Exploring and Articulating Ethics in Consumption: A Multi-Method Analysis of the Ethics of Consumption

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Sarah Marie Hall

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Abstract

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Sarah Marie Hall

With the reinvigoration of cultural and social geography in the 1980's, alongside the Moral Turn of the 1990's, moral questions in consumption have become commonplace in geography (Smith 2000). The moral turn also coincided with increased public protests against companies engaged in unethical or unsustainable production practices (McGregor 2006). Today, consumers have access to a wide range of products, or 'devices' (Barnett *et al* 2005), that are considered to be 'ethical' in terms of their production, through which consumers may express their morals, such as fair trade, organic, and locally produced goods. In more recent years, these Ethical Consumer discourses have been opened up to critique. However, ethical consumption still remains vastly under-theorised in relation to many other aspects of consumption studies and human geography, and little is known about how ethics in consumption form and how they are translated into consumption practices.

Similarly, ethical consumption has previously been researched only in terms of shopping habits and market projections, and not as an everyday grounded practice. More research is needed that manages to capture these 'lived' elements of everyday consumption, which currently remain to be a 'black box'. By addressing the grounded, real-life nature of consumption, we might be able to think beyond the monetary values of products, to explore how consumption practices are connected to, and create, a variety of moral geographies, and how everyday practices are intertwined with these moral networks. One way is by recognising the ethical decisions that people make in their everyday consumption choices, and how these values are related to wider global issues.

This thesis therefore aims to identify; how consumers incorporate their morals into their consumption choices and decisions; the impacts of education, family practices and marketing strategies in shaping consumption; and whether 'ethical consumption' can be disentangled from 'ordinary consumption'. To do this, the research adopts an innovative methodological approach, using a multi-sited, three-pronged research design. This includes ethnographic research with families from 2007-2009, focus groups and lesson observations in three schools, and interviews with thirteen companies, to effectively and thoroughly explore the ethics of consumption in narrative and practice. Using these data, the research explores where morals come from, how they are influenced and by whom, the ways in which ethics are expressed on a daily basis, and how morals are performed as a means of fulfilling ethical responsibilities. Therefore, this thesis contributes to discourses surrounding ethics, consumption, ethical consumption, care, responsibility and accountability. It is argued that geographers need to reassess and reconfigure how to address ethics in consumption, since current ethical consumer discourses are prescriptive and limiting, and are laden with assumptions, judgements and class distinctions. This thesis creates an argument for an *ethics of consumption*, rather than ethical consumption, which recognises the importance of everyday ethical decision-making, and consumption as a behaviour that goes hand-in-hand with moral debates.

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List of Acronyms

AFN	Alternative Food Networks
ASA	Association of Social Anthropology
CRB	Criminal Records Bureau
CSA	Community Supported Agriculture
CSR	Corporate Social Responsibility
ESRC	Economic and Social Research Council
ETI	Ethical Trading Initiative
GCC	Global Commodity Chains
GCSE	General Certificate of Secondary Education
GPN	Global Production Networks
GSC	Global Supply Chains
ICT	Information and Communication Technology
PE	Physical Education
PSHE	Personal Social and Health Education
QCA	Qualifications and Curriculum Agency
QCDA	Qualifications and Curriculum Development Agency
RE	Religious Education
RGS-IBG	Royal Geographic Society with the Institute of British Geographers
TNC	Transnational Corporation
UK	United Kingdom
USP	Unique Selling Point

Chapter 1: Introduction

As a consumer, making the 'right decision' can be extremely difficult. Today, consumers are told that buying clothes from one store may support unethical trading regimes, whilst purchasing fruit from a particular supermarket is damaging the environment. It would seem that, whatever they do, consumers are in some way creating damage and causing chaos. Related to this, is the emergence of so-called 'Ethical Consumption', often associated with consumers that either purchase certain products and certified goods (such as Fair trade, organic, local, etc), boycott 'unethical' companies and products, and/or embrace sustainable lifestyle choices such as recycling and energy conservation, as ways of 'making a difference'. These moral considerations are added to an already complicated and ethically complex decision-making processes, in which consumers have to consider factors such as affordability, health, quality, preference and convenience, to name but a few. Moral debates and ethical tensions are therefore a commonplace feature of contemporary consumer decision-making. However, this is not to say that ethical dilemmas did not exist for consumers in the past, most certainly they did, but rather that the current social, moral and economic climate, particularly with the recent financial crisis and a growing awareness of production processes, has brought about new challenges to the articulation and practice of moral identities. At the same time, whilst everyday 'ordinary' consumption practices and, more recently, the 'Ethical Consumer' movement have been subject to widespread academic debate, little attention has been paid to how, and if, these practices can actually be disentangled from one another.

The main objective of this thesis is therefore to explore how these moral identities form, how they develop and how ethics and morals are translated into everyday practices of consumption, in light of this so-called 'Ethical Consumer' movement. Understanding how ethics are formed is an expansive and ambitious task. I most certainly do not claim that this thesis will provide all, or even many, of the answers to the conundrum that is consumer decision-making and moral balancing. What I do hope to achieve, however, is to instigate the process of unravelling these decisions, the processes and moral understandings that consumers employ when making consumption choices, and how their ethics impact upon these daily routines. To do this, research with families, within schools, and with companies is used to explore the ethics of consumption. Within this introductory chapter I will outline the research context for this PhD project (1.1), specific the aims of the research and why we need to explore ethics in consumption (1.2), as well as explaining the structure of this thesis (1.3).

1.1: Research Context

Consumption has always been a moral issue. According to Miller (1995, 30), consumption is the 'use of goods and services in which the object or activity becomes simultaneously a practice in the world and a form in which we construct our understandings of ourselves in the world'. Consumer items may therefore be transformed from their materiality, to become tools and resources for the expression of people's (moral) identities, depending upon how they are used and appropriated. However, definitions of consumption have changed over time 'in relation to commodities or consumption practices' (Glennie 1995, 180). The very nature of consumption, the interaction between human and non-human (Whatmore and Thorne 1997), between people and the environment, or what Goodman and Goodman (2001, 98) describe as our 'metabolic relations with nature', is thought to be morally significant. As a result, consumption continues to raise moral questions and dilemmas. Yet, as Carrier (1990, 579) points out, the notion of consumption 'has a faintly immoral tone', that is to say that consumption is an often destructive practice associated with both morality and immorality. For Wilk (2001, 246), segregating consumption and morality is problematic, given that

> ...consumption is, in essence a moral matter, since it always and inevitably raises issues of fairness, self vs. group interests, and immediate vs. delayed gratification [...] moral debate about consumption is an essential and ancient part of human politics, an inevitable consequence of the unique way our species has developed its relationship with the material world.

In this sense, the very negotiations upon which consumption is based (Clarke 1991, Warde 1997)—not only of moral issues such as justice and power, but the basic ethical principles of right vs. wrong and good vs. bad—render consumer behaviour as an outlet for the expression of personal ethics. This idea of an inherent ethics (or moral questioning) of consumption also permeates theories of the 'self'. As Warde (1997, 10-11) argues, 'commodities are the principal channels for the communication of self-identity [...] actors are deemed to have chosen their self-images and can thus be held to account for a wrong decision'. As explored later in the thesis, consumption is integral to the creation of the self and personal identity, or rather as I prefer to call it, moral identities.

Consumption is also a means by which people may express their moral obligations. As Devault (1990) explores, there is a value in recognising the ethical aspects of care as a moral and societal

obligation or virtue, such as feeding the family, and the conflicts between personal desire and social things (Gilligan 1982). Therefore consumption, as a matter of choice and moral obligation, is a behaviour and practice that enables people to assert responsibility and ethics through their decision-making. Indeed, it has already been recognised by cultural theorists that

> The ordinary consumer was not a passive and easily manipulated creature, but an active, critical and creative person; someone who adapted and moulded material acquired through the mass media to their own ends by a means of a diverse range of everyday, creative and symbolic practices. By studying the 'real' consumer of popular products in this way, rather than the stereotypical, exploited and manipulated person portrayed in critical theory, cultural studies laid the basis for a genuine sociology of the consumer of cultural products.
>
> (Campbell 1995, 98)

Yet despite the recognition of consumers as autonomous and thoughtful, aware of their actions and not subject to market demands, we know very little about everyday ethical dilemmas of the 'ordinary consumer' and the moral tensions of their consumption decision-making. Therefore, whilst moral debates about consumption are especially new or distinctive, the ways in which we articulate morals and the discourses that surround their everyday practice is a contemporary issue.

Furthering these ideas, and with a 'moral critique of consumerism' in recent years (Fine 2002, 183), ethical questions of consumption have come to the fore. In particular, the Ethical Consumer movement has revived studies of consumption, to explore both the ethical and unethical aspects of consumer practices. The Ethical Consumption/Consumer movement is earmarked as having emerged in the early 1990's, and is thought to be the result of a heightened awareness of unethical business practices (see Chapter 4 for a more detailed discussion, and also McGregor 2006, Nicholls and Opal 2005). As mentioned before, whilst moral debates in consumption are not especially new, what is new is the ways in which ethics are defined and articulated, in light of this consumer movement and the branding of certain types of consumption. With the reinvigoration of cultural and social geography in the 1980's, alongside an increasing concern for values by the beginning of the 1990's, otherwise called the Moral Turn, moral questions in consumption have become commonplace in geography (Smith 2000). The moral turn also coincided with increased public protests against companies seen to engage in unethical or unsustainable production practices (McGregor 2006), and in the case of unethical production, issues of environmental damage

(Zyglidopoulos 2002), corporate monopoly (O'Neill 2003), global solidarity (Barnett *et al* 2004), animal rights (Dawson 1999, Watts 2004) and unjust working conditions (Russell 2004, Silvey 2004) are high on the agenda. Indeed, as Smith (2000, 5) notes, at the same time as the moral turn in geography, 'attention was also drawn to the geography within everyday moralities'. Today consumers have access to a wide range of products, or 'devices' (Barnett *et al* 2005), that are considered to be 'ethical' in terms of their production, through which consumers may express their morals, such as fair trade, organic, and locally produced goods to name but a few. In more recent years these discourses have been opened up to analysis (see Hall 2009c), however ethical consumption still remains vastly under-theorised (and under-critiqued) in relation to many other aspects of consumption studies and human geography.

My interest in these debates came about perhaps as a result of growing up amidst these ethical consumer discourses, but also because of my family experiences. For most of people, home is marked by experiences of consumption (Bell and Valentine 1997, Blunt and Dowling 2006), and my memories of home are heavily influenced by consumption, but also by the production process. My Dad is a greengrocer and has been since he was fourteen, when he left school to work with his Dad. When I was growing up, the things I knew about food were mostly from discussions with my Dad about his shop, about the wholesalers from whom he bought his produce, and the countries in which these foods were grown. At the dinner table he would make us all (me, my Mum and my sister) guess what variety of potato we were eating. During my teenage years I also worked with my Dad at the shop, and had firsthand experience of being part of an economy that brings goods to the consumer. I understood the tensions between unethical and ethical production, ethically produced food and affordable food, and the difficulty in knowing where your food comes from and how it is made. Throughout my time at university I was elected the Ethical and Environmental Officer in my final undergraduate year. During this year, I also completed a dissertation on Ethical Consumption and the role of the 'self'. Part of the fieldwork for this included three months of ethnographic research, whilst working in my Dad's shop.

