Andrea Davies & James Fitchett

School of Management University of Leicester

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**In the family way: bringing a mother-daughter (matrilineal) perspective to retail
innovation and consumer culture**

Here we apply the multi-level narrative approach of critical oral history to develop intergenerational narratives that show how social change in consumer culture is produced and enacted through family interrelations. The research uses intergenerational storytelling to describe the experiences and memories of women as mothers and daughters in families. Places and practices around provisioning, budgeting, cooking, childcare and domestic labour provide the setting in which the dialectics of family and gender are transformed and enacted through evolving family signatures. Families develop enduring myths which function as a means of organising and making sense of consumption. The oral histories show how family signatures operate and proliferate, how they are shaped by retail innovation and change and how they become structured into everyday practices, attitudes and family norms. This further demonstrates that family is important to understand the relationship between individuals and consumer culture.

Keywords

Family, retail innovation, consumer culture, intergenerational narratives, oral history.

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Since the 1950's the UK has been transformed from a post-war society of austerity, rationing and relative poverty into a consumer culture of abundance, choice, and convenience. The development of marketing technologies, at least in their mass cultural forms, takes place during this period and documentary evidence of this transformation can be narrated through the memories and experiences of consumers across generations. This includes accounts of physical technologies, such as the marketing architecture that shapes the physical reality of consumer culture (chain stores, shopping centres, supermarkets and self-service for example) but also technologies of the mind and the self, such as the emergence of brand consciousness, lifestyle and consumer identity.

Theories of mass consumer culture emphasize transition, describing how social changes since the 1950s have had a profound and structural impact on the relationship between individuals, the market and commodities. These transitions have been represented in a variety of ways such as through an understanding of technology and technological change (Bowlby 2000; Cochoy 2008; Schwarzkopf 2008), a theory of shifting social and cultural values (Agnew 2003; Keat et al 1994), a model of evolving identities (Kehily and Nayak 2008; Slater 1999), and through debates about the politics of consumption which highlight gender interactions, gendered identities and the actions and attitudes of women (Blomley 2006; Johnson 2008; Domosh 1996; Gregson and Crewe 2000).

Our contribution is to show how social relations do not only mirror and evidence social transition but are active in the process of reproducing social change. This approach builds on critical insights into consumer culture which are framed by episodic and relatively linear approaches (Bowlby 2000; Crewe 2003; Chung et al 2001). These tend to narrate a progression from the past to present, privilege cohort effects (life and times or *Zeitgeists*), and limit the

ability to view complex and dialectical relations (Davies 2011; Bertaux and Thompson 2007; Witkowski and Jones 2006). In this paper we employ the multi-level narrative approach of critical oral history to show how social change is not only represented by and through family inter-relations but also produced and enacted there. Critical oral history goes beyond an individual's life story to include generational (family) and public (social) narratives. It is able to provide visible testimony to changing cultural discourse as it is lived and remembered by individuals, families and community and overcome problems of episodic and linear accounts (Kelova 2009; Thompson 1975, 1981).

The objective of the paper is to show how female gender inter-relationships are reproduced across generations through everyday provisioning and consumption practices. We wanted to explore how different generations of women in families make sense of their own shared and imagined past to locate and position themselves against one another in the present. To achieve this objective our first pursuit is documentary: to focus on the everyday rituals and practices of food, provisioning (shopping) and place as they are experienced and remembered by women rather than as they have been narrated by the grocer, distributor or retail analyst (e.g. Shaw et al 2004). This corresponds to research in several disciplines which seek out the 'secret geographies' of family (Duruz 2002), 'ordinary consumption' (Gronow and Warde 2001) and the 'mundane' (Coupland 2005). By looking at the everyday we set out to observe a different view on retail change and consumer culture. The oral history approach can be successfully used to move away from cross-sectional analyses to look longitudinally at life course or life history. Here we investigate the embedded family experiences and practices of women within their family contexts. The research focusses on the experiences and memories of women as mothers, daughters and consumers to reveal an account of intergenerational story telling within family groups. Practices around provisioning, budgeting, cooking, childcare and domestic labour provide the setting in which the 'dialectics' of family are played out (Bricknell 2012; Brugge and Almas 2007; Cowan 1989; DeVault 1991; Miller 1998; Wajcman 1995).

The changing retail landscape

Women, and especially women as mothers, are afforded a central place in much consumer discourse from the mid-nineteenth century onwards and there seems to be a broadly accepted consensus that gender identities and gender politics shaped the emerging suburban culture of early consumer society (Glennie and Thrift 1996; Witkowski 1999). Rappaport (2000) shows how 19th century West End retailers redesigned operations to compete for the suburban female shopper and this created “a bourgeois femininity born in the public realm.” Over time these new expectations and gender norms (feminine subjectivities) required further retail innovation and adaptation, to accommodate a more autonomous, independent and ‘adventurer’ urban women. Innovations such as credit, packaging (Alworth 2010), retail chains, self-service formats (Alexander et al 2005; duGay 2004, Wrigley and Lowe 1996), the shopping cart (Cochoy 2008) and the supermarket (Alexander et al 2009; Clarke et al 2006; Shaw et al 2004) all illustrate this transformation. The retail space was gradually redesigned to effect particular modes of shopping where women were encouraged to touch and inspect products, choose branded items from beautifully arranged displays, and use a shopping cart (Blomley 1996; Lancaster 1995). These innovations were manufacturer and retailer inspired rather than consumer-led and with each retail innovation women’s position was (re-)shaped as inferior and feminine thus re-inscribing conventions of gender and femininity. Examples include women being trained by men on how to shop with a basket and to choose for themselves (Davies and Elliott 2006), being taught via demonstrations and displays how to be modern and use new food stuffs (Dowling 1993), and all in a space structured by male retail managers (Porter-Benson 1986). Retail innovation is entwined/implicated with a rational femininity located in notions of modernity and familialism. Self-service and the department store food halls, like other modern technologies, including the washing machine and refrigerator (Shove 2000; Warde 1999), were positioned as ways to reduce domestic labour so that women could be better wives and mothers. Women have been positioned as home economists, home managers and skilled consumers (Wrigley and Lowe 1996) in the pursuit of comfort, cleanliness and convenience (Shove 2003)

but within spaces that encode a male heterosexual gaze (Gregson and Crewe 1998; Reekie 1993).

