookery – as an everyday skill or hobby – has in recent years become a central part of many people's lives. It is no longer only for housewives or those in the catering trade. Celebrity chefs have been a key feature in this process. Through media presentations, they use food and engage with eating to construct not only meals, but also ways of living. One can think of celebrity chefs such as Jamie Oliver (cooking is cool), Nigella Lawson (cooking is sexy), and Nigel Slater (cooking is spontaneous) to demonstrate how this is achieved. People can then use and develop these styles and recipes to create their own way of eating and living. It is not so much the different foods

---

<sup>2</sup> As Willig (2001) notes, conducting research is more like an adventure than a prescriptive recipe.

that are eaten, but how we orient to these foods that constructs our eating practices on a daily level.

The claim that cookery and recipe books convey more than just meals is not a new concept.<sup>3</sup> As Goldman (1992) has pointed out, recipes can be constructive of selves, identities, and cultures. Through the sharing of recipes and their use in the construction of meals, we can negotiate and represent relationships with others in our society (see also Theophano & Curtis, 1991). Cookery books are also moral guides through what one should and should not do with regard to eating practices and associated activities. For example, near the beginning of the twentieth century, recipe books were often combined with household manuals, dictating how a ‘proper’ housewife should run the home, her family, and her life.<sup>4</sup> The ‘best way to prepare a rump steak’ also implies that this is what we should be eating and notes how we should be eating it. One needs only to think of recipe books dedicated to low-fat recipes, Indian dishes, and vegetarian foods to realise that these texts offer more than just a different way to cook food.

### **Aims of the research and key themes**

Food and eating are undoubtedly key aspects of societal and cultural practice, and this is well reflected in the non-academic literature. It is only in the last few decades that psychological and sociological research has pursued such topics with as much fervour and passion as we do in our daily consumption practices.

Perhaps as a result of this delayed start, methods in research are still somewhat lacking in scope. One of the aims of the thesis is to contribute to a more interdisciplinary model of food and eating than is currently available. Thus it is as much a methodological thesis as a theoretical approach to eating practices. The problems of existing methodologies will be discussed in more detail in chapter 2;

---

<sup>3</sup> Claude Fischler (1988) also suggests that cooking helps to resolve anxieties about food (such as the omnivore’s paradox – see chapter 2) and to give food meaning. This draws on Levi-Strauss’s notion of the raw and the cooked, whereby the latter is the social and acceptable form; the former is the natural and uncontrolled form of food.

<sup>4</sup> In the preface to the ‘new edition’ of Mrs. Beeton’s All-about cookery (circa 1927), it is noted: “Mrs. Beeton has been the guide, philosopher, and friend of countless happy homes for more than half a century” (p. 5). Fannie Farmer was an earlier equivalent in the USA, noted for her rationalisation of home cooking and straightforward style of house management (Ritzer, 2000: 80).

here I note the aims of the current research that address these, and more theoretical issues:

- To develop a more detailed and empirical study of eating in interaction.
- To draw on the strengths of psychological and sociological research in order to produce a more socially oriented approach to food and eating.
- To develop a discursive and social constructionist approach toward embodied practices and daily interaction.
- To focus attention on the mundane, everyday practices of eating.

A few key themes run throughout the thesis and are particularly focussed on in the analytical sections (chapters 5 to 8). These were developed from the early stages of searching the data, through to the focus on food and drink evaluations within the analytical discussions. It is particularly helpful to note these here as they relate to themes and issues that arise in existing literature around the topic area. They are as follows:

- The constructive and constructed nature of discourse. Words constitute particular versions of food that can be disputed, negotiated and managed in interaction.
- The action-orientation of talk. Actions are not separate from talk; rather, we achieve things through discourse and interaction. Talk is bound up with food related activities and as such is a practical resource in interaction.
- Accountability; we can be held accountable for the things we say and do. This is particularly appropriate to the foods we eat or don't eat, and highlights the social nature of eating practices.
- Embodiment and discourse. Eating is embodied through both discursive practices and acts of consumption.

### **Thesis overview**

The research presented here uses everyday conversations taken from family mealtimes as data. The construction and use of food evaluations within this talk are examined in light of current psychological and sociological accounts of eating



practices. The analysis of these discursive constructions relates to issues of food preferences, taste, and the embodied aspect of eating. Each of the analytic chapters provides a discussion of specific research in relation to the topic of analysis. Problems are raised with this existing work, and ways forward are suggested in the subsequent analyses and discussions.

### *Chapter 2: Setting the menu*

This chapter presents a selective review of the main areas of research carried out in the topic of food and eating. The thesis engages with three main fields of work: psychological, sociological, and discursive psychological approaches. The first two of these fields will be discussed in the second chapter, since these are areas in which most research on this topic has been carried out. This is not a traditional literature review in the sense that no previous research has been done in the specific area of food talk. That is, research has looked at talk *about* food and eating, but not *talking* food (i.e. the ways in which food related activities are worked up, and how talk constitutes the nature of food). What will be reviewed here instead are issues raised by existing research with respect to the current topic. Specific examples are used to highlight current research trends and resultant theoretical problems.

### *Chapter 3: Kitchen equipment*

The third chapter focuses on the approach taken in the thesis – that of discursive psychology. This is the ‘equipment’ or the tools used to carry out research in a manner that addresses the problems raised in chapter two. Some background discussion of conversation analysis and discursive psychology is provided. Again, this is not an exhaustive review of such work, but is used as a framework from which to explore more current debates and concerns. These are specifically debates about context, participant labels, embodiment, and the application of discursive research. Food and eating is a particularly appropriate topic for contributing to these debates in that it involves social, cultural, and bodily practices. This chapter is rather theoretical, but it addresses important questions that are necessary for the evaluation of the current research.

#### *Chapter 4: Making a meal of it*

The fourth chapter provides the methodological detail of the research. It describes aspects of data collection, the families contacted, and the recording and analytical procedures. It also highlights further (potentially problematic) issues associated with method, such as the use of naturalistic data and the inclusion of the researcher in some of the recordings. More importantly, it will examine how the participants orient to the research as comprising recordings of a 'family meal', and how this is managed and explicitly drawn upon as being an expectation or a set of requirements from each participant.

#### *Chapter 5: Cooking from first principles*

This is where the analysis begins in earnest. Some background discussion is included here where it is specific to the chapter content; this builds on work discussed in chapter two. The chapter examines the construction of food evaluations in everyday conversation. How evaluations are bound up with interactional turns at talk is a crucial part of this process. I will argue that when we make an assessment of food, we are doing *more than* just an abstract evaluation of an object – we are also engaging with others in discursive activities. A number of examples are used to demonstrate this. For instance, evaluations can be a resource for complaining, for persuading others to eat, and for claiming a local identity. The implications of this are discussed with respect to how we regard food preferences and personal tastes.

#### *Chapter 6: Dishes from the Orient (ation)*

Here I examine food evaluations in more detail. Rather than regarding them as a generic class of discourse – as seen in other areas of research – evaluations are treated as being of two broad types ('subjective' and 'objective'). Although there are problems with distinguishing expressions in this way, it is useful as a starting point for a detailed analysis of the construction of food evaluations. It is argued that there is a rhetorical 'logic' of food evaluations that can be used and developed by speakers in interaction. Different expressions are noted as constructing evaluations in particular ways, such as being based on individual preferences.

### *Chapter 7: Steak and Interest*

This chapter extends the discussion from chapter six, by examining how this 'logic' of evaluations can be used to hold speakers accountable. We see instances in which speakers have been challenged or questioned about their evaluation of a food. How does one build an authentic or accurate evaluation, and persuade others that this is true to the taste of the food or their own experiences? What kinds of evaluation can be challenged, and in what ways? This is important if we consider that what is being managed here is the construction of one's own, and others', bodily experiences of food. Taste, food and eating practices become discursive properties to be defined in interaction.

### *Chapter 8: Consuming pleasure, consuming bodies*

The focus here is more directly on issues of embodiment and eating as a physiological activity. Threads of discussion on the internal/external binary, different types of evaluation and accountability are sewn together in an analysis of the expression of 'pleasure'. In particular, there is an empirical examination of the gustatory *mmm*, which is often used as an evaluation of food and the eating experience. Here the evaluation is tied to bodily accounts of eating, and the authenticity that this affords.

### *Chapter 9: The proof of the pudding*

Here lies the concluding discussion. This chapter will summarise some of the key themes and issues that are raised by the thesis, such as embodiment and the social nature of eating practices. I will also consider the potential for applications of this work, and the contribution made to the academic literature in different fields. Following the metaphor of a cookery book, I hope that this concluding chapter will have sated your appetite – for the moment at least – for a study of food evaluations. Like all good recipes, however, this is just the start. There are ever more ways to eat.

## Setting the Menu:

### A review of relevant literature

“Understanding people through their food, or satisfying curiosity about an individual’s eating-habits, is an activity which certain puritanically minded scholars claim to despise. If, however, we associate food with generosity, pleasure, and the basic texture of life itself, it becomes a matter of more than simply ephemeral interest. Much depends on the approach.”

Brigid Allen, *Food: An Oxford anthology*, (1994:viii).

This chapter reviews psychological and sociological research on food and eating. The review is necessarily selective in order to focus on the main areas of research appropriate to the thesis topic. The chapter also aims to clear some theoretical space in preparation for later chapters on the discursive approach and methodology. Hence, it is designed as a means by which to set up the main issues and concerns of the thesis. This is particularly important since, as noted in chapter one, very little research has been carried out on food and interaction. Therefore this chapter aims to show what has *not* been done as much as what *has* been done in this topic area.

Before commencing the review, it is important to note particular areas of research that are absent from this chapter and subsequent discussions in the thesis. These areas are eating disorders, body image, health, and certain areas of feminist research. They have been omitted for two reasons. First, the excluded areas often emphasise problematic or pathological aspects of food and eating. This emphasis is often intentional, for example as a political move working toward interventions (e.g. Bordo, 1997; Burgard & Lyons, 1994; Gilbert, 1986; Steiner-Adair, 1994). As a consequence, this kind of research is not easily applied to more mundane or unproblematic talk around food and eating. Since the aim of this thesis is not

directly political, I refrain from including these issues if the participants do not raise them first<sup>1</sup>.

The second reason for excluding particular areas of research is that the thesis' focus has been necessarily restricted in order to carry out a detailed analysis of food evaluations. Issues around embodiment and eating practices are discussed later in the thesis as being constructed through the use of food evaluations, and so are more directly relevant than, say, body image or eating disorders. Thus it is not the case that these latter areas have been wholly excluded on principle, and applications to these areas are indeed foreseeable. It is hoped that the current research will contribute to other areas of food and eating by offering a different theoretical and empirical approach to eating practices (see chapters 3 and 9). For instance, work on healthy eating may benefit from using an interactional approach to examine how healthy eating practices are constructed as such in everyday interactions.

In considering the following review, it is important to note that academic discourses construct eating practices as much as (or perhaps more than) the data used later in the analysis. For instance, each theoretical approach works with a particular notion of consumption. Psychology often studies food and eating in terms of nutrition, attitudes and beliefs, and body image concerns. Sociology draws on (for example) cultural meanings, the politics and economics of consumption, and anxieties around food. Hence, what we are doing when we eat becomes a very different practice when looked at from within either of these disciplines. More importantly, the dominant discourses of these approaches permeate through cultural mediums to become part of everyday common sense. For example, the psychological image of the individual consumer, as someone who makes conscious choices about what to eat, is often reflected in product advertising and packaging<sup>2</sup>. If we take on an alternative theory or perspective, we then have different ways of orienting to food and of relating to our eating practices.

---

<sup>1</sup> This ties in with discussions on theoretical approaches and context in chapter three. Please refer to the latter chapter for a fuller justification of why this approach is taken.

<sup>2</sup> This also works the other way, with lay notions of eating being used within research frameworks.

## **2.1. Eating for one: Psychological research on food and eating**

Studies of food and eating within general psychology texts are typically found in chapters on biopsychology and cognition (e.g. Gleitman, 1991; Lloyd, Mayes, Manstead, Meudell, & Wagner, 1984; Pinel, 1993). Eating is discussed primarily as a physiological activity, and as controlled by biological and psychological needs. Its study is thus restricted to a particular area of psychology. Both Gleitman (1991) and Lloyd *et al.*, (1984), for example, introduce the topic of hunger under a chapter heading of 'motivation'. This is followed by an account of the gastrointestinal processes involved in controlling food intake, and the self-regulatory systems of the individual consumer. There is usually little, if any, discussion of the social nature of food in such textbooks. Categorised under the realm of biopsychology, eating is clearly conceptualised as an individual concern.

Beyond the undergraduate textbook, the majority of psychological research on food and eating is found within specialist journals (e.g. *Appetite*, *British Food Journal*, *British Journal of Nutrition*, *Food Quality and Preference*) and texts (e.g. Booth, 1994; Logue, 1991; Lyman, 1989). For the purposes of the thesis, I will demarcate and highlight three main areas of concern within this literature<sup>3</sup>: a) consumption behaviour, b) weight and body image, and c) 'attitudes' and taste preferences.<sup>4</sup> Each area is typically based on a combination of experimental, cognitive, and clinical methods, all of which place an emphasis on individual behaviour (as seen in the work of, for example, Bolles, 1990; Rolls & Hetherington, 1990; Wardle, 1995; Williamson, Barker, Bertman, & Gleaves, 1995). I will now review these topic areas and consider some of the problems and assumptions of each.

### **2.1.1. Consumption Behaviour**

The first area of research in psychology focuses on what people *actually* eat, studying this through direct observation and physiological measures in a

---

<sup>3</sup> A further area of research is that at the micro-level of nutrients and gastronomic processes. These are not considered here due to the need to focus on more 'social' approaches to eating. See Pinel (1993) for an introduction to this kind of work.

<sup>4</sup> This latter area of research is of most relevance to the thesis, as it focuses on the evaluation or assessment of food.

laboratory. Work in this area is typically based on biopsychological principles, and examines physiological processes and the (internal) mechanisms that are thought to control food intake (e.g. Rolls, 1986, 1990). Two broad conceptions of eating behaviour are assumed in such research. First, that people respond to the incentive properties of food. These have been defined as the anticipated pleasurable effects of eating a food such as satiety (for instance, Cabanac, 1990). Second, that there is a flexible 'settling point system' that maintains homeostasis within the body (Booth, Fuller, & Lewis, 1981). A settling point has been defined as 'the point at which various factors that influence energy and water balance are in equilibrium' (Pinel, 1993: 343). This means that food consumption is thought to be regulated by this system, which is outside of conscious control. These conceptions are therefore both concerned with individual and biological models of consumption, and are typical of this type of research.

We can define this first area of research as being based within physiological psychology, with a focus on the neurochemical and gastric sensations caused by eating. As such, the current thesis has no particular interest or dispute with this kind of work. However, the problem arises when social psychological researchers – armed with a battery of questionnaires and rating scales – draw on physiological principles to examine the social nature of eating practices. For example, notions of hunger, appetite, and pleasantness of taste are often converted into research variables and rated using numerical scales. Yet these are treated as they are in physiological terms, as physical sensations and our perceptions of these. The problem is that social psychological researchers have abstracted these notions from the laboratory, and claim to be able to measure them through completely different procedures. The remainder of this section will be concerned with the social psychological research of consumption behaviour, rather than on the physiological/gastro-chemical studies.

Social psychological research on consumption behaviour often looks for 'external' factors that may influence consumption. External factors might include concepts such as taste (Logue, 1991), smell (Marcelino, Adam, Couronne, Koster, & Sieffermann, 2001), learning (Birch, 1990; Kennett & Ackerman, 1995) and the company or influence of others (Birch, 1980; Clendenen, Herman, & Polivy,

1994; Lea & Worsley, 2001). For instance, eating in the company of others may be considered as a variable, and related to the amount and type of food eaten. These external factors are often regarded as the social aspects of eating, though they are typically treated as separate from individual consumption. Our 'appetite' is thus not just determined by our perceived physiological level of hunger or satiety, but also by factors such as food qualities and the environment in which we are eating. In this way the social is separated from, but somehow related to, the individual.

In much research in this area, notions of hunger, appetite and taste are treated as fairly unproblematic concepts. They are regarded as either individual (hunger, appetite) or food-based (taste), and as primarily physical or psychological states. However, their status as such is almost always dependent on inferences made from individual scales or definitions. The problem with this is that these concepts rely on the assumption that words or rating scale measures relate directly to underlying, physical states. What is meant by appetite, for example, is treated as an equivalent concept between individuals and across situations. Moreover, comparisons are still being made with animal models of eating behaviour (see for example, Bolles, 1990; Logue, 1991; Rogers & Blundell, 1990; Rolls & Rolls, 1982; Rozin, 1976). So not only are these concepts treated as relating to specific (but largely unspecified) mental or bodily states, they are also equally ascribed to humans or rats. The concern here is that this use of labels does not take into consideration the different interpretations and understandings of these expressions at different times.

Let us consider some examples. In this area of research, individuals are often required to consume foods in a controlled environment, and to complete rating scales concerning the food and their perceptions of physiological and cognitive states (e.g. Marcelino *et al.*, 2001; Rodin, 1990; Wardle & Beales, 1988). Such research is then concerned with the means by which food cues are perceived, experienced, and cognitively appraised by the individual (see Rodin, 1990, for a brief review). For example, Prescott, Young, and O'Neill (2001) examined attitudes toward different flavours of 'sheepmeat' (e.g. lamb). Rating scales were used to assess the degree to which the meat was liked or disliked, and this was



then compared with individual consumption behaviour. The aim of this study was to determine the basis on which consumers made choices and assessments of the food, according to flavour content. The key issue here is therefore with the cognitive and perceptual processes involved in the consumption of a particular type of food.

Other research within this paradigm examines individual satiety or 'fullness' levels and how these may contribute to the control of food intake. Under laboratory conditions, participants may be required to taste a food and then rate the extent to which they feel full, or satiated (e.g. Rolls & Hetherington, 1990). Barbara Rolls has done much research in this area (1986, 1990; Rolls, Rolls, Rowe, & Sweeney, 1981), in particular, examining the effects of eating a selection of different foods. One of the main findings from this body of work is that of sensory-specific satiety, whereby a single food becomes less palatable after continued consumption within a short period of time. This is a significant finding, as it implies the necessity for variety within each meal (this is similar to the notion of a 'cafeteria diet', proposed by Rogers & Blundell, 1990). Measures such as these may then be used to give an indication of individual eating habits and attitudes toward particular foods (e.g. Rozin, Pelchat, & Fallon, 1986; Shepherd, 1990). The key issue here is how much, and what type of food, people eat.

### *Social influences on individual consumption*

It was noted earlier that psychological studies on food are beginning to incorporate social factors into experimental designs. These often feature a contrived (i.e. set up by the researcher) meal context as an alternative environment in which to study participants' 'natural' eating behaviour. For example, Clendenen, Herman, and Polivy (1994) examined the impact of the presence of friends on eating behaviour. Consumption levels were measured by weighing the amount of food eaten by participants who were either alone, in pairs, or in groups of four people. These results were then compared with the presence of strangers rather than friends to examine whether familiarity encouraged further eating. Meiselman (1992) highlighted the need for more meal-based research of this kind as a shift away from the sterility of the food laboratory (Meiselman, Johnson,

Reeve, & Crouch, 2000), though one could argue that this is still an experimental construction and far removed from daily eating practices.

The examination of social influences on consumption highlights the aim of being able to predict and potentially control the factors that affect eating behaviour.

This is of particular interest to psychological researchers in relation to two groups of people: children, and those concerned with losing weight<sup>5</sup>. For instance, one might wish to encourage healthier eating habits in a child or adolescent, so that these may continue into adulthood. Nutrition research often focuses on children's consumption and food preferences as a result, for instance where this involves the presence of a peer group (see for example, Baxter, Thompson, & Davis, 2000; Birch, 1980, 1990; Lowe, Dowey, & Home, 1998; McBean & Miller, 1999). The implications of this research extend to health promotion and policy, education, and food product marketing. If we know how and why children choose to eat particular foods, then we can open up possibilities for changing these habits to suit financial or educational goals.<sup>6</sup>

The focus on children is often linked with the other interest group of 'dieters'. One of the main interests within this area of research is how early eating habits may influence restrained eating patterns or dieting behaviour in later life (e.g. Carper, Fisher, & Birch, 2000; Clarke & Palmer, 1983; Hill & Franklin, 1998; Patton, 1988). For example, De Bourdeaudhuij (1997) gave questionnaires to adolescents about the food obligations and restrictions that were placed on them by their parents when they were younger. She found that those who rated their parents as 'permissive' ate more 'unhealthy' foods as adolescents than those respondents who rated their parents as being more strict with food. If taken

---

<sup>5</sup> I refrain from using the term 'dieters' here, since this is commonly used in such studies to refer to a particular category of participant (e.g. Herman & Polivy, 1980). Though it will be used later for ease of reading, I find this an inappropriate and inadequate expression as it constructs and pathologises individuals often purely on the basis of questionnaire ratings.

<sup>6</sup> Recent work by the food research group at Bangor University is a particularly good example of this kind of research. They have developed a school-based intervention programme entitled 'Food Dudes' to encourage children to eat more fruit and vegetables. This work is based on the psychological models of eating discussed above.

literally, this has serious implications for the way in which eating is governed in children and families.<sup>7</sup>

The implicit assumptions of psychological research on consumption behaviour can be summarised as follows:

- Physiological states are accessible through quantifiable, external measures
- Each measurement is treated as a fairly accurate representation of an internal state.
- Participant responses are treated as being related to, and therefore predictors of, actual eating behaviours.

There are a number of problems with these assumptions that can be illustrated with an empirical example. The extract below is taken from the data set used in Wiggins, Potter, and Wildsmith (2001) and is similar to the data used in the later analytical chapters. There is good reason for using this example (and the others) in the literature review, as it begins to demonstrate the advantages of the thesis' methodology, and highlights the distinctiveness of the thesis from the approaches used in most social psychological research on food. The extract below, in particular, highlights a problem with the notion of identifiable physiological states, such as satiety and appetite. This piece of conversation is taken from about halfway through a family meal. Mark, the father, is clearing away the dinner plates, when the conversation turns to the food left on his daughter, Chloe's, plate. Also present are Emily (the younger daughter) and their mother, Sue (not heard in this extract).

#### EXTRACT 2.1: SKW/A2a-M5

1. Mark:           ↑wh:y ↓don't you want this chlo↑e?
2.                   (1.2)
3. Chloe:         °I'm ↑fu:ll°

---

<sup>7</sup> The issues of dieting behaviour and food consumption tie into the second area of psychological research: 'weight and body image'. In the later section the focus will be on how consumption behaviour is associated with concerns about weight and body size. This relates to what has been termed more 'pathological' eating behaviour, and extends to concerns around anorexia and bulimia nervosa. It should be noted, however, that psychological research on consumption and that on weight concerns are closely linked, with both seeking to determine the causes of under-, over-, or 'normal' eating.

4. (2.0)
5. Mark: ↑why are you always full you ↓two
6. (2.4)
7. Mark: I ca:n't underst:and at↓you're a[ge(.) I
8. Emily: [na-
9. Mark: used to be eat↓ing,
10. Emily: haven't got very big ↑appetites=
11. Chloe: =E-↑Emmie's no:t (.) tha::t (0.8) ↓f:ull all
12. the time but my=
13. Mark: =but you keep ea:ting things in be[twe:e]n ↑meals
14. Chloe: [look-]
15. Chloe: ↓Mum (.) can you tell him my appe↓tite's gone
16. (2.4)
17. Emily: °you've just said it°
18. (1.8)
19. Chloe: >no but< she's been ↓here so she can ↑pro:ve it

We can first of all note that the conversation focuses here on Chloe's physiological state – how full she feels – and whether this is related to a decline in general appetite. However, simply stating that she is full (line 3) is not, on this occasion at least, treated as an adequate reason for not eating all of her food. This is evidenced by the continued questioning and negotiations concerning Chloe's appetite. On being questioned by her father (lines 5-9, 13), Chloe proceeds to produce a more elaborate account of her internal state using references to appetite and the presence of others. We can consider, then, how the concept of satiety is bound up here with concrete activities such as finishing one's plate of food and snacking between meals, and thus is embedded in the family's daily activities.

Reporting one's physiological state can therefore involve more than simply describing internal sensations (as argued by, for example, Birch, 1990; Rogers & Blundell, 1990). In the extract above, further formulation is required – and in particular, some form of evidence – in order for the report to be treated as an acceptable account. The speakers treat physiological states as being negotiable. For example, Mark (line 5) starts to treat his daughters' fullness as a move in an argument. Being 'full' is oriented to here as an excuse or account for a particular behaviour. Yet an internal sensation, such as fullness or taste preference, is

generally regarded in current research as something purely individual. What I am suggesting here, is that in practical situations such ‘states’ can be open to public discussion; that is, they can be negotiated, disputed, and argued for or against. Descriptions of one’s physiological state, then, are not simply descriptions, but resources within interaction. They are also available to all participants. Physiological accounts can be used to answer questions, requests, or to justify behaviour; to treat them as merely representational would be to underestimate their orientation to action.

Let me illustrate this by contrasting the way a physiological state can be constructed in a conversation with how it is defined in a consumption questionnaire. For example, constructing ‘hunger’, or ‘satiety’, as unitary physiological states in experimental terms may underestimate the variety of ways in which these sensations can be evoked and worked up in everyday discourse (see Lupton, 1996: 33). Talking about being ‘full’ in extract 2.1 provided Chloe with an account or justification for a particular course of action (i.e. not eating all of her food). The use of questionnaires and rating scales may obscure the flexibility around people’s understandings of physiological accounts. Using an approach that can deal systematically with natural discourse is one way to reveal these flexible constructions. This does not mean that consumption based, social psychological research is redundant – only that it misses some quite important interactional work around food.

### *2.1.2. Weight and Body Image*

The second main area within psychological research on food is related to the first in that it focuses on the consequences of eating. Specifically, research of this kind is based on the individual’s perception of their body image, and the links that this may have with eating behaviour and its disorders (e.g. Heatherton, Herman, Polivy, King, & McGree, 1988; Herman & Polivy, 1980; Mizes & Christiano, 1995). Dieting and food restriction is not simply regarded as a practice in itself; rather, it is related to individual weight concerns and body consciousness (e.g. Noll & Fredrickson, 1998; Tiggemann, 1997). In particular, the focus is on young women and adolescent girls as being most affected by such concerns (Davies & Furnham, 1986; Hesse-Biber, 1991; Tunaley, Walsh, & Nicolson, 1999). For

example, Benedikt, Wertheim, and Love (1998) gave questionnaires to adolescent girls and their mothers about perceptions of body image, dietary behaviour, and attitudes to foods. The aim was to determine a causal link between their attitudes or perceptions of themselves, and their subsequent eating behaviour. In addition, they noted that mothers had an impact on the way in which they encouraged or modelled various dieting practices, though the focus remained on the girls themselves.

A key focus in this area of research is therefore on how people *perceive* eating patterns and body weight, and how this may impact on their actual consumption. This extends to how other people are perceived (Rudin, 1996), and can even involve moral overtones around social norms of eating behaviour (Chaiken & Pliner, 1987; Ricciardelli, McCabe, & Banfield, 2000; Stein & Nemeroff, 1995). For example, expectations about appropriate eating habits (such as the quantity and quality of food) may be expressed as normal behaviour and as related to the 'thin ideal'. In a now well-cited study, Garner, Garfinkel, Schwartz, and Thompson (1980) examined the decreasing size of Playboy centrefolds and Miss America Pageant contestants as having an impact on female body-image perception. They paralleled this decrease with an increase in weight in the general population, and argued that the images were reflecting not changing norms, but changing ideals of how women should look.

As with research on consumption behaviour, weight and body image studies also use questionnaire or rating scale designs to measure attitudes and behaviour. The categories, 'dieters'/'restrained eaters' and 'non-dieters'/'non-restrained eaters', are used within such questionnaires to examine what are thought to be different kinds of eating behaviour and perceptions of food (e.g. Kennett & Nisbet, 1998; Wardle & Beales, 1988). That is, the measurement of dietary behaviour is often based on participants' questionnaire responses, and subsequently used to define categories of eaters. What is of concern here is how the distinction between 'restrained' and 'unrestrained' eaters is predominantly defined, for example by Herman and Polivy (1980), as being the midpoint of the response distribution. This not only treats rating scales as literal representations of actual behaviour (i.e. that the mark on a rating scale is representative of a person's thoughts or

behaviours when eating), but it also makes arbitrary categorisations on the basis of these responses. 'Dieters', for example, are often treated as being a particular group of people who have distinctive characteristics, such as lower self-esteem, dissatisfaction with their weight, and restrained eating habits (e.g. Heatherton *et al.*, 1988; Herman & Polivy, 1991; though see Lindeman & Stark, 2000, for an alternative view). More significantly, this is all defined on the basis of a difference in numerical responses. While there is some dispute over the distinction between dieters and those with eating disorders (e.g. Patton, 1988; Williamson, Barker, Bertman, & Gleaves, 1995), statistical measures are still being used to place a category label or (moral) value on the basis of questionnaire responses.

Finally, other research in this topic area examines the *visual* perception of body image. This is measured using diagram rating scales, which feature pictorial representations of increasingly fat body frames (e.g. Hill & Franklin, 1998; Hill, Oliver, & Rogers, 1992). Participants must select the pictured body that they perceive to most closely match their own. For example, Monteath and McCabe (1997) used this scale, along with other questionnaires, to assess how participants viewed their body image in comparison with their 'ideal' body. Again, the focus here is on women and their individual responses to structured questionnaires. What is missing is how body image (and other concepts) are used and oriented to in everyday interaction.

The key assumptions of this second area of research can be summarised as follows:

- Eating behaviour can be characterised as 'restrained' or 'unrestrained' using appropriate measures.
- Participants' body image is based on perceptual and cognitive processes, and these can be represented pictorially.
- Participant responses are representative of internal states, and are independent of other individuals.

The problems with these assumptions will become clearer when more analysis is shown later in the thesis. For now, I draw your attention to the issue of how eating practices are categorised as normal or restrained (e.g. Herman & Polivy, 1980) as being a particular concern. It was noted above that this is often based on questionnaire responses about behaviour and attitudes towards food, and does not allow for the way in which participants themselves may define the behaviour. For example, consider the following extract of conversation in which such an issue arises. This was taken from near the start of a family mealtime, in which Sue asks her daughter, Chloe, about her day at school:

#### EXTRACT 2.2: SKW/ A1a/M2

1. Sue: what >did you< have for ↑lunch t'day?
2. (2.0)
3. Chloe: I had a chi:cken pi::e.
4. (3.0)
5. Chloe: (2 syllables)=
6. Mark: =an' what
7. Chloe: a choc:olate do:ughnut ((smiley voice))
8. Sue: I heard [you (.) sha:med your↓self.
9. Mark: [for ↑lunch
10. Chloe: ↓no but I ↑didn't have any ↓break I came in
11. and ev'rybody was .hh buying like (.) pizzas
12. and a- a slice of pi:zza and a (.) a
13. cho:colate (.) e:r sli::ce for break=
14. Mark: =for break=
15. Chloe: =and then [for] lunch they have like a (0.2) a-
16. Mark: [a:h]
17. Chloe: a↑nother piece of pizza and a- (0.2) an' a(.)
18. chocolate slice and °↑two lunches >in one
19. day<° I [mea]n (.) even when I ↑am (.) li:ke
20. Mark: [mm]
21. Chloe: (0.2) my <pi:gg self> (0.2) don't eat ↑that
22. mu:ch

As with extract 2.1, what we can see here is the production of an account – in this case, it is an account of what Chloe, and others, ate at school that day. Through describing the food in a particular way, Chloe is able to construct a definition of



what is 'normal' in this situation. For example, in using expressions such as 'everybody' (line 11) and 'they have like' (line 15), she displays such eating practices as being general, frequently occurring activities (see Pomerantz, 1986, and Edwards, 2000, for how such expressions can be used to normalise accounts). The constructive element of talk, then, offers a means of defining both the behaviour of self, and of others. This has a rhetorical function, in that one can portray a particular version of events in a way that justifies one's actions (Potter, 1996). In the extract above, Chloe is able to account for her own behaviour (eating the doughnut), through comparing her actions to those of others. As Smith (1978) and Edwards (1994) have shown, in the production of a 'normal' account she can then construct her own actions as being somewhat restrained in comparison, and thus defend her behaviour against criticism.

The point here is that what we as researchers take to be restrained or normal eating behaviour may be less significant than that which participants themselves define. Furthermore, restraint is seen in this example as being of concern to the speakers, bound up with other activities such as showing interest in what other members do, and eat, during the day. So restraint features here as part of the interaction: as constructed in a particular way, and for a particular reason. This raises problems for traditional notions of weight concerns, in that these are situated, and flexible accounts (this notion of situated accounts will be developed more fully in later chapters). Although the rest of the thesis does not focus on examples of this kind, the extract above demonstrates how we may start to unpack the complexities of food, body image and weight concerns by focusing on interaction and discursive practices.

### *2.1.3. Attitudes and Taste Preferences*

The third main area of psychological research draws on attitudinal models and evaluative research, and is particularly relevant to the analyses later in the thesis. The kinds of questions asked in this literature refer to individual attitudes and preferences toward particular foods, how these are established, and how they are subject to change. Thus there is a shift in focus from *what* people eat, to what they *intend* to eat. This has links with the previous two areas, though here the focus is on how eating habits may be open to change per se. Dieting or weight

concerns are not the key issue, though may feature as part of the individual's attitude and food preferences.

Research in this area predominantly uses the theory of planned behaviour (known as the TPB) developed by Ajzen (1988, 1991) from an earlier theory of reasoned action model (Fishbein & Ajzen, 1975). The basic assumption of the TPB is that there are three factors which influence intentions and behaviour: the 'attitude toward the behaviour', the 'subjective norm' (how one perceives social expectations or norms) and 'perceived behavioural control' (one's perception of how easy or difficult it is to perform the behaviour; see Eagly & Chaiken, 1993, 1998). Each of these is measured using a range of scales and questionnaires, which are then correlated with predictions of behavioural intentions (Armitage & Conner, 1999). The attitudinal model is thus used to assess individual attitudes or food 'preferences', which may then be used to predict particular eating patterns. For example, participants are asked about what they typically like to eat (and have eaten), and what they *would* like to eat. The subsequent responses are then used to measure general attitudes toward foods, rather than an evaluation of a particular food.

This type of research is often aimed at educating people into 'healthier' eating habits, or to determine why people have particular attitudes toward different foods (Nash, 1990; Rogers & Blundell, 1990). Methods typically draw on questionnaires or rating-scales, in which food tasting may or may not be a component. For example, Sparks and Shepherd (1992) asked participants to rate their attitudes on the consumption of organic vegetables. The aim here was to determine the extent to which people identified with the notion of a 'green consumer' (someone who eats ethically produced food). In this instance the food was assessed in the abstract, and not something that could be tasted and evaluated during the research experiment.

Most research in this third area of psychological studies on eating is therefore concerned with measuring general attitudes toward types of food. To a lesser extent, some research is focussed on evaluations and attitudes toward *particular* foods. Often this is more directly linked to marketing of brand foods or with

advertising campaigns. For example, a study by Bárcenas and colleagues (Bárcenas, Pérez de San Román, Pérez Elortondo, & Albisu, 2001) asked participants to rate different kinds of cheese before and after tasting samples of each kind. The researchers then correlated sensory qualities (such as 'nutty', 'sweet') with preference scores of each participant to determine what might be an 'ideal' kind of cheese for this group of people.

As one might imagine, attitudinal research of this kind would be of particular interest to marketing companies and manufacturers, in order to find out public attitudes towards their brand of food (see also research by Bonham, Greenlee, Herbert, Hruidi, Kirby, Perkins, Salkind, & Wilfong, 1995). Advertising, too, could benefit from knowing what kinds of things people are looking for when they select foods (Brinberg, Axelson, & Price, 2000). For instance, if I buy a particular brand of bread because I think it is 'better' for me, then advertisers may try to target consumers with more informational content. Alternatively, I may buy bread because I love the taste or the texture; in this case, advertising could target the sensory qualities of food. This very rough distinction has been characterised by Dubé and colleagues as the difference between the cognitive (informational, knowledge of nutritional value, etc.) and affective (taste, texture, etc.) bases of attitudes (Cantin & Dubé, 1999; Dubé & Cantin, 2000; Dubé, Chattopadhyay, & Letarte, 1996; Letarte, Dubé, & Troche, 1997; see also chapter 7).

As will be discussed later in the thesis, attitudinal models have had an enormous impact on food preference research. The TPB, for example, aims to determine the basis of individual attitudes and to see how these are related to intentions or actual behaviour. While this is an area of considerable dispute (Armitage & Conner, 1999; Bagozzi & Kimmel, 1995) the driving force of such research is the potential to be able to change people's attitudes and therefore their behaviour. If this were possible, then manufacturers, advertisers and the entire food (and consumer) industry would be set to benefit. It is important to bear this in mind, since it has a great impact on the direction of future food and eating research.

The main assumptions implicit within attitude research can be summarised as follows:

- Individuals possess a relatively stable attitude towards food/eating, based on an internal, cognitive state.
- Use of appropriate methods will provide access to such attitudes, and to participants' 'true', underlying beliefs.
- Attitudes are the result of individual appraisal, preferences, and motivations.

Again, it is useful to consider how we might start to challenge and question these assumptions from a discursive approach. Let me take the notion of food as an attitudinal object. Psychological research often treats food as an unproblematic item; for instance, that participants 'know' what chicken or carrots are, and that what is at stake is their *attitude* toward the food. The following example shows how definitions of the food may themselves be reconsidered as being part of the process of expressing an attitude. This section of conversation is taken from near the start of a family mealtime, and involves a brief exchange between Mark and his daughter, Chloe. It follows a lull in the conversation, before Chloe makes a comment about the meal itself:

#### EXTRACT 2.3: SKW/A1a/M2

1. Chloe: there's >↑so much< tu:na in Mum
2. (1.0)
3. Mark: its ↑ni:ce (0.4) its- its: tuna pasta (0.4)
4. that's why there's so much tuna >in it<
5. (4.0)
6. Chloe: °its° <tuna with pasta (0.2) not pasta with
7. tuna>

The most striking feature of this extract is the negotiation over how the food may be defined, and how this is bound up with evaluations of the food (being 'nice', line 3). By using different expressions and emphases in their talk, the speakers are able to construct the food in quite different ways. This simple, yet powerful, use of discourse demonstrates how evaluations may be made about food through what seem to be merely observational comments. For example, by stating that: "there's >↑so much< tu:na in Mum" (line 1), Chloe not only presents a description of the

food, she also displays an orientation to it in a particular way; in this context ‘so much’ is hearable as ‘too much’. By looking now at the other speaker, Mark, we can see how he constructs the food differently, and simultaneously offers a more positive evaluation. In other words, the meal is defined as being ‘nice’ (line 3), and as containing a lot of tuna for a good reason (i.e. it’s a tuna dish). Describing the food as being either ‘tuna with pasta’ or ‘pasta with tuna’ (lines 6 and 7) sets up a particular evaluation of the meal.

Thus we could argue that food (as with any other object) can be negotiated, defined, and constructed in talk, and that this is an ongoing, jointly achieved process<sup>8</sup>. In contrast, attitudinal studies have tended to treat food as an object to be individually appraised and responded to – through eating, or not eating the food. However, if constructions of food may be variable and are produced in interaction, this raises problems with the assumptions highlighted earlier. An experimental methodology requires participants to give a unitary response on a particular variable (e.g. niceness) and therefore places constraints on the way in which the food may be constructed. What has been overlooked is the fluidity and scope of food construction in everyday situations. Pre-defining the nature of food (as in questionnaires) restricts this practice, and may underestimate the extent to which understandings of food are worked up in talk.

What I have tried to show in this section are the ways in which attitudes and food preferences may be more interactionally based than is suggested in current psychological research. This is something that will be developed in detail throughout the thesis, along with a consideration of the implications of this construction for our understanding of eating practices. The extracts above, for example, suggest that appetite, eating practices, and food evaluations can be used both flexibly and rhetorically in interaction. They are therefore social, as well as individual, concerns. This sharply contrasts with experimental research, which focuses on these factors as purely individual and internal (mental or physiological) states. Where the ‘social’ enters this kind of research is as another variable, such as ‘peer influence’ or ‘perceived social expectations’. By contrast, the current

---

<sup>8</sup> This is something that will be attended to in more detail in later analytical chapters. Here it is worth pointing out as a contrast to psychological research on food attitudes.

thesis argues that these factors (appetite, evaluation) are inherently social in the way they are constructed and bound up with interaction and social practice.

The notion of restraint, or refusing food, may also be more socially oriented than is suggested by the questionnaire designs typically used in research. For example, it can be used as a resource in interaction to account for, justify, and explain behaviours – both one's own, and those of others. 'Norms' of eating are often constructed in relation to restricted eating practices, though these are often used retrospectively in accounts, rather than existing to pre-determine the behaviour (e.g. Herman & Polivy, 1980). As an example of constructing norms, Beach (1996) demonstrated how an individual with bulimia nervosa constructed their behaviour as normal, by developing descriptions that invoked social norms and everyday events in particular ways. Malson (1998) also argued this point in her study of the discourses of anorexia nervosa, highlighting the rhetorical and subjective nature of these kinds of accounts. Both of these studies have illustrated the constructive qualities of discourse, and offer alternative methodologies by which to examine eating practices.

## **2.2. Eating for two: Sociological research on food and eating**

The second half of this chapter will discuss sociological research on food and eating. Unlike psychological research, influences from social constructionism and discursive research (see chapter 3) have had a greater impact on this body of work. For instance, there is a greater focus on the construction of meanings around food, and on the interdependence of social, cultural, and historical factors (Beardsworth & Keil, 1997; Caplan, 1997; Counihan & Van Esterik, 1997). As a result of this interdependence, research on this topic is less marginalised than it is in psychological studies. Food is bound up with other topics such as the family (Lupton, 1996), the body (Featherstone, 1991; Turner, 1982) and social class (Warde, 1997). That being so, the following discussion will focus on three main themes within sociological research on food: 1) social structure and identity; 2) families and mealtimes; 3) food, the body and health<sup>9</sup>. These themes have been

---

<sup>9</sup> Other themes include the production of food, the importance of cultural differences, political and ideological notions of food, and analyses of food literature. These have not been included here, as they are not directly related to the thesis, and would require a chapter unto themselves.

constructed for the purposes of this thesis, to clarify and highlight key points of interest in the sociological literature.

### *2.2.1. Social structure and identity*

In the first theme in sociological research, food and eating practices are often regarded as symbolic and socially constructed. A fundamental argument is that eating is not simply an individual and physiological activity, but is constrained by social, historical, and cultural factors (e.g. Fischler, 1988; Gofton, 1986; Mintz, 1994, 1996). Two influential theorists in this area, Roland Barthes and Claude Levi-Strauss, advocate a structural approach that emphasises how social norms structure individual values (Lupton, 1996). Barthes (1997) saw food as a system of signs that communicated social and cultural practices. That is, “when he buys an item of food, consumes it, or serves it, modern man (sic) does not manipulate a simple object in a purely transitive fashion; this item of food sums up and transmits a situation; it constitutes an information; it signifies” (Barthes, 1997: pp. 21). Food thus has a meaning that can be used to communicate social beliefs and cultural values.

Levi-Strauss (1966) similarly regarded food practices as a language, identifying two basic distinctions between nature and culture, and the raw and the cooked. Unlike Barthes, he was more concerned with binaries as structuring belief systems around food and eating practices. For example, his notion of a ‘culinary triangle’, depicting the transition between natural (raw) foods and those associated with cultural (cooking) practices, has been extremely influential in subsequent work (Atkinson, 1980; Fürst, 1991; Lupton, 2000). Food is thus linked to society and culture at the most basic level, through the preparation and consumption practices of individuals.

The work of Barthes and Levi-Strauss is reflected to some extent in that of Mary Douglas (1972), which moves beyond the use of binaries and looks at the rituality of food occasions. Douglas argues that food is a code for social relations, defined by categories and boundaries of what can and cannot be served. Meals are also structured occasions, following rules about the combination of types of foods, presentation, and the ordering of courses (Douglas & Nicod, 1974; Grieshaber,

1997; Murcott, 1982). For example, Douglas argues that it would be unusual to offer a hot meal to a stranger who visits your house, though a beverage (e.g. tea or coffee) would be more acceptable. Hence, different levels of intimacy may be seen in the types of meal presented. As a result of this apparent key to 'deciphering' meals (Douglas & Nicod, 1974), the approach has been particularly popular in sociological research (e.g. Fieldhouse, 1986; Lupton, 2000; Makela, 1991).

Historical shifts in eating practices are also an important indicator of the social nature of food (Finkelstein, 1989; Mintz, 1994, 1996; Visser, 1993). Levenstein (1988) for instance, traces the changes that have occurred in dietary and culinary habits in America. As industrialisation led to an increase in women joining the workforce, food production was no longer confined to the home and became a separate practice in commercial outlets. Women had less time for cooking, and the shift in the workforce resulted in the mass-production of food outside the home. While this meant an increase in the diversity and availability of food (for instance, imported goods; see Sheridan, 2000), it has also been blamed for a shift toward problematic and anxiety-filled relations with food (Beardsworth, 1995; Beardsworth & Keil, 1997; Falk, 1991; Fischler, 1980; Ritzer, 2000). People are less aware of the origins and constitution of food products, and have less control over the processes of production than before industrialisation.

One of the main anxieties around food is referred to as the 'omnivore's paradox' (Rozin, 1990). As a biologically omnivorous species, humans can in principle eat a wide variety of foods. With this freedom, however, comes the tension between neophilia (seeking out new foods) and neophobia (the fear that new or strange foods may be harmful). Put simply, we are caught between trying to maintain a varied diet without the risk of eating something that may harm us. The anxiety caused by the paradox is thought to have increased as a result of the mass production and importation of new foods (Beardsworth & Keil, 1997; Falk, 1994; Fischler, 1987, 1988). As the means of producing food are further removed from the single household, it is more difficult to identify the source and content of what we are eating. This shift, and the plethora of new foods and ways of eating, has resulted in a state of crisis and uncertainty that Fischler (1980) has termed 'gastro-



anomy'. Various methods are then used to reduce this uncertainty, such as using brand loyalty to determine the choice of food (Beardsworth, 1995; see also Ritzer, 2000). Another way may be to use cultural, religious, or magical beliefs to guide selection (Beardsworth & Keil, 1997; Sallerberg, 1991).

Food choice may also be dependent on the use of categories or divisions of foods. For instance, Douglas' (1966) notion of purity and pollution in food has been used to account for different cultural practices in consumption (e.g. Fürst, 1991).

Foods thought to be impure may evoke disgust, which is argued to be a cultural, rather than a biological, response (Rozin, 1999; Rozin, Markwith, & Stoess, 1997). We learn which foods to avoid through socialisation processes in much the same way as we learn *how* to eat and what is socially appropriate.

A final theme within the area of social organisation of eating practices is that of identities around food. Vegetarianism is a particularly good example. As Twigg (1979) and others (e.g. Adams, 1990; Beardsworth & Keil, 1992, 1993; Fiddes, 1991; Maurer, 1995) have noted, this is not simply the avoidance of meat but can involve moral, social, political, and religious elements. Similarly, anorexia nervosa is often thought to be the expression of an identity, or control over the body and the self (Bordo, 1990, 1997; Turner, 1996). Benson (1997), for example, notes how anorexia can be both a political act and an extension of the ideology of self-management. As the mouth is seen as the site of entry into the self (Falk, 1994), so it can also be used to close off the self to societal values, as a way of policing the boundaries of one's identity.

The rise in menu-pluralism (Beardsworth, 1995) or excess choice of food also has implications for theories on food identities. Research in this area draws on accounts of the social organisation of eating practices, but focuses on the incorporation of food into the body. That is, how the non-self (food) becomes self (Crumblehulme, 2000; Falk, 1991, 1994; Fürst, 1991; Otnes, 1991). The process of consuming food and an identity involves making distinctions between what should and should not be eaten, as well as how this is to be done. If a food is thought to be dirty or contaminated, for example, then its consumption would involve a similar contamination of the self. Thus the site of constructing an

identity through eating is also pervaded by anxieties over the possible threat to the self.

On the basis of the studies discussed here, some general assumptions can be noted:

- Food distinctions are based on cultural or societal practices.
- The meanings of food and eating practices are for the most part non-negotiable by individuals due to this cultural ascription.
- Identities are based on the consumption of particular foods, or types of food.

As in the section on psychological research, it is helpful to consider an extract that begins to highlight some of the theoretical concerns outlined above. This is not to criticise sociological research on food per se, but rather to highlight features of interaction that may have been overlooked in this kind of research. While sociology is concerned with overarching societal factors, it is the way in which these are abstracted from specific instances of interaction that is of concern here. I focus here on the way particular foods are regarded as having a symbolic meaning that can be attributed to the consumer. In contrast to this, extract 2.4 below illustrates how 'meaning' may be regarded as something that is worked up and negotiated by the speakers. The family is eating Christmas dinner, when Sandra refers to her son, Darren, and his behaviour at the table.

#### EXTRACT 2.4: SKW/K1a-M2 (99-119)

1. Sandra: he's the ↑only one I ↓know makes (0.4) prawn
2. [cocktail,
3. Ian: [prawn cocktail butt:↓ies:
4. (1.6)
5. Sandra: [°heh heh°
6. Darren: [(what ↑else) are you supposed to do with it:
7. (3.0)
8. Sandra: mm?
9. Julie: [eat it
10. Darren: [>what ↑else are< you supposed to do with it
11. (1.8)
12. Sandra: >well you're supposed to eat it< delicate↓ly

13. (3.0)
14. Julie: delicately:
15. (0.4)
16. Ian: ↓delicately
17. (0.6)
18. Julie: have ↑Darren and delicate ever been uttered
19. in the same sen:tence
20. Darren: (uh [huh])
21. Sandra: [no

Note how a few of the speakers in this extract (Sandra, Julie, and Ian) orient to how one is 'supposed' to eat the prawn cocktail (lines 12, 14, and 16). In doing so, they are actively constructing a norm that is then used to hold Darren to account for his behaviour. This is not an abstract statement of manners or rules, but a practical achievement in the interaction. We can also see how these rules are imposed; Sandra does not directly scold Darren, but orients to his behaviour as being unusual (lines 1 to 2). Imposing the 'rules of the table' is therefore not done explicitly, or even apparently known by all members present (see lines 6 and 10, for example). The nature of the rules, in this section of talk, is something to be oriented to and worked up by the speakers. More importantly, they are used for a particular purpose (to make a claim about Darren) and so have a practical application.

Also of interest in this extract is the way the speakers work up an understanding of the consumer (Darren) and the food (prawn cocktail). Sociological research often argues that identities are established through particular eating habits and certain foods. What we have here, however, is a family group eating the same food in different ways. Their identities are different as a result, but they are also something that needs to be actively constructed in the interaction. That Darren is eating his food in a different manner, for example, is something that may distinguish his identity from the others. But it is only in the *noticing* or turning attention to, that the identity of being 'indelicate' or different is constructed in the public space. This is not a passive result of eating the prawn cocktail 'butty', but something constructed and worked up by the speakers.

### *2.2.2. Families and mealtimes*

The structure of eating practices at a societal level, as noted in the previous section, is intensified at the level of the family and food interactions. In the literature in this topic area, the focus is on the mealtime as the centre of family eating habits, as being bound up with the notion of family itself (DeVault, 1991; Lupton, 1996). Meals are regarded as arenas for the socialisation of children into family and cultural practices; learning both what, and how, to eat (Blum-Kulka, 1994, 1997; Coveney, 1999; Fieldhouse, 1986; Lupton, 1994). Ikeda (1999), in particular, notes that the family mealtime is an environment in which healthy eating patterns are established, incorporating social and cultural practices into individual lifestyles. In a similar vein, Fieldhouse (1986) argues that sharing food within a family or group setting is a way of expressing intimacy and friendship. In this way, the social aspects of food are oriented to and used as part of local mealtime activities.

The notion of manners and learning ‘the rules of the table’ are often associated with these processes of socialisation. For example, Gofton (1986) examined how appropriate eating practices are used to distinguish social relations amongst diners. Drawing on the work of Elias (1978, 1982) and Goffman (1971), he argued that rules about food consumption control what we eat, and who we eat with. Other empirical work supports this claim. Theophano and colleagues, for example, have examined the mealtime rules of Italian-American communities and found similar results (Goode, Curtis, & Theophano, 1984; Theophano & Curtis, 1991; cf. Blum-Kulka, 1994, 1997). The way menus were negotiated, planned and eaten maintained not only internal family relations, but also social networks with other families.

The concepts of rules and control suggest that meals can also be the site of power negotiations within the family.<sup>10</sup> In one of the few studies focussing on children, Grieshaber (1997) found that children actively challenge their parents’ authority

---

<sup>10</sup> An interesting example of this is seen in Widdowson’s (1981) study, which notes a character known as the ‘crust man’ in Newfoundland folklore. Portrayed as a large, ugly man, he is reputed (by parents) to patrol the community and would kidnap all those children who refused to eat their bread crusts. Ochs and Taylor (1992) also point out that “dinner time [is] a particularly intense moment for (re)instantiation of [their] family politics” (p. 302).

through the consumption (or refusal) of certain foods (see also Valentine, 1999). Breaking the rules of the table is thus one way of asserting independence. The work of Foucault is often used here to demonstrate the government of the family, and is echoed in Coveney's (1999) research on child nutrition. This shows how societal views of childhood are related to nutritional advice, and also highlights the obligations of parents. While rules may control and socialise children, they can also act to force parents to *apply* these rules and to encourage particular ways of eating.

Feminist research on eating has been similarly concerned with food, families, and power relations. Delphy's (1979) groundbreaking research on French families demonstrated that *ways* of consuming were more important than *what* was consumed. While this overlaps with earlier research (such as that of Levi-Strauss and Elias), Delphy focussed on the eating practices of different family members. Women, for example, may have had more access to food, but their consumption was significantly different from that of their husbands and children. Men were given more meat on the basis that their needs were greater, and were given better quality food than the women ate for themselves. This research sparked much subsequent work on gender relations in family eating practices (Charles and Kerr, 1986 a, b, 1988; DeVault, 1991; Lupton, 1994, 1996; Murcott, 1982) and in particular on the inequalities of power displayed at mealtimes. Eating was no longer only a social and cultural matter; it also became a political matter.

Nickie Charles and Marion Kerr's research has made a significant contribution to this body of feminist work, and focuses on the role of meat as symbolising differential power relations in the family (Charles & Kerr, 1986 a, b, 1988; Kerr & Charles, 1986)<sup>11</sup>. In a series of interviews with the mothers of young families, they argued that mealtimes were a prime arena for the subordination of women (see also Ekström, 1991). Expected to conform to the role of food provider and server, women privileged men's tastes over those of other family members. The women themselves were seen as contributing to this process of subordination by accounting for these privileges in terms of rational choices: men require more

---

<sup>11</sup> This link between meat and power can also be seen in research on vegetarianism (Adams, 1990).

meat for energy, are larger and need more food, and have bigger appetites. The point here was that unequal power relations were embedded in discourses around food and families. The women in their study were unable to fight against this subordination because that was the way eating practices were constructed at a societal level.

Anne Murcott's (1982, 1997) research on families in South Wales examines the power inequalities that may be seen in traditional notions of a 'proper family meal'. Noting similar findings to Charles and Kerr, her focus was on how the cooked dinner, as a set of requirements and rules for meals, serves important functions in the family. The cooked dinner is epitomised in the weekly Sunday dinner, comprising of a platter of roast meat, vegetables, and gravy. Arranged and served in a particular way, this meal acts as a centrepiece or focal point for the family. It is a time when the family members all eat together and redefine themselves as a working unit. In essence, it provides a concrete and practical representation of the family itself (see also DeVault, 1991; Lupton, 1996).

### *The 'death' of the meal*

The importance placed on the family meal is evident in writing which claims that this event is in decline (Fischler, 1980; Ritzer, 2000; cf. Murcott, 1997), resulting in the potential disintegration of the family unit. The reason for such fears is often attributed to the rise in availability of a wider range of foods, and the changing lifestyles caused by industrialisation. In many families, there simply isn't the time or co-ordination of family members to accommodate a communal meal. Instead, there has been an apparent increase in what has been termed 'grazing' or snacking (Falk, 1994; Fischler, 1980; Morrison, 1995; Warde, 1997) and eating outside of the home (Finkelstein, 1989; Warde & Martens, 1998, 1999, 2000). These two activities are frequently regarded as resulting in the death of the (family) meal (Wood, 1995).

The growth of fast food restaurants has also been held accountable for such apparent damage to the family unit. In Ritzer's (2000) account of the global spread of McDonaldization, he argues that these restaurants are impersonal and mechanised environments. Not only do they promote 'food for fuel' rather than

pleasure, but they also minimise social contact and conversation<sup>12</sup>. Concerns of a similar nature have also been noted in schools, where the presence of snack bars and sweet dispensers has encouraged 'institutionalised snacking' (Morrison, 1995). Although this enables the daily organisation and control of pupils, it is argued that it further promotes a move away from what is typically thought of as a proper meal.

We can question whether or not these changing habits are necessarily a bad thing. People now have a greater freedom and choice of food, and can combine a variety of social activities with eating practices. So 'eating out' need not necessarily mean being less of a family or social group. What may have changed is the formality of such occasions (Warde, 1997; cf. Finkelstein, 1989). In different eating environments, the power relations may also change, offering a means of escaping the parental control of the table and a chance for family members to construct their own eating practices. The different meanings associated with eating out often provide a strong collective identity, and a chance to engage with others in different settings (Martens & Warde, 1997; Warde & Martens, 2000; Williams, 1997). Eating out is thus a highly social and collaborative event. What may need to be changed, then, is our definition of what constitutes a proper 'family meal'.

The assumptions of research on the social and familial organisation of eating can be summarised as follows:

- Patterns within family mealtimes can be generalised to represent wider societal or cultural patterns.
- Descriptions and accounts of what constitutes a normal meal can be used to build up a picture of the structure of eating practices.
- Participant responses in interviews are representative of meanings or beliefs about food and eating within the family.

---

<sup>12</sup> Such restaurants are thought to be more appropriate for eating alone, which is itself regarded as a social taboo (Lukanuski, 1998). Lukanuski also argues that those with bulimia nervosa represent society's attitude toward eating alone – as a deviant and shameful practice. While this may be debatable, it makes an important point about the environment in which we eat.

What constitutes a 'proper meal' is not always apparent to the degree noted in the above literature. As we have seen, this is a notion drawn upon by respondents in various studies (e.g. Charles & Kerr, 1988; Murcott, 1982) but it sets up a rather restricted (and perhaps overly nostalgic) view of what a meal should be. The extract below demonstrates how specific instances of meals reveal the practical and localised construction of a meal in the participants' talk. Here the emphasis is on how the participants display a particular understanding of what constitutes a family meal. Adam, the eldest son, is in the midst of leaving the table at which the family is eating.

EXTRACT 2.5: SKW/ L1bM4 (266-281)

1. (1.0)
2. Adam: °bore::d°
3. Lynn: >(--)&#246; bored< if we went out for a meal you
4. wouldn't get up (.) half way ↓throu:gh
5. (1.0)
6. Adam: °we're° not at a ↓meal
7. Lynn: well, (0.2) we ↑are at a ↓meal (0.2) at a family
8. meal so time to [share (0.2) and I'd like you to=
9. Nicholas: [°Mum°
10. Lynn: =sit [down
11. Nicholas: [Mum
12. Adam: ↑how come [you've s:uddenly star:ted going on=
13. Nicholas: [you're not half way ↓through
14. Adam: =[like that
15. Robert: [lets: decide about (0.2) holi↓days
16. Lynn: yeah

There are a number of interesting issues in this extract, but I would like to focus here on how the notion of a meal is worked up and used as a practical resource for managing Adam's behaviour. Note how a number of different interpretations of the term 'meal' are used here – as being something public (line 3) or private (lines 7-8), and the expectations that go along with these (sitting down, sharing, making decisions). The distinctions made between these environments are not abstract or based on general criteria, but are bound up with the concerns of the local



interaction. That is, to work up expectations of how others should behave. Lynn not only displays an orientation to the activity of 'doing a meal', but also to the notion that this is a *family* meal, and thus something to be carried out collectively. In other words, she works up the obligations of everyone present to partake in this meal as activity. In particular, Robert's "lets decide about holidays" (line 15) directly attends to this obligation, and displays an understanding of the type of discussions that would be appropriate for a family meal.

