

# The reproduction of 'cultural taste' amongst the Ukrainian Diaspora in Bradford, England

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**Abstract:** This paper refers to research with Ukrainian families in Bradford that was conducted in an attempt to investigate the transmission of values, with particular reference to food. Here we report on how this research led us towards a better understanding of how cultural 'taste' evolves between generations. The paper thus draws upon three studies undertaken in the 1980s, 1990s and more recently between 2005 and 2008 with those who identify themselves with the Ukrainian communities in the city. The first two studies used oral history to collect life stories, while the more recent research used a range of anthropological methods. We have sought to draw in particular on, and combine theoretical insights from, Bourdieu and Passeron's work on 'habitus' (1979) and Mannheim's concept of 'generational style' (1997). By combining the earlier testimonies with more recent data, we conclude that each generation has developed its own distinctive projects and styles as it has negotiated its historical times. In arriving at this conclusion we want to suggest that while the influences of technology and media are influential in transforming 'taste', and foodways in particular, the generational projects and their food ideologies were the main determinant factor shaping the foodways of the Ukrainian diaspora.

## Introduction

While 'taste', as a sense, allows individuals to differentiate gustatory qualities of foods, differentiation is meaningless without a frame of reference. It is 'symbolic schemes of edibility' (Sahlins, 1990) which allow the basic distinction of edible versus inedible foods. All societies create, transform and reproduce the cultural representations of foods that make them distinctive from other societies. Or, as Falk (1994) puts it: 'members of the same culture eat the same kind of food'; and it is in this sense that taste is always cultural.

To understand better how 'taste' evolves between generations, the research informing this paper interrogated the notion of transmission of values, with particular reference to food, amongst Ukrainian families in Bradford.<sup>1</sup> In considering the evidence of social reproduction and transformation of a distinctive 'cultural taste' we revisited Bourdieu's concepts of 'cultural capital'

and 'habitus'. We were especially interested in explaining how material conditions and family membership influence the choices made by individuals (Bourdieu and Passeron, 1973; Bourdieu, 1984), including in diet and eating patterns.

Bourdieu (1984) used the concept of habitus to refer to the collective schemata of experience and perceptions within which individuals make decisions. Although habitus was not proposed as an absolute determinant of individuals' cultural practices it served to explain 'dispositions'; that is those processes that make individuals more likely to choose certain ways of doing and practising. Using the case study of evolving foodways, that is the procurement, preparation, and consumption of food, of Ukrainian post-war émigré people in Britain, we aim to illustrate how habitus provided individuals and generations with a framework for making sense of their social experiences.

The studies of Lupton (1996), Tivadar and Luther (2005), Warde and Martens (2000) seem to confirm that income and education continue to influence individuals' food preferences. But what would be the impact of the dynamics of habitus on eating amongst a diasporic community? How would individual histories and their experience of war and displacement affect their food choices? How would these experiences influence the reproduction of values associated with food and the foodways of successive generations born in the host country? This paper surmises how our investigations advanced in addressing these questions.

The schemata that helps the individual to discern what is edible and to consider the convenience and appropriateness of food practices is not automatically 'transmitted' from one generation to the next. Food preferences are adapted, adopted, transformed or generated in the practices of everyday life. The personal and social memories that influence preferences regarding edibility are in turn shaped by broader socio-political changes. The result is that 'cultural taste' is constantly disputed. It is through considering the preferences of other social actors within the same community that an individual's judgment of taste is constructed. In the words of Bourdieu (1977), 'there is always interested or competitive conduct within the symbolic system'.

Bourdieu and Passeron (1979) defined cultural capital as forms of knowledge; skill; education; or any advantages a person has which gives them a higher status in society, including high expectations. In particular, they suggested that parenting provided children with the attitudes and knowledge that allowed them to navigate more or less successfully through their generational time. Mannheim (1997) proposed that the social position of a generation depended on how a particular cohort navigated the historical period they lived through, with this confluence creating a 'community of location'. He also noticed that members of a single generation within a community of location seemed to believe that they shared a 'common destiny' and in doing so developed distinctive 'generational styles'.

Following this approach in our study of a particular Ukrainian diasporic community we will identify and describe the unique settings in which each

generation has exercised differing cultural practices. We were fortunate to be able to draw upon three projects conducted within the same community in which participants made reference to food. In re-examining the narratives of three generations of family members in Bradford who considered that they were Ukrainian or with Ukrainian heritage, it was revealed that food was a key marker in how they sustained a collective diasporic identity. Similar processes have been made evident in previous studies (i.e. Bak, 1997; Mintz, 2008; Threadgold, 2000) but we believe our study achieved something else by characterizing how this marker changes over time.

Before examining these styles in some detail we would refer briefly to our sources and the general background to this study. Since the mid-1980s a number of projects have been conducted with members of the Ukrainian communities in and around Bradford. The first of these projects by the Bradford Heritage Recording Unit (BHRU) collected oral histories with those who arrived in Britain during the late 1940s (Perks, 1986; Smith, Perks *et al.*, 1998). Life history interviews were also conducted as part of the East European Migration to Bradford projects in the 1990s as well. In addition interviews were carried out in this second study with the children and grandchildren of the 'primary settlers' as the researchers on the second study called those who arrived in the late 1940s (Smith *et al.*, 1998).