Much of what is known about retail transformation is documented from a retailer or trade perspective and, as Humphrey (1998) stresses, has been weighted to the experiences of American and French retailers as the pioneers in these developments. That the shopper is missing or at best refracted in these prevailing accounts is problematic. Attention to shoppers' experiences and reactions in war time and post-war (Alexander et al 2008; Bailey et al 2010; Bowlby 1984; Zweiniger-Bargielowska 2000) redress the imbalance. The growing consensus is that self-service and the supermarket are important developmental pivots which irreversibly changed the relationship between grocer and shopper foodstuffs and the local (Bowlby 2000; Friedberg 2007; Duruz 2002), and repositioned grocery shopping away from being an unreflective and functional practice to one imbued with meaning, intentionality and identity (du Gay 2004). The culture of provisioning and shopping is transformed into a culture(s) of consumption and consumers (Bowlby 2000; Miller et al 1998; Trentmann 2006; Jackson et al 2004).

Positive shopper reactions to self-service and the supermarket, such as novelty and autonomy, go some way to support a retailer centred view that self-service and the supermarket brought significant advantages and benefits for shoppers. More recently research on women's experiences from this period add a critical dimension to this view to show how this transition was also often characterised by a sense of confusion, worry, and unease about surveillance and alienation in the new sanitized, standardised and efficient episteme of the supermarket (duGay 2004; Bowlby 2000; Phillips et al 2005; Friedberg 2007; Issacs et al 2010). Our study examines how these kinds of experiences become internalised within family structures; reinforce and travel between generations within families and then transform family relations and identities. Family is a collective identity that is co-constructed in actions, interactions and intergenerational transfers (Epp and Price 2008; Harker and Martin 2012). Individual identity is constrained by family interactions and varying synergies and conflicts that construct family

identity (Epp and Price 2011; Connell et al 2011; Barnhart and Penaloza 2012). Identities are played out in family rituals, the transfer of special possessions and heirlooms, brand preferences and cooking and home-making (Moisio et al 2004; Wallendorf and Arnold 1991; Curasi et al 2004).

Mothers and daughters: cultural reproduction and cultural transmission

The relationships between mothers and daughters have a persistent and particular resonance in modern consumer culture discourse and in several studies mothers and daughters have been shown to often share brand preferences and shopping strategies (e.g. Moore et al 2002; Perez et al 2011). There is considerable anecdotal interest, for example, in questions over whether and why daughters purchase similar brands to their mothers or choose to share loyalty to particular shopping locations over time as evidenced by everyday examples from mainstream media (see for example Daily Mail 2011). The logic of these kinds of discussions is that women, as mothers, transfer norms and values to other women, as daughters, who in turn inherit and internalise these organising norms as their own. Intergenerational researchers adopt a parental modelling approach and offer empirical verification for these representations (Collado et al 2012; Wilkie et al 2005). Intergenerational transmission is a form of market stability which can be used to underpin theories of consumer socialisation and long term brand value and brand equity development (Esktrom 2007; Minahan and Huddleston 2010).

Family identities have been found to have consistency over time and intergenerational dynamics, including those that implicate consumption and the market, are central to the replication and solidarity of family norms and values (Epp and Price 2008; O'Connell 2010; O'Connor and Goodwin 2010). Moisio et al (2004) provides an interesting example of how the notion of 'homemade' resonates through family. In seeking to replicate the notion of 'homemade' which is important to (re-)produce a symbolic boundary between the family and the market, women adapted the practices and product use as the conditions of the market change and evolve, strengthening and reifying 'homemade' in new ways.

Different cultures of intergenerational transfer are recognised by family sociologists. Brannen (2006) differentiates family by the meanings associated with continuity/discontinuity, mutuality, independence, autonomy and receiving. Bengtson (2001) details five modes of family relating ranging from tight knit, to sociable, to intimate but distant, all the way through to obligatory and detached modes. These studies make visible the bias to consider consistencies in behaviours, attitudes and beliefs across family dyads rather than resistances. But consistencies have been shown to exist in direct relation to resistance and intentional differences. A mimic/resist dialectic (O'Connor 2011) is widely acknowledged in research on 'family making/family forming', especially around issues such as work-life balance, childcare arrangements and career choices. Daughters are frequently influenced by their own mothers either by mimicking or actively resisting them. The research developed here also considers the less well examined issue of how the behaviour of mothers might mimic and resist that of their daughters and to see influences and resistance within families as non-unidirectional (Esktrom 2007).

Mother knows best?: Mother and daughter dynamics

All mothers are also daughters and will come to relate with their own daughters when they become mothers themselves. When viewed in this way it is a dynamic relationship rather than the roles of either mother or daughter that needs to be examined. Mothers have been understood as a role and as an identity, and attention to the processes, practices and discourses through which these identities are formed, reproduced and maintained is well documented (e.g. Voice Group 2010; Miller 2007). Mothers occupy individuated role positions in these studies as a single unified and transparent category (Hirsch 1989) and there is surprisingly little attention given to the role of grandmothers (i.e. the mother of the mother). In this paper we show female subjectivity in daughter/mother- mother/daughter combinations, on the basis that motherhood should not be separated from daughterhood if we are to better incorporate family into the analysis. In our research women shop and provision for family (Mannino and Deutsch 2007; Procher and Vance 2013) and should not be separated from this context as mother-daughter.

The structure of the dialectic process between mothers and daughters is necessarily complex (Flax 1978) and for Blume and Blume (2003) female identity, sexuality and the body are used to structure a dialectical model to frame the social discourse that reproduces gender in families. This approach is valuable because it helps to illuminate underlying tensions and apparent indeterminacies between roles. It implies movement from one state which are then reacted against through transition and reaction to produce new states that then become subject to challenge and change. This conceptualisation is applicable to mother/daughter relations but also for the development of consumer markets more generally. Competition in markets, product innovation and change, as well as evolving consumer lifestyles and preferences can all be framed through a dialectical approach. A recent advocate for this approach is Holt (2002: 80), who notes,

“As part of a tenuous consensus maintained by the collective actions of consumers and marketers, consumer culture deceptively connotes an equilibrium for what is actually a dynamic dialectical relationship.”