### *2.2.3. Food, the body, and health*

The third theme within the sociological literature looks at social and cultural constructions of food and health. This includes research on the changes in patterns of diet and health behaviours, and the factors involved in these changes. As with the second theme on food and families, much research in this area has focused on how processes of industrialisation has caused a change in healthy eating practices (e.g. Beardsworth & Keil, 1997; Martin, 1995; Turner, 1982). The main idea here is that food and health has become a site for the discipline and control of the body. There are clear influences from Foucault in this work, relating eating practices to social processes of rationalisation and individualisation. The work ethic associated with industrialisation, for instance, promotes the rhetoric of production and efficiency through which eating practices are brought under control and constrained. Turner (1982) notes how:

"Contemporary anxieties about obesity and dieting, slimming and anorexia, eating and allergy are part of the extension of rational calculation over the body and the employment of science in the apparatus of social control." (1982: 267).

As a result of this focus on production, the body becomes an object to be shaped and controlled (Bordo, 1990; Germov & Williams, 1996a, b; Turner, 1996), to be put on display (Featherstone, 1991) and to be a lifestyle 'project' (Shilling, 1993).

The focus on the control of the body through health regimes has also involved elements of morality (Germov & Williams, 1996a). For instance, Crawford (1985) interviewed people about their perceptions and definitions of health. He found that health was treated as being something normal or expected, suggesting

that there are moral obligations within society to achieve a healthy state (though see also Herzlich, 1973). Two main themes emerged from the participant responses, and Crawford noted these as contrasting rhetorical devices. First, health could be regarded as self-control: a means of disciplining the self. This ties in strongly with the medical assumption that health is an individual concern, and an individual responsibility – people can be held accountable for maintaining a moral, healthy state (Crossley, 2000). The second theme was that health was constructed as release: being healthy also meant allowing yourself the freedom to enjoy life, and to eat different (and ‘unhealthy’) foods. So health was defined by Crawford’s participants as being a balance between control and release – between production and consumption (see also Bradby, 1997; Lupton, 2000; Lupton & Chapman, 1995).

The dichotomy of healthy eating rhetoric has since been replicated in a number of empirical studies. Katherine Backett’s research (1992; Backett & Davison, 1995), shows how the morality of health is bound up with other aspects of everyday life. She examined how participants made sense of their own health within the family unit, or as part of the process of ageing, in relation to wider social obligations to maintain a healthy lifestyle. Conrad (1994) also draws on this work and found similar results among students in America. Here, ‘wellness’ or healthiness was seen as a virtue, shown not only in student responses, but also in health promotion campaigns and the cultural interest in more ‘natural’ foods (Atkinson, 1980).

The notion that healthy eating may be understood as reflecting values of production as well as consumption means that there is often thought to be a conflict in relationships with food. This is thought to be particularly relevant with regard to women and food, and ties in with the earlier discussions of family and gender roles. Warde (1997) notes how increasing references to health emerged in recipes and food articles in women’s magazines in the late 1960’s, accompanied by an increase in nutritional information. Healthy eating became a socially pervasive notion, in advertisements, food campaigns, and conversation. Women were thus overwhelmed with advice on the ‘right’ foods to eat. However, there were also media references to indulgence – that food may be ‘naughty but nice’, and that one may be allowed ‘a sin a day’ (Gronow, 1991; Pill & Parry, 1989).

This suggests that healthy eating in itself (as production) is not enjoyable, but is a chore – thus the requirement for more pleasurable consumption in the form of ‘bad’ foods (Warde, 1997).

The work of Charles and Kerr is again appropriate here (1988; Kerr & Charles, 1986). In a set of interviews carried out with 200 women in the North of England (each with at least one pre-school age child), they argued that traditional divisions of labour and unequal power relations still exist in families. Moreover, this power is centred on food and the provision of meals. Women are expected to be providers for the family, but still be sexually attractive to their husbands (Charles & Kerr, 1986b). Thus while the men and children receive priority over food portions (Delphy, 1979; DeVault, 1991) women were expected to display self-denial in their consumption, particularly of more ‘fattening’ or unhealthy foods (cf. Whitehead, 1994). In this way, women may have greater access to food, but are constrained by familial and social pressures to conform to a restricted eating pattern (Bordo, 1998).

There are also links between healthy eating and the construction of individual identities seen earlier. In their interviews and group discussions with young women, Chapman and Maclean (1993) found that eating ‘junk food’ was often a means of expressing autonomy as an adult. The women classified foods as being either ‘healthy’ or ‘junk’, with the former associated with family meals, being ‘good for you’, and being the expected or normal behaviour. Eating junk food, by comparison, was associated with going out with friends and with expressing their independence. The researchers argued that the respondents therefore faced a conflict between maintaining family relationships and asserting their autonomy as an individual in society.<sup>13</sup>

Although there are many overlaps with the previous section, we can note some additional assumptions of this type of research (see also Wood, 1995):

---

<sup>13</sup> This conflict is often attended to indirectly in the data extracts used later in the thesis. However, it will be shown that the conflict is much more complex and localised than simply the distinction between healthy food and junk food.

- Healthy eating is a site of conflict between cultural ideals of production versus consumption.
- Being healthy is both a moral obligation and an individual responsibility.
- Women are particularly susceptible to conflicts around control and release, and often have a problematic relationship with food.

Although some research in this area focuses on how healthy eating is defined in different ways (e.g. Winter Falk, Sobal, Bisogni, Connors, & Devine, 2001), there are few studies that examine how these definitions are constructed in interaction. Much of the data used is based on interviews, which misses the conversational uses of healthy eating discourses in daily interaction. The following example provides an illustration of this.

#### EXTRACT 2.6: SKW/ K3a-M9 (470-487)

1. Ian: °come on eat ↓up°
2. (3.0)
3. Ian: eat up or you'll ↑never be a big rugby play:er
4. Darren: I am
5. (1.4)
6. Darren: they're ↓>horrible< (0.6) °bits:°
7. (0.8)
8. Ian: °are they° ↓heck: (0.4) >get 'em< eat:en
9. Darren: all fat (0.6) oh yeah ↑what's the point in
10. °s::craping off all that ↓(meat)°
11. Sandra: heh heh
12. Ian: <come on:::>
13. (1.2)
14. Ian: you wim:p
15. (1.4)

As we saw earlier (in extract 2.3), the status of the food may not always be treated in the same manner by different speakers. In the example above, whether or not the 'bits' are horrible has implications for whether Darren should be made to eat them. That is, if they are 'all fat' (line 9), then it may be considered unethical to force him to eat them. More importantly, Ian and Darren manage 'healthy' or proper eating in different ways. Ian alludes to quantities of food, of not being

fussy and building one's strength up through eating well. Darren, on the other hand, orients to what the food is like, and whether or not it is suitable for consumption. It is not simply a case of defining healthy foods as being a particular kind; these foods must be constructed and negotiated *as being* healthy (or not) by the speakers themselves.

### **Chapter summary**

This chapter has outlined some of the main issues within psychological and sociological research on food and eating. More importantly, it flags up some of the methodological and theoretical concerns associated with these approaches. Using examples from the data, I have shown how we may look at features such as appetite, social identity, and the concept of a 'meal' in different ways. The discursive approach is examined in more detail in the following chapter, and will provide the framework for the rest of the thesis. In essence, then, chapter two has enabled us to see what *has* been done in previous research. Now we can move on to look at how a more interdisciplinary approach may be used to offer an interactional perspective on eating practices.

Kitchen equipment:Discursive psychology & theoretical debates

“ I want to satisfy those very basic demands without in any way wishing to make you feel as if there were some actual list of recipes you needed to master before acquiring some notional or wholly goal-oriented culinary enterprise. My aim is not to promote notions of uniformity or consistency – or even to imply that either might be desirable – but to suggest a way of cooking that isn’t simply notching up recipes. In short, cooking in context.”

Nigella Lawson, *How to eat*, (1998: 7).

This chapter is concerned with the theoretical approach used in the thesis, and will provide a contextual basis for the later analytical chapters. I also use this chapter as a way of raising specific theoretical issues around discursive research. These issues are central to the way in which we analyse data, and thus provide the reader with an explicit account of the analytical choices and decisions made in the thesis. More importantly, perhaps, the issues raised have significant implications for the study of eating practices. They demonstrate the centrality of discourse to our understandings and interpretations of both food as object and as activity.

The thesis adopts a discursive psychological approach (henceforth DP; Edwards & Potter, 1992; Potter & Edwards, 2001a). Briefly, this is concerned with the ways in which social psychological topics are constructed and managed in interaction. The approach draws on recent developments within conversation analysis (e.g. Atkinson & Heritage, 1984; Button & Lee, 1987; Heritage, 1995; Hutchby & Wooffitt, 1998) and discursive analyses (e.g. Jaworski & Coupland, 1999; Potter & Edwards, 2001a, b; Silverman, 2001; Wetherell, Taylor, & Yates, 2000a, b). Rather than repeat much of what has already been said in other texts, I will briefly outline the basic principles of DP before focussing on four specific debates within discursive research.<sup>1</sup> These debates are centred on key issues that are often used

---

<sup>1</sup> Their status as ‘debates’ already sets them up as having opposing and mutually exclusive sides on a particular issue. This is a somewhat misleading term, though it is useful for stimulating discussion.

to distinguish between different strands or versions of these approaches (see also Wetherell, 2001). Indeed, they constitute concerns that I personally experienced and engaged with at various points throughout the research process. As debates, their 'solution' as such will not be resolved either within this chapter or the rest of the thesis. To do so would be to undermine the very notion of a continuing, argumentative, debate. For each line in a debate is only ever a next turn, and there will always be occasions for further next turns to continue the discussion.<sup>2</sup> What is more important is that each turn adds something new, or insightful. It is hoped that this thesis does just that.

For the purposes of this thesis, the four debates or issues have been constructed as follows: 1) context; 2) the left-hand margin; 3) embodiment; 4) application.

- 1) **Context:** this refers to the issue of whether we need to draw on 'macro' issues (such as gender, power, class) in order to more sufficiently analyse and understand the 'micro' (situated, interactional) context. In short, what is to count as context?
- 2) **The left-hand margin:** or the use of participant labels and their implications for analysis. This follows on neatly from the debate on context, as it raises questions about the resources we use to analyse interaction.
- 3) **Embodiment:** the issue of whether DP is able to capture and attend to the physical and material aspects of being. This draws on different versions of social constructionism (realism versus relativism) and is focussed on the notion of 'extra-discursive' features of interaction.
- 4) **Application.** This final debate is concerned with the problem of the application of academic research findings. It relates to each of the previous debates in terms of politics, power, and the 'real world'.

---

<sup>2</sup> This next turn may indeed be my own, in a later publication. This is not to suggest that I am not 'true' to the position taken here, but to admit that our positions in such debates are constructed and therefore confined within a particular interactional moment. It is only through the use of audio or written material that our interactions become 'fixed' in records, and for which we may then be held accountable (Buttny, 1993).

### **3.1. Basic principles**

Before moving on to the four debates in more detail, I begin by outlining the main principles of the DP approach. DP (Edwards & Potter, 1992; Potter & Wetherell, 1987) has its roots in conversation analysis (henceforth, CA; e.g. Atkinson & Heritage, 1984; Hutchby & Wooffitt, 1998; Wooffitt, 1990), ethnomethodology (e.g. Button, 1991; Garfinkel, 1967) and rhetoric (Billig, 1996).<sup>3</sup> A fundamental assumption of these perspectives is that discourse is central to, and constructive of, social life (Coyle, 1995; Edwards & Potter, 1993; Potter & Edwards, 2001a; Potter & Wetherell, 1987). As Silverman (2001: 160) has noted, “conversation is the primary medium through which social interaction takes place” (see also Heritage, 1984a; Sacks, 1992; Silverman, 1998). Hence, a focus on discursive practices is a focus on social life.

#### ***3.1.1. Conversation analysis***

CA research aims to identify the organisational features and patterns of talk in interaction (Drew, 1995). It emerged as a discipline within sociology in the 1960's, with the work of Harvey Sacks and his colleagues Gail Jefferson and Emmanuel Schegloff. Drawing on studies by Goffman and Garfinkel, they were primarily concerned with interaction and social practices (Sacks, 1969, 1984; Sacks, Schegloff, & Jefferson, 1974; Schegloff, 1988). Where the earlier studies relied mainly on imagined or invented scenarios, Sacks argued that this necessarily but problematically blurred specific features in interaction (Heritage, 1984a; Schegloff, 1988). Sacks regarded these features – such as turn organisation, repairs, pauses and topic changes – as being essential for making sense of the interaction. It is through these features that we orient to, and display these orientations within, the interaction (Heritage & Atkinson, 1984). CA research has since largely followed Sacks' research and focuses on the detailed organisation of talk in interaction.

Let us consider an example. Sacks noted that talk is frequently characterised by what he termed ‘adjacency pairs’: a sequence of two adjacent utterances that are produced by different speakers and have ordered parts (Heritage, 1984a: 246;

---

<sup>3</sup> The latter two approaches are not discussed in detail as they are less central to the thesis than CA.



Sacks, 1992). An example would be an invitation-response pair, with the invitation as the first pair part, and the response as the second. The importance of adjacency pairs is that they highlight the 'normative character of paired actions' (Wooffitt, 2001: 53). That is, when a first pair part is given, the production of the corresponding second is normatively expected. If it is *not* produced, then the second speaker may be held accountable for its absence.

The organisational patterns within talk, such as adjacency pairs, suggest that conversation is both context-shaped and context-renewing (Heritage, 1989).

Heritage describes it as follows:

"A speaker's action is both *context-shaped* in that its contribution to an on-going sequence of actions cannot adequately be understood except by reference to the context – including, especially, the immediately preceding configuration of actions – in which it participates. ... The *context-renewing* character of conversational actions is directly related to the fact that they are context-shaped. Since every 'current' action will itself form the immediate context for some 'next' action in a sequence, it will inevitably contribute to the framework in terms of which the next action will be understood. In this sense, the context of a next action is repeatedly renewed with every current action." (1984a: 242; emphasis in original).

In other words, talk is indexical; the meaning of a particular word is embedded within the immediate context of its use (Heath & Luff, 1993; Hutchby & Drew, 1995). So to understand talk we must look to see how it is sequentially organised and produced as a joint activity within interaction.

The focus on structure and sequential organisation<sup>4</sup> is therefore a primary concern of CA, based on the assumption noted earlier that conversation is the basis for social action (Heritage, 1983, 1995; Wootton, 1989). As a corollary, it is often seen as imperative that CA research uses naturally occurring, spoken interaction

---

<sup>4</sup> CA research may also draw on 'membership categorisation analysis' (MCA; Sacks, 1992; Silverman, 1998) which examines how speakers construct and use categories in talk. This analysis has until recently received much less attention (Abell & Stokoe, 2001; Wootton, 1989) and this may be due to the ambiguity of categories as cultural constructions. As we shall see later, cultural knowledge is a contentious issue in CA research. For more recent MCA research and discussions, see Hester & Eglin (1997), Lepper (1995), Silverman (1998), Stokoe (in press), Stokoe & Smithson (in press), and Watson (1996).

(Heritage, 1989; Nofsinger, 1991). Broadly defined, this is talk that derives ‘from situations which exist independently of the researcher’s intervention’ (Silverman, 2001: 159). This means that interviews, focus groups, texts, and other set-up data are regarded as less appropriate, for they would fail to capture the ways in which talk is built up in everyday life. Interviews, for example, are designed for the purposes of the researcher. The topic is driven by the interview schedule, the style of questioning is particular to the type of research, and the purpose of the talk is to answer the questions given in the most appropriate manner.

As a result of this focus on natural talk, it is often claimed that ‘ordinary’, everyday conversation is the primordial or foundational form of talk-in-interaction (see for example, Heritage, 1995; Schegloff, 1999a, b; Wooffitt, 2001). Other forms of talk – such as those within institutions – are considered to be systematically different. As Billig (1999a, b) has noted, this issue has prompted some debate, along with the criticism that CA is taking the moral high ground over forms of data. This is not necessarily the case; rather, for CA research in particular, naturally occurring data is regarded as more appropriate for the research questions attended to in this kind of work. Since the current thesis is driven by an interest in food talk in everyday interaction, this approach is adopted as being most suited to the research aims.

### *3.1.2. Discursive psychology*

Discursive psychology is a more recent development within psychological (rather than sociological) research. It emerged partly as a result of the epistemological ‘crisis’ in psychology, in which traditional methods and values were challenged by postmodernist and social constructionist perspectives (Parker, 1992; Stainton Rogers, Stenner, Gleeson, & Stainton Rogers, 1995). These latter approaches question the notions of objectivity, truth, and scientific method that have until recently been so central to psychological research. There are, of course, many divisions within these approaches, particularly concerning the notion of truth and whether or not we can talk about such a concept (see for example, Parker, 1998). In this thesis I take the line that while there is no single, underlying truth in any event, action, or person, we can still talk about ‘truth’ (or truths) as it is constructed and attended to by participants at any one time. This holds no

guarantees about certainty, but it allows us to examine the processes of how truth comes to be understood, without worrying about whether it exists or not.

One of the key elements in the epistemological shift in psychology was the ‘turn to discourse’ (Harré, 1995; Nikander, 1995). Language is treated in terms of how it constructs social realities rather than as representing internal cognitive states. Thus the focus also shifted from the intra- to the inter-personal. The turn to discourse in psychology incorporated some of the main principles of CA, such as the focus on the structure and organisation of talk in interaction (Potter & Wetherell, 1987). However, DP is also concerned with the topic or content of talk in interaction. In particular, psychological topics such as memory, attitudes, and sensations are examined in terms of how they are constructed and managed as concerns for the speakers themselves (Edwards, 1994; Potter & Edwards, 2001b). For example, we can examine how an ‘attitude’ is worked up in talk without needing to refer to any cognitive structures or mental processes. Using CA principles, DP is able to examine how such issues arise within the organisation of talk (Potter, 1998). For this, we do not need to know, or be concerned with, the mental state of individuals. Moreover, the issue of mental experience does not arise in this form of discursive research. Instead, we can focus upon how actions are carried out and oriented to in interaction. Cognition is of interest only as it is attended to in interaction, for this is where it becomes an issue *for* the interaction (Potter, 2000; Potter & Edwards, 2001a). As Willig has noted, “psychological concepts such as prejudice, identity, memory or trust become something people *do* rather than something people *have*” (2001: 91, emphasis in original).

There are three basic features of discourse that are central to this approach: construction, action, and variability.<sup>5</sup> First, discourse is both *constructive* and *constructed*. By *constructive* we mean that people construct versions of the world using discourse (Potter & Wetherell, 1995). Since there are innumerable ways of describing something, the way in which we do so presents a particular representation or construction of this object (see for example, Potter, 1996).

---

<sup>5</sup> Other features have been highlighted, but the three discussed here are the most commonly cited (see Beattie & Doherty, 1995; Coyle, 1995; Edwards & Potter, 1992; Potter, 1996; Potter & Wetherell, 1988, 1994, 1995; te Molder, 1995).

Discourse is also constructed, in that it is actively built up and used by speakers. The words one uses therefore have implications and consequences for the interaction (Speer, 1999). For example, particular identities can be constructed in interaction through the use of person categories, activities and events (e.g. Antaki & Widdicombe, 1998; Widdicombe & Wooffitt, 1995). This is not to say that utterances are intentional or meticulously planned but that they are rhetorically designed<sup>6</sup> to deal with the business at hand (Edwards, 1994; Potter & Wetherell, 1994). Discourse, then, is constructed *for* a specific interaction and a specific set of activities *within* this interaction.

This brings me to the second feature of discourse: action. The DP approach argues that talk is not a simple reflection of internal beliefs or feelings, but is a social action in itself. Drawing on and going beyond the work of Austin (1962), words are seen as performing actions such as making a complaint or an offer. It is through talk in interaction that we carry out particular activities. This focus on action highlights the concern to look at the practical use of discourse – what people do with it, and how it is oriented to action (Potter, 1998; Potter & Edwards, 2001a, b). As an example of this, research by Burningham (1995) examined the construction of attitudes toward proposed environmental changes in a local setting. These were constructed in terms of the social impacts of the scheme, and worked to build up credible or persuasive accounts from different sides of the argument.

It is due to the discursive features of construction and action that the third – variability – is inevitable. If talk is constructed for and within particular interactions, then it will vary according to the context in which it is located. For example, I may say that I love strawberry flavour milkshake on one occasion, but that I prefer chocolate flavour on another. This does not necessarily mean that I have changed my mind, or that I am lying on one of these occasions. Instead, we can see how different expressions are used as part of situated and local

---

<sup>6</sup> By this I mean that discourse is bound up with activities such as excusing, blaming, and explaining, and that it constructs a version of reality that indirectly counters an alternative version. This does not mean that individuals are using words deliberately or strategically to perform this work; rather, the culturally-specific discourses we use are themselves constructive of psychological and social realities.

conversational activities (Marshall & Raabe, 1993; Potter, 1996). This feature of variability suggests that we should not seek consistency across accounts, as is often the case in more experimental forms of psychology (see chapter 2), but look to see what different accounts are *doing* in interaction.

The three features of discourse discussed above are present in Edwards and Potter's (1992, 1993) *Discursive Action Model* (DAM), which summarises some of the key features of the DP approach. As the authors note, this is not so much a model as a way of approaching the study of discourse and interaction. The model is divided into three parts: action, fact and interest, and accountability. The first part of the DAM – action – has already been noted in the discussions above. Here the focus is on people's practices and the actions performed through discourse.

The second part on 'fact and interest' is concerned with how people treat *each other* as having particular interests or motivations (Edwards & Potter, 1992). Note that this is not something imbued by the analyst, but is a feature of the interaction itself. In particular, what has been termed the dilemma of stake highlights the concern with "how to produce accounts which attend to interests without being undermined as interested" (Edwards & Potter, 1992: 158). For example, one could 'just be saying' something in order to give a good impression, or to promote their point of view. Speakers must therefore use rhetorical devices, such as consensus, corroboration and category entitlements, to make their account appear factual (see Horton-Salway, 2001; Potter, 1996; Wooffitt, 1992, for examples of how speakers build factuality into accounts).

The third part of the model is concerned with accountability. Again, this is regarded as a participant's concern. People treat each other as being accountable for their talk and actions, as having agency and responsibility in this regard (Buttny, 1993; Horton-Salway, 2001). This is a particularly important issue, as it suggests that all accounts and descriptions are rhetorically constructed and can be undermined or challenged by other speakers (e.g. Beattie & Doherty, 1995). As analysts, we can use accountability to make sense of talk and the actions being performed therein (Edwards & Potter, 1992).

Finally, it should be noted that DP is a reflexive perspective. It is a “debate with our own taken-for-granted reading practices” (Potter, 1988: 48) in that it treats all descriptions, categories and evaluations as rhetorical constructions. As a corollary of this, we can take a step further (as done by Ashmore, 1989, and Latour, 1988) and look reflexively at our own constructive practices in writing (Potter, 1996). For instance, one could analyse this thesis as another version of reality and examine how it works to build up credibility and robustness in the arguments. Reflexivity is therefore a way of subjecting our own discourses and texts to the same treatment as we give our data.

The above discussion covers some of the basic assumptions of the DP approach. Readers familiar with different versions of discourse analysis will no doubt notice certain omissions, such as the notions of ‘interpretative repertoires’ (see Edley, 2001; Potter & Wetherell, 1995; Wetherell & Potter, 1992), Foucauldian analyses (e.g. Parker, 1992; Parker & Burman, 1993), and ideological dilemmas (see Billig, Condor, Edwards, Gane, Middleton, & Radley, 1988; Edley, 2001). These do not feature in the thesis’ discussions or analyses and so have been excluded here for reasons of clarity and brevity. However, they may be considered as related – and to some researchers, essential – elements of discursive analyses, and the reader is directed to the above texts for further discussion of these issues.

### **3.2. Eating culture: The context debate**

Now we move on to the debates. The first is that of context and is concerned with how much cultural ‘knowledge’ or contextual information should be included in the analysis. This is a hotly disputed topic and may be regarded as fundamental to the distinction between different kinds of discursive research. I include it here in order to be more explicit about the approach taken in this thesis. This is not to say that I have in any way resolved the issues, nor do I claim to have accurately or completely presented the approaches and arguments taken by other theorists. The following discussion is instead a rather broad gloss on what is a complex and continually changing issue.

First, we can consider what is to be understood by the term context. There are many different uses and understandings of the term (see for example Tracy,

1998), such as what “we need to know about in order to properly understand the event, action or discourse” (van Dijk, 1997:11). However, as Wetherell (2001) has noted, there are problems with such definitions<sup>7</sup>. For instance, those who take a CA approach often focus solely on the talk, and reject any ‘extra-interactional’ issues unless these are oriented to by the speakers themselves (e.g. Beach, 1996; Schegloff, 1987, 1992, 1997, 1999a; Speer, 1999; Wooffitt, 1992). In these instances, context is regarded as something achieved in, and through, the talk.<sup>8</sup>

The opposing stance argues that there are factors that are relevant to the analysis of the interaction, but are not necessarily and explicitly displayed in the talk. These are often referred to as cultural (Abell & Stokoe, 2001) or higher-level (Hutchby, 1996) features, and researchers from this perspective often draw on social theory in their analyses (see the discussion in Billig, 1999a). A key argument here is that in order to gain a complete understanding of interaction, we must “trace through the argumentative threads displayed in participants orientations” (Wetherell, 1998: 404). That is, talk is not just referenced in the here-and-now action of the talk, but in the historical, social, and cultural frameworks within which it is situated (Willig, 1998, 2001).

In this section I will argue for the former (CA based) approach – that context should be treated as something the participants orient to themselves. This is particularly significant for the topic of food and eating, as certain foods are often argued – particularly in sociological work – to have specific cultural meanings or significance. For example, if I talk about not wanting to eat a cream bun, this may invoke particular notions of women and dieting that would not be apparent if I were a man, or if the cream bun were a courgette.<sup>9</sup> This is perhaps a rather crude gloss of the issue, but it makes the point that eating is potentially laden with cultural understandings that either need to be explicitly addressed in the analysis,

---

<sup>7</sup> For example, is the ‘we’ referred to here the participants or the analysts? And what would constitute a proper understanding (and who would be the judge of this)?

<sup>8</sup> I am aware that this captures only one strand of CA theorising on the topic, though it serves here as a way of displaying the more cautious approach taken in the current thesis.

<sup>9</sup> I am indebted to Margaret Wetherell and members of the OU discourse group for their valuable thoughts and discussion on this issue. Many of the statements made later in the chapter with reference to food and ‘extra-interactional’ context stem from a data-session with this group.

or else treated as not relevant for the speakers and analyst. The following sections work through some of the main issues within this debate.

### *3.2.1. What people say*

As a discourse or conversation analyst, it is appropriate to begin analysing what people say, or express non-verbally in interaction. This will often involve an examination of what is *not said* (Billig, 1996), but again this may be observable through what is made relevant in the interaction. For instance, I may have thoughts or ideas about a conversation, but until these are expressed publicly in the talk, they remain an individual concern (and hence, not available to either the other speakers or the analyst). As Hutchby and Wooffitt (1998) have pointed out, we may have intuitions about the relevance of contextual features, but this is inadequate from a CA perspective. By relying on the “private realm of individual awareness, it [intuition] fails to account for the essentially public means by which participants display for one another their orientation to context and their understanding of each other’s actions.” (ibid., p. 146, emphasis in original). In other words, I argue that we should focus analysis on that which is publicly displayed in the interaction.

The focus on what is only *explicitly* expressed has been attacked by those in the counter-position, drawing on Foucauldian arguments (such as Critical Discourse Analysts; see Schegloff, 1997, for a CA defence of this issue). These arguments often emphasise the exertion of power and control through access to, and the use of, particular ways of speaking (such as medical talk, or therapy talk). Such power need not be explicit to be effective, it is argued, and there may be higher-order constraints on the interaction that are not produced in the talk (e.g. Laclau & Mouffe, 1987). We may also require particular cultural knowledge in order to understand the implications of an interaction. Abell and Stokoe (2001), for example, use an analysis of Princess Diana’s 1995 Panorama interview to argue (amongst other things) that we need an understanding and awareness of the British royal family to adequately understand the implications of Diana’s responses. By not taking these contextual and cultural factors into account, it is argued, the analyst is at risk from being morally and ethically unsound.



My concern with the latter argument is that we may impose particular issues onto the data that did not arise when the interaction took place. This would privilege our own accounts over those of our participants, and would certainly be inconsistent with the CA-based perspective taken in this thesis. More importantly, we must be aware that any description of context is just one way of presenting the interaction (Schegloff, 1987; Wooffitt, 1992). If I talk about power in the analysis, for instance, I am simultaneously constructing the talk within this framework. Yet how should I distinguish between *my* version of what 'power' entails, and that of the participants? This is, I admit, a cautious or sceptical position to take, though undoubtedly a particular CA-based perspective. It is perhaps due to the predominance of more culturally- and power-based perspectives within food and eating research (see chapters one and two) that I feel an alternative approach is both necessary and theoretically appropriate.

We can also think about macro concerns in another way. As Hutchby (1996) has argued, power (as a 'higher-level' feature) can be seen at the detailed, micro level of interaction. It is not necessarily an external force on speakers' utterances, but is something *produced* within the "oriented-to features of talk" (1996: 482). This dissolves, to some extent, the division between macro and micro levels of context (see also Speer, 1999) and allows us to deal with such issues without looking beyond the interaction. It also supports the argument taken in this thesis, that context is something constructed within the talk (see the earlier discussion on context-shaping; also Beach, 1996; Schegloff, 1997; Wooffitt, 1992).

CA's exclusive focus on the micro-details of interaction has been criticised for trying to set a 'gold standard' of analysis (Wetherell, 1998) and for treating the data as if it were the 'real' reality (Billig, 1999a). Setting a gold standard suggests that CA demands that all claims be empirically grounded in the data. That is, we cannot bring anything to the analysis unless it is 'found' in the data. The problem here, Wetherell (1998) argues, is that this is too restrictive a notion of context, ignoring both historical and cultural factors. The analysts themselves select the extract of conversation for analysis, and this also limits the context to that particular moment of the interaction. From this argument it becomes clear that our understandings of context are themselves indexical and situated. Alluded to

here are historical or cultural issues that exist at some (perhaps ideological) level beyond the talk. My concern with this is that it unnecessarily sets up a dichotomy between the conversation and the wider social context (see also Schegloff, 1992) as if the interaction existed in a vacuum.<sup>10</sup> This is not to suggest that other social issues do not exist, but that these cannot unproblematically be separated as if on a higher level.<sup>11</sup>

The second criticism is that CA approaches tend to treat data as if it were the source of the 'truth' about the interaction (Billig, 1999a, b). This is something that has been similarly argued with respect to the use of audio-tapes and transcripts (Ashmore, Macmillan, & Brown, in press; Ashmore & Reed, 2000). In many respects, the claim is that CA takes a realist stance toward the data – treating the interaction as if it had its own internally grounded reality (Billig, 1999a).<sup>12</sup> CA has its own analytical terms, such as 'adjacency pairs' and 'preference structures', that are used to interpret and make sense of (or construct) participants talk. Again, this argument could equally be applied to other DA research as well as more traditional methods.

In response to the above criticism, I argue that using the data alone (whether tape, transcript, or written text) to ground analytical claims is important to allow for some common ground on which researchers can stand. That is, other readers should be able to see the same materials in order to confirm or disagree with the analysis (Potter, 1996; Silverman, 2001). As Antaki (1994) notes, this may be frustrating for some researchers, but the concern here is to avoid the reliance on ungrounded theory. We need to be able to distinguish between rigorous research and individual speculation, and CA is *one way* in which this can be achieved. I may argue, for example, that from my experience an extract highlights the ironic or comic nature of particular eating habits. Without some form of 'evidence' of

---

<sup>10</sup> Ironically, this has also been said about CA research.

<sup>11</sup> There are links here to the debate around embodiment and the physical or bodily features as being at a 'base' level that is fundamentally separate from discourse.

<sup>12</sup> Realism is the belief that a single reality exists independently of our representations or constructions of it. Relativism is the opposing stance, and is the belief that there are no grounds for a reality independent of the individual. See also section 3.4.

my experience, however, you have little choice but to take my word on trust (or refuse to do so). The problem, then, is not to treat the data as 'real', but to regard it as a base from which *all* readers of the analysis can judge the claims being made.

### *3.2.2. What people eat*

The same kinds of arguments about talk apply to the food that we eat in interaction. Food and drink is available as a conversational resource even though it may not be explicitly discussed. However, its status should not be taken for granted. I argue that what the food is like, how it is eaten, how much is left, and so on, should not be treated as social concerns unless they are oriented to publicly in the interaction. I may wonder if I should take the last piece of cheesecake, but this 'thought' is not relevant to the interaction until it enters the public domain by an expression of some kind. Even if this is non-verbal, its orientation to it (or not) will be analysable in the subsequent actions of the other speakers (Heritage, 1984a).

A further concern with the imposing of 'issues' onto the food is that this may perpetuate the notion that certain foods have particular cultural meanings that are invoked at an interactional level. By saying this I am not denying that foods are associated with particular understandings – as discussed in the sociological review in chapter 2 – but cautioning against the notion that these understandings are always relevant to speakers. For instance, if I choose vegetables over meat dishes, does this necessarily indicate a vegetarian diet or a concern about weight control? The point here is that socio-cultural 'meanings' do not directly map onto the foods we eat. To impose such issues onto specific interaction is not only to assume that the speakers have the same concerns as the analyst, but also to perpetuate the notion that food is always laden with symbolic (and potentially problematic) meanings.

Some final thoughts on the context issue: Edwards (1994, 1997) points out that both CA and DP are emic enterprises (see also Heritage, 1995). That is, they try to explicate everyday practices from the perspective of the participants, rather than the analyst (the latter being an etic practice; see Pike, 1954, cited in Edwards,

1997). The key phrase here is 'explicate'. As discourse analysts, we are not trying to *explain* practices, in the sense of providing a causal model or account, such as why people say particular things or eat certain foods. Rather, the aim is to show in more detail how these practices are carried out and to increase our understanding of them. Cultural knowledge, then, is not something that we need to bring to the data to make sense of practices, but it is something we *can* use to see how participants make sense of the interaction themselves. Thus, 'context' is not something added to the analysis, but arises as, when, and how, it becomes relevant for the speakers.

### **3.3. Naming names: the left-hand margin debate**

In the second debate I raise the issue of how we label participants. This occurs primarily in our transcripts, with the use of letters (A, B), roles (therapist, teacher), or names (Mr Brown, Kate). We also use labels when we refer to participants as 'speakers', 'participants', 'members', and so on.<sup>13</sup> This is important because such terms are often used implicitly or explicitly in the data analysis. Watson (1997), for instance, argues that we are pre-disposed to reading off a speaker's identity before we read the transcript because culturally we read from left to right. This is a way of categorising our participants implicitly through the use of different labels in our transcripts. As with the context debate, this concern has been raised primarily with CA research (see Billig, 1999a; Silverman, 1998).

Ivan Leudar and Charles Antaki (1996, 1997) have highlighted the lack of acknowledgement or research on this issue, which they refer to as 'participant status'. Drawing on Levinson's (1988) reworking of Goffman's concept of footing, they argue that participant identities are dialogical in nature and that there are many different identities associated with 'speaker'. For example, is the speaker voicing their own words or someone else's? Who are they speaking *as* (a mother, wife, or therapist?) and who are they speaking *to* (a researcher, friend, or woman?). This interdependence between the researcher and participant continually shifts within the interaction. The upshot of this is that the dialogical

---

<sup>13</sup> The second use is not taken up here for reasons of space, and I concede that I alternate between the terms 'participant' and 'speaker' throughout the thesis with no justification for their use. I have no explanation for this, save that at times one term feels more appropriate than the other.

nature of participant status should be taken into consideration in the analysis. As Leudar and Antaki note, “the force or meaning of what someone says is at least partly dependent on the temporary role he or she is adopting in saying it” (1996: 25). With this in mind, whatever labels we use on our transcripts can only ever be crude distinctions for the benefit of the reader. They fix a particular identity that may only have been constructed or invoked at one moment in the interaction.

This issue links directly to the previous debate on context, as it concerns our analysis of the data and the potential for imposing categories onto the talk. For instance, issues of power may be thought to arise in a section of talk from a medical encounter. By labelling the participants, ‘doctor’ and ‘patient’ rather than ‘Ann’ and ‘John’, we may be inclined to attribute greater power to the doctor because of the associations with this role as a health professional. As Billig (1999a) notes, first names may suggest informality and an equal status between participants. Therefore the labels we use also add to the contextual features that are part of the analysis.

Let us look at an example of this issue in more detail. What I am concerned with here is how participant labels might have implications for the analysis of food evaluations. Using an example from the mealtime data corpus, we can compare two different kinds of labels: first names (as used in the thesis) and family roles (for example, mother). This is also a way of justifying my use of particular labels throughout the thesis and identifying potential issues that remain unresolved. The example below is taken from the family F corpus, and raises some particular issues concerning family roles and gender relations.<sup>14</sup> Consider the extract with first names only:

---

<sup>14</sup> I am grateful here to Clare MacMartin, Nikki Parker, and Jonathan Potter for their thoughts and comments on this extract, particularly in relation to the use of participant labels.

EXTRACT 3.1: SKW/F1b-M1 (414-437)

1. Liz: is: that o↑kay
2. (2.0)
3. Liz: (gr:ea[sy)
4. Brian: [the tea?
5. Liz: °mm°
6. (0.6)
7. Brian: °↓fine >thank you<°
8. Liz: and did you like those tri:angular ↓things
9. Brian: [°(no:)°
10. Martin: [((heavy breathing out))
11. Helen: I:: [lo:-
12. Brian: [but ↑I didn't think it was right to com↓plain
13. (0.6)
14. Martin: >I thought they were al↑right<
15. Liz: ↑I thought they were alright (0.4) could- (0.2)
16. well: I mean if ↑you don't like them that's
17. [°okay°
18. Helen: [anyway you shouldn't [complai:n when the:: uhm:
19. Debbie: [>°(I will)°<
20. (0.6)
21. Helen: thingy's on
22. Liz: why?
23. (0.6)
24. Helen: recorder's on

Some preliminary analytical thoughts can be noted here (see sections 6.3.1 and 6.3.3 for fuller discussions of this extract). First, there are issues around who prepared the meal and therefore who is accountable for the food. We learn earlier in the conversation that Liz is the food provider, and that the 'triangular things' – samosas – were bought rather than home made. However, we can get some sense about who is responsible for the food from the questions and responses in the extract. For instance, on line 8, Liz asks the others whether they liked the 'triangular things'. Asking this displays a concern with the response; that Liz cares whether or not the food is enjoyed, and thus indicates the possibility that this is a new or unusual food for the family.

There are also indications about what is appropriate behaviour, such as making a complaint about the food (lines 12 and 18). Note that it is Brian and Helen who raise these concerns, and that the other speakers orient to these turns in different ways. With Brian's 'but I didn't think it was right to complain' (line 12), both Martin and Liz indirectly challenge this as being an unusual or individual claim. Helen's turn (line 18), however, is challenged more directly by Liz (line 22). So there are some asymmetrical features within this extract, and we may want to go further to unravel the kind of business that is going on here. However, using first names as participant labels allows us to start from a more equal or informal basis before we examine potential power differentials.

Now consider the same extract with family roles in place of the participant names. To avoid confusion I have termed the older daughter (Debbie), 'Daughter A', and the younger (Helen), 'Daughter B'.

#### EXTRACT 3.2: SKW/F1b-M1 (414-437)

1. Mother: is: that o↑kay
2. (2.0)
3. Mother: (gr:ea[sy])
4. Father: [the tea?
5. Mother: °mm°
6. (0.6)
7. Father: °↓fine >thank you<°
8. Mother: and did you like those tri:angular ↓things
9. Father: [°(no:)]°
10. Son: [((heavy breathing out))]
11. DaughterB: I:: [lo:-
12. Father: [but ↑I didn't think it was right to com↓plain
13. (0.6)
14. Son: >I thought they were al↑right<
15. Mother: ↑I thought they were alright (0.4) could- (0.2)
16. well: I mean if ↑you don't like them that's
17. [°okay°
18. DaughterB: [anyway you shouldn't [complai:n when the:: uhm:
19. DaughterA: [>°(I will)°<
20. (0.6)

21. DaughterB: thingy's on
22. Mother: why?
23. (0.6)
24. DaughterB: recorder's on

One initial point to note about the use of these terms is that I have used the more formal versions of 'Mother' and 'Father' rather than, for instance, 'Mum' and 'Dad'. This in itself may set up particular category assumptions, such as that more traditional or strict family relations are in place. What I will focus on here, however, is how the role labels themselves might alter our interpretation of the interaction. For instance, the label 'mother' may imply that this person has a particular duty to provide a suitable meal for the family. It may also highlight – more than first names would – gender roles and associations with food provision (see for example Charles & Kerr, 1988). So we may be inclined to see the 'mother' as fulfilling her role as a food provider, ensuring that the food was suitable and enjoyed by the other members.

We may also regard the father and siblings in a similar manner. For example, is the father, in line 12, demonstrating to the children the kind of behaviour that is appropriate for a family meal? If so, how are we to understand the son's response to this (line 14)? We also see one of the daughters expressing a concern over what should not be said in front of the tape-recorder (lines 18 and 24). These kinds of activities are not necessarily associated with family roles, but using labels in this way suggests that this is how we should understand and interpret them.

The point being made here is that using family roles as participant labels may lead us to interpret the data purely in terms of family relations and responsibilities. It also locks us into a particular view of the family as a hierarchical and gendered structure. While this may be the case on occasion, I argue that we should not assume this structure is oriented to at each and every moment of interaction. Using first name terms may initially erase power differentials, but we can then see how these are constructed and managed in the talk. This is not to dismiss such issues (see also the context debate) but to begin with as few a priori assumptions as possible.



As a final point on this issue, we may also want to consider how the participants themselves refer to each other. This is rarely done directly, and Antaki (1994) notes that the use of names often signals conversational accountability. On those few occasions when names are used, they are a mixture of first names, nicknames, and family roles. So Brian may at times be called 'Brian' (by Liz) and 'Dad' (by Helen, for example). The children are most often called by their first names, though the use of 'daughter' has been noted when talking to another person. For example, Brian may say to Liz, 'can you tell your daughter...' as a way of managing responsibility for instructing the children. Hence, there are no uniform terms of address. This signals a problem with using *any* participant labels and we must be aware of this when analysing the data. The discussion here will hopefully go some way to keeping this awareness alive, and to justify the use of first name terms throughout the thesis.

#### **3.4. Eating on an empty stomach: The embodiment debate**

The third debate is concerned with embodiment, and the issues this raises with the realist and relativist positions of social constructionist (SC) theory. While there are no simple definitions of these positions (see for example, Potter, 1998), I offer here a particular take on the issues that will serve as a base for the following discussion. This is not an attempt to oversimplify or gloss the range of theoretical positions available (see Parker, 1998), but to provide a means by which this debate can be regarded in relation to food and eating research.

Realism, then, can be broadly defined as the belief that a reality exists independently of our representations or constructions of it (Edwards, 1997; Wetherell & Still, 1996). That is, that we can be sure there *is* a reality (ontology) but we cannot be sure whether we can know it or not (epistemology). On the other hand, relativism may be defined as the belief that there is no basis on which we can say there is an independent reality, and argues that such claims to

reality are always relative to the speaker (Gergen, 1999, 2001).<sup>15</sup> Both of these positions, however, may be sceptical of existing forms of knowledge and each seeks to question the basis on which we 'know' about psychological realities.

There are fierce debates around this issue and how it may itself be constructed (see for example, Edley, 2000; Gergen, 2001; Parker, 1992, 1998), not least because of the research implications. A particularly clear attack from the realist camp is that relativism neglects embodiment, materiality, and power in favour of a preoccupation with discourse and language (Cromby & Nightingale, 1999; Parker, 1999). That is, issues such as power inequalities are reduced to the level of discourse and are minimalised as a result. Realists argue that this is not only a theoretically misaligned position to take, it is also immoral in that it ignores the constraints of embodied practices (Burr, 1998; Butt, 1999). In other words, those in subversive or marginal positions in society are not there because of social constructionism but as a result of actual material and/or political forces.

As with the debates on context and participant labels, theories of embodiment are also bound up with political and social concerns (e.g. Foster, 1998; Gergen, 1998; Willig, 1999). Inequalities can occur around embodiment, such as the dominance of particular forms, styles, and abilities of bodies over others. In terms of eating research, an example may be the marginalisation of fat or overweight bodies, as these do not conform to the concept of a 'thin ideal'. The issue of embodiment is therefore not just an abstract theoretical musing; it involves the practical implications of how bodies and embodiment may supersede the level of talk (e.g. Gill, 1995). To deny the inclusion of embodiment and materiality, then, is to deny the constraints of the physical conditions within which discourse is embedded (Willig, 1999).

The relativist position has fought back with vigour. In a seminal paper on the issue, Edwards, Ashmore and Potter (1995) provide a critique of what have been

---

<sup>15</sup> Another way of distinguishing between these two points is to refer to one as 'ontological constructionism' (realism) and 'epistemic constructionism' (relativism; Edwards, 1997). These categories have some slight differences, and I shall remain with the terms realism/relativism to keep matters as simple as possible. See also Edley (2001) for some disagreement and further discussion on this issue.

referred to as 'bottom line' arguments. First, there is the furniture argument. This is often demonstrated by the realist thumping the table with their fist and proclaiming, 'tell me that's socially constructed'. This is the physical reality that *cannot* be denied. The second bottom line argument is known as the death argument, using references such as the atrocities of the holocaust, and victims of war. This is the reality that *should not* be denied for moral and ethical reasons.

In this thesis I adopt a relativist position, taking the view that fundamental 'truths' such as embodiment, materiality, and power cannot be easily separated off from discourse and constructionist practices. As Potter has argued, this is 'an anti-foundationalist position on knowledge. At its simplest, this means that there is no touchstone, bedrock, or set of logical principles which provides an unproblematic arbiter of knowledge claims' (1997: 55). However, without this bedrock, it may be hard to judge the 'accuracy' of our accounts (Nightingale & Cromby, 1999). How are we to know that our analysis is more 'right' or 'just' than anyone else's (Miller, 2000)? The point here is that there is no such thing as being accurate in the abstract. Our analyses can always be disputed or contested, and it is through such theoretical disagreements that research develops. This is not an attack on brute empiricism, but rather a call to avoid privileging some versions (or aspects) of reality over others.

This lack of foundation in reality may be the cause of some uncertainty. In particular, the confusion in many SC texts lies with the tension between wanting to make claims about the nature of the world, but not implying that we can have objective knowledge of this world (see Parker, 1996, 1999). This is both a moral and a theoretical tension. For example, Nightingale and Cromby argue that they 'reserve the right to question the ontological status of *chosen* aspects of our world in the future' (1999: 3, emphasis added) but do not indicate the basis on which these choices are made. This leads me to question that if we have no way of (objectively) 'knowing' the world, then how can we make the claim that it exists as such? There appears to be the notion that there is something 'out there', beyond discourse (Hepburn, 2000a), that we can use to gauge the accuracy of our claims about the world. There are also some problems with privileging certain

undefined aspects of the world, and then not specifying the criteria by which these are to be defined.

Many of these concerns with the realism/relativism debate, from which the embodiment argument emerges, lie with the definitions of social constructionism. For example, by talking about SC we bring it into (ontological) existence – as if this was something we could tie down with definitions and boundaries (Potter, 1998). Similarly, notions of the extra-discursive are no longer such, as soon as they are talked about or analysed. The ‘truth’ is not out there – it is within the world of discourse. To be concerned with whether realism or relativism is more true or real than the other is thus to take a realist position. Relativism does not make such ontological claims, being not concerned with what SC is, but with how it is used. Hence, arguments about what ‘their’ SC constitutes (Cromby & Nightingale, 1999: 3) merely work to negotiate boundaries of what is, after all, an abstract construction.

Like the context and participant label debates, the debate around embodiment is also driven by political values. For example, Gill (1995) argues that relativist forms of discourse analysis may create tensions for those concerned with politically motivated feminist approaches. If we have no way of deciding whose truth is more just than others, then how are we to take a stance on moral or ethical issues (see also Davies, 1998, Miller, 2000)? This is something that has been the turning point for many would-be relativists. The fear is that with no critical edge, researchers would lose a collective base from which to take action (Burr, 1998; Willig, 1998). In particular, it is the apparent lack of *agency* in relativist accounts of interaction that is regarded as most problematic by realist researchers (e.g. Burr, 1999; Butt, 1999; Parker, 1999; though see Hepburn, 2000b).

Political tensions, however, need not be so straightforward. Willig (1998), for example, notes that realist arguments can be equally paralysing in terms of social and political action, if one is committed to particular goals and values. From a relativist perspective, Potter (1997, 1998) argues more strongly that there is no direct link between epistemology and politics. Rather, realism is worked up to be a more politically motivated position, often misinterpreting relativism and playing

on moral causes in the process (Potter, Edwards, & Ashmore, 1999). Any approach that claims to have access to the 'truth' is trying to depoliticise that which is fundamentally political (Miller, 2000).

The bodily processes, practices, and entities that form part of social life are inevitably bound up with these arguments on political action and social constructionism. 'Real' effects are thought to take effect on such non-discursive objects as the body (Danziger, 1997), and it is at this apparent base level that power and politics are played out. The debate about embodiment is thus largely concerned with theoretical disputes over what should, and does, exist in the world. It is also concerned with how we know about bodies, and to what (political) use this knowledge is put. Also, how do we 'know' in interaction, when we are members (rather than analysts) ourselves? These kinds of issues are thus not simply theoretical debates, but are managed by people in everyday accounts, justifications, and descriptions of actions.

The position taken in this thesis is that embodied practices cannot be easily or unproblematically separated from discourse. This is not to deny experiences or physical sensations, but to avoid treating these as if they had a more basic or distinct existence from other things in the world (Stainton Rogers & Stainton Rogers, 1997). More importantly, I am concerned with how embodiment is managed in interaction; how is it worked up, defended, and bound up with activities in talk? This is very much a practical concern with the issue, rather than seeing it as something to be resolved in the abstract. I will return to this topic in chapter 8, which features the analysis of something that is often regarded as an individual and physical sensation: pleasure.

### **3.5. All talk, and nothing to eat? The application issue.**

The final debate draws together the themes raised in the earlier discussions of the chapter. It is concerned with whether the 'knowledge' presented in this thesis is of practical value or may be applicable in other settings. Like the other debates, there is some dispute over what is meant by applied or applicable research, and this will also be considered as a fundamental issue. So, while I shall remain

focussed on the research presented here on food and eating, the discussion will also be relevant to other discursive studies.

First, let us consider the notion of application. In traditional psychology, there is a certain 'ideology of application' (Potter, 1982:23). This suggests that knowledge flows along a continuum from pure to applied research, with the latter being the product of science. Within this ideology knowledge is unidirectional, being implemented in and adjusted for particular applied contexts. The problem with this model is that it assumes that the results or outcome are the product of a particular theoretical finding (Potter, 1982). It also assumes that 'pure' knowledge is readily applied in other fields (Howitt, 1991; Mulkay, 1979). The interchange between academia and social policy, for example, is not easily measured or demonstrated.

A more appropriate term or ideology might be that knowledge or research is *potentially* applicable (Helmreich, 1975) or useable (Murphy, 1996), although we would still require some criteria by which to judge research that fits this category (Potter, 1982). We also need to take into account the way in which practitioners implement knowledge and how this feeds back into research. Application may be more of a multidirectional or circular process between theory and practice than a continuum from one to the other (Auburn, Lea, & Drake, 1999). As practices change, different needs and contexts drive academic research. Practice, too, will be grounded in previous practice and the experiences of individual practitioners (Potter, 1982).

Before continuing, we need to be aware of a further corollary of this issue of application. Both of the 'models' above assume that there is some distinction between pure and applied, or between (academic) research and (real-world) practice. This leads us into the same muddy waters as the distinction between the discursive and the extra-discursive. By claiming that what we as researchers are doing is fundamentally different to real-world practice, we are at risk from privileging our own accounts as being more truthful or knowledgeable than others (Potter, 1982; Willig, 1999). This ties in with the issue of power and politics

discussed earlier. Treating research as 'pure' suggests that it is more abstract or less situated than something that is applied.

A more appropriate way of thinking about this issue might then be to regard both academic ('pure') and non-academic ('applied') fields as constructing different realities. It is not that one provides knowledge and the other puts it into practice. Rather, we can think of them as different contexts in which situated knowledge is constructed and negotiated for particular purposes. This does not mean that research can no longer be applied in practice, but that we can contribute a different means of construction. Discursive research is particularly suited to this alternative notion of application, since it uses data taken directly from instances in interaction. What is being studied are extracts of talk, rather than statistical representations or configurations of social life.

Carla Willig's (1999) edited book *Applied Discourse Analysis* provides some useful discussion on this issue. She argues that there are three main ways in which discursive research can address social practice (see box 3.1). Each of these offers a means by which action can be taken on a local or global level, although again it more often suggests the *potential* for such application. The chapters within this edited collection offer examples of research and ways in which they may be used in practice. However, implicit throughout the book is a distinction between theory (academic research) and practice (the 'real' world). It is as if what 'we' do, in talking and writing (theory), is fundamentally different to what others do in non-academic (applied) spheres. If, however, we concede that 'all knowledge-talk has an action orientation' (ibid. p.8), then the division between theoretical and applied talk becomes blurred.

So far, then, it appears that the application of research findings is at best a set of guidelines for policy makers and practitioners. This entails providing a different kind of 'knowledge' to that produced in discursive papers – i.e. it must be general and broad ranging. Given that most discourse analysis is concerned with examining specific instances of situated talk, this is quite a big leap to take. It is, however, one way in which researchers can potentially contribute to the understanding of daily practices.

### **Box 3.1. Potential uses of discursive research**

Discursive analyses (DA) can address social practice in one of three ways:

1. *As social critique* – DA can be a means of examining the taken-for-granted practices in society. In doing so, it can expose those discourses that legitimate and help perpetuate unequal power relations or maintain the status quo. However, merely exposing such discourses doesn't necessarily help to change social practices.
2. *As empowerment* – DA can also provide counter-discourses to challenge dominant ideologies. Empowerment may be found at an individual or group level, by providing people with new ways of positioning themselves within society. Such action is thus more suited to grass-roots level implementation, and may therefore be harder to enforce.
3. *As a guide to reform* – DA can recommend action at a higher level toward more positive change. For example, research could offer guidelines for policy makers or training programmes. This would require co-operation from these bodies, but offers more long-term opportunities for change.

Taken from Willig (1999)

#### **3.5.1. Eating your words (again)**

Let me end with a brief discussion about application and the topic of food and eating. This is something that will be taken up again in chapter 9, where I will summarise the analysis and make suggestions about how the findings may be used in other settings. Here, I shall consider how and why this topic might be applied. Eating is typically regarded as an altogether practical activity. Talking about and around eating may seem irrelevant to the traditional medical models that focus on biological requirements of nutrients, carbohydrates, and so on. More importantly, it is the act of eating – or not eating – that is regarded as the potential cause of problems. For example, weight control, eating 'disorders', food allergies, and food poisoning cannot simply be discussed away. Can *talking* in a different way prevent someone from becoming anorexic?

The questions posed above work with a common-sense notion of eating based on causes and the distinction between talk and actions. That is, they assume that there are reasons why people eat, and that these are separate from discourse. If, however, we look at eating in context and in interaction, then we can see a rather



different picture. Eating with others is a very social occasion, and is managed by norms and localised practices (Lupton, 1996). Sociological research (see chapter 2) has shown that what we eat, and how we eat it, is partly a consequence of the cultural and societal groups in which we live (Beardsworth & Keil, 1997; Douglas, 1972). At a more detailed level, there are issues of politeness and familiarity. If one is offered some cake as a guest at a friend's house, is it easier to refuse than when the host is one's mother? The actions here are not just the taking and eating of the food, but the ways in which the food is presented, offered and received.

My argument here is that eating cannot be separated from discourse and interaction. Talking food is bound up with the ways we eat, and with our common-sense notions of eating practices. So to look at discursive practices at mealtimes is to see how these notions are put together and used in practice. It also encourages us to move away from the traditional concept of causes. The majority of experimental studies seek reasons or explanations for why events occur, in the hope that future events or behaviours can be predicted. While this may be an interesting endeavour, it assumes that there *are* reasons why we eat. By contrast, I argue that we need to be wary of such assumptions and instead look at how these concepts are worked up and attended to in talk.

### **Chapter summary**

This chapter has introduced the basic assumptions and concerns of discursive psychological research, and raised key debates in this area. In doing so, I hope to have provided some justification for the research presented in the thesis. The analysis will add further to these debates, and conclusions will be discussed in the final chapter. For now, it should be apparent that discursive research is a thoroughly empirical and pragmatic approach to interaction. This is not just about talk, it is about the social practices that people use to construct their everyday realities. As researchers, we also construct realities, and this thesis is an example of this. In the next chapter I outline the processes involved in conducting the research, and explore further my own role in the construction of the family mealtimes.

## Making a meal of it:

### Data, methods, and the cooking process

“I still think that one of the pleasantest of all emotions is to know that I, I with my brain and my hands, have nourished my beloved few, that I have concocted a stew or a story, a rarity or a plain dish, to sustain them truly against the hungers of the world.”

M. F. K. Fisher, *The Gastronomical Me*, (1989:18)

This chapter is concerned with the methods and practicalities of the thesis. Following on from the theoretical discussions in chapter 3, I consider the implications and assumptions behind the methods used. This is not a straightforward process, as each stage of the research is constructive of the final product. The main ‘findings’ or results of the thesis are to a large extent produced by the methodological practices used. My aim here is therefore to be, to some extent, epistemologically reflexive (see Willig, 2001: 10). The metaphor of the cookery book will be used here more explicitly to achieve this, as I compare the research process with the making of a meal. Thus the chapter is designed to be a stimulant rather than a sedative.<sup>1</sup>

In conducting the research on family mealtimes, it should be noted that I am assuming there is such a thing as a mealtime, and that this can be encapsulated in a single, observable, and recordable event. Alas – and as is well known to the food provider in mundane, routine detail – it is not as simple as that. Meals must be planned, purchased, prepared, and presented as a meal. Their boundaries extend beyond the presence of the diners and the food, to the social and cultural histories of eating practices (e.g. Visser, 1986, 1993). This chapter will therefore help to make visible the constructive process of the making of a meal (see also Charles &

---

<sup>1</sup> I say this because method chapters and texts often have a tendency to be rather dry and dull. This is not a fault of the authors, but due to the nature of the material. Talking about methods is not half as much fun as actually using them. Similarly, discussions on reflexivity often result in the researcher being talked into a state of inactivity; if you argue that everything is a construction – including this thesis – it is often hard to justify doing anything at all (see for example, discussions in Latour, 1988).

Kerr, 1988; DeVault, 1991), through comparisons with the making of the thesis. From the selecting of the ingredients (the participants), through the cooking process (the analysis), to the serving and presentation (the thesis), the meal as such is constructed. Each stage of the research embodies theoretical and practical assumptions, in much the same way as meal preparation demands thought and consideration of practical constraints. The rest of the chapter will discuss these issues as follows:

- a) **Preparation: Collecting & selecting the ingredients.**<sup>2</sup> The data collection stage is necessarily a selective process, and here I outline the theoretical and practical steps through which this was achieved. This section is primarily descriptive of procedures, and discussions on the theoretical implications will be taken up later in the chapter. Details on the transcription of the family meals and additional group data are also provided. As researcher – and in some cases, participant – I discuss the potential problems and issues that arise as a result of this inclusion in the data set. Finally, ethical issues are considered as a central part of the data collection process.
  