A third study, ours, was conducted in 2006–2007. The research aims included investigating whether there were distinctive cultural practices among the diaspora and if so, how such practices effected changes in the food habits of successive generations. We documented the reproduction of rituals that bring stability in the communication exchange between generations. But we also documented inter-generational tension, made obvious when divergent projects or differences in style were discussed (narratives) or performed (in every day cooking or at festive occasions).

References to the narratives recorded during the most recent fieldwork (2006–2007) have been coded beginning with PS and references to narratives recorded prior to this research have been coded beginning with SS. The data generated through our project comes from the categorization of ethnographic notes and recorded interviews.<sup>2</sup> The same categories and codes were then used when reviewing the archived material generated by the earlier projects.<sup>3</sup> In this way we were able to contrast 'cultural practices' against the narratives in which they are embedded.<sup>4</sup>

## Ukrainians in Britain

The histories of Ukrainians in Britain have been explored in some depth (Cesarani, 2001; Smith *et al.*, 1998). Before the Second World War there was little Ukrainian presence in Britain and within a little more than five post-war years migration was complete. Ukraine after the war had become a part of the USSR and the 'iron curtain' dividing Europe meant that contact and travel to and from Ukraine

was extremely difficult. By 1951 there were around 34,000 Ukrainians in Britain who found themselves cut off from friends and family in Ukraine. Until the 1990s Ukrainian communities in Britain were isolated from the motherland in a way that was unusual even in comparison with other eastern European émigrés, there was, for example, more contact amongst Polish communities in Britain and Poland in this period. The Soviet regime effectively prevented subsequent migration from the homeland to Britain. As a consequence along with the isolation the profile of the initial migrants would in turn produce sharply defined generational cohorts within the Ukrainian communities.

Ukrainian communities in Britain were also distinct in composition in relation to other Ukrainian communities. For example, the settlements in North America were not only longer established, but also socially, religiously and politically heterogeneous, and included members of the political left who had escaped Tsarist terror before the First World War. In contrast the largest number of activists in Britain belonged to the Organization of Ukrainian Nationalists (OUN). These were split between Banderists (OUN/B) and a smaller grouping who were the followers of Andriy Melnyk (OUN/M). Most originated from rural Galicia, western Ukraine, were practising Ukrainian Greek Catholics, and formed the Association of Ukrainians in Great Britain (AUGB). There was a small minority from the east, who tended to be Eastern Orthodox and who thought of themselves as better educated and more urbane and were more likely to belong to the rival Federation of Ukrainians in Great Britain.

Just over a quarter of the men who arrived had been members of the Ukrainian-SS Galician Division of the German Army before surrendering to the British. Controversially, in 1948 they were brought to Britain and released (Smith *et al.*, 1998; Cesarani, 2001; Hrycyszyn, 2002). However, the majority of the men and almost all of the women had served as forced labour in Germany. Some formed good relationships with the Germans they worked for, especially on farms (PS: M), but others were ordered into munitions production and experienced harsh conditions (SS: B0042). After a period at the end of the war as 'Displaced Persons', they volunteered to join one of the European Volunteer Worker (EVW) schemes that brought them to textile towns in Britain (Smith *et al.*, 1998; Hrycyszyn, 2002). The majority of these migrants were not fluent in English and had little education (PS: M, WG; SS: B0005, B0016, B0133).

Referring to the 'imagined community' of Ukrainians in Bradford, Smith and Jackson (1999) called attention to the negotiation processes that take place within a diaspora whilst 'narrating the nation'. Narrating the nation is always contextualized. The individuals' re-creation of events is influenced by numerous factors, including age, gender, class, status, kinship, education, ethnic or religious affiliation, geographical location, and health. And the formation of 'national identity' for a diasporic community is further complicated by the migrant 'experience of being from one place and of another'. In this way, Anthias argued, 'diaspora' is both a condition and a societal process (1998: 565).

Accurate statistics for post-1990 Ukrainian emigration are notoriously difficult to obtain as often Ukrainians are grouped together in official counts

with other so-called 'eastern Europeans'. In addition temporary, seasonal and irregular migration adds to a confused picture both nationally and globally. The World Bank (2006; 2007) calculated that some 7 million people have been annually exiting Ukraine (including seasonal workers) with Britain attracting a very small number, perhaps around 12,000.

## The imagined cuisine of an imagined Ukraine

Almost all those who were interviewed in the 1980s, 1990s and in the most recent study agreed that for the oldest generation Ukrainians who settled in Britain, marriage and the creation of family and home were as important as the acquisition or construction of churches, both Ukrainian Catholic and Orthodox, for the service of the 'community'.<sup>5</sup> Families were not only created through marriage, but also through establishing fictive kin networks, most obviously through children's godparents and the making of 'uncles' and 'aunts' (SS:EMB 21, 07, 05, 03, 13, 15, 18).