Family identity emerges from ambiguities arising from competing claims to experience/modernity, technology/nature, and around issues relating to convenience, quality/price and so on. These positions are structured as multi-directional, with values and meaning transferring from mothers to daughters and from daughters to mothers. A dialectical approach defines mother-daughter relations as fluid identity positions that are emergent within the context of relationships. Women not only move between mother/daughter roles but can and do occupy both at the same time. Rather than conceptualising intergenerational effects as being activity produced by an ‘older’ generation for passive consumption by the younger, identity positions are formed and reformed through the contradictions and ambiguities that structure them.

The dialectic approach overcomes the problems of cultural transmission down family chains by acknowledging that mother-daughter relations are not fixed identity positions but continually emerge within the context of these relationships. Perhaps the clearest illustration of this is to

consider the impact on mother daughter relationships when daughters first become mothers themselves. Perez et al (2011) for instance note stronger mother-daughter correlations for brand choices when the daughters first become mothers. Zhu (2010) shows how disagreements over pre-natal care by older and younger Chinese mothers served to establish separate and distinctive mother identities as 'modern' and 'older'. Mother/daughter relations were dialectically structured in terms of authority, knowledge, experience and comfort, with both identity positions defining their claims to these values in direct relation, proportion and opposition to the other.

Bringing a critical oral history approach to inter-generational research

Intergenerational research has been criticised for its focus on consistency and a unidirectional flow of influence but there is also the problem of understanding and applying the concept of 'generation'. From a cohort or historical approach generations are constructed as periodic entities made up of individuals of a defined age who experience similar social, political and economic conditions (e.g. Moore and Carpenter 2008). This contrasts with a family-based definition of generation which is localised and inter-relational over time. Because cohort based definitions are based on generic, relative and selective criteria they have limited application for examining cultural transmission down family chains or for analysing individual family units. It is also problematic to discount cohort conditions completely because members of particular cohorts share some similarities beyond family influences (Wilkie and Moore 2005). Oral history is well placed to simultaneously capture familial and cohort generational influences. It locates intergenerational/family memories by showing how each generation positions itself and is positioned differently as a consequence of the small shifts in discourse over time (Alexander 2009). The approach makes visible the artefacts of cultural discourse as they are storied in the everyday of peoples' lives (Thompson 1981). As Portelli (1997: 6) reminds us, oral history is "the search for a connection between biography and history, between individual experience and the transformations of society".

It is important to stress that oral history does not seek to uncover a literal description of the past. It is focussed on memory and remembering and seeks to illuminate the stories that individuals construct to locate their pasts and imagine their futures. Narratives are stories involving characters, motives, emotions, interests and moralities. They are not predetermined but purposeful and should be conceived as ‘narratives-in-action’ (Georgakopolou 2006). Oral historians position narratives as stories imbued with intentionality that constitute and represent the past (Mears 2008, Squire 2013). Critical oral history offers several advantages over other longitudinal qualitative methods: it avoids the problems of cross-sectional research designs that underestimate the complexity and entangled stands of life journeys (Lee et al 2012), incorporates and situates individual experiences in context (Askegaard and Linnet 2011) and offers an alternative to undertaking interviews with participants at two different time periods to trace their journeys. Oral historians use a layered approach in their analysis of life history interviews and have shown how the small, mundane and everyday thoughts and actions of ordinary people mark the movement in history and discourse (Davies 2011; Kelova 2009; Thompson 1975, 1981).

The study

We report on two family cases drawn from a larger study with UK women in 23 family groups. Most of the families comprised of three generations but the data often accounts for much longer intergenerational periods. The ‘older’ generation of women recall childhood memories and talk about their own mothers, and the younger generation are often recent new parents themselves. In some cases four or even five generations are present in the data. Broad open ended questions about life in the past, and memories of childhood and youth were used to facilitate discussion around personal life history. These were supplemented with more directed questions about memories concerning food preparation, household work, shopping, and paid jobs. Follow-up interviews were conducted with participants involving a ‘pantry study’ or kitchen visits (Coupland 2005; Jackson et al 2004). In these interviews participants were invited to lead the researcher on a guided tour of the contents of their kitchen cupboards and refrigerators. The

presence of particular technologies and machines, products and brands as well as methods of organising cupboards, drawers and other domestic spaces were useful in facilitating further discussion and, to a limited extent, enabled any consistencies and contrasts between articulated and actual recent consumption to be raised. Photographs of cupboards, products and machines were also recorded by the interviewer. These were particularly useful to raise awareness and discussion around mundane, every day and overlooked aspects of consumption. In some cases for instance, we found that different generations of women in the same family would give very similar explanations for why certain products were to be found in the store-cupboard. In other cases a daughter or mother might attribute the reason for having particular goods to an inheritance from their own mother, only to find that the mother did not undertake similar practices herself and could not recall ever doing so. Encounters such as these emphasise the selective, purposeful and specific character of articulated memories, and served to continually remind us, as interpreters and analysts, to understand the meaning and extent of the accounts given (Moisander et al 2009).

The data set from the study is extensive and the analysis involved preparing a conventional coding procedure to identify themes, trends and categories in the interviews (Squire 2013; Spiggle 1994). This was done by first looking at individuals, and was then extended to look at families, and finally themes, trends and categories were examined across families. The large data set brings many opportunities but also tensions. It would be practically impossible and theoretically questionable to represent all of the families. The purpose of oral history is not to objectify the data into abstract codes but to retain coherence and integrity around and within participant and family accounts. To adopt a thematic analysis across all participants would not show how narratives, as purposeful stories, are connected and interplay between individual, family and society/culture. We provide accounts from two families separately and then draw contrasts between them. The two families were selected because their accounts are particularly useful, but for very different reasons, in highlighting dialectical aspects of mother-daughter-mother relations and intergenerational family identity.