- b) **Cooking: Analysing and constructing the family meals.** In this section I outline the processes involved in coding and analysing the material, using a discursive psychological approach. This mirrors the process of preparing and cooking the food for the meal, as both a skill and a constructive event.<sup>3</sup> I also address the way in which families orient to the tape-recorder and the requirements of the research/er, and how the meal as event is partly constructed through this orientation. Moreover, the notion of a ‘proper family’ is raised as a consequence of orienting to what constitutes a ‘proper meal’, and this will be discussed with reference to sociological research on food and families.

---

<sup>2</sup> The term ‘ingredients’ is used here to refer to the data for the research, as comparable to food ingredients used in cooking. Later chapters (5 to 8) will refer to ingredients as the content, or sections, of the chapter. This is used both to aid clarity, and to maintain the cookery book theme.

<sup>3</sup> This echoes an argument put forward by Willig (2001), in which she describes research methods as being like an adventure, rather than simply following a recipe. The latter metaphor is often synonymous with earlier methods textbooks (see footnote 1) and suggests a more prescriptive style of research. Anyone who has dabbled in either research or cooking will appreciate that both are indeed, and should be, exciting adventures into the unpredictable.

c) **Serving: Presenting the meal and the thesis.** The concluding section focuses on how the orientation to the meal as a defined event is also constructed through the presentation of the thesis as ‘research on mealtime conversations’. What, in essence, makes these conversations particular to mealtimes and what are the implications of this for research methods? The presentation of the data and analysis in the form of interrelated chapters adds to the sense of the thesis as being a multi-layered meal. Each chapter is an intermediate course, and it is only through seeing these in relation to the whole that the entity *becomes* a meal, and becomes a thesis.

**Box 4.1. Why study mealtime conversation?**

As discussed in the introduction, my interest in this area is concerned with how food, weight, and body image have become an important aspect of people’s daily lives. This can be seen in the media, and heard in the ways people talk about themselves and others (for example, being slim or vegetarian), their hobbies (going to the gym), current ‘projects’ (getting fit before they hit 30) and concerns (how much weight they’ve gained) during everyday conversation. I was eager to find some way of capturing these conversations in a concrete and ethical way, and without raising these topics directly through a research agenda (Potter, 1997). Recording mealtimes was one way in which this could be achieved. Families were used for practical reasons, although their internal structure and management in interaction is interesting in its own right. As Visser (1993) has noted, mealtimes are usually occasions with limited physical activity, and so they enable recordings to be made easily and regularly, without the need for the researcher to be present.

## **4.1. Preparation: Collecting and selecting the ingredients**

### **4.1.1. Finding the families**

The data collection started with the search for participants in either families or non-family adult groups. I primarily used personal contacts to locate and recruit participants between the ages of 16 to 25 who shared meals as part of a household routine. Finding suitable participants proved to be more difficult than anticipated.<sup>4</sup> Groups of young working people and students were approached, but mealtimes for these groups tended to be more sporadic, with independent lifestyles resulting in separate mealtimes. For the purposes of the research, the group needed to eat together on a regular basis in order to become acclimatised to the recording equipment, but also to indicate that mealtimes were a usual and familiar occurrence. It was on the basis of this pilot work that I then sought families with younger children, and at least one child of less than 15 years. Although not always the case,<sup>5</sup> such groups were more likely to eat together on a regular basis.

Approximately 15 families were approached overall, either by myself or through a contact person (someone who knew me, and who knew the family). Usually this involved a telephone call or face-to-face conversation, at which point the research was outlined to one of the family members to elicit their potential involvement in the study. From these initial contacts, 10 families agreed to take part in the research. The research was described to the family as a ‘study of everyday conversation between family members’. As such, the families were not required to alter their daily activities and the research was noted as having a broad range of theoretical interests in family interaction. The use of mealtimes was noted as being practically the most appropriate location to record family talk, and thus was conveyed to the participants. An information sheet was provided to support the

---

<sup>4</sup> This difficulty, of course, is relative, and due mainly to the concern with time constraints and the possibility of not being able to collect enough data. Recent debates on the *Languse* email discussion list have raised the notion that dinner talk is ‘much easier to get than other stuff’ and that there is too much of this kind of data (Gene Lerner, 23/7/01, 09:08). It depends, of course, on what you are looking for. Despite this apparent wealth of data from mealtimes, very little research has been carried out on talk about food or eating within these settings.

<sup>5</sup> Recent sociological work on food and families notes that post-modern lifestyles have resulted in divergent eating schedules of family members (e.g. Valentine, 1999; see also section 2.2.2 in chapter 2). The point here, however, is that nuclear families were found to be more suited to the practical requirements of the current research.

initial verbal contact, containing the researcher's contact details and a consent form (see appendix). Families were provided with a small tape-recorder, microphone, and two D90 audiocassettes. More tapes were provided later, once the families felt more comfortable with recording and had filled the original blank tapes. The total data corpus consists of 86 mealtimes and over 40 hours of recorded conversation. Table 4.1 provides brief details of the family members, and dates during which recordings took place.

The families were left to self-record their mealtimes with little or no contact from the researcher within the first few weeks. It was important to the nature of the research to allow some degree of freedom to the participants. This was done both for ethical reasons to avoid intrusion into the family life, and for methodological reasons to allow for more naturalistic data.<sup>6</sup> As a family activity, it became something that family members carried out together as a group, without any assistance from the researcher. In some cases, one of the children undertook responsibility for taping the meals (such as Beth in family G). In this respect, it became their family routine and a collective activity for a short period of time.

It is important to note here that I am not seeking naturalistic data as a more 'pure' or natural form of data. Nor do I reduce my level of intrusion in order to try and eliminate my presence from the research setting (as is argued by Stubbs, 1983). In some cases it is quite the reverse; see section 4.1.5. The use of a tape-recorder is itself a key feature in the family interactions and at times opens up issues of accountability and the justification of eating practices. Having minimal contact with the families is rather an attempt to manage the dilemma between requiring consent and wishing to study the families carrying out their daily routine (see Speer & Hutchby, in press; also section 4.2.2).

---

<sup>6</sup> By 'naturalistic', I refer to the nature of the talk as being closer to the daily routines of the participants (more 'naturally occurring', Silverman, 2001: 159) than, say, an interview or focus group. However I do not see the process of taping mealtimes as being particularly 'natural' (cf. Ashmore & Reed, 2000); rather, I regard it as bound up with the activities of 'doing a meal' and 'doing family' (see DeVault, 1991).

Table 4.1: Guide to family members

Family Code	Names & relation	Age at recording	Recording period
D	Anna (Mother) Simon (Father) Peter (Son) Jenny (Daughter) Mike (Jenny's partner) Jane (Peter's fiancé)	52 years 52 years 26 years 24 years 28 years 26 years	December 1998 to December 1999
E	Mary (Mother) Dave (Father) Jo (Daughter)	Unknown Unknown 21 years	April 1999 to July 1999
F	Liz (Mother) Brian (Father) Martin (Son) Debbie (Daughter) Helen (Daughter)	Approx. 40 years Unknown 18 years 9 years 7 years	October 1999 to December 1999
G	Laura (Mother) Roger (Father) Beth (Daughter) Doris (Laura's sister) Bill (Doris' wife)	Approx. 40 years Unknown 11 years Approx. 50 years Unknown	November 1999 to July 2000
H	Stephanie (Mother) John (Father) Lee (Son) Danny (Son)	35 years Approx. 35 years 15 years 12 years	November 1999 only
I	Eve (Mother) Nick (Father) Scott (Son) Ben (Son)	48 years 49 years 15 years 12 years	October 1999 to January 2000
J	Lesley (Mother) Paul (Father) Ben (Son) Viv (Daughter) Chris (Son)	Unknown Unknown 14 years 12 years 10 years	November 1999 to December 1999
K	Sandra (Mother) Ian (Father) Julie (Daughter) Amy (Daughter) Darren (Son)	Unknown Unknown 19 years approx. 15 years approx. 11 years	December 1999 to February 2000
L	Lynn (Mother) Robert (Father) Adam (Son) Nicholas (Son) Daisy (Daughter)	Unknown Unknown Approx. 13 years Approx. 9 years Approx. 4 years	December 1999 to January 2000
M	Jane (Mother) Steve (Father) Susie (Daughter) Matt (Son)	Unknown Unknown Approx. 15 years 8 years	December 1999 to February 2000

#### 4.1.2. Additional data

I noted earlier that the pilot stages of data collection amongst groups of young people proved largely unsuccessful. Of the few tapes that were collected, most were inaudible due to bad recordings or technical failings, and for this reason I excluded them from the data set. There were, however, four meals with adult groups that were successfully recorded, and these featured myself as participant. The process for recording these meals was identical to those for the family groups, though here the meals were special occasions in that the participants did not normally eat together. The tape-recording was *not* the reason for the event, but was introduced once the participants had collected together for the meal. The following table 4.2 provides a summary of the participants in each of the four mixed-group meal transcripts.

Table 4.2: Summary of mixed-group mealtime data

Code name	Participants	Age at recording	Date of meal
MG1	Jenny Mike John Maddie	23 years 27 years 24 years 25 years	6 <sup>th</sup> February 1999
MG2	Jenny Mike Lynn Rick	23 years 27 years 24 years 24 years	20 <sup>th</sup> February 1999
MG3	Jenny Lynn Katie	23 years 24 years 23 years	16 <sup>th</sup> April 1999
MG4	Jenny Maddie John Dave	23 years 25 years 24 years 24 years	24 <sup>th</sup> June 1999

#### 4.1.3. Transcription

The tapes from the families and adult groups were initially transcribed to a basic level, capturing the spoken content only. This was rather a time-consuming process, though I feel it was essential for my own development as a discursive analyst. Getting close to the data in this way is part of the reading process, and ensured that I was familiar with the range of conversational topics in the data. It allowed me to gain a sense of the organisation of sequences of food talk, and was also a vital process in developing analytical ideas and notes (see Hutchby &



Wooffitt, 1998). Families were assigned a code letter (commencing from 'D'), to assist in the organisation of the data corpus. Each meal was transcribed separately, and identified with the family code letter, tape and side number, and reference to the meal sequence. So for example, SKW/ D1a-M1 refers to family D, tape one, side a, meal 1. The initials 'SKW' refer to the initials of the researcher/transcriber (myself).

The second stage of transcription involved transcribing in full those sections that contained references to food, eating, bodies, or health (according to the system developed by Gail Jefferson; see Appendix). These topics were chosen for their relevance to the research aims. The full transcription captured details such as changes in intonation, emphases, pauses, and the relative speed of the talk. All features of the talk were treated as potentially relevant for analysis, so as much detail as possible was included in the data extracts (Button & Lee, 1987; Hutchby & Wooffitt, 1998).<sup>7</sup> This is therefore a theoretical as well as a methodological choice, following the main principles of CA-informed research.

In terms of organising the material, the detailed sections were printed and bound separately for each family or group. As the analysis progressed and the attention focussed on food evaluations, separate documents were collated, printed, and bound according to particular areas of interest. For example, where evaluations such as 'nice' and 'lovely' featured in extracts, these were compiled in a new word document. This body of printed material allowed easy access to the written version of the tapes. The tapes themselves were copied onto spare cassettes and digitised onto CD-ROM using SoundEdit software. This captures the data onto a digital format that can then be enhanced to improve sound quality and audibility. It also provides quick and efficient access to the material, allowing repeated listenings without damage to the original recordings.

---

<sup>7</sup> The issue of transcription as an unproblematic translation from the tape to written form is hotly disputed in the CA literature (e.g. Cook, 1990; Hopper, 1989; Kendon, 1982; Ochs, 1979; Psathas & Anderson, 1990). The status of the tape versus the transcript as being analytically more useful is part of the debate (e.g. Hutchby & Wooffitt, 1998; ten Have, 1999).

#### *4.1.4. Class, race and other labels*

It may be noted at this stage that no mention has been made of demographic details such as class, race, or socio-economic status. One may also note, however, that I use gender specific names when assigning pseudonyms to each family member. I also provide information about each participant's relation to each other and their age where this is known. So it may seem as if I am being inconsistent in the details of my study. Demographic statistics are traditionally regarded as essential in order to be able to replicate or validate research (e.g. Gleitman, 1991). This is thought to be the case in what may be considered qualitative as well as in quantitative approaches (e.g. Banister, Burman, Parker, Taylor, & Tindall, 1994). Does the exclusion of these details mean that the research is less valid?

My concern here is that providing such characteristics is neither appropriate nor possible. In many cases I simply did not know this kind of information about the families! Given that one of the aims of the research was to gain access to naturalistic data, I severely reduced the amount of contact I had with the participants. So in some cases I may not have actually seen the families face-to-face (this will be discussed in more detail in the section on ethics). More importantly, discursive and social constructionist approaches do not follow the traditional, scientific method of categorising participants into different groups. Labels of class, race, and socio-economic groups are extremely problematic as they construct both the participants and the meal itself. For instance, if I were to categorise family D as being 'lower middle-class' or 'white', I am making particular assumptions about the data and subsequent analysis (see also sections 3.2 and 3.3). This is not to say that this is a fixed process, but rather that these labels construct a particular, unproblematised and unquestioned 'reality' about the family members.

Despite the concern with categorising the participants, there are two reasons for using the labels referring to age, gender and family relationship in the data corpus. First, the use of these labels does not necessarily mean that they are used as interpretative resources in the analysis. Where they do become relevant, efforts have been made to ensure that this is due to speaker orientation in the first instance. That is, I do not make reference to the gender of the speaker unless the

participants do so explicitly themselves. This is an important point, since it distinguishes the analysis from that of other feminist work in the area (for example, Charles & Kerr, 1986b; Delphy, 1979). Also, these categories are provided to allow the reader to gain an overall perspective on the data. They show how the families are constituted through a mix of ages and family roles.

The second reason for the inclusion is that these categories – at times used by speakers themselves – may be used to make analytical sense of particular sections of conversation. For example, Sacks (1992) notes how children have fewer rights to speak in conversation. Their utterances are not treated in the same way as those of an adult (a ‘full member’), nor are they expected to contribute to discussions to the same extent, or in the same manner (a similar point is made by Shakespeare, 1998, with regard to people with Alzheimer’s disease). In this way, we can make sense of why another speaker responds in a particular way to an outburst or unusual statement by a child. We can also draw on category-bound activities, such as parents providing food for their children, and the subsequent obligation of the latter to eat this food (De Bourdeauhuij, 1997). These are analytical tools rather than fixed categories that are ascribed to the speakers, and how we use these is in the same manner as the participants themselves make sense of each others’ talk (Edwards, 1997).

#### *4.1.5. The cook as consumer*

I mentioned earlier that I, the researcher, directly recorded the adult group meals as listed in table 4.2. Therefore it may have been noted that I am the participant referred to as ‘Jenny’ in these and the family D data. This raises some theoretical and methodological issues about using oneself as a participant. However, some advantages can be highlighted. First, these recordings were made during the early stages of the research in order to acquire additional data. This data was collected in the period up to December 1999, and at this stage I had not focussed directly on food evaluations as the topic for my analysis. One could argue, therefore, that I was naïve to the focus of the study (as were the other participants), except for the concern with talk about food or eating. More importantly, had I made unusual or explicit references to particular issues, these would have been noticeable through

the other participants' turns. That is, their unusualness would be oriented to as a participants concern.

Second, I was able to ensure that the equipment was set up properly and so fewer technical problems (often due to unfamiliarity with the equipment) affected this portion of data. The tapes were often clearer as a result, aiding both the transcription and the digitising processes. Third, being part of the data set gave me a greater appreciation and awareness of what it is like to be recorded. I gained a sense of how the presence of the tape-recorder may cause embarrassment, shyness, or joviality. I also appreciated how the recorder may be oriented to as a 'third ear' or an intruder in the conversation. This does not mean that the data is in any way less naturalistic, but shows how it can be oriented to as an outside presence (see section 4.2.2).

The problems with using oneself as a participant need also be addressed. Unlike interviews where the research topic is explicitly discussed, mealtimes are more spontaneous and informal occasions. Where I featured as a participant, the other group and family members were informed that the recording was for my own research on talk in interaction. So while I may be contributing to the conversation on one level, I also had another more covert and formal way of 'listening' in on the talk: I could take the tapes away and repeatedly listen to the conversation, offering additional turns in the form of analytic notes. In other words, I had special access to the conversation that was not available to the other speakers. In some respects, then, I was more than just a participant in those mealtimes.

A concern may be about using 'insider' knowledge of the mealtimes to analyse the data. That is, I may use my memory of the meal to fill in visual details or interpret 'meanings' of the talk, and so on. However, a DP approach is cautious about such speculation. Indeed, 'insider knowledge' is of little help in an analysis that rests on examining the next turns in the interaction. For it matters little what I 'think' was going on; if this is not displayed and oriented to in the talk, then it makes no difference to the analysis of how understandings are constructed in the interaction. In other words, DP offers a way of working with material that prioritises public displays and focuses on how these are produced and managed in interaction.

#### *4.1.6. Ethics*

Appropriate steps were taken to ensure the research met the recognised, British Psychological Society (1993), ethical guidelines for research with human participants. A combined consent form and information sheet was given to each of the families (see Appendix A). This was signed by the researcher and by a member of the family on behalf of the other family members. The information provided outlined the aim and requirements of the research, as discussed above. A contact telephone number and email address of the researcher was also provided. The participants were assured that they would be assigned pseudonym names (for themselves and all identificatory details) on all transcripts. Permission was sought to use the data for publication purposes, for example in journal articles and in conference presentations.

Following these procedures ensured that the participants gave their consent for the material to be used, and that every step was taken to ensure confidentiality. Once the data collection process was completed, participant families were sent a thank you letter, and were briefed on the research interests that were beginning to develop in the data. The tapes, and their copies on cassette and CD-Rom, remain confidential and are stored in a secure location with the researcher.

Naturalistic research necessarily requires some level of change to the research environment if it is carried out ethically; that is, with participant consent. The presence of the tape-recorder is a potentially novel occurrence in the family mealtimes. This is important for both ethical and analytical reasons, the first of which will be considered here. The ethical concern is that the tape-recorder may be intruding or imposing on the private space of the family members. Though I took a hands-off approach to the data collection and encouraged participant autonomy, it became apparent that there was still an indirect pressure to comply with the research due to the need for active participant involvement (see Cameron, Frazer, Harvey, Rampton, & Richardson, 1992; Taylor, 2001). In some cases, this was exacerbated where the researcher knew one or more of the family members personally. The following extract shows one instance in which the obligation to

record mealtimes became explicitly oriented to in the interaction. Note in particular how Liz uses a footing shift to manage her request on line 4.

EXTRACT 4.1: SKW/ F3aM8 (32-47)

1. (3.0)
2. Liz: °just° one mo::re=
3. Debbie: =<told ya>
4. Liz: just ↑one more tape for Sally and then that's-
5. Martin: → (its) so intrusive
6. Liz: >↑heh heh (its not ---)<
7. (1.0)
8. Martin: °heh heh°
9. Brian: → ↑why can't we see what she's doing when >(we're
10. having [our tea)<
11. Martin: [heh heh heh heh
12. Liz: [well- heh heh
13. (2.0)
14. Debbie: (you have to put the) tape [on (its ---)
15. Brian: → [this is so one way
16. (2.0) ((*dishing out food*))
17. Debbie: thank you Mummy
18. Liz: okay love

Making a request of the family in this way – to do ‘one more for Sally’ (line 4) – presents the obligation as being a favour for somebody external to the family group. In doing so, Liz manages the potential blame and responsibility for the recording. If it were for herself, the others would have the opportunity to challenge or discuss the issue. Liz could justify and defend the need for the recording, and this could be negotiated as a family concern. Given that the researcher is not present and can ‘hear’ the complaints (lines 5, 9 and 15), however, means that it may be harder for the participants to explicitly refuse. The dialogue is one-sided (as noted by Brian, line 15); any complaints cannot be receipted by the researcher and so remain unanswered here. Liz is thus able to continue the recording without being put in a position to account for the tape-recorder. This demonstrates the subtle ways in which participants are able to manage the potential power imbalances of research when given some autonomy

over the recording material. The situation may not have changed, but the way in which it is oriented to, has.

What is also important here is that the expressions of unfairness or discontent (lines 5, 9 and 15) attend to issues of familiarity and politeness with respect to the researcher. As Jefferson, Sacks and Schegloff (1987) noted, what might be considered as frank, rude, or obscene topics are indices of more intimate interaction. Referring so directly to the unfairness of the situation in the knowledge that the researcher would hear these comments indicates that perhaps these are not meant to be taken seriously. Indeed, both Liz and Martin laugh at the suggestion that the researcher be recorded herself (lines 9 and 10). This is not to imply, however, that the matter is treated as being of no importance. The fact that it is not attended to further by other speakers, signalled by a pause and a topic shift (lines 16 to 18), suggests that this may be something that is treated as inappropriate for the present conversation. That being so, it may be discussed as a concern when the recorder is not switched on.<sup>8</sup>

The awareness of the tape-recorder's presence provided further opportunity for reflexivity from the participants. The families were required to place the recording equipment on the table or area where they were eating, so it provided a prominent and concrete symbol of the research. A degree of acclimatisation was reached by allowing the families to use the equipment themselves, and without contact from the researchers, over a number of weeks. More importantly, it gave the participants full control of the research process at this stage. Those mealtimes that were recorded were done voluntarily and at the discretion of the family members. Consent forms also ensured that the families were aware of, and willing to take part in, the research. However, gaining consent may also be a more localised and negotiated concern. The following extract from family G shows how the issue is dealt with practically and as part of the management of family relationships.

---

<sup>8</sup> In line with this, the extract is taken from the final meal that this family recorded, despite there being more than 30 minutes' worth of blank tape left.

#### EXTRACT 4.2: SKW/ G4b-M21 (35-48)

1. (5.0)
2. Beth: its not gonna record this:
3. Roger: it is recording
4. Beth: → oh is it (.) did you- (0.4) Mumm::y (0.4) you
5. didn't tell us (0.6) (I was going to [leave it])
6. Laura: [told your
7. father (0.4) (he's the important one)
8. Beth: hmmm
9. Roger: °(---)° creep
10. Laura: hehh hehh heh
11. Beth: what about ↑me
12. Laura: what about you
13. (3.0)
14. Roger: °(still a) bit slur::py (0.4) started it off
15. earlier°

Of particular interest here is the way in which responsibility for the recording is managed. Beth usually deals with the recording (as indicated in line 5 and in previous conversations), so Laura's actions are immediately noticeable as unexpected (particularly marked by the 'oh', line 4). More importantly, Beth signals the fact that she has not been told is an accountable matter. So consent is oriented to here as a concern for the person who actually switches on the tape. It is interesting how this responsibility is managed within the interaction, and separated from the role of the researcher. The ethics of the research process are taken up here as part of local interactional business, and thus become a practical and specific concern.

We can also see how family roles are negotiated in the extract. Beth claims that Laura didn't tell us: 'us' being Beth and Roger. This creates a distinction between the potential wrong-doer (Laura) and the rest of the family. Telling 'your father' (line 6) about the tape not only attends to the issue of consent, it also reverses this distinction. Beth is now the one who is left out, as the one who didn't know. Despite being said somewhat jovially (as indicated by the laughter on line 10, and the reference to being a 'creep', line 9), the 'important one' is Beth's father. What is being negotiated here is thus who *needs to be told*, rather than *who should tell*



about the recording. Indeed, Beth's concern about her own status in this interaction is neither treated seriously nor taken up as a family concern (lines 12-14).

## **4.2. Cooking: Analysing and constructing the family meals**

### *4.2.1. Stages of analysis*

The compilation of the transcripts involved separating off those sections concerned with talk about food, eating, health, and bodies. Preliminary coding was then carried out by repeated readings of the transcripts and listening to the tapes. The focus for these readings was based on the concerns of DP: construction, action, and accountability. I was interested in the activities that were being achieved in food talk, and how the family members engaged with each other while they were eating. I was also looking for patterns in the talk, and in particular I was struck by the number of occasions in which people made assessments during the meal. So, I continued to search for instances of evaluations of food and drink.

This stage of the coding process is necessarily intensive and pragmatic (as noted in Potter & Wetherell, 1987, and Willig, 2001). The selection of material is likely to be over inclusive, but it was important that all instances of food evaluations were collected at this stage. This ensures that analysis is based on the full range of features of this kind of talk. From this selection process numerous files were produced, as further coding categories became apparent. For instance, I could sort evaluations into those that were about food being eaten at the present meal, on a previous occasion, for a particular kind of food, and so on. Each of these coding practices allowed me to sort through the large amount of data, and to catalogue files of instances of each type. I could then highlight those that seemed of most interest, to begin the analysis proper.

The analysis stage itself is more complicated to explain, as discursive analyses are quite unlike the traditional step-by-step procedures of statistical analyses (Potter, 1998; Silverman, 2001; Willig, 2001). Instead, it is more like the asking of particular questions (Potter & Wetherell, 1994). For instance, the analyst asks why they read something in a particular way. What is it about the talk that makes

it sound teasing, complimentary, or defensive? The analyst must therefore look closely at their own sense making practices. How do we understand turns in talk, and how do the speakers display this in the interaction? In short, we must take apart that which we so often take for granted in everyday talk.

Patterns, differences, and similarities were also searched for in the data. The DP approach expects to find variability in accounts, so we can look to see what this variation is doing in particular sections of talk. I found that there seemed to be different kinds of evaluative expressions (see chapter 6) and that other speakers oriented to these in different ways. I could say I 'like pizza', or that the 'pizza was nice', for instance. The data corpus and coded sections could then be searched for places where the expression 'nice' was used to see what kind of conversational activities this was involved in. Having found these sections of talk, the analysis continued into the writing phases, and developed throughout this process. Analyses of particular extracts would be written and reanalysed as these matched or differed from other extracts. Themes developed from these analyses, and structured the thesis into chapter sections and sub-sections.

#### *4.2.2. Orientation to the tape*

A consequence of using ethically recorded material is that participants must, by definition, be aware of the presence of the tape-recorder (see section 4.1.6). Allowing the recording period to extend over a series of consecutive weeks or months may help to reduce this awareness to some extent (through acclimatisation). There is, however, always the possibility that talk and interaction change as a result of the research. Rather than see this as a negative and contaminated occurrence, we can treat this as a topic of study in its own right (Speer & Hutchby, in press). It is particularly interesting, then, to examine those occasions in which participants explicitly orient to the tape-recorder or the research.

We can regard these orientations to the tape as *displaying* awareness of the research and/or recording device. That is, it can be regarded as part of the range of activities achieved in the talk, and is thus doing something in the interaction. We can examine such instances alongside other discursive practices, rather than

treating them as a shift away from the 'natural' talk of the mealtime. For instance, Speer and Hutchby (in press) note how the tape-recorder may take on the status of an 'overhearing presence' through participant orientations to it. Just as the research ethics of consent became a participants' concern in extract 4.2, so what is deemed 'tape-appropriate' speech is also a situated resource and topic for recorded interaction.

The following two discussions demonstrate how an orientation to the tape or research can be part of the construction of both the mealtime as a defined and situated event, and of the family as a cohesive unit. These activities are specific to mealtime interaction and also work to show how family members 'do' being a family and having a meal. This adds to the claim that meals are both constructed and actively managed in discourse.

#### *The mealtime as a construction*

When I first began to approach individuals about the possibility of recording their family mealtimes, I was at times confronted by puzzled expressions. 'But we don't eat together,' was a common reason for those not wishing to participate. This was especially the case for those families with adolescent children, whose lifestyle patterns meant that family members' routines rarely coincided for meals. To find a sufficient number of families who *did* eat together was thus an achievement in itself. It seemed that what I was looking for was a rare event, and there is certainly some debate as to whether family meals have become a thing of the past (e.g. Murcott, 1997; Ritzer, 2000; see also chapter 2). What is being assumed, however, is that there is a particular type of eating activity that constitutes a (proper) 'meal'.

The participants themselves oriented to a meal as being a particular event at certain points in the mealtime conversations. Often this is done indirectly, through talk about what is appropriate conversation or behaviour for the dinner table. Take extract 4.3 below as an example. This is a rather busy section of talk, in which Helen (the youngest daughter) is becoming increasingly upset by the actions of her sister, Debbie, and her father, Brian. Throughout this section, there are the sounds of crying from both Helen and Debbie as they argue over what is to

be allowed for pudding at this meal. Note how Martin (the older brother) formulates this talk and simultaneously orients to the requirements of the research. The 'friend' being referred to on line 14 is myself.

EXTRACT 4.3: SKW/ F1bM2 (758-778)

1. Helen: ↑why- (.) did you \*↑hear Dad (.) (before I went
2. out saying) custard (0.4) did you ↑hear him
3. Brian: ↑yeah::
4. (0.8)
5. Helen: ((crying)) hhh (0.4) <you stu:pid idiot> its not
6. your fault (---) is it
7. Brian: it was a (--) question (.) >its got an answer<
8. of yes or no
9. Martin: (or no-)
10. Brian: not-
11. Helen: she is=
12. Brian: ='rrrrrgh:::'
13. Helen: stupid
14. Martin: → I thought your friend wants dining room
15. conversation (.) not zoo: conversation
16. Debbie: ((crying))
17. Liz: okay- (.) stop it ↓now that'll do
18. Brian: can I see the transcripts of this please=
19. Liz: =heh heh heh heh
20. Debbie: hhh hhh ((crying))

The different strands of conversation, complaint, and expressed emotions are glossed here as being similar to those found in a zoo (line 15). In doing so, Martin provides a formulation of the previous talk as being in some way different to that which one might expect in a 'dining room'. Note that this is a particularly formal way of talking about a meal (as being held in a specific room) and works to heighten the contrast between a civilised meal and a menagerie of animals. This supports the claims that Speer and Hutchby (in press) have made regarding participant orientations to 'tape-appropriate' speech. This inappropriateness is something that is constructed and managed as a local concern, rather than being an external constraint on the conversational topics.

The extract above also relates to what may be considered appropriate mealtime talk, and in effect serves to define a mealtime as a particular kind of event. Meals can be distinguished by certain practices (Warde & Martens, 2000) and discursive practices are part of this constructive process. In the example above, the boisterous chatter one may find in a zoo (with a collection of animals) is worked up as inappropriate for a mealtime discussion. More importantly, this construction also acts as a diffusing device for what may potentially be a distressing episode. The daughters are clearly upset and Martin's turn works to add some humour and lighten the interaction (see the transcribed laughter on line 19). The inappropriate is thus managed to some extent by being constructed as humorous.

A further example of participants' orientation to the tape is provided below. Again, this shows how appropriate eating or mealtime behaviour is constructed in the talk. Nicholas and Daisy (two of the children) are currently arguing over whether or not Daisy likes Christmas cake. A shift in the conversation then occurs on line 6 when Nicholas attends to the pudding that they have been eating (ice cream or yoghurt).

#### EXTRACT 4.4: SKW/ L1aM1 (51-63)

1. Nicholas: you are (.) you ↑liked it on-
2. Daisy: I'm NO:::↑T
3. (0.8)
4. Nicholas: okay >okay °okay°<
5. (1.0)
6. Nicholas: ↑can I lick the ↓lid Mum
7. (1.0)
8. Lynn: → Nicholas this is: a lovely tape-re↓cording (.)
9. can I (read the °letter°)
10. (2.0)
11. Nicholas: mmm↓m

Lynn's comment on lines 8 to 9 displays an awareness of the tape recorder's presence. Note, however, how this is referred to casually and with some degree of irony (being a 'lovely' tape-recording). It orients to Nicholas' behaviour as being the reason why the recording is 'lovely', and thus serves as an evaluation of both

his eating behaviour and the taped conversation. As with that seen in extract 4.3, the argument between Daisy and Nicholas may also be oriented to here as inappropriate behaviour. So in displaying an awareness of the recorder, Lynn makes a rather subtle point about the children's mealtime activities.

The orientations to the tape and the mealtime as requiring particular, appropriate behaviours are significant in light of current sociological research on food and eating, where classificatory systems are often used to distinguish between different kinds of eating events (as noted in Douglas, 1972; Douglas & Nicod, 1974; Warde & Martens, 2000). There are distinctions between food eaten as a meal and as a snack; different kinds of meal ('tea', 'dinner', 'main meal'); and food eaten in or outside the home. However, sociological distinctions are often devised on the composition of the food at the meal. Little has been said about how the meal may be constructed by the participants in their interaction around the food. Moreover, it may be that other features are more important than characterising it as a particular 'type' of eating event. In the examples above, it was the discursive practices and actions of the other family members that served to define the 'mealtime' as an event.

### *The family as a construction*

The construction of a 'proper' mealtime through orientations to appropriate recorded conversation has further implications. By setting boundaries on what can be classed as a proper meal, it also defines what should be a proper *family* meal. In chapter 2 we saw how sociological research has tended to focus on the eating practices of families and groups (Charles & Kerr, 1988; Coveney, 1999; Douglas & Nicod, 1974; Lupton, 1996, 2000; Murcott, 1997). This places attention on what may be considered the 'classic' nuclear family of two parents and two children. For example, Murcott's (1982) study of roast dinners has been used as a classic representation of British family mealtimes. In doing so, both mealtimes and family are defined as a particular kind of event or unit.

The work of Gubrium and Holstein offers an alternative perspective on the family (Gubrium & Holstein, 1987, 1990; Holstein & Gubrium, 1994). Using a social constructionist approach, they argue that 'family' can be reconceptualised as a

descriptive practice rather than a physical unit. It can be used as a category in discourse to define social relations and norms and to perform actions. This offers a new way of looking at the mealtime data, as part of this constructive process. So it is not that I have simply collected and recorded family mealtimes; rather, my research and the participants' talk construct these interactions as family mealtime conversations.<sup>9</sup>

The extract below demonstrates how the family unit is constructed as part of the conversation. Julie has just rejoined the 'family' after a term at university, and is clarifying the need to tape the mealtime conversations.

#### EXTRACT 4.5: SKW/ K2bM6 (24-46)

1. Julie: so ↑how often do we- (0.4) we have to do: this
2. ↓then
3. Sandra: when >we're all to↓gether< at tea-°time° (0.4)
4. or- or:- (.) well ↑any meals: (0.4) breakfasts::
5. (0.2) lunch, (0.2) °↓tea°
6. Julie: >but we< (0.4) we don't ↑have breakfast all
7. together
8. Sandra: well ↑sometimes we do y'↓know we sometimes,
9. (0.2) like the other morning we did (.)
10. °>didn't we< Darren we had >bacon and eggs:<°
11. (0.6)
12. Darren: no
13. (1.0)
14. Sandra: >were you not 'ere<
15. (1.2) ((banging noise))
16. Darren: [°(no)°
17. Julie: [yeah [hheh
18. Sandra: [heh heh heh (0.2) hhheh hhheh (0.2) .hhh
19. >I thought you were<
20. (3.0)
21. Julie: hhh heh heh can you ↓n(h)ot (not(hh)ice hi(h)m)
22. (0.2) hehh heh
23. Sandra: well I lose track of ↓when: (0.4) when we ↓eat

<sup>9</sup> When I refer to the data as a family mealtime, and so on, this is done for ease of reading, and acknowledging the constructive work that this is doing.

24.                    °an' -° (0.6) here and when we're ↑not  
25.                    (2.0)

The family as a unit is first oriented to by Julie (line 1) when she refers to the collective 'we', and doing the recording as a group activity. This immediately defines the participants as being part of a family group. Sharing meals is then put forward as being a joint event, 'when we're all together' (line 3), and Sandra provides a specific example of herself and Darren eating breakfast together. Being a family is something that must be worked up and managed as a practical task in interaction. Engaging in activities together (such as eating) is one way in which the family can be constructed as a concrete and definable unit.

We can also see how the category label 'we' is used as an account or justification of the family's eating habits. Julie's orientation to the recording displays an awareness of the requirements – and thus expectations – of the family to record 'proper mealtimes'. Sandra's list of occasions when they share food serves to provide evidence that such mealtimes are in existence. This is not just 'for' the tape, as it also provides a function in the interaction. Having recently returned home, Julie may be working to renegotiate herself as being part of the family. Talking about the sharing of meals and the use of the inclusive 'we' serves to construct her as part of the family, as a cohesive and collective unit (Holstein & Gubrium, 1994).

The final two examples illustrate the construction of the family through orienting to 'normal' practices. This is similar to the terms used in the official research description (focusing on natural, everyday conversation between family members) and shows how the participants use these instructions as part of interactional activities. Extract 4.6 below begins after Nicholas has asked his mother (Lynn) to define the word passive. I draw your attention to how Adam (the older brother) orients to the requirements of the research as constraining *all* of their behaviour.



EXTRACT 4.6: SKW/ L1bM4 (438-455)

1. Lynn: passive observer is someone who's sat in on a  
2. meeting and doesn't ↓say anything or didn't join  
3. in at all-
4. Nicholas: <so not active>
5. Lynn: yeah (0.2) not active (0.2) not taking part-
6. Nicholas: ↑EH::: YOU naughty pen
7. Lynn: Nicholas, (0.4) that tape (is on when you've  
8. finished) shouting↓
9. Nicholas: heh heh (0.2) heh heh heh
10. Adam: → yeah you're meant to act nor:mally when the  
11. tape's ↓on=
12. Nicholas: =but it says a well-or[ganised and ↑passive man
13. Lynn: [it's a bit frightening
14. → seeing what normal is in our >family< (0.4)
15. passive (.) (no) I don't think you're passive
16. (1.0)

Acting 'normally' is constructed in two ways here. First, it attends to the presence of the tape recorder, as requiring particular forms of behaviour from the participants. Note how Adam's reference to 'you' (line 10) could implicate all the family members. That is, there is an obligation for everyone to act normally. The shouting on line 6 is thus oriented to as being *not* normal for Nicholas, and is also picked up by Lynn (lines 7 to 8) as being inappropriate for the tape. What is 'normal' here is not necessarily usual behaviour, but perhaps something more subdued or mundane than is suggested by Nicholas' brief outburst.

The second construction of 'normal' is in terms of what is normal for this particular family (line 14). Lynn's reference to this being 'frightening' (line 13) suggests that what is normal here is rather *abnormal* in comparison to other families. What this serves to do is to contextualise Nicholas' behaviour, particularly in conjunction with the statement that she doesn't think he is passive. In effect, it highlights that his turn on line 6 might actually be regarded as usual or normal for this family (contrasting with Adam's turn on line 10). The construction of the 'family' is thus achieved through talk about the usual

behaviour of the family members – not just as a group, but as distinct from other families in terms of normal practices.

The final extract below illustrates how sharing meals may be implicated as one of the normal practices of the family. It is used here as a way of negotiating the family unit, and as part of the accountability that this entails. This family only recorded one mealtime, and this section of talk is taken from near the start of their evening meal. John (the father) is talking about the switch on the side of the tape-recorder, so there is a direct and explicit orientation to the research at this point.

#### EXTRACT 4.7: SKW/H1a-M1 (11-27)

1. John: °(----) change one of the settings that's [all°
2. Stephanie: [°mm°
3. John: ↓prob'ly set at the right speed
4. (0.6)
5. Lee: she's gonna get some great conversation off
6. ↑us at the dining table (0.4) when [(--)
7. Stephanie: [first
8. time we've eaten a meal in over-
9. (0.8)
10. Lee: heh heh
11. Stephanie: ten days to↑gether (0.6) or (.) actually sat
12. at the ta:ble
13. (1.4)
14. Lee: >I know normally< we don't even talk
15. (0.6)
16. Stephanie: we do=
17. Lee: =she might be able to hear we bu- (0.2) burping
18. or something
19. Stephanie: she does: hear we<sup>10</sup> talk
20. (1.2)
21. Stephanie: anyway can >somebody< think of something to say
22. then
23. (0.6)

---

<sup>10</sup> This is a regional expression replacing the word 'us' with 'we' (pronounced 'wuh').

At the beginning of this fragment, both Lee (the older son) and Stephanie (the mother) produce a collaborative account of mealtimes in this family. These are expressed as rare occasions (see lines 8, 11 and 12) and lacking in conversation (the ironical use of 'great' conversation, lines 5 to 6). If taken alone, these turns suggest that the family don't often share mealtimes. The problems with this account appear later, when Stephanie defends the notion that they do talk (lines 16 and 19), despite explicitly prompting conversation on line 21. Not talking or eating together might suggest that this family were not *acting* as a family unit. This lack of appropriate behaviour has implications for how the family is portrayed on the tape, and Stephanie's turns can be seen as face-saving on behalf of the group.

What is important about this is that it shows how talk and eating are part of the construction of a family unit. Taking part in the research meant that participants needed to display that they *were* a family, as required in the collection of 'natural conversation between family members'. It is through this joint collaboration between researcher and researched that the family mealtime becomes constructed as a particular and definable (and analysable) event. These activities did not just exist to be studied, but came into being through the research process. What they have also allowed participants to do, however, is to construct and define themselves as a family through their conversations for the tape. This research has given them the space and the collective voice to manage their group identity for each other as well as for the research.

#### *4.2.3. Cooking the data*

The data used in this thesis may be compared to sociological food research that focuses on meals within the home. Rather than using retrospective reports, however, it offers empirical and actual instances of mealtime interaction. This is an important shift, as previous research often restricts what is considered as an appropriate or standard family meal (Warde & Martens, 2000). For instance, studies may focus on household events and the collective practices of eating a meal together (e.g. Charles & Kerr, 1986a). Eating separately or outside the home is often regarded as less of a family occasion, and has moral implications for how families *ought* to behave. In practice, these other forms of meals may be

reconsidered as different ways of constructing the family. The globalisation of McDonalds<sup>11</sup> restaurants and similar fast-food outlets has been cited as one of the causes of the decline of the family meal (Ritzer, 2000; cf. Murcott, 1997).

Whether or not this is the case, it is certainly apparent that eating in such restaurants encourages a different style of 'meal'. Consequently, family trips to McDonald's may encourage different ways of 'being a family' (Visser, 1989, cited in Ritzer, 2000: 142).

The point I am making here is that we need to look at how families are constructed as situated groups in local interaction. Thus, a family need not be the same type of entity at all times (Gubrium & Holstein, 1987). Constructing 'family' may be used to manage both informality and closeness, and to distinguish the group from other groups or families. Moreover, we need not define a family by the meals and the food it eats. Instead, we can examine how food is worked up as a 'meal' and how different practices and actions are encouraged through styles of interaction. This is something that has been more widely researched in sociology or anthropology than in psychology, though there are many opportunities for overlap between these disciplines. While this thesis focuses on meals and eating, it has been shown here that these practices cannot be separated from the construction of the family (or relationship) group in interaction.

#### **4.3. Serving: Presenting the meal and the thesis.**

It remains for me to discuss how the thesis was put together, and how this maps onto the process of presenting food (or research) as part of a larger unit. In other words, both a meal and a thesis are in part defined through their final presentation. Presenting the thesis in the way that I have – as an academic text, briefly incorporating discourses from food literature – is all part of the construction of the meals, and of the families who consumed them. Just as a chef presents a plate of food as a particular 'course' within a pre-arranged meal, so each chapter fits in with those that proceed and succeed it. Each can be taken on its own merits, but it only *becomes* a meal (or a thesis) when considered in light of the other parts.

---

<sup>11</sup> I doubt whether this footnote is necessary. McDonald's is an American based fast-food restaurant selling burgers and 'fries' (potato chips) meals, and is now accessible in most developed countries. It has become symbolic of fast food (or 'junk food') and modern lifestyles.

There is a link here with the discussion on context in the previous chapter.<sup>12</sup> If we consider that this 'extra' information (the other chapters) is additional context, then we may have to make a decision about whether it is relevant or not. Given that I (as participant in this text) have made it *directly relevant* to the text, we can – in this instance, at least – take it that we should include it in the analysis.

The data are also presented as being taken from family mealtime conversations. As noted above, their status as such is constructed by both the research instructions and the orientation of the participants. They are as much a part of the meal as the food itself. So they become mealtime conversations in the sense that they constitute and make up the meal. I have already raised the notion that we should examine talk as much as we do food, and this takes the point further. Having a mealtime conversation can make a meal; without it, we may simply be eating in the presence of others. It may be easier to think of this in terms of eating in a staff canteen or crowded café, when you are seated next to a stranger. Is this person a part of your meal? Would you say that you had eaten with them? Of course not, for without talking to them we do not share a meal; eating at the same table is not the same as sharing a meal.<sup>13</sup>

The implications of this presentation, or serving, of the meal/thesis are twofold. First, it suggests that we need to approach eating behaviour as a collaborative and interactional event. This is something that would complement rather than replace existing food research. Mealtimes can be defined as any occasion in which people share food, and indeed it is constructed as a 'meal' through this sharing and orientation to the food. Sociological research has placed more emphasis on the social nature of eating, but this needs to be combined with a more situated, interactional approach in order to capture the constructive processes involved in daily practice.

---

<sup>12</sup> This, in itself, is proof of the interconnectedness of each chapter. We could not make sense of this reference (to chapter 3) without already having read the chapter, or by being aware that other chapters exist.

<sup>13</sup> There is a nice link here with Drew's (1990) example of courtroom talk in which a prosecution witness is cross-examined about the events preceding an alleged rape:

Council: And during the evening, didn't Mr O [the defendant] come over to sit with you?

Witness: Sat at our table.

Second, there are implications for how this thesis is to be perceived. At various points I make explicit the constructive processes involved in analysing and presenting the data and the 'findings'. At other times this is glossed over with seemingly no consideration for the importance of reflexivity in discursive research. This tension – between revealing and concealing discursive devices – is unavoidable if one wishes to engage with both mainstream academic literature, and those who work in more applied settings. As noted earlier, the application of research is not as straightforward as may be thought. Sometimes this involves a compromise between theoretical understandings and providing 'results' that can then be put to some practical use.

I have struggled with this tension throughout the research and in the writing of this thesis. The links made between the cookery book and the thesis are one way of managing this, and demonstrate that *practical* goals are often tempered by the constraints of the resources one is working with. For example, I may wish to cook a meal for 6 people but need to first consider issues of time, food preferences, space, and cost. I may wish to look at how to apply my research findings, but also need to think about context, constructive processes, 'usefulness', and models of application.

### **Chapter summary**

This chapter has examined both the practical stages of doing the research, and the theoretical assumptions that underpinned these events. The discussions herein build on those in chapter 3, as they raise questions about the nature of research (discursive or otherwise), and offer ways of managing debates and tensions. The next four chapters focus on the analysis of the data. This is where the theory is less apparent, and reflection on my own discursive constructions is not directly or explicitly attended to. As noted above, this illustrates a tension within discursive research and is a compromise in order to provide a basis for the potential use of these findings. Without providing 'results' of some form, it would be difficult to contribute to the many areas of food and eating research. As this is the ultimate aim of the thesis, it seems appropriate to allow for such a theoretical compromise in order to meet the practical goals of the research.

Cooking from first principles:

Construction and action in food evaluation

“Now we have heard how Mrs Sedley had prepared a fine curry for her son, just as he liked it, and in the course of dinner a portion of this dish was offered to Rebecca. ‘What is it?’ said she, turning an appealing look to Mr Joseph.

‘Capital,’ said he. His mouth was full of it; his face quite red with the delightful exercise of gobbling. ‘Mother, it’s as good as my own curries in India.’

‘Oh, I must try some, if it is an Indian dish,’ said Miss Rebecca. ‘I am sure everything must be good that comes from there.’”

William Makepeace Thackeray, *Vanity Fair*, (1848).

This chapter is concerned with the discursive construction of food evaluations, and marks the beginning of the main body of analysis. In terms of the thesis-as-meal, you could say that this is the start of the main course. The discussions up to this point have been concerned with the interactional nature of eating, and with talk as a constructed and constructive activity. This chapter is more focussed. As noted earlier, the analysis examines food evaluations as a specific example of talk about food and eating. I begin at a basic level, looking at how evaluations are produced in talk, and the activities in which they are involved. These questions are raised as simple, but important points, particularly because evaluations of food have not previously been examined in this way. By starting at this level, we can begin to reveal some basic and fundamental issues for food and eating research.

The chapter will first review specific features of food preference research. As noted in chapter two, social psychological research on this topic often works with the concepts of attitudes and intentions to eat. Aspects of methodology will be discussed with particular attention being paid to the rating scales and questionnaires used in these studies. These methods will then be contrasted with discursive approaches that emphasise the practical use of evaluations in talk in interaction. The analytic section is broadly divided into two parts. First, I discuss and illustrate how evaluations can be regarded as interactional constructions as

well as individual assessments. This is due in part to their expression within interaction, as speakers are constrained by conversational norms and practices. The second part of the analysis examines how food evaluations are embedded within different activities in conversation. A key issue here is that participants *themselves* treat evaluations as being more than simply an assessment of food. Examples of these activities will be discussed in more detail: compliments and praisings, requests and offers, complaints, obligations, persuasions, and experience claims. The chapter ends with a discussion of some of the implications of this approach for evaluation and food preference research.

#### **Box 5.1: Ingredients for chapter 5**

- Models of attitudes and food preferences
- Rating scale examples
- Problems with methodology in attitude research
- Discursive psychology and evaluative practices
- The interactional construction of evaluations
- Discursive activities, and food and drink assessments

#### **Attitude research and food preferences**

Social psychological research on food evaluations typically adopts an approach in which evaluations are treated as the representation of underlying beliefs, preferences, or 'attitudes' toward food (as argued by, for example, Eagly & Chaiken, 1993, 1998; also chapter 2). These attitudes are measured using responses on rating scales either in a laboratory setting (e.g. Wardle & Beales, 1988) or by postal questionnaire (e.g. Sparks, Shepherd, Wieringa, & Zimmermanns, 1995). The individual attitude toward particular foods is then used to predict future eating behaviour, or intentions to eat, using a theoretical model of behaviour (Armitage & Conner, 1999; Bagozzi & Kimmel, 1995; Conner, Povey, Sparks, James, & Shepherd, 1998; Wardle, Parminder, & Waller, 2000). For example, a study by Cantin and Dubé (1999) measured preferences for different beverages and the degree to which this influenced the individual's consumption of the drink. The proposed link between attitudes and behaviour (or behavioural intentions) is one of the key concerns of this type of research and will be returned to later in the chapter. Also examined are potential changes in attitudes, such as using variations in product information to determine whether this affects attitudes



or behaviours toward different foods (e.g. Aaron, Mela, & Evans, 1994; Berg, Jonsson, & Conner, 2000; Bonham *et al.*, 1995).

One of the most widely used models in attitude research is Ajzen's theory of planned behaviour (TPB; Ajzen, 1988, 1991), which was developed from the earlier theory of reasoned action (Fishbein & Ajzen, 1975). The TPB is a theoretical model combining participant ratings on a number of factors in order to predict behavioural intentions<sup>1</sup> (see also chapter 2). The three main factors are referred to as 'attitude', 'subjective norm' (what the individual perceives to be the expected behaviour) and 'perceived behavioural control' (how far they think they are capable of performing the behaviour; Bagozzi & Kimmel, 1995; Eagly & Chaiken, 1993, 1998; Netemeyer, Burton, & Johnston, 1991). Research questions are often concerned with measuring and determining the components of attitudes towards food, and examining how these may be subject to change.

It is helpful to pause here and consider the implications of using this type of model for attitude research. With respect to food and eating research, potential applications would be in advertising and marketing fields, consumer research, and health promotion work (e.g. Bárcenas *et al.*, 2001; Dubé, Chattopadhyay, & Letarte, 1996). If eating practices can be causally linked to definable attitudes towards food, then by changing these attitudes one could potentially alter an individual's behaviour. This is of considerable importance at the levels of both social policy and commerce since it could modify health-related eating patterns and cause a shift in consumer spending. In line with this, contemporary health and nutritional campaigns often rely on the notion of the individual as information-processor (a cognitive model). Hence providing 'knowledge' of food nutrition and basic biological needs is used in order to change people's attitudes, and thus their behaviour.

One of the main assumptions of the TPB and attitude models generally is that an attitude is an individual construct (Conner *et al.*, 1998). It follows that individual

---

<sup>1</sup> Note that the key term here is 'intentions', since the prediction of behaviour itself is harder to define or measure in such terms. This reliance on people's stated intentions could itself be seen as a circular argument, since what is being measured is a further *account* for the initial evaluation.

measures will be used to measure attitudes, such as the aforementioned questionnaires and rating scales (see box 5.2). Any interaction with others would be regarded as potentially influencing the individual's responses or rating of the food. For example, one may feel the need to conform to social norms or expectations about particular eating habits. By using individual rating scales, these 'influences' are thought to be reduced.

**Box 5.2. Types of rating scale**

The two most widely used types of rating scale in attitudinal research are the Likert scale, and the semantic differential scale.

**The Likert scale**

This was developed by Rensis Likert (1932; cited in Eagly & Chaiken, 1993) and consists of a set of statements of beliefs or behaviours about a particular topic. Participants are required to indicate how strongly they agree or disagree with each statement. The statements (or scale items) are "written and selected so that agreement with the item represents either a favourable or unfavourable attitude toward the object" (Eagly & Chaiken, 1993: 53). For example, participants may be asked to rate their responses to the following items on a 7-point scale, from 1 = 'never' to 7 = 'frequently':

- 'I do not have enough time to eat a low-fat diet'
- 'Eating a low-fat diet costs too much money'
- 'I think about eating low-fat food'

(scale items taken from Armitage & Conner, 1999: 39-40).

**The semantic differential scale**

This scale was developed by Osgood, Suci, and Tannenbaum (1957) and consists of a set of bipolar adjective scales, which correspond to a particular category or object. For example, participants may be presented with a statement such as, 'my eating a low-fat diet in the next month is...'. They are then required to rate pairs of adjectives, each on a 7-point bipolar scale in relation to their attitude toward the given statement:

-3	-2	-1	0	1	2	3
Bad.....				.....Good		
Unfavourable.....				.....Favourable		
Harmful.....				.....Beneficial		
Unpleasant.....				.....Pleasant		

(scale items taken from Armitage & Conner, 1999: 39)

*Attitude problems*

From a discursive perspective, we can identify two problems or concerns with the methodology of attitude research. First, food and drink evaluations are typically regarded as being separate from the underlying attitude construct that they are

thought to represent. This means that evaluations are treated as on-the-spot assessments of particular foods, and thus are more flexible than attitudes toward foods. In other words, a 'taste evaluation' is regarded as a single, immediate judgement of a food, whereas an attitude is an 'evaluative summary' of these judgements (Lozano, Crites, & Aikman, 1999; p. 208; see also Sparks, Hedderley, & Shepherd, 1992). This makes sense in the abstract - as a theoretical distinction - but it is harder to reconcile in practical terms. The distinction becomes somewhat blurred when one tries to define the boundaries between what constitutes an evaluation (rather than an attitude) at an interactional level. For example, how does one distinguish between an evaluation and an attitude when it is expressed either verbally or in written form? How many evaluations would it take to make up an attitude towards an object; and what would happen if these evaluations were contradictory? This latter concern has been taken up recently by attitude theorists themselves, and I return to this later (see box 5.3). For now, we can note that the evaluation/attitude distinction is somewhat problematic when considered in terms of everyday practices.

The second problem with the methodology of attitude research is the generic use of evaluative expressions, such as 'good' or 'like', within questionnaire designs. Based on the researcher's notion of the meaning of these terms, questionnaire scales fail to take into account how a participant may interpret what is meant by 'good' or 'enjoyable' food. Moreover, it imposes categories of food evaluations, such as taste, health value, and sensory appeal, onto participants' responses (e.g. Geiselman, Smith, Williamson, Champagne, Bray, & Ryan, 1998; Lindeman & Stark, 1999; Martins, Pelchat, & Pliner, 1997). The problem with relying on the analyst's (rather than participants') categories is that the understanding of the response is often altered in the process of analysis (Hutchby & Wooffitt, 1998). For example, an analyst may have a different interpretation of the term 'sweet' (perhaps as being sugary, or as a negative feature of the food) than the participant who may rate a food as being sweet for more positive reasons. That is, the particular form of an evaluation has an indexical meaning that is lost when it is taken out of context. The assumption of the researcher, therefore, is that not only will participants have the same understandings of expressive terms, but that these have an abstract definition that can be taken out of the evaluative context. This

issue will be taken up in more detail in chapter 6. Here, it highlights some serious problems with the predominant methodology of attitudinal research.

### **Evaluations in practice: Discursive approaches**

Discursive psychological approaches have already challenged attitude research in a number of ways (Billig, 1989, 1992; Burningham, 1995; Potter & Wetherell, 1987, 1988; Puchta & Potter, 1999; Verkuyten, 1998, 2001). Most notably, the notion of a stable attitude has been problematised through an examination of the variability of attitude expression. For example, interviews with New Zealanders revealed a number of conflicting standpoints within the same stretch of talk (Potter & Wetherell, 1988). Taking a conventional approach, it would be difficult - if not impossible - to isolate the single attitude that underpinned such a response (see box 5.3). A further challenge has been concerned with the link between attitudes and behaviour. Problems identifying the precise relationship between these concepts continue to engage attitude researchers (Eagly & Chaiken, 1998). However, discursive approaches propose that expressing an evaluation is *itself* a behaviour. That is, an action or activity performed in interaction. An attitude then becomes the topic of study, rather than an entity to be isolated and measured. It is then less appropriate to search for links between what may be distinct and separate practices.

Discursive approaches, as outlined in chapter three, are concerned with the construction of evaluations as interactional practices rather than with assumptions about cognitive constructs or processes. An evaluation is therefore examined within the local context of an interaction. We may ask such questions as, what talk precedes and follows an evaluation? What are the features of the interaction that may have required such an assessment? In other words, evaluative practices are regarded as *inter*-individual, rather than *intra*-individual activities. The practical uses of evaluations are also emphasised, in terms of what else is achieved when giving an evaluation. In this respect, the approach differs from an examination of the functions of holding a particular attitude (e.g. Herek, 1987; Maio & Olson, 1994).<sup>2</sup> The focus is on the action-orientation of these

---

<sup>2</sup> Such research maintains the notion of an attitude as an internal, mental construct.

constructions, and how this is achieved interactionally (Edwards, 1995, 1997; Potter, 1996, 1998). For example, Marshall and Raabe (1993) illustrated how attitudes toward political ideologies varied within participants' interview responses. Whether they were 'for' or 'against' privatisation was dependent upon the question they were being asked. Indeed, their understanding of the term 'privatisation' was constructed in their responses, and so was itself open to negotiation.

### **Box 5.3. Ambivalence in attitudinal research**

Recent attitudinal research aims to account for the variability in individual responses through the notion of 'ambivalent' attitudes. These are broadly defined as inconsistent evaluations or beliefs toward an attitude object (Eagly & Chaiken, 1993: 123). For example, I may express a liking for chocolate because I enjoy its texture and flavour, but don't want to eat a lot of it as I don't wish to put on weight. The notion of ambivalence is thought to be important because it has implications for the predictive ability of models like the TPB (Sparks, Conner, James, Shepherd, & Povey, 2001). Attitudes that are high in ambivalence are less useful in predicting future intentions to eat.

While it may appear that attitudinal research can account for variability, it still relies on the notion of underlying cognitive constructs behind evaluations. TPB theory has been adapted to incorporate these findings, rather than questioning the nature of 'attitudes' themselves. The problem with this is that the distinction between attitudes and evaluations is even harder to define if attitudes have different dimensions. Again we may ask, at what point may an evaluative statement be regarded as an attitude, or part of an attitude?

Up to the present time, discursive work on evaluations has drawn primarily on interactions within interviews (e.g. Billig, 1992; Burningham, 1995; Marshall & Raabe, 1993). While these studies have seriously challenged social psychological work on attitudes, they demonstrate the need for research that examines evaluations in more naturalistic settings. Interview data produces evaluations within a particular research agenda and as part of responses to interviewer questions. The problems with this type of data become apparent when one considers evaluations to be contextualised, indexical practices. That is, they perform particular actions within a conversation, and are thus expressed *for* that specific moment in time. If we then look at an evaluation within an interview, we are looking at someone 'doing' an interview. While this can allow us to examine

some of the uses of evaluations, it doesn't tell us anything about how people use evaluations in their everyday lives.

CA research has also contributed to work in this area, and typically examines the organisation of evaluations and assessments in everyday talk. In particular, Anita Pomerantz' work (1978, 1984a, b) has examined the form and structure of agreements and disagreements with prior assessments. She also notes how speakers may shift the referent of the evaluation (i.e. the evaluative object) in order to perform activities such as accepting a compliment (Pomerantz, 1978). This work and other CA research on evaluations has been extremely useful in terms of detailing the patterns and features of evaluations in everyday conversation. It is in these daily practices that evaluations can be seen to be bound up with, and constitutive of, activities in interaction.