Their ambiguous status of having residency and work permits, but no passports or voting rights was of little concern to the settlers of the late 1940s, given that most believed that their stay in Britain was temporary and that they would return to an independent Ukraine freed from Soviet influences in the foreseeable future (PS:WGI; SS: B0018). Above all else their efforts were directed towards influencing 'international politics' and preparing their families for the return to the 'fatherland' or 'father's country' (SS: B003, B0008, B0016). They were to develop the infrastructures that their social and political projects required. In Bradford as early as 1961 the AUGB premises, 'the club', began to develop offices, a kitchen and dining hall, a bar, an auditorium, a school and a library. A church was also purchased in a nearby location. (PS: WGI, M, D, S, Ach, AB; Smith *et al.*, 1998).

In respect to the handling of foods, the cooking practices and eating patterns were all influenced by post-war shortages, the housing conditions, transport infrastructure and social institutions of post-war urban life. First and second generation Ukrainians in Britain remember that food was often stored in the cellars of their homes (PS: TAI, WGI, ACh); few if any would have had refrigerators (PS: WGI, D, S, Ach). Food tended to be purchased from two large markets in Bradford with the main shopping taking place during weekends. There were many corner shops, a few bakeries, one of them selling 'Ukrainian' bread. A tiny number of Polish and Ukrainian migrants opened delicatessen shops where 'home ingredients' were purchased for the cooking of traditional dishes on special occasions, particularly during Christmas and Easter (PS: WGI, M, D, S, Ach, AB, JK; SS: B0059).

Members of the oldest generation interviewed during the most recent research repeated narratives similar to those collected in the earlier studies with respect to the value they attached to food (eg PS: TO, M, AB; SS: B0016). An important factor emphasized is experienced and imagined food scarcities; the primary

settlers portrayed pleasant childhoods interrupted by the war. In such narratives Ukrainians are invariably portrayed as victims reacting against irrational or evil external forces who deprived them of human security, including food. Food has a greater meaning in these stories than recalled individual hunger. After all, these are recollections of childhoods that were spent in communities in which farming and food processing were important determinants of peasant identity.

### **Performing traditional food at home and in public**

Before looking at the changing meanings of food between generations in more detail, we need to say a little more about our use of theory in understanding that change. An early critique of structuralism was that researchers who were interested in cultural practices as signifiers or codes tended to overlook the influence of material conditions in cultural practices. Bourdieu proposed habitus as an alternative way of considering the problem; thus, whilst acknowledging that 'cultural practices' represent and need to be understood as signifiers within a larger framework, he brought back Marxism's interest in how 'material conditions' actually influenced cultural practices as well. In following this approach, we provide an account of material conditions and their influence in habitus settings, but we also signal how the apparent changes in generational style, particularly the use of foodways as artefacts and tokens (described later in this article) by successive generations actually sustains the identity of the diaspora as a perceived collective.

According to Lévi-Strauss (1965), 'endo-cuisine' involves the consumption of food within a small closed group, such as the family. This is contrasted with 'exo-cuisine', which is food intended to be offered for more public consumption. Lévi-Strauss's earlier attempt was to generalize, linking particular cooking methods as indicative of either endo- or exo- cuisine, with boiling associated with endo-cuisine and roasting with exo-cuisine. Other researchers have been more cautious in making this type of generalization but retained the conceptual distinction (see for example Ulrich Tolksdorf, 1976). Following such a route, one could refer to endo-cuisine as the daily consumption of meals in the domestic sphere and to exo-cuisine as food prepared for special occasions or consumed after its public display, including in restaurants. For some, including Phillip Kleinfelder (2004), building on the earlier work of Klaus Roth (2001), this distinction can also offer a way of thinking about how new 'foreign' cuisines can be introduced. Thus, it is argued, new and exotic dishes are usually first encountered in the 'exo-cuisine', although in the long term they can be adopted into the 'endo-cuisine' following the adaptation and performance made to suit 'local' tastes. We will return to these ideas later when discussing the ways in which different generations have related to exo- and endo- culinary practices and their overall effect as cultural practices.

The model or ideal traditional meal as recalled by participants in the most recent research, regardless of their age, was: *borsht* (beetroot soup) *pyrohy* or

*vareneky* (dumplings filled with potatoes or cheese) accompanied with fried onion sauce or mushroom sauce and *holubtsi* (cabbage rolls) which could be filled with corned beef, or rice and pork.<sup>6</sup> During Christmas an additional dish called *kutia* was prepared, containing a mixture of poppy seeds, wheat, nuts and honey. At this time some families ate *oseledets* (pickled herring) served on their own or with beetroot salad. Occasionally cakes or a sweet version of *vareneky* (cheese with strawberry or cherry sauce) accompanied the meal. During Easter each family arranged food in a basket to be blessed by the priest on the day before Easter breakfast. The baskets observed in the most recent study contained *kovbasa* or *sosysky* (sausages and other pork meats), *paska* (rich sweet bread) or *babka* (sweet bread with dried fruit), boiled eggs and *pysanka* (decorated eastern eggs), horseradish, some pickles and *kvashena kapusta* (sauerkraut). For the blessing, the baskets were placed in a line, covered with embroidered cloths with traditional designs.

