

# APPENDIX

## BRIEF METHODOLOGICAL DETAILS

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### Study Timetable

*November 1993–April 1994: Exploratory field-work phase*

This was initially designed to serve as an ethnographic pilot phase for a combined nutrition and anthropological study. At that early stage I had intended to focus specifically upon the weaning beliefs and also upon the actual dietary practices of British Iranians. However, during interviews a number of themes recurred, relating particularly to issues of identity, and these gradually emerged as key focal areas of study, as described below. Simultaneously, my own awareness of and interest in the symbolic aspects of food consumption increased and I decided to pursue these topics in more depth and therefore to engage solely in ethnographic data-collection.

At this stage the field was centred around South Manchester (to which I commuted) and encompassed a small group of Iranian Shi'ites (who were long-standing friends) and their social networks. Initially weekly day trips were made to establish contact in a research context, gradually, as the level of confidence in the study increased visits became longer. However, this often relied on the willingness of participants to invite me to stay and I was very conscious of the need not to outstay my welcome, so that individual visits rarely lasted more than four days. Field work comprised participant-observations within homes and at social gatherings such as parties and picnics, as well as interviews with each of the participants. As I was generally treated as a guest my participation in domestic food-work was largely restricted to setting the table or clearing away and occasionally washing-up. I was frequently present during meal preparation (and was expected to stay to eat) but was only rarely permitted to assist and then only in unskilled tasks such as washing salad ingredients or shelling nuts.

In this preliminary phase it became apparent that women, who were generally responsible for food-provisioning within the home, seemed to be regarded as guardians of the health and ethnic identities of their families. Meanwhile, a considerable proportion of Iranian men (i.e., 75 percent of male contacts in this preliminary phase) were involved in public foodwork, i.e., were employed within the fast-food industry. The two spheres of domestic and public food-work appeared to form discrete lines of enquiry, and I felt the analytic process would be more effective if the field-work was divided into distinct phases which first focused on each domain of activity separately, and then considered both types of work together in relation to the gender identities they articulated. At this stage I identified a number of research themes which were to form the basis of interviews and observations during each subsequent phase of the field work:

1. Exploration of the links between health, identity and domestic food-work.
2. Analysis of the factors motivating Iranian men to enter the take-away food trade and of the apparent failure of Iranian cuisine to impact upon the ethnic food sector.
3. The contrast between the apparent respect obtained by Iranian women for their domestic food-preparation and the relatively low status held by their male counterparts, and the disjunction between these and Orientalist gender stereotypes.

#### *January–June 1995: Fast-food and restaurant field work*

The exploratory field work period had been based upon interviews and participant-observations in homes and at social gatherings which were also mainly centred around the home. This phase had generated a considerable amount of data regarding domestic food-work, but had not ventured into the public sphere of commercial food-preparation. I decided to pursue this subject before conducting more field work based on domestic food-provisioning. This was partly in order to better contextualise each set of data in relation to the other and also because I felt so immersed in, and familiar with, the data generated within the domestic arena that I needed to create a distance from them in order to achieve greater analytical clarity. I also felt that the division of the field work and analysis in this way would make the writing-up process more manageable and would allow insights gained from one phase of field work to be tested and modified in subsequent stages. I therefore opted to follow each data-collection period with an analytical and writing-up phase before proceeding to the next topic of investigation.

By this stage I had decided to expand the field geographically rather than simply seeking other participants from within the Greater Manchester region. This was partly for ethical reasons – those interviewed in the preliminary phase easily recognised other participants, despite the use of pseudonyms, and there was some concern at the possibility of political repercussions. Given the level of mistrust between Iranians of different ethnic, religious and political affinities, and the need to be known and trusted by the community in order to gain access (as observed by Hoffman, 1990) it also seemed unlikely that I would easily obtain a heterogeneous sample within a single geographical location. Additionally, I had established contacts in Sheffield and more recent links with Iranian families within the Stoke-on-Trent area and a number of them had expressed interest in the study and wanted to be involved.