The topic of food and eating has not been a focus for either CA or DP work on evaluations, and hence *food and drink evaluations* have not been studied directly in research of this kind. One area in which eating has been studied in interaction is in the work of Blum-Kulka (Blum-Kulka, 1994, 1997), and of Fasulo and colleagues (Ochs, Pontecorvo, & Fasulo, 1996; Pontecorvo & Fasulo, 1999). This research is based on more ethnographic or sociological principles and examines the construction of cultural (Italian, American, Jewish) identities through talk about food. For example, Ochs *et al.*, (1996) look in detail at the socialisation practices within American and Italian family mealtimes. Food was constructed as nutrition, a reward, or as a source of pleasure, and these constructions were noted to differ across the different family types. Blum-Kulka's work (1994, 1997) also examines family practices, but focuses instead on how children are socialised into cultural rules around talk, such as topic changes and turn-taking. So while the setting here is the mealtime and family interaction, the practice of *talking food* is not the main concern.

The work of Blum-Kulka, and of Ochs and colleagues, has made a significant and important contribution to research on food and interaction. It complements CA and DA work, and highlights ways in which talk about food is bound up with local family practices, and cultural practices of talk and eating. This kind of research

paves the way for the current thesis, in which the focus moves to more specific and detailed practices of food talk. Here, I draw on psychological rather than sociological notions of eating, such as attitudes and taste preferences, to see how these are constructed and managed in daily conversation. So this is a more interactional and discursive focus than, say, the work of Ochs and colleagues.

**Box 5.4. A taste for an attitude**

It is worth reminding ourselves that in eating research, attitudes are directed toward a particular type of object: food. This is important because it feeds into (!) our cultural understandings of taste, eating, and food preferences. If we start to see a food evaluation as being more than just a representation, our sense of what a food evaluation *relates to* must also change. The underlying attitude in this case would be a food preference. Both the academic literature on food choice, and our personal intuition, suggests that these preferences are fairly stable. Of course, our preferences will change at different points in time – as we grow older, if we have a bad experience of food, or as we taste new flavours – though the predominant image is of a physiological, psychological, and cultural predisposition towards liking or disliking certain foods. My taste for curry, for example, is unlikely to change from one day to the next, and I *know* that I prefer a bhuna to a madras. So how can we account for this through arguing that evaluations are constructions? Does this mean that we *don't* have any preferences toward particular foods? I will return to this issue in chapter eight in the discussion of eating as an embodied practice. For now, it is helpful to raise these issues and keep them in mind as we proceed through the current chapter. What is at stake, literally, is our taste.

## ANALYSIS

The analysis in this chapter is divided into two sub-sections. The first illustrates the construction of food evaluations as part of everyday conversation. The important point here is that this construction is achieved at an interactional, rather than an individual, level. The second section builds on the first to demonstrate the range of activities within which food evaluations can be embedded. It demonstrates how food evaluations are *active* constructions. Together the analytic sections incorporate three aims: a) to examine food evaluations in terms of their placement in conversation, b) to consider their rhetorical design, and c) to examine the extent to which food evaluations are bound up with other activities in interaction. Ultimately the analysis leads to the conclusion that expressing an evaluation involves *more than just* expressing an opinion, and that this suggests we need to rethink our notions of food preferences and tastes.

### 5.1. Re-evaluating conversation

Using conversational data immediately highlights a very simple, but important point – that food evaluations are expressed in interaction. It is important for the reason that most current social psychological research treats evaluations as individual responses (see chapter 2). This is evident from both theoretical assumptions and the methodology used in attitude research. By contrast, discursive work has illustrated how evaluations are contested, negotiable activities in interaction (Billig, 1996; Edwards & Potter, 1992; Wetherell & Potter, 1992). As explained earlier, this research has predominantly drawn upon interactions within interviews. By examining food evaluations as they are used in *conversation*, we are in a better position to understand *where* and *when* these constructions are put into practice.

The first extract below demonstrates how food evaluations are expressed *as part of* conversation. It is taken from near the end of a family meal in which Lesley and Paul are the parents, and where the conversation turns to the food that is being eaten.



### EXTRACT 5.1: SKW/ J1b-M4 (410-422)

1. Lesley: >d'you like your< ↑sausage bits
2. (1.0)
3. Paul: >pardon<
4. Lesley: d'you ↑like them
5. Paul: → mmm: ↑they're alright >they're a bit< spi:cy
6. Lesley: >h↓m<
7. (1.0)
8. Paul: what are: ↓they
9. Lesley: °(mm)° just slice:s with-
10. (1.0)
11. Lesley: spices rather than:: (.) ↑n:ormal ones >(thought
12. they'd)< be: (0.4) nice for a ↑change
13. (5.0)

The first point to note about this extract is that Paul's evaluation (line 5) is the second part of a question-answer pair with Lesley's turn in line 1, or line 4, serving as the first part (Pomerantz, 1984a; Sacks, 1987). In some ways, then, we could compare Lesley's turn to a questionnaire item, in which the participant is asked for their 'attitude' towards a food. However, differences become immediately apparent when one considers the rest of the extract. One noticeable feature is the structure of Paul's response (line 5), consisting of an evaluation ('mmm they're alright') and a description ('they're a bit spicy').<sup>3</sup> Each part can be heard to support the other: the spiciness accounts for the food just being 'alright', which itself projects a probable hearing of 'a bit spicy'. In other words, both description and evaluation are constructed through reference to the other. Not only does Paul provide an evaluation he also gives a reason, or account, for it.

Another point of difference with questionnaire designs occurs when Paul asks, 'what are they' (line 8), in reference to the food that he has just assessed.

Attitudinal research tends to assume that participants already know the identity of

---

<sup>3</sup> I am aware that such a description could, in itself, be regarded as an evaluation. However, whether the 'spiciness' is a positive or negative evaluation is dependent on the rest of the turn and the interaction, so it cannot be treated here as an explicit evaluation in itself. Instead, evaluations are worked up as positive or negative (and to what degree) through the collaborative efforts of the speakers in the interaction.

the attitude object (Eagly & Chaiken, 1993, 1998) – yet here Paul has been able to evaluate the food without (apparently) knowing exactly what the food was.<sup>4</sup> Questioning the food in this way constructs it as being unidentifiable on sight alone, and thus of potentially dubious quality. The onus is shifted onto Lesley, who must then account for the sausages and does so in terms of familiar foods: ‘just slices with spices rather than normal ones’ (lines 9-11). Evaluating a food, then, is also implicated in the identification and description of the food itself; the nature of the attitude object cannot be taken at face value (Potter & Wetherell, 1988).

The next extract raises further conversational restraints on the expression of evaluations, which affect their construction. In particular, note how the other speakers orient to the evaluations and comments expressed by Simon. In this extract, Simon and Anna are hosts to their adult daughter, Jenny, and partner, Mike. They are currently eating the remains of a pavlova that had been served the previous evening. Anna is serving out portions of the dish, and Simon has already begun eating at this point.

EXTRACT 5.2: SKW/ D2b-M4 (1590-1609)

1. (3.0)
2. Simon: mmm↑mm
3. (3.0)
4. Simon: → ↓ah: (0.2) its definitely better [now its=
5. Mike: [↑ooh:: (0.6)=
6. Simon: =defrosted
7. Mike: =thank ↑you
8. (1.0)
9. Simon: mmm:↓
10. (1.2)
11. Simon: → I think that was the problem last ↓night Mike
12. (.) it was fro:zen=
13. Anna: =I kno:w, (0.4) well I hadn't- (0.4) realised
14. ↓that you see (.) I should've left it- (0.6)

---

<sup>4</sup> Regardless of whether or not Paul ‘knows’ what the food is, the line ‘what are they’ *displays* a lack of knowledge, and works here as a request for clarification. The concern then is not with what participants may ‘think’ about the food, but how this is displayed in, or suggested by, their talk.

15.                   put it out (0.2) when I got it  
 16.                   (0.6)  
 17.   Mike:   →   oh [I ↓thought it was quite ↑ni:ce last night  
 18.   Jenny:           [°(-- )°  
 19.   Simon:       it was very ↓nice though  
 20.                   (2.0)

Simon expresses a series of evaluative expressions here (lines 2, 4, 9, 11, and 19) which build an account of his enjoyment of the food (see also chapter eight). Part of the work involved in this construction is to make a comparison with the taste of the pavlova on the previous day: 'its definitely better now its defrosted' (line 4). So the evaluation is expressed in relation to an alternative, but unspecified, evaluation. For example, Simon doesn't say, 'the pavlova was horrible last night'. Instead, he makes reference to a 'problem' (line 10) and highlights the fact that the food was frozen as being the possible cause of this. This also shows how evaluations can often be built as relational qualities (cf. Zanna & Rempel, 1988). It is not that the pavlova is good *per se*, but that it is better than it was before.

The construction of Simon's collective evaluations is also aided by Mike's contribution to the conversation. Prefaced by an 'oh', his response on line 16 is marked as a contrast, or receipt of Simon's turns (Heritage, 1984b, in press). It displays the comments of both Anna and Simon as being unexpected. By saying 'I thought it was quite nice last night', he offers an evaluation in the form of a personal opinion<sup>5</sup> as an alternative point of view. This not only orients to Simon's (and Anna's, in collaboration) comments as being directly evaluative of the food, but also that they provide a negative assessment. In other words, by treating the reference to a 'problem' as an evaluation, Mike's turn is involved in its construction as such (Heritage, 1984a; Wooffitt, 2001). We can also note that it is a 'dispreferred' second assessment with a characteristic pause (line 15; Pomerantz, 1984a) and a change of state marker ('oh', Heritage, 1984b). This indicates that extra work is being done here by Mike to avoid similarly criticising the food.

---

<sup>5</sup> See chapter six on the distinction between different types of evaluative expression.

The final extract in this section demonstrates how other speakers can orient to the implications of expressed evaluations. With respect to food, the notion of consistent taste preferences becomes an issue in this sequence of talk. The extract here focuses on seven-year-old Helen, and her mother, Liz.

EXTRACT 5.3: SKW/ F1a-M3 (72-82)

1. (8.0)
2. Helen: I love that >↑chicken<
3. (2.4)
4. Liz: °thought you didn't ↑like chicken Helen°
5. (2.0)
6. Helen: → I like the one with: (.) this
7. (1.0)
8. Helen: well I ↑do like it (0.2) its okay: but- (0.6) out
9. of that and corned ↓beef I like corned beef °best°
10. Liz: °I see°
11. (6.0)

Evaluating food is typically regarded as a representation of a taste preference, and this is oriented to as a concern for the speakers in the above extract. Helen's expressed love of the chicken is challenged by the claim that she must have previously expressed otherwise ('thought you didn't like chicken Helen'; line 4). Whether or not this is the case, Liz orients to Helen as being accountable for expressing contradictory evaluations on different occasions. There is an orientation, therefore, to the notion of stable food preferences. This highlights how food evaluations can be treated as referring to individual 'traits' – as something consistent within the speaker (see also chapter 7 for a more detailed discussion on this issue).

A further point to note about this extract is the way in which Helen responds to Liz's question about her evaluation. There is a dramatic downgrading of evaluative terms, through which Helen manages her original 'love' of the chicken (line 2), to 'like' (line 6), and finally stating that 'its okay' (line 8). This is further achieved through a comparison with another food, corned beef. As with Simon's evaluation in terms of what the pavlova *was* like (extract 5.2), Helen offers an

evaluation of the chicken in relation to another food. In doing so, the evaluation is grounded in a specific, concrete formulation of taste, making it rhetorically stronger (Potter, 1996; Wooffitt, 1992). It defends against the counter claim that Helen may be contradicting previously expressed food preferences. In other words, it strengthens the reliability of her evaluations here.

The examples above demonstrate the interactional construction of food evaluations, and how they are bound up with conversational norms and practices. The situated, contextual nature of discourse prevents there from being a simple way of abstracting an underlying attitudinal construct(s). Moreover, since other speakers are also involved in their construction, the notion of evaluations as reflecting individual, mental attitudes becomes problematic. Before returning to this concern, I now focus on the interaction itself. If evaluations are bound by conversational practices, then they must also be bound up with activities achieved in talk, such as making offers, requests or persuading others. The next section examines how food evaluations can be involved in these activities in detail.

## **5.2. Variations on an evaluative theme**

Conversations are overwhelmingly sites of action – for example, arguing, requesting, and praising. As part of conversation, food evaluations are similarly involved in these activities. Expressing an evaluation also demonstrates an engagement with the interaction; it displays involvement in the event (Pomerantz, 1984a, b). The following examples are by no means an exhaustive list, but provide an illustration of the variety and depth of this involvement: compliments, offers and requests, complaints, obligations to eat, justification for not eating, persuasion, and claiming experience of food.

### ***5.2.1. Compliments and praises***

The first example is based on what may seem to be an obvious point – that one can compliment a cook by praising their food – though it is exactly its simplicity that is of interest here. The following two extracts explicate how this may be realised conversationally using food evaluations. In the first, Laura and her daughter Beth are hosts to their relatives, Doris and Bill. At this point, the family

has just finished their main course, and Bill is in the midst of a previous discussion.

EXTRACT 5.4: SKW/ G2a-M8 (315-319)

1. Doris: → that was lovely Lau:↓ra [thank ↓yo:u
2. Bill: [because eh-
3. Beth: it is [love:↓ly
4. Laura: [>did you enjoy that< there is
5. some >d'you ↑want< (0.2) there's a
6. bit mo:re >if you want<

The evaluation on line 1 ('that was lovely') works as a compliment by providing a reason for the thanking. By referring to the food itself – rather than, say, Doris' personal taste preferences – the compliment displays an 'objective' quality (see chapter 6). This is also qualified by Beth's repeat of the expression, providing corroboration with the initial praise (line 3; see also Potter, 1996: 158-162). However, it is the explicitness of the evaluation that highlights its use as a compliment. In saying 'that was lovely Laura', Doris brings attention to the food despite the conversation focusing on a different topic (as indicated by Bill, line 2). The direct reference marks it out as being an observable event, as something to be noted (Sacks, 1992). Confirmation of this is given by Laura, who by offering more food displays an orientation to the evaluation as being *more* than just an evaluation.

The next example illustrates how the use of evaluations as compliments may be an issue for the speakers themselves. Here, Jenny has just brought a cake to the table for dessert.

EXTRACT 5.5: SKW/ D2a-M3 (1024-1031)

1. Simon: → ve:ry well iced like- (0.2) uhm:: nice
2. (0.2) nicely uh:: (0.2) °iced°
3. (1.0)
4. Jenny: you don't have to say ↓that Dad
5. >cos I didn't make ↑it<
6. Anna: o::h its terrible isn't it

7. Jenny: ye [a::h  
 8. Anna: [Jenny could have done better than this:

Characterised by frequent pauses and 'uhm's', Simon's initially strong evaluation ('very well iced', line 1) soon appears disjointed and repetitive. By referring only to the icing the turn seems to be overly exaggerated, and Jenny orients to this as being uttered merely out of an obligation to praise the chef (lines 4 and 5).

'Having' to say something complimentary about the food suggests that the evaluation is insincere. This construction of 'real' versus contrived assessments is taken one step further in Anna's turn, in which she makes reference to the cake being 'terrible' (line 6). Situated directly after Jenny's admittance to not making the cake, it is hearable as highlighting the potential use of food evaluations as complimentary devices.

### 5.2.2. 'Fishing' for food

Analysis of the data revealed that an offer of food would sometimes follow an evaluation of the item. Since offers generally follow requests (Sacks, 1992), this suggests that the second speaker is orienting to the evaluation *as if* it were an indirect request for more food. Returning to extract 5.4, the focus here is on Laura's response to the preceding compliments.

#### EXTRACT 5.4: SKW/ G2a-M8 (315-319)

1. Doris: that was lovely Lau:↓ra [thank ↓yo:u  
 2. Bill: [because eh-  
 3. Beth: it is [love:↓ly  
 4. Laura: → [ >did you enjoy that< there is  
 5. some >d'you ↑want< (0.2) there's a  
 6. bit mo:re >if you want<

The main point to note is the construction of both the offers of food, and the expression 'did you enjoy that', in personal terms. By alluding to the praise as being indicative of a personal pleasure, the offer of food is made relevant to Doris. It is something that she *personally* enjoyed, and so might wish to have more. This can be contrasted with, for example, talk about qualities of the food itself. If this had been the case, Laura may have made a general offer open to all speakers: for

example, 'yes it is lovely, would anyone like some more?' Personalising it as she does in lines 5 and 6 not only singles out Doris, it also prevents Laura from potentially appearing boastful about her own cooking (Pomerantz, 1978).

It is also worth noting here that the construction of the food evaluation as a 'fishing' device (see Pomerantz, 1980) is achieved through the sequential placement of the speakers' turns.<sup>6</sup> By following Doris's turn (and as unlikely to be oriented to Beth's since this is in overlap), Laura's offer is hearable as relevant to the evaluation. The evaluation 'that was lovely' (line 1) is in itself not an indirect request, but *becomes* one through the second speakers' orientation. Hence, it is through the interactional features of the conversation that the evaluation is treated as a potential request for more food.

The next extract also highlights this orientation to fishing for more food, though there are no explicit compliments in this interaction. This section of talk is taken from near the end of the main course.

#### EXTRACT 5.6: SKW/ J1a-M2 (515-521)

1. (2.0)  
2. Lesley: °mmm that was a ↑nic:e quiche (.) I ↑liked that°  
3. (0.6)  
4. Lesley: °mm-↑hm°  
5. Paul: → some left  
6. (1.0)  
7. Lesley: °mmm (0.2) no not for ↓me (thanks ---)°

The expression 'some left' (line 5) is particularly significant here in the way it makes the extra food relevant to this point of the conversation. Paul displays an orientation to Lesley's evaluation (line 2) as indicating a potential desire for more food. As such, it works as an indirect offer, retrospectively constructed by Lesley's refusal on line 7. In other words, Lesley displays an understanding of

---

<sup>6</sup> Note that the use of the term 'fishing' is rather different from Pomerantz's (1980) usage, in which she analyses shared orientations in talk as a way of eliciting information from another speaker.



Paul's turn as being an offer to take more food. As with the compliments, it is the explicit nature of the food evaluation that marks it out as something to be attended to. Speakers have the opportunity to orient to food evaluations, since they are part of the conversational order. Exactly *how* this is done is managed as an interactional concern.

In the final extract for this section, speakers' evaluations of the food are treated as directly oriented to the purpose of 'fishing for food'. Although one speaker (Debbie) explicitly requests more food, it is the way in which this is done – and Helen's subsequent turn – that is of interest here. Prior to this section of talk, Brian mistakes the dumplings (a suet-based savoury scone) as being Yorkshire puddings (a similar, though lighter, dish made from oven-risen batter)<sup>7</sup>. At this point he expresses the 'realisation' that they were not the food that he had previously thought them to be.

#### EXTRACT 5.7: SKW/F2b-M7 (481-495)

1. Brian: =that's what's flippin' ↓wrong that's why I think
2. there's a lo:t I've eaten sixteen blummin'
3. dumplings here:
4. Liz: heh heh heh heh
5. Martin: I've eaten at ↑least a [hundred °↓dumplings°
6. Liz: [↑heh heh heh
7. Debbie: → ↑I'll have ↓some (Dad) I like-
8. Helen: → I love dumpling:s
9. Liz: okay you ↓guys: (0.4) <stop for a [ging>
10. Helen: [°cos I (am
11. a dump[ling)°
12. Liz: [you're ↑alright (.) [you're gonna have some=
13. Martin: [I've had enou↑gh (.)=
14. Liz: [=pudding now in a minute
15. Martin: [=I can't eat any more ((burping noise))

<sup>7</sup> The use of these descriptions or glosses of the food (also used later in the thesis) is included for the benefit of readers who may be unfamiliar with the food items. However, I am aware that my descriptions work to construct them in a particular way, which may be very different to the participants' orientations to the food. Hence, they should be read with caution and in conjunction with the extracts. What is more important is how the participants construct the food and the defining features (i.e. being a lot to eat) for the interaction.

Both Brian and Martin talk about how many dumplings they have eaten, and this accounts for why Martin, at least, 'can't eat any more' (line 15). This in itself orients to the potential that there may have been a requirement to eat more food, and it may work to prevent such an offer being made. That this talk works as a defence against offers of food is evident in Debbie's and Helen's subsequent turns. Debbie's request to 'have some' signals a contrastive stance, and implies that she hasn't had as much as the others, or 'enough' for her own satisfaction (cf. line 13). In other words, it works to prevent Brian's turn as being treated as representative of the other family members.

We can note, however, that Liz refers to 'you guys', suggesting that more than one speaker is 'foraging' for food at this point. Helen's expressed preference for dumplings could also be treated as an indirect request for more food. By stating that she 'loves' dumplings, the implication is that she would want to eat more of the same food. Without stating this directly, she does not display quite such a desperate plea as Debbie. Within this part of the interaction, however, it is treated as having the same underlying motive: to get more food. This demonstration of how speakers *themselves* can orient to the activities of food evaluations is further evidence of their extended use in conversation.

### 5.2.3. Complaints

Evaluating a food negatively is one way in which to make a criticism about food or someone's cooking. What is more interesting, however, is how speakers use *positive* evaluations to indirectly make a complaint or express dissatisfaction. The following two extracts show how this can implicate not only the food, but also the actions of others in relation to the food. The first example is from section 5.1, in which we earlier saw how expressing an evaluation is bound up with the organisation of conversational turns.

#### EXTRACT 5.2: SKW/ D2b-M4 (1590-1609)

1. (3.0)
2. Simon: mmm↑mm
3. (3.0)

4. Simon: → ↓ah: (0.2) its definitely better [now its=  
5. Mike: [↑ooh:: (0.6)=  
6. Simon: =defrosted  
7. Mike: =thank ↑you  
8. (1.0)  
9. Simon: mmm:↓  
10. (1.2)  
11. Simon: → I think that was the problem last ↓night Mike (.)  
12. it was fro:zen=  
13. Anna: =I know, (0.4) well I hadn't- (0.4) realised  
14. ↓that you see (.) I should've left it- (0.6)  
15. put it out (0.2) when I got it  
16. (0.6)  
17. Mike: → oh [I ↓thought it was quite ↑ni:ce last night  
18. Jenny: [°(-- )°  
19. Simon: it was very ↓nice though  
20. (2.0)

When we last saw this extract, I noted how Simon's evaluation of the food is partly constructed through Mike's contrastive turn.<sup>8</sup> That is, it suggests that Simon had made a complaint or criticism of the food being frozen the previous night. It is interesting to note that the negotiation of this 'complaint' is carefully managed through positive evaluations of the food in the current situation. We can note, too, how Anna orients to the 'problem' as being her responsibility (lines 12-14). She treats it as due to her actions; that she was directly to blame for how the food tasted. Yet this food was bought, rather than home-made, so Anna's involvement in the preparation was minimal. Indeed, there is no suggestion that *anyone else* 'should have' taken it out of the freezer sooner – it is treated unproblematically as being Anna's fault.

Criticisms of food – as an activity of food evaluations – have important implications in light of family members' responsibilities, and of interaction more generally. They can be used to indirectly (or directly) construct the rights and

<sup>8</sup> This interactional construction through the sequencing of turns was also seen in the sub-section on requests and offers, in which Doris' 'that was lovely' is subsequently oriented to as an indirect request for more food.

identities of different speakers. In the extract above no question was raised about Anna's role as food provider, so we can see this being constructed as a local identity. By this I mean that it is constructed *here and now*, and for the locally situated activities of the interaction. As such, local identities are flexible and rhetorically organised constructions (Antaki & Widdicombe, 1998). They can be managed and reconstructed on an immediately sequential level (though see Davies & Harré, 1990, for a different argument) and so are also negotiated between speakers. While there is not the space to say more about this issue here, it raises potential possibilities for future discursive research on food talk.

The next extract demonstrates how the expression of a food preference can be used to display dissatisfaction with the actions of another speaker. In this case, Bill is in the kitchen making toast for his wife Doris (the couple are staying with Laura and Beth). Prior to line 1, Beth notes that Bill might be burning the toast.

EXTRACT 5.8: SKW/G2a-M7 (787-802)

1. Doris: → [I like ↑pale ↓toa:st
2. Beth: I know he's b↑urnt [it
3. Laura: [don't shout °(----)°
4. Beth: no its not ↓pale:: (0.4) the other side's
5. >really really< ↓burnt
6. Doris: oh- (0.4) G:od=
7. Laura: =its cos he's put it ↑right up close to it
8. Bill: its not pale its still bre- its [still ↑white
9. Doris: → [Bill ↑I like
10. <pa:le ↓toa::st>
11. Bill: → I ↑know what you li:ke
12. Laura: °(---)° ((b'ground))
13. Beth: yeah >well he's done< (0.4) .hh ↑three pieces
14. are >really really< black and one piece
15. kind of: (.) not-
16. Doris: he can ↑eat it then

What is significant about this extract is the way in which Doris' expressions of liking pale toast (lines 1 and 9) contrast directly with Beth's descriptions of what

the toast is 'actually' like (lines 2, 4, and 14). This works to build dissociation between the food that was requested and that provided. It further reflects badly on Bill, suggesting that perhaps this is a deliberate action on his part. As Doris is so explicitly expressing her preference for pale toast, why would he be preparing that which is darker? It is interesting to note that she never directly says what she *doesn't* like. In doing so, she avoids appearing as a 'fussy eater', or as someone who is 'hard to please'.

Note how Bill then takes up the potential complaint in two ways. First, he offers an alternative description of the toast as being 'still white' (line 8). This not only counters Beth's claims that the toast is burnt, but also attends to the expressed importance of the colour. Being the extreme version of pale, 'white' displays – quite literally – Bill's efforts to meet Doris' request. The second way in which he takes up the complaint is by directly addressing Doris' preference (line 11). By emphasising his existing 'knowledge' of her likes, he orients to her evaluation as being redundant or unnecessary. There is no need to tell him after so many years of marriage. The implication by Doris is that he would not take her preferences into account despite being 'reminded' of them.

#### *5.2.4. Obligations to eat*

The previous type of activity – complaining – illustrated how food evaluations are bound up with the practical management of food and eating. In this section I examine this further, as the negotiation of food becomes of immediate importance within the family meals. It is generally considered to be the case that parents are the providers of the food, and have a responsibility to make sure that their children eat it. Similarly, children have an obligation to eat the food that parents give them (De Bourdeaudhuij, 1997). This may be considered as a relevant expectation in family meals, though is not always the case, nor need it be treated as such. What we shall consider here, then, is how evaluations may be used to justify having *not* eaten one's food, and how this may highlight potential obligations. The first example of this is taken from near the end of a family meal, in which Lesley makes a comment about food left on her son's, Chris's, plate.

EXTRACT 5.9: SKW/ J1b-M3 (441-448)

1. (10.0)
2. Lesley: you ↓struggling (with ↑that)?
3. Chris: → °I- (0.4) don't like carrots:°
4. (2.0)
5. Lesley: you don't like the ↓carrot:s
6. Chris: °no°
7. Lesley: but you didn't ↑have man::y
8. (10.0)

The relevance of Chris's evaluation occurs here as an account for not eating (or 'struggling' with, line 2) his food. As such, he displays not only an expression of a 'dislike' for carrots, but also that there is a *need* for him to account for his behaviour. Lesley's subsequent orientation to the evaluation confirms this, in which she specifies the source of the dislike, as being '*the* carrots' (line 5, emphasis added). In doing so, a potential complaint of the food is constructed. With a particular focus on the evaluation, it appears as if it is the food, rather than the evaluator, who is to blame. Lesley then counters this (line 7) with reference to quantity – highlighting again Chris's obligation to eat all of his meal. What this extract shows is that evaluations can be used to justify not eating one's food, and that this also highlights potential obligations of the speakers.

Justifications for not eating one's food may often occur as a response to the expressed obligation of the speaker. As the previous section illustrated, there is the possibility that such a justification could involve a complaint about the food. In this instance, it may be necessary to avoid this by using personalised evaluations. Consider the following extract. Brian and his daughter, Debbie, are having a dispute over the choice of dessert.

EXTRACT 5.10: SKW/ F1b-M2 (527-535)

1. Debbie: ↑you said I °can't have° chocolate chip ca:ke
2. (0.2) ↑WHY:::?
3. Brian: why can't you have tootie-↑fruitie cake
4. Debbie: → because I don't like the <tootie- (0.2) f::ruitie
5. ↓cake>

6. (1.4)  
 7. Brian: sh- hhh:::  
 8. (2.0)  
 9. Brian: Deb (0.4) sit ↓down

The notion of food preferences being linked to eating practices is used here to great effect. Debbie's reason for not having the 'tootie-fruitie cake' is simply that she doesn't like it (line 4). There is no further justification for this – it works in itself as a plausible account. This is supported by the fact that Brian doesn't directly challenge the evaluation. There is, however, some display of frustration (seen in the cut-off word and extended out-breath, line 7), at having been 'beaten' in this battle of wills. The management of food has been resolved, at least temporarily, through the justification of what *not* to eat.

The following extract shows a rather ironic instance of how an evaluation may be used to negotiate the potential obligations of the speaker. Here, the usual parent-child roles have been reversed, as 23-year-old Jenny teases her father, Simon, about not eating his food.

EXTRACT 5.11: SKW/ D5a-M8 (1801-1812)

1. Jenny: >have you< finished Dad?  
 2. Simon: yes: (.) thank you very ↓much pet  
 3. Jenny: °oh:: and you haven't <finished your ↓sprouts>°  
 4. Simon: I've- (.) I know [I hav(hh)en't finished all=  
 5. Jenny: [heh heh heh  
 6. Simon: =m(h)y spro(hh)uts d(hh)e-  
 7. Jenny: well they're the best ↑bit  
 8. Simon: I know  
 9. Mike: hhhheh  
 10. Simon: → they were ↑actually very good  
 11. Jenny: °hheh heh°  
 12. (2.0)

Despite the element of teasing in this sequence (lines 3 and 5), an account is still provided by Simon for not finishing his sprouts (see Drew, 1987, on po-faced receipts of teases). He achieves this by both displaying an agreement with Jenny

('I know', line 8), and by his own evaluation of them as being 'actually very good' (line 10). The evaluation here rhetorically defends against possible counter-arguments (Billig, 1996), by suggesting that it is not distaste that prevents Simon from finishing the food. In particular, as Clift (2001) has argued, the term 'actually' suggests that the evaluation works against expectations. In agreeing that they are 'very good' or 'the best bit', Simon heads off the potential claim that one may have an *obligation* to eat one's food, irrespective of taste preferences. His account confirms the need for an explanation, despite the reversal of 'roles' constructed in this interaction.

### 5.2.5. Persuading others to eat

The obligation to eat one's food can be further negotiated by the persuasion of others. In this case, it is not the consumer who expresses the evaluation, but the person doing the persuading. This is often, though not always, the parent, since it was noted above that they have an obligation to provide food for the child(ren). Positive evaluations may be involved here as providing a reason *for* eating the food (cf. how negative evaluations often justify the opposite). The extract below provides an example of parents trying to persuade their teenage daughter, Viv, to eat particular foods.

#### EXTRACT 5.12: SKW/ J1b-M4 (160-172)

1. Paul: [(---) (haven't had) chips for °a ↑long time°
2. (3.0)
3. Paul: they're nice as ↑well w- (.) ↑what kind are they
4. (1.0)
5. Lesley: uhm::: (0.6) they ↑are: (0.2) Asda-↓something but
6. I'm °(not quite sure)°
7. Paul: >they're ↑nice<
8. (3.0)
9. Paul: → >there's< your favourite ↑salad here Viv
10. (1.8)
11. Lesley: wa[nt ↑some
12. Viv: [°mm° (0.6) no ↓thanks:
13. (3.0)



The first two evaluations seen in this extract are involved in the act of complimenting, or showing appreciation of the food (see section 5.2.1). However, it is the third evaluation on line 9 with which we are concerned here. Note how this is expressed in terms of someone else's 'favourite' food, rather than an evaluation of the food that one has eaten. By highlighting the presence of this food, Paul marks it as being of particular relevance or importance for Viv on this occasion. The suggestion is that she would be interested to know that the salad was available, and that she would want to eat some of it. The fact that a request is not forthcoming is attended to by Lesley (line 11), when she makes a more direct offer. Both parents are therefore orienting to the business of persuading Viv to eat the food. Again, the evaluation (on line 9) is also treated as an offer by Viv herself, demonstrating the sequential organisation of food evaluation talk.

It is not only parents who may express an evaluation as part of persuasions, or suggestions to eat. Not eating one's food can be an accountable issue in any food interaction, for reasons including issues of politeness, and being actively involved in the meal. The extract below shows a daughter (Jenny) holding her mother (Anna) accountable for not finishing her food. At this point in the conversation, Simon and Jenny are trying to fix a plastic toy from a Christmas cracker – so there are two overlapping streams of talk here.

#### EXTRACT 5.13: SKW/ D6a-M9 (1368-1379)

1. Anna: would anybody else like the rest of my bit-
2. heh heh
3. Jenny: heh [heh
4. Mike: [heh heh heh hhe hhe hheh
5. Jenny: just [(---) Dad
6. Simon: [cannot get this thing back together An↑na
7. Anna: heh heh
8. Simon: can't get this thing=
9. Jenny: → =have you not ↑finished it? (.) °its:° lovely
10. (0.8)
11. Anna: I ↑>couldn't< eat anymore:
12. Jenny: ↓oh: (0.4) well don't get any pudding ↑then
13. Anna: I'm all bunged up you ↑see ((said with blocked

Jenny's orientation to Anna's turn is slightly delayed due to the distraction of the toy, seen in lines 2 to 7. By questioning her 'not finishing it' (line 8), there is again an attendance to the expectation that one should eat all of one's meal. A reason must therefore be provided for why Anna *hasn't* eaten her meal, despite her being the food provider in this instance. What is particularly interesting is how Jenny then expresses an evaluation ('its lovely') as a supplement to her question. The implication is that a pleasant taste is reason enough for eating the food. An alternative justification is being full (or no longer hungry), and Anna refers to this when she says she 'couldn't eat anymore' (line 10).

### 5.2.6. Experience claims

The final discursive activity to be discussed here is that of expressing knowledge, or experience of, a particular food or drink (see also Pomerantz, 1984b). The examples used here are concerned with alcoholic drinks, which are perhaps more suited to such an activity, particularly if children or teenagers are involved. Experience with alcohol is a predominantly adult activity, associated with certain category-bound features (Sacks, 1992), such as maturity, responsibility, and independence. Implying that one has drunk alcohol on a number of occasions suggests that these qualities may be attributed to the speaker.

The example below demonstrates this role of food and drink evaluations. In this case, evaluations have also been used to defend against a challenge to the knowledge claim. Here, 11-year-old Beth asks her mother, Laura, if she can try some of the red wine that the others are drinking. Also present at this meal are Beth's Aunt (Doris) and Uncle (Bill); Beth is the only child.

#### EXTRACT 5.14: SKW/ G2a-M8 (740-749)

1. Beth: can I try some ↑wi:ne
2. Laura: °oh::: (.) (↑mm-hm)°
3. (1.0)
4. Beth: → don't [↑like red really
5. Laura: [its very nice:

6. (1.0)
7. Laura: ↑well=
8. Bill: =how d'you know (0.6) have you ↑ever tried it
9. Beth: I've tried it about a ↑million times
10. → I hate all ↑red (.) it's too strong

Beth's request to 'try some wine' (line 1) portrays her here as a minor, needing permission to drink alcohol. Her subsequent evaluation on line 4 is therefore a possible anomaly, contrasting sharply with the initial display of inexperience. It suggests that she has drunk wine before, and enough to evaluate a particular type of wine (red wine). The reference to 'red' is particularly noticeable, by virtue of it being a familiar and abbreviated expression. By using an evaluation in this way, Beth re-constructs her identity in terms of an experienced wine drinker – enough, at least, to distinguish between red and white varieties.

The evaluation is then taken up by Bill, who directly challenges the experiential basis for the claim ('how do you know, have you ever tried it'; line 8; see also chapter 7 on challenges). Beth's response to this is to upgrade her evaluation using both stronger terms, and an 'objective' judgement ('its too strong'; Pomerantz, 1986). The extreme case formulations here are rhetorical, working to qualify her evaluation, and demonstrate a commitment to the claim (Edwards, 2000). Having tried it a 'million times', and hating 'all red' wine, is extremely unlikely considering Beth's young age. What these achieve then is to defend the identity being constructed by invoking 'factual' evidence (Potter, 1996). Therefore the evaluation has been used here in order to both proclaim, and support, Beth's status as being familiar with alcohol.

The final example below similarly works on the experience-evaluation link, in which an older daughter expresses knowledge about types of alcoholic beverages. This section of talk features Sandra, her daughters, Julie (19 years old) and Amy, and son, Darren.

### EXTRACT 5.15: SKW/ K1a-M2 (1695-1705)

1. Julie: you don't [drink vodka an-
2. Amy: [°(I don't want water)°
3. Julie: >↓straight< you drink it neat
4. (1.0)
5. Darren: >do you<
6. Julie: → but its horri↓ble
7. (1.2)
8. Sandra: °a[h:°
9. Amy: [I h:ope [you've not trie:d it ↓young lady
10. Julie: [↑not on its own:
11. (2.0)

A reference to the way that 'you drink' vodka (line 3) presents Julie as one who has either drunk it herself, or who is particularly knowledgeable on the subject. Either way, she may have to account for the basis of her knowing this, and indeed Darren suggests that clarification may be necessary here (line 5). It is at this point that the evaluation ('but its horrible'; line 6) constructs, and confirms, the experience. Amy highlights the implications of this, in a style reminiscent of Bill in extract 5.14. This then becomes the issue for the participants, not the evaluation per se. The example thus shows how evaluations can be used to both construct and manage claims to experience of a particular food or drink. This not only reveals something about the activities within which evaluations can be involved, but also about our understanding of taste and eating practices.

### Chapter summary

This chapter has shown that evaluations are not free standing representations, but are embedded in, and part of the business of, daily interaction. The extent of this involvement can only be fully appreciated when one considers the rhetorical, interactional nature of discourse - something that is often obscured in more traditional methods. Although recent attitude theories have grown in complexity, they have yet to capture the sorts of constructive and action oriented features of evaluations documented in this chapter.

#### **Box 5.4. Serving suggestions**

Food can be evaluated to serve with any one of the following actions:

- ☛ To make a compliment or praise
- ☛ To make an offer or a request for food
- ☛ To make a complaint
- ☛ Showing an obligation to eat
- ☛ To persuade others to eat
- ☛ Claiming experience of food or drink
- ☛ Any combination of the above...

The picture of food evaluations as flexible and locally organized has implications for the application of this research. The first thing to note is that there is no expectation that the pattern found here will generalise to other settings. Quite the contrary; what has been highlighted is the way evaluations are bound up with other actions. In a different setting – dining out with a close friend, say, or eating in a staff canteen – the sorts of actions that food is embedded in might be quite different. The normative backdrop may be different (is the food eaten as a one off, as a daily routine) allowing for different contrastive evaluations; is the food to be got out of the way, or topicalised as a notable part of an evening. The point of this chapter is not to show a standard pattern to eating evaluations (although certain patterns might be identified); rather it is to start to show how evaluations may have different roles.

The flexible, variable, and constructed nature of evaluative terms makes it difficult to sustain the notion that a speaker has a particular, enduring attitude toward food. There is no neutral setting in which to establish the nature of the food preference and therefore to assess whether an assessment is representative or not. The suggestion offered here is that it is more heuristic, and closer to the logic of the materials, to move away from the idea of an underlying attitude. In evaluating a food discursively, one constructs the notion of ‘taste’ by reference to the food itself. Having a food preference, then, becomes something to be worked up in talk, rather than being measurable through rating scales. Evaluating a food is achieved locally and conversationally, in collaboration with other speakers as part

of particular activities. In essence, the evaluation becomes part of the interaction and from which its situated understanding is constructed.

The applications and implications of the analyses in this chapter will be discussed in the final chapter of the thesis. For now we can note that the aim is to demonstrate how food evaluations should not just be treated as representations of 'real' bodily or food states<sup>9</sup>. The focus has been shifted to what these evaluations achieve in interaction. This takes our attention to the particular construction, form and use of evaluative terms, which will be the focus of the next chapter. We have seen here *what* can be done with evaluations – we now want to see *how* this is achieved in more detail.

---

<sup>9</sup> Here I am not suggesting that food evaluations are representations of bodily or mental states, but am attending to the assumption in the majority of food research that this is what they are.

Dishes from the Orient(ation):Subjectivity and specificity in food evaluations

‘What’s next?’

‘ “Little Latin Lupe Lu”.’

I groan.

‘Mitch Ryder and the Detroit Wheels?’ Dick asks.

‘No. The Righteous Brothers.’ You can hear the defensiveness in Barry’s voice. He has obviously never heard the Mitch Ryder version.

‘Oh. Oh well. Never mind.’ Dick would never go so far as to tell Barry that he’s messed up, but the implication is clear.

‘What?’ says Barry, bristling.

‘Nothing.’

‘No, come on. What’s wrong with the Righteous Brothers?’

‘Nothing. I just prefer the other one,’ says Dick mildly.

‘Bollocks.’

‘How can it be bollocks to state a preference?’ I ask.

‘If it’s the wrong preference, its bollocks.’

Nick Hornby, *High Fidelity*, (1995: 44).

It should now be clear that although the thesis focuses on food evaluations in conversation, much more is at stake here. Talking food is also talking social interaction. The previous chapter examined how food evaluations are constructed in, and bound up with, activities in interaction. Food evaluations *do* things, and this is a result of their being situated within specific conversational practices. The focus on the action-orientation of evaluations raises further questions about the form and style of evaluative terms. Are the same kinds of evaluations used in different activities? How do other speakers respond to these expressions? This leads us onto the next step in the analysis: to look more closely at different evaluative expressions.

This chapter will begin by addressing existing discursive work on evaluations from both CA and DP perspectives. This will build on and develop the discussion from chapter 5, and will focus more closely on how existing research has largely overlooked the use of particular terms in evaluative expressions. There is also a concern with the lack of attention to *domains* of evaluations (such as the domains

of food, films, or people). By this I mean the particular topic areas in which evaluations can be expressed, and which constitute different kinds of practices and accountabilities. Similar problems with the neglect of specific expressions will also be noted with attitude research, particularly with respect to the use and content of questionnaire designs. I then propose some broad distinctions between evaluative expressions and their uses, and the analysis will show how these construct and enable different concerns and accountabilities in talk. Etymological work will be considered in the discussion section as providing a sense of perspective on our current use and understanding of evaluations. The chapter ends with a comparison between food evaluations and emotion terms as working with rhetorical contrasts to achieve particular constructions of mind and body.

#### **Box 6.1 Ingredients for chapter 6**

- Problems with discursive work on evaluations
- Problems with notions of food preferences and taste
- Subjective vs. objective evaluations
- Category vs. item evaluations
- Orienting to 'accuracy' in food evaluation
- Modalization, category entitlement and consensus
- Etymological and rhetorical contrasts

#### **Discursive psychology and conversation analysis**

In the previous chapter I discussed how discursive psychology has already developed a thorough and detailed challenge to attitude research. Likewise, CA work on assessments has considered a range of issues such as second assessments and disagreements (Pomerantz, 1984a) and the building of local context in conversation (Goodwin & Goodwin, 1992). This work is primarily based on the structure and organisation of turns in talk, and concerned with how evaluations and assessments have particular functions to play in this organisation. The focus in the present chapter is on the use of particular evaluation *terms* applied to food and drink, and it is here that DP and CA approaches have so far had less to say. This is not to underestimate the implications and advancements of current research in this area. Rather, I hope to use the example of food evaluations – as specific, occasioned practices – to demonstrate how further developments can be made in this field.



Two concerns with existing research on evaluations can be noted here. First, although much has been achieved in CA research in examining the detail of evaluative *turns* in talk (e.g. Gardner, 1997; Heritage, 1989; Pomerantz, 1978, 1984a, b), little has been made of the distinction between different evaluative *terms*. The focus has primarily been on the sequential organisation of evaluations as a general class of terms, rather than on how these are constructed. For example, Pomerantz' (1984a) work on second assessments examines the organisation of evaluative terms that display agreement or disagreement with a prior speaker.

Some extensions to this work have focused on the different types of evaluations or assessments, such as interrogatives and assertions (Pomerantz, 1984a, b), and how these are involved in the organisation of assessment sequences. However, these point to differences between types of assessments, rather than differences between assessment terms (see also Goodwin & Goodwin, 1992). Similarly, Pomerantz highlights the importance of the referent of an evaluation (i.e. that to which the evaluation refers). This is an important contribution to work on evaluations, though the concern here is that it doesn't go on to examine the implications and accountabilities of using different referents or evaluations for the speakers involved.

The treatment of evaluations as a generic category of discourse is partly a result of using existing social psychological expressions as a basis from which to challenge our understanding of these concepts. By referring to evaluations as a category of expressions, we are better placed to engage with other researchers in the field by using the same construct. This is particularly true of DP, which aims to challenge current research on attitudes, for instance. CA has typically used the term 'assessments', though for the purposes of the thesis this is synonymous with the term 'evaluations'. The consequences of this, however, are that researchers have tended to treat evaluations as if they were a broadly homogenous category.

The second concern is that both DP and CA have paid relatively little attention to the *domain* of objects to which evaluations are applied. Put another way, the

domains in which evaluations are used are treated as broadly interchangeable. By 'domain' I mean the topic area or interaction in which the evaluation is produced. In the present study, the domain might be termed 'food discourse' or 'mealtime talk'. The terms 'good' or 'nice' may, then, have a different understanding in different domains or in reference to specific objects. For example, one may have a different understanding of 'good food' as opposed to a 'good film'. The sense-making practices of speakers may be different according to both the referent object and the interaction in which the evaluation is expressed. The generic use of evaluations has already been noted as a problem in discursive work (Potter, 1998), but to date little has been done to adequately address this issue. What is needed is empirical work to examine evaluations and their use within specific domains.

### **Attitude research and expressions of taste**

Concerns with different terms and their assumed meanings are also seen within attitudinal research in psychology. For instance, references to individual consumption behaviour often use three main constructs: 'preference', 'choice' and 'liking'. Food 'preference' refers to the selections people make on the basis of the choice of food available (Logue, 1991; Rozin, Pelchat, & Fallon, 1986). If all foods are equally accessible and available, then the preferred food is that which is selected. This is not to be confused with food 'choice', which depends on the availability and ease of obtaining particular foods. So a food may be chosen because it is cheaper, or easier to purchase locally. The third expression – 'liking' – appears to correspond most directly to the notion of individually evaluating a food positively. For example, Rozin *et al.*, (1986) use the example of a dieter who may " 'prefer' (choose) lettuce to cake, but like cake better" (1986: 86). The implication here is that this 'liking' is the underlying motivation that may be 'revealed' when the consequences of eating particular foods (for example, weight gain) are alleviated (for a slightly different take on this issue, see Logue, 1991).

The confusion begins when one tries to tease apart the pragmatic differences between these terms and expressions, and to consider how speakers make sense of them in practice. For example, how would one distinguish between the sorts of practices achieved by use of the expression 'I like this' as opposed to 'I prefer this'? Could we assume that speakers are attending to the same understandings as

those of the researcher?<sup>1</sup> My concern here is that while researchers may theoretically consider the potentially ambiguous nature of expressions, this is not attended to in practice. The use of questionnaires and fixed-response ratings means that it is difficult for both respondents and researchers to attend to this issue. For instance, there is no space for respondents to articulate their understandings or interpretations of an evaluative term on a questionnaire, nor is there the suggestion that such an elaboration would be appropriate or necessary.

A good way to demonstrate this problem is to use an example from the data corpus (taken from the non-family group meals). In the extract below, Katie and Jenny are guests at Lynn's house for dinner. At this point in the conversation, Lynn has just offered to buy another bottle of wine from the local shop, to mild protests and cries of 'do you mind?' from her guests:

EXTRACT 6.1: SKW/MG3-16-4-99 (1526-1539)

1. Lynn:           ↑no! (0.2) ↑God no (.) course not (0.4) >what do
2.                       you ↓want< (0.2) white or red
3. Jenny:           either
4.                       (1.0)
5. Jenny:           whatever's [cheapest (.) hehh
6. Katie:                               [red?
7.                       (0.8)
8. Lynn:           heh heh [heh (that's --)
9. Katie: →                            [I prefer red (0.6) I ↑like white,
10.                       (0.4) [but I pre↓fer red [yeah
11. Lynn:                               [that alright?
12. Jenny:   [mmm
13. Lynn:           >okay<
14.                       (1.0)

In order to respond to Lynn's question (lines 1-2), both Katie and Jenny may also have to display some consideration of what the others might like to drink. Note

<sup>1</sup> The importance of these questions lies in the fundamental assumptions of the discursive approach taken in this thesis. Giving precedence to how speakers construct and define food evaluations allows me to examine how eating practices are embedded within conversational activity. My concern here is to show how these definitions are a central part of the interaction and of speakers' sense-making practices.

how this is achieved through a more accommodating response (Jenny's 'either', line 3), a pause (line 4), and hesitant response (line 6). Katie also negotiates this dilemma through the expression of what she 'likes' and 'prefers' (lines 9-10) as two candidate options. Stating first that she prefers red implies that this is what she would select, given the choice. This ties in with the psychological definition of preference as incorporating aspects of choice, but note how it is being used here *in relation to* another food. This reference to another type of wine not only attends to the degree of choice available, but also to the potential wishes of the other speakers. Her claim to 'like white' (line 9) opens up the possibility for Jenny to select either red or white wine, while offering a response to Lynn's initial request.

The expression 'prefer' therefore works here as a way to express a 'want' (line 2) or 'desire' in a way that manages the conversational dilemma. It also suggests that Katie likes red wine more than white wine, contradicting the formal definitions provided earlier. The use of the expression 'I like white' is not necessarily an underlying, 'true' evaluation, but a way of accommodating the tastes of others; it is tied in with the specific, practical concerns of the interaction. The point here is that setting particular definitions of terms may provide a basic conceptual understanding, but fails to capture speakers' understandings and rhetorical reworkings of the expressions in practice. This may be of little surprise to attitude researchers. Indeed, they may note that it is exactly these rhetorical twists that they wish to filter out with the use of rating scales. What is being argued here is that in doing so, research collaborates in the construction of eating as an individual and conscious activity. As taste is constructed through particular expressions, so the fixedness of these expressions implies a coherent object (food) that is being evaluated.

#### *Evaluative terms in traditional social psychology*

The significance of using particular expressions becomes more apparent when one considers how they are predominantly used in social psychological research. Here I will use an example to highlight two potential evaluative distinctions that are often obscured using current research methods. Attitude studies typically use rating-scales or questionnaires in which people place marks on scales or items that

use contrasting words, such as 'good/bad' and 'like/dislike' (e.g. Levis, Chambers, & Johnson, 2000; Norman & Smith, 1995; Westcombe & Wardle, 1997; see also box 5.2 in chapter 5). Consider an example taken from a study examining the variability of attitudes toward the consumption of wholemeal bread and biscuits (Sparks, Hedderley, & Shepherd, 1992). It is chosen as it is food related, clear and characteristic of this kind of research, and is a high quality example of the social psychology of attitudes. Participants completed a series of rating scales, including the following semantic differentials of their evaluation of the two foods: 'enjoyable-unenjoyable'; 'good-bad'; 'foolish-wise'; 'harmful-beneficial'; 'pleasant-unpleasant' (1992: 60). The research aim was to assess individual attitudes toward the foods, and to distinguish between the cognitive and affective emphases of these evaluations. For example, is the nutritional content more important than the taste of a food? The measured attitudes were then correlated with a rated intention to eat the foods in order to see if one could predict eating behaviour on the basis of liking for foods.

From a DP perspective, two problems can immediately be identified with this kind of study. First, the practice of filling out a rating scale may force the participants to make a particular type of evaluation. By selecting the parameters within which foods can be rated (e.g. 'good-bad'), participants are forced into a particular language game of semantic differentials and numerical judgements.<sup>2</sup>

This is a specific kind of practice in itself, and does not test the possibility that food evaluation in interaction may be done as parts of very different practices (as noted in chapter 5). Moreover, the evaluative terms are defined by the analyst. Participants' own understandings, orientations, and rhetorical re-workings are given little space to emerge and would, anyway, be lost due to the constraints on what is recorded as data. There is no space, for example, to negotiate what is understood by the term 'good', or 'enjoy', and how this might be applied to specific foods or eating experiences.

The second problem arises in the interpretation of results. As is standard in attitude research on food, rating scale items and their statistical analyses are

---

<sup>2</sup> Antaki's (1994) book on attributions and accounts offers a similar example of the language game of attribution research.

interpreted in terms of underlying tastes, food flavours and psychological states. Food preferences and attitudes are typically treated as being the underlying objects behind the evaluative words.<sup>3</sup> In this way, words become associated with physical sensations and mental properties. Rating wholemeal bread as 'enjoyable', for example, is treated as characterising an individual's general sensory experience of eating this food. The concern here is that this interpretation is based almost exclusively on the expression of an evaluation within a set of pre-defined parameters. Put another way, what is missed is any kind of practice (apart from a putative practice of naming inner sensations) that these words might be used for.

### *Subjective/objective and category/item*

The problems discussed above obscure two specific distinctions that are potentially important in food evaluation. First, a distinction can be made between two classes of evaluative terms. On the one hand, there are terms that index an individual preference or dislike. Words such as 'like', 'enjoy' and 'love' suggest subjective experiences, so I will refer to these as subjective evaluations. On the other hand, there are terms that index qualities of the object, such as 'good', 'enjoyable' and 'lovely'. I will refer to these as objective evaluations. One way of clarifying this distinction is in terms of a grammatical test, which checks whether different terms fit into particular grammatical environments. For example, if the term fits into sentences such as 'I (x) cheese', then it is subjective. Alternatively, if it fits the sentence 'the cheese is (x)', then it is objective.

It is important to make some observations about this distinction. First, the terms subjective and objective are not intended to carry connotations of correctness or accuracy. They are being used more literally than this: subjective terms index or foreground the subject; objective terms index or foreground the object. They mark something important, but should be used cautiously (see also box 6.2). Second, there is clearly likely to be a close relationship between a subjective evaluation such as 'love' and an objective evaluation such as 'lovely'. To

---

<sup>3</sup> A recent move toward the study of ambivalence in attitudes (e.g. Sparks *et al.*, 2001; Thompson, Zanna, & Griffin, 1995) shows a concern with the variability of attitudes toward a particular object. This area of research, however, retains a mentalistic notion of attitude that is considered to be independent of the evaluative terms themselves.

highlight the distinction is not to deny the relationship. Nevertheless, the existence of a grammatical marking of the difference between 'love' and 'lovely' suggests that it may be available for doing different practices.

The second distinction to be made is between evaluations of categories and evaluations of specific items. This is the kind of distinction that Billig (1985, 1996) has shown to be crucial for understanding argumentation about race and social categories. However, here it is focussed on food evaluations. For example, is the evaluation of a specific item, or is it an evaluation of a category or class of things that this item is a member of. Such distinctions are marked in conversation in various ways – for example, grammatical differences such as 'I like cheese' or 'I like *this* cheese' may be used. Various levels of categorization and particularization are possible in evaluative talk of this kind.<sup>4</sup>

It may be possible to mark some distinctions of this kind in traditional attitude measures. However, methods of measurement typically obscure them. On the one hand, if participants are presented with food to taste and asked to rate it on a scale, this does not distinguish ratings of this specific food item or the class that it comes from. On the other hand, if they are asked to rate food using verbal categories, then this too is often not clear whether they are rating *either* a category of food (through the invocation of some kind of prototype, say) *or* a specific example (the last instance they remember, say).

---

<sup>4</sup> For example, a distinction may be made between a food as mass (e.g. an amount of cheese) and as number (e.g. more cheeses).

### **Box 6.2 Locating taste**

The expressions, 'subjectivity' and 'objectivity', are used here with a lavish amount of caution and concern, as they set up a rather misleading dichotomy with regard to taste. That is, they allude to the notion of an 'inside' and 'outside' the body; the former being taste sensations, the latter being the food or drink which is tasted. This implies that they are independent concepts – that food can be evaluated independently of one's personal, individual reaction to its qualities. This is clearly not the case. Not only does this assume that 'taste' is something to be found within a particular location (e.g. taste buds, food particles), but also that the experience is purely physical. What I argue here – and which will be clearer toward the end of the thesis – is that 'taste' is as much a discursive construction as it is a sensory experience. Indeed, one cannot separate these two aspects, for the very notion of taste rests on our constructions of food qualities, flavours and textures, and eating as an individual experience.



## ANALYSIS

The focus of this chapter is on the two distinctions: subjective/objective and category/item. The aim is, first, to document the existence of these distinctions in practice and second, to start to show some of the business that these distinctions allow in practice. More generally, I will be considering the different concerns and accountabilities that arise when using different evaluative expressions. For example, do references to personal taste or food quality become bound up with the management of eating practices such as complimenting, avoiding disagreement, and so on? Finally, I consider how the etymology of evaluative expressions can be worked into the analysis and here I draw comparisons with Edwards' (1997, 1999) examination of emotion terms.

### 6.1. Subjective vs. objective evaluations

The analysis begins by considering extracts that involve evaluations that are subjective or objective. I will document their existence and some of their features. First a subjective evaluation: that is, one that satisfies the grammatical test of taking the form 'I (x) cheese'. Extract 6.2 below provides a clear illustration. Sandra (the mother) talks through her plans for the following day as the family eats their evening meal.

#### EXTRACT 6.2: SKW/ K1a-M1 (48-53)

1. Sandra: I might nip to Marks and Spen↓cer's: (0.6)
2. after work (0.4) just to see if they've ↑got,
3. (1.0)
4. Sandra: → I do: like their sticky toffee pav↓lo:va
5. (1.0)
6. Sandra: >°see° if they've< got any left

In line 4 Sandra produces a subjective evaluation, 'I do: like', which specifies a personal or subjective preference. The preference is marked as the speaker's own, without indicating whether other speakers present do, or should, have the same preference. Furthermore, the food is named, without ascribing any particular qualities to it. Note the organisation of the talk. The speaker starts by outlining a potential course of action (going to Marks and Spencers – a UK department store

noted for its food). She starts to describe the reason 'to see if they've got' but then self-repairs with the evaluation. The subjective evaluation thus serves as an account for this (future) course of action. In particular, it justifies going to Marks and Spencers rather than another (perhaps more convenient or cheaper) store. If there is a chance that there may be no pavlova left (line 6), and this is something that Sandra particularly likes, it makes the 'nipping' to Marks and Spencers all the more reasonable and accounted for. The general and simple point, then, is that subjective evaluations can be used as accounts for actions.

The next example includes objective evaluations; that is, ones that satisfy the grammatical test 'cheese is (x)'. In the extract below a group of relatives are sharing a meal. Laura has cooked and served the dinner.

EXTRACT 6.3: SKW/ G2a-M8 (93-99)

1. (2.0)
2. Doris: → this is all del<sup>↑</sup>i<sup>°</sup>ci<sup>°</sup>ous<sup>°</sup>
3. Laura: °>'nk ↑you<°
4. Beth: → the- (0.4) chicken's lovely
5. Laura: ↑mmm
6. Beth: hh: (.) and hot
7. (2.0)

In line 2 Doris produces an 'objective' evaluation, as does Beth in line 4. In each case the evaluation specifies features of the food ('delicious', 'lovely'). Note the difference from extract 6.2, in this case the objective evaluation suggests that these are features of the food itself rather than (possibly) idiosyncratic to the speaker. As with extract 6.2, the sequential organisation of the talk allows us to understand the activity that the evaluations are part of. Note the 'thank you' from Laura in line 3. She is responding to Doris' evaluation as a compliment and doing one form of compliment receipt (Pomerantz, 1978, 1984a). That is, the assessable quality of the food is treated as a consequence of Laura's actions. Again, the evaluation is doing more than making an abstract formulation of quality, it is performing a specific action; in this case making a compliment.

