CHANGING FAMILIES, CHANGING FOOD

Family Meal at Home:
“Sixty dollars a month isn’t a lot of money, but Mrs Siebold is a good manager and she feeds her family well with the small budget she has for food” (WPA, November 1937)

The Leverhulme Trust: ‘The Family’ programme
Why families and food?

Food is a powerful lens on changing family life (historically, sociologically, psychologically...)

A means of addressing a wide range of issues:
- variations between families
- dynamics within families
- different types of family
- changing contexts of family life

A new perspective on family life, transcending disciplinary boundaries between the social sciences, humanities and health research.
Our research programme

Three research strands (families across the life-course):

- Pregnancy and motherhood (led by Paula Nicolson)
- Childhood and family life (led by Allison James)
- Family and community (led by Graham Smith)

plus a ‘time-line’ (changing families and food since the early C20th), international comparisons (culturally-specific patterns of family life and food consumption) and cross-cutting themes (e.g. ethnicity in all three strands).
Changing Families, Changing Food

**STRAIGHT 1**
**PREGNANCY & MOTHERHOOD**
- Healthy start…
- Bonnie babies in family context…
- My mother, my self…

**STRAIGHT 2**
**CHILDHOOD & FAMILY LIFE**
- Childhood obesity and food choice…
- Parental food choice and childhood obesity…
- Men, children and food…
- Social reproduction and food values…

**STRAIGHT 3**
**FAMILY & COMMUNITY**
- Food provision and the media…
- Food choice and family context…
- (No) family, (no) food…
- Making healthy families…

**INTERNATIONAL COMPARISONS**

**TIME-LINE**
- Early 20th
- Second World War
- 1960s to early 21st

**CROSS-CUTTING THEMES**
- GENDER
- ETHNICITY
- CLASS
- PLACE
Originality and timeliness

- Increasing policy and popular interest in the relationship between families and food
- Little sustained research since *The Nation’s Diet* (ESRC, 1992-98)
- Unique opportunity to undertake a coordinated programme of inter-disciplinary research incorporating new work on theories of family practice and everyday life
- Many recent interventions have ignored the wider social context (e.g. work on food deserts).
Methods

✧ **Quantitative**: analysis of long-run datasets from the late-1950s onwards, plus a range of social surveys

✧ **Qualitative**: life-histories from the early 20th, the 1930s-50s, and 2000, plus archival, documentary and textual analysis, cohort studies, in-depth interviews and focus groups, ethnography and participatory research.
Institutional context

- Based in ICoSS (the Informatics Collaboratory for the Social Sciences) – new £5m facility funded through SRIF: office space, state-of-the-art facilities, meetings rooms etc.
- A single institution bid built on an existing network of researchers at Sheffield including strong links with other research centres
- Common commitment to sharing data-sets and methodologies (e.g. N-Vivo), data archiving and research training
- Wide range of international links (via Worldwide University Network).
Outcomes

❖ Contribution to theory (e.g. risk society, the family and reflexive modernisation)
❖ Contribution to policy (e.g. Sure Start, National Family and Parenting Institute, International Task Force on Obesity)
❖ Range of outputs: a programme book series; papers in academic journals; conferences, seminars and workshops; executive summaries and ‘user’ briefings; programme web-site and contributions to TV, press and radio.
Project management

- **Programme Director**: Prof. Peter Jackson, Director of Research (Social Sciences) with admin support for duration of grant and budget for programme events
- **Three strand leaders**: Prof. Paula Nicolson, Prof. Allison James, Dr Graham Smith
- **Programme, strand and project events**: annual programme symposium; research strand workshops and day-seminars; induction, team-building and training sessions (RAs and PhD students); clear project milestones; strong University-level research, financial and technical support.
Future directions

❖ **Individual projects**: extended via bids to ESRC, MRC, AHRC etc

❖ **Research strands**: ‘Europeanised’ (via bids to Marie Curie and EU Framework Programmes)

❖ **Programme**: build on our international networks (via WUN and other links).