In the UK maternal/marital customs mean that women in the same family do not share surnames, and so are referred to here as family 10, and family 12. The index numbers refer to the contact/recruitment schedule and were retained as we could not find a more appropriate or meaningful way to identify them. Three generations of women from each family agreed to participate but in the course of the research the eldest woman from family 10 died. She is nevertheless very much present in the accounts provided by her daughter and granddaughter. To represent the interrelations between the women of each family participants are referred to as Grandmother, Middle-Mother or New-Mother. Pseudonyms beginning with the either ‘G’, ‘M’ or ‘N’ are used to aid navigation around the analysis. The families were white and broadly what we would refer to in contemporary terms as upper ‘working-class’ or lower ‘middle-class’. The class structure of British society has changed significantly over the period of the research (which takes in most of the 20th century) and the families reflect this fluidity of class relations. What might be located as lower middle class today would not have been given such a position in the 1940’s. Our analysis is concerned with showing the dynamics of social reproduction of capital in families and an extensive analysis of class over the time period is not our focus. Table 1 provides a graphic overview of each family.

INSERT TABLE ONE

Family 12: Choice, control and being progressive

Mary and Naomi shop together in Tescos each Friday for groceries which they describe as functional shopping. On Saturdays Mary, both her daughters, and the two grandchildren go shopping. Often they buy nothing, and other times they buy clothes, gifts or pick up something from the chemist that they have forgotten. Gwen does not share their enjoyment of shopping. Naomi explains:

.. And it's a social thing for us whereas my mum would never go shopping with my Nan, they would never do that socially at all. Nan sees shopping as functional. She would see that as a complete waste of time (Naomi)

It is not because of old age or other frailties that Gwen does not join in with the shopping. It is because she sees shopping in purely functional terms – to collect provisions. It is not leisure, it is not enjoyable and it does not hold any self-symbolic meaning. These different orientations to shopping practices are made more visible as each woman tells us about shopping from childhood to the present day. Mary has few childhood memories of shopping. She rarely went shopping with her mother in the early 1950's because everything was delivered to the house. Going to the shops was unusual.

Mum had her shopping delivered from a store called Bensons, which was in Halesowen. I think on a pre-arranged night, say a Thursday or something, he would come and pick the order up. Because at the same time we used to have fruit and veg delivered as well, but that was a separate thing. He was called Mr Goodie, ...and I remember he used to come as well. So she didn't actually go out to the shops. She had her groceries delivered. She had her fruit and veg delivered.

A similar account of home delivery in the 1920's is given by Gwen, who also reports few memories of shopping as a child. When Gwen married in 1940's she remembers having the bulk of her shopping delivered just as her mother had done. Little had changed and there is a sense of continuity between mother and daughter. Women had little consumer consciousness and did not see themselves as consumers with rights and responsibilities. Gwen recalls how shopkeepers held relatively authoritative positions within the local community. Pregnant women would be regularly skipped to the front of the grocers queue and non-rationed goods were reserved for special customers. By travelling further away from home Gwen could transgress the local social relations and restrictions of shopping. In the city she was an autonomous and independent shopper and there were greater opportunities to buy non-rationed goods. Mary recalls a brief period before the arrival of supermarkets when, as a teenager in the 1950's, she would be sent to the local shops with a list. By the early 1960s supermarkets were more commonplace, home delivery had ceased and women had to shop for provisions. Self-service came in gradually and choice was limited to specific product categories to begin with. Naomi was a child in the 1970's and has no recollection of home delivery. Children were

becoming implicated in shopping practices by accompanying their mothers. Her earliest memories of shopping recall the distance to the shops and the physical effort of bringing provisions home. They did not have a car and caught the bus into the city. The bus stop was a long walk up hill and the local supermarket, KwikSave, was a 20 minutes' walk. Naomi remembers that supermarkets were unremarkable as a child. As a teenager in the early 1980's a Savacentre opened in a nearby suburban town which was a big change.

As an adult and mother with young children Naomi talks in detail about different Supermarkets and what different brands mean in terms of identity and lifestyle positions. Naomi has two supermarkets within walking distance but dislikes both. She will use Morrison's for the pharmacy and ASDA for buying cheap children's clothes. Sainsburys is her supermarket of choice but it is 15 minutes' drive away and without a car she expresses isolation and frustration, saying 'I don't really do much shopping these days'. Most of Naomi's groceries are bought in Tesco's where she shops with her mother every Friday. Mary assists with childcare in the store and Naomi sees the supermarket as easy and convenient; she can get everything that she needs in one place. Naomi constructs the supermarket as convenient and easy in contrast to having to visit multiple shops as was the case for Mary. Mary, however, does not report shopping in the 1970's as inconvenient. Rather it is Naomi who expresses anxiety because she can't shop at Sainsburys and it is Naomi who feels restricted in what she is able to do shopping-wise.

When we met Family 12 and began to analyse their provisioning and shopping memories we were surprised by the intention shared and articulated by each of the women to be alike. They position their family as 'close' and use shopping and household provisioning to demonstrate and maintain this closeness. Naomi and Mary attribute their own practices to a perceived similarity to their mothers and grandmothers, showing a consciousness across the family chain. This intentionality is performed across several home management and provisioning domains: home baking, storing, food preservation, embracing new labour-saving technologies, co-shopping and using the same brands of soup. These consistencies are reported regularly as a

signature of family identity that links the three generations. Each daughter expresses a desire to be like her mother, and each mother recognizes that her daughter replicates her:

I've a great store cupboard. I have all that and then I have all my tinned stuff over here, you see. I don't keep as much tinned stuff as I used to, but I have all those, I keep a lot of those. My daughter's taken after me ...Well, her husband says that we could live for six months, I said, No. We couldn't. (Gwen)

In telling us about her full store cupboard Gwen makes reference to rationing but explains that for her maintaining a full store cupboard affords her the freedom to cook what she wants when she wants to, and also so she can host unexpected guests. Mary reports an almost identical practice of maintaining a full store cupboard. She acknowledges the contradiction of stockpiling when food supply is not a likely risk for her now. At first reading the reasons for stockpiling are different. Gwen wants to be free to cook what she fancies without pre-planning while Mary stockpiles so that she never has to worry that she 'be caught short' when cooking the evening meal or preparing her husband's sandwiches for work. Naomi also maintains the family practice of a full cupboard which she keeps fully stocked by buying on promotion, a practice which Gwen also recounts. She draws on imagined notions of shortage, such as potential fuel strikes which bring with it imagined scarcity which she links back to the rationing her grandmother experienced. Naomi and Mary seek to narrate a consistency in motivation across generations, and reinvent and locate a myth of scarcity. For all three women stockpiling controls against a notion of scarcity, whether that be not having cake for guests (Naomi), ingredients for a recipe (Gwen) or a meal to serve (Mary). They have a common family signature of being in control.