The two types of evaluative expression (subjective and objective) have a number of interactional implications. By offering either subjective or objective evaluations, speakers are expressing different constructions of ‘taste’ as either a personal experience or something found in the food. They can therefore be held accountable for their evaluation in terms of whether it is an appropriate assessment or not (see also Goodwin & Goodwin, 1992). One of the features of a subjective evaluation is to present the activity as a personal choice. For example in extract 6.2, Sandra did not implicate others in the evaluation and therefore in any way pressure toward the course of action proposed. In contrast, an objective evaluation (like that in extract 6.3) presents the assessment as more than a personal one. In the above example, it makes a stronger compliment. If Doris gave a subjective evaluation it may project the possibility that others might not like the food, and therefore weaken the compliment.

Having set out the basics of the subjective/objective distinction, I will now consider some slightly more complex examples. These will be used to demonstrate the rhetorical possibilities of different types of evaluation. For instance, the next extract shows how evaluative terms can allow speakers to adopt different roles in interaction. This section of talk is from the same meal as in extract 6.3, and links back to the discussion on offers in chapter 5.

#### EXTRACT 6.4: SKW/ G2a-M8 (315-322)

- |    |          |   |
|----|----------|---|
| 1. | Doris:   | that was lovely Lau:↓ra [thank ↓yo:u            |
| 2. | Bill:    | [because eh-                                    |
| 3. | Beth:    | it is [love↓ly                                  |
| 4. | Laura: → | [>did you enjoy that< there is                  |
| 5. |          | [some >d'you want<                              |
| 6. | Bill:    | [she ↑said-                                     |
| 7. | Laura:   | there's a bit mo:re if you ↓want (0.6) >there's |
| 8. |          | a bit< more ↑sauce?                             |

In line 1 we see Doris praising Laura for the ‘lovely’ meal, and thanking her. Beth immediately follows with her own evaluation. Note that both evaluations are objective. They describe the meal as lovely rather than characterising themselves

as, say, having loved it. Both these assessments work as compliments of Laura. As Pomerantz (1978) has shown, compliments can be tricky to receive, as there is a conflict between agreeing with the assessment on the one hand, and avoiding self-praise (boasting) on the other. Often compliments are reassigned to a different referent or downgraded in order to deal with this tension. Now, note the way that Laura does not agree with the evaluation of the food using another objective description ('yes, it was, wasn't it', say, which might have sounded boastful), rather she reformulates the objective description in subjective terms, as them enjoying the food. Another feature of her management of their compliment is to treat it as a potential request for more food. Thus she responds to the positive evaluation by offering more.

In the following extract Beth is requesting some wine. This section of talk illustrates some features about the practical role of subjective as opposed to objective evaluations.

EXTRACT 6.5: SKW/ G2a-M8 (740-749)

1. Beth: can I try some ↑wi:ne
2. Laura: °oh::: (0.2) (↑mm-hm)°
3. (2.0)
4. Beth: → don't [↑like red really
5. Laura: [its very nice:
6. (1.0)
7. Laura: ↑well=
8. Bill: =how d'you know (0.8) have you ↑ever tried it
9. Beth: I've tried it about a ↑million times
10. → I hate all ↑red (.) it's too strong

The initial thing to note about this extract is that the sequence is occasioned by Beth's request to 'try some wine' (line 1). In couching her request in this way she both attends to her 'junior' status as someone that needs permission and also indicates that her drinking will be somewhat experimental (through the use of the term 'try' rather than 'have'). Laura's elaborate receipting (the extended 'oh' and delay in line 2) displays her subsequent agreement as considered. It is difficult to know precisely what happens in the two seconds that follow this. However, there

is good reason to think that Laura has reached for, or started to pour red wine (with white as another option).<sup>5</sup> This suggests that Beth's subjective evaluation in line 4 is doing a refusal. That is, formulating a negative evaluation is used to turn the offer of red down.

Three points are worth highlighting here. First, an assessment is being used to perform an activity. That is, in this everyday setting peoples' evaluative language is *practical* rather than *abstract* or *theoretical*. By this I mean that evaluations are used in conversation in very different ways to questionnaires or rating scales, where they may be regarded as representations of underlying attitudes. In the latter case, evaluative language is more abstract because of this connection with theoretical concepts, and with the abstraction of the evaluation from a specific interactional context. Second, we can start to understand a bit more the interactional value of using subjective assessments. By constructing her assessment as a personal or subjective one Beth is orienting to red wine as a familiar drink, one that is on the table and that others are drinking. That is, she is avoiding conflict about the quality of wine itself, or questioning the judgement or tastes of the others present. This construction focuses the accountability for not drinking the red on her, rather than on others for drinking it.

The third thing to note about subjective assessments is something pointed out by philosophers of language such as Wittgenstein (1953). The language game of avowals of this kind (pain, desire, taste sensations) treats them as directly felt and privileged. The speaker does not have to make inferences about such things, nor do they require evidence. Neither are they directly open to dispute by other speakers. However, what can be seen in the extract above is rather interesting. Although Laura does not directly contest Beth's subjective evaluation, she does offer a contrasting objective evaluation. One way of considering this is that speakers may draw on the rhetorical effectiveness of the language game of sensation when, for example, turning down food, but there are also rhetorical counters that can be used against them.

---

<sup>5</sup> Note the alternative idea that Beth has been given and tried it in the period is very unlikely, not just from the timing but because it makes Laura's line 5 and particularly Bill's line 8 anomalous.

Now consider some of the complexities about using evaluations in talk. In partial overlap in line 5 Laura does a strong objective evaluation of the red wine (note the emphasised 'very' and the extended 'nice'). One way of considering this is as an attempt to persuade. Emphasising the objectively positive quality of the wine after the refusal provides an opportunity for Laura to reconsider. There is nothing verbal here, although the silence (line 6) and further questioning (note the rising intonation on 'well' in line 7) suggest that Beth may be displaying some kind of equivocation. The general point to observe here is the way subjective and objective evaluations are used to do different things. By presenting the niceness as a quality in the wine Laura encourages Beth to try it; by presenting her dislike as a personal judgement, Beth turns it down without disputing other's choices.<sup>6</sup>

Another notable feature of evaluations in the extract is what happens in lines 8-10. Bill, like Laura, questions Beth's subjective assessment. In this case, however, he asks about the grounds for her assessment: how does she know she doesn't like it, has she ever tried it? Having had her evaluation in line 4 doubted by her mother and uncle, Beth provides a very emphatic formulation of the evidence she is working with; she has tried it 'a million times'. This is followed by an upgraded and extreme assessment: from 'not liking red really' she moves to 'I hate all red', with emphasis on the 'hate' (Edwards, 2000; Pomerantz, 1986). This in turn is followed by a description of a negative quality of the wine: it is 'too strong'. The notable thing here is the way the subjective assessment is presented as grounded in evidence; she has tried the wine and she can specify a particular negative quality that she does not like. This negative quality of the wine makes her assessment accountable. It is important to hold in mind, however, that this disagreement about the quality of wine is occasioned by her refusal of the red. Her position is not abstract, but has the practical upshot of not being given the red to drink.

---

<sup>6</sup> We can observe here, without following it up, that there are some interesting issues of asymmetry – of categories and descriptions – highlighted in lines 4 and 5. Laura's objective evaluation in line 5 may be heard as questioning the judgement or the basis of the judgement of Beth's subjective evaluation in line 4. Such questioning of another person's subjective evaluations might be related to features of parent-child relationships.

## 6.2. Category vs. item evaluations

In this second analytic section I consider the way the contrast between evaluations of a category of food and a specific food item may operate. This is not a simple distinction, as different levels of categorisation and particularisation may be available. Let me start with an example to illustrate how categorisations and particularisations may relate to evaluations.

### EXTRACT 6.6: SKW/D2a-M3 (1105-1117)

1. Anna: → I'm not quite sur:e I ↑like this mincemeat (0.4)
2. I ↑like it: (0.6) but its (.) too far removed
3. from traditional (0.2) [isn't ↓it
4. Jenny: [ye:ah
5. (2.4)
6. Mike: → I'm ↑never really ↑kee:n on traditional mincemeat
7. Anna: no?
8. (0.4)
9. Mike: → I ↓like that more than I do the traditional
10. Anna: mmm
11. (0.6)
12. Jenny: °mmm°
13. (2.0)

The first thing to note about this extract is Anna's evaluation in line 1. Its grammatical construction identifies a particular food, 'this mincemeat'. She contrasts it with a category of mincemeat she calls 'traditional'. Note the way this is not just an abstract contrast; by invoking the food's difference from 'traditional mincemeat' she accounts for her dislike. The second thing to note is the way these constructions can manage one of the features that arise with assessments. Pomerantz (1984a) has shown that there is a strong normative expectation for assessments to be followed by second assessments. One of the features of subjective evaluations of this kind is that they manage the potential for disagreement between assessments. We can see this here in the construction of Mike's turn in line 6. Although he is offering a contrasting assessment of traditional mincemeat it is not prefaced by the kind of dispreference markers we

might expect for a disagreeing second assessment. Compare extract 6.6 above with the following:

1. D: We've got sm pretty [(good schools)
  2. → C: [Well, yeah but where in
  3. the hell em I gonna live.
- (from Pomerantz, 1984a, p. 72)

In the dispreferred second assessment here we see characteristic features such as a 'well' preface and an agreement inserted prior to the disagreement. In line 6 of extract 6.6, Mike's assertion of his assessment is done directly (and with the emphatic 'never') with no preface or prior agreement. While there is a 2.4 second pause on line 5 (indicating disagreement), it is not clear whether this is due to the activities of eating, such as having food in one's mouth. Even if this were displaying a dispreferred turn shape marker here, Mike's turn does not subsequently follow the typical pattern (Pomerantz, 1984a). Moreover, Anna orients to his turn in line 7 as being directly contrastive with her own assessment. Constructing the evaluation as a subjective one, a different kind of accountability is projected.<sup>7</sup>

To illustrate some of the rhetorical possibilities in using categories vs. item evaluations I will examine the following relatively simple example. Extract 6.7 comes from near the end of a family meal; Lesley is Chris's mother.

#### EXTRACT 6.7: SKW/ J1b-M3 (441-448)

1. (10.0)
2. Lesley: you ↓struggling (with ↑that)?
3. Chris: → °I- (0.4) don't like carrots:°
4. (2.0)
5. Lesley:→ you don't like the ↓carrot:s
6. Chris: n:o
7. Lesley: but you didn't ↑have man:y
8. (10.0)

---

<sup>7</sup> The subjective/objective distinction raises some interesting questions about preference markers and second assessments. For instance, it would be interesting to consider whether using a



When Lesley asks her son if he is 'struggling' with his food, his response is constructed as a subjective evaluation. That is, he accounts for his non-eating by indicating his personal evaluation. Looked at another way, this shows again how a subjective evaluation can act as an account for an action. What I wish to focus on now, however, is the construction of the evaluation as a category. Contrast Chris' 'I don't like carrots' (line 3) with Lesley's 'you don't like the carrots' (line 5). The difference may seem subtle in the abstract, but the contrast has practical upshots. In particular, by saying he 'does not like carrots' (category), Chris provides a general account for not eating them that does not require him to eat any to confirm this, and might suggest that the problem is his mother not knowing, or ignoring his established preference (this latter problem may occasion his mother noting that he did not have many to start with, presumably served by her). In contrast, Lesley's formulation about him not liking '*the* carrots' (item, emphasis added for clarity) suggests a judgement about these specific carrots, that is, a judgement that would require him eating at least some to warrant.

Now that some of the possibilities in using category vs. item evaluations have been explicated, it is helpful to reconsider the earlier extracts to highlight the relevance of the category or item constructions. In extract 6.2 we see Sandra using a particularized evaluation in line 4.

#### EXTRACT 6.2: SKW/ K1a-M1 (48-53)

1. Sandra: I might nip to Marks and Spen↓cer's: (0.6)
2. after work (0.4) just to see if they've ↑got,
3. (1.0)
4. Sandra: → I do: like their sticky toffee pav↓lo:va
5. (1.0)
6. Sandra: >°see° if they've< got any left

The interest here is in how the item evaluation 'their sticky toffee pavlova' contributes to the action. In this case the evaluation is working as an account for going to a particular store. Using an item evaluation justifies the specificity of the

---

subjective evaluation precludes the need for a dispreference marker, given that the evaluation may not directly challenge that of another speaker.

trip. For example, it heads off potential suggestions of other convenient shops that might also have pavlova, or even sticky toffee pavlova. The item evaluation acts as a simple justification here. Extract 6.3 below also shows a simple use of item evaluations.

EXTRACT 6.3: SKW/ G2a-M8 (93-99)

1. (2.0)
2. Doris: → this is all del<sup>↑</sup>i<sup>°</sup>ci<sup>°</sup>ous<sup>°</sup>
3. Laura: °>'nk ↑you<°
4. Beth: → the- (0.4) chicken's lovely
5. Laura: ↑mmm
6. Beth: hh: (.) and hot
7. (2.0)

The item evaluation is part of what makes the assessments work as compliments. For example, if Beth claimed to like chicken as a category it would undermine the specific compliment of Laura's cooking. It would suggest merely that Laura has made a good judgement in choosing to cook chicken. Doris' combination of an item assessment ('this') with a reference to the whole meal ('all') is an effective way of highlighting cooking skill over the quality of any particular food.

Extract 6.5 shows some ways in which category and item assessments contribute to performing actions.

EXTRACT 6.5: SKW/ G2a-M8 (740-749)

1. Beth: can I try some ↑wine
2. Laura: °oh::: (0.2) (↑mm-hm)°
3. (2.0)
4. Beth: → don't [↑like red really
5. Laura: [its very nice:
6. (1.0)
7. Laura: ↑well=
8. Bill: =how d'you know (0.8) have you ↑ever tried it
9. Beth: I've tried it about a ↑million times
10. → I hate all ↑red (.) it's too strong

Note the way Beth's evaluation in line 4 is a category evaluation; it is not this red wine, but red wine as a general category. This justifies her rejection without needing to try this particular wine. By assessing the category as a whole, trying this one is not required. In contrast Laura's turn in line 5 is an item evaluation (there is a little ambiguity, but the sequential positioning of 'its' before Beth has said 'red wine' supports this interpretation). Its assessment is of the particular wine that is being offered. In Beth's next turn (lines 9 and 10) her construction orients to the possibility of different reds having different qualities (and therefore the possibility that she is acting in a prejudiced fashion). Not only has she tried red wine 'a million times', but she also hates 'all' red wine. Moreover the negative feature she offers to justify her assessment ('too strong') is something that could be applied to red wines as a class.

Finally, reconsider extract 6.4. This is another simple example where item assessments are used in compliments.

#### EXTRACT 6.4: SKW/ G2a-M8 (315-322)

1. Doris: → that was lovely Lau:↓ra [thank ↓yo:u
2. Bill: [because eh-
3. Beth: → it is [love↓ly
4. Laura: → [ >did you enjoy that< there is
5. [some >d'you want<
6. Bill: [she ↑said-
7. Laura: there's a bit mo:re if you ↓want (0.6) >there's
8. a bit< more ↑sauce?

Note the way that both Doris and Beth construct their compliments as item assessments (lines 1 and 3). Again, item assessments emphasise the specific production of the food rather than its generic quality.

### 6.3. Constructing a gustatory reality

In the final analytic section of this chapter, I consider a further implication of the existence of different evaluative terms: that some evaluations may be treated as being more persuasive, or more 'accurate' than others. In other words, there may be particular interactional consequences of expressing subjective or objective

evaluations beyond those discussed in section 6.1. For example, if two evaluations contrast with one another, how do speakers resolve the disparity? Whose evaluation is taken to be the closest to ‘reality’, and how this ‘reality’ is constructed, can be a key issue for speakers. One way to start to unpack this issue is by considering modalities – or levels – of facticity. That is, some ways of expressing food evaluations may suggest a greater certainty or truthfulness than others. Speakers may also attend to the issue of accuracy by building up their category entitlement to evaluate food and by drawing on consensus of opinion. These can be considered as discursive resources in constructing a ‘gustatory reality’ and are discussed in turn below.

### 6.3.1. Modalities of food evaluations: getting to the ‘real’ taste

Food evaluations can be regarded as descriptions with a directional quality that provides an explicit assessment of the food. By treating them as such, we highlight the fact that they are *one* description or one evaluation, out of many possible others. This helps us to avoid treating objective evaluations, for example, as being more accurate than subjective types. But is there a tendency for speakers to regard one type of evaluation as being more reality-based than another? Here we need to unpack the constructive work around which food evaluations and facticity are built.

Consider the following extract. Liz prepared the meal and asks the family members for their opinions on the vegetable samosas (a spicy, savoury form of pastry) that were part of the meal. I draw your attention here to the construction of the evaluations on line 7 and 8.

#### EXTRACT 6.8: SKW/ F1b-M1 (421-430)

1. Liz: and did you like those tri:angular ↓things
2. Brian: [°(no:)°
3. Martin: [((heavy breathing out))
4. Helen: I:: [lo:-
5. Brian: [but ↑I didn't think it was right to com↓plain
6. (0.6)
7. Martin: → >I thought they were al↑right<

8. Liz: → ↑I thought they were alright (0.4) could- (0.2)  
 9. well: I mean if ↑you don't like them that's  
 10. [°okay°

Martin and Liz both draw upon subjective ('I thought') as well as objective ('alright') expressions in their turns, with a striking similarity. One might argue that these are rather subjective constructions, particularly with the upward intonation on Liz's 'I', as a personal claim to taste. However the issue is not quite so straightforward. Together the two evaluations work to provide a consensus of opinion that is rhetorically persuasive against Brian's claim to not liking them. They build up a collaborative account of what the food is like, that it is 'alright'. By using subjective prefixes, though, these evaluations are somewhat softened and personalised constructions.

It is useful to consider evaluations of this type within a hierarchy of modalization (see box 6.3). This concept, devised by Bruno Latour and Steve Woolgar, describes a process by which speakers can make varying claims to a factual account (Latour, 1987; Latour & Woolgar, 1986; Woolgar, 1988; see also Potter, 1996). Statements at the top of the hierarchy are treated as being truthful and accurate accounts of reality. For example, the statement 'chilli peppers are spicy' asserts this description rather unproblematically. Terms such as 'are' and 'is' attend to the factual quality of an utterance. At the other end of the hierarchy are statements that are treated as doubtful or dubious, as being based on mere speculation rather than actual knowledge of an object or event (Potter, 1996). An example of this would be 'I imagine that chilli peppers are spicy'.

**Box 6.3. A hierarchy of modalization**

[...]

X

X is a fact

I know that X

I claim that X

I believe that X

I hypothesise that X

I think that X

I guess that X

X is possible

(taken from Potter, 1996; p. 112)

different evaluations. Whether or not an evaluation is treated as an accurate or appropriate account, can be a major concern for the interaction. We will see how this is managed and negotiated with respect to challenges in chapter seven.

### 6.3.2. *Category entitlement*

When expressing an evaluation, speakers may often refer to experience as being the basis, or justification, for their assessment (Pomerantz, 1984a, b). With regard to food evaluations, this will most probably consist of having eaten or tasted the food. Speakers may construct entitlement to this, and other activities, by building up their identity with a particular category (Sacks, 1992; Wooffitt, 1992; see also Antaki & Widdicombe, 1998; Edwards, 1998; McKinlay & Dunnett, 1998; Potter, 1996). The following example shows how this can work in conjunction with the hierarchy of modalization. Before this section of talk, the family had been talking about spicy foods and Anna refers here to an occasion when Peter (her son) had been eating an Indian take-away.

#### EXTRACT 6.9: SKW/ D2a-M3 (1641-1650)

1. Anna: and he h:ad an In:d↓ian,
2. Simon: hh[h
3. Anna: → [and it was:-
4. (0.6)
5. Anna: → actually it was ↑quite nice cos I tasted ↓it
6. and it was like: (.) uhm (0.4) >bits of< chicken
7. (0.6)
8. Anna: and >like a< mixed salad
9. Simon: was it like a <spi:cy chicken>
10. Anna: >spicy chick[en< mixed salad=
11. Jenny: [garlic °something°
12. Anna: =and garlic

Despite the use of 'quite nice' as a softened form of assessment, Anna's turn in lines 3 to 8 works up a factual account of the food through building her category entitlement to 'know' what the food was like. This is achieved using three devices. First, the description is given in definite terms: 'it was' (lines 3 and 6). There is no doubt or uncertainty here, nor use of 'think', or 'believe' to suggest

personal opinion, so the statement is higher up the modality hierarchy. Second, the evaluation is prefixed by an 'actually', which is hearable as a contrastive term (Clift, 2001). Placed at the start of an utterance (after a pause), it signals a change of mind in the speaker. The rhetorical force of this works by displaying the speaker herself as being persuaded by the 'facts' of the situation.<sup>8</sup> This rests on the third device, where Anna refers to having tasted the food (line 5). As we will see in later chapters, referencing bodily aspects of taste is a powerful tool in constructing rhetorically robust evaluations of food or drink. To have tasted and experienced the food displays an awareness of qualities of the food itself that cannot be accessed through thought or reflection alone.

What is also interesting about this reference to taste is that it suggests that Anna hasn't eaten the food on a previous occasion. In conjunction with the 'actually', which orients to an unexpected taste, it constructs Anna as being rather ignorant of this particular dish. What it 'was like' highlights it as an unknown item – something that Anna could only broadly describe as 'an Indian' (line 1). Having not had the food before, and showing unfamiliarity through avoiding technical terms, sets up the category of a novice to this type of food. Anna could then not be said to be biased or easily persuaded, if it appears that she does not usually eat such dishes.

Referring to the taste experience as a means by which to appear factual raises a more fundamental issue about embodiment. That is, the body is treated as the primary site of eating and taste experiences. The consequences of this are that evaluations based on the senses and physical experiences are treated as more authentic than those based on thought or cognition. This issue draws on the Cartesian notion of the mind-body split, and its subsequent theories (see Crossley, 2000; Danziger, 1997; Edwards, 1997, for recent discussions on this issue). It also relates to recent debates about social constructionism and its supposed neglect of embodiment and physicalities. As we shall see in chapter 8, the display of

---

<sup>8</sup> We can compare this to the use of an 'oh' preface (Heritage, 1984b) that indicates information given by *another* speaker wasn't previously known by the current speaker. The term 'actually', by contrast, suggests that this 'new' information or idea is a result of personal reflection.

'pleasure' from eating authenticates evaluations by constructing the body as being at the heart of eating practices.

Category entitlements can therefore include the construction of the body as being the basis on which the evaluation is made. That is, the category being worked up is of an involuntary reaction to food, and is not something that has been deliberately thought about. In the example below, Stephanie is encouraging her son, Danny, to finish his food. The older son, Lee, is in the middle of a conversation with his father, John. The focus of the talk turns to the food that Danny is being asked to eat.

EXTRACT 6.10: SKW/ H1a-M1 (599-618)

1. Stephanie: °come on Dan↓ny eat your ↓tea up [(son)°
2. Danny: [I'm ↑finish:ed
3. (0.6) that is-
4. Lee: ↑Dad I'm this [close
5. Danny: [ho:rrible
6. Stephanie: well you've got to eat °(your [tea- ↓meat)°
7. John: [°(---)°
8. Lee: don't [push it sunshine
9. Danny: → [ >its so< horri↑ble (.) don't like ↑it
10. (0.2) ↓Lee >d'you want some of this<
11. Lee: no I >don't want<
12. (0.4)
13. Danny: >(I know see even ↑he didn't) like it<
14. John: well eat the sau↑sage (0.8) you've eat all
15. the ↑other sausag:e
16. (1.2)
17. Danny: → I know: (0.4) and that's why I feel ↑sick=
18. John: =right well ↑leave it [then (.) leave it
19. Lee: [right well I'll-
20. John: you said you didn't want [very ↓much:

The construction of a factual account is dependent here both on the use of subjective and objective evaluations, and on Danny's category entitlement as having eaten the food. First, the description of the food as 'horrible' (lines 5 and



9) locates the source of the problem as lying with the food. There is no softening or politeness here as the evaluation is both direct and negative about the food. A negative evaluation is also indirectly displayed through Danny's expressions of feeling sick (line 17). This locates the problem at a fundamental level: an adverse reaction to the food prevents him from eating any more. Through using this as part of his account, Danny shows that he at least attempted to finish his meal. Thus he is not being deliberately awkward, but has been constrained by physiological effects. Moreover, this reaction warrants his subjective evaluation (line 9) and entitles him to a privileged, personal account of the food.

### 6.3.3. *Consensus*

In this final section of the analysis, I begin to highlight how consensus may be used as a resource to warrant a more factual evaluation. If one or more speakers express a similar evaluation, this may be taken as evidence of some consensus or corroboration in assessments. If these are seen to be produced explicitly and independently, then this is further proof of the 'reality' of the judgements (Edwards & Potter, 1992: 110). It is as if the other speakers can 'see' the evidence of agreement between different accounts. The idea here is that if more than one person provides the same evaluation, then this must reflect the reality of the situation (Wooffitt, 1992; Mulkay, 1991). The rhetoric of consensus may also build on the category entitlements of each individual. If they are all 'reliable witnesses' (as with Anna and her displayed unfamiliarity with Indian food) then this makes for an even more persuasive account (Potter, 1996).

The extract below is an extended form of extract 6.5 seen earlier in the discussion on modality. It is a particularly clear example of how consensus can be used to manage the existence of contrastive, and potentially critical, evaluations. Some of the surrounding turns have been included to provide a local context for the sequence.

#### EXTRACT 6.11: SKW/ F1b-M1 (414-437)

1. Liz: is: that o↑kay
2. (2.0)
3. Liz: (gr:ea[sy])

4. Brian: [the tea?
5. Liz: °mm°
6. (0.6)
7. Brian: °↓fine >thank you<°
8. Liz: and did you like those tri:angular ↓things
9. Brian: [°(no:)°
10. Martin: [((heavy breathing out))
11. Helen: I:: [lo:-
12. Brian: [but ↑I didn't think it was right to
13. com↓plain
14. (0.6)
15. Martin: → >I thought they were al↑right<
16. Liz: → ↑I thought they were alright (0.4) could- (0.2)
17. well: I mean if ↑you don't like them that's
18. [°okay°
19. Helen: [anyway you shouldn't [complai:n when the:: uhm:
20. Debbie: [°(I will)°<
21. (0.6)
22. Helen: thingy's on
23. Liz: why?
24. (0.6)
25. Helen: recorder's on

This extract is interesting for many reasons, not least of which is Helen's orientation to the tape-recorder (see chapter 4). The focus here, however, is on lines 15 and 16, in which Martin and Liz jointly construct Brian's turn as a negative assessment of the food. Although his evaluation is not altogether clear (line 9), his statement, 'but I didn't think it was right to complain' (lines 12-13) suggests that the evaluation was negative. The 'complaint' here is formulated in terms of not liking the food, since this is how Liz first frames the question (line 8). The fact that the evaluation is negative is further supported by Martin's description of the food as being 'alright' (line 15). The contrast here is shown by the upward intonation on the evaluative term, displaying a questioning of the previous turn. Furthermore, the use of an objective term and display of personal opinion ('I thought'), offer an alternative construction of the nature of the food.

The consensus is provided by Liz in line 15 and here the emphasis is on the 'I' as another speaker. The evaluation not only repeats the construction of the food as being 'alright' but also offers this as being an evaluation from an independent source. Therefore it is not just Martin who thinks the food is alright; Liz thought this as well. This highlights the consensual nature of the claim through the rising intonation on the 'I'. It matters little that Brian has not directly offered, nor supports, his own evaluation, for this is formulated on his behalf. Liz singles him out as not liking the food; as being the minority case. What is important is that a personal, subjective evaluation is constructed and used here by another speaker. Personal taste is commonly treated as being private knowledge, yet this example shows how it can be managed and used as a rhetorical device in interaction.

The following two extracts provide further examples of how subjective evaluations can be expressed as belonging to another speaker(s). In these instances, the 'others' are not part of the interaction as with extract 6.8, and so are less liable to being challenged. In extract 6.9, Anna refers to her son's trips home from university (a 3-hour journey) to collect a particular home-made dish. The 'lads' in this instance are Peter and his flatmates.

#### EXTRACT 6.9: SKW/ D2b-M4 (186-193)

1. Anna: and there was ↑one year:
2. (1.0)
3. Anna: one time (0.4) he came all the way bac:k ↑home:
4. → (0.4) for it (0.6) cos the lads liked it so much
5. they went out and bought a ↑frying-pan and all
6. ↑sorts: of thin(h)gs-
7. Jenny: [>did ↑he<
8. Mike: [°heh heh°

The potential to appear boastful is apparent again here since Anna is talking about something she cooked herself. To manage this, she constructs an account of the food in terms of how much other people liked it. More importantly, these 'others' (Peter's flatmates) are not accountable to Anna in the same way that Peter or another relative might be. The fact that Peter 'came all the way back home' (line

3) *because* of his flatmates request for the dish shows that this is not just a son trying to appease his mother. We should also bear in mind that these are male students. By referring to them as 'the lads' (line 4), a mismatch can be heard between this category (male students) and buying 'a frying pan and all sorts of things'. This might not have been so surprising if it had been female students, for example. Anna also builds this as an unexpected or unusual event by using extreme case formulations ('*all* the way back home', 'liked it *so much*'; Edwards, 2000), and this orientation is supported by both Jenny and Mike (lines 7 and 8).

The consensus being built up in this extract, then, is of a number of people who appeared to act out of character on this occasion. The strength of their preference is a key issue here, and serves to justify and account for Peter's behaviour. As a single occurrence ('one year', 'one time', lines 1 and 3) it avoids the possibility that it was due to the usual habits of 'the lads' (see Edwards, 1994, on script formulations). That is, Peter did not travel home every weekend just to collect his mother's food. This is built up as a special occurrence, and thus a special food.

Claiming the preferences of an unknown group of people is fairly unproblematic in this instance since it is unlikely that the other speakers could claim a greater knowledge of the lads' food preferences. But what would happen if the consensus being built up were inclusive of *everyone*? It is feasible to imagine that this could cause problems if it is taken literally by other speakers. This is what happens in the following extract. Although challenges to evaluations are discussed more fully in the next chapter, this example is useful here as a demonstration of the rhetorical strength of food evaluations. In this section of conversation, the two daughters of the family (Helen and Debbie) are last to finish their meal and both Liz, and Martin (their brother) orient to this.

EXTRACT 6.13: SKW/F3a-M8 (341-361)

1. (2.0)
2. Liz: stop it Hel:en (0.6) >come on eat ↓up<
3. (9.0)
4. Helen: loo:k
5. (2.0)

6. Helen: can have [that if you ↓wa:nt  
7. Martin: [↑save your peas till ↓last did you  
8. ↑Deb=  
9. Debbie: =no: I don't like ↓them: (0.6) I don't like them  
10. [with ↓gravy  
11. Martin: → [↑nobody likes peas:  
12. Helen: ↑I like peas  
13. Martin: no you ↓don't  
14. (0.6)  
15. Brian: ↑go and [get the honey  
16. Helen: [(I ↑love them)  
17. (1.4)  
18. Martin: °hehh heh°  
19. (0.6)  
20. Debbie: no but I need a clean °↓knife (Dad)°  
21. (2.0)  
22. Debbie: >heh heh heh<

The significant turn here is in line 11, in which Martin states that 'nobody likes peas'. This is clearly refuted by Helen (line 12), using her own expressed liking for peas as a means of invalidating Martin's claim. Note, however, that she does not say he is wrong in direct terms. Instead she presents her own evaluation as a contrast, marked by the upward intonation on the 'I'. Whether Martin is accurate in his claim is, however, not the point. Note the practical work done by this evaluation. Following Debbie's turn, Martin is making the point that what you *like* is often an irrelevant factor. On occasion people are required to eat food whether they like it or not. Since other people do this, the implication is that Debbie should do the same. What Martin is alluding to here is thus an obligation to eat one's food.

Note also how the others treat Martin and Helen's turns. Nobody says, for example 'that means Martin can't be right' or 'why don't you eat them Helen', nor do they attend to Debbie's predicament. The focus remains on the challenge to the claim that 'nobody likes peas'. By disputing Helen's expressed preference (line 12), Martin displays the rhetorical importance of his statement. If Helen is

seen to be supported in some way, then Debbie could be excused from eating her peas. What happens instead is that moves are made to dismiss Helen's claim and to attend to the business of Debbie and her meal. This is shown by Brian, who calls for someone - perhaps Helen - to 'go and get the honey', presumably as a means by which Debbie can eat the peas (honey making them sweeter and sticking them to the knife!). The subsequent laughter (lines 17 and 21) displays an orientation to the way in which Helen, as the youngest family member, treats the talk at face value while the others treat it as a rhetorical move in the management of eating practices.

The examples above demonstrate how consensus may be constructed and used to add rhetorical strength to an evaluation. If others appear to like, or not like, something, then this may provide validity or confirmation of a particular food assessment. The conversations also hint at issues of stake and interest in the expression of evaluations. That is, by displaying a more 'factual' account of food - for example, through building a category entitlement or consensus of opinion - speakers may present themselves in a more favourable light. Their evaluation is protected from the claim that they are expressing a biased position or evaluating the food for a particular gain (e.g. boasting, trying to gain respect, or persuasion). This is something that will be discussed in more detail in the following chapter, when speakers themselves attend to the potential use or misuse of food and drink evaluations.

## **Chapter summary**

### *Etymological reflections and rhetorical contrasts*

Our common-sense understandings of different evaluative terms are socially and historically as well as locally defined, and this can be seen most explicitly if we trace historical definitions (Danziger, 1997; see also Edwards, 1997, with regard to emotions). For example, the current sense of the term 'like' in English - to find agreeable, or to have a taste for (Oxford English Dictionary, 1994) - was in use as far back as the thirteenth century. However, the term has also been used to signify the desires or wishes, and the enjoyment, of the speaker. These incorporate notions of motivation, and temporal experience as much as they do personal taste preferences. The expression 'nice' has been defined, from the eighteenth century

onwards, to suggest refined tastes or daintiness – particularly with respect to food. It has also been defined as something that is ‘agreeable’, that one can derive pleasure from. The etymology of these expressions therefore suggests the distinction made earlier between subjective and objective evaluations, and between internal and external emphases. The importance of this is not that we must learn the etymology of words to understand their ‘meaning’, but to be aware that our situated understandings of words are due in part to cultural and historical uses.

There are strong links here with Edwards’ (1997, 1999) analysis of the rhetorical uses of emotion terms. Words for ‘anger’ or ‘love’, for example, are not straightforward descriptions of internal states, but are bound up with situated interactional practices. Edwards’ argument stands against the more predominant semantic-conceptual account of emotion (e.g. Wierzbicka, 1995), which fails to capture the practical use of emotion discourse. Food evaluations can be regarded in a similar manner, in that they are treated as relating to bodily sensations or experiences (this is predominant in attitude research, as seen in the introduction and in chapter 2). It therefore makes sense to draw on Edwards’ use of rhetorical contrasts of emotions to examine the range of discursive resources surrounding food evaluations.

The following is a list of some of the possible contrasts that can be used to construct the nature of food evaluations and the activities within which they are embedded (cf. Edwards, 1997: 194). This is not a complete list, and there are many overlaps; this is a feature of the contrasts themselves, as flexible and interdependent constructions.

1. *Affect versus cognition* – the basis of an evaluation is often separated into two domains: based on sensory qualities of the food (affect), or on ‘knowledge’ or beliefs about nutritional content, etc. (cognition). This is often drawn upon in attitude research (e.g. Dubé & Cantin, 2000) and highlights the individual as being the primary ‘source’ of the evaluation.
2. *Internal sensations versus external realities* – this is the basis of the ‘subjective-objective’ distinction, in which the former refers to ‘private’ or

personal evaluations of the food, and the latter to 'public' or external qualities of the food.

3. *Specific versus general* – this allows speakers to narrow or broaden the focus of their evaluation in order to rhetorically defend or justify their evaluation. Specific items of food can be singled out as being a unique case, whereas general classes of food allude to normativity and notions of generic taste qualities.
4. *Personal versus global* – One's own evaluation can be highlighted as unique, as based on individual preferences. This can be used to manage the issue of whose evaluation is more 'accurate' than those of others.
5. *Experience versus not tasted* – this can take a number of turns, depending on what kind of food or drink has been experienced, and whether the speaker has 'rights' to this (e.g. in the case of alcohol and children). It draws on the sensory (affect) notions of taste as being the basis for an evaluation.

We can consider these contrasts as part of people's sense-making practices with regard to food, taste and eating (see also Lupton, 1996; Wetherell, 1996; Wetherell & White, 1992). Rather than being fixed meanings or definitions, evaluative expressions are bound up with ongoing activities in talk, and are continually constructed and reconstructed as a result. They are discursive resources that can be used rhetorically to defend, challenge or manage claims to taste and the experiences of eating.

#### A question of taste – implications for the way we eat

This chapter has shown the distinction between different types of evaluative expression, and the concerns and accountabilities that are associated with these. We need also to bear in mind that these concerns are specific to the domain of food. There are implications for our theories of taste and eating as a result. For instance, common-sense notions of taste involve bodily sensations, opinions and food qualities that are embedded within the discourse of food talk. By reconstructing these as rhetorical and discursively based concepts, we need then to reconsider what we mean by 'taste' and how we might approach eating practices as interactionally based. In other words, do we have to rethink our notion of what it means to have preferences and sensations towards particular foods?



This question will be addressed in the following chapters as an important implication of the thesis and its approach. What started out as an examination of food talk has opened up new ways of conceptualising embodied practices. Consider, for example, the notion of taste. One may have particular preferences or preferred 'tastes' as a result of learning, or cultural food usage for instance. Components or features of the food itself have been studied to a much lesser degree, primarily due to the focus on the individual as attitude-holder. Very often, then, the 'taste' of the food is characterised in quite broad categorical terms, and as an object to be evaluated on an individual level. For instance, mussels may be classed as 'salty', and as either liked or disliked as such by the individual.

Using these two features as separate aspects of 'taste' becomes problematic if we try to judge the point at which taste itself becomes a property of either food or person. Both are required for something to be tasted. Even when the mouth is thought to be empty and a taste 'perceived', saliva, food particles or aroma could be present in tiny amounts. Similarly, could we consider a food to have 'taste' independent of anyone to experience this quality? Does the taste of a food exist if we have not, or cannot experience it? Rather than develop this philosophical point further, it may be more helpful to consider 'taste' as being a *process*. In this respect, it exists neither solely with the food or consumer, but as a culturally, historically, and locally constructed phenomena.

#### **Box 6.4. Serving suggestions**

Constructing evaluations using different ingredients (subjective, objective, category, item) can be used to serve with any of the following activities:

- ☛ Constructing a factual-based evaluation
- ☛ Building one's experience or 'knowledge' of the food
- ☛ Orienting to a consensus of opinion
- ☛ Avoiding blame or responsibility

## Steak and interest:

### Challenges, accountability, and food preferences

Then, reaching under the counter I pulled out a small pink box with a silver valentine bow on it. 'Here. For you. My first customer.' Guillaume looked a little startled.

'Really, Madame, I-'

'Call me Vianne. And I insist.' I pushed the box into his hands. 'You'll like them. They're your favourite kind.'

He smiled at that. 'How do you know?' he enquired, tucking the box carefully into his coat pocket.

'Oh, I can just tell,' I told him mischievously. 'I know *everyone's* favourite. Trust me, this is yours.'

Joanne Harris, *Chocolat* (1999:29).

Evaluations expressed within interaction are bound up with conversational activities such as arguing, persuading, and accounting for behaviour. They can therefore also be countered or challenged by other speakers as part of these activities. This chapter will examine the different ways in which food and drink evaluations can be challenged, drawing on the distinctions between subjective/objective and category/item types discussed in chapter 6. These challenges are examined for how they construct particular notions of taste, such as individual food preferences and favourite foods. The chapter will also consider the ways speakers may be held accountable for their evaluations and associated eating practices.

Challenges to food evaluations draw on the notion that one may need to provide a reason for an evaluation. As Antaki (1994) has noted, in everyday conversation we may refer to these as accounts or justifications (see also Buttny, 1993; Heritage, 1984a; Potter & Wetherell, 1994). For example, I may claim to like bananas because of their sweet flavour; the latter (sweetness) being the account for the former (liking). Food attitude research similarly includes an examination of the causes or bases of evaluations. The difference between conversational accounts and experimental models of causation is one that will be discussed later. Also of relevance here is attribution theory, which examines how causes or explanations are attributed to objects and events, and often uses conversational

models of reasoning. Such work will also be discussed as part of the background to the chapter analysis.

It is important to note here that preferences or favourite foods, as referred to in this chapter, are treated as discursive resources, rather than individual or biological predispositions. This does not mean that we do not have particular tastes for foods, nor does it deny the physical sensations we experience when eating. Rather, I take a more cautious approach that does not distinguish between the body, and talk about the body (for an alternative account, see Burkitt, 1999; Burr, 1999). My concern here is to show that the body cannot be treated as fundamentally and theoretically different from other aspects of our daily practices and experiences. I argue instead that concepts such as food preferences are constructed as bodily experiences through discursive and interactional practices. This is not just something that occurs in conversation – it is also present in academic, media, advertising, and marketing discourse – but the data here show how it is constructed on an everyday level.

#### **Box 7.1. Ingredients for chapter 7**

- The affective/cognitive distinction
- Attribution theories and the conversational model
- Discourse and the internal/external dichotomy
- Challenging objective and subjective type evaluations
- Evaluations as requiring evidence – taste and specificity.
- The accountability of food preferences

#### **The affective/cognitive distinction**

Attitude research on food consumption often distinguishes between two different components of attitudes: cognitive and affective<sup>1</sup> (this was noted briefly in chapter 2; see also Rozin, Pelchat, & Fallon, 1986). Dubé and Cantin (2000) define these concepts as follows:

“The cognitive component of attitudes contains the positive and negative attributes and beliefs about the target (e.g. nutritional

---

<sup>1</sup> Other researchers such as Conner *et al.*, (1998), and Eagly & Chaiken (1993) also note a third component of behavioural tendencies toward the food. This is not included in the discussion here as the focus is on what may be treated as causes or reasons for the evaluation.

value, health consequences, convenience, etc.). The affective component pertains to the sensations, feelings and emotions one experiences in response to the food item (e.g. the hedonic tone of consumption, perhaps the pleasure of sharing it with friends, as well as the pleasant memories these create).” (2000: 252).

Attitudes toward different objects, or different foods, are thought to be dominant in either one of these components. One’s attitude toward fish, for example, may be more cognitive-based (believing it to be good for you, say) than affective-based (liking the taste). The important point is that attitudes are thought to be based on both of these components in varying degrees. So one may have potentially conflicting attitudes toward the same food, known as attitudinal ambivalence (Sparks *et al.*, 2001; see also chapter 5, box 5.3). Models are increasingly moving toward a more flexible notion of the attitude concept, in an attempt to account for the discrepancy between attitudes and behaviour. The affective/cognitive distinction is one way in which this is attempted.

Laurette Dubé and colleagues have developed much of the research using these concepts in their work on food consumption and advertising (Cantin & Dubé, 1999; Dubé & Cantin, 2000; Dubé, Chattopadhyay, & Letarte, 1996; Letarte, Dubé, & Troche, 1997). They put the distinction to practical use, arguing that advertising can use the results of such research to target either affective (e.g. ‘tastes great’) or cognitive (e.g. ‘good for you’) components of food attitudes. For instance, if people rate bread more highly on cognitive components, then advertisers could design their promotions to incorporate nutritional rather than sensory information. These recent developments – alongside those in ambivalence in attitudes – show great potential for practical application. Placing ‘causes’ into categories is a way of managing and isolating variables, though my concern here is that this constructs food preferences in a particular way, and fails to take into account the everyday use of explanation and accounts in food interaction. By looking at conversation, we can examine how causes are themselves built into the practices of food evaluations and eating discourse.

## Attribution theories and the conversational model

Attributing a cause or reason for a particular event can also be thought of as part of everyday explanation. People make sense of their daily experiences through explaining events or actions, and by solving the 'puzzle' of how, and why, things occur (Antaki, 1994). Experimental social psychology has tackled the notion of causes and explanations in attribution models. These are quite distinct from attitude research models (which are primarily questionnaire-based) and draw more heavily on conversational vignettes. In this section I briefly review the basic principles of attribution theory, the conversational model of causal explanation, and how these have been challenged by discursive theorists (Edwards & Potter, 1993).

The notion of attribution was established through the work of Fritz Heider (1958) and his concern to understand how interpersonal relations were embodied in everyday talk. He argued that there were ten prototypical units of lay psychology, including 'perception', 'want' and 'cause'. These were the basic cognitive principles by which people built up accounts of events in the world. For example, I could explain my choice of tomato soup for lunch by knowing that I *wanted* something hot to eat, and that the lack of other food in the cupboard *caused* me to choose this particular soup. Heider used these units to identify the underlying meaning or 'core sense' of the word (cited in Antaki, 1994: p. 10). This focus on the intrinsic meaning of language as something used by individuals in their everyday explanation became the key to later work on attribution theory.

Jones and Davis (1965) developed Heider's causal model and outlined a 'theory of correspondent inferences', which stated that there were two potential causes of an event or behaviour: internal and external<sup>2</sup> (see Myers, 1999). Their theory stated that "the goal of the attribution process is to *infer* that observed behaviour and the

---

<sup>2</sup> The internal/external binary was discussed briefly in chapter 6 in the distinction between subjective and objective types of evaluation. Here its use is more problematic, since it separates the individual from the social at a theoretical, rather than a pragmatic, level. This is not just how discourses construct the world as it involves researchers imposing these bounded categories onto participants responses. Nevertheless, we shall see how speakers also draw on this distinction when challenging different types of evaluation.

intention that produced it *correspond* to some underlying stable quality in the person" (Hewstone & Antaki, 1988: 113). Thus, the process involved explaining behaviour in terms of 'internal' causes. These were also classed as dispositional or personal factors by other researchers, which suggests that there is some confusion over the precise meaning of the measures used (Antaki, 1994). The alternative is to attribute things to an 'external', or situational, or environmental cause.

The work of Harold Kelley (1967, 1973) extended attribution theory further by portraying the individual as using different types of information about an event to arrive at a logical, rational explanation. The problem with this, and with the previous models, is that it fails to consider how the language used in attributional vignettes might contribute to the interpretation of events. This concern was first taken up by Mansur Lalljee (1981), who noted the pragmatics and use of vocabulary as being an important feature in causal explanation. In particular, he was concerned to take the model out of the laboratory setting and apply it to conversational usage. This was the start of the conversational model that has since been developed by Hilton and others (1990, 1991; Hilton & Slugoski, 1986; Turnbull & Slugoski, 1988).

Hilton's conversational model worked on the basis of Gricean maxims: be clear, be informative, be relevant and be honest. He argued that these constrain the kinds of explanations that people can provide in any given situation, and hence should be used as the basic principles of causal attribution in conversation. For example, I could not adequately explain my choice of tomato soup by referring to the current price of Suzuki motorbikes; the explanation is neither clear, informative, nor relevant in Gricean terms. The conversational model also proposed that "verbs carry implications about causality" (Antaki, 1994: 30). For example, the phrase 'John bores Sandra' implies that John is the cause of this situation (see Semin & Fiedler, 1988). A major problem with this model, however, is that it is based on conceptual forms of language and places these within a cognitive framework (Antaki, 1994). In other words, the use of conversation in such models does not extend beyond theorised, imaginary examples.

### **Discourse and the internal-external dichotomy**

The problems associated with traditional and conversational attribution models have been discussed in great detail by discursive theorists such as Antaki (1994), Buttny (1993), and Edwards and Potter (1992, 1993, 1999; see also Schmid & Fiedler, 1999, in response to the latter paper). The crux of these criticisms is that attribution models assume a particular view of language (as representational or conceptual) and overlook the action orientation of talk in interaction. For example, Edwards and Potter's (1992, 1993) *Discursive Action Model* emphasises how explanations are bound up with the interests and concerns of speakers, and how speakers may be held accountable for events and their explanations. Explanations are offered, managed and negotiated as part of other activities in talk, and it is from this embeddedness in interaction that shared understandings emerge.

Another feature of discursive approaches toward attribution is their treatment of the internal/external dichotomy used in traditional models. Broadly, this is regarded as a constructed and conceptual dichotomy; something used by researchers and participants alike in order to perform particular rhetorical work. It is imperative that we treat it as such, and not as an actual distinction between the body and the environment (as attribution theories seem to conceptualise it; see Heider, 1958). This is of particular significance with regard to eating, which is typically regarded as being an individual, embodied activity (e.g. Logue, 1991; Myers, 1999). By unpacking the internal/external dichotomy, we can begin to see how taste and food preferences are constructed as embodied practices.

A comparison between taste and emotion – both working with the internal/external rhetoric – may be helpful here. Derek Edwards (1997, 1999) provides a particularly clear discussion of emotion terms by drawing on anthropological research (Lutz, 1988; White, 1990). According to the latter body of work, there are cultural differences between the use of expressions and their associated emotions. One of the arguments that Edwards makes is to show how emotion terms should be examined for their rhetorical work in interaction, rather than to question how, or if, they are associated with bodily experiences. The use

of a particular emotion term such as the Ifaluk's expression 'song' (broadly meaning 'justifiable anger') requires an understanding of the Ifaluk culture and of their discourse. It is the use of such expressions, rather than the 'emotion' itself (what it usually conceived to be the bodily experience), that is interactionally significant. To refer to one's 'song' is to invoke a set of moral and social obligations on another individual, for there must be some reason *why* the individual is 'justifiably angered'.

We can take this argument one step further with regard to the notion of taste. Taste is typically regarded as being a physical, individual and private sensation. This implies that it is 'extra-discursive', or distinct from discourse. Here the internal/external dichotomy is most apparent. Not only is the body thought to be separate from talk, and purely 'internal', but it is also thought to be the primary location for taste and sensation. In this way, taste is regarded as being individual and private, rather than a public construct or experience.

The analysis in this chapter aims to demonstrate how the rhetoric of the internal/external dichotomy can be used and reworked in interaction. What are the implications of using this dichotomy for our notions of eating practices more generally? Food evaluations are involved in attribution work in the way that they may construct, imply or infer the *source* of the evaluation. For instance, the classic internal/external distinction may be drawn upon to construct inherent qualities of the food (the 'velvety-ness' of milk chocolate, for example). These are qualities or characteristics that are treated as being independent of individual taste. Indeed, such qualities are often played upon in advertisements and product information. The qualities associated with particular foods can be marketed as being unique to a brand of food. The 'taste' of the food is the same regardless of the consumer, and can therefore be relied upon to recreate the experience of taste of the food on each occasion.

The converse causal relation is that the *individual consumer* is the reason for the evaluation. For example, I may 'like' the taste of pasta because I have a personal preference for the food. This may be supported by an additional account of liking *all types* of pasta and not just lasagne, or rigatoni al forno (i.e. a specific dish).



This kind of attribution could be said to be an internal one, as relatively stable and independent of food qualities. Note also how it works with the distinctions between subjective/objective and category/item evaluations discussed in chapter 6. We can sense, though, that caution is needed. As others have noted, the distinction between 'internal' and 'external' causes is an overly-simplistic account (Antaki, 1994; Edwards & Potter, 1992). Yet this is still the primary model for food preference and attitudinal research.

The aims of this chapter are to examine; 1) how subjective and objective evaluations are challenged in different ways. 2) To examine the different concerns and accountabilities that these challenges raise, and 3) to discuss the implications of these for notions of food preferences and eating experiences.

### ANALYSIS

Before beginning the analysis, it is helpful to first consider the relative frequency of evaluations that were challenged in the data. By 'challenged', I refer to those instances in which evaluations were questioned, disagreed with, asked to be accounted for, or treated as unacceptable in some way. These were found to be markedly different from those evaluations that were not challenged (for example, when an agreeing second evaluation is given in response to a first assessment).

I began the analysis by searching the data corpus for instances where these challenges occurred. Out of a total number of 500 food and drink evaluations, 30 were challenged in some way. Within these 30 instances, most challenges were produced when the initial evaluation was negative, and often subjective and directed toward a category of food. For example, the evaluation, 'I hate carrots' would fit these requirements. By implication, those evaluations that were positive (e.g. 'lovely', 'delicious'), objective, and directed toward a particular food item, were less often challenged. This initial distinction is helpful to gain a sense of where challenges most often occurred, though we need to examine instances in more detail to see how they are managed in interaction.

The initial searching of the data for the 30 instances of challenged evaluations was followed by a thorough discursive analysis of each instance. I noted four main

ways in which evaluations could be treated as accountable. These are: evidence of having eaten the food; specifying what is 'wrong' (or right); referring back to usual food preferences; and differences of opinion. These forms of challenges may be thought of as rhetorical devices, and will be used to structure the main body of this analytic section.

### 7.1. Taste as evidence

One of the main rhetorical devices used to challenge evaluations is to question whether or not the other speaker has eaten the food that was evaluated. This constructs eating as being primarily a physical experience, with sensations of taste, texture, and flavour forming the basis for our evaluations of food. The implication is that if one hasn't tasted the food, one cannot say with the same degree of authority whether it is liked or not. Take the following example. This extract was seen in chapter 5 as an example of evaluations being used to claim experience of a food or drink. Here we see how another speaker questions the claim, so it is the experience, rather than the evaluation, which is under dispute.

#### EXTRACT 7.1: SKW/G2a-M8 (740-787)

1. Beth: can I try some ↑wine
2. Laura: °oh::: (0.2) (↑mm-hm)°
3. (2.0)
4. Beth: don't [↑like red really
5. Laura: [its very nice:
6. (1.0)
7. Laura: ↑well=
8. Bill: → =how d'you know (0.8) have you ↑ever tried it
9. Beth: I've tried it about a ↑million times
10. [I hate all ↑red (.) it's too strong

Beth's evaluation of the wine is constructed in terms of an established personal experience, through the expression of a dislike of the drink. In particular, the reference to red wine as a category of drink, and the familiar, abbreviated 'red' (line 4) suggests that her experience is substantial. Note how the use of subjective and category based evaluations work here to suggest that this is based on a previously established preference (see also chapter 6). In other words, this is not

just an on-the-spot judgement, but a statement about Beth's taste and drink preferences. It constructs these tastes as existing beyond the context of the current interaction.

It is perhaps not surprising then that Bill challenges and holds Beth accountable for the evaluation, given that she has also indirectly drawn attention to her age through her request in line 1. He is not questioning her evaluation *per se*, but the implication of this – i.e. that she has experienced a substantial amount of red wine. Beth then employs a number of extreme case evaluations that work to defend her account (Edwards, 2000; Pomerantz, 1986). For example, having tried wine 'a million times' (line 9) seems unlikely given Beth's age, but it demonstrates a commitment to her earlier statement. It particularly contrasts with Bill's 'have you *ever* tried it' (line 8) by stressing that the opposite is true. As Edwards (2000) has argued with respect to extreme case formulations, the use of emphasised terms such as 'hate' and 'too strong' (line 10) add further rhetorical strength to her argument. Using an 'objective' type of evaluative term allows Beth to defend her expressed preference, by shifting the focus onto the drink itself. The evaluation is constructed as being based on both the wine and her experience of it. To say that red wine is 'too strong' (line 10) not only redirects the evaluation, it also constructs a notion of what the drink is 'actually' like.

The above extract demonstrates how challenges to evaluations may involve much more than simply questioning another speakers' judgement (though there will be examples of this later). What is at stake here is the experience of eating (or drinking) particular foods. As Pomerantz (1984a) has shown, expressing an evaluation also expresses an *entitlement* to give an evaluation. It demonstrates an involvement in other activities, for which the speaker may then be held accountable. For example, where was this food eaten, and in whose company? Food occasions – as noted in chapter 2 and 4 – are events involving the building and maintenance of relationships with others. Who we eat with (and what we eat) are bound up with our daily interactions and the construction of social relations.

The extract below illustrates this point with respect to family structures. In this section of talk, the family members are talking about a party that Sandra and Ian

have been invited to. The topic of food arises, and they discuss what may be being served at the party.

EXTRACT 7.2: SKW/ K1b-M3 (292-307)

1. (3.0)
2. Darren: >just gonna have a< fon<sup>↑</sup>due:
3. (1.0)
4. Darren: <sup>↑</sup>I like fondues but I don't cheese fondues
5. they're >horrible<
6. (1.0)
7. Julie: → °<sup>↑</sup>when have you ever [had a <sup>↓</sup>fondue°
8. Amy: [hehhh
9. Sandra: >he had one [on<
10. Darren: [I have
11. (0.6)
12. Darren: [on <sup>↑</sup>holida:y
13. Ian: [he has:
14. (0.4)
15. Ian: mm-<sup>↑</sup>hm
16. (1.0)

The example above differs from extract 7.1 in that both subjective and objective types of evaluation are used in the initial assessment (lines 4-5). The latter evaluation works to support the claim that Darren doesn't like cheese fondues, by giving a reason for this based on the food itself (i.e. 'they're horrible'). What is important, however, is that, as with extract 7.1, it is not the evaluation that is challenged, but what this subsequently implies. In other words, Julie questions the fact that Darren has an entitlement to give an evaluation (line 7) – that he has been part of a social activity in which fondues were also present. Given that fondues are a rather unusual style of food, and associated with particular forms of dinner party, the likelihood that Darren has eaten one is further reduced.

Both Darren and his parents provide the defence of his evaluation. Through subsequent turns in the conversation, a collaborative account is given of an occasion at which Darren ate some fondue. Note also that this was 'on holiday' (line 12), suggesting that this was a special or unusual occasion – and so more

likely to include a range of different food items. It also suggests a family event, and this is supported by his parents, who act as a witness for Darren. Given that Julie is also a member of the family, it implies that this was an occasion at which she may have been present as well. As Edwards and Middleton (1986; Edwards, Potter, & Middleton, 1992) have noted, such instances also show how speakers may orient to a shared activity as a feature of 'conversational remembering'. What is being constructed here is the collective remembering of an event, as well as the food that was consumed at the time.

Challenging an evaluation on the basis of experience works to construct eating as being primarily a physical activity. It is oriented to as something that requires more than just perception through sight or smell. Likewise, one may need to account for stating a preference on the basis of 'thought' or 'prejudgement' alone. Tasting or trying food then becomes the evidence for the expressed evaluation. The extract below is an example. In this section of talk, Mike is talking about a type of kebab that he has previously provided a lot of detail about. More importantly, the speakers discussed kebabs as being a rather unappealing food. At this point in the conversation, Jenny has just referred to a form of kebab that is cooked on a vertical, rotating spit. It is to this that Anna later refers to as the 'bit of meat hanging up'.

#### EXTRACT 7.3: SKW/ D2a-M3 (1743-1752)

1. Mike: >yeah< (0.2) that's the one
2. (1.2)
3. Mike: I quite ↑like them
4. Anna: → do [↑you
5. Jenny: [mmm
6. Mike: lots: of chilli sauce on (↑board)
7. (1.0)
8. Anna: mm, (0.8) >ac- prob'ly if I a:te it I would quite
9. ↓like it its just the thought that they were
10. unhygie:nic with the bit of m:eat hanging up<

The form of the challenge is subtler here, and begins when Anna requests an account from Mike (line 4). The implication is that, given the current discussion

about kebab meat, just saying that he 'quite likes' it is not sufficient as a stand-alone evaluation. That is, there must be some reason for liking the food despite the possibility that it may be unhygienic (as discussed earlier and in line 10). This reason is treated as being the actual experience of eating the food, when Anna displays a contrast between the 'thought' of the food (line 9) and an evaluation based on taste (line 8) as being contrastive states. This is a wonderful illustration of how the body is separated from the mind in everyday talk. Eating is firmly placed as being in the former category (as physical), and as being the final basis on which an evaluation can be made.

All of the above extracts featured subjective types of evaluation. Liking a food was oriented to as evidence of having tasted it on at least one previous occasion. The same could occur with objective evaluations, though here the specific terms used are important in the interpretation. For example, in extract 5.5 (chapter 5) Simon uses the evaluation 'nice' to compliment his daughter on the Christmas cake. While this is challenged as being *only* a compliment, the 'nice' is treated as referring to the look of the cake. That is, objective terms may not always imply that a food has been tasted, as they may refer to other qualities of the food.