With a strong interest in this field, I then applied for a PhD studentship. When I first began the PhD, the intention was to explore the role of young people as ethical consumers, which was, as I saw it, a neglected aspect of ethical consumption discourses. Upon starting the project, I realised that not only was there very little research on people (old or young) as ethical consumers, but that the

literature was biased towards a particular kind of consumer; one that was affluent, knowledgeable and actionable. I found that, when drawing upon this literature as a basis for my understanding, I was contradicting my own experiences of ethical consumption. Indeed, this poor fit between current Ethical Consumer discourses and my own consumption experiences (or rather the moral dilemmas of consumption that I had become privy to), was the basis for this PhD. Instead, I was more interested in how ethics influenced consumption; not just a particular type of ethics, but rather how everyday experiences were translated and negotiated within consumption decision-making.

1.2: Exploring Ethics in Consumption

According to Mansvelt (2005), consumption is fundamental to how geographies are created and experienced in contemporary Western society. Although Warde (1997, 7) argues that in the past consumption had been subject to 'decades of comparative neglect', and despite a surge in studies of consumption (as explored later in Chapter 3), consumer practices still remain marginalised aside their production, trade and retail counterparts. There is also argued to be a lack of research which manages to capture the 'lived' elements of consumption processes (Hall *et al* 2008). Consumption is not a practice isolated from other economic processes, but is intrinsically linked within production chains or networks. However, the complex linkages between production processes and everyday consumption, such as the moral aspects of decision-making, are yet to be explored in depth, and as a result everyday consumption practices remain a 'black box'. By addressing the grounded, everyday nature of consumption, we might be able to think beyond the monetary values of products, to explore how everyday consumption practices are connected to, and create, a variety of moral geographies and moral networks. One example of this might be recognising the ethical decisions that people make in their consumption choices, and how these values are related to wider economic processes, such as production practices, waste management, world poverty, and environmental degradation.

Similarly, while much research has been conducted into ethical production processes, ethical consumption practices remain under-theorised. As Held (1993, 57) affirms, 'most standard moral theory has hardly noticed as moral significant the intermediate realm of family relations', that is, the everyday and commonplace practice of ethics. Thus, the everyday intricacies of everyday ethical consumption practices and experiences are yet to be explored fully by social scientists. More

specifically, we know very little on how these ethics are defined, how they form, and how they are translated into and negotiated within everyday consumption practice. A Quastel (2008, 42) argues, 'agents' decisions to buy ethical goods must be understood in the context of how they [consumers] make their choices'. To explore these issues requires a consideration of the current consumer climate, to investigate what ethics in consumption actually entails. This involves taking into account the recent literature surrounding ethical consumption, and how concepts of 'ethics' in consumption tend to be dismissive of the ethical considerations bound within all family consumption practices, and instead focus on particular products or ideals. As such, this research aims to recognise the everyday ethical decisions that consumers make, by embracing the multiplicity of consumer ethics as expressed in various ways, often according to what is 'right' or beneficial to the family, its members and their situation. In this thesis, a Kantian deontological approach will be used to inform debate. As explained in Chapter 2, this approach is favoured for its conceptualisation of moral action, whereby morally correct behaviour is defined according to the action (right) and not the consequence (good) (Brock 2005, Proctor 1998). This is especially relevant to debates on ethics in consumption.

This research therefore considers the normative ethics, or the moral solutions used as a basis of conduct (Smith 2000), of consumption practices, and the ways in which ethics are defined by those who practice them. I seek to engage critically with recent studies regarding ethical consumption (and ethical production); arguing that ethical consumption has been reduced to set of specific buying practices (or particular products, such as Fairtrade, local and organic goods etc.) that are thought to be emblematic of what it is to be an 'ethical consumer'. Similarly, ethical consumption has only previously been researched in terms of shopping habits and market projections, and not as an everyday grounded practice. This further separates ethical consumption from its counterpart, ethical production, whereby ethical consumers are rarely considered to be part of an ethical economy, but more as a symptom. To explore these issues, we need to know more about where morals come from, how they are influenced and by whom, the ways in which ethics are expressed on a daily basis and how morals are performed by people as a means of fulfilling ethical responsibilities. Therefore the aims of this thesis are to identify;

* How consumers incorporate their morals into their consumption choices and decisions.
* The impacts of education, family practices and marketing strategies in shaping consumption.
* Whether 'ethical consumption' can be disentangled from 'ordinary consumption'.

To do this, the research also adopts an innovative methodological approach by using a multi-sited, three-pronged research design. This includes ethnographic research with families, fieldwork in schools, and interviews with companies, to explore the ethics of consumption in narrative and practice effectively and thoroughly. The following section will describe the structure of the thesis as a means of addressing the above aims in the most logical manner possible.

1.3: Thesis Structure

The thesis is arranged into nine chapters, including this one, and structured into three main sections: a theoretical section (Chapters 2, 3 and 4), a methodological section (Chapter 5) and an empirical section (Chapters 6, 7 and 8).

Chapter 2, 'Moral Theory and Ethical Discourses', following on from this introductory chapter, looks at the definitions (2.1) and theories of ethics and morality (2.2), as well as exploring the relationship between morals and geography (2.3), and the role of moral education (2.4). In particular, this chapter explores how moral theory can be applied to everyday practice, the complexities of ethical behaviour, and the ways in which morals have informed academic research, such as the 'Moral Turn'. The chapter closes by arguing for a more detailed investigation of the relationship between concepts of normative ethics and practical ethics, such as by invigorating debates between geography and philosophy, and investigating further the different sites of moral education.

Chapter 3, 'Geographies of Consumption', goes on to explore studies of consumption, which have become more popularised since the 'Cultural Turn'. Looking at identity formation (3.1), the location of consumption in economic analysis (3.2), and theories of commodification and value (3.3), this chapter explores how consumption is integral to identity formation, yet has become marginalised within studies of the economy. Similarly, whilst consumption is discussed within different economic accounts, the role of consumers and the importance attributed to consumption is varied. The chapter also argues for a closer look at the everyday processes of consumption, in order to expose the range of values that impact on consumption choices, beyond just monetary terms, and the ways in which these values are negotiated alongside one another within consumption decision-making.

Chapter 4, 'Ethics and Consumption', then moves on to look at the role of consumption in ethical economies, by focussing on the Ethical Consumer movement (4.1), critiquing Ethical Consumer discourses (4.2), and exploring ethics in consumption (4.3). The main aim of this chapter is to deconstruct ethical consumption discourses, and as the premise for the thesis, to illustrate how we need to know more about how ethics are formed if we are to understand how and where ethics can be applied to consumption. The chapter argues that, in short, definitions of ethical consumption are contentious, that there is a lack of synergy within ethical consumption discourses, along with the need for more nuanced understandings of ethics in consumption, aside from those prescribed within ethical consumption discourses. To do this, we need to know more about how consumers use their products on an everyday basis, and the different morals that make up their consumption choices. As the final theoretical section, this chapter also lays out the four research questions that have influenced the empirical research for this thesis.

Chapter 5, 'Research Design', will discuss the fieldwork and subsequent methodologies. The introduction to this chapter will provide an explanation of the three-pronged research design and of the ethical framework of the research. The chapter is then arranged according to the various methodologies, including ethnographic research with families (5.1), interviews with companies (5.2), and research in schools (5.3). These sections are then further separated, to include a discussion of the literature and the past application of each methodological approach, the details of the fieldwork conducted, and any arising ethical issues. The chapter closes by explaining how the three-pronged approach is the most effective way to explore consumption and ethics according to families, schools and companies, and explains the purpose of the following empirical chapters.

The first of the empirical chapters, Chapter 6, 'Articulating Ethics and Morality', looks at the ways in which ethics are defined and distinguished between different people and institutions (6.1), where they are thought to be located (6.2), and who is responsible for teaching ethics (6.3). These discussions are based upon the narratives of participants, i.e. what they say about their ethics, and how these narratives and understandings become fixed within their own behaviour. The chapter explores how definitions of ethics and morality vary between consumers and producers, and how this can create confusion and a lack of comprehension. The various locations of ethics, and the importance of past experiences and upbringing, also add to the plurality of definitions within participants' narratives. In terms of teaching ethics, the moral obligation of parents was pronounced

in the data, and the chapter indicates how this mirrors the attribution of responsibility and accountability to consumers and producers for the impacts of consumption.

Chapter 7, 'Negotiating Morals, Negotiating Consumption', looks at the negotiation of morals within everyday consumption decision-making. To do this, the chapter explores a number of factors that emerged from the data as being influential within consumer negotiations, namely health issues (7.1), morals and money (7.2), waste and resource management (7.3) and ethical consumerism practices, such as supportive and avoidance techniques (7.4). As a determinate factor in consumption decision-making, health is often regarded by participants as immovable and nonnegotiable, and therefore heavily impacts on consumer decisions. Again, money is often considered as an inflexible aspect of decision-making, but may be open to change depending upon 'needs' and 'wants', various planning and preparation techniques, and tensions with ethical consumerism. By approaching consumption choices in this way, this analysis chapter aims to demonstrate the complex nature of consumption decision-making in order to redefine the parameters of ethical consumption.

Chapter 8, 'Responsibility through Consumption', looks at the ways in which consumers express responsibility and accountability in their consumption choices, as well as assessing their responsibility for the impacts of their consumption. To do this, the chapter will explore transparency and trust (8.1), the self and the collective (8.2), and the ways in which consumers can enact responsibility (8.3). Trust and transparency emerge as an avenue to knowledge about the goods that we consume, by making production processes visible and relationships between producers and consumer honest, and therefore essential in enabling consumers to enact their responsibility. The self and the collective are also discussed as having an impact on responsible consumption, in terms of consumer's perceived responsibility to others, which might also affect their behaviour and decisions. In terms of enacting responsibility, there are discrepancies between consumer and producer understandings of accountability, which has implications on how, and if, social and environmental issues in consumption can be addressed effectively.

Chapter 9, the 'Conclusion', outlines the main conclusions from the empirical chapters, by firstly discussing the difficulties of finding meaning in the messiness (9.1). From this, the chapter goes on to discuss the main conclusions from these findings, according to the four research questions. Taking

each question in turn, the chapter looks firstly to moral development and family consumption practices (9.2), followed by ethics and morals in the school environment (9.3), marketing ethics and ethical products (9.4), and developing an appropriate research design (9.5). Lastly, the chapter closes with a discussion of the implications of the research and new research agendas (9.6). It is posed that ethical consumption discourses conceal more and wider debates than they encourage, that the relationship between knowledge and ethical consumption is not as straightforward as it is otherwise theorised to be, and that thrift and frugality are, in fact, compatible with ethical consumption discourses. A number of policy implications are also outlined, involving moral education in schools, product marketing in light of the recent financial crisis, and the need for accountability. New and innovative ways of doing social research are also discussed, such as the use of social networking websites, as a contemporary form of communication with participants. The main finding of the thesis is also emphasised here, that there is a need for an ethics *of* consumption rather than ethical consumption, that recognises the everyday dilemmas that consumers face and the multiple moral concerns that consumption decisions may encompass.

