

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**

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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.

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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)

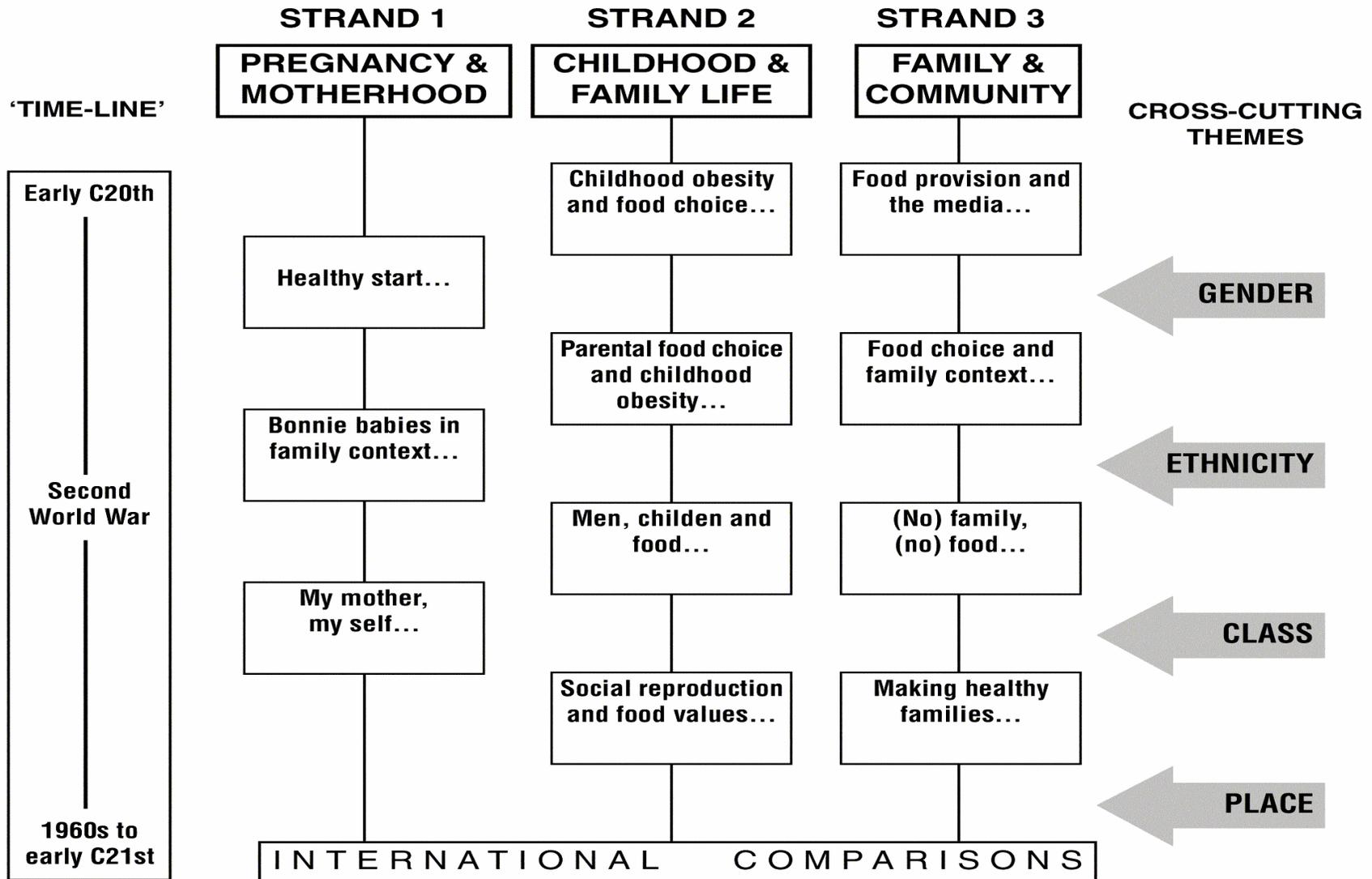
plus a **'time-line'** (changing families and food since the early C20th), **international comparisons** (culturally-specific patterns of family life and food consumption) and **cross-cutting themes** (e.g. ethnicity in all three strands).

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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).

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Methods

- ☀ **Quantitative:** analysis of long-run datasets from the late-1950s onwards, plus a range of social surveys
- ☀ **Qualitative:** life-histories from the early C20th, the 1930s-50s, and 2000, plus archival, documentary and textual analysis, cohort studies, in-depth interviews and focus groups, ethnography and participatory research.

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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).

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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.

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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.

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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).

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