The physical experience of food as 'proof' of an evaluation is fundamental to our cultural conceptions of eating and taste. We regard the sensual aspects – the flavours and textures of food – as being one of the basic principles guiding our choice of food on a daily basis. This is very much reflected in the psychological literature on eating, as discussed at the start of the chapter and in chapter two. What is important is that we *treat* it as a construction, and as oriented to particular activities in talk. For instance, chapter 5 showed how we could use evaluations as a way of evidencing our food experiences. One can also use the lack of having 'tried' a food as an argument against a claim that a food isn't liked (see box 7.2). The implication is that if we haven't tried the food, how will we know whether we like it or not?

### Box 7.2. Using the 'taste as evidence' rhetoric

The rhetoric of taste as being primarily a physical experience can be used in various ways and as part of other activities. For example, a parent may wish to persuade their children to eat their food. The following extract shows how one may be obliged to 'try' food, not only as a means by which to evaluate it, but as a requirement of the meal itself (see also chapter 5, section 5.2.4).

SKW/ M1bM3 (14-27)

1. (1.0)
2. Jane: >right what do you< think- (0.4) make of
3. ↓that then
4. Susie: °nice°
5. Jane: hmm? (0.4) lovely >in't it<
6. (1.2)
7. Matt: don't ↑know
8. Jane: → you don't ↓know then (0.2) you haven't tried
9. ↓it yet (0.4) °(---)°
10. (3.0)

The use of the word 'yet' (line 9) is important here, since it suggests that Matt will be required to try the food at some point. Indeed, it may be the case that requesting an evaluation (line 2-3) is a way of making sure that the children (Matt and Susie) have eaten – and continue to eat – their food.

### 7.2. What's wrong with it?

As I noted at the beginning of the analysis section, the majority of the challenges seen in the data corpus followed negative evaluations, whether these were subjective or objective types. Of these examples, one form of challenge asks the first speaker to specify *what was wrong* with the food, or *why* they didn't like it. The implication in both cases is that a complaint has been made about the food. This takes up the discussion from chapter 5, in which evaluations can be used and treated as being part of a complaint sequence. What I am interested in here is how these types of challenges are managed interactionally, and how they construct taste as being a physical, accountable activity.

The extract below is a particularly clear example of how the qualities of the food are negotiated and managed alongside speaker evaluations. The food is available to all speakers, and so evaluations of the food are open to direct challenges in a way that more subjective evaluations are not. The family here is eating Sunday dinner, with meat and 'stuffing'. Stephanie is the mother and food provider in this instance.

EXTRACT 7.4: SKW/ H1a-M1 (91-104)

1. Lee: >d's anyone want that bit of: °(s'p:ork)°<
2. Stephanie: °↓no°
3. (1.0)
4. John: (that-) (0.4) ↑stuffing in it
5. (0.6)
6. Lee: its horri↑ble:
7. Danny: ugh:, [(0.4) who ma:de ↑that
8. John: → [ >what's wrong with ↑it<
9. Lee: its not ↑Pax:o
10. Danny: >where did you< buy it °from°
11. (1.0)
12. Stephanie: hheh .hh .hh (0.4) its 'Aunt ↑Bessie's::'
13. Lee: >exactly<
14. (1.2)

The challenge used here ('what's wrong with it', line 8) is directed toward Lee's claim that the food is 'horrible' (line 6). The latter appears to be an item-based, objective evaluation. Using this type of evaluation, Lee orients to taste as being a feature of the food, and thus implies that other people would also find it horrible. The taste and unpleasantness are constructed as being separate from the individual food preferences of the others present. However, John subsequently displays an inability to taste the unpleasantness of the food by asking 'what's wrong with it' (lines 8). In doing so, he opens up the possibility that the problem could lie with the food or with Lee's evaluation of it. If he agreed with Lee, this turn would not make sense. So by asking him to be more specific, John also challenges the notion of taste that Lee is constructing with his use of the term 'horrible'.

Extract 7.4 also shows how evaluations of food can highlight different accountabilities and concerns of the speakers. Here, accountability for the food falls to Stephanie (as food provider) for serving the 'wrong' brand of stuffing. By using an objective evaluation, and noting the different brand name (line 9), Lee shifts the blame onto the food. That is, it is not his fault that the food is horrible; he is merely pointing to aspects of the food that question its quality. The



implication of this is that Stephanie may then be held accountable for selecting this food for the family meal. This is something that Danny directly orients to in line 10. In this way, evaluations become bound up with the roles and responsibilities of the family members. Despite the initial challenge (line 8) that supports Stephanie, the subsequent conversation displays how the rest of the family constructs expectations about appropriate or acceptable foods.

Challenges to evaluations can therefore attend to practical concerns, such as what food is to be served, and who is to help prepare the meals. The different roles and responsibilities of speakers may also be constructed through these concerns. Take the following example. Although Sandra is the usual food provider in this family, on this occasion it becomes apparent that Julie has helped to prepare the meal. Amy is the younger daughter and questions Sandra about her not eating her mushrooms.

#### EXTRACT 7.5: SKW/ K3a-M9 (562- 578)

1. Julie: cos my- (0.8) door keeps rattling [(----)]
2. Amy: [↑why are you
3. not eating your mushrooms::
4. Sandra: >didn't< ↑like them
5. Amy: → ↓why not
6. Sandra: don't ↑know
7. (1.0)
8. Julie: they- >they ↑didn't< loo:k (.) too ↓nice:
9. (0.2) did they=
10. Ian: =>they were al↑right<
11. Sandra: were they ↑al↓right
12. (0.6)
13. Ian: [but-
14. Darren: [I didn't
15. Ian: (cos) Julie didn't turn them ↑over on the grill:
16. Julie: ↑YOU TOLD ME ↑NO:T TO::
17. Ian: <I ↓did:n't>

The initial evaluation in this section of talk is subjective. Sandra displays a personal dislike of the mushrooms and in doing so constructs the evaluation as

being concerned with her tastes rather than the food per se. It is interesting, then, that Julie (who cooked the mushrooms – see lines 15 to 16) provides an account for why Sandra might not like them (lines 8 to 9). This suggests that even subjective evaluations may be treated as saying something negative about the food. Indeed, by asking Sandra why she didn't like her food (line 5), Amy displays a concern to find out the cause of the problem. Note also that the evaluation is directed at *these* mushrooms as a particular item of food, suggesting that there is a fault with this serving of mushrooms. Ian confirms this orientation to an indirect complaint on line 10, in which he offers a claim that the food was 'alright' as a contrasting evaluation.

Accountability for one's taste is also displayed in Amy's direct challenge on line 5. Here she asks Sandra why she didn't like the mushrooms. This raises interesting questions around common sense notions of food taste and preferences. To express a personal taste, for instance, is to claim privileged knowledge over one's experience of food. The suggestion is that not only are experiences of eating private and personal, but that individuals have 'likes' and preferences that derive from these private sensations. The work of Wittgenstein (1953) is appropriate here, in that eating discourse can be seen as a language game. For example, Sandra states that she didn't 'know' (line 6) why she didn't like her food, and this was not pursued by the other speakers. 'Not knowing' the cause of dislikes suggests that this is a bodily experience that is separate from rational thought or reflection. So tastes can be constructed as involuntary and outside of one's control. Hence if one doesn't like the taste of something, responsibility for this evaluation can be avoided.

Extract 7.6 illustrates how the distinction between objective and subjective evaluations may be used to manage accountability for complaints about food. The problem in this section of talk is initially oriented to as being with the food, and thus could be seen as Viv making a complaint about the food that Lesley has provided.

EXTRACT 7.6: SKW/ J2a-M5 (550-558)

1. (2.6)
2. Lesley: what's: that there (0.4) ↑what's the mat:ter
3. with ↑that no:w=
4. Viv: =>I ↑don't like it its dry<
5. (0.6)
6. Lesley: oh::↓
7. Ben: → pastries are ↑usually dry: ↓Viv
8. Viv: >I don't like< °pas:tries very ↑much°
9. (5.0)

There are two parts to Viv's evaluation on line 4: a subjective first part ('I don't like it') and an objective second part ('its dry'). This has the effect of constructing the evaluation as an individual reaction to the food, while also providing an account for this. That is, the reason why Viv doesn't like the pastry is because it is dry. As such, she cannot be held accountable for something over which she has no control. Again, this orients to taste as being a physical reaction, through which qualities of the food are evaluated. Dryness is one such quality that may otherwise be perceived as an appropriate aspect of particular foods.

It is this latter part of Viv's evaluation that Ben challenges on line 7. Rather than dispute her expressed experience of taste, he offers an alternative account of what pastries are 'usually' like. This reference to expected characteristics of the food implicates certain norms and generalisations that can be made (Edwards, 1994, 1995). If pastries are usually dry, then Viv should have known this; there is nothing peculiar about this particular pastry to cause offence. Lesley's query about there being something 'the matter' with the food (line 2) is therefore answered within Ben's response. That this is not explicitly said adds to the rhetorical force of the expression. It is not that Ben and Lesley are ganging up on Viv; rather, they appear to be merely stating what the food is like.

### Box 7.3. Uses of the 'what's wrong with it' rhetoric

As with the previous form of challenge in section 7.1, asking the prior speaker to specify what is wrong (or bad) about the food works to construct their evaluation as being a complaint about the food. This is the case whether or not the evaluation was subjective or objective. So by using this kind of challenge, speakers can highlight practical issues such as who prepared the food, whether they received any help from the others, and also attend to the tastes of the family members. For instance, if one made a complaint about the food, the food provider could argue that they didn't receive any help, or that they were just doing as they were told (as in extract 7.5). These forms of challenges can be used to shift the blame or highlight responsibilities. It is more than just the food that is being evaluated here; the roles of the family members are also at stake.

### 7.3. Favourites and food preferences

Subjective type evaluations, such as 'I like', suggest the evaluation is based on an individual orientation toward particular foods. This being so, it implies that a specific food preference exists, and that this existed prior to the current interaction in which the evaluation is expressed. This is particularly the case if the evaluation is of a category of food. For example, if I say 'I love bread', then you might deduce that I have 'loved bread' for quite some time. More importantly, it says something about my tastes, rather than about particular foods. I can then be held accountable if I behave or talk in a way that contradicts this food preference. The following three extracts are examples of how this 'preference' rhetoric may be used to challenge another speakers' evaluation.

The first example below illustrates how the rhetoric of food preferences can also work for food that is thought to be disliked by the speaker. Of particular interest here is how Helen manages the challenge to her initial claim to liking the chicken.

#### EXTRACT 7.7: SKW/ F1a-M3 (72-82)

1. (8.0)
2. Helen: I love that ↑chicken
3. (2.4)
4. Liz: → °thought you didn't ↑like chicken Helen°
5. (2.0)
6. Helen: I like the one with: (.) this
7. (1.0)
8. Helen: well I ↑do like it (0.2) its okay: but- (0.6) out

9.                                   of that and corned ↓beef I like corned beef °best°  
 10.   Liz:                           °I see°  
 11.                                   (6.0)

The use of a subjective evaluation in this extract is interesting, as it is located after a significant pause in the conversation (seen in line 1). While it may be a weak form of compliment to the food provider (Liz), it might also be seen as an indirect request for more food (see chapter 5). The important point here, however, is that neither of these possibilities is taken up. Instead, Liz questions the evaluation as being an accurate representation of Helen's food preferences. Note how this is achieved. Liz says that she 'thought' that Helen didn't like chicken, which softens the challenge. It questions Helen's initial evaluation without claiming to have greater knowledge of her taste preferences than Helen herself does. This constructs taste as not only being a personal concept, but one that can be 'known' to others through earlier displays of preferences. For example, Liz could refer back to a previous occasion on which Helen said she didn't like chicken. That this is not necessary here shows that 'thinking' you know what another person likes is an acceptable claim on this occasion.

We can also consider how Helen is prompted to give an account of her preferences through the organisation of speaker turns.<sup>3</sup> This is achieved through an elicitation in the form of a 'my side telling' (Pomerantz, 1980), which presents some information as being due to the limited access of the speaker (line 4). By using this rhetorical device, an explanation slot is opened up (Antaki, 1994), prompting Helen to provide an account for this seemingly puzzling state of affairs. In other words, to provide an explanation that rests on 'full' access to Helen's food preferences toward chicken. She then proceeds to give an elaborate account and evaluation of different foods in order to justify her initial statement.

The following two extracts are longer sections of conversation, and are included here as examples of how food preferences may be managed in interaction. In

---

<sup>3</sup> Providing an account is not the only option here, for if Liz 'thought' that Helen didn't like chicken, she could be held accountable herself for serving the food at this meal. That Helen doesn't hold Liz accountable demonstrates the rhetorical power of accounting for the stability of food preferences.

extract 7.8 below, the food being discussed was eaten at a fish and chip restaurant ('Harry Ramsden's'). Given that the food was therefore prepared by an external source, (and not by one of the speakers here), it is interesting to see how Anna avoids making a complaint of the food.

EXTRACT 7.8: SKW/ D5a-M7 (116-152)

1. Anna: >Dad and I< wentu to uh: (0.6) Harry Rams:den's:
2. >yester↓day<
3. (1.2)
4. Anna: >he said< I'll treat you to Harry ↓Rams:den's::
5. Jenny: ↑oh yes:
6. Mike: mm↑mm::
7. Anna: I'm always disa↓ppointed every time I ↑go
8. (2.0)
9. Anna: >°I don't think° they're special at ↑all< their
10. fis:h is [bea:utiful but their chips:-
11. Jenny: [mmm
12. (0.6)
13. Anna: >I don't like their chips:<
14. Jenny: ye[↓ah
15. Mike: [mmm
16. (2.4)
17. Mike: → but what kind of chips: do you ↑like
18. (1.8)
19. Mike: the: [uhm-
20. Anna: [they're jus:t- (0.8) ↑no I think >I dunno
21. whether it's the pota:t↓oes< (0.2) °if its just°
22. (0.8) >°(so I don't know what it is)° sort of<
23. dry:: an',
24. Mike: mmm
25. (1.4)
26. Jenny: ↓mmm
27. Anna: I ↑don't like greas:y ↓chips: (0.4) but these
28. were- (.) ooh (0.2) I don't ↓know
29. (1.0)
30. Jenny: if its ↑gonna be a fish and chip restau↓rant
31. (0.8) you expect [it to ↓be:

32. Anna: [its- (0.4) ↓yeah, (0.2) you're  
 33. paying ↓for (0.4) the whole am:bience and the-  
 34. Mike: mmm  
 35. Anna: tradition and,  
 36. Jenny: mmm,  
 37. (1.4)

It is important to see the subjective evaluation 'I don't like their chips' (line 13) in its sequential context here, as it follows a claim that Anna is '*always* disappointed *every time*' she goes (line 7, emphasis added). In other words, her not liking their chips provides an account for this disappointment. Likewise, if she had said, for instance, 'their chips are horrible', there is a chance that others could disagree. Keeping it subjective constructs it as a personal experience without implicating others' tastes. It is also interesting to note the cut-off turn in line 10, which may have projected a more objective evaluation. This is repaired to the subjective 'I don't like' on line 13, and to which Mike's 'but' may be orienting to as a potential accountability issue.

Mike's question on line 17 indicates a disjunction with the previous turns in talk. The 'but' signals a problem with Anna's story. She has claimed to be disappointed with the food (and in particular, the chips) yet doesn't clearly articulate what is wrong with them. Indeed, it almost appears as if the problem lies with Anna's food preferences, and it is this that Mike questions after the initial account from Anna. His turn can be regarded as a way of making sense of why the complaint has been raised. It provides a challenge in that it locates the problem with Anna and her potentially distinctive or unusual preferences. Note how Anna subsequently manages this challenge in terms of how the food was prepared by the restaurant; perhaps through the use of the wrong kind of potatoes, or inadequate cooking procedures. Anna displays a detailed justification of her complaint, and this works to defend against the possibility that her preferences are at fault here.

The orientation to individual food preferences can also involve the construction of identities based on food. By identities, I mean the local, situated identities that

emerge through the sequential organisation of turns in talk (see for example studies in Antaki & Widdicombe, 1998). In terms of food preferences, examples might be being a 'fussy eater' or 'someone who loves strawberries'. These identities may be mundane and often unspecified directly, though their implication may be seen through how they are bound up with activities in talk. In other words, these are occasioned identities and may be managed by speakers as part of the business of the interaction.

Extract 7.9 provides a more explicit example of how food preferences and identities may be managed alongside the practical concerns of serving out the food. There are some unclear turns in this section of talk, due to the movement of the speakers around the table. I draw your attention to the way in which Daisy's refusal of the cake is first attended to by Nicholas (her older brother) and then by Lynn (her mother). Daisy's claim to not liking the cake is used on both occasions to challenge her refusal.

#### EXTRACT 7.9: SKW/ L1a-M1 (37-82)

1. Lynn: Daisy:, (0.4) come and sit down (0.2) [have your=
2. Nicholas: [↑thank you=
3. Lynn: =[cake ↓please
4. Nicholas: =[Mum can you put the [cream ↓on for me
5. Daisy: [↑don't like i:t>
6. (1.0)
7. Daisy: don't like >it<
8. Lynn: °oh-°
9. Nicholas: wha::t
10. (2.0)
11. Daisy: °ca:::ke°
12. (2.0)
13. Nicholas: →oh you're ↑just being a copy-cat
14. Daisy: °(I'm ↓not)°
15. Nicholas: →you are (0.2) you ↑liked it on-
16. Daisy: I'm NO:::↑T
17. (0.8)
18. Nicholas: okay >okay °okay°<
19. (1.2)



20. Nicholas: ↑can I lick the ↓lid Mum  
 21. (0.8)  
 22. Lynn: tch- (0.6) Nicholas this is: a ↑lovely tape-  
 23. re↓cording (0.2) can I (read the °letter°)  
 24. (3.0)  
 25. Nicholas: mm:m↓m  
 26. (2.0)  
 27. Lynn: °where's your-° (0.6) brother gone  
 28. (1.6)  
 29. Daisy: there's something hanging on my back (.) (but --)  
 30. Lynn: is there?  
 31. Daisy: (candles in)  
 32. Lynn: mm↑mm↓  
 33. Daisy: °I've [(- - -)]°  
 34. Lynn: → [thought you ↑liked Christmas ↓cake  
 35. (1.0)  
 36. Daisy: °I ↑didn't°  
 37. Lynn: mmm  
 38. (1.0)  
 39. Daisy: °did- (0.4) [(- -)]°  
 40. Nicholas: [(this mine?) (0.6) Mum=  
 41. Lynn: =>cos you don't< (0.4) you keep leaving  
 42. ↑everything at the mo:ment  
 43. (1.2)  
 44. Nicholas: she ↑don't like anything  
 45. (7.0)

It may be important to consider Daisy's age here (around 5 years old), since there appears to be an asymmetry in the turns in talk. For instance, calling someone a 'copy cat' is usually associated with younger children (Nicholas is around 9 years old), and there is a characteristically child-like 'you are/I'm not' style of speech. Nevertheless, we can see that the logic of stable food preferences discussed up to now still applies. Nicholas supports his challenge by referring to a previous occasion on which Daisy had apparently liked the cake (line 15). The implication is not only that she should also like it *now*, but that this will mean she will *eat it now*. This display of remembering past preferences is thus not an abstract statement, but a turn in an argument. It is being used to achieve the goal of

persuading Daisy to eat, just as Daisy's claim to not like the food is a means by which to avoid eating it.

We can also see how particular characteristics are ascribed to Daisy throughout this interaction around food. Lynn expresses a concern that she keeps 'leaving everything at the moment' (lines 41-42), as if the rejection of the cake were an example of a more persistent behaviour. This suggests that Daisy's evaluation is just a ploy to leave food on her plate, to avoid eating it. Nicholas similarly orients to this notion (line 44) as if this were a failing on Daisy's part. Her not liking things is constructed as a stubbornness or awkwardness. Note also the ambiguity of the 'don't like anything', since this may refer to other activities apart from food. While this ascribing of characteristics might be particular to younger children, it shows again how food talk is bound up with other activities in interaction.

#### **Box 7.4. Uses of the 'favourites' or 'food preference' rhetoric**

To understand a little more about the rhetoric of food preferences, we can consider a moral issue: that it may be ethically wrong to force someone to eat a food that they do not like. Negotiating what people do or do not like is therefore bound up with what they should/could eat. Talking about someone's 'favourite' food can also suggest that this food is preferred over others, and that the person would actively choose to eat it (regardless of hunger, etc.). This kind of talk is extremely robust in terms of holding people accountable for their actions. For instance, if I invite you to dinner and offer your supposed 'favourite' meal, then you will have to do a lot of work to turn me down. A polite refusal may not be sufficient given that I have gone to the trouble of making something to suit your tastes!

#### *7.4. Differences of opinion*

In the final analytic section I consider a fourth type of challenge to food and drink evaluations. This type involves what may be regarded as quite a direct challenge, in which the speaker offers a contrasting evaluation to that previously given. This can occur with both subjective and objective evaluations, though there are variations in the way these are expressed. For instance, objective evaluations refer to something about the food, and thus something that is treated as accessible to others. On the other hand, subjective evaluations construct a private sensation that can only be 'accessed' by the speaker. If they are personal and physical, then they

may be harder to challenge than objective evaluations based on qualities of the food. The following extract is an example of a direct challenge to an objective evaluation.

EXTRACT 7.10: SKW/ G3a-M10 (175-185)

1. (1.0)
2. Beth: ↑why do you ta:ke all the white stuff ↓off:
3. (1.0)
4. Laura: the pith:
5. Beth: >its< ↑ni:ce
6. (0.6)
7. Laura: → ↓urgh:: (0.2) its ↑horri::d
8. Beth: → its ↑ni:::ce
9. Laura: °(not)° (0.2) pith: on these is ↑horrid (0.2)
10. I've ↑put your- (.) uh:m (0.2) the last app↓le
11. and two clemen↓tines °in your bag°

I am particularly interested here in the way in which Laura and Beth equally engage in the dispute over what the food (orange pith) tastes like. Both speakers use objective evaluations, so the dispute here is focussed on the food itself, rather than their personal taste. Yet it is interesting that neither concedes, for example by saying, 'well I think its nice', or 'I like it'. The point is that this is a rhetorical battle of wills, and Laura 'wins' in this case, by having the last word. This is something achieved in the organisation of turns in interaction, rather than by having the better argument, or being the more senior speaker. By specifying 'these' oranges (line 9), Laura shifts the evaluation to something particular to what she (and not Beth) is currently eating, and thus to which only she can directly assess in this instance. The shift in the topic of conversation (lines 10 and 11) is also significant, in that it prevents Beth from giving a counter evaluation without having to make a bigger issue out of the dispute.

Markers of taste are often experiential, in that they suggest a physical on-the-spot reaction to the food. An example is the 'urgh' on line 7 in the extract above (see also chapter 8 and 'mmm'). This term works to suggest that the evaluation is based on uncontrollable physical, and negative, responses to the food. The

movements of the mouth when expressing an 'urgh' also suggest the behaviour of one spitting out, or vomiting, food. This is similar to what Goffman (1978) named 'revulsion sounds' (such as 'Eeuw!'). These can be heard when someone has come into contact with a contaminating object (or is *displayed* as being such). The revulsion sound is then a way of temporarily excusing the subsequent behaviour. In the instance with 'urgh' above, it displays the 'horrible' evaluation as being due to the revulsion-inducing qualities of the food. This is not just Beth's thought on the matter; it marks the evaluation as being based on the actual experience of the taste.

The next extract shows another example of a challenge to an objective evaluation. Here, the evaluation is not countered by another, but is claimed to be an excuse for Darren not to eat all of his meal. At this point in the conversation, Julie has just returned from taking a phone call for her brother.

EXTRACT 7.11: SKW/ K3a-M9 (467-487)

1. Julie: I said to Mum next time I'm gonna an- (0.4) I
2. answer the phone I'm gonna answer '↑Darren's
3. messaging service'
4. Ian: °come on eat ↓up°
5. (3.0)
6. Ian: eat up or you'll ↑never be a big rugby play:er
7. Darren: I am
8. (1.4)
9. Darren: they're >↓horrible< (0.6) °bits:°
10. (0.8)
11. Ian: → °are they° ↓heck: (0.4) >get 'em< eat:en
12. Darren: all fat (0.6) oh yeah ↑what's the point in
13. °s::craping off all that ↓(meat)°
14. Sandra: heh heh
15. Ian: <come on:::>
16. (1.2)
17. Ian: you wim:p
18. (1.4)

What is at stake here is Darren's potential identity as someone who is avoiding eating his food because of reasons other than being full or unable to eat it. Both Sandra and Ian make light of his complaints, by way of laughter (line 14) and name-calling ('wimp', line 17). Challenging his evaluation that the food is 'horrible' (line 9) is an important part of this negotiation. Rather than taking it seriously as a potential complaint or assessment of the food, it is treated as a way of being awkward, or of avoiding the issue. What is important about this section of talk is how it situates the evaluation within a particular rhetorical argument. Whether or not the bits are 'horrible' has consequences for how Darren's local identity is constructed in this part of the conversation. Moreover, whether or not they are horrible is not the point; it is that Darren is making excuses for not eating and blaming the food.

It is particularly interesting to see how Ian refers to Darren's sporting activities (i.e. that he plays rugby) as a way of persuading him to finish his meal. Eating his food is associated with building strength or muscle, and the needs of an energy-consuming sport. If he does not eat the food, he is at risk of 'never being a big rugby player' (line 6) or being a wimp (line 17). Darren manages this threat by orienting to *particular* items of food on his plate ('they're horrible bits', line 9; see Billig, 1996, on the rhetoric of particularization). In doing so, he not only locates the source of the problem with the food, but also shows that he is not just avoiding eating his meal.

We now move onto direct challenges to subjective evaluations. As was noted earlier, this needs to be managed in a different way. One cannot say 'no, you don't like them' in the same way as one could say 'no, they're horrible'. Note how the expression of a direct disagreement, or difference of opinion, is managed in the following sequence; Simon is recounting his regular visits to see his elderly mother.

EXTRACT 7.12: SKW/ D4a-M6 (1153-1161)

1. Simon: cos when I go in, (0.2) the Weetabix is like
2. soaking with (.) always Tip-Top (0.6) .hh and
3. there'll be a [banana

4. Jenny: [urgh::: (.) <Tip-Top>  
 5. Anna: → oh I quite like ↑Tip-Top  
 6. (0.4)  
 7. Jenny: oh but not the- hhh (.) like ah- (.) you know  
 8. (0.2) y:ou mix it with something wouldn't you  
 9. (0.6)

The challenge here occurs in line 5, when Anna offers an alternative evaluation of the food. Note how this is prefaced by a marker, 'oh', which suggests that this is a dispreferred response to Jenny's evaluation (Pomerantz, 1984a). As Heritage (in press) has noted, this 'oh' preface to a disagreement suggests that Anna had direct or independent access to the object. In other words, her evaluation was based on prior experience of the food. This ties in with the use of a subjective evaluation indicating a personal preference, and displays precedence over Jenny's more spontaneous ('urgh') evaluation.

The use of a subjective evaluation here also suggests something other than a personal preference. Since evaluations are bound up with other activities in talk, we can see how Anna's stated preference is used here to support another's food habits (those of Simon's mother). That is, it avoids the absent person being characterised as unusual, or as having repulsive tastes. This may be suggested by Jenny's 'urgh' reaction, by which she displays a form of disgust at the thought of the food. To imply that one's food habits are disgusting may be regarded as offensive, and certainly the sociological literature notes the link between meanings of food and the self (e.g. Fischler, 1980, 1988; Rozin, 1999). By looking at particular instances of interaction like this, we can see how such issues may be constructed as practical concerns rather than simply as abstract notions around food identities.

The final extract below demonstrates how subjective and objective evaluations can be managed to construct the tastes of others as being purely personal and unique. In this case, what someone 'likes' becomes a rhetorical device to discredit a speaker in some way. In this meal, Liz prepared the dinner and asks the family members for their opinions on the vegetable samosas (the 'triangular things', line 1) that were part of the meal.

EXTRACT 7.13: SKW/ F1b-M1 (421-430)

1. Liz: and did you like those tri:angular ↓things
2. Brian: [°(no:)°
3. Martin: [((heavy breathing out))
4. Helen: I:: [lo:-
5. Brian: [but ↑I didn't think it was right to com↓plain
6. (0.6)
7. Martin: → >I thought they were al↑right<
8. Liz: → ↑I thought they were alright (0.4) could- (0.2)
9. well: I mean if ↑you don't like them that's
10. [°okay°

The practicalities of expressing an evaluation are shown particularly well here, as we see how negative expressions (line 2 and 5) are oriented to by the other speakers. The other speakers construct a 'complaint' about the food (although not actually articulated) as being due to Brian's personal taste (line 9). This appears to contrast with what the food 'actually' tastes like, as a result of the consensus provided by two other speakers (Martin and Liz). With two descriptions of the food being 'alright' (lines 7 and 8), Brian's complaint is notable as being accountably different. Note, however, that the two evaluations use the prefix 'I thought' which adds a personal claim to what are otherwise 'objective' type assessments. It is only in collaboration that these work together to produce a constructed version of the food's taste.

What is particularly interesting about this sequence is the way in which Liz requests assessments from the family members. By asking them 'did you like' the food (line 1), the preferred response would be to agree in subjective terms (Pomerantz, 1984a). That is, the construction of the question sets up a particular style of response (Antaki, Houtkoop-Steenstra, & Rapley, 2000; Sacks, 1987). However, having given a personal (subjective) response, Brian's account was sharply contrasted with the so-called reality of the food (that it was 'alright') and was not treated as valid a response. The 'okay' on line 10 could suggest that this personal dislike is not an immediate problem in terms of serving the samosas again, or that it is 'okay' to say that you *personally* dislike the food.

### **Box 7.5. Use of the 'differences of opinion' rhetoric**

The rhetoric of contrasting evaluations, as shown above, rests on the notion of people having different perceptions or tastes of foods. This is something pervasive in other areas of western culture, in which someone's 'point of view' is treated as being equally valid or appropriate as another (see Billig, 1989, on this notion of 'multisubjectivity'). Indeed, there are similarities here with postmodern thought, which celebrates the plurality of perspectives and opinions. As a result of this rhetoric, one must manage and account for differences in evaluations. For example, to persuade others that your evaluation is more valid, one may draw on past experiences (section 7.1), category entitlement (chapter 6) or faults with the food (section 7.2).

### **Chapter summary**

The fact that different types of evaluation hold different implications for the speaker is a basic, but unacknowledged issue in evaluation research. Evaluations are usually regarded as a generic category of relatively interchangeable expressions, and as such have no specific consequences dependent on the chosen term. What is important, however, is that in interaction these expressions can become an accountable issue, and evaluations can be rhetorically developed to defend such accounts. The subjective/objective distinction then becomes harder to define as a clear distinction in practice. When speakers are given the chance to respond to an evaluation, they can address exactly the issues that are being implied in the evaluative terms themselves.

An important point to note is that the extracts and examples used in this chapter are not an exhaustive list of types of challenge. Rather, they are some of the more apparent devices that were found in the data, and reveal particular constructions and rhetorical features of food evaluations. For example, by examining the ways in which food evaluations *have* been managed by speakers, we can see a range of practices used to defend, express or question the notion of taste and food quality.

By avoiding the use of dualistic notions of the body and discourse, we can argue that food sensations can be considered as bound up with, and inseparable from, discourse. Indeed, to talk about 'taste' as a quality of either food or individual preferences is to reify the notion that these sensations exist (and exist without the



need for discourse). However, we could consider how this might be so if we did not have talk – would we taste things as being particular flavours, or would we taste things at all?

Attribution theories have been shown by discursive psychologists (e.g. Antaki, 1994; Buttny, 1993) to underestimate the potential for causal relations to be actively constructed within a rhetorical, contextual and situational framework. People attribute causes to particular objects or people in relation to a specific interactional activity. Treating these attributions in the abstract – as is often the case with attitudes – removes them from their situational and interactional context. Food evaluations are a particularly appropriate area in this regard, since they are bound up with the management of food on a practical everyday level. The tastes and preferences of others must be taken into account when choosing meals for the family (e.g. Grieshaber, 1997). These preferences can therefore be constructed and negotiated as part of the accountabilities of food management.

#### **Box 7.6. Serving suggestions**

Challenging evaluations can involve a number of rhetorical moves, and require consideration of the type (subjective, objective) and focus (category, item) of the evaluation. Some suggested forms of challenge are as follows:

- ☛ Taste as evidence
- ☛ What's wrong with it
- ☛ Favourites and food preferences
- ☛ Differences of opinion

Consuming pleasure, consuming bodies

“Good home baking brings both pleasure and satisfaction to housewives and their families alike. Home cooks know the pleasure of creating really delicious cakes and pastries themselves in their own kitchens. The aroma of freshly baked food is a delight to all, and to see your family, especially the children, eating and enjoying the wholesome results of your own baking skill gives lasting satisfaction.”

Be-Ro Home recipes, 31<sup>st</sup> edition (circa 1926).

The previous analytical chapters have shown how evaluations of food and drink are highly complex constructions. First, we can examine them as interactional constructions, bound up with conversational activities on a practical level (chapter 5). Second, we can distinguish different types of evaluative expression and examine their associated accountabilities and concerns. Some may be treated as being more factual than others, and thus more persuasive (chapter 6). Third, the use of different expressions suggests that there are cultural notions of taste and food preferences. Some types of evaluation may be challenged more directly than other types; for example, according to how one attends to the notion of favourite foods (chapter 7). So food evaluations achieve more than just assessing food – they are bound up with our basic assumptions about taste, eating experiences, and food preferences.

This chapter continues the theme of food evaluations and conversational activities into a more specific area: that of gustatory pleasure. The ‘mmm’ expression will be used as an example of how pleasure can be expressed and constructed as part of, or as, a food evaluation. More importantly, I demonstrate how this expression is bound up with the construction of eating practices as embodied activity. As discussed previously, eating has primarily been researched as an individual activity, as something based on physiological, psychological and social influences. In this chapter the focus will be on how discourse brings the body into the practice of eating. In other words, how talking food is also talking bodies. It is here that

we will examine how eating is oriented to as an individual experience through the construction of physiological reactions and sensations in the body.

### **Box 8.1. Ingredients for chapter 8**

- Redefining pleasure
- Embodying talk
- The conversational *mmm*
- *Mmm* and intonation
- Bringing pleasure to the talk
- The *mmm*-plus-evaluation sequence
- Immediacy, spontaneity, vagueness
- Embodying the experience

### **Redefining pleasure**

Eating can involve, among other things, pleasurable tastes and flavours. Within psychological research, gustatory pleasure is largely conceptualised as a physical experience, as something that can be directly accessed via participant responses (e.g. Cardello, Schutz, Snow, & Lester, 2000; Frijters, 1987; Grogan, Bell, & Conner, 1997; Hetherington, Pirie, & Nabb, 1998). Despite this, there has been relatively little research on the pleasurable or enjoyable aspects of food (Dubé & Cantin, 2000); the overwhelming emphasis has been on research examining the negative aspects of diet, eating disorders and cultural norms (e.g. Bordo, 1997; Germov & Williams, 1996a; Hill & Franklin, 1998). In particular, there has been little concern with how 'pleasure' can be defined, and how it is constructed as an individual, embodied experience. This chapter will examine how pleasure is expressed and oriented to in conversation, and the implications of this for discursive theories and notions of embodiment. The 'gustatory *mmm*' has been chosen as a topic for analysis as it appears to be central to the expression of pleasure during eating.

As seen in previous chapters, the focus on the individual consumer is characteristic of psychological research on food, in which eating is regarded first and foremost as a physiological and cognitive activity (see for example, Wardle, 1988; Conner, Martin, Silverdale, & Grogan, 1996; Herman & Polivy, 1980). The social and interactional nature of food consumption is sectioned off as an

independent variable, made up from either the consumer's perception of social norms or the mere presence of other consumers. Hence it is typically regarded as an influence on, rather than being central to, food choice and eating behaviour. For example, Conner *et al.*, (1998) made a distinction among factors relating to the food, the environment (social and cultural) and the individual (psychological and physiological). Gustatory pleasure would be included in this latter category and social and cultural factors are considered here as not only external to the individual, but also as separable and independent influences.

The argument in this thesis is that the social nature of eating – interacting with friends over dinner, offering and accepting food, for example – is more than just another factor to be considered in the analysis; rather, it is fundamental and inseparable. Likewise, pleasure can be regarded as a social phenomenon that is bound up with interaction and communication. Food is always, already social; it becomes so from the moment we orient to it as food. For example, we relate to others through acts of giving, sharing and withholding food, and our eating practices are embedded within daily (e.g. dinner) and annual (e.g. Christmas dinner) routines (De Vault, 1991; Visser, 1986, 1993). In this way, eating is bound up with cultural, historical and social practices (e.g. Beardsworth & Keil, 1997; Lupton, 1996; Mead, 1997; Meigs, 1997). As discussed in previous chapters, an interactional approach to eating attends to these practices (Ochs, Pontecorvo, & Fasulo, 1996; Pontecorvo & Fasulo, 1999; Wiggins, Potter, & Wildsmith, 2001), and is used here to examine how the pleasure of eating is embedded in discourse.

To see how an interactional approach might be useful for this topic consider how current methods are used to measure gustatory pleasure. Participants in psychological studies, for instance, may be asked to rate the pleasantness of a food on a numbered scale or questionnaire (e.g. Geiselman *et al.*, 1998). In this way, pleasure is represented as something quantifiable. Hedonistic scales present levels of gustatory pleasure that can be compared as individual responses to different foods. In contrast, the approach taken here argues that making a distinction between private experience and public expression is problematic. Pleasure may involve elaborate utterances or facial movements. It is also organised at an

interactional level. For example, speakers may display a pleasant taste experience when they commence eating, but this is not repeated at every mouthful. Similarly, speakers are less likely to express such a reaction when eating alone. One such expression, which will be used in the analysis here, is the gustatory *mmm*.

### **Embodying Talk**

One of the aims of this chapter is to illustrate how embodied practices are constructed in sequences of conversation (see also Billig, 1999c; Edwards, 1997, 1999; Wetherell, 2001; Wittgenstein, 1953; on emotion as an embodied construction). However, recent debates within sociology generally, and discursive psychology in particular, have raised the issue of embodiment as a potential problem for analyses that focus on talk (e.g. Burr, 1995, 1999; Gergen, 1999; Parker, 1998; Willig, 2000; see also chapter 3). Burkitt (1999) and others have argued that discursive research does not take embodiment seriously, and that what have been defined as extra discursive features are disregarded or overlooked by such analyses (Burr, 1999; Crossley, 2001; Kempen, 1998; Sampson, 1998).

My concern here is to demonstrate that this need not be the case if we look at how embodiment is constructed in specific examples of interaction. More importantly, rather than set up a body-discourse dualism, it may be more revealing to examine how the body is constructed as being extra-discursive in participants' talk. In other words, how do references to bodily states, tastes and eating construct the body as something outside of, or distinct from, discourse. It is not that we need somehow to gain access to underlying bodily states, but that the concepts of 'body' and 'discourse' may be seen themselves as interrelated and interactional constructions.

Research on embodiment and embodied actions has received more attention within CA and ethnomethodology. These approaches are more aligned with sociology, which has developed a more established corpus of work on the body than psychology, for instance. The focus in CA and ethnomethodological work in this area is on embodied actions, such as gesture, gaze, and body orientation, and how these are organised within interaction. For example, Charles and Marjorie Goodwin have pioneered research on how productions of turns in talk are co-

ordinated with the gaze of the recipient (C. Goodwin, 1979, 1980, 1981, 1987; M. Goodwin, 1980).

Christian Heath has also significantly developed research on how bodily movements and gestures are oriented to in interaction, and how they are used as resources to encourage the co-participation of other speakers (1982, 1986, 1998). Research in these areas therefore examines how embodied actions are bound up with the sequence and organisation of conversational action. It is upon this tradition of work that the current style analysis is based, though here I am more concerned with how psychological notions (such as gustatory pleasure) are constructed as embodied actions.

### **The Conversational *Mmm***

The *mmm* expression has already received analytical attention within CA research. Different forms of the expression have been classified according to organisational features and uses of the term (e.g. Czyzewski, 1995; Gardner, 1997, 2001; Schegloff, 1982). This work illustrates the necessity to examine intonation, since this can determine what type of *mmm* is being expressed. For example, a 'repair initiator *mmm*' characteristically has a rising intonation, and is used to mark a possible error in a previous turn (Gardner, 2001). The sequential features of *mmms* are also important in determining their function in talk, such as whether the *mmm* occurs in overlap or in response to a previous turn (e.g. Jefferson, 1984; Koole, 1998; Schegloff, 1982). Among these various types, a 'degustatory *mmm*' (Gardner, 1997; p. 150) has been identified as primarily associated with eating and drinking practices. The gustatory *mmms* referred to here bear a strong resemblance to Gardner's term, though here the expression is typically characterised by an emphasised or exaggerated expression, with a rising and/or falling intonation.

We can define the gustatory *mmm* as 1) accompanying eating and/or talk about food and drink; 2) hearably evaluative in a positive direction. It is examined here in terms of its involvement in the construction of gustatory pleasure. Intonational variations between gustatory and non-gustatory *mmms* will be shown to highlight the rhetorical flexibility and constructive nature of these expressions. The

sequential position of the gustatory *mmm* is also a prime concern here. For example, how does the placement of the expression display or construct a bodily pleasure, and how do other speakers orient to this? The focus here is therefore on the organisation of the gustatory *mmm* in talk, and its involvement in constructing the pleasures of eating.

### Box 8.2. The pleasure of chocolate

Armande plumped into the chair and took her glass in both hands. She looked eager as a child, her eyes shining, her expression rapt. ‘*Mmmm.*’ It was more than appreciation. It was almost reverence. ‘*Mmmmmm.*’ She had closed her eyes as she tasted the drink. Her pleasure was almost frightening. ‘This is the real thing, isn’t it?’ She paused for a moment, bright eyes speculatively half-closed. ‘There’s cream and – cinnamon, I think – and what else? Tia Maria?’ ‘Close enough,’ I said. ‘What’s forbidden always tastes better anyway,’ declared Armande, wiping froth from her mouth in satisfaction. ‘But this’ – she sipped again, greedily – ‘is better than anything I remember, even from childhood. I bet there are ten thousand calories in here. More.’

From J. Harris (1999) *Chocolat*

### *Mmms* and intonational features

The gustatory *mmm* can be distinguished from other *mms* by the extended and emphasised turn, occasional rising or falling intonation, and by its sequential placement within the context of eating. It is also a relatively infrequent term in comparison with other forms of the expression, even during mealtime conversation (Gardner, 1997, 2001). These features allow us to distinguish the gustatory *mmm* from the variety of other *mmms* that have been highlighted in previous research (e.g. Czyzewski, 1995; Gardner, 1997; Jefferson, 1984; Koole, 1998; Schegloff, 1982).

To give an example of what is meant by a gustatory *mmm*, the following extract provides an illustration that includes a particularly graphic sequence of gustatory *mmms*. The family has just begun to eat Christmas dinner.

#### EXTRACT 8.1: SKW/ K1a-M2 (56-69)

1. (3.0)
2. Sandra: → ↑mmm (0.4) ↑mm↓mm↑m::
3. Ian: → ↑mm↓m [m↑mmm:: : m↑mmmm:

4. Sandra: → [↑mmmm↓mmm: : :  
5. (2.4)  
6. Sandra: ((clears throat)) just cope with this: every  
7. ↑da:y  
8. (1.4)

While this may be a rather exaggerated example, it displays the flexibility of the expression, in that both rising and falling intonation features are used to great effect. Note how Sandra's turn is almost mirrored by Ian's, and is overlapped by further elaboration. This collaboration of similar sounds suggests that the expression is unproblematic here; no explanation is required before Ian joins in with the display. Sandra refers back to the food ('just cope with this every day', line 6), but there is no questioning of the *mmm* expression itself.

A different type of *mmm* can be used here to offer a contrast, and to highlight the importance of subtle changes in intonation. The following extract illustrates a 'continuer *mm*' (line 3), characterised by a rising intonation (Gardner, 1997).

#### EXTRACT 8.2: SKW/ D3a-M5 (211-216)

1. Anna: so she's- (0.4) they've donated fifty pound  
2. (1.0)  
3. Mike: → mm↑  
4. Anna: voucher  
5. Jenny: mm?  
6. (12.0) ((eating noises))

The *mms* in this extract are different from the gustatory *mmm* in that they are primarily associated with the acknowledgement of another speaker, rather than with the food. So not only is there a different intonation, there is also a different topic, and focus, of the talk.

At the risk of being overly simplistic, the following table 8.1 provides a summary of distinctions between gustatory and non-gustatory *mmm* expressions. This was used to aid analysis and identification of the expression, and is provided here to clarify the distinction for the reader.



**Table 8.1**

Expression type	Common features of the Expression		
	1) Sequential organisation	2) Topic	3) Intonation
Gustatory <i>mmms</i>	Follows the presence of eating, or talk about food and drink.	Associated with food, drink or eating practices. <sup>4</sup>	Emphasis; exaggerated rising or lowering intonation; can be extended or repeated.
Non-gustatory <i>mmms</i>	Follows a wide range of activities.	Non-specific to topic	Various forms, though often shorter, without emphasis.

The main aims of this chapter are to: 1) examine the organisation of the gustatory *mmm* as it occurs in interaction. I will demonstrate how the expression is recipient designed and organised sequentially in talk. 2) Consider the involvement of the expression in conversational activities. How might it be oriented to action? How does it contribute to evaluations of food and drink? 3) Illustrate how an examination of expressed gustatory pleasure helps us understand the way embodiment enters into interaction. How is pleasure constructed as an individual and private bodily experience?

### ANALYSIS

The analysis is divided into three sections. The first examines the status of the gustatory *mmm* as an interactional activity. I argue that pleasure is organised sequentially in conversation. The second highlights evaluative features of the expression and how this is partly achieved through a construction of immediacy, spontaneity and vagueness. Finally, the construction of gustatory 'pleasure' as an embodied event is considered in the third section.

---

<sup>4</sup> A possible extension of this category could include other bodily sensations associated with pleasure, for example, massage, or sexual experiences. Gardner (2001) briefly alludes to these types of sensation.

### 8.1. Bringing pleasure to the talk

A characteristic feature of mealtimes is the intermittent presence of food. As food is brought to the table, eaten, and then cleared away, it moves in and out of relevance for the diners. Within the data corpus, orientation to the food and eating were only occasional activities for the family members. That is, they did not display a taste reaction at each and every mouthful. The nature of these orientations raises questions for the conventional notion of gustatory pleasure as discussed in the introduction. If we regard pleasure in terms of how it is expressed in interaction, then we need to take situated conversational practices into consideration (see for example, Sacks, 1992; Sacks, Schegloff, & Jefferson, 1974).

The interactional features of bodily expressions have been similarly argued in Gail Jefferson's work on laughter (Jefferson, 1985; Jefferson, Sacks, & Schegloff, 1987; see also Mulkay, 1988, for a discussion of this work). She demonstrated how laughter that seems spontaneous is co-ordinated with other speakers' actions. Like taste sensations, which are generally taken to be outside of conscious control, laughter may perhaps be more structured. As an example of this with regard to pleasure, the following extract illustrates how the expression of pleasure may appear to be co-ordinated with other turns in the conversation. In this extract, the family is near the start of their meal, and food is being passed round the table.

#### EXTRACT 8.3: SKW/ D2b-M4 (132-142)

1. (6.0)
2. Anna: a sausag:e ↑Simon
3. Simon: → mm↑m:: (0.4) >no thank you<
4. Mike: uh- (.) uh:: [>(anybody else want) cranberry
5. ↓sauce<
6. Jenny: [°yeah (0.4) I'll get-°
7. Simon: → mm↑m[m
8. Jenny: [I'll have a ↑little bit of cranberry
9. sauce (.) °please- >thank you<°
10. Mike: >°there you ↑go°<
11. Simon: → mm↑mm: (0.6) nice
12. (2.8)

The turns immediately prior to the *mmms* appear to be, and are treated as, complete utterances. That is, Simon expresses pleasure from the food at transition relevant points (TRP's; Sacks *et al.*, 1974). Such a placement suggests that the *mmm* is at least as much an interactional item as an immediate, causal response to inner sensations. Note that it signals not only Simon's orientation to the talk (through its placement at a TRP), but also his inability to contribute more fully to the conversation. For example, his *mmm* on line 3 displays to Anna that he is attending to food currently being eaten, given that this is articulated first, and followed by a brief pause. The repeated and emphasised *mmm* expressions (lines 6 and 10) continue to demonstrate his engagement with the food. By drawing attention to his consumption in this way, he is also signalling to other speakers that he is unlikely to talk in more depth. This is particularly supported by the speeded-up 'no thank you' on line 3.

Other speakers may attend to the gustatory *mmm* more explicitly. What may seem to be an individual experience of the food – and apparently inaccessible to others – can become a focus for the interaction. In the following extract, Anna reformulates Simon's expressions as an overarching taste preference. At the start of the extract, she moves two cats that have been lying on the dining room chairs.

#### EXTRACT 8.4: SKW/ D1a-M1 (36-47)

1. Anna: look- (0.4) you can ↑both get on the seat so you
2. can both get on [that ↓one
3. Simon: → [°mmm↓:°
4. (1.4)
5. Anna: (so your) Dad li[kes his egg and ↓°chips°=
6. Simon: → [mm↓m:
7. Anna: =°Simon°
8. Jenny: °I know°
9. Anna: it was ↑jus:t something little isn't ↑it
10. (.) dear
11. Simon: little simple ↓pleasures=
12. Anna: =its: <↑s:imple ↓pleasures:,>

In her analysis of laughter, Jefferson (1985, 1987) notes that reports of others' laughter are usually in the form of 'he laughed' rather than 'he went "ah heh heh heh"' (Mulkay, 1988, p. 110). Similarly, the *mmm* expression is rarely used as part of a verbatim report. In the extract above, Anna reformulates Simon's *mmms* as being evidence of his 'liking' egg and chips (line 5). The point being made here is that Simon's enjoyment is specific to the food – which Anna served – at this meal. Moreover, the later constructions of 'simple pleasures' (lines 9-12) suggest that it is the food itself that is the source of the pleasure. Note also how the intonation of these *mmms* contrasts with that of the continuer *mm* (seen in extract 8.2) and how the orientations of the other speakers differ. What began as the expression in terms of a personal experience becomes a feature of the food, and a focus for the interaction.

### 8.2. The '*mmm*-plus-evaluation' sequence

In the data corpus, the gustatory *mmm* was at times followed by an explicit evaluative term (e.g. '*mmm* that's nice'). The table 8.2 below details the number of instances of *mmms* in relation to evaluative terms, or where they occurred as free-standing expressions.

Table 8.2.

Sequence of gustatory <i>mmms</i> and evaluative terms	Number of instances in the data corpus
Free-standing <i>mmms</i>	147 (70%)
<i>Mmm</i> -plus-evaluative term	60 (28%)
Evaluative term-plus- <i>mmm</i>	5 (2%)
Total:	212

The free-standing gustatory *mmm* was the most common occurrence, often expressed following a reference to the food being eaten. The *mmm*-plus-evaluative term<sup>5</sup> sequence was the predominant pattern on those occasions where a speaker provided an additional expression. Take the following example.

<sup>5</sup> Gardner (2001) also notes that 'mmm's almost always occur at the start of a turn. Occasions on which they occur later in the turn will be examined in the next section, with a consideration of how this constructs both the 'pleasure' and the talk itself.

EXTRACT 8.5: SKW/ D5a-M8 (636-638)

1. (0.8)
2. Simon: → mm↑mm: (0.2) that's ↑lovely
3. (0.6)

The extended expression of pleasure ('mm↑mm', line 2) occurs here prior to the descriptive account ('that's lovely'). Expressing gustatory pleasure in this way suggests a reaction to a bodily sensation followed by a descriptive account. Note also that both the *mmm* and the more explicit evaluation are uttered in close proximity within the same turn. This has the effect of tying the expressions together – the *mmm* is there seemingly because the food is lovely. Likewise, the loveliness appears to refer specifically to the pleasurable sensations of the food.

A variation on this sequence involved instances in which the explicit evaluative component (e.g. 'lovely' or 'nice') occurs in the same speaker's next turn later in the conversation. We saw this earlier in extract 8.3 with Simon uttering a few *mmms* before the more explicit term, 'nice' (line 10). The following extract shows a similar sequence with two speakers (Lynn and Rick) displaying the '*mmm*-plus-evaluation' pattern over a series of turns. Jenny prepared the chocolate pudding that is currently being eaten, and Mike is continuing a previous narrative.

EXTRACT 8.6: SKW/MG2-20-2-99 (2646-2659)

1. (0.4)
2. Lynn: this is (0.2) excellent
3. Rick: → mm↑mm:
4. Mike: so- (0.4) [its: (0.4) I mean, =
5. Jenny: [not ↑bad eh?
6. Rick: → =very go[od
7. Lynn: → [mmm↓
8. Mike: I try to control my↓self
9. Jenny: first attempt eh?
10. Lynn: → °its° excell[ent
11. Rick: [chew↑y
12. Lynn: → really good

13. Rick: [really °nice°

14. (0.6)

The ordering of the expressions is important here. After Lynn's initial 'this is excellent' (line 2), both Rick and Lynn express pleasure from eating before evaluating the food more explicitly. It is this prefacing of the more explicit evaluation with the *mmm* that adds to the subtlety of its meaning. The different intonation of the *mmms* also suggests both initial pleasure (rising intonation, line 3) and confirming other evaluations (falling intonation, line 7). Note that the gustatory *mmm* alone is not treated as an incomplete expression. The separation between the *mmm* and the evaluative term, by other speaker turns, suggests that the *mmm* itself works (and is oriented to; see lines 3 and 5) as an evaluation. In particular, it displays an evaluation of the food at what is seemingly the most basic, physiological level. Here we begin to see something of the construction of embodied pleasure. The predominant organisation and intonation of the gustatory *mmm* highlight three key features of pleasure construction: immediacy, spontaneity and vagueness. I shall now examine these in turn.

### 8.2.1. Immediacy

Having a mouth full of food severely restricts what can be clearly articulated. The *mmm* expression is one that can be uttered effectively and, perhaps, politely while eating, since it does not require movement of either the tongue or lips.<sup>6</sup> This makes it a useful resource in mealtime conversation, for one can respond to another speaker almost immediately, even when eating. It is this immediacy that constructs the pleasure of the gustatory *mmm* as an evaluation based on what is being experienced physically at that particular moment. The gustatory *mmm* seems to capture the sensation as being experienced at that moment. The extract below provides an illustration of this. At this point in the meal, the family is near the end of their main course.

---

<sup>6</sup> I refer here to customs within British culture, on appropriateness and politeness during meals. Within this culture, it is generally considered bad manners – or rudeness – to talk with your mouth full. Apart from the disgust of being sprayed with spittle and pieces of chewed food, it is often hard to make out what the person is saying anyway.

EXTRACT 8.7: SKW/ D3a-M5 (713-720)

1. Simon:           so if the [plane was an hour ↓late,
2. Jenny:                           [finish up the ↑sauce if you want
3. Simon:           we couldn't make it
4. Anna: →       mm:m↓:
5.                           (2.0)
6. Jenny:           °mm°
7. Anna:           this is lovely
8. Mike:           °(uh (.) I'll be fine thanks)°

A notable feature of this example is Anna's expression of enjoyment (line 4) soon after an offer of more food is made<sup>7</sup> (line 2). In doing so, she displays an orientation to the food as a source of pleasure, while simultaneously acknowledging Jenny's offer. The short delay before she comments more directly ('this is lovely', line 7) serves to emphasise the role of the *mmm* as an on-the-spot response. It highlights the immediacy of the first reaction, as being expressed while the food could still be tasted. The evaluation on line 7 then supports this as a verbalised response to the food.

Extract 8.8 below offers a further illustration of the rhetorical force of the gustatory *mmm* when it is spoken while eating. Robert is the father of this family; Nicholas, Daisy, and Adam are his children. 'Daddy's cheese' has just been offered to the children, who proceed to comment on its smelly qualities. This part of the conversation immediately follows.

EXTRACT 8.8: SKW/ L1a-M3 (993-1001)

1. Nicholas:       [>(you me and)< Daisy have only had a
2.                           <tiny smidg:e>
3. Daisy:           (cos) <I don't like ↓it>
4. Robert: →     mmm:: (0.2) yumm:y
5.                           (1.0)
6. Adam:           (its ↑cheese)
7.                           (0.6)
8. Robert: →     mmm:: (0.4) oh: [that's bet↑ter

The discussion about who likes, or doesn't like the food is restricted to the children at this point in the conversation. Robert's contributions make no reference to whether he *likes* the cheese, but this is implied through his expressions of gustatory pleasure (lines 4 and 8). By expressing what may be treated as a reaction to the taste of the food (*mmm*), he presents an evaluation in terms of qualities of the cheese itself. This is displayed as a response to the act of eating rather than a pre-existing preference for the cheese (see chapter 6). Note also that his turns do not directly attend to the other speakers' talk. In this sense, he avoids direct disagreement with the others, but still presents an alternative evaluation.

The immediacy of the gustatory *mmm* builds on the notion that this is a bodily sensation. Drawing on Heritage's (1984b) concept of a news receipt, we could regard the gustatory *mmm* as a form of 'sensation receipt', in that it displays an immediate orientation to a taste experience. This is particularly noticeable where a rising intonation occurs in the talk (e.g. *mm↑mm*). The notion that one can display an evaluation of food through reference to a bodily sensation is of no small consequence. For example, research on attitudes typically rely on rating scales and questionnaires, which are thought to provide access to internal beliefs (e.g. Eagly & Chaiken, 1993, 1998). Language is used as a tool, as distinct from the attitude or the sensation. Here, the gustatory *mmm* is an expression that not only alludes to a bodily sensation, but also evaluates the food simultaneously. These displays of pleasure present the body itself as seeming to inform the assessment. Hence the body, expression, and evaluation are not so easily separated.

### 8.2.2. Spontaneity

Another feature of the gustatory *mmm* is its construction of a spontaneous sensation. Not only can it be produced immediately after (or while) food is eaten, but it can be expressed at various points in the interaction. There is no

---

<sup>7</sup> One could examine the potential for gustatory *mmms* to serve as food acceptance receipts, though there is not the space to tackle this here.



requirement to preface the expression or announce a topic change (see also extract 8.12). Indeed, displaying pleasure from the food when others are engaged in a separate conversation may serve to enhance the authenticity of the expression. Take, for example, the extract below (an extension of extract 8.1), from a family Christmas dinner. Although this exchange occurs after a brief lapse (4 seconds) in the talk, Ian almost immediately follows Sandra's lengthy *mmm* expression.

EXTRACT 8.9: SKW/ K1a-M2 (59-72)

1. (4.0)
2. Sandra: → ↑mmm (0.6) ↑mm↓mm↑m::
3. Ian: → ↑mm↓m [↑mmm:::::]
4. Sandra: → [↑mmmm↓mmm:::]
5. (3.0)
6. Sandra: ((clears throat)) just cope with ↑this: every
7. da:y
8. (1.6)
9. Sandra: °hhmm hhmm [hmmm°
10. Ian: [°hmm hhm° (0.4) you mean the
11. drin(hh)king and the stupidity: heh heh
12. Sandra: ↑no (0.2) the prawn ↑cocktail
13. Ian: oh right=
14. Sandra: =°hheh°
15. (3.0)

It is particularly revealing that despite the collaboration of displays of pleasure, there is some uncertainty over the focus of, or reason for, the display. Whereas Sandra refers to the specific food they are eating (the prawn cocktail), Ian formulates the talk in terms of the festive season more generally (the 'drinking and the stupidity'). Despite this, the expression was not questioned by any of the other speakers (three children were also present at this meal). The extract also demonstrates a further activity of the gustatory *mmm* – that of indicating alignment between speakers (see also Heritage, 1984a, Nofsinger, 1991, for discussions on alignment). By expressing a similar evaluative turn in overlap, Sandra and Ian appear to be sharing an experience of the food. Note that this is

regardless of what they actually taste. The point is that it gives the *appearance* of sharing pleasure. This in itself is a social action.