Chapter 2: Moral Theory and Ethical Discourses

Moral theory and ethical discourses are central to the theoretical framework of this thesis. In order to understand what ethics are, what it means to be ethical, and how people learn to this, it is necessary to explore how ethics and morals impact upon everyday behaviour. In addition, it also needs to be considered how these ethical questions have informed academic debate. Discussions surrounding ethics and morality came to the fore in the mid 1990's, marked by a substantial number of publications, conference topics, and dialogue between the social sciences and philosophy, coined as the 'moral turn'. The 'moral turn' in Geography was distinguished by an increase in conference programmes and publications regarding ethics in Geography, along with the launch of the journal *'Ethics, Place and Environment'* in the mid-1990's (Smith 1997). Indeed, this journal merged with the journal *'Philosophy & Geography'* in 2005, providing further evidence of a synthesising of the two disciplines. This moral turn also brought up themes of responsibility, obligation and care, and in a working paper by Barnett *et al* (2004) entitled 'Articulating ethics and consumption', the authors suggest that an exemplary topic of this moral turn was the recurrent theme of 'caring at a distance' as explored later in this chapter. From this, geographical research has expanded to explore ethical issues in a range of research contexts. Research in moral geographies has also taken the form of environmental and social justice movements, whereby the moral turn also coincided with heightened public protests against companies seen to engage in unethical or unsustainable production practices (McGregor 2006). Geographers are now leading debates around the problem of morals and scale, asking questions about the moral features of place, as well as the spaces over which distance intervenes and complicates moral duties (Barnett *et al* 2004, Cutchin 2002, Proctor 1998).

The moral turn within Geography is of particular relevance to this thesis, as the catapult for debates surrounding everyday ethical conduct, such as ethical consumption. Therefore, in the chapter below, these moral geographies are explored in further detail, with the use of literature from across the social sciences and philosophy. Starting with an effort to define the key terms of 'ethics' and 'morals', the chapter will then take a closer look at theories of morality, leading onto the application of moral theory within geography, followed by a discussion of the role of moral education. This chapter is therefore structured as follows; Defining Ethics and Morality (2.1), Moral Theories (2.2),

Moral Philosophy and Moral Geographies (2.3), and Moral Education (2.4), followed by a brief conclusion (2.5).

2.1: Defining Ethics and Morality

Firstly, in terms of defining what morals and ethics are, this thesis considers the normative ethics, or the moral solutions used as a basis of conduct, of consumption practices, as well as the practical ethics of the methodology (see Chapter 5). In geographical and philosophical discussions, the terms ethics and morality are commonplace, complex and interconnected, as well as indiscriminate and interchangeable (i.e. sexual morality, medical ethics) (Lee and Smith 2004, Singer 1993, Smith 2000). In his widely cited text *'Moral Geographies: Ethics in a world of difference'*, Smith (2000, 10) distinguishes the terms in so far as ethics is a form of moral theory, and morality is a practical action, 'what people actually believe and do'. This thesis is also informed by the following definition,

> Ethics [...] is commonly understood as a systematic intellectual reflection on morality in general, or specific moral concerns in particular.
>
> (Proctor 1999b, 3)

That is, ethics are developed from moral beliefs and used as a way to make sense of the world. Morality may also be appropriated as a set of 'guidelines' that provide a basis of evaluation for the conduct of oneselves and others (also referred to as values) (Furrow 2005, Proctor 1998, 1999a). Conversely, unethical actions or behaviours are thought to be those which contradict social norms on how people ought to live, implying a universal set of moral guidelines (Valentine 2004). Ethics, or values, may be applied in a number of ways, namely descriptive ethics (which characterise existing moral schemas), normative ethics (involve constructing a suitable moral basis to inform human conduct) and metaethics (an examination of the characteristics of ethical reasoning) (Proctor 1999b, Smith 2000). As an issue that will arise in later discussions and subsequent data analysis, Stewart (2009) points to the tensions between normative ethics and practical ethics (or ethics in practice), causing possible conflict when applying ones ethics to everyday situations.

In a more tangible sense, to be ethical or to act in a moral way is, according to Valentine (2004), preceded by a notion of human rationality, and a sense of universality or commonality, or having respect for, and an awareness of, others (both people and the environment). That is, ethical beliefs

develop due to the possession of reason, as part of human nature. When thinking about ethics, and the ethos (character and conduct) of others, there is a tendency to focus on the values and norms by which people live their lives, and give their actions meaning (Roebuck 1999). Yet, for Singer (1993) these values and norms go beyond the individual, and instead to a wider universal judgement (known as Universalism) that gives guidance to right and wrong. According to Proctor (1998, 1999b), despite their assumed polarity, values are as much a part of geography as facts. On the same matter, Sack (1997) instead speaks of moral virtues, such as truth, justice, courage and duty as forces that encourage ethical action and so sources of moral credit (Smith 2000). However, it is largely agreed that 'ethical action' would always be determined depending upon what is good or bad, right or wrong, factors that are themselves problematic in nature.

Distinguishing between 'good' and 'right' remains to be a focal aspect of discussions surrounding morals and ethics. In accordance with this, the development of Western philosophy has seen the emergence of two important moral theories, teleological and deontological approaches, both of which play a significant role when distinguishing between different moral philosophies (Driver 2005, Proctor 1998). As expanded upon in the following section, the deontological approach has informed the philosophical positioning of this thesis. Advocators of this approach argue that acting in a universally moral way is difficult, as there are no set morals to which everyone (or everyone knows that they should) adhere to, and 'correct' behaviour is too often presumed to have positive consequences (Barnett *et al* 2004, Brock 2005, Proctor 1998). As Lee and Smith (2004, 3) also explain, the human capacity 'to think normatively and to imagine', to express moral values, is what distinguishes humans from other beings. Although ethics are used to decipher between good and bad behaviour, they are also highly personal and plural in nature (Nagel 1979), making moral behaviour highly contextualised and incomparable between every individual. The following section will now go on to address moral theory, and the ways in which abstract concepts, such as ethics and morality, can be extracted and applied to everyday practice.

2.2: Moral Theories

An examination of the founding of moral philosophies and differing philosophical approaches is central to the discussion. A variety of approaches have dominated moral theory since the Nicomachean politics and ethics of Aristotle. As already noted, the Teleological and Deontological

approaches both occupy a significant role in Western moral philosophy (Driver 2005, Proctor 1998). Distinguishing between these approaches, the teleological approach 'concerns itself with the consequences' whereas deontological theories 'concern themselves with the action/motive' (Stewart 2009, 12). For Hay and Foley (1998), the establishment of two different approaches to ethics would infer that there exist two, contradictory notions of morally correct or ethical behaviour. Indeed, the aforementioned philosophical approaches view the intention behind moral actions in different ways. This section will start with an overview of the philosophy of morals and paradigms of moral theory, followed by a closer examination of the aforementioned approaches and corresponding literatures.

Theories regarding morality and ethics are often regarded as dichotomous with, and thus removed from, science and empirically deduced knowledge. According to Russell (1946),

> Unlike many other subjects treated by Greek philosophers, ethics has not made any definite advances, in the sense of ascertained discoveries; nothing in ethics is known in a scientific sense. There is therefore no reason why an ancient treatise on it should be in any respect inferior to a modern one. When Aristotle talks about astronomy, we can say definitely that he is wrong; but when he talks about ethics we cannot say, in the same sense, either that he is wrong or he is right.
>
> (Russell 1946, 193)

By 'scientific sense' one can assumed that Russell (1946) is referring to the positivist approach of induction, which attempts to understand the world through measured, controlled outcomes. By placing ethics in counter position to science, it is therefore assumed that ethics are subjective, and thus are difficult to contradict or invalidate. Yet it may be that too much emphasis is placed on the 'truth' of science, and not enough on the 'truth' of morality. Some philosophers and social scientists also argue that objective morals do exist outside individual perception, or more 'man's consciousness' (Anguelov 1972, 208), as a domain unto itself, like faith. Similarly, Russell's quote above also indicates that spatial and temporal changes should not influence morals, meaning that there exist universal morals that are not inhibited by context.

Likewise, other scholars have argued that ethics, or moral philosophy, are not that far removed from science, and so nor from its objective components. Kant, for example, believed that morals should be explored 'from a standpoint of disinterested and disengaged moral actors' (Tronto 1993, 9), and Weber (1904) also argues for a set of more definitive morals. However, Jones (2005) poses that,

> Moral discourse is fact-stating, disagreement is neither more nor less rationally resolvable in science than in ethics, moral properties are explanatorily potent and sometimes explain our moral observations, the method of wide reflective equilibrium just is the method used in science, and, though vulnerable to ideological distortion, some claims to moral knowledge survive reflective scrutiny.
>
> (Jones 2005, 67)

This extract would seem to suggest that ethics can, and should, be seen as a science, to be measured, manipulated and controlled. Yet normative assumptions, such as ethical behaviour, contrast unfavourably with 'positive' knowledge, or knowledge achieved through 'dispassionate empirical observation in the spirit of the natural sciences' (Proctor 1999b, 3), since people execute their ethics in different ways, dependent upon cultures, social norms and personal experiences. In response, it may be argued that morals are given in nature, that they are non-negotiable social facts, since negotiation is not thought to be a legitimate basis for moral principles, as this would then leave them to be arbitrary and subjective (Driver 2005). Likewise, for Durkheim (1895, 29), while moral maxims may be malleable, they are in fact more rigid than customs or fashions, and although both are a part of everyday life, morals and ethics, or 'ways of existing', become crystallised in our actions and the way we treat others.

However, both ethics and science are subject to paradigm shifts, which can lead to radical changes of thought. For instance, what Aristotle 'knew' about astronomy has since been tested and theoretically developed, albeit with the use of technological advancement. Likewise, Lee and Smith (2004, 3) point out that morality is 'geographically and historically constituted'. Yet, because morals and ethics are thought to possess 'highly personal and political implications', they are often assumed to be polarised with scientific 'fact' (MacIntyre 1967, Parsons 1937, Proctor 1999, 3). For Anguelov (1972, 209), this is due to the slow development of the social sciences, previous to Marx, in that social theories often failed to provide an explanation of 'the social essence of man'. It is also argued that ethics are part of what it is to be a 'social being', given that throughout history people have

always struggled for power, territory and the control of resources. According to Tronto (1993), such political battles conflate with moral principles. More specifically, she suggests that the combination of humans and ethics is not necessarily dyadic, but that politics places a huge emphasis upon this relationship. Furthermore, she argues that two versions of human conduct exist, 'morality first' and 'politics first', or rather what is 'right' and what is 'good' (see Aristotelian ethics below). In support of this argument, Russell (1946) also claims that since men have been capable of free speculation, their actions and theories of the world have been grounded in two ideals; what is good and what is evil. Western theories of ethics have been derived from these two streams of moral philosophy, and ethical theory in the social sciences has developed in a very similar fashion. As mentioned before, the teleological and deontological approaches are the result of this difference. Proctor (1999b) has also observed that a major theme in ethical theory, to which the philosophical debate often returns, is this notion of 'right' and 'good', and distinguishing between the two.