As Fishkin (2005) has noted, one extensively investigated aspect in the literature of foodways is the question of authenticity in cuisine and its relation to a group's identity. In the case of the diasporic community we observed that claims of 'authenticity' were strongly associated with 'traditional' foods. On closer examination Ukrainian cookery has borrowed ingredients and dishes from a range of culinary traditions, including Russian, Polish and German. There is little that makes the dishes prepared by Ukrainians in Britain distinctively Ukrainian. However, through family and social rituals that the oldest generation of the diaspora pursued so emphatically, these dishes became a powerful symbol of the lost nation. In reference to 'traditional food practices' it has been documented in the past 'that people often feel it necessary to supply that identity with a past, even if much of that past was specially created for the purpose' (MacClancy, 2004: 68). As Murcott (1996) suggested, once imagined, these cuisines become a concrete expression of national-ethnic identities. In this case, the imagined cuisine of the diaspora became an integral part of the creative process of nationhood.

Older Ukrainian women who had worked on family farms as children and who later were forced to labour for the Germans during the war had to learn their cooking on the march, with scant regard to the quality of ingredients or fidelity to family recipes. The priority was to provide nutrition and survive but inadvertently they were creating the 'lost nation's cuisine'. After settling in England, these women would cook and serve 'Ukrainian food' as well as instruct their daughters in 'Ukrainian traditional cooking' (PS: WGI). For the primary settlers the Ukrainian food tasted (and still tastes) better than any other food and for good reason: it tastes of the nation. This is an important marker of a distinctive food ideology: the oldest generation of the diaspora ate what they ate, and ate in the ways that they did, because they pursued the diasporic interest of an imagined national Ukraine.

The recipients of this well crafted symbolism surrounding the 'national cuisine', the children of the primary settlers, reinterpreted and relocated their food experiences. They questioned their parents' generational project,

reconsidered the aesthetics and values attached to traditional foods and set to develop a new lifestyle that could distinguish them from their parents.

When they were young many of the children were sent to Ukrainian school on Saturdays and to church on Sundays, with vacation time programmed into the club activities as well. Second generation Ukrainians have consistently complained that they had little time for mixing with non-Ukrainian friends (PS: WGI, D, S; SS: B0007, B0008) and began to rebel and search for what they conceived to be the English experience. (PS: WGI, D, S, JK, SM; SS: BOO8; Smith *et al.*, 1998).

Although some of them permanently broke off contact with all things they considered to be Ukrainian, the AUGB and other community activities are run today by those who were raised as Ukrainians in Britain. There are those who have consistently remained involved with political and social activities and there are others who have more recently returned to assist with the various organizations, often after starting a family of their own. They work together with a small number of new post-1990 immigrants who, although they do not share the experiences of the diaspora, are willing to work with the AUGB and the Association of Ukrainian Schools. And in doing so, they aim to protect and develop the diasporic models of traditional Ukrainian community and family life (PS: WGI, D, St, T). This is reflected in the caution exercised by members of the Bradford AUGB and the Ukrainian School in accepting volunteers. As the president of AUGB Women's group in Bradford explained to us this caution includes a certain amount of scepticism about recent migrants who express an interest in affiliating to AUGB activities (WGI).

It is noticeable that members of the younger generation refer to themselves as British-Ukrainians and to Ukrainian food as part of their heritage rather than a signifier of national identity (PS: JK, S, D, WGI; SS: B0005, B0007, B0007). Within this reconstruction of identity Ukrainian foodways have been re-contextualized. British-Ukrainians' recollections of school dinners are little different from those of any British child or teenager (PS: D, S, WGI). Indeed, their narratives demonstrate that their food practices reflect broader changes in British culture, particularly available in the restaurants of Bradford. So, for instance, they are not only critical of their parents' lack of appetite for foods of 'other ethnicities', and an understanding of the significance of exo-cuisine, but they also consider themselves – and are perceived in turn by their own children – as more adventurous with food than the primary settlers (PS: D, S, WGI, TAI, JK, St, Dy, Mt, P). Unlike the oldest generation of Ukrainians, they like to try different foods and enjoy the experience of eating out (PS: WGI, D, S, TAI, TO, St, Dy, Mt, P).

There are some similarities in these findings to those of Tivadar and Luthar (2005) in their research into food traditions in Slovenia. They differentiated between traditionalists and post-traditionalists regarding the group's capacity to accept other food cultures. Traditionalists' rejection of 'foreign food, among other distinctions (the main one being a preference for meat) reflects, Tivadar and Luthar suggest, an inability to accept diversity, while post-traditionalists



are attracted to ethnic cuisines and other people's food cultures. Not surprisingly, then, in our study, the oldest generation Ukrainians reject foreign foods even when these are presented outside the home. Their conservatism is matched in their political and religious beliefs, whilst in contrast their children are more likely to accept cultural diversity and political liberalism as well as the value of religious plurality. They also have an appetite for foreign foods to the extent that the cuisines of others are not only consumed in public but are now prepared and eaten at home. Here we see a movement between generations in what constitutes exo- and endo-cuisines, although, as we will show below, less of a change in distinction in practice between the two than might be supposed.