The like mother-like daughter script is further performed in the layout and organisation of food cupboards. Gwen, Mary and Naomi all report how they organise their cupboards in identical ways, despite differences in storage size and spaces:

Mum has a bigger kitchen than me, so she will have things in different cupboards, but all her tins, you would find the same things with the same things. Like, in Mum's, if you wanted to find tea bags you'd look in the cupboard above the kettle. And that's where her tea bags are. Mum's tins, actually she hasn't got one of those horrible carousels, but her tins are in a bottom cupboard. And I would always put my tins in a bottom cupboard. Her dried goods, again tend to be in a higher up cupboard. So yeah, there are similarities in that sense. (Naomi)

These are not imagined consistencies but operate as spatial and material practices. The women celebrate certain benefits that such practices bring, including being able to find things in each other's cupboards. They also share common a family signature around the practices of home-baking, cooking and then storing their produce in the fridge and freezer. Their stories chart the introduction and acquisition of modern technologies and are manifest of the family signature of being progressive and in control. Gwen was one of the first people they knew to get a washing machine and then a freezer. Mary didn't have either when she was first married but eventually acquired both appliances second-hand from her mother. Both Gwen and Mary value labour-saving technologies that they describe as freeing them from the time constraints associated with traditional household tasks. Before washing machines wash days were Mondays and required significant preparation: stoking up the fire, boiling water, then drying and ironing the clothes. Both Gwen and Mary chart a biography of washing machines, detailing how each modification and improvement, the eclectic wringer, a heating agent, a pump to full automation, transformed their lives. These technologies freed both women from being, as Mary describes, "stuck to the kitchen sink". They began to choose which day and when in the day they wanted to wash. The same narrative is told for the microwave, ready meal and the car.

Although the family narrative focuses on being alike we also observe how the daughters distinguish themselves as better than their mothers, they are more progressive and more in control. Gwen is quite frugal and as a young mother was proud that she was able to make ends meet. These days she insists that manufacturer brands are no better than own labels, buys whatever is on promotion, and complains that there is an increasing and unnecessary brand proliferation and product complexity. Mary doesn't buy own labels and sticks to manufacturer brands now that she can afford them:

I decided with my two girls when they were very young, that I, what I wanted for them was totally different to the way I'd been brought up. No, don't get me wrong, my upbringing wasn't bad or anything like that, but it was very strict, very, very strict.. (Mary)

Naomi also identifies points of difference between herself and her mother: she selects and uses healthier foods than her mother, she is more progressive, knowing more about the qualities of foods and more sensitive to potential food scares. She checks the ingredient labels carefully and will not buy meat from the supermarket. She has improved on the practices of her own mother that she remembers from childhood.

Shopping practices and preoccupations differ across the generations. Gwen tells us about wash days and using washing blue to get your whites white. She complains about brand proliferation and complexity in contemporary clothes washing detergents while at the same time celebrating the washing machine. In contrast, Mary demonstrates a very sophisticated understanding of washing detergents. She doesn't like supermarket own brands, believing that they do not wash clothes very well and leave grease marks. She buys whichever manufacturer brand is on offer but has a hierarchical preference, Persil or Ariel, and then Bold. Mary sees merit in the complexity offered by washing powder products, and is very different from her mother.

I don't stick to one. There's Persil who do ones where they are small ones, whether they be the liquid in the pouch or whether they be the tablet, and they're for half wash, so that is quite useful...and some non bio in, simply for the reason that Nicky's little one, Ella, well and her son actually, they both suffer with eczema (Mary)

Naomi also uses a range of clothes washing products. She is knowledgeable and skilful at choosing what is on special offer but also complains that buying manufacturer brands are expensive. She buys manufacturer brands but worries that she could be spending her money on more interesting identity-imbued products and leisure. Across the generations we see a changing brand consciousness and with middle-mother (Mary) and new-mother (Naomi) a greater sense of shopping and brands being important for identity.

Family 10: Pioneers and innovators

Maureen's earliest memories of shopping and provisioning describe a localised system of distribution based on weekly deliveries from local sellers. Maureen recalls how her mother,

Greta, made very occasional trips into the local town for provisions. She remembers that the back garden was used for growing vegetables and that rationing was in place for many essentials.

I remember the butcher was a great friend, and he used to come round to the backdoor with his meat and my mum would order say a piece of roast beef or something for Sunday (Maureen)

Although Maureen's memories refer to a period that was only around 60 years ago, they recall an idyllic/mythical past where communities and neighbours worked and socialised together, and where provisioning and consumption were part of the broader social fabric of daily life:

I remember in September my mum and the neighbour up the road and her children, we all used to go out blackberrying together. And then the lady next door had all the jam pans that everybody used to borrow to make their jam....And the lady next door kept hens, so we got eggs from her. (Maureen)

Maureen describes a full range of routine domestic work typical for a middle class household in the 1950s. Regular wash days and days for cooking are well remembered, to the extent that she is able to recall the particular meals that would be eaten on which day of the week. The modern conception of consumer choice and variety, so important to the next Nicola's generation, are almost without referent or meaning at this time.