In accordance with Aristotelian accounts, the teleological approach is one that distinguishes between right and good, in that what is seen to be 'right' is that which maximises the 'good', or rather actions are seen to be 'right' if they have good consequences (Hay and Foley 1998). Thus ethical or moral conduct is evaluated on the basis that 'right' is deduced by balancing good over bad. In addition, Driver (2005) suggests that a theory of value is important within teleological accounts, since this avenue of moral thought claims that moral actions are those which are carried out with the intention of good or positive consequences (otherwise referred to as the Consequentialist approach). A teleological account is often used in support of the notion of ethics as subjective, since 'it promotes what everybody wants', which of course varies between individuals (Stewart 2009, 13). An example of this is practice would be utilitarianism, 'which holds that right action maximises the good' (or the greatest good for the greatest number), and therefore perceived as morally correct conduct (Driver 2005, 34).

Where teleological accounts place greatest significance on achieving 'good' over evil, Kantian deontology sees certain actions themselves as good or morally correct (Furrow, 2005). Indeed, deontological theories might be described as 'duty-based', whereby the term 'deon' is derived from the Greek for 'duty' (Stewart 2009, 35). Deontological accounts reject the principle that what is right may be determined by the evaluation of consequences, such as resulting in 'good'. This perspective takes into account the fact that morally correct behaviour does not always result in good or positive

consequences, theoretically suggesting that there are some morals that should be placed above happiness, desire or pleasure, as unconditional commands or moral duties (Hay and Foley 1998). In this sense, compared to teleological accounts that place greatest significance on achieving 'good' over evil, deontological accounts see 'right' as 'a more paramount concern' (Proctor 1999b). Kant believed duty or moral obligation to be determined by the aforementioned unconditional demands that place 'right' over good, rather than being driven by the desire to produce 'good' consequences. Hence, using this theory, people are regulated by what morality demands to be correct behaviour (Driver 2005). This parallels Christian moralist theories, which hold that 'while the consequences of virtuous actions are in general good, they are not *as* good as the virtuous actions themselves, which are to be valued on their own account, and not on account of their effects' (Russell 1946, 190).

It is said that from the eighteenth century onwards, Kantian views of moral theory have not only been accepted, but form much of the basis of ethical thought in both philosophy and social science. Kant argued that moral theory should not arise from specific circumstances, but instead from the requirements of reason (Kant c1775, Tronto 1993). Driver (2005, 43) elaborates upon this analysis, to suggest that Kantian ethics are somewhat 'cold and antiseptic', that is, according to Kant, emotions have no intrinsic value in ethical theory, compared to the role of reason and duty. Comparatively, the Aristotelian view argues for a harmonious relationship between desires and moral belief, in order to achieve a 'good citizen by forming good habits', and that humans should find pleasure and happiness in performing good actions (Russell 1946, 185). However, these ideas are argued to reflect the convention of the day, and as such Aristotle's opinions on moral questions are often regarded as part of an ancient philosophical paradigm (Driver 2005). These ancient conceptions of philosophy are also notable in Spinoza's 'Ethics' which, despite integrating theories of metaphysics and ethics, still argues happiness is necessary for a 'well-lived life' (Lloyd 1996, 141). Within this thesis the deontological approach is favoured and furthermore it is argued that acting in a universally moral way is difficult, and 'correct' behaviour is too often presumed to have positive consequences (Barnett *et al* 2004, Brock 2005, Proctor 1998). Taking note of these intra-social differences, it is here at the interface between geography and philosophy that theories regarding geographies of morality and ethics have emerged, as the next section will now explore.

2.3: Moral Philosophy and Moral Geographies

Debates and discussions regarding moral theory have been long standing in Philosophy, and with the Moral Turn have more recently infiltrated into other academic subjects (Smith 1997). According to Cutchin (2002) ethics have 'penetrated medical, population and economic geography' (p. 658) and the influence of morals on geographic research (both theoretical and methodological) is pervasive. Taking into account the moral turn and the infiltration of moral theory into Geography, such research might indeed mark a different phase in the life of contemporary Geographies. For Tuan (1999), morals and ethics were not traditionally thought of as inherent in Geography, and in fact moral questions had still failed to emerge in the discipline by the mid-twentieth century. Geography is also rarely referred to in philosophical texts (as the core residence of moral theory), despite the prominent use of philosophy to inform geographical debate (Smith 1997 and 1999). However, others have suggested that the notion of ethics and morals in geography should be less a meeting of two disciplines, and more a case for the deconstruction of Geography as a discipline and a subject with a complex, ethically questionable heritage (Rose 1993).

In the past, there have been difficulties in bridging this gap between the disciplines of Geography and Philosophy, since Philosophy very rarely engages with Geographical debates and issues (Smith 1997 and 1999). In the Introduction to their aptly titled book *'Philosophy and Geography'* Light and Smith (1997) argue that synthesising the two subjects should not be about forming a relationship between them, but to provide a forum for discussion that would interest academics from both parties. Contrary to these suggestions, Kobayashi and Proctor (2004) argued that ethics have always been an aspect of geography, due to the integral role of the human relationship with nature. As reminded by Cutchin (2002), the term 'ethics' derives from the Greek *thea* meaning 'habitats', therefore pronouncing the role of nature and the environment in informing moral theory. Thus Valentine's (2004) definition of 'commonality' may not be limited to human-human relationships, but could extend to include ecological and environmental concerns. Further from this, Driver (1991, 61) notes that moral beliefs and assumptions 'in our own time and place may be radically different from that of other times and places'. This suggests that morals occupy their own geography, due to these temporal and spatial differences. Similarly, Opie (1998) suggests that 'an ethical choice made about a particular people and place; an internal logic that belongs to the particular people and place' (242). This underdeveloped relationship, between Geography and Philosophy, provides further

context to this research, which sits at the interface of these two bodies of thought; how morals form and how they are incorporated into practice.

One way of bridging the connection between geography and morality, and creating scope for further discourse between the two disciplines, is by examining the relationship between abstract morals and practiced ethics. Geographers' research is especially influential in terms of the problematising of morals and scale, and asking questions about the moral features of place, as well as the spaces over which distance might intervene and complicate moral responsibilities (Barnett *et al* 2004, Cutchin 2002, Proctor 1998). As mentioned in the introduction to this chapter, the notion of caring at a distance raises important issues about the difficulties of social distance. Although too broad a discussion to be thoroughly examined here, and having already been subject to rigorous academic debate (see Brock 2005, Korf 2007, Popke 2006, Silk 2000) theories of caring (and conceiving harm) at a distance tend to be based on the notion of obligation. This obligation and responsibility is often strongest toward those people with whom we have a close personal relationship (the 'inner core' or 'thick morality'), resulting in a privileging of the local over the distant (Bell 1998, Brock 2005, Smith 1997). This tension in responsibility towards distant others has created a gulf between caring about (benevolence) and caring about (beneficence) others,

> In caring about others, we experience a genuine ethical and emotional engagement, wishing to do good. In caring for others, we take the crucial step actively to do good.
>
> (Silk 2000, 304)

A distinction can also be made between benevolence and beneficence in the 'thinking' and 'doing' aspects of the above extract, in that to care for others, or to act in a beneficent manner, is to perform relative actions, rather than to just express empathy. The act of caring for others involves exercising ones moral motivation, or 'charitable impulses', and displaying care or consideration for others through behavioural practice (Cloke 2002, Tronto 1993). Yet these charitable impulses are not universally defined, but instead depend upon a range of variables such as inclusion or exclusion of social groups (Philo 1991), economic connectedness to other actors (Brock 2005), cultural assumptions, such as closeness to domestic animals (Dawson 1999, Valentine 2004), presumed relatedness and responsibility (Gormley and Bondi 1999, Popke 2003), and the power or agency to act (Rundstrom and Deur 1999).

Whilst recognising that moral motivations are, in many case, highly contextual, Popke (2003) notes that there is a common tendency, when expressing benevolence or beneficence, to privilege more local or better known individuals/communities, over distant strangers, and argues that to be ethical is to treat equality those who are distant or near. According to Silk (2000, 306), acting ethically requires 'psychological and emotional engagement with fellow human beings in need', therefore positioning ethical intentions as a requirement for ethical behaviour. Understanding these ethics in practice also requires an understanding of relational ethics, or how one's ethics affect others. Ethics are grounded in a moral responsibility towards others, as mentioned previously, and ideas about moral selfhood and responsible action are bound up with notions of human agency. However, Popke (2003) suggests that it is difficult to act ethically with a prevailing 'out of sight out of mind' mentality. In this sense, ethical responsibility is geographical in nature, as knowledge of distant locations is often considered a prerequisite for responsible action and an essential basis for a healthy society (Barnett *et al* 2005, Bell 1998).

Despite the presumption that knowledge is a prerequisite to responsible action, it may also be argued that there are no universal obligations towards these 'distant others'. Conversely the 'near and dear' have come to expect care and concern, and moral obligations towards close family members, for instance, are taken as a given (Smith 2000). At the same time, self-interest and altruism need not be defined as polarised, dichotomous categories, but indeed 'self-interest can be moral' (Badhwar 1993, 93), or rather the avenue to moral acts. Silk (2000) also discusses the prioritisation of localised responsibilities, and the social distances between average citizens and members of less advantaged groups, as potential obstacles for caring at a distance. Whilst considering these networks and pathways to care, this very argument can be inverted and applied to understand unethical behaviour, for one cannot recognise the harm brought to others, and indeed it is not visible (due to distance), by imbrications in social rules (Bell 1998). As Smith (2000) notes,

> If the human capacity of putting one's self in the place of others is to be an effective well spring of morality, this requires understanding that place as well as those others
>
> (Smith 2000, 214)

Understanding ethics therefore requires an understanding of the context in which ethics are formed and performed, and what is right given the situation. Debates regarding the geographies of morality, such as 'caring at a distance', are an essential aspect of recognising what it means to be ethical, since

'distance should not matter morally' (Silk 2000, 305). However, these discussions should be approached in a critical manner, since the theory of caring at a distance only considers human-human concerns, thus marginalising potential environmental and ecological responsibilities. The next section goes onto explore how these moral debates enter into everyday practice, and who is responsible for their dissemination.

2.4: Moral Education

As mentioned, a deontological approach to ethics has informed and is favoured within this thesis, as providing a more fitting explanation of moral conduct, particularly in relation to ethical consumption debates (see Chapter 4). In taking this approach, it is important to understand not only how and what behaviours are defined as right or wrong, but to be able to discern moral practices. If moral behaviour is not determined by consequence but is instead related to duty and defined according to the moral nature of the action, this therefore means that people also need to learn how to be moral. In this case, moral education becomes significant.

Whilst there are multiple theories of moral behaviour, the term 'moral education' is also subject to various definitions. According to Althof and Berkowitz (2006, 496), moral education is the attempt to promote the development of young people's 'moral cognitive structures'. Others conceptualise moral education more in terms of *what* it attempts to develop, such as 'the deliberate teaching of particular values, attitudes, and dispositions' (Schuitema *et al* 2008, 70), or simply education that is aimed at 'promoting pupils' personal well-being' (White 1990). The term moral education is also interchangeable with the phrase 'values education', deemed to be more fashionable (Gatherer 2004), although other terms such as 'character education' and 'citizenship education' may be used (Schuitema *et al* 2008). The latter of these terms, citizenship education, is associated with the introduction of Citizenship as a statutory foundation subject (in English secondary schools since September 2002) (Pike 2007a). Conversely, Fogelman (1997) suggests that debates about citizenship education in the UK can be traced back to the Victorian times. Despite these differences in definition, terminology and emphasis, what such definitions share is an understanding that moral education is designed to prepare young people to become moral members of society (Kay 1975).