The *mmm*-plus-evaluation pattern was noted earlier as being the predominant pattern where gustatory *mmms* were accompanied by further expressions. The reverse of this pattern (evaluative term-plus-*mmm*) was seen to occur in only five percent of instances in the data. We could therefore note this pattern as being a set of deviant cases, and these confirm the importance of the gustatory *mmm* as a spontaneous evaluation. Consider extract 8.10 below. Lynn is a guest at an adult group meal, and has been recounting a description of the food eaten on a previous occasion. Rick is her partner and Jenny is the hostess.

EXTRACT 8.10: SKW/ MG2-20-2-99 (133-141)

1. (1.0)
2. Lynn: and it was ↑rea::lly [flavoursome
3. Jenny: [ooh::
4. Rick: ye [ah:
5. Lynn: [it was >°really° really< good (0.4) (its)
6. → lovely (0.6) mm↑m:
7. Jenny: ah::
8. (0.8)
9. Lynn: so we're (.) eating ↑very well this °week[end°

Having already described the food eaten previously in some detail, Lynn sums up at this stage by saying that it was 'really flavoursome' (line 2) and 'really really good' (line 5). The overemphasis on this account (particularly the use of 'really really') highlights the fact that the food at *this* meal has not nearly been complimented to the same degree. It may appear as if Lynn is not appreciative enough of her hostess's culinary skills. The gustatory *mmm* on line 6 thus serves to bring the conversation round to the current food, though it is unclear as to whether or not the 'lovely' refers to this particular meal. Following the evaluative term, the *mmm* appears to be more forced or contrived. Note also that it has a rising intonation, suggesting a sensation receipt of the experience, even though Lynn had already begun eating. It is as if she is backtracking so as not to offend

her hosts. Indeed, she makes a more elaborate repair on line 9, working to align both meals as occasions on which they have eaten 'very well'.

The occurrence of the gustatory *mmm* within the latter part of a turn thus appears to diminish the authenticity of the speaker's response. Extract 8.11 below is a continuation of extract 8.8 and shows how pleasure can be expressed in order to make a particular point.

EXTRACT 8.11: SKW/ L1a-M3 (999-1005)

1. (0.6)
2. Robert: → mmmm:: (0.4) oh: [that's bet<sup>↑</sup>ter
3. Daisy: [I don't like it=
4. Adam: =its stu:pid
5. Robert: oh:: (.) just taste this: compared to your
6. → ↓rubbish (0.4) mm:m
7. (2.0)

If we first focus on the second *mmm* (line 6), it appears as if Robert is exaggerating his displays of pleasure in order to make a point about the cheese (previously referred to as 'Daddy's cheese'). The *mmm* (line 6) appears to be more contrived than that on line 2, and we can also note that neither displays a rising or falling intonation. It is less spontaneous, fitting into the sequence of the talk rather than being expressed as a response to a bodily sensation. By making direct comparisons to the other, unnamed food – 'that's better' (line 2), and 'your rubbish' (line 5) – Robert is claiming to own, or have a preference for, the better food. Not only can he *say* how much he is enjoying the cheese, but he can show it as well.

The sequential organisation of the gustatory *mmm* is clearly an important feature in the construction of spontaneity. In the *mmm*-plus-evaluation sequence, the gustatory *mmm* was noted to act like a sensation receipt. The significance of the *mmm* prior to further elaboration becomes apparent when one examines the reverse sequence (evaluation-plus-*mmm*). In this case, the delayed *mmm* lacks spontaneity and immediacy, given that an evaluation has already been expressed descriptively. Referring to the taste experience directly then seems somehow

contrived, as if it was being expressed as empirical support, and not as an experience in itself. It is only when the *mmm* appears first does it construct the spontaneity of pleasure as an immediate taste sensation.

### 8.2.3. Vagueness

The intonational pattern of gustatory *mmms* that allows for flexibility also contributes to the ambiguity of the expression. It exudes vagueness with respect to both semantic content and its role in the interaction, since neither is explicitly articulated by the gustatory *mmm* alone (for an alternative argument, see Koole, 1998). Although it suggests that there is some associated bodily sensation, it fails to specify exactly what it is about the food that makes it pleasurable. The vagueness of the expression also contributes to its involvement in interactional activities. For example, *mmm* can be used not only to avoid specifying taste attributes, but also to avoid attending directly to the conversational topic. Displaying a physical reaction allows a speaker to step out of the interaction to some extent. Referring to the body, or the food, can be treated as a separate part of the interaction. For example, Simon's evaluation of the food in the extract below is left unattended by the other speakers. What is notable about this evaluation is that the main topic of conversation is about another, less appetising food (uncooked sprouts).

#### EXTRACT 8.12: SKW/ D5a-M8 (631-638)

1. Jane: fla[sh: ↓boi(h)led
2. Simon: [yeah
3. Anna: >mmm<
4. (0.4)
5. Peter: they were actually raw: they <↑crunched> in
6. your mouth
7. (0.8)
8. Simon: → mm:↓m (0.2) that's ↑>lovely<
9. Anna: even Nat >couldn't eat them< °could ↑she°
10. (0.4)
11. Peter: >she was the one< who ↑cooked them

It is apparent from the content of the talk here that what Simon refers to as 'lovely' is not the same item of food discussed in the surrounding talk. This is evidenced by both the preceding 'mmm' (line 8; working as a 'sensation receipt') and by the lack of speaker orientation to Simon's turn. The expression of pleasure enables Simon to opt out of the current conversation to some extent, as if this were an aside. The *mmm* bases the evaluation in immediate, physical experience - and provides the context in which 'that's lovely' is to be heard. In other words, it marks this turn as being distinct from the topic under discussion.

The different forms of the (gustatory and non-gustatory) *mmm* also allow it a certain flexibility. For example, it can be used to offer an evaluation, express uncertainty or doubt, or to show agreement with others. The *mmm*-plus-evaluation sequence in the context of eating may work to reduce the ambiguity and allow it to be used for more particular purposes. It is therefore a general expression - not confined to any one situation - yet its meaning is constructed by situational and organisational features. It is worth noting here that both the vagueness and generality of the gustatory *mmm* afford it rhetorical strength, as with idiomatic expressions (see Drew & Holt, 1988; Edwards, 2000; Pomerantz, 1986). By not specifying exactly what is meant, the *mmm* is fairly robust in that it is resistant to refutation by other speakers (cf. Kitzinger, 2000). This links to the notion of systematic vagueness, through which factuality is alluded to, but never exactly specified (Edwards & Potter, 1992; Potter, 1996; Wooffitt, 1992). A possible reason for this could be to avoid the necessity for further elaboration. If the *mmm* is not something that can be articulated adequately in any other way, then the speaker cannot be held accountable for not providing further elaboration.

### **8.3. Embodying the experience**

The concern in this final section is to examine how the pleasure of eating is constructed as being primarily an embodied experience. That is, the gustatory *mmm* as a free-standing expression constructs pleasure as something that can't be readily articulated in words. We have already seen elements of this in the discussions on immediacy, spontaneity and vagueness, which alluded to the body as being prior to thought or language. This is an important, though apparently obvious point. To appreciate this, we need to be aware of the distinction that

separates the body from discourse, as discussed in the introduction (see also Harré, 1999, and chapter 7). This division sets up one side (the body) as being somehow more 'real' or fundamental than the other (discourse). For example, we may talk about what a food tastes like, but it is the physicality of taste that is treated as being the more accurate source.

To show how embodiment is bound up with discursive features, we need to look at some examples in which the gustatory *mmm* is used as a free-standing expression. One way in which this might occur is when the expression is used to provide agreement with, or confirmation of, another speakers' account. The ability of the *mmm* expression to display agreement has already been examined (Gardner, 1997; Koole, 1998; Schegloff, 1982), but the reference to taste or pleasure in some sense extends this. It gives the agreement a basis - an account of the grounds on which the expression is made. In extract 8.13 below, Ian displays such an affiliation with Sandra.

**EXTRACT 8.13: SKW/ K2a-M4 (77-83)**

- |    |         |   |
|----|---------|---|
| 1. |         | (6.0)   |
| 2. | Sandra: | >° <u>oh</u> ° this has got< <u>loads</u> : on it (.) ↑hasn't it  |
| 3. |         | (0.6)   |
| 4. | Ian:    | <u>mmm</u> ↑  |
| 5. |         | (1.2)   |
| 6. | Sandra: | °>mm<° (0.2) I <u>like</u> ↓ <u>Morrison's</u> : <u>pizza's</u> : |
| 7. |         | (1.0)   |

Sandra's turn is already designed to seek a response through the addition of the tag question 'hasn't it' (line 2; Schiffrin, 1987). The fact that Ian's 'mmm' (line 4) includes some emphasis and rising intonation shows that additional work is going on here. It provides an agreement with Sandra, but adds an evaluative and bodily referent. The 'loads on it' (line 2) is constructed retrospectively through Ian's expression of gustatory pleasure as being a positive, or pleasurable, state of affairs. There is no expressed need for elaboration; the 'mmm' alone is treated as sufficient. We can also note how Ian's *mmm* differs from the *mm* on line 6, which

is speeded-up and softened. In the latter case, the *mm* provides agreement (Gardner, 1997) but without the display of pleasure.

The example below demonstrates how the act of eating food provides credibility for one's accounts of the food, as well as evidencing them. The body is viewed as the baseline against which food accounts are to be checked – the physical is given credence over the verbal/mental. In this section of the interaction, the speakers are eating Christmas cake at the end of their meal.

EXTRACT 8.14: SKW/ D2a-M3 (1087-1097)

1. Simon: its actually got ↓quite a bit of: uhm
2. (0.6) >is it< (0.2) ↑brandy or-
3. Anna: ↑mmm
4. Simon: rum >or something<
5. (2.0)
6. Jenny: → ↑mm [mm
7. Simon: → [mmmm
8. Jenny: >see what you mean<
9. Simon: °by jove [that-°
10. Anna: [was on the box ↑there's- (0.4) there's a
11. few: different ingredients: in ↓it (0.6)
12. alcoholic

Simon's comment about the food 'actually' having alcohol in it suggests that he has already tasted the pudding (lines 1-2). As Clift (2001) has argued, the 'actually' marks information (in this case, the taste of the cake) as being new or contrary to previous understandings. Thus it displays Simon's consumption of the food as being the basis for this acquired information. However, it is not until another speaker, Jenny, expresses pleasure in the food and refers back to Simon's account (line 8), that discussion of the alcohol content proceeds. The displays of gustatory pleasure on lines 6 and 7 therefore work to authenticate the claim of tasting alcohol and locate it in a framework of bodily sensations. This is something which is seemingly being experienced *there and then* by both Jenny and Simon, providing embodied proof that indeed, there is 'quite a bit of' alcohol

in the food. The 'see what you mean' (line 8) then links the pleasure to the alcohol content in particular.

The embodiment of food pleasure is thus partly achieved through the use of the gustatory *mmm*. By expressing an emphasised or exaggerated form of the term, the speaker references bodily sensations associated with pleasure – in this case, those derived from food. We can note that other pleasures – for example, sexual experiences - may be similarly referenced in a different context (see Gardner, 2001, for a brief discussion of this). In the context of a mealtime, however, eating is one of the primary sources of reference. The gustatory *mmm* is one way in which to locate the talk in the physical or psychological aspects of this activity.

### **Chapter summary**

This chapter has argued that gustatory pleasure is sequentially organised in conversation and is oriented to other speaker turns. That is, pleasure is constructed within, and for, interaction. As a result, it is embedded within activities such as making a compliment, displaying alignment, or agreeing with another speaker. It can therefore be regarded as inseparable from conversational and eating practices, rather than as an internal, individual experience. It is also bound up with the practical management of food. Whether or not one expresses pleasure from eating may have consequences for how families negotiate the content of future meals, for example. The construction of gustatory pleasure as an embodied and individual reaction to food also demonstrates the advantages of using a discursive approach. Usually confined to the realms of biopsychology, eating can be reconsidered as a situational and sequentially organised activity. It blurs the boundary between individual and interactional, in detailed and examinable ways.

The predominant *mmm*-plus-evaluation pattern was shown in the analysis to construct pleasure as an immediate, spontaneous, yet descriptively vague sensation. This affords it an authenticity, as an evaluation seemingly based on embodied sensations. The body is oriented to as being fundamental to taste and pleasure, but this must be seen *as* a construction, and as a topic for analysis in itself (Edwards, 1997; Edwards & Potter, 1992). The notion of the gustatory



*mmm* acting as a sensation receipt highlights this process of metaphorically separating the body from discourse: the private-public distinction. In other words, distinguishing pleasurable sensations from their public expression in discourse. By making this distinction both visible and problematic as a theoretical claim, the argument that discursive psychology cannot address issues of embodiment is itself problematized. The argument only holds if we treat embodiment and discourse as two separate, and bounded, domains.

The analysis shown here also contributes to CA work on *mmms* and response tokens by detailing the predominant intonational and sequential pattern of the gustatory *mmm*. This is characterised by an exaggerated and extended expression, located immediately before, during, or following the presence of food and/or eating. The gustatory *mmm* also typically features a rising or falling intonation. In this instance, a rising intonation is more likely to display a sensation receipt, as being an immediate reaction to the food. The expression is also associated with a topic shift to that of food or eating, with the *mmm* itself acting as an announcement of this shift (extract 8.12 is a particularly good example of this). Therefore the paper also builds on the notion of a news receipt (e.g. Heritage, 1984b), with the gustatory *mmm* acting as a conversational resource and an analysable construction of pleasure.

### **Box 8.3. Serving suggestions**

Constructing pleasure can be achieved through the expression of gustatory *mmms* in the following ways:

- ☞ Free standing *mmms*
- ☞ *Mmm*-plus-evaluation sequences
- ☞ Immediacy, spontaneity and vagueness
- ☞ Sensation receipts

## The proof of the pudding

After a while I went into the kitchen for two meringues, which were still warm and treacly inside their chocolate envelopes and served with thick crème Chantilly and chopped hazelnuts. 'It doesn't seem right, doing this, at this moment', said Josephine, but I noticed she ate anyway.

Joanne Harris, *Chocolat*, (1999: 221)

This thesis examines specific instances of conversation from family mealtimes. In the course of the previous chapters, a focus was placed on the construction and use of food and drink evaluations, as these were seen to be fundamental to the way in which eating practices are managed in interaction. I argued that food evaluations should not be treated simply as mental representations or attitudes (as is typical in psychological or sociological research), but as active and interactional constructions. The use of evaluations in everyday interaction reveals their detail and specificity as complex discursive resources. I have shown how talk about food can therefore not be separated from eating practices, and that it is fundamental to our cultural common-sense notions around consumption. Eating is not simply a straightforward physical activity, but is constructed primarily as a physical and individual matter.

The arguments proposed in the thesis feed into a number of different, and at times overlapping, research areas. These are notably: social psychology, health psychology, and discursive psychology. The thesis has focussed on social psychological research on food and eating, though there are strong associations here with health psychology. For example, both disciplines use the concepts of attitudes and intentions to study consumption behaviour of individuals. As noted in earlier chapters, the aim of this type of research is to try and uncover the determinants of eating habits so that these may be changed to 'healthier' ways of eating. So there are strong reasons for considering how the current research may feed into both of these areas.

Discursive psychology and its associated traditions – CA, ethnomethodology, and rhetoric – are also a strong theme in this thesis. This approach has been used as both the theoretical and methodological basis for the research. Hence, in this concluding chapter I will also consider how the approach has been useful for studying food and eating practices, and how it has added to research based on more traditional social or health psychological methods. I see this thesis as very much a starting point for other discursive research on eating, and an arena in which to open out new issues and questions in the field. Therefore I will summarise what I see as being the main implications for discursive research, and food and eating studies in general.

### **9.1. The research-application issue**

Before considering the implications and applications of this research, it is important to refer back to the discussions on application in chapter 3. In that chapter I raised the problem of treating academic (research) and non-academic (the area of application) as two separate fields. Discursive analyses in particular can also raise problems, as analyses are often specific to a local set of practices in the data. For instance, data taken from family mealtimes may involve different concerns and accountabilities from mealtimes shared by a group of students or work colleagues, for instance. There may be different asymmetrical relationships between speakers that have implications for the way in which food evaluations are elicited, offered, or challenged. So there are two main issues here: first, the distinction between academic and non-academic arenas; and second, the specificity of analysis.

The first issue – the distinction between academic and non-academic arenas – was initially considered in chapter 3. There I argued that we need to break down this distinction to avoid privileging one area over another. For instance, research findings are often treated as the ‘expert’ source and given priority over participant interpretations or accounts. There are clearly ethical concerns here, as this suggests that academic researchers may provide ‘better’ or more appropriate analyses than those individuals whose behaviour they are studying. If we break down the distinction between academic and non-academic arenas, we can begin to

see how each arena is constructed *as* distinct. For example, how do people treat academia as being a different kind of environment or setting than other settings? At what point do interactions within academic environments take on this different form and become different from everyday interaction outside the institution?

Breaking down the distinction between academic and non-academic arenas therefore involves considering specific instances of interaction. As Willig (1999) has argued, research is no less situated than 'ordinary' activities outside the institution. Each area is bound up with particular situational constraints, norms, and practices that cannot be separated from the research itself. Just as the food evaluations in the earlier analysis were local and situated practices, so this thesis (and its various stages of development) is situated within my own interactions and academic training. By focusing on the *processes* of research rather than research as an abstract concept, it is harder to see the boundaries between the 'everyday' and the 'academic'.

The focus on specific and situated practices leads me onto the second issue: that the data here is taken from a selection of instances of mealtime interaction. This does not mean, however, that the analyses here cannot be used to inform or be applied more generally. I highlighted a range of phenomena, from the way in which evaluations are embedded within conversational turns, to different types and expressions of food evaluations. All of these are potentially robust phenomena, as they occurred in a variety of instances within the data corpus. More importantly, the data was taken from everyday conversation, in which norms of turn-taking, relevance, and topic changes apply (as discussed at length by Sacks, 1992). Hence, the analysis of family mealtimes is not so different from other kinds of interaction at the level of detail examined here.

The implications for application are, therefore, that we need to broaden the usual conception of 'application' as a straightforward process of applying research findings to a non-academic arena. More importantly, it requires a move away from trying to solve issues that are based on broader societal problems, such as the rise in eating disorders or the state of the nation's health. While these are important issues, they need to be broken down into specific pockets of activity or

interaction. For example, we could focus on a slimming or health club in a particular area, or an Internet support group for bulimic sufferers. By focussing on a specific area, we will be able to develop a sufficient level of detail to appreciate more fully the complexity of food and eating practices.

## **9.2. Summary of chapters**

Before moving on in more detail to areas in which the thesis may contribute, it is helpful to summarise some of the key themes and arguments in each of the chapters:

### *Chapter 1*

In the opening chapter I introduced the notion that eating is primarily an interactional, rather than an individual activity. I provided a very brief overview of psychological and sociological approaches to food and eating, and pointed to key concerns in the literatures. These concerns centred on the use of retrospective accounts and restrictive questionnaire formats that limit the form and content of participant responses. I also noted that very little research examines the detail of everyday, mundane eating practices, and argued that this is necessary for a thorough social psychological account of eating practices. The focus in current research, by contrast, seems to be on general eating patterns (sociological) or problematic individual relationships with food (psychological). Finally, I introduced the aims of the thesis, which were:

- To provide an empirical and detailed study of eating in interaction.
- To draw on both psychology and sociology to produce a more socially oriented approach to food and eating.
- To develop a discursive and social constructionist approach toward embodied practices and daily interaction.
- To focus attention on the mundane, everyday practices of eating.

### *Chapter 2*

This chapter provided more background detail and reviewed key themes within psychological and sociological literature on food and eating. In particular,

methodological problems were raised with these current approaches. For example, a reliance on questionnaires and rating-scales often means that theories may be constrained by the limited use of discourse; participants must respond to set questions and have little space or time to elaborate on these in their own words. By treating talk and text as if they were representative of attitudes, researchers have tended to take responses at face value. They also restrict the kinds of issues that are raised. For instance, interviews conducted on housewives about food and meal provision (e.g. Charles & Kerr, 1988) are more likely to focus on gender and power relations within the household. It is very difficult for participants to respond outside of the research agenda. These and other methodological issues were raised as being fundamental to the theoretical 'findings' of current research.

### *Chapter 3*

In the third chapter I considered theoretical issues arising from the discursive perspective used in the thesis. After an overview of the main principles of conversation and discursive analyses, I focused on 4 key issues or debates: context, the left-hand margin, embodiment, and application. These were chosen as they reflect current theoretical debates and are particularly relevant to the analysis of mealtime data. For instance, food is often thought to be laden with cultural and gendered meanings, and it is important to note how (and if) these should be attended to in the analysis. I argued from a more conversation analytic perspective, which focuses on only those issues oriented to directly by the participants. I also raised the issue of application as being potentially problematic, as also addressed above.

### *Chapter 4*

The fourth chapter was concerned with the practicalities and methodological aspects of the research. Details about the participant families were provided, along with discussions on each stage of the research process and data analyses. I raised theoretical concerns about using myself as participant in some of the mealtimes, and how the families negotiated ethical dilemmas as an interactional concern. Orientation to the tape-recorder was also a key issue. Rather than see this as a problematic by-product of 'naturalistic' data, I regarded it as being part of

the families' daily activities. More importantly, it demonstrated the orientation to appropriate behaviour, and how this constructs a 'proper meal' and a 'proper family'. In essence, then, this chapter demonstrates how the family mealtimes were constructed through both researcher and participant orientation.

### *Chapter 5*

This chapter marked the beginning of the analytical part of the thesis. Starting at a general level of analysis, I demonstrated how we could consider food evaluations in terms of their location and construction in interaction. That is, rather than examine these as part of a questionnaire response, we can see how and when they arise in daily conversation. This simple point has often been overlooked in eating research and therefore it is important to begin at this point to provide a foundation for more detailed analyses on eating practices. The subsequent analysis in this chapter shows how the construction of food and drink evaluations is a collaborative process bound up with conversational norms and practices. Moreover, evaluations are expressed as part of particular activities, such as complimenting others, complaining, and making offers of food.

### *Chapter 6*

The second analytical chapter takes the analysis a little further and begins to consider the consequences of regarding food evaluations as active constructions. Here I looked in more detail at different types of evaluative expressions, such as 'nice' or 'like'. Surprisingly, there has been little work on the distinctions between different expressions, despite the amount of CA work on assessments more generally. To start to unpack some of the uses of the different expressions, I distinguished between what may be termed 'subjective' and 'objective' evaluations. These are very broad and basic distinctions, in which the former type is based on the subject (e.g. 'I like') and the latter is based on the object (e.g. 'the chips were lovely'). I also made a distinction between evaluations that are directed toward an item of food, and those directed at a category of food. For example, I can evaluate *the* bread, or *bread* as a type of food. The analysis in this chapter then showed how these distinctions are bound up with different kinds of accountabilities and can be rhetorically developed in conversation. The important point here is that they demonstrate the complexity of food evaluations as being a

particular domain and type of talk, which raises problems for more conventional methods of food and eating research.

### *Chapter 7*

The third analytical chapter worked with the distinctions raised in chapter 6 to show how some evaluations may be treated as more authentic or accurate than other evaluations. The analysis here showed how these distinctions also construct different notions of taste and eating. For instance, if I talk about what 'I like' to eat, then this constructs a notion of individual food preferences, and of having 'favourite' foods. The implications of this construction are that I can be held accountable if I don't eat a particular (previously favoured) food, or if I express a different preference at a later time. The chapter notes how eating becomes a very public activity in this way. Other people's tastes and experiences of food are open to scrutiny and can be challenged as being wrong or inconsistent. Therefore we can examine food and drink evaluations to see how these are managed as accountable concerns in everyday interaction.

### *Chapter 8*

In the fourth and final analytical chapter I developed the idea of embodiment and eating as also being a constructed and discursive activity. The theme of embodiment can be seen throughout the thesis (for example, in chapter 7 discussions on favourite foods), and here it is raised as a central and fundamental issue. I use the example of gustatory pleasure as one aspect of the embodied aspect of eating. I argue that gustatory pleasure is as much an interactional experience as it is individual, since expressions of pleasure are socially organised within interaction. This argument directly contrasts with previous research in this area, which tends to treat pleasure as an entirely personal (and usually physical) sensation. By regarding gustatory pleasure as a social activity, we can then begin to see how we might reconceptualise eating practices (and processes) in terms of discourse and interaction.



### 9.3. Application in practice

In each of the three sub-sections below, I outline ways in which the thesis could contribute to existing work in areas within social, health, and discursive psychology.

#### 9.3.1. Social psychology applications

There are three areas within social psychology to which the thesis directly applies: attitudes and beliefs about eating, identities and food, and embodiment. First, attitudes and beliefs about eating; this is rather a broad area, and has been discussed at length in various chapters (especially chapters 2 and 5). The main theme in such work is that people have attitudes, values, beliefs and feelings about food, and that these are involved in some way in their eating behaviour and practices. An important corollary of this is that if we can see how people develop particular attitudes, then we can potentially change these attitudes and thus change individual behaviour. As noted in chapter 5, this would be of great interest to the food industry, health promotion, and other commercial organisations, and hence research in these areas is often well supported financially.

Drawing on existing discursive research, and following the analyses here, this thesis argues that we need to take an alternative approach to this topic. Rather than treat food and drink evaluations as being representative of internal attitudes, we can instead regard 'attitudes' as themselves constructed and conceptual objects. Their existence is only relevant for social psychology *as and when* these 'attitudes' are expressed in interaction. As social psychologists, we need not concern ourselves with whether or not we have particular attitudes toward food. What is more important is how these are used and constructed within interaction.

If we follow this argument, we could then start to examine how evaluations and attitudes are built up in talk. In the area of food and eating, researchers could look at how food evaluations are used as part of media advertising, marketing and packaging of foods. How are these constructed to try and persuade people to buy the product? How are these constructions then used to justify and account for food consumption amongst friends and family? This brings me to the issue of data. It is no longer appropriate to use rating scales if we treat evaluations as part

of conversation. We need to examine daily interactions in different settings: mealtimes with the family or friends, conversations in the supermarket or work canteen, talk in the kitchen when preparing food, and so on. By examining these interactions, we can begin to see how constructions of food are bound up with other social activities, and how 'attitudes' to food are part of this flexible construction of daily realities.

The second area of social psychological research to which this thesis may contribute is concerned with identity. Social psychological research on food identities has been predominantly associated with vegetarianism or more 'ethical' consumption (e.g. Sparks *et al.*, 1992; see also box 9.1). This could be expanded to other forms of identity construction if we see it as a more subtle activity. For example, talk about what 'I like' or 'he likes' is part of the management of local, situated identities. People's tastes and favourite foods are constructed within interaction for particular activities, so we can examine these to see how 'food identities' are used in this way. In other words, identity is not something that is fixed, but is variable and part of local activities.

**Box 9.1.**

Maggie Schofield...poured out her savoury mess of big golden beans and brown gravy.

'It is vegetarian hot-pot,' said Miss Schofield. 'Would you like to try it?'

'I should love to,' said Ursula.

Her own dinner seemed coarse and ugly beside this savoury, clean dish.

'I've never eaten vegetarian things,' she said. 'But I should think they can be good.'

'I'm not really a vegetarian,' said Maggie. 'I don't like to bring meat to school.'

'No,' said Ursula, 'I don't think I do either.'

And again her soul rang an answer to a new refinement, a new liberty. If all vegetarian things were as nice as this, she would be glad to escape the slight uncleanness of meat.

'How good!' she cried.

'Yes,' said Miss Schofield, and she proceeded to tell her the receipt.

D. H. Lawrence, *The Rainbow*, 1915.

The third area of social psychology is that of embodiment. As I noted in chapter 8 (and earlier), this is a highly debated area, and researchers have often fallen back on the distinction between talk and bodies (or the discursive vs. the non-

discursive). This is understandable, given that it is part of our cultural common-sense practices to make such a distinction. If we try to avoid it, however, then we open up more exciting and unbounded ways of conceptualising embodied practices.

By regarding the 'body' and bodily sensations as constructed and expressed through discourse, then we can begin to unpack the work that goes into constructing them as embodied. For example, the analysis of the gustatory *mmm* demonstrated how this constructed pleasure as being a physical sensation – yet we have no way to check whether or not any physiological changes occurred (indeed, this also assumes that there *are* such sensations). What we can examine instead is how the body is constructed in a particular way, and how this becomes part of our understanding of eating practices. How important is this constructed embodiment to our interactions around food? Is it necessary to 'show' that you have really enjoyed a meal, and how might this be achieved?

Further implications apply to other embodied practices. Any activity that gives precedence to physical or bodily acts (such as pain, exercise, smoking, illness and disease, and so on) constructs the rhetoric of embodiment as a basic level of experience. Social psychology needs to address these issues as social (and not purely individual) concerns, and to examine how they are part of social activities. This will mean that such issues cannot be unproblematically separated off from other topics.

### **Box 9.2. Non-verbals**

It is important and appropriate at this stage to highlight a potential omission from the data analysis in this thesis. This was based on talk, with no mention of non-verbal behaviour or practices. The reason for this is that as a *social* psychology thesis, I was only concerned with those aspects of interaction that become relevant for the speakers. Regardless of the nature of 'thought' (see Billig, 1996, for a discussion on this issue) this is not available for the other participants, and so is not needed for the analysis of conversations. Likewise with non-verbals. These are often oriented to by other speakers and we can determine the sense made of them through the subsequent turns in talk. This does not mean that they are not necessary for discursive study. The fact is that they are not so different from verbal activity, in the same way that bodily experiences are not easily separable from discourse (see chapter 8). That said, the analysis in this thesis shows the potential for extending research of this kind to include video data. As I noted above, this thesis is a starting point, and indicates that using video recorded interaction would be a highly suitable and advantageous way forward.

### *9.3.2. Health psychology applications*

Although this thesis was conducted as part of social psychology, the potential for applications within health psychology research is striking. The thesis offers a new way of conceptualising food preferences and eating practices as interactional rather than individual events. What may be defined as 'good' food – and therefore also 'healthy' food, to some extent – is constructed and managed by speakers. These constructions are bound up with other activities in conversation, and with practicalities such as providing meals that fit around the different lifestyles and routines of household members. The most important implication is therefore that we can't separate healthy eating from other aspects of everyday life.

If we regard eating as being primarily a social activity, and our eating practices as being constructed as part of our discourse, then this takes us away from the notion of the individual consumer. Dieting behaviour, as a consequence, is no longer a fixed repertoire of practices (reducing fat, increasing fibre intake, using laxatives, etc.) but a construction as part of accountabilities and relationships with other people. For example, people are not 'dieters' until their behaviour is constructed as such. In the same way, the association between women and eating can be deconstructed in terms of a rhetorical device to account for particular habits or concerns around food. It is not that women have a 'love-hate' relationship with food (see Bordo, 1998; Meadow & Weiss, 1992; Wolf, 1990), but that talking food in this way sets up moral and accountable practices around eating.

So there are moral issues associated with health promotion (as suggested in the extract at the beginning of the chapter). Talking about food in terms of 'sin' or being 'bad for you' constructs food in terms of what is forbidden or dangerous (Crawford, 1985). This can then add an excitement, or naughtiness to eating particular foods – for rebelling against what you 'shouldn't' have (see Bordo, 1998; Crossley, 2000). This suggests possible applications within the realms of health or slimming clubs. For example, the 'Slimming World' organisation defines foods that are 'sinful', allowing members to consume a certain amount of 'sins' per week, as long as they adhere to their prescribed weight-loss plan. This sets up constraints not only over what people can eat, but how they relate to food on a daily basis. If we think in terms of calories, or fat content, then eating is

oriented to as something that must be measured and controlled. Likewise, we will feel accountable to ourselves and to others if we eat something that we think we shouldn't.<sup>1</sup> The implications of this are that eating practices may become characterised by anxiety or guilt, and inherently an individual concern.

There are two broad sets of implications from this work for health promotion and social policy. First, the problems that have been highlighted for current social psychological approaches to food attitudes raises issues about the sorts of policy suggestions that are made on the basis of attitude research (see also Eldridge & Murcott, 2000, for research on this issue). The second point is more positive. The identification of food evaluations as being bound up with other activities opens up new possibilities for approaching health policy. For example, research could examine how healthy eating is managed in practice on a daily basis: how it is managed and made accountable as healthy, how it causes interactional trouble or becomes a source of dispute? How do people incorporate different foods into their diets, and how are these related to interactional activities? Could eating 'healthily' become a game for children, in which food is not constructed as 'good for you' but as 'enjoyable'. Eating is already a part of our relationships with other people; what could be changed is *how* this relationship is constructed.

The current focus of health research is to promote 'healthy eating' habits, but this assumes that what is 'healthy' is relatively unproblematic (although there are different arguments on this matter). What needs to be addressed is *how* food is constructed as healthy, locally within settings such as family meals or evenings out with friends, and the assumptions these definitions draw on. It also highlights a different approach to advertising material, media representations and educational materials. For example, the notion that there are food 'groups' is often used in home economics classes in schools and colleges (i.e. carbohydrates, protein, fats, etc.). This constructs a particular abstract version of 'food as nutrition', which then places limits on what people should, or ought to, eat. Opening up and examining these types of construction, and considering the way they are built,

---

<sup>1</sup> One of the family D meals includes a section in which Anna takes some pudding while saying that 'she shouldn't, but she will', as if the eating of the food is something prohibited, or immoral.

ironised, resisted and ignored in interaction during eating could provide an important new basis for considering the value and development of food policy.

### *9.3.3. Discursive psychology applications*

The thesis contributes to existing discursive research in three ways. First, it extends the critique of attitude theory by considering evaluation practices in more detail. In particular, the focus on both the everyday use of evaluations, and the distinction between types of evaluation term, highlight problems with current attitude research methodology. Second, the thesis develops discursive research by using only naturalistic materials taken from everyday interaction. The move to this form of data follows a growing concern for DP to examine situated activities and a wider range of daily practices. While this does not detract from work based on interviews or focus groups, it signals a broadening out of DP issues and interests.

The third way in which the thesis contributes to DP research is through the use of CA procedures in conjunction with a DP focus on psychological topics, and the action orientation of talk. This combination of approaches could allow researchers to develop areas of research that have previously been overlooked. CA and DP have similar assumptions regarding talk and interaction (though there are also great divisions within and between these approaches, see chapter 3), and provide a strong foundation on which to build research in new areas. For example, embodied practices have rarely been studied in DP, yet these form a substantial part of our everyday interactions. CA research in this area (e.g. Goodwin, 1987; Heath, 1998) offers a way in which we can empirically research embodiment at the level of interaction. As I discussed in chapter 8, this may also involve a reconceptualisation of embodied practices, such as eating and drinking, as we examine how these practices are constructed *as* embodied.

### *9.4. The next bite*

Though meals may have constructed boundaries, the act of eating is continuous. We cannot distinguish one interaction with food from the next without getting caught up in associations, understandings, and planning ahead. As one meal is served and cleared away, so the cook/researcher thinks about what will be

prepared for the next meal; what gustatory pleasures await. So it is with research. Throughout this thesis, themes and issues have been raised that highlight the inadequacy of focussing on food evaluations. What is required next is an examination of different aspects of eating practices. Some ideas are considered below.

As I noted in section 9.3.3, the thesis contributes to the development of conversation analysis and discursive psychology through both the topic, and the analysis of issues such as embodiment and context. Taking this further, the next step could be to use video data (as noted in box 9.2), which would allow researchers to take into account the practicalities of, and movements during, mealtimes to a greater degree. For example, video tape would capture the relative position of the speakers, how much food is present, how the food is distributed, and what other (non-verbal) activities are being conducted. Developments in technology would allow such data to be recorded, analysed, and presented in a digital format – thus aiding not only the research but the way in which this can be disseminated to different audiences. For instance, digitised video can be anonymised by obscuring selected areas (such as faces) and by changing voices to prevent identification. These anonymised sequences can then be presented to conference audiences, on websites, and in journal articles (as video stills).

Developments from the current research could also be used in a more practical setting. While the analysis in this thesis alone may not be sufficient, it could be the start of a corpus of material that would aid the development of health promotion and policy around food and eating. Practitioners could use the material and analysis to see how mealtimes are *actually* conducted, rather than working with retrospective accounts or questionnaire responses. Researchers could examine how healthy eating talk is constructed in interaction, who uses it (is it only parents telling their children, or might the opposite be the case?), and how it is worked into family routines and purchasing plans. Can we help change the way people view 'healthy' eating by changing the way they talk about it?

More specific areas could be targeted. It was noted in the introduction that the thesis could contribute to eating disorders research. For instance, discursive

analyses of eating practices demonstrate the importance of eating as a social practice, in which other social activities are achieved through food talk. Researchers interested in eating disorders – such as anorexia and bulimia nervosa – could use discursive methodologies to examine how struggles over food are managed in interaction. How are individuals persuaded and encouraged to eat, and how may food be resisted as part of the expectations and roles of family members? We could also look at how eating disorders are constructed and managed by speakers in everyday interaction. The work of Wayne Beach (1996) is a particularly good example, as he analyses a telephone conversation between a woman with bulimia, and her grandmother. This kind of research – focussing on instances of interaction – allows us to examine in more detail how we orient to food and eating *as* a problem.

The way forward also requires a reconsideration of issues that have not, until now, been addressed in this thesis. I refer here to the notions of subjectivity or experience, and to eating alone. It may have been noted that in this final chapter I have at times used such terms – in particular, ‘add an excitement’ (p. 236), ‘anxiety’ (p. 237), ‘view’ (p.239) – without questioning or problematising their use. While these may suggest cognitive or experiential concepts, I do not mean to negate the deconstructive work (e.g. about holding an attitude, or having a particular taste experience) that constitutes the heart of this thesis. Rather, the use of these terms signals a tension between wishing to provide an alternative approach to eating practices, and being constrained by the vocabulary that currently constructs our understanding of such practices.

There is no simple answer to this tension, and this thesis represents the limits of where I have taken this argument to date. There are still questions about how we think about or experience eating, and how we may theorise such things if we want to take a discursive or critical approach to ‘thoughts’, ‘attitudes’, or ‘experiences’. We could, as Willig (2000) has argued, begin to examine how discourses and practices constitute subjectivity. This would, however, require some theorising of subjectivity and subject positions (see for example, Davies and Harré, 1990; Harré, 1997; Hollway, 1989), and of eating as an embodied practice. This thesis



has gone some way to providing a way of managing this problem, though there is still some way to go yet.

In conclusion, then, this thesis presents a new way of approaching food and eating, as constructed and interactional practices. I have drawn upon social psychological and sociological research to show an area of research that has to date been largely neglected: the specifics of mealtime interaction and food talk. This has been examined by using the theoretical and methodological approaches of discursive psychology and conversation analysis. Yet this is just the starting point for discursive research of this kind on eating practices. What we eat is bound up with the interactional activities around food and mealtimes, and here I only scratch the surface by beginning to consider the construction and uses of food and drink evaluations. Talking food is a fundamental part of our understandings of eating practices and food. What we eat, then, are our words.

## REFERENCES

- Aaron, J.I., Mela, D.J., & Evans, R.E. (1994). 'The influences of attitudes, beliefs and label information on perceptions of reduced fat spread'. *Appetite*, Vol. 22: 25-37.
- Abell, J. & Stokoe, E.H. (2001). 'Broadcasting the royal role: Constructing culturally situated identities in Princess Diana's 'Panorama' interview'. *British Journal of Social Psychology*, Vol. 40 (3): 417-435.
- Adams, C.J. (1990). *The sexual politics of meat: A feminist-vegetarian critical theory*. Cambridge: Polity Press.
- Ajzen, I. (1988). *Attitudes, personality and behavior*. Chicago: Dorsey.
- Ajzen, I. (1991). 'The theory of planned behavior'. *Organizational behavior and human decision processes*, Vol. 50: 179-211.
- Allen, B. (1994) (Ed.). *Food: An Oxford anthology*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Antaki, C. (1994). *Explaining and arguing: The social organisation of accounts*. London: Sage.
- Antaki, C., Houtkoop-Steenstra, H., & Rapley, M. (2000). "Brilliant. Next question..." High-grade assessment sequences in the completion of interactional units'. *Research on Language and Social Interaction*, Vol. 33 (3): 235-262.
- Antaki, C. & Widdicombe, S. (1998) (Eds.). *Identities in talk*. London: Sage.
- Armitage, C.J. & Conner, M. (1999). 'The theory of planned behaviour: Assessment of predictive validity and 'perceived control'' *British Journal of Social Psychology*, Vol. 38: 35-54.
- Ashmore, M. (1989). *The reflexive thesis: Wrioting sociology of scientific knowledge*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Ashmore, M., Macmillan, K., & Brown, S. (in press). 'It's a scream: Professional hearing and tape fetishism'. *Discourse Studies*.
- Ashmore, M. & Reed, D. (2000). 'Innocence and nostalgia in conversation analysis: The dynamic relations of tape and transcript'. *Forum: Qualitative Social Research*. [Online journal]. Vol. 1 (3) Available at <http://qualitative-research.net/fps/fqs-eng.htm>

- Atkinson, J.M. & Heritage, J.C. (1984)(Eds.). *Structures of social action: Studies in conversation analysis*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Atkinson, P. (1980). 'The symbolic significance of health foods.' In M. Turner (Ed.), *Nutrition and lifestyles*. (pp. 79-89). London: Applied Science Publishers Ltd.
- Auburn, T., Lea, S., & Drake, S. (1999). ' "It's your opportunity to be truthful": Disbelief, mundane reasoning and the investigation of crime'. In C. Willig (Ed.), *Applied discourse analysis: Social and psychological interventions*. (pp. 44-65). Buckingham: Open University Press.
- Austin, J.L. (1962). *How To Do Things with Words*. (2nd edition). Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press.
- Backett, K.C. (1992). 'Taboos and excesses: Lay health moralities in middle class families'. *Sociology of Health and Illness*, Vol. 14 (2): 257-274.
- Backett, K.C. & Davison, C. (1995). 'Lifecourse and lifestyle: The social and cultural location of health behaviours'. *Social Science and Medicine*, Vol. 40 (5): 629- 638.
- Bagozzi, R. P. & Kimmel, S. K. (1995). 'A comparison of leading theories for the prediction of goal-directed behaviours'. *British Journal of Social Psychology*, Vol. 34: 437-461.
- Banister, P., Burman, E., Parker, I., Taylor, M., & Tindall, C. (1994). *Qualitative methods in psychology: A research guide*. Buckingham: Open University Press.
- Bárcenas, P., Pérez de San Román, R., Pérez Elortondo, F.J., & Albisu, M. (2001). 'Consumer preference structures for traditional Spanish cheeses and their relationship with sensory properties'. *Food Quality and Preference*, Vol. 12: 269-279.
- Barker, M.E., Tandy, M., & Stookey, J.D. (1999). 'How are consumers of low-fat and high-fat diets perceived by those with lower and higher fat intake?' *Appetite*, Vol. 33: 309-317.
- Barthes, R. (1997). 'Toward a psycho-sociology of contemporary food consumption'. In C. Counihan & P. Van Esterik (Eds.), *Food and culture: A reader*. (pp. 20-27). London: Routledge.

- Baxter, S. D., Thompson, W. D., & Davis, H. C. (2000). 'Fourth-grade children's observed consumption of, and preferences for, school lunch foods'. *Nutrition Research*, Vol. 20 (3): 439-443.
- Beach, W.A. (1996). *Conversations about illness: Family preoccupations with bulimia*. New Jersey: Lawrence Erlbaum.
- Beardsworth, A. (1995). 'The management of food ambivalence: Erosion and reconstruction?' In D. Maurer & J. Sobal (Eds.), *Eating agendas: Food and nutrition as social problems*. (pp. 117-142). New York: de Gruyter.
- Beardsworth, A. & Keil, E.T. (1992). 'The vegetarian option: Varieties, converasions motives and careers'. *The Sociological Review*, Vol. 40 (2): 253-293.
- Beardsworth, A. & Keil, E.T. (1993). 'Contemporary vegetarianism in the U.K.: Challenge and incorporation'. *Appetite*, Vol. 20: 229-234.
- Beardsworth, A. & Keil, E.T. (1997). *Sociology on the menu*. London: Routledge.
- Beattie, G. & Doherty, K. (1995). ' "I saw what *really* happened": The discursive construction of victims and perpetrators in firsthand accounts of paramilitary violence in Northern Ireland'. *Journal of Language and Social Psychology*, Vol. 14 (4): 408-433.
- Beeton, E. (1927). *Mrs. Beeton's all-about cookery*. London: Ward, Lock & Co., Ltd.
- Benedikt, R., Wertheim, E.H., & Love, A. (1998). 'Eating attitudes and weight-loss attempts in female adolescents and their mothers'. *Journal of Youth and Adolescence*, Vol. 27 (1): 43-57.
- Benson, S. (1997). 'The body, health and eating disorders'. In K. Woodward (Ed.), *Identity and difference*. (pp. 121-182). London: Sage.
- Berg, C., Jonsson, I., & Conner, M. (2000). 'Understanding choice of milk and bread for breakfast among Swedish children aged 11-15 years: An application of the Theory of Planned Behaviour'. *Appetite*, Vol. 34: 5-19.
- Be-Ro Home recipes (circa 1926). 31<sup>st</sup> Edition. Nottingham: J. Howitt & Son Ltd.
- Billig, M. (1985). 'Prejudice, categorisation and particularisation: From a perceptual to a rhetorical approach'. *European Journal of Social Psychology*, Vol. 19: 203-222.

- Billig, M. (1989). 'The argumentative nature of holding strong views: A case study'. *European Journal of Social Psychology*, Vol. 19: 203-223.
- Billig, M. (1992). *Talking of the Royal family*. London: Routledge.
- Billig, M. (1996 [1987]). *Arguing and thinking: A rhetorical approach to social psychology*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Billig, M. (1999a). 'Whose terms? Whose ordinariness? Rhetoric and ideology in conversation analysis'. *Discourse & Society*, Vol. 10 (4):543-558.
- Billig, M. (1999b). 'Conversation analysis and the claims of naivety'. *Discourse & Society*, Vol. 10 (4): 572-576.
- Billig, M. (1999c). *Freudian repression: Conversation creating the unconscious*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Billig, M., Condor, S., Edwards, D., Gane, M., Middleton, D., & Radley, A.R. (1988). *Ideological dilemmas: A social psychology of everyday thinking*. London: Sage.
- Birch, L.L. (1980). 'Effects of peer models' food choices and eating behaviours on preschoolers' food preferences'. *Child development*, Vol. 51: 489-496.
- Birch, L.L. (1990). 'The control of food intake by young children: The role of learning'. In E.D. Capaldi & T.L. Powley (Eds.), *Taste, experience and feeding*. (pp. 116-135). Washington, D.C.: American Psychological Association.
- Blum-Kulka, S. (1994). 'The dynamics of family dinner talk: Cultural contexts for children's passages to adult discourse'. *Research on Language and Social Interaction*, Vol. 27 (1): 1-50.
- Blum-Kulka, S. (1997). *Dinner talk: Cultural patterns of sociability and socialisation in family discourse*. London: L.E.A.
- Bolles, R.C. (1990). 'A functionalistic approach to feeding'. In E.D. Capaldi & T.L. Powley (Eds.), *Taste, experience and feeding*. (pp. 3-13). Washington, D.C.: American Psychological Association.
- Bonham, P., Greenlee, D., Herbert, C.S., Hruidi, L., Kirby, C., Perkins, A., Salkind, N.J., & Wilfong, R. (1995). 'Knowledge of brand and preference'. *Psychological Reports*, Vol. 76: 1297-1298.
- Booth, D. A. (1994). *Psychology of nutrition*. London: Taylor & Francis.
- Booth, D.A., Fuller, J., & Lewis, V. (1981). 'Human control of body weight: Cognitive or physiological? Some energy-related perceptions and

- misperceptions'. In L.A. Cioffi (Ed.), *The body weight regulatory system: Normal and disturbed systems*. (pp. 305-314). New York: Raven Press.
- Bordo, S. (1990). 'Reading the slender body'. In M. Jacobus, E.F. Keller, & S. Shuttleworth (Eds.), *Body/politics: Women and the discourses of science*. (pp. 83-112). New York: Routledge.
- Bordo, S. (1997). 'Anorexia nervosa: Psychopathology as the crystallisation of culture'. In M.M. Gergen & S.N. Davis (Eds.), *Toward a new Psychology of gender: A reader*. (pp. 423-453). London: Routledge.
- Bordo, S. (1998). 'Hunger as ideology'. In R. Scapp & B. Seitz (Eds.), *Eating culture*. (pp. 11-35). Albany: State Univ. of New York Press.
- Bradby, H. (1997). 'Health, eating and heart attacks: Glaswegian Punjabi women's thinking about everyday food'. In P. Caplan (Ed.), *Food, health and identity*. (pp. 213-233). London: Routledge.
- Brinberg, D., Axelson, M.L., & Price, S. (2000). 'Changing food knowledge, food choice and dietary fiber consumption by using tailored messages'. *Appetite*, Vol. 35: 35-43.
- British Psychological Society (1993). 'Revised ethical principles for conducting research with human participants'. *The Psychologist*, Vol 6: 33-35.
- Brook, U. & Tepper, I. (1997). 'High school students' attitudes and knowledge of food consumption and body image: Implications for school based education'. *Patient Education and Counselling*, Vol. 30 (3): 283- 288.
- Burgard, D. & Lyons, P. (1994). 'Alternatives in obesity treatment: Focussing on health for fat women'. In P. Fallon, M.A. Katzman, & S.C. Wooley (Eds.), *Feminist perspectives on eating disorders*. (pp. 212-230). New York: The Guilford Press.
- Burkitt, I. (1999). 'Between the dark and the light: Power and the material contexts of social relations'. In D. J. Nightingale & J. Cromby (Eds.), *Social constructionist psychology: A critical analysis of theory and practice*. (pp. 69-82). Buckingham: Open University Press.
- Burningham, K. (1995). 'Attitudes, accounts and impact assessment'. *Sociological Review*, Vol. 43 (1): 100-122.
- Burr, V. (1995). *An Introduction to social constructionism*. London: Routledge.

- Burr, V. (1998). 'Overview: Realism, relativism, social constructionism and discourse'. In I. Parker (Ed.), *Social constructionism, discourse and realism*. (pp. 13-26). London: Sage.
- Burr, V. (1999). 'The extra-discursive in social constructionism'. In D. Nightingale & J. Cromby (Eds.), *Social constructionist psychology: A critical analysis of theory and practice*. (pp. 113-126). Buckingham: Open University Press.
- Butt, T. (1999). 'Realism, constructionism and phenomenology'. In D. Nightingale & J. Cromby (Eds.), *Social constructionist psychology: A critical analysis of theory and practice*. (pp. 127-140). Buckingham: Open University Press.
- Buttny, R. (1993). *Social accountability in communication*. London: Sage.
- Button, G. (1991) (Ed.). *Ethnomethodology and the human sciences*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Button, G. & Lee, J.R.E. (1987). *Talk and social organisation*. Clevedon: Multilingual Matters.
- Cabanac, M. (1990). 'Taste: The maximization of multidimensional pleasure.' In E.D. Capaldi & T.L. Powley (Eds.), *Taste, experience and feeding*. (pp. 28-42). Washington, DC: American Psychological Association.
- Cameron, D., Frazer, E., Harvey, P., Rampton, M.B.H., & Richardson, K. (1992). *Researching language: Issues of power and method*. London: Routledge.
- Cantin, I. & Dube, L. (1999). 'Attitudinal moderation of correlation between food liking and consumption'. *Appetite*, Vol. 32: 367-381.
- Caplan, P. (1997). 'Approaches to the study of food, health and identity'. In P. Caplan (Ed.), *Food, health and identity*. (pp. 1-31). London: Routledge.
- Cardello, A.V., Schutz, H., Snow, C., & Lester, L. (2000). 'Predictors of food acceptance, consumption and satisfaction in specific eating situations'. *Food Quality and Preference*, Vol. 11: 201-216.
- Carper, J.L., Fisher, J.O., & Birch, L.L. (2000). 'Young girls' emerging dietary restraint and disinhibition are related to parental control in child feeding'. *Appetite*, Vol. 35: 121-129.
- Chaiken, S. & Pliner, P. (1987). 'Women, but not men, are what they eat: The effect of meal size and gender on perceived femininity and masculinity'. *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin*, Vol. 13 (2): 166-176.

- Chapman, G. & Maclean, H. (1993). “‘Junk food’ and ‘healthy food’”: Meanings of food in adolescent women’s culture’. *Journal of Nutrition Education*, Vol. 25 (3): 108-113.
- Charles, N. & Kerr, M. (1986a). ‘Issues of responsibility and control in the feeding of families’. In S. Rodmell & A. Watt (Eds.), *The politics of health education: Raising the issues*. (pp. 57-75). London: Routledge and Kegan Paul.
- Charles, N. & Kerr, M. (1986b). ‘Food for feminist thought’. *Sociological Review*, Vol. 34 (3): 537-572.
- Charles N. & Kerr, M. (1988). *Women, food and families*. Manchester: Manchester University Press.
- Clarke, M.G. & Palmer, R.L. (1983). ‘Eating attitudes and neurotic symptoms in university students’. *British Journal of Psychiatry*, Vol. 142: 299-304.
- Clendenen, V.I., Herman, C.P., & Polivy, J. (1994). ‘Social facilitation of eating among friends and strangers’. *Appetite*, Vol. 23: 1-13.
- Clift, R. (2001). ‘Grammar in interaction: The case of ‘actually’’. *Unpublished manuscript, University of Essex*.
- Connor, M., Martin, E., Silverdale, N., & Grogan, S. (1996). ‘Dieting in adolescence: An application of the theory of planned behaviour’. *British Journal of Health Psychology*, Vol. 1: 315-325.
- Connor, M., Povey, R., Sparks, P., James, R., & Shepherd, R. (1998). ‘Understanding dietary change: Contributions from social psychology’. In A. Murcott (Ed.), *The nation’s diet’: The social science of food choice*. (pp. 43-56). London: Longman.
- Conrad, P. (1994). ‘Wellness as virtue: Morality and the pursuit of health’. *Culture, Medicine and Psychiatry*, Vol. 18: 385-401.
- Cook, G. (1990). ‘Transcribing infinity: Problems of context presentation’. *Journal of Pragmatics*, Vol. 14: 1-24.
- Counihan, C. & Van Esterik, P. (1997)(Eds.). *Food and culture: A reader*. New York: Routledge.
- Coveney, J. (1999). ‘The government of the table: Nutrition expertise and the social organisation of family food habits’. In J. Germov & L. Williams (Eds.), *A sociology of food and nutrition: The social appetite*. (pp. 259-275). Oxford: Oxford University Press.



- Coyle, A. (1995). 'Discourse analysis'. In G.M. Breakwell, S. Hammond, & C. Fife-Schaw (Eds.), *Research methods in psychology*. (pp. 243-258). London: Sage.
- Crawford, R. (1985). 'A cultural account of "health": Control, release and the social body'. In J.B. McKinlay (Ed.), *Issues in the political economy of healthcare*. (pp. 60-103). New York: Methuen.
- Cromby, J. & Nightingale, D. J. (1999). 'What's wrong with social constructionism?' In D. J. Nightingale & J. Cromby (Eds.), *Social constructionist psychology: A critical analysis of theory and practice*. (pp. 1-20). Buckingham: Open University Press.
- Crossley, M. L. (2000). *Rethinking health psychology*. Buckingham: Open University Press.
- Crossley, M. L. (2001). 'Do we need to rethink health psychology?' *Psychology, Health & Medicine*. Vol. 6 (3): 243-255.
- Crumblehulme, B. (2000). 'Perceptions of food read through metaphors of the biological and the 'civilised''. *Journal of Intercultural Studies*. Vol. 21 (3): 331-340.
- Czyzewski, M. (1995). ' "Mm hm" tokens as interactional devices in the psychotherapeutic in-take interview'. In P. ten Have & G. Psathas (Eds.), *Situated order: Studies in the social organisation of talk and embodied activities*. (pp. 73-89). Maryland: University Press of America.
- Danziger, K. (1997). *Naming the mind: How psychology found its language*. London: Sage.
- Davies, B. (1998). 'Psychology's subject: A commentary on the relativism/realism debate'. In I. Parker (Ed.), *Social constructionism, discourse and realism*. (pp. 133-146). London: Sage.
- Davies, B. & Harré, R. (1990). 'Positioning: The discursive production of selves'. *Journal of the Theory of Social Behaviour*, Vol. 20: 43-65.
- Davies, E. & Furnham, A. (1986). 'The dieting and body shape concerns of adolescent females'. *Journal of Child Psychology and Psychiatry*, Vol. 27 (3): 417- 428.
- De Bourdeaudhuij, I. (1997). 'Family food rules and healthy eating in adolescents'. *Journal of Health Psychology*, Vol. 2(1): 45-56.

- Delphy, C. (1979). 'Sharing the same table: Consumption and the family'. In C. Harris (Ed.), *The sociology of the family: New directions for Britain*. (pp. 214-231). Keele: University of Keele.
- De Vault, M. L. (1991). *Feeding the family: The social organization of caring as gendered work*. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press.
- Douglas, M. (1966). *Purity and danger: An analysis of concepts of pollution and taboo*. London: Routledge.
- Douglas, M. (1972). 'Deciphering a meal'. *Daedalus*, Vol. 101: 61-81.
- Douglas, M. & Nicod, N. (1974). 'Taking the biscuit: The structure of British meals'. *New Society*, Vol. 33: 744-747.
- Drew, P. (1987). 'Po-faced receipts of teases'. *Linguistics*, Vol. 25: 219-253.
- Drew, P. (1990). 'Strategies in the contest between lawyer and witness in cross-examination'. In J. Levi & A. Walker (Eds.), *Language in the judicial process*. (pp. 39-64). New York: Plenum.
- Drew, P. (1995). 'Conversation analysis'. In J.M. Smith, R. Harré, & L. van Langenhove (Eds.), *Rethinking methods in psychology*. (pp. 64-79). London: Sage.
- Drew, P. & Holt, E. (1988). 'Complainable matters: The use of idiomatic expressions in making complaints'. *Social Problems*, Vol. 35(4): 398-417.
- Dubé, L. & Cantin, I. (2000). 'Promoting health or promoting pleasure? A contingency approach to the effect of informational and emotional appeals on food liking and consumption'. *Appetite*, 35, 252-262.
- Dubé, L., Chattopadhyay, A., & Letarte, A. (1996). 'Should advertising appeals match the basis of consumers' attitudes?' *Journal of Advertising Research*, Vol. 36 (6): 82-89.
- Eagly, A.H. & Chaiken, S. (1993). *The psychology of attitudes*. New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanich.
- Eagly, A.H. & Chaiken, S. (1998). 'Attitude structure and function'. In D.T. Gilbert, S.T. Fiske, & G. Lindzey (Eds.), *The handbook of social psychology*. Vol. I, 4<sup>th</sup> edition. (pp. 269-322). New York: McGraw-Hill.
- Edley, N. (2000). 'Unravelling social constructionism'. Paper presented at the BPS Social Psychology Section annual conference, September, Nottingham.

- Edley, N. (2001). 'Analysing masculinity: Interpretative repertoires, ideological dilemmas and subject positions'. In M. Wetherell, S. Taylor, & S.J. Yates (Eds.), *Discourse as data: A guide for analysis*. (pp. 189-228). London: Sage.
- Edwards, D. (1994). 'Script formulations: An analysis of event descriptions in conversation'. *Journal of Language and Social Psychology*, Vol. 13(3): 211-247.
- Edwards, D. (1995). 'Two to tango: Script formulations, dispositions and rhetorical symmetry in relationship troubles talk'. *Research on Language and Social Interaction*, Vol. 28 (4): 319-350.
- Edwards, D. (1997). *Discourse and Cognition*. London: Sage.
- Edwards, D. (1998). 'The relevant thing about her: Social identity categories in use'. In C. Antaki & S. Widdicombe (Eds.), *Identities in Talk*. (pp. 15-33). London: Sage.
- Edwards, D. (1999). 'Emotion discourse'. *Culture & Psychology*, Vol. 5 (3): 271-291.
- Edwards, D. (2000). 'Extreme case formulations: Softeners, investment and doing nonliteral'. *Research on Language and Social Interaction*, Vol. 33 (4), 347-373.
- Edwards, D., Ashmore, M., & Potter, J. (1995). 'Death and furniture: The rhetoric, politics and theology of bottom line arguments against relativism'. *History of the Human Sciences*, Vol. 8(2): 25-49.
- Edwards, D. & Middleton, D. (1986). 'Joint remembering: Constructing an account of shared experience through conversational discourse'. *Discourse Processes*, Vol. 9: 423-459.
- Edwards, D. & Potter, J. (1992). *Discursive Psychology*. London: Sage.
- Edwards, D. & Potter, J. (1993). 'Language and causation: a discursive action model of description and attribution'. *Psychological Review*, Vol. 100 (1): 23-41.
- Edwards, D. & Potter, J. (1999). 'Language and causal attribution: a rejoinder to Schmid and Fiedler'. *Theory & Psychology*, Vol. 9 (6): 823-836.
- Edwards, D., Potter, J., & Middleton, D. (1992). 'Toward a discursive psychology of remembering'. *The Psychologist*, Vol. 5: 441-446.