A number of researchers have previously made the point that 'traditional foodways' in post-modern society have been eroded by economic and technological developments (eg Fishler, 1988; Crouch and O'Neill, 2000). It could then be construed that socialization amongst families, peers, and within home and community settings is less influential than broader social influences, including the media (old and new), the rise of the supermarket and the demise of the corner shop and street market, in promoting significant changes in our foodways. Project participants, however, considered such changes less significant in the transformation of food habits and values. What these findings suggest is that claims of 'authenticity', and indeed of 'erosion', of 'traditional food' are narrated or staged with the intention of communicating particular food ideologies rather than as a reflection or record of historical change.

Finch (2007) has suggested that changes in displaying and doing family reflect evolving features of the relationships within and around the family. However it should be acknowledged that such changes are at least in part the result of the changes in material conditions in which such relationships are located. The men and women of this incipient diaspora had limited material resources. 'Displaying' and 'doing family' in the public sphere was mainly restricted to Church, shopping at the centre market and in the social activities of the club and school. While the primary settlers' public activities were somewhat limited this was not the case amongst their children, who had more income than their parents and also new ways of spending. The children of the primary settlers were often fluent in at least two languages; some became professionals and most bettered their socio-economic position in comparison to their parents. Changes in the city infrastructure, such as new roads, supermarkets, restaurants, theatres and music venues opened a whole range of new possibilities for displaying family; and second generation Ukrainians made use of these opportunities.

As British-Ukrainians, though, they retained traditional rituals that continued to spell out a degree of distinction between endo- and exo- cuisines. The most prominent example of this occurs during Easter. Whilst the blessing of food baskets is done in public at church or at the club, with food displays to be appreciated by all those who wish to attend, the breaking of the fast happens at home within the family. After enjoying this intimate moment, families head

towards Church for Mass. There then follows organized community activities (dancing and singing). During these ritual celebrations, foods to be consumed within the family (endo-) and foods to be offered or shared (exo-) are differentiated. As instructed by the oldest generation, all participants follow traditional proceedings in displaying family and community.

The foodways of British-Ukrainians are said by many of those we interviewed to have become similar to or undistinguishable from those they perceived as archetypically 'British'. However, significantly, a new distinction has appeared in the narratives of food between the foodways of the diaspora and those that could be found (or imagined to be found) in independent Ukraine (PS: D, S, SM, T). In making this distinction, members of this generation discursively located themselves as outsiders. In the narratives of the British-Ukrainians (the children of the primary settlers) the distinction between traditional food and day-to-day food is usually made in order to emphasize that food practices are important for the cohesion of the family. Again the differentiation of endo- and exo-cuisine is instrumental in claims of authenticity, doing family and sustaining identity. In order to fulfil what they perceived as a common destiny, British-Ukrainians effectively use the foodways of the diaspora as a cultural artefact of integration; a 'cultural artefact' that represents the synthesis of performance and narrative.

## **Ukes' food in multicultural Bradford**

Evidence from the three studies that have been conducted between the 1980s and 2007 suggests that the Ukrainian family ideal has remained that of heterosexual couples willing to submit their children to instruction in Ukrainian and of the traditional values held by the diasporic community. The requirement continues to be that children and teenagers should attend church and Saturday school, and participate in the youth association activities including the celebrations surrounding Ukrainian's Independence Day.

Our most recent study included exploring the attitudes towards food amongst a third younger generation of Ukrainians in Britain. We asked the teenagers about their food interests, including whether they were concerned about diet. We also asked about food practices at home, at school and among the diaspora, whom they refer to as 'Ukes'. In doing so we became aware that implicit in the narratives of the youngest there was a distinction between their own food interests and the interests they identified as belonging to former generations of AUGB and Ukrainian Saturday School authorities.<sup>7</sup> For instance, they were conscious of recent concerns about 'healthy eating' and food habits in relation to gender that their parents and grandparents had not experienced:

*Interviewer: In many of the interviews that followed the photographic food journey all of you said that many younger children are eating crap.*

A, B, C, D: Yes, they are.

*Interviewer: So, how could this problem be solved effectively?*

A: By teaching about healthy eating.

B: But the problem is that if they have option they would not eat better, you would have to get rid of the choice of eating crap food.

C: Yes I agree, like say the school meals, if you have options of vegetables and fruits instead of chips and other crap food . . .

B: like in a Communist regime? (laughs).

A: The other reason kids choose [crap foods] is the advertisement of these foods, sweets and everything, they know about it and where to get it . . .

B: Well you would have to have that choice of food but as special treat, not always.

C: Yes, once you get used to it you take it for granted

*Interviewer: Do you think there is a difference between girls' and boys' approach to foods?*

D: Yes, [Be]cause as girls get older they worry about their weight and stuff, they go into diets, whilst boys don't care as much.

B: But they should just do more exercise.

C: That is the problem I think boys exercise more than girls.

D: That is not true, girls exercise as well.

*Interviewer to D: Have you felt that pressure yourself or felt some of your friends have been pressured in that way?*

D: Yes [I have] sometimes [experienced that pressure].

*Interviewer: At school have you received information about problems with eating habits or healthy eating?*

B, C: We have.

D: In our school they really don't talk about it but [have] decided on changes.

A: Yes that is right they have gone all healthy eating.

*Interviewer: So you are aware of where to get help if you feel anxious about food or if you think someone needs help?*

B: No I would not go as far as saying that there is.

*Interviewer: There is not that kind of worry then.*

C: Well someone can be called a fatso and then they need to do something to get fit.