In terms of the purpose of moral education, and arguably education in general, Kay (1975, 196) proposes that one aim is to produce 'good citizens', and that schools should 'induce moral values, principles, norms and conduct'. To be more specific, Gatherer (2004, 146) suggests that moral education is required to develop 'moral concepts [such] as 'justice', 'fairness', 'rights' and 'obligations''. According to Pike (2007a), moral education in schools is intended to directly influence behaviour,

> The mandatory citizenship curriculum in England does not aim only to foster *skills* and transfer *knowledge* (in relation to such practices as voting for instance) it is designed to influence citizens' *values and actions*.
>
> (Pike 2007a, 472)

Here again it appears that thinking and doing, or rather 'values and actions', are segregated into different levels of moral behaviour, similar to the differentiation between benevolence and beneficence. According to Lambert (1999, 12), at the heart of the concept of moral education is the eventual development of the person 'to do right because one wants to do right'. Additionally, Althof and Berkowitz (2006, 496) argue that 'societies need moral members; they need children to develop into moral adults'. This idea of 'children are our future' is also apparent in Climate Change discourses (see also Smith 2000), and is entangled with concepts of responsibility, as discussed in Chapter 4 and again later in Chapter 8. Schuitema *et al* (2008, 72) also state that 'moral education contributes to the quality of society', implying that moral education equates to a better quality of citizen. In agreement with Ross (2002), these motivations for moral education would seem to problematise the notion of doing right, and for whom (and why) people learn to do right, whether for society, or for individual self-development. This in turn may impact upon the content of moral education, or what is taught to be 'moral', and how this information is disseminated.

A number of subjects have been identified as carrying a specific responsibility for teaching and disseminating moral values. It should, however, be noted that the following discussion regarding the contents of the school curriculum is very UK-centred, given that this research was carried out in the UK. As mentioned above, the introduction of the subject Citizenship was designed to meet the aims of moral education, by promoting responsible behaviour and 'to enhance the practice of good citizenship in school and society' (Covell *et al* 2008, 321). However, before the subject of Citizenship was introduced, and for those schools where Citizenship teaching is integrated across the curriculum

(as opposed to forming a separate lesson, which tends to be encouraged), other lessons were, and are, required to fulfil the role of moral education. Those subjects that have been identified as 'compatible' with Citizenship teaching include Personal Social and Health Education (PSHE), Religious Education (R.E), History, Geography and English. However, Physical Education (P.E), Information Communication Technology (ICT), Modern Foreign Languages, Drama, Art, Business Studies, Maths and Technology have also been recognised as having a potential role (Lambert 1999, National Curriculum 2008, Pike 2007a, Pike 2007b, Schuitema *et al* 2008). Fogelman (1997) also points out that the ethos of the school and the general teaching style of the subject matter are important to moral education. Engagement with the school council and participation in whole-day events might also help to make moral education more visible (Pike 2007b). In this sense, the school environment - consisting of the classroom, pupils, teachers and the school ethos - becomes a site for moral learning.

However, moral education is not bound to the school, or indeed the classroom, whereby the family and real life experiences are also considered to play an essential role (Potter 2002). As the QCA (now QCDA) report on Spiritual and Moral Development (1995, S) outlines, 'moral development in schools builds on the child's experience in the home'. Additionally, the family, according to Kay (1975, 183), is an 'agent of moral education'. Halstead (1999) also indicates that the family are usually the initial and primary influence on a person's moral development, implying that they are likely to have a greater moral 'imprint' on the child. If this is the case, that the family and the home environment have a pervasive influence on moral education, then it stands that,

> To benefit from an education in citizenship is to acknowledge that we live interconnected lives in a society and to appreciate that what we know and do derives, in part, from such involvement.
>
> (Pike 2007a, 485)

There is again a distinction made here between knowing and doing, and this dichotomy between knowledge and practice is a consistent theme in moral theory, as well as within this thesis. In the very definition of morals and ethics, as described in earlier sections, ethics were identified as a conscious reflection on moral beliefs, and morality as the performance of these beliefs. The notion 'interconnectivity' in spheres of moral learning is also repeated by Schuitema *et al* (2008), who argue that what students learn at school needs to be meaningful to them and they must be able to

connect this learning with their prior knowledge. This concept is extremely helpful and provides further supports the multi-sited research design used (see Chapter 5), as well as the theoretical framing of this thesis. Although it may be debated as to whether school or home education is the most effective, there is a general consensus that neither families nor school are the only influence, nor are they always in mutual cooperation (Covell and Howe 2001, Kay 1975).

In terms of learning about specific aspects of moral education, there appears to be a particular dialect between the formal and informal avenues to knowledge, as a concept that parallels the idea of 'interconnected lives'. One such aspect is ethical consumption, although this would most likely be taught and discussed within lessons concerning environmental and humanitarian ethics. Citizenship education is designed to approach these different ethical debates, as noted in the Crick report- the Governmental report that led to Citizenship being established as a subject within the UK National Curriculum. This report found that the values that were thought to underpin a 'modern, participating democracy', at the heart of citizenship education, include 'a concern for human rights and the environment' (Potter, 2002, 38). Schuitema *et al* (2008, 76) similarly argue that issues such as 'environmental pollution and distribution of wealth' encourage young people's understanding of the world around them. The notion of thinking about other people and the world around you had strong connotations of the geographies of responsibility and concepts such as 'caring at a distance', as discussed previously. In accordance with this, Pike (2007b, 222) notes that citizenship education is also concerned with motivating young people to combat 'injustice in society', which insinuates a responsibility amongst young people to address social problems.

However, as yet there appears to be very little engagement within the UK curriculum that acknowledges ethical debates, or indeed the capacity of young people to make ethical decisions in consumption. In a rare example, within a school-based study conducted by Hudson (2005), ethical consumption was integrated into the curriculum. At the end of a unit on globalisation, students had the choice of either making posters for the classroom regarding ethical consumption and advertising fair trade products, or to write to the director of Nike about worker's conditions and pay. Other literature also touches on the value of whole-day events such as 'Human Rights Day' and 'Criminal Justice Day' (Pike 2007b), and other events such as theatre workshops tailored to increase student's understanding of particular issues, out of school visits, or community-service learning (Schuitema *et al* 2008). The reorganisation of cooked school meals and the removal of certain foods from the

school environment (such as turkey drummers, chips and carbonated drinks) might also be included within this list. Indeed, the TV chef associated with this campaign, Jamie Oliver, is even discussed on the QCDA (2010) website, in a section entitled 'Designing healthy food for a local context'.

Therefore, those instances where ethics are approached would seem to be based around practical activities or events that are separate from everyday learning in the classroom, and tasks that would appear to require some prior knowledge (such as from home, media, peers). Rather than being part of debates, examples such as ethical consumption are used to illustrate wider social issues, rather than being explored as an issue in themselves (Hudson 2005). In relation to this, Lambert (1999) argues that simply promoting environmental values is morally careless and does not contribute to pupils' moral development. Yet, as Haydon (2004) points out, consumerism cannot be ignored in discussions of the ethical environment, simply because of the impact it has on people's lives in a 'consumer society' (Rattansi and Phoenix 1997). As discussed, ethics in consumption are rarely approached in curriculum and citizenship literature, and nor are debates about the issues it involves. In short, within moral education there lacks an understanding of how, and indeed why, ethical and moral dispositions can influence consumption choices and the decision-making processes surrounding consumer habits.

2.5: Chapter Conclusion

Within this chapter, debates surrounding ethics and morality have been explored in further detail, using geographical and philosophical literature, as well as theory from across the social sciences. In section 2.1, definitions of morality and ethics were explored. Most definitions refer to these terms as a set of 'moral guidelines' that provide a foundation for the assessment of the conduct of oneself and others. These moral guidelines included a sense of universality and commonality, or having respect for, and an awareness of, others. The literature also pointed to a tension between normative ethics and practical ethics, between what people think and what they do (also see Chapter 4). It was also indicated that, when defining the perimeters of these terms, there are difficulties in distinguishing between 'good' and 'right'. Ethics are often used to decipher between good and bad behaviour, although they are personal and plural in nature.

Section 2.2 then examined differing philosophical approaches. Following a discussion of the difference between science and ethics, it was explored how normative assumptions, such as ethical behaviour, are difficult to contrast with science or 'positive' knowledge, because people execute and express ethics in different ways. As explained, the teleological approach distinguishes between right and good, and actions are seen to be 'right' if they have good consequences, making moral behaviour incomparable between every individual. Kantian deontology, however, places 'right' as a more paramount concern and actions themselves as good or morally correct. The deontological approach informs this thesis, and later chapters will explore how acting in a universally moral way is difficult, and 'correct' behaviour is too often presumed to have positive consequences.

Following from this, section 2.3 explored the relationship between Geography and Philosophy, whereby the influence of morals on Geographical research is obvious, and yet Geography is rarely referred to in philosophical texts. It has been argued that, rather than forming a relationship between them, what is needed is a forum for discussion. The relationship between abstract morals and practiced ethics was also discussed as requiring further investigation. In terms of the influence of moral theory on Geography, this section also discussed theories of caring at a distance and issues surrounding social distance. It was discussed how people are thought to have greater moral obligations to those with whom they have a close personal relationship and those that are more locals, privileging the local over the distant. Moral motivations or 'charitable impulses' were also a topic of debate, as well as concepts of benevolence and beneficence. However, it was argued that academics should also approach these discussions in a critical manner, taking into account not only human-human concerns, but also environmental and ecological responsibilities.

Section 2.4 then explored the various definitions of moral education, as the teaching of values and ethics to young people, to prepare them to become moral members of society, or good citizens. In terms of moral education in schools, a number of subjects were identified as carrying a specific responsibility for teaching and disseminating moral values, as well as the school environment (the classroom, pupils, teachers and the school ethos). However, it was argued that moral education is not bound to the school, but that family are a pervasive influence, creating 'interconnected' spheres of moral learning. It was also explained that the UK curriculum interacts minimally with ethical debates, such as the ethical decision-making processes surrounding consumption.

This chapter has therefore identified that morals vary between people, and are expressed in different ways, towards a variety of issues, although there is a need for empirical evidence of moral development and practice. There is also scope to further develop the forum for discussion between moral theory and geography, as well as the relationship between concepts of normative ethics and practical ethics. There is also room to explore the different sites of moral education, such as the family and the school, the ways in which they influence moral learning, and the capacity of young people to make ethical decisions. Before exploring these issues, it is necessary to first investigate the role of consumption within everyday routines. Consumption is identified as one means of expressing moral values (see Chapter 1), and is therefore significant in understanding, developing and discerning moral practice. Therefore the next chapter will now go on to explore Geographies of Consumption. Taking off where this chapter was left (at education and moral citizens), I will firstly explore issues of identity, and the ways in which personal dispositions can impact, but can also be expressed through consumption choices.