- Ekström, M. (1991). 'Class and gender in the kitchen'. In E.L. Fürst, R. Prättälä, M. Ekström, L. Holm, & U. Kjaernes (Eds.), *Palatable worlds: Sociocultural food studies*. (pp. 145-158). Oslo: Solum Forlag.
- Elias, N. (1978). *The civilizing process, Volume I: The history of manners*. Oxford: Basil Blackwell.
- Elias, N. (1982). *The civilizing process, Volume II: State formation and civilization*. Oxford: Basil Blackwell.
- Eldridge, J. & Murcott, A. (2000). 'Adolescents' dietary habits and attitudes: Unpacking the problem of (parental) influence'. *Health*, Vol. 4 (1): 25-49.
- Falk, P. (1991). 'The sweetness of forbidden fruit: Towards an anthropology of food'. In E.L. Fürst, R. Prättälä, M. Ekström, L. Holm, & U. Kjaernes (Eds.), *Palatable worlds: Sociocultural food studies*. (pp. 53-83). Oslo: Solum Forlag.
- Falk, P. (1994). *The consuming body*. London: Sage.
- Featherstone, M. (1991). 'The body in consumer culture'. In M. Featherstone, J. Hepworth, & B.S. Turner (Eds.), *The body*. (pp. 170-196). London: Sage.
- Fiddes, N. (1991). *Meat: A natural symbol*. London: Routledge.
- Fieldhouse, P. (1986). *Food and nutrition: Customs and culture*. London: Croom Helm.
- Finkelstein, J. (1989). *Dining out: A sociology of modern manners*. Cambridge: Polity Press.
- Fischler, C. (1980). 'Food habits, social change and the nature/culture dilemma'. *Social Science Information*, Vol. 19 (6): 937-953.
- Fischler, C. (1987). 'Attitudes towards sugar and sweetness in historical and social perspective'. In J. Dobbing (Ed.), *Sweetness*. (pp. 83-98). London: Springer-verlag
- Fischler, C. (1988). 'Food, self and identity'. *Social Science Information*, Vol. 27 (2): 275-292.
- Fishbein, M. & Ajzen, I. (1975). *Belief, attitude, intention, and behavior: An introduction to theory and research*. Reading, MA: Addison-Wesley.
- Fisher, M.F.K. (1989). *The gastronomical me*. San Francisco: North Point.

- Foster, D. (1998). 'Across the S-S divide'. In I. Parker (Ed.), *Social constructionism, discourse and realism*. (pp. 107-118). London: Sage.
- Frijters, J.E.R. (1987). 'Sensory sweetness perception, its pleasantness, and attitudes towards sweet foods'. In J. Dobbing (Ed.), *Sweetness*. (pp. 67-80). London: Springer-Verlag.
- Fürst, E.L. (1991). 'Food, gender and identity: A story of ambiguity'. In E.L. Fürst, R. Prättälä, M. Ekström, L.Holm, & U. Kjaernes (Eds.), *Palatable worlds: Sociocultural food studies*. (pp. 111-130). Oslo: Solum Forlag.
- Gardner, R. (1997). 'The conversation object Mm: A weak and variable acknowledging token'. *Research on Language and Social Interaction*, Vol. 30 (2):131-156.
- Gardner, R. (2001). *When listeners talk: Response tokens and recipient stance*. Amsterdam: Benjamins.
- Garfinkel, H. (1967). *Studies in ethnomethodology*. Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice Hall.
- Garner, D.M., Garfinkel, P.E., Schwartz, D., & Thompson, M. (1980). 'Cultural expectations of thinness in women'. *Psychological Reports*, Vol. 47: 483-491.
- Geiselman, P.J., Smith, C.F., Williamson, D.A., Champagne, C.M., Bray, G.A., & Ryan, D.H. (1998). 'Perception of sweetness intensity determines women's hedonic and other perceptual responsiveness to chocolate food'. *Appetite*, Vol. 31: 37-48.
- Gergen, K. J. (1998). 'Constructionism and realism: How are we to go on?' In I. Parker (Ed.), *Social constructionism, discourse and realism*. (pp. 147-155). London: Sage.
- Gergen, K.J. (1999). *An invitation to social construction*. London: Sage.
- Gergen, K. J. (2001). *Social construction in context*. London: Sage.
- Germov, J. & Williams, L. (1996a). 'The epidemic of dieting women: The need for a sociological approach to food and nutrition'. *Appetite*, Vol. 27: 97-108.
- Germov, J. & Williams, L. (1996b). 'The sexual division of dieting: Womens' voices'. *Sociological Review*, Vol. 44 (4): 630-647.
- Gilbert, S. (1986). *Pathology of eating: Psychology and treatment*. London: Routledge.

- Gill, R. (1995). 'Relativism, reflexivity and politic: Interrogating discourse analysis from a feminist perspective'. In S. Wilkinson & C. Kitzinger (Eds.), *Feminism and discourse: Psychological perspectives*. (pp. 165-186). London: Sage.
- Gleitman, H. (1991). *Psychology*. 3<sup>rd</sup> edition. New York: W.W. Norton & Co.
- Goffman, E. (1971). *The presentation of self in everyday life*. London: Penguin.
- Gofton, L. (1986). 'The rules of the table: Sociological factors influencing food choice'. In C. Ritson, L. Gofton, & J. McKenzie (Eds.), *The food consumer*. (pp. 127-155). Chichester: John Wiley & Sons.
- Goldman, A. (1992). "'I yam what I yam": Cooking, culture, and colonialism'. In S. Smith & J. Watson (Eds.), *De/colonizing the subject: The politics of gender in women's autobiography*. (pp. 169-195). Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.
- Goode, J.G., Curtis, K., & Theophano, J. (1984). 'Meal formats, meal cycles and menu negotiation in the maintenance of an Italian-American community'. In M. Douglas (Ed.), *Food in the social order: Studies of food and festivities in three American communities*. (pp. 143-218). New York: Russell Sage Foundation.
- Goodwin, C. (1979). 'The interactive construction of a sentence in natural conversation'. In G. Psathas (Ed.), *Everyday language: Studies in ethnomethodology*. New York: Irvington.
- Goodwin, C. (1980). 'Restarts, pauses, and the achievement of mutual gaze at turn-beginning'. *Sociological Inquiry*, Vol. 50: 272-302.
- Goodwin, C. (1981). *Conversational organization: Interaction between speakers and hearers*. New York: Academic Press.
- Goodwin, C. (1987). 'Forgetfulness as an interactive resource'. *Social Psychology Quarterly*, Vol. 50 (2): 115-130.
- Goodwin, C. (1986). 'Between and within: Alternative sequential treatments of continuers and assessments'. *Human Studies*, Vol. 9: 205-217.
- Goodwin, C. & Goodwin, M. H. (1992). 'Assessments and the construction of context'. In A. Duranti & C. Goodwin (Eds.), *Rethinking context: Language as an interactive phenomenon*. (pp. 147-189). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

- Goodwin, M. (1980). 'Process of mutual monitoring implicated in the production of description sequences'. *Sociological Inquiry*, Vol. 50: 303-317.
- Grieshaber, S. (1997). 'Mealtime rituals: Power and resistance in the construction of mealtime rules'. *British Journal of Sociology*, Vol. 48 (4): 649-666.
- Grogan, S.C., Bell, R., & Conner, M. (1997). 'Eating sweet snacks: Gender differences in attitudes and behaviour'. *Appetite*, Vol. 28: 19-31.
- Gronow, J. (1991). 'Need, taste and pleasure: Understanding food and consumption'. In E.L. Fürst, R. Prättälä, M. Ekström, L. Holm, & U. Kjaernes (Eds.), *Palatable worlds: Sociocultural food studies*. (pp. 33-52). Oslo: Solum Forlag.
- Gubrium, J. & Holstein, J. (1987). 'The private image: Experiential location and method in family studies'. *Journal of Marriage and the Family*, Vol. 49: 773-786.
- Gubrium, J. & Holstein, J. (1990). *What is family?* Mountain View, CA: Mayfield.
- Harré, R. (1995). 'Discursive psychology'. In J.A. Smith, R. Harré, & L. Van Langenhove (Eds.), *Rethinking psychology*. (pp. 143-159). London: Sage.
- Harré, R. (1997). 'The ontological status of persons'. Paper presented at the Inaugural Conference of the Centre for Critical Realism, University of Warwick.
- Harré, R. (1999). 'Discourse and the embodied person'. In D. J. Nightingale & J. Cromby (Eds.), *Social constructionist psychology: A critical analysis of theory and practice*. (pp. 97-112). Buckingham: Open University Press.
- Harris, J. (1999). *Chocolat*. London: Black Swan Publishers.
- Heath, C. (1982). 'Preserving the consultation: Medical report cards and professional conduct'. *Journal of the Sociology of Health and Illness*, Vol. 5 (2): 36-74.
- Heath, C. (1986). *Body movement and speech in medical interaction*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Heath, C. (1998). 'The analysis of activities in face-to-face interaction using video'. In D. Silverman (Ed.), *Qualitative research: Theory, method and practice*. (pp. 183-200). London: Sage.
- Heath, C. & Luff, P. (1993). 'Explicating face-to-face interaction'. In N. Gilbert (Ed.), *Researching social life*. (pp. 306-326). London: Sage.

- Heatherton, T.F., Herman, C.P., Polivy, J., King, G.A., & McGree, S.T. (1988). 'The (mis)measurement of restraint: An analysis of conceptual and psychometric issues'. *Journal of Abnormal Psychology*, Vol. 97 (1): 19-28.
- Heider, F. (1958). *The psychology of interpersonal relations*. New York: Wiley.
- Helmreich, R. (1975). 'Applied social psychology: The unfulfilled promise'. *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin*, Vol. 1: 548-560.
- Hepburn, A. (2000a). 'Power lines: Derrida, discursive psychology and the management of accusations of teacher bullying'. *British Journal of Social Psychology*, Vol. 39: 605-628.
- Hepburn, A. (2000b). 'On the alleged incompatibility between relativism and feminist psychology'. *Feminism and Psychology*, Vol. 10 (1): 91-106.
- Herek, G.M. (1987). 'Can functions be measured? A new perspective on the functional approach to attitudes'. *Social Psychology Quarterly*, Vol. 50 (4): 285-303.
- Heritage, J. (1983). 'Accounts in Action'. In G.N. Gilbert & P. Abell (Eds.), *Accounts and Action*. (pp. 117-131). Aldershot: Gower Press.
- Heritage, J. (1984a). *Garfinkel and ethnomethodology*. Cambridge: Polity Press.
- Heritage, J. (1984b). 'A change-of-state token and aspects of its sequential placement'. In J.M. Atkinson & J. Heritage (Eds.), *Structures of social action: Studies in conversation analysis*. (pp. 299-345). Cambridge: C.U.P.
- Heritage, J. (1989). 'Current developments in conversation analysis'. In D. Roger & P. Bull (Eds.), *Conversation: An interdisciplinary perspective*. (pp. 21-47). Clevedon: Multilingual Matters.
- Heritage, J. (1995). 'Conversation analysis: methodological aspects'. In U.M. Quasthoff (Ed.), *Aspects of oral communication*. (pp. 391-418). Berlin: de Gruyter.
- Heritage, J. (in press). 'Oh-prefaced responses to assessments: A method of modifying agreement/disagreement'. In C. Ford, B. Fox, & S. Thompson (Eds.), *The language of turn and sequence*. New York: Oxford University Press.



- Heritage, J. & Atkinson, J.M. (1984). 'Introduction'. In J.M. Atkinson & J. Heritage (Eds.), *Structures of social action: Studies in conversation analysis*. (pp. 1-15). Cambridge: C.U.P.
- Herman, C.P. & Polivy, J. (1980). 'Restrained eating'. In A.J. Stunkard (Ed.), *Obesity*. Philadelphia: W.B.Saunders.
- Herman, C.P. & Polivy, J. (1991). 'Fat is a Psychological Issue'. *New Scientist*, No. 1795: 41-45.
- Herzlich, C. (1973). *Health and illness: A social psychological analysis*. London: Academic Press.
- Hesse-Biber, S. (1991). 'Women, weight and eating disorders: A socio-cultural and political-economic analysis'. *Women's Studies International Forum*, Vol. 14 (3): 173-191.
- Hester, S. & Eglin, P. (1997)(Eds.). *Culture in action: Studies in membership categorisation analysis*. Washington, D.C.: University Press of America.
- Hetherington, M.M., Pirie, L.M., & Nabb, S. (1998). 'Pleasure and monotony: Effects of repeat exposure on pleasantness, desire to eat and intake'. Presentation at XIIth International Conference on the Physiology of Food and Fluid Intake, Hungary, 5<sup>th</sup>-8<sup>th</sup> July, 1998.
- Hewstone, M. & Antaki, C. (1988). 'Attribution theory and social explanations'. In M. Hewstone, W. Stroebe, J-P. Codol, & G.M. Stephenson (Eds.), *Introduction to social psychology: A European perspective*. (pp.111-141). Oxford: Blackwell Press.
- Hill, A.J. & Franklin, J.A. (1998). 'Mothers, daughters and dieting: Investigating the transmission of weight control'. *British Journal of Clinical Psychology*, Vol. 37: 3-13.
- Hill, A.J., Oliver, S., & Rogers, P.J. (1992). 'Eating in the adult world: The rise of dieting in childhood and adolescence'. *British Journal of Clinical Psychology*, Vol. 31: 95- 105.
- Hilton, D. (1990). 'Conversational processes and causal explanation'. *Psychological Bulletin*, Vol. 107 (1): 65-81.
- Hilton, D. (1991). 'A conversational model of causal attribution'. In W. Stroebe & M. Hewstone (Eds.), *European review of social psychology*, Vol. 2. Chichester: Wiley.

- Hilton, D. & Slugoski, B. (1986). 'Knowledge-based causal attribution: The abnormal conditions model'. *Psychological Review*, Vol. 93: 75-88.
- Holstein, J.A. & Gubrium, J.F. (1994). 'Constructing family: Descriptive practice and domestic order'. In T.Sarbin & J.I. Kitsuse (Eds.), *Constructing the Social*. (pp. 232-250). London: Sage.
- Hollway, W. (1989). *Subjectivity and method in psychology: Gender, meaning and science*. London: Sage.
- Hopper, R. (1989). 'Conversation analysis and social psychology as descriptions of interpersonal communication'. In D. Roger & P. Bull (Eds.), *Conversation: An interdisciplinary perspective*. (pp. 48-65). Clevedon: Multilingual Matters.
- Hornby, N. (1995). *High Fidelity*. London: Indigo.
- Horton-Salway, M. (2001). 'The construction of M.E.: The discursive action model'. In M. Wetherell, S. Taylor, & S.J. Yates (Eds.), *Discourse as data: A guide for analysis*. (pp.147-188). London: Sage.
- Howitt, D. (1991). *Concerning psychology: Psychology applied to social issues*. Milton Keynes: Open University Press.
- Hutchby, I. (1996). 'Power in discourse: The case of arguments on a British talk radio show'. *Discourse & Society*, Vol. 7 (4): 481-497.
- Hutchby, I. & Drew, P. (1995). 'Conversation analysis'. In J. Verschueren, J-O. Ostman, & J. Blommaert (Eds.), *Handbook of pragmatics: A manual*. (pp. 182-189). Amsterdam: John Benjamins.
- Hutchby, I. & Wooffitt, R. (1998). *Conversation analysis: Principles, practices and applications*. Cambridge: Polity Press.
- Ikeda, J. P. (1999). 'Culture, food and nutrition in increasingly culturally diverse societies'. In J. Germov & L. Williams (Eds.), *A sociology of food and nutrition: The social appetite*. (pp. 149-168). Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Jaworski, A. & Coupland, N. (1999) (Eds.). *The discourse reader*. London: Routledge.
- Jefferson, G. (1984). 'Notes on a systematic deployment of the acknowledgement tokens "yeah" and "mm hm"'. *Papers in Linguistics*, Vol. 17: 197-217.
- Jefferson, G. (1985). 'An exercise in the transcription and analysis of laughter'.

- In T.A. van Dijk (Ed.), *Handbook of discourse analysis; Volume 3: Discourse and dialogue*. (pp. 25-34). London: Academic Press.
- Jefferson, G. (1987). 'On exposed and embedded correction in conversation'. In G. Button & J.R.E. Lee (Eds.), *Talk and social organisation*. (pp. 86-100). Clevedon: Multilingual Matters.
- Jefferson, G., Sacks, H., & Schegloff, E. (1987). 'Notes on laughter in the pursuit of intimacy'. In G. Button & J.R.E. Lee (Eds.), *Talk and social organisation*. (pp. 152-205). Clevedon: Multilingual Matters.
- Jones, E.E. & Davis, K.E. (1965). 'From acts to dispositions: The attribution process in person perception'. In L. Berkowitz (Ed.), *Advances in experimental social psychology*. Vol.2. New York: Academic Press.
- Kelley, H.H. (1967). 'Attribution theory in social psychology'. In D. Levine (Ed.), *Nebraska symposium on motivation*, Vol. 15. (pp. 192-240). Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press.
- Kelley, H.H. (1973). 'The processes of causal attribution'. *American Psychologist*, Vol. 28: 107-128.
- Kempen, H.J.G. (1998). 'Mind as body moving in space: Bringing the body back into self-psychology'. In H.J. Stam (Ed.), *The body and psychology*. (pp. 54-70). London: Sage.
- Kendon, A. (1982). 'The organisation of behaviour in face-to-face interaction: Observations on the development of a methodology'. In K.R. Scherer & P. Ekman (Eds.), *Handbook of methods in nonverbal behaviour research*. (pp. 440-505). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Kennett, D.J. & Nisbet, C. (1998). 'The influence of body mass index and learned resourcefulness skills on body image and lifestyle practices'. *Patient Education and Counselling*, Vol. 33: 1-12.
- Kerr, M. & Charles, N. (1986). 'Servers and providers: The distribution of food within the family'. *The Sociological Review*, Vol. 34 (1): 115-157.
- Kitzinger, C. (2000). 'How to resist an idiom'. *Research on Language and Social Interaction*, Vol. 33 (2): 121-154.
- Koole, T. (1998). 'Affiliation and detachment in interviewer answer receipts'. In H. van den Berg, H. Houtkoop-Steenstra, & M. Wetherell (Eds.), *Analysing racist discourse: multidisciplinary approaches*. Cambridge: CUP

- Laclau, E. & Mouffe, C. (1987). 'Post-Marxism without apologies'. *New Left Review*, Vol. 166: 79-106.
- Lalljee, M. (1981). 'Attribution theory and the analysis of explanations'. In C. Antaki (Ed.), *The psychology of ordinary explanations of social behaviour*. (pp. 119-138). London: Academic Press.
- Latour, B. (1987). *Science in action*. Milton Keynes: Open University Press.
- Latour, B. (1988). 'The politics of explanation: An alternative'. In S. Woolgar (Ed.), *Knowledge and reflexivity: New frontiers in the sociology of knowledge*. (p. 155-176). London: Sage.
- Latour, B. & Woolgar, S. (1986). *Laboratory life: The construction of scientific facts*. (2<sup>nd</sup> edition). Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.
- Lawrence, D. H. (1915). *The rainbow*. Harmondsworth: Penguin.
- Lawson, N. (1998). *How to eat*. London: Chatto & Windus.
- Lea, E. & Worsley, A. (2001). 'Influences of meat consumption in Australia'. *Appetite*, Vol. 36: 127-136.
- Lepper, G. (1995). 'Making trouble: The uses of 'formal organization' as an institutional resource'. *Studies in Cultures, Organizations and Societies*, Vol. 1: 189-207.
- Letarte, A., Dube, L., & Troche, V. (1997). 'Similarities and differences in affective and cognitive origins of food liking and dislikes'. *Appetite*, Vol. 28: 115-129.
- Leudar, I. & Antaki, C. (1996). 'Discourse participation, reported speech and research practices in social psychology'. *Theory & Psychology*, Vol. 6 (1): 5-29.
- Leudar, I. & Antaki, C. (1997). 'Participant status in social psychological research'. In T. Ibanez & L. Iniguez (Eds.), *Critical social psychology*. (pp. 273-290). London: Sage.
- Levenstein, H.A. (1988). *Revolution at the table: The transformation of the American diet*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Levinson, S.C. (1988). 'Putting linguistics on a proper footing: Explorations in Goffman's concepts of participation'. In P. Drew & A. Wootton (Eds.), *Erving Goffman: Exploring the interaction order*. (pp. 161-227). Oxford: Polity Press.

- Levis, P. A., Chambers, E., & Johnson, D. E. (2000). 'Consumption and liking of a fat modified product during short trial periods'. *Nutrition Research*, Vol. 20 (6): 791-804.
- Levi-Strauss, C. (1966). 'The culinary triangle'. *Partisan Review*, Vol. 22: 586-595.
- Lindeman, M. & Stark, K. (1999). 'Pleasure, pursuit of health or negotiation of identity? Personality correlates of food choice motives among young and middle-aged women'. *Appetite*, Vol. 33: 141-161.
- Lindeman, M., & Stark, K. (2000). 'Loss of pleasure, ideological food choice reasons and eating pathology'. *Appetite*, Vol. 35: 263-268.
- Lloyd, P., Mayes, A., Manstead, A.S.R., Meudell, P.R., & Wagner, H.L. (1984). *Introduction to psychology: An integrated approach*. London: Fontana Press.
- Logue, A.W. (1991). *The psychology of eating and drinking: An introduction*. Second edition. New York: W.H. Freeman & Co.
- Lowe, C.F., Dowey, A., & Home, P. (1998). 'Changing what children eat'. In A. Murcott (Ed.), *'The nation's diet': The social science of food choice*. (pp. 57-80). London: Longman.
- Lozano, D.I., Crites, S.L., & Aikman, S.N. (1999). 'Changes in food attitudes as a function of hunger'. *Appetite*, Vol. 32: 207-218.
- Lukanuski, M. (1998). 'A place at the counter: The onus of oneness'. In R. Scapp & B. Seitz (Eds.), *Eating culture*. (pp. 112-182). Albany: State Univ. Of New York Press.
- Lupton, D. (1994). 'Food, memory and meaning: The symbolic and social nature of food events'. *Sociological Review*, Vol. 42 (4): 664- 685.
- Lupton, D. (1996). *Food, the body and the self*. London: Sage.
- Lupton, D. (2000). 'The heart of the meal: Food preferences and habits among rural Australian couples'. *Sociology of Health and Illness*, Vol. 22 (1): 94-109.
- Lupton, D. & Chapman, S. (1995). ' "A healthy lifestyle might be the death of you": Discourses on diet, cholesterol control and heart disease in the press and among the lay public'. *Sociology of Health and Illness*, Vol. 17 (4): 477-494.

- Lutz, C.A. (1988). *Unnatural emotions: Everyday sentiments on a Micronesian Atoll and their challenge to Western theory*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Lyman, B. (1989). *A psychology of food: More than a matter of taste*. New York: Van Nostrand Reinhold.
- Maio, G.R. & Olson, J.M. (1994). 'Value-attitude-behaviour relations: The moderating role of attitude functions'. *British Journal of Social Psychology*, Vol. 33 (3): 301-312.
- Makela, J. (1991). 'Defining a meal'. In E.L. Fürst, R. Prättälä, M. Ekström, L.Holm, & U. Kjaernes (Eds.), *Palatable worlds: Sociocultural food studies*. (pp. 87-96). Oslo: Solum Forlag.
- Makepeace Thackeray, W. (1848 [1994]). *Vanity Fair*. Harmondsworth: Penguin.
- Malson, H. (1998). *The thin woman: Feminism, post-structuralism and the social psychology of anorexia nervosa*. London: Routledge.
- Marcelino, A. S., Adam, A. S., Couronne, T., Koster, E. P., & Sieffermann, J. M. (2001). 'Internal and external determinants of eating initiation in humans'. *Appetite*, 36, 9-14.
- Marshall, H. & Raabe, B. (1993). 'Political discourse: Talking about nationalization and privatization'. In E. Burman & I. Parker (Eds.), *Discourse analytic research: Repertoires and readings of texts in action*. (pp. 35-51). London: Routledge.
- Martens, L. & Warde, A. (1997). 'Urban pleasure? On the meaning of eating out in a northern city'. In P.Caplan (Ed.), *Food, health and identity*. (pp. 131-150). London: Routledge.
- Martin, E. (1995). 'Flexible bodies: Health and work in an age of systems'. *The Ecologist*, Vol. 25 (6): 221-226.
- Martins, Y., Pelchat, M. L., & Pliner, P. (1997). '“Try it, it's good for you”: Effects of taste and nutrition information on willingness to try novel foods'. *Appetite*, Vol. 28: 89-102.
- Maurer, D. (1995). 'Meat as a social problem: Rhetorical strategies in the contemporary vegetarian literature'. In D. Maurer & S. Sobel (Eds.), *Eating agendas: Food and nutrition as social problems*. (pp. 143-163). New York: Aldine de Gruyter.

- McBean, L. D. & Miller, G. D. (1999). 'Enhancing the nutrition of America's youth'. *Journal of the American College of Nutrition*, Vol. 18 (6): 563-571.
- McKinlay, A. & Dunnett, A. (1998). 'How gun-owners accomplish being deadly average'. In C. Antaki & S. Widdicombe (Eds.), *Identities in talk*. (pp. 34-51). London: Sage.
- Mead, M. (1997). 'The changing significance of food'. In C. Counihan & P. Van Esterik (Eds.), *Food and culture: A reader*. (pp. 11-19). New York: Routledge.
- Meadow, R.M. & Weiss, L. (1992). *Women's conflicts about eating and sexuality: The relationship between food and sex*. New York: Haworth Press.
- Meigs, A. (1997). 'Food as a cultural construction'. In C. Counihan & P. Van Esterik (Eds.), *Food and culture: A reader*. (pp. 95-106). New York: Routledge.
- Meiselman, H.L. (1992). 'Methodology and theory in human eating research'. *Appetite*, Vol. 19: 49-55.
- Meiselman, H.L., Johnson, J.L., Reeve, W., & Crouch, J.E. (2000). 'Demonstrations of the influence of the eating environment on food acceptance'. *Appetite*, Vol. 35: 231-237.
- Miller, L.J. (2000). 'The poverty of truth-seeking: Postmodernism, discourse analysis and critical feminism'. *Theory & Psychology*, Vol. 10 (3): 313-352.
- Mintz, S.W. (1994). 'Eating and being: What food means'. In B. Harriss-White & R. Hoffenberg (Eds.), *Food: Multidisciplinary perspectives*. (pp. 102-115). Oxford: Blackwell Press.
- Mintz, S.W. (1996). *Tasting food, tasting freedom*. Boston: Beacon Press.
- Mizes, J.S. & Christiano, B.A. (1995). 'Assessment of cognitive variables relevant to cognitive behavioural perspectives on anorexia nervosa and bulimia nervosa'. *Behaviour Research and Therapy*, Vol. 33 (1): 95-105.
- Monteath, S.A. & McCabe, M.P. (1997). 'The influence of societal factors on female body image'. *Journal of Social Psychology*, Vol. 137 (6): 708-727.
- Morrison, M. (1995). 'Researching food consumers in school: Recipes for concern'. *Educational Studies*, Vol. 21 (2): 239-263.

- Muir, S.L., Wertheim, E.H., & Paxton, S.J. (in press). 'Adolescent girls' first diets: triggers and the role of multiple dimensions of self-concept'. *Eating Disorders: The Journal of Treatment and Prevention*.
- Mulkay, M. (1979). *Science and the sociology of knowledge*. London: Allen & Unwin.
- Mulkay, M. (1988). *On humour: Its nature and its place in modern society*. Cambridge: Polity Press.
- Mulkay, M. (1991). *Sociology of science: A sociological pilgrimage*. Milton Keynes: Open University Press.
- Murcott, A. (1982). 'On the social significance of the "cooked dinner" in South Wales'. *Social Science Information*, Vol. 21 (4/5): 677-696.
- Murcott, A. (1997). 'Family meals – A thing of the past?' In P.Caplan (Ed.), *Food, health and identity*. (pp. 32-49). London: Routledge.
- Murphy, M. (1996). 'The dynamic household as a logical concept and its use in demography'. *European Journal of Populations*, Vol. 12 (4): 363-338.
- Myers, D.G. (1999). *Social psychology*. Sixth edition. Boston: McGraw-Hill.
- Nash, P. (1990). 'The influence of nutritional awareness on consumer food choice'. In M.Ashwell (Ed.), *Why we eat what we eat: 12<sup>th</sup> Annual Conference of the British Nutrition Foundation*. (pp. 60-78). London: B.N.F.
- Nasser, M. (1997). *Culture and weight consciousness*. London: Routledge.
- Netemeyer, R.G., Burton, S., & Johnston, M. (1991). 'A comparison of two models for the prediction of volitional and goal-directed behaviours: A confirmatory analysis approach'. *Social Psychology Quarterly*, Vol. 54 (2): 87-100.
- Nightingale, D.J. & Cromby, J. (1999)(Eds.). *Social constructionist psychology: A critical analysis of theory and practice*. Buckingham: Open University Press.
- Nikander, P. (1995). 'The turn to the text: The critical potential of discursive social psychology'. *Nordiske Udkast (Journal for Critical Social Science)*, Vol. 23 (2): 3-15.
- Nofsinger, R.E. (1991). *Everyday conversation*. London: Sage.



- Noll, S.M. & Fredrickson, B.L. (1998). 'A mediational model linking self-objectification, body shame and disordered eating'. *Psychology of Women Quarterly*, Vol. 22 (4): 623- 636.
- Norman, P. & Smith, L. (1995). 'The theory of planned behaviour and exercise: and investigation into the role of prior behaviour, behavioural intentions and attitude variability'. *European Journal of Social Psychology*, Vol. 25: 403-415.
- Ochs, E. (1979). 'Transcription as theory'. In E. Ochs & B.B. Schiefflen (Eds.), *Developmental pragmatics*. (pp. 43-72). New York: Academic Press.
- Ochs, E., Pontecorvo, C., & Fasulo, A. (1996). 'Socialising taste'. *Ethnos*, Vol. 61 (1-2): 7-46.
- Ochs, E. & Taylor, C. (1992). 'Family narrative as political activity'. *Discourse & Society*, Vol. 3 (3): 301-340.
- Osgood, C.E., Suci, G.J., & Tannenbaum, P.H. (1957). *The measurement of meaning*. Urbana: University of Illinois Press.
- Otnes, P. (1991). 'What do meals do?' In E.L. Fürst, R. Prättälä, M. Ekström, L. Holm, & U. Kjaernes (Eds.), *Palatable worlds: Sociocultural food studies*. (pp. 97-108). Oslo: Solum Forlag.
- Oxford English Dictionary* (1994). (2<sup>nd</sup> edition). On CD-ROM. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Parker, I. (1992). *Discourse dynamics: Critical analysis for social and individual psychology*. London: Routledge.
- Parker, I. (1996). 'Against Wittgenstein: Materialist reflections on language in psychology'. *Theory & Psychology*, Vol. 6 (3): 363-384.
- Parker, I. (1998) (Ed.). *Social constructionism, discourse and realism*. London: Sage.
- Parker, I. (1999). 'Introduction: Varieties of discourse and analysis'. In I. Parker and the Bolton Discourse Network. *Critical textwork: An introduction to varieties of discourse and analysis*. (pp. 1-12). Buckingham: Open University Press.
- Parker, I. & Burman, E. (1993). 'Against discursive imperialism, empiricism and constructionism: Thirty-two problems with discourse analysis'. In E. Burman & I. Parker (Eds.), *Discourse analytic research: Repertoires and readings of texts in action*. (pp. 155-172). London: Routledge.

- Patton, G.C. (1988). 'The spectrum of eating disorder in adolescence'. *Journal of Psychosomatic Research*, Vol. 32 (6): 579-584.
- Pill, R. & Parry, O. (1989). 'Making changes – women, food and families'. *Health Education Journal*, Vol. 48 (2): 51-54.
- Pinel, J.P.J. (1993). *Biopsychology*. 2<sup>nd</sup> edition. Boston: Allyn & Bacon Press.
- Pomerantz, A. (1978). 'Compliment responses: Notes on the co-operation of multiple constraints'. In J. Schenkein (Ed.), *Studies in the organisation of conversational interaction*. (pp. 79-112). New York: Academic Press.
- Pomerantz, A. (1980). 'Telling my side: "Limited access" as a "fishing" device'. *Sociological Inquiry*, Vol. 50: 186-198.
- Pomerantz, A. (1984a). 'Agreeing and disagreeing with assessments: Some features of preferred/dispreferred turn shapes'. In J.M. Atkinson & J. Heritage (Eds.), *Structures of social action: Studies in conversation analysis*. (pp. 57-101). Cambridge: C.U.P.
- Pomerantz, A. (1984b). 'Giving a source or basis: the practice in conversation or telling 'how I know''. *Journal of Pragmatics*, Vol. 8: 607-625.
- Pomerantz, A. (1986). 'Extreme case formulations: A way of legitimising claims'. *Human Studies*, Vol. 9: 219-229.
- Pomerantz, A. (1987). 'Descriptions in legal settings'. In G. Button & J.R.E. Lee (Eds.), *Talk and social organisation*. (pp. 226-243). Clevedon: Multilingual Matters.
- Pontecorvo, C. & Fasulo, A. (1999). 'Planning a typical Italian meal: A family reflection on culture'. *Culture and Psychology*, Vol. 5 (3): 313-336.
- Potter, J. (1982). "'...Nothing so practical as a good theory" The problematic application of social psychology'. In P. Stringer (Ed.), *Confronting social issues: Some applications of social psychology, volume 1*. (pp. 23-49). London: Academic Press.
- Potter, J. (1988). 'What is reflexive about discourse analysis? The case of reading readings'. In S. Woolgar (Ed.), *Knowledge and reflexivity: New frontiers in the sociology of knowledge*. (pp. 37-52). London: Sage.
- Potter, J. (1996). *Representing reality: Discourse, rhetoric and social construction*. London: Sage.

- Potter, J. (1997). 'Discourse analysis as a way of analysing naturally occurring talk'. In D. Silverman (Ed.), *Qualitative research: Theory, method and practice*. (pp. 144-160). London: Sage.
- Potter, J. (1998). 'Fragments in the realisation of relativism'. In I. Parker (Ed.), *Social constructionism, discourse and realism*. (pp. 27-46). London: Sage.
- Potter, J. (2000). 'Post-cognitive psychology'. *Theory & Psychology*. Vol. 10 (1): 31-37.
- Potter, J. & Edwards, D. (2001a). 'Discursive social psychology'. In W. P. Robinson & H. Giles (Eds.), *Handbook of language and social psychology*. (pp. 103-118). London: Wiley.
- Potter, J. & Edwards, D. (2001b). 'Sociolinguistics, cognitivism and discursive psychology'. In N. Coupland, S. Sarangi, & C. N. Candlin. (Eds.), *Sociolinguistics and social theory*. (pp. 88-103). London: Longman.
- Potter, J., Edwards, D., & Ashmore, M. (1999). 'Regulating criticism: Some comments on an argumentative complex'. *History of the Human Sciences*, Vol. 12 (4): 79-88.
- Potter, J. & Wetherell, M. (1987). *Discourse and social psychology: Beyond attitudes and behaviour*. London: Sage.
- Potter, J. & Wetherell, M. (1988). 'Accomplishing attitudes: Fact and evaluation in racist discourse'. *Text*, Vol. 8 (1-2): 51-68.
- Potter, J. & Wetherell, M. (1994). 'Analysing discourse'. In A. Bryman & R.G. Burgess (Eds.), *Analysing qualitative data*. (pp. 47-66). London: Routledge.
- Potter, J. & Wetherell, M. (1995). 'Discourse analysis'. In J.A. Smith, R. Harré, & L. Van Langenhove (Eds.), *Rethinking methods in psychology*. (pp. 80-92). London: Sage.
- Prescott, J., Young, O., & O'Neill, L. (2001). 'The impact of variations in flavour compounds on meat acceptability: A comparison of Japanese and New Zealand consumers'. *Food Quality and Preference*, Vol. 12: 257-264.
- Puchta, C. & Potter, J. (1999). 'Asking elaborate questions: Focus groups and the management of spontaneity'. *Journal of Sociolinguistics*, Vol. 3 (3): 314-335.

- Ricciardelli, L.A., McCabe, M.P., & Banfield, S. (2000). 'Body image and body change methods in adolescent boys: Role of parents, friends and the media'. *Journal of Psychosomatic Research*, Vol. 49: 1-9.
- Ritzer, G. (2000). *The McDonaldization of society*. (New Century Edition). California: Pine Forge Press.
- Rodin, J. (1990). 'Behavior: Its definition and measurement in relation to dietary intake'. In G.H. Anderson (Ed.), *Diet and behavior: Multidisciplinary approaches*. (pp. 57-72). London: Springer-Verlag.
- Rogers, P.J. & Blundell, J.E. (1990) 'Psychobiological bases of food choice'. In M.Ashwell (Ed.), *Why we eat what we eat: 12<sup>th</sup> Annual Conference of the British Nutrition Foundation*. (pp. 31-40). London: B.N.F.
- Rolls, B.J. (1986). 'Sensory-specific satiety'. *Nutrition Reviews*, Vol. 44: 93-101.
- Rolls, B.J. (1990). 'The role of sensory-specific satiety in food intake and food selection'. In E.D. Capaldi & T.L. Powley (Eds.), *Taste, experience and feeding*. (pp. 28-42). Washington, DC: American Psychological Association.
- Rolls, B.J. & Hetherington, M. (1990). 'A behavioural scientist's perspective on the study of diet and behavior'. In G.H. Anderson (Ed.), *Diet and behavior: Multidisciplinary approaches*. (pp. 209-220). London: Springer-Verlag.
- Rolls, B.J. & Rolls, E.T. (1982). *Thirst*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Rolls, B.J., Rolls, E.T., Rowe, E.A., & Sweeney, K. (1981). 'Sensory specific satiety in man'. *Physiology & Behavior*, Vol. 27: 137-142.
- Rozin, P. (1976). 'The selection of food by rats, humans and other animals'. In J.S. Rosenblatt, R.A. Hinde, E. Shaw, & C. Beer (Eds.), *Advances in the study of behaviour*, Vol. 6. London: Academic Books.
- Rozin, P. (1990). 'Social and moral aspects of food and eating'. In I. Rock (Ed.), *The legacy of Solomon Asch: Essays in cognition and social psychology*. (pp. 97-110). Hillsdale, NJ: LEA.
- Rozin, P. (1999). 'The process of moralization'. *Psychological Science*, Vol. 10 (3): 218-221.
- Rozin, P., Markwith, M., & Stoess, C. (1997). 'Moralization and becoming a vegetarian: The transformation of preferences into values and the recruitment of disgust'. *Psychological Science*, Vol. 8 (2): 67-73.

- Rozin, P., Pelchat, M.L., & Fallon, A.E. (1986). 'Psychological factors influencing food choice'. In C. Ritson, L. Gofton, & J. McKenzie (Eds.), *The food consumer*. (pp. 85-106). Chichester: John Wiley & Sons Ltd.
- Rudin, J.P. (1996). 'Perceived weight of other persons'. *The Journal of Social Psychology*, Vol. 136 (6): 719-726.
- Sacks, H. (1969). 'Lecture 4: An impromptu survey of the literature'. In G. Jefferson (Ed.), *Lectures in Conversation, Volume 1*. Oxford: Blackwell.
- Sacks, H. (1984). 'Notes on methodology'. In J.M. Atkinson & J. Heritage (Eds.), *Structures of Social Action: Studies in Conversation Analysis*. (pp. 21-27). Cambridge: C.U.P.
- Sacks, H. (1987). 'On the preference for agreement and contiguity in sequences in conversation'. In G. Button & J.R.E. Lee (Eds.), *Talk and social organisation*. (pp.54-69). Clevedon: Multilingual Matters.
- Sacks, H. (1992). *Lectures on conversation*. Volumes I and II. Cambridge: Blackwell Press.
- Sacks, H., Schegloff, E.A., & Jefferson, G. (1974). 'A simplest systematics for the organization of turn-taking for conversation'. *Language*, Vol. 50 (4): 696-735.
- Sampson, E.E. (1998). 'Establishing embodiment in psychology'. In H.J. Stam (Ed.), *The body and psychology*. (pp.30 –53). London: Sage.
- Scapp, R. & Seitz, B. (1998) (Eds.). *Eating culture*. Albany: State Univ. Of New York Press.
- Schegloff, E.A. (1982). 'Discourse as an interactional achievement: Some uses of 'uh huh' and other things that come between sentences'. In D. Tannen (Ed.), *Georgetown University round table on language and linguistics, 1981: Text and talk*. Washington, DC: Georgetown University Press.
- Schegloff, E.A. (1987). 'Recycled turn beginnings: A precise repair mechanism in conversation's turn-taking organisation'. In G. Button & J.R.E. Lee (Eds.), *Talk and social organisation*. (pp. 70-85). Clevedon: Multilingual Matters.
- Schegloff, E. A. (1988). 'Goffman and the analysis of conversation'. In D. Drew & A. Wootton (Eds.), *Erving Goffman: Exploring the interaction order*. (pp. 89-135). Oxford: Polity Press.

- Schegloff, E.A. (1992). 'In another context'. In A. Duranti & C. Goodwin (Eds.), *Rethinking context: Language as an interactive phenomenon*. (pp. 191-227). Cambridge: CUP.
- Schegloff, E.A. (1997). 'Whose text? Whose context?' *Discourse & Society*, Vol. 8(2): 165-187.
- Schegloff, E.A. (1999a). "'Schegloff's texts' as Billig's data': A critical reply'. *Discourse & Society*, Vol. 10 (4): 558-572.
- Schegloff, E.A. (1999b). 'Naivete vs. sophistication or discipline vs. self-indulgence: A rejoinder to Billig'. *Discourse & Society*, Vol. 10 (4): 577-582.
- Schiffrin, D. (1987). *Discourse markers*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Schmid, J. & Fiedler, K. (1999). 'A parsimonious theory can account for complex phenomena: A discursive analysis of Edwards and Potter's critique of non-discursive language research'. *Theory & Psychology*, Vol. 9 (6): 807-822.
- Sellerberg, A.M. (1991). 'In food we trust? Vitally necessary confidence and unfamiliar ways of attaining it'. In E.L. Fürst, R. Prättälä, M. Ekström, L. Holm, & U. Kjaernes (Eds.), *Palatable worlds: Sociocultural food studies*. (pp. 193-202). Oslo: Solum Forlag.
- Semin, G.R. & Fiedler, K. (1988). 'The cognitive functions of linguistic categories in describing persons: Social cognition and language'. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, Vol. 54: 558-568.
- Shakespeare, P. (1998). *Aspects of confused speech: A study of verbal interaction between confused and normal speakers*. London: LEA.
- Shepherd, R. (1990). 'Overview of factors influencing food choice'. In M. Ashwell (Ed.), *Why we eat what we eat: 12<sup>th</sup> Annual Conference of the British Nutrition Foundation*. (pp. 12-30). London: BNF.
- Sheridan, S. (2000). 'Eating the other: Food and cultural difference in the Australian Women's Weekly in the 1960's'. *Journal of Intercultural Studies*, Vol. 21 (3): 319-329.
- Shilling, C. (1993). *The body and social theory*. London: Sage.
- Silverman, D. (1998) (Ed). *Qualitative research: Theory, method and practice*. London: Sage.

- Silverman, D. (2001). *Interpreting qualitative data: Methods for analysing talk, text and interaction*. 2<sup>nd</sup> edition. London: Sage.
- Slater, N. (2000). *Appetite*. London: Fourth Estate.
- Smith, D.E. (1978). “‘K is mentally ill’”: The anatomy of a factual account’. *Sociology*, Vol. 12: 23-53.
- Sparks, P., Conner, M., James, R., Shepherd, R., & Povey, R. (2001). ‘Ambivalence about health-related behaviours: An exploration in the domain of food choice’. *British Journal of Health Psychology*, Vol. 6: 53-68.
- Sparks, P., Hedderley, D., & Shepherd, R. (1992). ‘An investigation into the relationship between perceived control, attitude variability and the consumption of two common foods’. *European Journal of Social Psychology*, Vol. 22: 55-71.
- Sparks, P. & Shepherd, R. (1992). ‘Self-identity and the theory of planned behaviour: assessing the role of identification with ‘green consumerism’’. *Social Psychology Quarterly*, Vol. 55 (4): 388-399.
- Sparks, P., Shepherd, R., Wieringa, N., & Zimmermanns, N. (1995). ‘Perceived behavioural control, unrealistic optimism and dietary change: An exploratory study’. *Appetite*, Vol. 24: 243-255.
- Speer, S.A. (1999). ‘Talking gender and sexuality: Conversations about leisure’. Unpublished doctoral thesis, Loughborough University.
- Speer, S. A. & Hutchby, I. (in press). ‘From ethics to analytic: Aspects of participants’ orientations to the presence and relevance of recording technologies’. *Sociology*.
- Stainton Rogers, W. & Stainton Rogers, R. (1997). ‘Does critical social psychology mean the end of the world?’ In T. Ibanez & L. Iniguez (Eds.), *Critical social psychology*. (pp. 67-82). London: Sage.
- Stainton Rogers, R., Stenner, P., Gleeson, K., & Stainton Rogers, W. (1995). *Social psychology: A critical agenda*. Cambridge: Polity Press.
- Stein, R. I. & Nemeroff, C. J. (1995). ‘Moral overtones of food: Judgements of others based on what they eat’. *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin*, Vol. 21 (5): 480-490.

- Steiner-Adair, C. (1994). 'The politics of prevention'. In P. Fallon, M.A. Katzman, & S.C. Wooley (Eds.), *Feminist perspectives on eating disorders*. (pp. 381-394). New York: The Guilford Press.
- Stokoe, E.H. (in press). 'Mother, single women and sluts: Gender, morality and membership categorisation in neighbour disputes'. *Feminism and Psychology*.
- Stokoe, E.H. & Smithson, J. (in press). 'Gender and sexuality in talk-in-interaction: considering a conversation analytic perspective'. In P. McIlverny (Ed.), *Talking gender and sexuality*. Amsterdam: John Benjamins
- Stubbs, M. (1983). *Discourse analysis: The sociolinguistic analysis of natural language*. Oxford: Basil Blackwell.
- Taylor, S. (2001). 'Locating and conducting discourse analytic research'. In M. Wetherell, S. Taylor, & S. J. Yates (Eds.), *Discourse as data: A guide for analysis*. (pp. 5-48). London: Sage.
- te Molder, H. (1995). 'Discourse of dilemmas: An analysis of government communicator's talk'. Unpublished doctoral thesis, Loughborough University.
- ten Have, P. (1999). *Doing conversation analysis: A practical guide*. London: Sage.
- Theophano, J. & Curtis, K. (1991). 'Sisters, mothers, and daughters: Food exchange and reciprocity in an Italian-American community'. In A. Sharman, J. Theophano, K. Curtis, & E. Messer (Eds.), *Diet and domestic life in society*. (pp. 147-171). Philadelphia: Temple University Press.
- Thompson, M., Zanna, M., & Griffin, D. (1995). 'Lets not be indifferent about (attitudinal) ambivalence'. In R.E. Petty & J.A. Krosnick (Eds.), *Attitude strength: Antecedents and consequences*. (pp. 361-386). Hillsdale, NJ: Erlbaum.
- Tiggemann, M. (1997). 'Dieting in moderation: The role of dietary restraint in the relationship between body dissatisfaction and psychological well-being'. *Journal of Health Psychology*, Vol. 2 (4): 501-507.
- Tracy, K. (1998). 'Analyzing context: Framing the discussion'. *Research on Language and Social Interaction*, Vol. 31 (1): 1-28.



- Tunaley, J.R., Walsh, S., & Nicolson, P. (1999). '“I’m not bad for my age’: The meaning of body size and eating in the lives of older women’. *Ageing & Society*, Vol. 19 (6): 741-759.
- Turnbull, W. & Slugoski, B. (1988). 'Conversational and linguistic processes in causal attribution'. In D. Hilton (Ed.), *Contemporary science and natural explanation: Commonsense conceptions of causality*. (pp. 66-93). Brighton, England: Harvester.
- Turner, B.S. (1982). 'The government of the body: Medical regimens and the rationalization of diet'. *British Journal of Sociology*, Vol. 33 (2): 254-269.
- Turner, B.S. (1996). *The body and society*. (Second Edition). London: Sage.
- Twigg, J. (1979). 'Food for thought: Purity and vegetarianism'. *Religion*, Vol. 9: 13-25.
- Valentine, G. (1999). 'Eating in: Home, consumption and identity'. *Sociological Review*, Vol. 47 (3): 491-524.
- van Dijk, T.A. (1997) (Ed.). *Discourse as social interaction: Discourse studies: A multidisciplinary introduction*, Vol. 2. (pp. 144-180). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Verkuyten, M. (1998). 'Attitudes in public discourse: speakers’ own orientations’. *Journal of Language and Social Psychology*, Vol. 17 (3): 302-322.
- Verkuyten, M. (2001). '“Abnormalization’ of ethnic minorities in conversation’. *British Journal of Social Psychology*, Vol. 40: 257-278.
- Visser, M. (1986). *Much depends on dinner*. Harmondsworth: Penguin.
- Visser, M. (1993). *The rituals of dinner: The origins, evolution, eccentricities, and meaning of table manners*. Harmondsworth: Penguin.
- Warde, A. (1997). *Consumption, food and taste*. London: Sage.
- Warde, A. & Hetherington, K. (1994). 'English households and routine food practices: A research note'. *Sociological Review*, Vol. 42 (4): 758- 778.
- Warde, A. & Martens, L. (1998). 'A sociological approach to food choice: the case of eating out'. In A. Murcott (Ed.), *The nation’s diet’: The social science of food choice*. (pp. 129-144). London: Longman.
- Warde, A. & Martens, L. (1999). 'Eating out: Reflections on the experience of consumers in England'. In J. Germov & L. Williams (Eds.), *A sociology*

- of food and nutrition: The social appetite.* (pp. 116-134). Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Warde, A. & Martens, L. (2000). *Eating out: Social differentiation, consumption and pleasure.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Wardle, J. (1988). 'Cognitive control of eating'. *Journal of Psychosomatic Research*, Vol. 32 (6): 607-612.
- Wardle, J. (1995). 'The assessment of obesity: Theoretical background and practical advice'. *Behaviour Research and Therapy*, Vol. 33 (1): 107-117.
- Wardle, J. & Beales, S. (1988). 'Control and loss of control over eating: An experimental investigation'. *Journal of Abnormal Psychology*, Vol. 97 (1): 35-40.
- Wardle, J., Parmenter, K., & Waller, J. (2000). 'Nutrition knowledge and food intake'. *Appetite*, Vol. 34: 269-275.
- Watson, R. (1997). 'Some general reflections on 'categorisation' and 'sequence' in the analysis of conversation'. In S. Hester & P. Eglin (Eds.), *Culture in action: Studies in membership categorisation analysis.* (p. 49-75). Washington, D.C.: University Press of America.
- Westcombe, A. & Wardle, J. (1997). 'Influence of relative fat content information on response to three foods'. *Appetite*, Vol. 28: 49-62.
- Wetherell, M. (1996). 'Fear of fat: Interpretative repertoires and ideological dilemmas'. In J. Maybin & N. Mercer (Eds.), *Using English: From conversation to canon.* London: Routledge.
- Wetherell, M. (1998). 'Positioning and interpretative repertoires: Conversation analysis and post-structuralism in dialogue'. *Discourse and Society*, Vol. 9(3): 387-412.
- Wetherell, M. (2001). 'Themes in discourse research: The case of Diana'. In M. Wetherell, S. Taylor, & S. J. Yates (Eds.), *Discourse theory and practice: A reader.* (pp. 14-28). London: Sage.
- Wetherell, M. & Potter, J. (1992). *Mapping the language of racism: Discourse and the legitimation of exploitation.* Hemel Hempstead: Harvester Wheatsheaf.
- Wetherell, M. & Still, A. (1996). 'Realism and relativism'. In R. Sapsford (Ed.), *Issues for social psychology.* (pp. 99-116). London: Sage.

- Wetherell, M., Taylor, S., & Yates, S.J. (2000a) (Eds.). *Discourse as data: A guide for analysis*. London: Sage.
- Wetherell, M., Taylor, S., & Yates, S.J. (2000b) (Eds.). *Discourse theory and practice: A reader*. London: Sage.
- Wetherell, M. & White, S. (1992). 'Fear of fat: Young women talking about eating, dieting and body image'. *Unpublished Manuscript: Open University*.
- White, G.M. (1990). 'Moral discourse and the rhetoric of emotions'. In C.A.Lutz & L. Abu-Lughod (Eds.), *Language and the politics of emotion*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Whitehead, A. (1994). 'Food symbolism, gender power and the family'. In B. Harriss-White & R. Hoftenberg (Eds.), *Food: Multi-disciplinary perspectives*. (pp. 116-129). Oxford: Blackwell.
- Widdicombe, S. & Wooffitt, R. (1995). *The language of youth subcultures: Social identity in action*. London: Harvester Wheatsheaf.
- Widdowson, J.D.A. (1981). 'Food and traditional verbal modes in the social control of children'. In A. Fenton & T.M. Owen (Eds.), *Food in perspective*. (pp. 377-390). Edinburgh: John Donald.
- Wierzbicka, A. (1995). 'Emotion and facial expression: A semantic perspective'. *Culture and Psychology*, Vol. 1 (2): 227-258.
- Wiggins, S., Potter, J. & Wildsmith, A. (2001). 'Eating your words: Discursive psychology and the reconstruction of eating practices'. *Journal of Health Psychology*, Vol. 6 (1):5-15.
- Williams, J. (1997). ' "We never eat like this at home": Food on holiday'. In P. Caplan (Ed.), *Food, health and identity*. (pp. 151-171). London: Routledge.
- Williamson, D.A., Barker, S.E., Bertman, L.J., & Gleaves, D.H. (1995). 'Body image, body dysphoria and dietary restraint: Factor structure in non-clinical subjects'. *Behaviour Research and Therapy*, Vol. 33 (1): 85-93.
- Willig, C. (1998). 'Social constructionism and revolutionary socialism: A contradiction in terms?' In I. Parker (Ed.), *Social constructionism, discourse, and realism*. (pp. 91-104). London: Sage.
- Willig, C. (1999) (Ed.). *Applied discourse analysis: Social and psychological interventions*. Buckingham: Open University Press.

- Willig, C. (2000). 'A discourse-dynamic approach to the study of subjectivity in health psychology'. *Theory & Psychology*, Vol. 10 (4): 547-570.
- Willig, C. (2001). *Introducing qualitative research in psychology: Adventures in theory and method*. Buckingham: Open University Press.
- Winter Falk, L.W., Sobal, J., Bisogni, C.A., Connors, M., & Devine, C.M. (2001). 'Managing healthy eating: Definitions, classifications, and strategies'. *Health Education and Behaviour*, Vol. 28 (4): 425-439.
- Wittgenstein, L. (1953). *Philosophical investigations*. Oxford: Blackwell.
- Wolf, N. (1994). 'Hunger'. In P.Fallon, M.A. Katzman, & S.C. Wooley (Eds.), *Feminist perspectives on eating disorders*. (pp. 94-111). New York: The Guilford Press.
- Wood, R.C. (1995). *The sociology of the meal*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press.
- Wooffitt, R. (1990). 'On the analysis of interaction: An introduction to conversation analysis'. In P.Luff, N. Gilbert, & D. Frohlich (Eds.), *Computers and conversation*. (pp. 7-38). London: Academic Press.
- Wooffitt, R. (1992). *Telling tales of the unexpected*. Hemel Hempstead: Harvester Press.
- Wooffitt, R. (2001). 'Researching psychic practitioners: Conversation analysis'. In M.Wetherell, S. Taylor, & S.J. Yates (Eds.), *Discourse as data: A guide for analysis*. (pp. 49-92). London: Sage.
- Woolgar, S. (1988) (Ed.). *Knowledge and reflexivity: New frontiers in the sociology of science*. London: Sage.
- Wootton, A.J. (1989). 'Remarks on the methodology of conversation analysis'. In D. Roger & P. Bull (Eds.), *Conversation: An interdisciplinary perspective*. (pp. 238-258). Clevedon: Multilingual Matters.
- Zanna, M.P. & Rempel, J.K. (1988). 'Attitudes: A new look at an old concept'. In D. Bar-Tal & A.W. Kruglanski (Eds.), *The social psychology of knowledge*. Cambridge, England: Cambridge University Press.

## Appendices

### Appendix A: Consent form

#### Information for Participants

The collection of mealtime conversations is the focus of my doctoral research, with the aim of obtaining a database of natural talk between family members. Each group is asked to tape-record the mealtimes themselves, on a regular basis (preferably daily), in order to become accustomed to the recorder. This should continue for at least 2 or 3 weeks, if possible, when the situation will then be reviewed. If both the participants and researcher are in agreement, then the data collection may continue for several more weeks. The researcher stresses that the study is designed to be as natural as possible, and no hypotheses or assumptions have been made prior to the research. There is no need to change any daily routines, or to behave differently in any way. Your time and co-operation are very much appreciated.

#### Informed Consent Form

1. I, the undersigned, voluntarily agree to take part in the collection of mealtime conversations as described above.
2. I have been given an explanation of the nature and purpose of the study, have read and understood the "Information for Participants", and feel happy with the requests therein. I have had the opportunity to ask questions about the research, and have contact details of the researcher for future enquiries.
3. I understand that my participation in this study is entirely voluntary, and that I am free to withdraw from the research before tapes have been returned to the researcher.
4. I will not be referred to by name or personal details in any report concerning this study, though I agree that any of the data may be used for publication material. All recorded data that I provide will be kept strictly confidential, and I will be fully protected in accordance with the Data Protection Act of 1984, and in compliance with *British Psychological Society* ethical guidelines.
5. I am willing to take part in this study, and am aware that the recording equipment and tapes are the property of the researcher, and must be returned when requested.

**Signed:** \_\_\_\_\_ **Date:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Researcher signature:** \_\_\_\_\_

Email: XXXXXXXXXX  
Phone: XXXXXXXXXX

**Date:** \_\_\_\_\_

## Appendix B: Transcription notation

The following symbols are taken from the system developed by Gail Jefferson (see Atkinson & Heritage, 1984).

<u>don't</u>	Underlining indicates stress or emphasis in the speech.
Che::ese	Colons are used to represent extended, drawn-out speech.
(2.0)	Numbers in brackets refer to pauses in tenths of a second. Those less than two tenths of a second are indicated by (.).
(mine's)	Words in brackets indicate the transcriber's best estimate of an unclear section of speech.
hhh	Aspiration (out-breaths).
.hhh	Inspiration (in-breaths).
(hh)	Indicates laughter within speech
[ ]	Square brackets indicate the beginning and end of overlapping talk.
=	Equal signs indicate continuous talk between speakers.
NO	Capital letters mark speech that is louder in volume than the surrounding talk.
◦	Degree signs enclose talk that is lower in volume than the surrounding talk.
↑↓	Pointed arrows indicate a marked rising or falling in speech intonation.
><	'Greater than' and 'less than' signs enclose speech which is noticeably faster than the surrounding talk. When the order is reversed (<>) this indicates slower speech.
→	Indicates a specific line of the extract discussed in the text.
?	Question marks at the end of words signify stronger, questioning intonation, irrespective of grammar.
yea-	Hyphens mark a cut-off word or sound.
*	Squeaky or high-pitched voice.