Maureen describes the transition to more organised forms of retail in the 1960s. She recalls early supermarkets that were partly self-service. She remembers the name of the supermarket as well some personal information about the store owner. Her accounts of shopping as an older child/young adult contain little or no notion of individual preference for anything other than the product ranges that were, and had always been, on offer. Early experiences of supermarkets and self-service in the 1960s are described in terms of newness, novelty, excitement and freedom (to choose what 'you' wanted):

..it was fairly narrow aisles, but it was very bright and lots of Formica, plastic surfaces. And you had middle pyramids of things, and I think there was a cheese counter along the back with the cooked meats and the cheeses on. And I think there you still had to ask somebody to give you those, but everything else you could help yourself.(Maureen)

Nicola's earliest memories of shopping at the supermarket bear considerable similarities to her mother's account, although there are also obvious differences in terms of the way these experiences were valued and understood.

they used to have just like plastic floors, vinyl floors, with maybe those really tiny mosaic tiles on them, but in greys and blues and really. But I remember stuff like that...they just were really bloody dreary to be honest with you...that's probably why children hated shopping. (Nicola)

Nicola's typical shopping list reflects aspirations for multi-cultural, metropolitan styles of food and cooking that are clearly differentiated from the types of products she was familiar with as a young person growing up in the same area twenty or so years ago. She describes her shopping list to us:

Pasta, peppers, mushrooms, onions, avocado, sweet potatoes, coconut milk, pasta sauces, pesto sauce, puttanesca sauce, a million and one sauce things...Lots of Indian herbs and spices, cos I often make a curry from scratch...I still buy lots of fresh fish when I go to the supermarket for me during the week at lunchtime and stuff, and just your bog standard veg, salad and stuff really....Oh and tinned chopped tomatoes and tinned baked beans, and dried stuff probably lentils and rice and sun dried pasta. (Nicola)

Nicola herself acknowledges that her knowledge and competence in consumption is considerably more extensive than her mother's when she was younger. Nicola's sense of consumer identity and self is predicated at least in part on an appreciation of diversity, variety and choice. The different brands she locates for each cleaning task are clearly described while she tells us that her grandmother used bleach for all cleaning, just altered the level of dilution.

Nicola explains,

Because my time is limited now with looking after the baby, I've started buying floor wipes, like a packet of ready wipes and getting on my knees and just quickly going over the floor. I buy Detox antiseptic wipes for his changing mat and for the toilet and stuff. Then we have Cif for the worktops, then we have Domestos for the toilet, Toilet Duck for the toilet, bloody hell there's loads.

As a mother of a young family Nicola regards value and convenience to be important considerations and this typically involves using supermarkets. She shops around at different supermarkets for value on products such as nappies, and although Nicola likes the idea of buying from local providers, the higher costs and relative inconvenience are powerful

disincentives. Both Maureen and Nicola are able to talk about the relative market positioning of different supermarkets with a degree of knowledge. As well as describing the relative brand values of supermarket brands, they also articulate the relative value of brands within supermarkets, commenting for instance that prestige own label ranges at otherwise middle-of-the-road supermarkets are acceptable for occasions including dinner parties.

But Maureen and Nicola have a very different family dynamic to the one we saw in Family 12. They have a shared commitment to discontinuity. Nicola is confrontational and antagonistic when describing her childhood, although nowadays she enjoys a good relationship with her mother. Nicola is highly critical of Maureen's approach to cooking and shopping when she was a child. Her mother was, in her view, a poor cook and the typical meal time consisted of poor quality overcooked meat, unimaginative traditional 'meat and two veg' types of meals with little or no imagination or flair. The main consequence of getting a freezer in the mid 1980s was, according to Nicola, that it allowed her mother to buy 'loads of crap'. Maureen uses the same phrase and terminology as Nicola, but, interestingly attributes a large part of the responsibility for the decision to buy a freezer to her first husband. Maureen is very critical of herself as a young mother/consumer, confessing that the types of food practices she used to engage in when her children were in their early teenage years were 'rubbish'. Maureen and her second husband do not own a freezer, or eat frozen food. She has adopted a very different lifestyle with her second husband including become a vegetarian.

Nicola identifies the food 'deprivation' she experienced as a child as one of the reasons why her own attitudes now are so different to her those that Maureen held in the past. Nicola considers her mother to be responsible for her own poor experiences with food as a child. While Maureen's recollections are remarkably consistent in terms of emphasis and tone to some of Nicola's memories she does not describe herself as lacking knowledge, having limited skills or low consumption expectations. In fact some of her comments contradict the substance of

Nicola's criticisms. Maureen tells us how she was a pioneer in bringing new foods into the home:

I don't know, I've just always been interested in food I think, and my mum [Greta] used to buy tinned spaghetti and sometimes she'd do us spaghetti on toast and I hated that. But when I got married I bought normal spaghetti that you buy these days in a packet and cooked that and much preferred that....I think I tried, if there was anything new to try I would try it, but in those days there weren't mangos and avocados and all the things that we're used to eating now (Maureen)

An important source of new consumer knowledge for Nicola comes via friends she meets at college. Nicola embraces new food types and the exotic affirming the family signature of being pioneers and innovators. She positions the food practices of new friends in opposition to those of her mother. Nicola also celebrates the time as a student that she made friends with an Afro-Caribbean woman and went for lunch. She draws upon ideals of the big communal meal and family, as well as a celebration of the exotic, and perhaps even a sense of tradition and the rustic, in order to positively differentiate her own consumption and food values from those of her mother that are constructed as synthetic, empty of social and cultural meaning, and lacking in diversity and variety.

Nicola considers that her knowledge and competence in consumption is considerably more extensive than her mother's was when Nicola was younger. Part of this skill is about being creative and productive within the confines of mass consumer culture. Whereas her mother, in her view, was unable to do much more than distribute food from supermarket to freezer to the table, Nicola is able to craft and personalise: "I only buy pesto sauce and puttanesca sauce really, and I just add to it". These examples illuminate how both mother and daughter share a common mode of remembering in which they construct themselves as pioneers and innovators in terms of consumption expectations and food. This pioneering attitude is in direct opposition to the kinds of attitudes and behaviours they attribute to their own mothers.

Yet in family 10 one of the main contradictions is that despite proclamations of difference there are significant shared practices and values between the women. Nicola's articulations of

difference from Maureen are set against a context that shows many of her practices to be similar. These include moving away from home to be independent and then returning closer to her mother when starting a family, deciding to give up full time work to be a full time mum, as well as shared values around preferences for home grown, natural and ‘proper’ home cooking.

Maureen and Nicola use similar terms to describe and frame different products. Both describe using supermarkets and convenience foods as ‘a bit naughty’ for instance. They also apply a similar moral discourse to aspects of consumption (slight guilt) and both affirm positive consumer identity around anti-supermarket sentiments. They both ‘admit’ to using supermarkets and both rationalise it as a last resort or because of the lack of a viable alternative. As a mother of a young family Nicola regards value and convenience as important considerations in consumption and this typically involves using supermarkets and some convenience food. Nicola is afraid of becoming what she recalls as the Maureen of the 1980s, and in some respects shares the values of Maureen today.