Chapter 3: Geographies of Consumption

Consumption is often referred to as a set of commonplace practices, such as buying, using, shopping cooking, eating and drinking. As asserted in Chapter 1, consumption is a means by which people articulate their personal identities and understandings of the world, as 'a pervasive part of everyday life in contemporary society' (Mansvelt 2005, 1). Since the 'Cultural turn' in the 1980's, consumption in the market has been celebrated as a source of fulfilment, veering from dominant economic perspectives that place production as more important than consumption (Driver and Martell 1999). As a result, there has been a steadily increasing production of academic works on this subject, paralleling the consumer boom of the 1980s, resulting in the emergence of Geographies of Consumption (Goss 2004). To some, the Cultural turn represents a crisis of overproduction, but cultural analysis is nonetheless a significant aspect of contemporary Human Geography. Indeed, for Geographies of Consumption, the cultural turn took consumption, otherwise regarded as a symptom of production, and reinvigorated studies of consumerism to explore issues of self-identity, class and, as later initiated by the Moral turn, ethical considerations. The growth of cultural geography therefore has heavily influenced consumption research to date (Cutchin 2002, Goss 2004, Nash 2002).

Corresponding with this academic movement towards cultural understandings, many Western countries also experienced a consumer boom, leading through to the early 1990's. From this consumer boom (alike those of the 1950's and 1970's), new kinds of consumer groups emerged. According to Lofgren (2004), marked by globalised trading and a time-space compression, this era bore a 'hyper consumption'. Changes were also occurring in the specific modes of retail that facilitated consumption, for example a movement from local stores to supermarkets. Therefore definitions, understandings and practices of consumption have been historically changing and are socially constructed (Bell and Valentine 1997, Bocock 1993). However, one major criticism of consumption research to date is that it fails to capture the 'lived' elements of consumption as being part of wider economic (everyday) processes. This has subsequently led to a marginalisation of the everyday processes of consumption within the economy, where consumption is regarded as something removed from the economic networks of trade and production. More recently, however, social science research has started to address the grounded, real-life nature of economic processes, to recognise consumption not as a practice isolated from other economic processes, but as being

intricately linked within production chains or networks. Addressing consumption in this manner enables us to think beyond just the monetary value of products and to explore how everyday consumption practices are connected to the global economy in other ways. At the same time, however, whilst the complex linkages between the economic processes of production and consumption have been received recent academic attention, the depth to which this relationship has been examined is limited (see Hall *et al* 2008). Within this chapter, these marginalised aspects of the Geographies of Consumption will be explored, looking firstly at the role of consumption in identity formation (3.1), forms of economic analysis (3.2) commodities and value (3.3), following by a chapter conclusion (3.4).

3.1: Consumption and Identity

Consumption is, by all accounts, an essential everyday process, 'to live is to consume' (Borgmann 2000, 418). As explained above, understanding the process of consumption also requires a look at the ways in which consumption impacts on everyday lives. For some, consumer profiles are thought to be shaped by market processes, producing identities that are fluid and fragmented (Bocock 1993, Lofgren 2004). For others, however, consumers of today are thought to play an active and skilled role in the consumption process (Barnett *et al* 2004). Consumers are considered to be actively aware of their influence as a consuming body, and the relationship between food consumed and the spaces that bodies take up (Bell and Valentine 1997). The corporeal nature of consumption, in the sense that foods (and other items, such as cosmetics and medicines) are ingested into the body (Fine 2002) means that consumption may also impact upon a person's appearance and health. Ray and Sayer (1999) also argue that, rather than being passive to market forces, consumption practices are actually a sign of creative activity and cultural innovation. In short, consumption is one way of expressing personality or identity; who we are, what we like, and our cultural/extra local influences.

One aspect of identity formation and expression within consumption is the use of brands. Branding has effectively been used as a way for corporations to create a unique personality, as 'personification[s] of who they are and where they've come from' (Bakan 2004, 26), and therefore construct their own identity. These brand identities are also used to define consumer identity and culturally fix themselves to consumer spaces, such as the supermarket, the shopping centre, and even the home. An important part of brand identity is brand credibility, 'as the believability of the

product position information contained in a brand' (Erdem and Swait 2004, 191). What is expected of a brand and what it is trusted it to deliver, such as the quality, taste, aesthetics and/or performance of the produce, all comes down to how the brand is perceived. According to Erdem and Swait (2004), brand-based purchasing and loyalty of this sort leads to a reduction in consumer information, as they are less likely to look for similar items of a different brand. This lack of information flow via the consumer, due to brand reliability, may explain why many consumers are unaware of 'unethical' brands, although recent years have seen an increase interest in the ethics behind the products people use (Falk 1997, Goss 2004, Klein 2000), as the next chapter will explore.

It is now widely accepted within consumption studies that consumerism is an integral part of identity formation, whereby people's personalities are constructed around what they purchase, nurturing an individualised style (Sayer 1999). As Edwards (2000, 118) explains,

> Personality is at least partly constructed or reinforced through commodities, particularly those which are clearly apparent or easily recognised including clothing, cars and property.

Consumer habits and visible markers of consumption may therefore be used as a way to define a personal identity and individuality. Identity, like consumption, is recognised as being neither fixed or immutable (Miller 1998), but at the same time is influenced by class distinctions and thus taste (Bourdieu 1984, Jenkins 1992). At the same time, personal identity may be expressed through everyday consumption choices. The concept of the 'everyday' is often associated with ideas of routine and familiarity, as the mundane and uninteresting, yet under theorised parts of family life (Dupois and Thorns 1998). There are a number of theories to explain the development of habits or repeated practices, such a 'modes of operations' (de Certeau 1984), or 'practical consciousness' (Giddens 1984, Hobson 2003). Through these repetitive practices, people develop habits, as well as tacit knowledge about the products that they consume.

However, having an active role as a consumer is not necessarily possible for everyone. This preoccupation with commodities for the development of personal identity (otherwise known as commodity fetishism) also ignores issues surrounding the harmful effects of over-consumption to both the body and society in general. People now work in order to be able to afford to buy consumer products, that 'serve as goals and rewards for working (Bocock 1993, 50). As Miller (1998, 94) also explains, for some money is a 'frightful substance', and 'may carry with it the resentments, the

achievements and a host of other experiences of work', associated with labour and earning. Such changes in the patterns of consumerism have lead to constantly changing boundaries between wanting, needing, desiring, consuming and owning, which are themselves associated with values beyond that of a monetary form. However, it may be said that certain modes of consumption alter these boundaries, for example shopping; as the linchpin of the consumer society, shopping is thought to facilitate the cultural manipulation of the consumer by market interests and thus impacting upon the desirability of consumer goods (Castree 2001, Lofgren 2004).

As the previous chapter explored, the home and the family are considered to be the key site of moral education. The home is also thought to be the site where personal and consumer identities are rooted. According to Bell and Valentine (1997), and later Valentine (1999c), memories of home are often marked by consumption habits. Consumer items within the home may be regarded as deeply personal possessions, thus household items are often passed through numerous generations (Edwards 2000), in the same way that consumer habits might be traced through family experiences. Today, the home is an important site for the everyday consumption of, for instance, foods, clothes, music, toiletries, and the development of consumer identities, yet this has not always been the case. In the past, the home was also the sphere of production. Since the industrial revolution, production and consumption have been regarded as largely dichotomous, with home considered to be caring and secure, and the labour market as dangerous and uncaring (Bowlby *et al* 1997, Sibley 1995). The ontological security that the home offers is also thought to be essential to the continuation of self-identity, and for many people home offers a source emotional security that enables them to develop their personalities (Dupois and Thorns 1998, Mallet 2004).

Home and identity are intricately bound together, and consumption allows people to articulate their identity within the home (Furst 1997, Tolia-Kelly 2004, Valentine 2001). Yet it is important to remember that consumption and identity formation take place in the context of a shared home, amidst intra-family dynamics. Family members are also thought to be morally obligated to provide security and care for one another, and parents are considered as social and moral guarantors for their children (Finch and Mason 1993, Wyness 1997). However, exercising this responsibility is gendered in nature, and such relationships are constantly being negotiated. For Finch (1989), negotiated responsibility is considered a moral dimension of everyday family life, whereby parents create moral boundaries for their children, directly influencing their behaviour and what they

perceived to correct (ethical) conduct, as discussed in Chapter 2. One example is that meal times at the dinner table are often an opportunity for parents to teach their children how to manage their bodies and actions to be socially acceptable. Similar to moral education, this encourages people to exercise and reproduce these habits through repeated practice (Bell and Valentine 1997).

As mentioned, family members within the home are thought to maintain particular (often gendered) roles within decision-making and consumption practices, based on intra family relations. For Domosh (1998), the space of the kitchen confirms a gender distinction within the home, perpetuating social practices that keep women at home as primary care givers. Women and the home seem to have a bounded identity, as the space of the home is regularly considered feminine and certain practices, such as cooking, reproduce socially and culturally accepted female positions (Bugge and Almas 2006). This ethic of care, of mothers having a moral duty to their home and family, is often thought of as 'natural' and obligatory (Bowlby *et al* 1997, Furst 1997, Wyness 1997). These notions of care and responsibility to others have also been explored by Feminist theories of the self, and the ways in which our relationships with others are affected by understandings of the self, as an agglomeration of social circumstances, material circumstances, change and growth (Griffiths 1995). Today, women still shop for, prepare, and cook most family meals, and this responsibility for the feeding of the family effects the extent of her influence in deciding how the family consumes (Bell and Valentine 1997, Griffiths 1995). For Miller (1998), this form of care-giving is considered to be an expression of 'love', which in many ways romanticises these internal family relations and removes any consideration of the tensions that exist within these negotiations (also see Massey 1994). Within the family context, morality and consumption are intricately bound together, and thus consumption allows people to articulate their identity within the home (Bell and Valentine 1997, Furst 1997, Tolia-Kelly 2004, Valentine 2001).

However, others suggest that the decision-making processes surrounding consumption are far more complex, and that while men have limited responsibility over domestic chores, they still hold authority over the money assigned to consumerables, and the times and content of meal times (Bell and Valentine 1997, Mallet 2004). Home can therefore also be a place of conflicting interests, and power, and so tensions and negotiations within the home are thought to be normal (Blunt and Dowling 2006, Sibley 1995). Negotiations occur between parents, regarding their responsibilities towards their children, but also between parents and children, in order to maintain moral

boundaries. Valentine (1999b, 1999c) argues that more work is needed on the decision-making processes regarding consumption at home. In her research on eating in the home (1999c), she reveals that negotiation occurs between different family members at different times, owing to the strained relations that gendered responsibility and control can cause between all family members (also see Valentine 1999a, Valentine 2001, Wyness, 1997).

In terms of locating consumer identity, in their book *Consuming Geographies*, Bell and Valentine (1997) focus on a set of commonplace consumption spaces, ranging from the body, home and community, through to wider, less intimate spaces, including regional, national and global sites. They argue that since the cultural turn, emerging geographies of consumption have mapped only certain consumption sites (notably shopping centres) or particular consumption practices, and thus their objective is to expand ways of thinking about geographies of consumption. Previous work regarding the geographical location of consumption has focused on a range of sites, place and spaces, including eating and body image (Valentine 1999c), geographies of retail (Crewe 2000 and 2003), eating in the street (Valentine 1998), car boot sales (Crewe and Gregson 1998), food and drink in the workplace (Valentine 2002), supermarkets (Hilton 2003), male prisons (Valentine and Longstaff 1998), and feeding the family as women's work (Devault 1991). However, there remains a distinct lack of engagement between how these spaces and these consumer identities interact with personal morals and ethics. Also, as Crewe (2000) points out, everyday spaces of consumption, such as the home (see page 31), are often overlooked in favour of more 'worldly' locations.