D: Girls do worry about this and they say mean things. [. . .]

C: In our school there is a good canteen offering healthy food, but all around there are many fish and chips shops, curry foods, there is sweets shop and there are two bakeries, which mostly sell junk food.

A: Come on! You cannot say the bakeries sell junk food.

B: The healthier there is sandwiches.

C: You can advise but not impose.

A: That is what I was trying to say.

D: You cannot stop someone from eating junk food [. . .]

Another significant generational difference they highlighted when interviewed individually and in a group was that their awareness of Ukes' food made them more adventurous with foreign foods in general:

*Interviewer: What is the Ukrainian word for 'taste'?*

D: 'cmak' is used to refer about the taste of something.

*Interviewer: So is there such thing as 'good taste'?*

A, B: Yes there is.

*Interviewer: Thus you can say that X or Y has good taste?*

C: Not really, that is individual.

D [Answering interviewer]: No I would not say that.

B: Well you can say some people had good taste in music or clothes but it relates to what you like, so it is your personal taste [. . .]

*Interviewer: How do you think that the way you have been brought up has influenced your food habits?*

D: Because you are aware of particular things, for example the use of cabbage and carrots in certain ways. . . things like that.

*Interviewer: It makes you more adventurous [with food?]*

D: Yes definitely.

C: Look, if you are from an ethnic minority you identify with others that are from minorities.

A: That is right, you would not reject some food because it is different, on the contrary it makes you want to try it.

B: Yes. [. . .]

*Interviewer: Is there any special value in Ukrainian food?*

A, B, C, D: There is.

B: It is delicious (gestures – laughs) We have our traditional food pirohy, borsh, . . .

C: It is best, but it is for special occasions.

B: Yes it is like, people is used to have turkey for Christmas, and it has a special value then, but you can have it occasionally in other times. The same with Ukes' food.

*Interviewer: Would you like to pass on these values?*

C: I would like to, [. . .] I want to have this skill of making traditional food.

A: Although sometimes I take it to school and a few of my friends show interest but others don't, some of them hear of potato dumplings and they go 'wack', don't want it, keep it there . . .

D: You could not have it all the time anyway.

C: You have to build up to it. [. . .]

*[D and C last statements are referring to the richness of the food (oily carbohydrates)]*

D: There is also the decorations and arrangements of the baskets [during Easter], that is nice . . . [. . .]

The teenagers pointed out that it is precisely the fact that they know of the particularities of Ukrainian traditional foods that enables them to appreciate other culinary traditions. Such appreciation, as a marker of generational change, relates to the process of 'foreign' foods making their way from exo-cuisine to endo-cuisine. For instance, as described above, while the sons and daughters of primary settlers would initially eat out as families in 'Chinese' and 'Indian' restaurants as an occasion, the consumption of such food has in more recent years not only become more frequent, but is now consumed and even in some cases prepared in the home.

The space provided for teenagers to express current preferences regarding organization of community activities, including dinners and other festivities is limited. The generational project of their parents, grandparents and great

grandparents has influenced the settings in which this new generation negotiate their preferences; however, an important part of such settings is the institutional organization of Ukrainian organizations in Britain. Since their foundation, the AUGB, the Youth Association and the Ukrainian Schools have retained formal committee structures. Membership of these committees is voluntary although participation is limited. In addition to the formal rules, there are informal systems of control and checks. These can be seen during functions, or even fortuitous encounters, pub gatherings or at extended family and friends gatherings. Often these involve the consumption of food: dinners, barbeques, Wednesday lunches at the club, charity or fund raising diners.<sup>8</sup> This implies that although teenagers can be innovative, the changes in social practices they propose or perform need to be perceived as non-threatening to the reproduction of the models of Ukrainian family and community, as overseen by School authorities and UUGB committees.

Although the food practices of the latest generation seem undistinguishable from those of other British teenagers, they could and sometimes deliberately exhibit their knowledge of traditional foods not simply to distinguish themselves from others, but also as a socialization tool. For instance, teenagers attending Ukrainian school volunteered to organize the serving of traditional food in 2007 Christmas celebrations at the Club; they also invited 'non-Uke' friends to the fundraising event organized by the women's group (in 2007) and were observed explaining their culinary traditions to those who showed interest. Some of those who attend Ukrainian school on Saturday often participate in state school activities designed to promote cultural diversity. On special occasions, such as 'Ukrainian-day', some of them dress in traditional costumes and take part in traditional Ukrainian dancing or singing. The mere fact that most of them showed interest in our research, took time to address our questions, allowed us to accompany them, or participated in photographic food journey research activities, demonstrates that they are interested in making new social uses of the skills and performance of traditional foods.

The latest generation showed genuine appreciation for the particular taste of traditional foods, but when they were asked individually if 'Ukes' food' tasted better, they said that they did not consider that traditional Ukrainian food was tastier or healthier than any other 'ethnic' or 'traditional' food. However as demonstrated in the recorded discussions they did highlight that having this food heritage as a part of their identity gave them a willingness to try and taste a diversity of foods. The knowledge practices of traditional Ukrainian food are performed and displayed not only in intra-community activities, but sometimes amongst friends and (non- Ukrainian) school peers as well (PS: P, D, St, Pt, B, TGI).