Taking the two families together

Our research shows how the development of consumer culture is also a narrative about the evolution and development of female gender roles. Mother (and daughter) roles, identities and relations are central to any understanding of the dialectical transformation of consumer culture in an historical perspective.

Looking across the two families we show this dialectic process when mothers and daughters are seen to seek *similarity through difference* but also *difference through their similarities*. The two families have very different family identities signatures. Family 12 proudly declare their shared commitment to *continuity* in family practices, and value *being control* and *being progressive*. Each of the women in Family 12 seek to reproduce and remake important intergenerational family signatures through the adoption of new technologies, shopping and

home management practices, such as buying the same brands, co-shopping, keeping identical kitchen layouts, stockpiling and batching and freezing home cooked food. Despite the intentionality to be the same the daughters want to also be different from their mothers. They want to do it better than their mothers. Here we see tension and resistance which is resolved to affirm their shared commitment to being alike and using new technologies including food technologies to be in control, have choices on how to organise household work and to confirm that they are progressive.

Family 10 in contrast have a shared commitment to *discontinuity*. Their family signature is one that values being pioneers and innovators. This sits fairly easily with the family dynamic of seeking discontinuity and doing things differently from their mothers. Yet in family 10 one of the main contradictions is that despite proclamations of difference there are significant shared practices and values. Nicola's articulations of difference from Maureen are set against a context that shows many of her practices to be similar. These include moving away from home to be independent and then returning closer to her mother when starting a family, deciding to give up full time work to be a full-time mum, as well as shared values around preferences for home grown, natural and 'proper' home cooking. Maureen and Nicola have an almost identical negative attitude when talking about supermarkets but also concede that they also offer benefits that both women value and utilise. One interpretation is that both Nicola and Maureen share a common solidarity and reaction against 'the Maureen of the 1970s', and in their own ways try to reconstruct positive role positions against this shared other.

The oral-histories narrated across the three generations map retail, home appliance and transport innovations and we see in the storied descriptions of women's everyday practices how they have been incorporated into, shape and shaped by family. One of the most evident trends in the data is the emergence of consumer identity and then brand consciousness (Hilton 2003; Keat et al 1994; Slater 1999). For both Naomi and Nicola (New Mothers) brand awareness, consumer individualism and agency are an uncontroversial part of their identities and self-

expression. For Maureen and Mary (Middle Mothers) consumer consciousness was something they learned and adopted when they became independent adults and then mothers. And for Gwen (Grand-Mother) these expectations of consumption are still not sought or adopted. When Maureen and Nicola talk about Greta (family 10) and her attitudes towards consumption they describe a functional and practical attitude, very similar to that held by Gwen (family 12). For the Grand-Mother generation consumption is not significant in the same way that it is for subsequent generations of women. Their childhoods and when they were mothers with children at home are periods without marketing and consumer consciousness as these terms would come to be understood from the 1970s onwards. Accounts of their provisioning practices as young women contrast sharply with their reflections on the recent past, and the present as elderly consumers now in their 80s.

The Middle Mothers in both families offer descriptions of the post war years but this time remembered as a recollection through a child's eyes. Their accounts from early married life focus heavily on the emergence of new forms of retail environments (such as self-service) and practices associated with technology and modernity (such as home-freezing). One of the consequences of these developments is the emergence of a marketing orientated awareness, which replaces a prior discourse of provisioning and localism. Consumer culture emerges in these de-territorialized retail spaces that are purposely celebrated as a break from localism, communalism and the practice of consumption as part of some embedded socially shared reality. Much of this aspect of the data is about organization, or from highly organized forms of collective social practice (shared and common washing days, eating practices and other norms) to individuated 'dis-organised' forms of social practice epitomized by the supermarket. In these accounts we are able to observe the emergence of discourses of the self in consumption, consumer identity, the notion of consumption as freedom and markets as sites for progress. The Middle Mothers have mixed evaluations of this period now and often position present day consumption habits and behaviours in terms of a break or rejection of the practices they

undertook in the 1970s and 1980s. They represent a cohort generation that is the first to really embark on a critical reflection on consumer culture and supermarket culture in particular.

We see New Mothers working to incorporate their consumer identity and brand consciousness into family signature/myths. Just as their mothers were able to reflect on their own childhood experiences of the post-war years, they reflect on their experiences as children in the early era of supermarkets, frozen food, and convenience goods. Compared to their grandmothers the New Mothers have a highly developed sense of consumer identity. This is not only reflected in the types and range of good purchased but in the expectations of markets, and of themselves as consumers. One of the clearest illustrations of this can be seen the level of detail and sophistication that they have in terms of their use of consumer discourse.

Conclusion and discussion

The rapid changes in consumer society over the last 60 years or so which are documented by our participants provided the basis for resistance but also challenge the desire for continuity. They show how continual consumption innovations have facilitated greater intergenerational fracture and a desire for difference among women (Cowan 1989; Wajcman 1995; Shove 2003). While Gwen and Greta's (Grand-mothers) generation seem to have been able to largely reproduce the social relations of consumption of their parents, both Maureen and Mary's (Middle-mothers), and Nicola's and Naomi's (New-mothers) generation had little or no option but to change and innovate. The restlessness of the New mothers' generation mirrors a consumer culture that is seen as being in a continual state of movement and reformation, in which traditions and rituals of the past are challenged and then consigned to the past, and reformulated as 'signs to be consumed'.

A unidirectional generational flow of information, habits and rituals does appear to structure many parts of the interviews in that the women frequently draw upon deterministic views of their family history and culture. Family signatures are usually described as 'coming down' the generations, and in the case of Naomi she talks about the desire to continue this process by passing them on to her daughter. The oral history methodology highlights the quasi-mythical and narrative aspects of these practices. Portelli (1991: 50) reminds that "Oral sources tell us not just what people did, but what they wanted to do, what they believed they were doing and what they now think they did". Family 12 work hard to retain and adapt family mythologies to new consumption practices whereas Family 10 does the opposite. For family 10 the common practice of seeking fracture, difference and then reconciliation of some sort also has to adapt and respond to emerging consumption norms. Mother and daughter react to and against each other. This co-production of roles has (and is) primarily achieved through the practices and

organization of work around the home, provisioning and shopping. Here family identities are negotiated and these are shown to operate through organising myths or family signatures.