Whilst geographers and anthropologists alike have looked to material culture as a way to explore individual identity (see Campbell 2005, Jackson *et al* 2007, Money 2007), few efforts have been made to explore how individual consumption choices can have an impact on production processes or those involved in production practices (Hilton 2003). Indeed, there is also little discourse between theories of consumer identity and theories of moral identity. As mentioned in the introduction to this chapter, research that has examined the links between consumption and production is deficient, in terms of how everyday consumption practices relate back to wider social and economic processes. Due to this, consumption largely remains to be a 'black box', yet to be opened. According to Hilton (2004), consumption cannot be understood outside its ethical and political- to which I would add geographical- framework. Therefore, in exploring the relationship between theories, and

practices, of consumption and production, the following section will look at various forms of economic analysis, and the positioning of consumption within each of these accounts.

3.2: Locating Consumption in Economic Analysis

The previous section explored how consumption is considered central to identity formation, and yet everyday consumption practices are largely marginalised from theories of the economy. Likewise, it has proved difficult for theoretical accounts of the economy to fully explore both economic and cultural aspects of consumption and the nuances of everyday consumer habits. There have, however, been various attempts to theorise the vast, complex interconnections of the global economy. These attempts have ultimately been concerned with the relationships that emerge between people and places, since there has been a 'growing interest in the mutual dependence of sites of production, distribution, retailing, design, advertising, marketing and final consumption' (Hughes and Reimer 2004a). There are three dominating approaches to analysing these connections of mutual dependence; commodity chains, network-based approaches, and commodity circuits. This section will discuss these approaches, in so far as their ability to explain the relationship between production and consumption, where each account positions consumption, and therefore the role of consumers within these economic processes.

In its simplest definition, a commodity chain is a linear process tracing the social and economic organisation that surrounds the global 'life' of a particular product or commodity, from production to consumption (Clancy 1998). The commodity chain approach was developed primarily by Hopkins and Wallerstein, as 'a network of labor and production processes whose end result is a finished commodity' (Hopkins and Wallerstein 1986, 159). Leslie and Reimer (1999, 402) also draw attention to the various other nodes that are involved when tracing the trajectory of a commodity,

> Production, distribution, retailing, design, advertising, marketing and final consumption... Commodity chain analysis provides a means of thinking more precisely about the specific practices which shape the flow of goods.

Focusing on the commodity is a useful tool with which to examine the various practices and sites involved in the production of goods within the global economy. Two examples of commodity chain theories include the Global Commodity Chain approach (GCC) and the filière approach.

The GCC approach, developed largely by Gary Gereffi, provides an international view of the global economy, and is often favoured over other state-centric approaches (Raikes *et al* 2000). According to Gereffi *et al* (1994, 2),

> A GCC consists of sets of interorganizational networks clustered around one commodity or product, linking households, enterprises, and states to one another within the world-economy. These networks are situationally specific, socially constructed, and locally integrated, underscoring the social embeddedness of economic organisation

The GCC approach builds upon Hopkins and Wallerstein's idea of 'networked processes', as well as expanding the definition, to encompass the different sites and spaces that the chain encounters. However, the French filière approach may be advocated instead of the GCC approach, especially when attempting to describe agricultural activity and food chains, for which the theory was formulated. Developed by French economists around the 1970's to provide a description of the industrial structure of the country, the filière approach is another means of analysing the strategies of different actors in the economic system. The filière (or 'chain') is concerned with the historical formation of relations between institutions, organisations and the individual, in the production of food. Removed from the trade-centric approach advocated in earlier economic theory, the filière concept attempts to map the flow of commodities by looking to the role of agents and activities (Groeneweyen and Beije 1989, Mather 1999). The approach has been defined as a 'commodity focused analysis' (Raikes *et al* 2000, 404, Watts 2004), but more accurately the filière itself is 'a system of agents producing and distributing goods and services for the satisfaction of a final demand' (Henderson *et al* 2002, 439).

By focussing on the trajectory of the commodity, these commodity chain approaches seek to recognise the external linkages involved in global trade (households, enterprises and states), in the process of commodification. Yet, for Guthman (2004, 235), the centrality that is given to the commodity within GCC theory is a 'back door way' of resurrecting the 'fetishism of commodities'. Within the chain metaphor, there is a tendency to ignore the process of consumption, subsuming all consumption activities and processes as the last 'stage'. In this sense, consumers are portrayed as passive 'nodes' within the chain, that simply mark the ending of the commodity's 'lifetime' (Leslie and Reimer 1999). Goodman (2002, 272) also argues that, because of this, production and consumption are therefore not chained together at all, but in fact appear as autonomous categories, and as 'sites only skeletally connected through the act of purchase'. This focus on the commodity,

and the surrounding processes, differs greatly from traditional or neoclassical approaches to the economy, known to consider trade alone and isolated from other factors such as investment, finance and even internal relations. By focussing on the trajectory of the commodity, the commodity chain approach seeks to recognise the external linkages involved in global trade, in the movement towards an end point of commodification, as the next section will consider.

In contrast, network-based approaches, such as Global Production Networks (GPN) and Alternative Food Networks (AFN) keep sight of the social relationships that are essential to the functioning of the global economy. In its broad definition,

> The metaphor of the network can be applied to the economy in order to describe how different nodes (people, firms, states and organisations) are connected to one another in complex and multi-stranded ways.
>
> (Hughes 2000, 178)

Originating from GCC theory, GPN's have been described as a globally organised nexus of interconnected functions and operations, by firms and non-firm institutions, through which goods and services etc. are produced and distributed. GPN's pay attention to the strategic organisation of production across and within firms (and non-firms), rather than simply analysing the economy as a unified body (Coe *et al* 2004, Held and McGrew 1999, Smith *et al* 2002). Whilst GPN theory looks to local transactions, there is a failure to consider extra-local connections within the region, and the networks that link the local to other actors (Coe *et al* 2004, Coe and Bunnell 2003). However, AFN's have recently been cited as way of connecting local production to the wider, economic story. The term AFN is said to encompass the newly emerging networks of producers, consumers and other actors, which embody alternatives to the standardised industrial modes of food supply, and they are considered diverse and dynamic in nature. Removed from the conventional chain, they are celebrated for their ability to 'resocialise and respatialise food' and thereby making way for consumers to make new judgments on their food, based on knowledge, experience or perceived imagery (Renting *et al* 2003, 398, Venn *et al* 2006).

As argued by Powell and Smith-Doerr (1994), and later by Rauch (1999), network analysis illuminates the social relations and personal connections both within firms and in the linkages between firms.

Unlike the GCC approach that traces the movement of the commodity through nodes in an economic chain, a network-focused approach looks to the complex, multi-directional flows that connect these nodes, recognising the layered lattices of economic activity. In this sense, network-based analyses might be described as being more nuanced than commodity chains in its approach to people, place and social relations, considering not only the multi-dimensional assets that make up the network, but also the implications that these relations have on the workings of the global economy (Coe and Bunnell 2003, Henderson *et al* 2002). However, these networks still function on the basis that value is added to the product downstream from the point at which it is produced. AFN's seek to attribute value not only in terms of capital, but also with regards to the connections, social relations and knowledge that AFN's can potentially produce.

Commodity circuits, however, have been theorised to a lesser degree, although research to date has shed light on how knowledge itself circulates around and between different actors, and so shaping the (power) relations between them. According to Hughes and Reimer (2004b), commodity circuit theory is removed from the linearity of the chain, and to some extent from the network approach, with the aim to understand further the contextual knowledge that is attributed to commodities, and the ways in which this is redistributed throughout the circuit. From this, Barrett *et al* (2004, 20) suggest the notion of a 'cellular network- in which business and product linkages are connected by overlapping circuits of knowledge and innovation'. They regard this to be a more appropriate, by which they also infer 'realistic', conceptualisation of commodity trading and the relations that form these structures. The cellular network concept includes aspects from all three approaches, in which there is a network of power, in a structured chain that privileges some sites over others, whereby each site/node is encompassed within a circuit of knowledge and innovation. For Barrett *et al*, these cellular networks are integral for economic success, as a way of providing actors with access to knowledge, technology and innovation, upon which their business depends. In accordance with this, whilst neither the commodity chain nor the network-based approach alone can effectively theorise the dynamics of the global economy, the use of a more combined and interrelated approach, such as the 'cellular network' might prove to be more helpful in portraying the reality of economic accounts, such as consumption. Moving on from the ways in which economic analysis positions consumption, the following section will address the role of the commodity as the 'end point' of the production process, alongside meanings and attachments of value given to commodities by consumers.

3.3: Commodities and Value

As discussed, many accounts of production and consumption place the commodity at the centre of analysis, in order 'to develop a critique of the coproduction of "economy" and "culture"' (Bridge and Smith 2003). Commodification is the process by which 'everything comes to acquire a price and a monetary form', where the commodity is the final, tangible article (Watts 2005, 538). According to Hughes (2000), in her analysis of the cut flower trade, by concentrating on the lifetime of the commodity, the links between production, distribution and consumption become visible for inspection. In this respect, the commodity itself highlights the interconnected nature of the economy and the (production) nodes within it. For Watts (2005), this focused attention upon the commodity is legitimised by the fact that 'commodities saturate our universe' (p.528), and that to study consumption as isolated from the global economy is both illogical and restrictive.

According to Marxist theory, the commodity, as 'an object outside us, a thing that by its properties satisfies human wants of some sort or another' (Marx 1886, 1), possesses two values; use-value (the 'utility of a thing'- Marx 1886, 2) and exchange value ('a quantitative ratio, or relative price'- Lapavitsas 2004, 36). Marx distinguishes these values in the following way,

> As use-values, commodities are, above all, of different qualities, but as exchange values they are merely different quantities, and consequently do not contain an atom of use-value.
>
> (Marx 1886, 4)

Value is added to the commodity with its movement through different stages of labour within production chains or networks, until it reaches the consumer, for whom it is believed also to hold a form of social capital. In this sense, the commodity may carry relations of value, wealth and power, and so is therefore entwined in a web of social relations. There has recently emerged a concern to situate the value generated in the process of commodification at particular places and spaces. The values discussed in relation to commodification are often associated with monetary value and use value, yet as the next chapter will explore, there are numerous other values that might be attached to consumer goods.

