



The  
University  
Of  
Sheffield.

Changing Families,  
Changing Food.

# Socio-historical reproduction and food values

## Researchers

Oscar Forero, University of Lancaster  
Graham Smith, Health & Social Care, Royal Holloway, University of London  
Barry Gibson, University of Sheffield  
Paul Ward, Department of Public Health, Flinders University

## Administrator

Cindy Wang-Cowham, Liverpool Hope University

## Summary

This project explored changes in socio-historical reproduction of food values, including diet and eating patterns, within families in the Ukrainian communities of Bradford. We critiqued the notion of 'changing families', in terms of food values, diet and eating patterns and parent/child discipline.

Our overall objective was to demonstrate the ways in which 'the family' adapts to the developments associated with its increasingly differentiated environment and food in particular.

## Contact:

Dr Graham Smith  
Health and Social Care  
Royal Holloway, University of London  
Email: [graham.smith@rhul.ac.uk](mailto:graham.smith@rhul.ac.uk)



The Leverhulme Trust

[www.sheffield.ac.uk/familiesandfood](http://www.sheffield.ac.uk/familiesandfood)

## Research questions

- To compare social reproduction, particularly the transmission of food values and dietary patterns, among Ukrainians living in Britain.
- To investigate food habits and document the process of change of such habits.
- To compare inter-generational references to the notions of traditional food and everyday food.
- To document the differentiated perceptions of family members with respect to the social significance of changing food habits.



## Research design

This was an ethnographic and ethno-historical study documenting changing 'taste' among the Ukrainian community in Bradford. Participatory action research in community activities allowed interviewing with individuals from first, second, third and sometimes fourth generations members of the same families. Additionally, some teenagers, from third or fourth generation were engaged in photographic journal activities documenting their relationship with food.

## Key findings

- While the rise of supermarkets and the diversification and availability of food products has affected what Ukrainians in Bradford eat, somewhat surprisingly such changes are not perceived as dramatic or even significant. It was made evident that notions of 'Ukrainian' identity have continued to influence individuals' choices of food consumption and eating habits. However, each generation has developed distinctive projects transforming the identity and foodways of the community. This process has not been unidirectional nor has it been the result of consensus; on the contrary, it carried ruptures and disenchantment, but also revalorisation of traditions and the histories of families and individuals and their importance in transforming the social projects of the community as a whole.
- Many of the Ukrainians who arrived in the 1940s made use of foodways to support the making of their collective identity, including promoting the political project of an independent Ukraine. The daughters of the primary settlers are now playing a key role in the organisations that their fathers developed. This, at least in part, arises from responsibilities of care. These responsibilities include the preparation of food for ageing parents and in some cases the provision of communal meals for members of the oldest generation.
- While older Ukrainians in Britain emphasised the distinctiveness of Ukrainian foodways to advance their political projects, their children re-contextualised foodways to facilitate the integration of the British-Ukrainian family. Now, the grandchildren of first generation Ukrainians, as they often call themselves, are using the foodways of this community as a token of their active citizenship in multi-cultural Britain.