From this stage onwards interviews provided the primary source of data, with participant-observations mainly providing supplementary information, which complemented and corroborated interview accounts and sometimes generated further questions for investigation. During this phase employees of fast-food ventures were interviewed in their homes and/or places of work. I also observed interactions between employers, staff and customers and made participant observations in one establishment in which I worked as an unpaid employee on several occasions. Although useful in reinforcing and contextualising the interview data, the need to concentrate on food preparation and service tasks to some extent hindered the observation process and the exercise was not particularly profitable in terms of generating new avenues of enquiry. Moreover, these takeaways were largely staffed by Iranian men and my entrance to this predominantly male sphere of activity resulted in a change in these men's behaviour towards me, and at times resulted in some discomfort in my relationship with these participants so I did not attempt to repeat the experience.

In discussing their selection of occupation, some employees in the fast-food trade mentioned that they had considered the restaurant sector but had decided that Iranian food would not be marketable. Since I found Iranian cuisine to be highly palatable I was intrigued to discover why it has not achieved the popularity of other ethnic cuisines, for example, Thai food. I made several participant-observation visits to one Iranian restaurant in Manchester (the only one apparently flourishing in that city). At first I visited in the company of other Iranian diners, then with an English friend, and later alone. Finally I made a visit to interview the proprietors. However, I found it almost impossible to obtain data by which to compare and contrast

these findings; apparently none of the other restaurants in the North and Midlands which had been mentioned to me were still in existence. At this stage I felt that a trip to Kensington (reportedly the best established Iranian community in the country and the site of a number of Iranian restaurants) was necessary. A friend advised me that he knew a well-known and respected Iranian businessman in London who would be happy to introduce me to a number of restaurant owners. Although I repeatedly postponed the visit for over two months I was unable to make contact with this businessman and (unsure of his willingness to help) I eventually decided to make the trip alone. I spent two days in Kensington, drinking coffee, eating meals and snacks and talking to street sellers, shop owners and restaurant staff. Although a number of people were friendly and willing to talk, others were distinctly hostile and I felt that the absence of a trusted patron undermined my ability to gain access. Rather than make repeat visits I further tested my findings by discussing them with Iranian contacts and academics who lived in and around London and who were familiar with recent changes in the restaurant scene there.

*July-August 1995:*

Analysis and writing. Return of transcripts to participants for feedback.

*August-October 1995: Domestic food-work and health*

More in-depth interviewing and additional observations were made during this period, particularly focusing on everyday (rather than festive) food-work within the home. Both women and men were interviewed during this phase, although observations predominantly focused on women (I saw only three men cooking everyday meals at home). Through their daily cooking performances it appeared that women enacted and reinforced their roles as women, wives and mothers and so commanded considerable respect for their work. My observations generated questions concerning the ways in which Iranian men and women understand the relative positions of the sexes and how they articulate these beliefs in practice, in particular the extent to which they consider food-preparation to be gendered work. These questions were to form the basis of the next phase of field work.

*October-December 1995:*

Analysis, writing and feedback.

*December-April 1996: Gender relations*

At this stage participants were observed as they performed their relational and occupational roles. Interviews were conducted with men

and women, together and separately. This was intended to be the final phase of field work until the reported comments of a young girl made me realise the need to incorporate the views of children and teenagers.

*May-July 1996:*

Analysis, writing and feedback.

*July-October 1996: Field work with young people*

Although children had been involved in all of the social occasions in which I had participated, until this stage I had not really 'seen' them. As a result, this chapter relies predominantly upon the interview data obtained at this late stage in the data-collection.

*October-December 1996:*

Analysis, writing and feedback.