Perhaps one way of thinking about what the teenagers are doing is through the concept of 'cultural tokenism'. Cultural tokenism is sometimes referred to as the inauthentic display of cultural identity – the token as poor replacement for the real. Such a perception is found in the humanities (Niemann, 2002), art studies (Wallace, 1997), sociolinguistics (Lamy, 1974; Balutansky, 1995; Cox,

1998) and criminology (Rutherford, 1975). But here and in reference to the narratives and behaviour of the teenagers that participated in this project we refer to a positive value of 'tokenism' that is perhaps similar to that described by Wyman (2004) in her study of Yup'ik peoples. That is as a shared method of making and marking group identity.

These youngsters (and this includes those observed as well as those who took a more active part in the project) were seen assisting in serving food, arranging tables and taking part in the ceremonies and rituals in which traditional Ukrainian food is reified. Such disposition shows concern on their part about their role within family and community. It has been highlighted in previous studies that the provision of food and the sharing of meals symbolise, among other things, the provision of care and some sense of being a family (Holdsworth and Morgan, 2005). We would not argue that teenagers taking an active part in ceremonial meals signify an endorsement of the food ideologies of their parents and grandparents, but we believe it gives expression to a sense of belonging to a distinctive community.

The teenagers' tokenism is enacted by displaying knowledge of traditional practices, (including cooking practices), by narrating the myths that accompany food festivities and by performing food manners with competence during traditional festivities (table manners may be accompanied by praying or singing in Ukrainian, or by dressing in traditional costumes and dancing in a distinctive Cossack style). The token works as a networking medium in a multicultural society, and is a valuable symbol of a distinctive heritage as well. It is in this sense that the latest cohort of the Ukrainian diaspora is currently using 'Ukrainian food', its practices, rituals and associated ideologies as a cultural token.

## **Concluding comments**

By drawing on two earlier oral history projects and supplementing these with a third study that had a distinctive ethnographic component, we have attempted to offer a way of understanding how a particular community has changed from 1948 to the present. We have used the lens of food to explore the ways in which successive generations of an Ukrainian diasporic community in Bradford imagined, adapted and reified narratives and rituals to suit the particular projects they felt destined to pursue in amalgamation with changing life styles.

By combining the theoretical insights of Bourdieu and Passeron (1979) and Mannheim (1997) in particular, we were able to examine changing ideas of edibility across generational and historical time. Significant here were Mannheim's concept of 'generational style' and Bourdieu's 'habitus' in our attempts to understand how individuals responded to broader historical changes. In undertaking our study we have therefore analysed how each generation has negotiated their historical time and in doing so how different generational styles have developed.

We wanted to appreciate better how taste evolves over generations. We aimed to do this by studying a community in which a core group had stated objectives and developed structures intended to ensure the continuation of cultural tastes over generational time. It was particularly useful to our study that the founders of this particular community, the primary settlers, were drawing on, as a key part of their constructed collective identities, recalled foodways of a homeland that they were isolated from. They could also express with clarity what they wanted to transmit to their children in terms of cultural values and practices, including those transmitted through foodways.

It could be safely said that the Ukrainians who arrived in Britain as a generation in the late 1940s established the settings within which family and community would narrate and perform food and feeding. This was part of a larger political project that they thought would prepare their return to an imagined Ukraine. Their children subsequently developed their own project and thus transformed their food practices in ways that they figured would sustain Ukrainianness while mainly serving their interests in settling in Britain.

Although members of this community, regardless of age, continue to narrate and perform 'Ukrainian' food traditions at home and in the community space, effectively reproducing the foodways of the diaspora, two distinctive projects were identified, corresponding to two generations developing their own style and food practices that in turn reflect different ways of conceiving food: what it means to them as individuals, to their families and to the larger community. The oldest generation of the diaspora ate what they ate in the way they did with a distinctive Ukrainian nationalistic purpose. They thought and laboured hard in constructing the settings for reproducing nationhood among successive generations. They associated, bought buildings for religious observance, formed a club, constructed a school, organized and funded youth centre activities. They carried out food festivals and performed rituals in which claims of authenticity were constructed so as to assert the ubiquitous presence of Ukrainian culinary traditions. However the food ideology of the second generation was quite different. They remained loyal to the central idea of Ukrainianness but they ate what they ate in different ways from that of their parents. Unlike first generation Ukrainians they developed a taste for other peoples' foods and through their food practices they considered cultural diversity. Such variance reflects the changes in both the material conditions and the food practices of the two generations.

Those who settled in Britain in the late 1940s viewed food as symbolic expression of their identities. In contrast food had a different significance for their children, who were also more likely to consume the foods from other cultural traditions. However distinctions continued to be made by the children of primary settlers in terms of food consumed in public celebrations (exocuisine) and in everyday life (endocuisine). What had changed was an increased consumption of the food from other cultures in both the domestic sphere and in eating out with non-Ukrainian friends or immediate family. What emerges

is that the foodways of the diaspora are displayed as marking British-Ukrainianness in a multicultural society.