Family signatures are the operationalization and organisation of shared family myths across generations and operate like a collective storytelling system or institutional memory that individuals draw upon to make sense and structure individual experience and memory. The term ‘signature’ captures the idea of a process by which different aspects of intergenerational ideas, ideals, norms and values are scribed, translated and transitioned between women in family groups. This concept of family signature has parallels to Boje’s (2008) and more recently Watson and Watson’s (2012) theoretical positioning of organization as an intervening or mediating layer between the individual and culture. Organizational identity forms are reproduced and changed through storytelling practices within organisations which function as myths, conceived as an organising rationality that are told and translated by individuals. Our analysis shows that family can be seen to occupy a similar position. Families have enduring myths which serve to function as means of organising and sense making. ‘Signature’ means the mark of a person (as a written form) and reflects the structuring core from which the multifaceted aspects of individual and family identity become manifest in practices, expressions, and memory. The analysis shows how family signatures can be seen to operate and proliferate, as well as how they become structured into a range of everyday practices, attitudes and norms. By locating family signatures we show how family represents a mediating layer between individuals and culture (Kelova 2009). Individuals make sense of and perform identity within and against family identities. Gendered identities are (re)-produced and negotiated through the material practices of individuals engaged in mundane, every day and ordinary consumption places (Mansvelt 2012; Crewe 2013). The study presented here extends this research approach to show these dialectic processes operating between women in chains (Leslie 2002, 2012). The concept of chains has been applied to represent spatial relations of care in families (e.g. Coe 2011) and draws directly on studies that consider bonds beyond the nuclear

family to analyse the networks of kinship chains (Bengston 2001; White 2011). In our study we see how gendered identities are (re)-produced and negotiated across multi-generational family relationships and this adds a temporal dimension to the analysis of chains.

Family is a place where constructions of gender and the self are formulated and reproduced in the customs and practices surrounding the provisioning, preparation, consumption and distribution of food and home/housework (Valentine 2012; D'Sylva and Beagan 2011; Protschky 2009). We have highlighted the multi-generational (heritable) family to show how meaning is translated and transitioned through family signatures. This further demonstrates that family is important to understand the relationship between individuals and culture (Probyn 1998; Bricknell 2012; Harker and Martin 2012) and shows how consumption practices are intersectional (i.e. gendered, sexed, aged, raced, familial and classed). We have shown how family is in state of constant becoming and we see in our study meaning (re)produced and (re)formed through negotiation. Family signature is not benign but is formed through negotiated efforts (Walsh 2011). The same family signature does not have a constant subjectivity but is in movement, produced and constrained between women, and (re)formed.

Recently Crewe (2011) identified the ambiguity of value attributed to material things and the impossibility of erasure. Our study suggests that the impossibility of erasure is bound within relating practices and sustained within these family signatures. The women's narratives that form the oral histories of their provisioning and domestic practices join several sites of consumption, or what Crewe (2003:356) refers to as 'personal accumulated shopping geographies that are routinely reproduced and extended through practice'. An accumulated geography is not solely individual but is (re)produced and negotiated by individuals and, as our findings show, also within families. Our research shows how different place practices (domestic technologies, new commodities, self-service and supermarket, local shops and farmer markets) are incorporated into individual identity through family signatures.

In this study family is considered longitudinally, both in terms of researching across generations but also by bringing memory critically into the research frame. The oral history method highlights that accounts that focus only on the present are necessarily limited because they are always partly framed from the past. The method helps to overcome problems with linear and episodic modes of observation and enables the dynamics and cycles of meaning brought about through dialectical relating between women to be described. In common with Crewe (2003) we have shown how the consumer's historical imagination to be 'invested, invented, recollected and animated through a range of material forms' including old tills, wooden counters, counter-service, paying tubes and domestic appliances. These were not materially present but as imagined material forms (Domosh 2013; Crewe 2011) they were deeply implicated in the plots, practices and identities the women told about the material present. It is often difficult to capture long term, slowly evolving social and cultural trends, and this study re-emphasises the need to look beyond contemporary and individual experiential accounts to develop interactive, dynamic and dialectic accounts which emphasise the social relations and contexts of consumer culture.

These oral histories of women show how female gender inter-relationships are reproduced across generations through everyday provisioning and consumption practices. Different generations of women in families make sense of their own shared and imagined past to locate and position themselves against one another in the present. We apply the term 'family signature' to describe these specific, historically contingent and collective identities. The paper has demonstrated how an oral history approach can be used to examine the place of consumption, shopping and provisioning in framing, practicing and remaking family life. There is significant potential to apply and adapt the methodology to other research settings to examine experiences and remembrances from across generations. Here it has been used to document that ways in which complex family histories and relationships are continually reimagined through everyday consumption practices and behaviours. Unique family memories, family histories and individual identity positions in these accounts are in part structured by the organisation of the

store-cupboard and shared experiences of shopping. Memories that recall experiences of the supermarket first as a child and then as a mother of children, or conflicting views on home-baking and convenience food, can all manifest the complex and dialectical nature of intergenerational relations.

Table 1: Index to the generations and names in the two family cases

	Family 10	Family 12
GREAT GRAND MOTHER		Ethel , b. 1900s deceased
GRAND MOTHER	Greta , b. 1920s <i>Recently deceased</i>	Gwen , b. 1920s <i>Married 1940s</i>
MIDDLE MOTHER	Maureen , b. 1940s <i>Married 1960s, divorced 1980s</i> <i>Remarried, 1980's</i>	Mary , b. 1940s <i>Married 1960s, divorced 1980s</i> <i>Remarried 1980s</i>
NEW MOTHER	Nicola , b.1970's <i>Married 2000s</i>	Naomi , b.1970s <i>Married 2000s</i>
YOUNG CHILDREN	Christopher , b.2000s	Catlin and Charlie , b. 2000s

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