*Research Participants*

I include here only those individuals interviewed in relatively formal situations, and from whom I collected demographic details. In more informal interview situations, such as those conducted without prior acquaintance (in particular the interactions with stall owners, shop keepers, takeaway and restaurant staff in London), I felt this would be deemed an unnecessary invasion of privacy which may have jeopardised the research process. Similarly during participant-observations I did not generally record such details. I have chosen to refer here to interviewees by a numerical coding rather than to apply the pseudonyms given in the text. This is because I found that the amount of detail included in my Masters' dissertation allowed participants to identify one another easily and a number of individuals were concerned that outsiders might use the information for political purposes. For the same reason I have withheld other identifying features, such as region of origin, current geographical location, ties of friendship, business connections and the links between gatekeepers and other research participants, in order to ensure that individual profiles are sketchy and therefore difficult to identify. Although my response to their concerns may be considered to be overcautious, I feel that the interests of the research participants must remain my paramount concern. Hence, the list which follows is necessarily incomplete, nevertheless it does give an indication of the demographic characteristics and of the social range encompassed by the sample as a whole.

The list of participants is divided into four sections which connote each of the key research questions successively explored within the main phases of field work – i.e., the high level of involvement of Ira-

nians in the fast-food trade, yet relative invisibility of that cuisine; the importance of domestic food and health work; the significance of food-work in the construction of gender identities; and the significance of childrens' food consumption practices in processes of identity-formation. A number of individuals took part in more than one phase of field work, thus some details are repeated.

*Fast-food/restaurant focus*

1. Male takeaway employee and part-time mature student, forty years old, single, lives alone, born in Iran, has lived in Britain for twenty years.
2. Male takeaway owner, forty-two years old, married to 16, lives with wife and one child, born in Iran, has lived in Britain for twenty years.
3. Male food wholesaler and entrepreneur, forty-five years old, married to 17, born in Iran, has lived in Britain for eight years.
4. Male takeaway owner, forty-one years old, married to 18, lives with his wife and two children, born in Iran, has lived in Britain for twenty years.
5. Male takeaway owner, forty years old, single, lives with his girlfriend, born in Iran, has lived in Britain for nineteen years.
6. Male takeaway employee, forty-two years old, cousin of 5, married to 19, lives with his wife and two children, born in Iran, has lived in Britain for five years.
7. Female restaurant owner, forty-six years old, married, lives with husband and two children, born in Iran, has lived in Britain for twenty-four years.
8. Male restaurant manager, twenty-three years old, son of 7, single, lives with his parents.
9. Male takeaway owner, forty-seven years old, divorced, lives alone, born in Iran, has lived in Britain for thirteen years.
10. Male takeaway owner, forty-three years old, single, lives alone, born in Iran, has lived in Britain for twelve years.
11. Male takeaway owner, thirty-two years old, married, lives with wife and one child, born in Iran, has lived in Britain for twenty years.
12. Female co-owner of takeaway, thirty-one years old, wife of 11, born in Britain, English parents.
13. Male takeaway owner, forty-two years old, married to 25, lives with wife and two children, born in Iran, has lived in Britain for eight years.
14. Female takeaway owner and part-time mature student, forty-eight years old, sister of 25, single, born in Iran, has lived in Britain for twelve years.

15. Male dental technician, thirty-one years old, single, lives alone, born in Iran, has lived in Britain for fifteen years

*Domestic food-work, health and identity*

16. Housewife, thirty-four years old, married to 2, born in Iran, has lived in Britain for ten years.
17. Housewife, sister of 2, forty-three years old, married, lives with husband and two children, born in Iran, has lived in Britain for seven years.
18. Housewife, thirty-two years old, married to 4, born in Iran, has lived in Britain for eleven years.
19. Housewife, forty years old, married to 6, born in Iran, has lived in Britain for five years.
20. Male university lecturer, forty-eight years old, married, lives with wife and three children, born in Iran, has lived in Britain for eighteen years.
21. Unemployed male, fifty-one years old, married, lives with wife and two children, born in Iran, has lived in Britain for sixteen years.
22. Female factory machinist, forty-eight years old, wife of 21, born in Iran, has lived in Britain for sixteen years.
23. Male postgraduate student, forty-two years old, married, lives with his wife and two children, born in Iran, has lived in Britain for four years.
24. Housewife and part-time word processor, thirty-eight years old, wife of 23, born in Iran, has lived in Britain for four years.
25. Housewife, thirty-nine years old, married to 13, born in Iran, has lived in Britain for eight years.
26. Female hairdresser, forty-five years old, divorced, lives with partner, born in Iran, came to Britain as a teenager.
27. Female postgraduate student, twenty-nine years old, married, lives with husband and two children, born in Iran, has lived in Britain for five years.
28. Male postgraduate student, thirty-one years old, husband of 27, born in Iran, has lived in Britain for five years.
29. Male postgraduate student, twenty-eight years old, married, lives with wife and one child, born in Iran, has lived in Britain for two years.
30. Housewife, twenty-seven years old, married to 29, born in Iran, has lived in Britain for two years.
31. Male postgraduate student, 30 years old, married, lives with wife and one child, born in Iran, has lived in Britain for 3 years
32. Housewife, twenty-seven years old, married to 31, born in Iran, has lived in Britain for three years.