There is some evidence that the youngest generation, the grandchildren of the primary settlers, have taken this development further. They see British-Ukrainian cuisine as one of a myriad of cuisines in Britain that offers them a way of participating in what they see as multiculturalism. We believe that 'Ukrainian food' is used as a cultural token by the youth in their social practices. Thus while distinctions are maintained, we suspect a transformation is taking place, as these distinctions are becoming a marker of group identity, whilst at the same time allowing individuals to reaffirm their belonging to the wider world.

Reflecting upon shifts in habitus over time we have demonstrated that for making choice in foodways, the objective material circumstances together with the cultural practices have been instrumental to both individuals and generations. The food practices relating to the home cooking and endo-cuisine as well as exo-cuisine and the preparation of foods for festivities reifying Ukrainian traditions are evidence of effective use of material and social settings to promote transmission (adoption and adaptation) of food values. It could then be concluded that it is within these settings that generations discuss differential food ideologies as they provide individuals with the socio-cultural space where they can express their food choices.

It would be of value to know if current teenagers develop, as their parents and grandparents did, a generational project of their own and continue reproducing 'Ukrainianness'. They currently participate, narrate and display traditional foods to interact and network with other youngsters who have in turn their own distinctive foodways. In this way they are already making use of the knowledge practices of traditional foods as a positive cultural token.

Previous studies have suggested that in general, traditional foodways in post-modern society have been eroded by economic and technological developments. Without denying the influence of technological change and the media in transforming foodways, the illustration provided by our case study demonstrates that claims of authenticity or of erosion of 'traditional food' are narrated and performed with the intention of communicating (or attempting to pass on) particular food ideologies. As highlighted throughout this article we found that the generational projects were by far the main determinant factor shaping the foodways of the Ukrainian diaspora.

## Notes

- 1 This article is informed by the data generated through the research project 'Socio-historical reproduction of food and dietary values', which was part of the 'Changing Families Changing Food' programme funded by the Leverhulme Trust.
- 2 Most of the activities observed took place in the Ukrainian Club (which includes a pub and a large dining hall where meals are served every Wednesday and during community events) and



the Ukrainian School run by the Bradford branch of the Association of Ukrainians in Britain. We also followed the families into Church and attended family meals at home. All semi-structured recorded interviews were conducted in three sections. The first part focused on family experiences with food, food habits, cooking and eating. The second focussed on investigating provisioning and budgeting. In the third part interviewees were encouraged to assess the significance of food in culture, including perceptions about food security and (un-) healthy food. The interview schedule was adapted from Conevey (2004: 292).

- 3 In the second study ('East European Migration to Bradford) conducted in the 1990s, researchers interviewed children of primary settlers who no longer considered themselves to be Ukrainian or even with an ongoing attachment to the community they were raised in. Although during the third study (2006–7) we considered these interviews and coded them, we failed in our attempts to re-contact individuals who had left the diasporic community. It was the case that some participants who were interviewed in the most recent project recognized that their children, relatives or former friends have been lost to the community through either a conscious decision to reject or a disinterest in their Ukrainian heritage and/or the activities of the community (PS: ThO, WGI).
- 4 Two of the group interviews were filmed, one with four members of the women's group of the Bradford branch of the Ukrainian Association (WGI) and one with a group of teenagers who were attending Saturday Ukrainian School in Bradford at the time of the study. Twelve interviews were also audio-recorded with eleven adults belonging to six different families. The participation of these families during Ukrainian community activities was then closely followed. We analysed hundreds of photographs, and a number of video recordings of community activities, cooking practices, art performances and religious ceremonies.
- 5 The connection between religion and politics, especially anti-Soviet activities, was closely intertwined, especially given the suppression of religion in Soviet Ukraine. Bandera himself was the son of a cleric. The diaspora tended to regard priests, bishops and the churches themselves as emblematic symbols of anti-Soviet resistance. For this reason many of the Ukrainian diaspora celebrations are intermixed with religious festivities. Participating in church-based activities is often read as a marker of belonging to the diasporic community more than a testament of faith. This is the reason why by following the activities of this community we ended up in religious celebrations or in Church, but this should not be read as indicative of us choosing to do research in Church based settings.
- 6 Referring to the ritual foodways of Ukrainians in Canada, Klymasz (1985) highlights that the traditional Christmas meal does not and 'must not' include meat and thus the cabbage rolls served during Christmas meals are filled with rice or buckwheat. In contrast, the 2006 meal served at the Christmas dinner of the Ukrainian Association in Bradford included cabbage rolls filled with corned beef. Although some research participants later signalled that during Christmas one was supposed to abstain from eating meat, they acknowledged that corned-beef filling of *holubtsi* during Christmas had become common practice.
- 7 The teenagers were observed during Saturday activities, during the Youth Association annual meeting in Weston on Trent (July 2006) and other numerous activities they engaged with during year 2006–07. Some of the more active participants of our research agreed to make photographic 'food journeys', after which they were interviewed individually. We then filmed a group interview with four of them, three boys (A, B, C) and a girl (D). The quotations of this section of the paper are taken from this filmed group interview.
- 8 Lunch is offered in the AUGB premises every Wednesday and many of the so-called 'first generation' Ukrainians attend. Wednesday's lunch as an intergenerational form of communication is discussed elsewhere (Forero, Ellis *et al.*, 2009).

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