*Gender relations*

2. Male takeaway owner, forty-two years old, married, lives with wife and one child, born in Iran, has lived in Britain for twenty years.
3. Male food wholesaler and entrepreneur, forty-five years old, married to 17, born in Iran, has lived in Britain for eight years.
4. Male takeaway owner, forty-one years old, married, lives with his wife and two children, born in Iran, has lived in Britain for twenty years.
5. Male takeaway owner, forty years old, single, lives with his girlfriend, born in Iran, has lived in Britain for nineteen years.
6. Male takeaway employee, forty-two years old, cousin of 5, married, lives with his wife and two children, born in Iran, has lived in Britain for five years
13. Male takeaway owner, forty-two years old, married to 25, lives with wife and two children, born in Iran, has lived in Britain for eight years.
14. Female takeaway owner and part-time mature student, 48 years old, sister of 25, single, born in Iran, has lived in Britain for twelve years.
16. Housewife, thirty-four years old, married to 2, born in Iran, has lived in Britain for ten years.
17. Housewife, sister of 2, forty-three years old, married, lives with husband and two children, born in Iran, has lived in Britain for seven years.
18. Housewife, thirty-two years old, married to 4, born in Iran, has lived in Britain for eleven years.
19. Housewife, forty years old, married to 6, born in Iran, has lived in Britain for five years.
21. Unemployed male, fifty-one years old, married, lives with wife and two children, born in Iran, has lived in Britain for sixteen years.
22. Female factory machinist, forty-eight years old, wife of 21, born in Iran, has lived in Britain for sixteen years.
25. Housewife, thirty-nine years old, married to 13, born in Iran, has lived in Britain for eight years.
26. Female hairdresser, forty-five years old, divorced, lives with partner, born in Iran, came to Britain as a teenager.
27. Female postgraduate student, twenty-nine years old, married, lives with husband and two children, born in Iran, has lived in Britain for five years.
31. Male postgraduate student, thirty years old, married, lives with wife and one child, born in Iran, has lived in Britain for three years.

32. Housewife, 27 years old, married to 31, born in Iran, has lived in Britain for 3 years.

*Children, food and identities*

33. Schoolgirl, five year old, daughter of 2 and 16, born in Britain.
34. Schoolboy, sixteen years old, son of 17 and 3, born in Iran, has lived in Britain for seven years.
35. Schoolgirl, ten years old, daughter of 17 and 3, sister of 34, born in Iran, has lived in Britain for seven years.
36. Schoolgirl, nine years old, eldest daughter of 4 and 18, born in Britain.
37. Schoolboy, eleven years old, eldest son of 6 and 19, born in Iran, has lived in Britain for five years.
38. Female university student, seventeen years old, single, lives in shared accommodation, born in Iran, has lived in Britain for fourteen years.
39. Schoolboy, fourteen years old, elder son of 23 and 24, born in Iran, has lived in Britain for four years.
40. Schoolboy, eight years old, younger son of 23 and 24 and brother of 39, born in Iran, has lived in Britain for four years.
41. Schoolgirl, sixteen years old, born in Iran, has lived in Britain for thirteen years.
42. Schoolgirl, ten years old, daughter of 13 and 25, born in Iran, has lived in Britain for eight years.
43. Schoolboy, six years old, son of 13 and 25 and brother of 42, born in Britain.