The notion of the product 'lifecycle', as a way of explaining commodities and value, has received considerable attention within accounts of production and consumption, and increasingly within

post-consumption narratives (see Barr 2004, Bekin *et al* 2007). The 'commodity' has been depicted as having a 'lifespan' or, rather a 'life history' (Appadurai 1986, Cook *et al* 2004), stretching from the processes of production onwards. This progression, from the raw product to disposal (as the product 'life') has been described using different metaphors, such as 'biographies', 'social lives', and even 'geographies' of products (Bridge and Smith 2003, Cook *et al* 2004, Kopytoff 1986). These interchangeable metaphors refer to the socio-economic relations that commodities encounter and, in turn, produce. Increasingly too, these product life-cycles take account of the environmental consequences of production, consumption, and disposal (including recycling for reproduction). In the automotive industry for example, a vehicle may have a 20-year environmental footprint from design to dismantling and recycling. However, whilst product lifecycles encompass social, economic and environmental processes of production, consumption, and disposal, there has been a considerable emphasis upon the initial stages of production, leaving consumption practices (Eden *et al* 2008), or what happens to the item once bought, often to be marginalised within such accounts.

If products have their own life history, commodities may in turn be said to possess their own geography (Clancy 1998, Jackson 1999, Smith *et al* 2002), and many of these geographies are yet to be disentangled. The advantage of a commodity-centred approach, when tracing the geographies of production and consumption, is that the links between production, distribution and consumption become visible for inspection (Clancy 1998, Hughes 2000, Jackson 1999, Smith *et al* 2002). Acknowledging the various stages through which products progress, or the life history of the product, may reveal a number of crucial connections between the commodity and a range of spaces and places (Lyon 2005). Hughes (2000) also suggests that commodity-based analysis highlights the interconnected nature of the economy and the (production) nodes within it. Likewise, Castree (2004) argues that commodities are transgressive, and that it is important to consider the socio-spatial universe of places, peoples, identities and beliefs when researching the commodity-form. In nearly all these accounts though, there is still an emphasis on the earlier stages of production.

In terms of value, according to the GCC approach, many basic commodities are mostly produced in the 'periphery' of the world-economy (such as Africa and parts of South East Asia), and are exported for consumption in the 'core' (although it is recognised that dichotomies such as these are contentious) (see also Domański 2004). This posits a particular set of power relations, according to commodity chain approaches, since value and power are added to the commodity as it moves along

the chain, along with a hierarchical distinction that sees raw material production as lower than industry and industry as lower than services (Gereffi *et al* 1994). In this sense, producers and consumers are 'linked' through the commodity lifecycle, whereby those at the 'consumption' end of the chain (with purchasing power), may impact upon the fortunes of those located in the 'producing' peripheries. In light of this, there is scope within accounts of the economy, such as those discussed previously in this chapter, to recognise the impact that consumer choices and decisions can have on other actors, nodes, or the overall social relations produced during the product lifecycle, therefore also the impact of individual consumers, and how their choices link back to global issues.

These geographies do not occur on just a global scale, but there are also local intricacies in the geographies of consumption, particularly the spaces in which consumption occurs. Likewise, as the previous sections in this chapter have explored, everyday consumption practices and self-identity also relate back to global issues, both within the economy and beyond, further complicating these geographies of consumption. Within geography, studies regarding consumption have often focused on the spaces through which a commodity travels before reaching the consumer. Different nodes such as people, households, organisations, and nations etc., are connected to one another in complex and multi-stranded ways, which then links different sites to one another within the world economy (Gereffi *et al* 1994, Hughes 2000). More recently, however, geographers have been analysing the particular sites at which acts of consumption occur. With commodification being present in all spheres of everyday social life, consumption is therefore considered to be an embodied, and valued, experience (Crewe 2003, Roe 2006). In the study of consumption, consumers are regularly considered as passive to the enormous forces of the economy, privileging geographies of production over geographies of consumption (Bryant and Goodman 2004, Edwards 2000). However, as discussed throughout this chapter, consumption should not only be re-centred in economic analyses, but the different values of consumption also need to be recognised for the impacts they might have on production. In fact, ethical consumption might be one way of reconciling these debates, as well as bridging the interchange between self-identity and recognition of global issues. Indeed, the next chapter will address some of these very issues.

3.4: Chapter Conclusion

This chapter has explored the limitations of geographies of consumption, and the relationship that consumption has to production, identity and values. In section 3.1, consumption was described as an essential everyday process, whereby consumers are thought to take an active role in the consumption process (although this is not possible for everyone). The corporeal and creative nature of consumption was also discussed, as well as consumption being a sign of cultural innovation. Everyday consumption emerged as one way of expressing aspects of personal identity, the same way that brands create identities, although the concept of the 'everyday' is often associated with ideas of routine and familiarity. Therefore identity formation is related to these everyday repeated practices or habits. The home was discussed as the site where personal and consumer identities are rooted, amidst intra family relations and gender distinctions. Women were identified as primary care givers and the concept of an ethics of care was also discussed. Despite a surge in consumption studies, everyday spaces of consumption, such as the home, remain marginalised and in some case romanticised, as well as there being little discourse between theories of consumer identity and theories of moral identity.

Section 3.2 explored different ways of analysing the global economy and looked at where consumption and consumers are positioned in each of the various approaches. Commodity chain theories, such as the GCC approach and French filière approach, focus on the commodity to examine the various practices and sites involved in the production of goods within the global economy. However, they are criticised for encouraging the fetishism of commodities and for positioning production and consumption as autonomous categories. Network-based approaches, such as GPN's and AFN's, keep sight of the social relationships that make up the network and how these impact on the global economy. Commodity circuits and 'cellular networks' were argued to be a more favourable approach, and by looking at how knowledge itself circulates around and between different actors they can provide a more realistic evaluation of the global economy. There also emerged a need for economic analysis that recognises the role of the consumer, and does not marginalise these accounts aside production.

Taking this commodity-centred analysis further, section 3.3 explored the relationship between commodification and value. The commodity is the final article of a production chain and value is

added throughout the production process, until it reaches the consumer. The concepts of 'use-value' and 'exchange value' were also discussed, whereby the values of commodification are often associated with money and usability. Using the concept of the product lifecycle, it was also argued that there has been a considerable emphasis upon the initial stages of production, leaving consumption practices (and the impacts of consumption) to be sidelined within these accounts.

Within this section it has been illustrated that whilst consumption has attracted increasing academic attention, this is still comparatively less than production. At the same time, concepts of everyday consumption have been overlooked within economic theories, and there have been few attempts to link consumer identity theories to moral theory. There is also little discussion regarding everyday sites of consumption and how such sites are linked to global process through internalised acts of consumption. At the same time, very little is known about how consumers use their products beyond purchasing, and how this relates back to the production process. There is also a need to recognise how different values may exist in the commodification process, and how this process impacts upon the values of consumers. To do this, it is necessary to explore how morality and values are incorporated into everyday consumption decision-making and negotiation processes, and the ways in which consumers might express their ethics in consumption. The example of the Ethical Consumer movement is particularly fitting, in terms of demonstrating this relationship between ethics and consumption in practice. Therefore the next chapter moves on from this discussion, to look at the history and definitions of the Ethical Consumer movement, critiquing these discourses, as well as exploring the everyday ethical aspects of consumption.

Chapter 4: Ethics and Consumption

As the previous chapter explored, consumption remains to be an overlooked aspect of economic processes. Ethical economies, however, have been cited as one way to reconnect and reconciliation production and consumption, with the use of 'identifiable, connected and transparent' product life-histories (Guthman 2004, 233). Within ethical economies, 'a variety of approaches affecting trade in goods and services produced under conditions that are socially and/or environmentally as well as financially responsible' (Blowfield 1999, 754). Concern about ethical or alternative economies, with their transparent production practices and informed, knowledgeable consumers, first developed at the height of the 'moral turn' (McGregor 2006, Nicholls and Opal 2005). From this, the geographies of ethical economies have attracted increasing interest from the social sciences over the last twenty years. As part of these ethical economies, the introduction of ethical production techniques, such as Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) and ethical trading initiatives (ETI) have been concurrent with a growing consumer interest in the production of consumer goods, along with the social and environmental responsibilities of business (Hughes 2006, Hughes *et al* 2007, Sadler 2004).

The term 'ethical trading' refers to the sourcing of products from companies guaranteeing core labour and human rights standards to their workforce, and is thus synonymous with sound and socially responsible sourcing (Blowfield 1999, Freidberg 2003). According to Hughes *et al* (2007, 491), ethical trading involves the application of 'corporate codes of conduct for sites of production, [and] has become a key means of regulating labour in retailers' global supply chains since the mid-1990's'. By sourcing products from socially and/or environmentally conscious producers, ethical trading is a way of exercising responsibility within supply chains. With a heightened awareness of these production practices, it is thought that consumers are able to make more informed, and thus ethical, choices within their consumption decision-making (McGregor 2006). In these ethical economies, consumers and producers are considered as part of the same process, whereby ethical trade provides the tools for ethical consumers, and the demands of ethical consumers encourage ethical trade. Also, the juxtaposition within these discourses - between the consumer and those involved in the production, manufacturing and retailing processes - brings together everyday consumer habits and the issues of ethics and morality within consumption choices (Atkins and Bowler 2001).

To date, ethical production processes have dominated the study of ethical economies, although more recently there has been an increased interest in ethical consumption practices, in both academic research and wider social considerations. This chapter seeks to engage critically with recent studies regarding ethical economies, to argue that ethical consumption has been reduced to set of specific buying practices (devices such as Fairtrade, local and organic goods) that are thought to be emblematic of what it is to be an 'ethical consumer' (Barnett *et al* 2005, Guthman 2004, Renting *et al* 2003). Similarly, ethical consumption has only previously been researched in terms of shopping habits and market projections, and not as an everyday practice or amidst 'ordinary' consumption choices. Alongside this, theories of ethical consumption tend to posit the practices and actions it entails as different to 'ordinary' consumption, and thus excluding the values involved in everyday consumption choices (Hall 2009c, Hall 2009d). Similarly, while there has been a stream of research conducted into ethical production processes, ethical consumption practices remain comparatively under theorised.

To address these issues, the chapter starts by reviewing the literature surrounding ethical consumption, to determine the practices and sentiments it involves, as well as the characteristics of the consumer movement. This is followed by a critique of ethical consumer discourses, whereby there appear to be disjointed and indeed multiple discourses of ethical consumption. Following this is an exploration of the concept of an inherent ethics of consumption, and the idea that ethics in 'ordinary' consumption cannot be separated from so-called ethical consumer practices. The chapter is therefore organised as such; 4.1: The Ethical Consumer Movement, 4.2: Critiquing Ethical Consumer Discourses, 4.3: Ethics in Consumption, followed by 4.4: Chapter Conclusion.

4.1: The Ethical Consumer Movement

As a phrase that emerged in the late 1980's to early 1990's, ethical consumption is thought to be the result of a heightened awareness, amongst both consumers and academics, of unethical business practices (McGregor 2006, Nicholls and Opal 2005). Indeed, 'Ethical Consumer' magazine was launched in the UK in 1989, and describes itself as 'a driving force behind the ethical consumer movement' (www.ethicalconsumer.org). For the last fifteen to twenty years, the terms 'ethical consumption' and 'ethical consumer' have been applied to describe an alternative set of consumption behaviours and practices (Carrigan *et al* 2004). Often considered, perhaps

contentiously, as a consumer movement (Barnett *et al* 2005, Hilton 2003), ethical consumption practices are regularly characterised as those consumption choices and activities that avoid harm to other people, animals or the environment (Harrison *et al* 2005). The term 'ethical consumption' is also currently associated with a range of consumer behaviours (Harrison *et al* 2005) and responsible business practices (Carmichael 2001). Also, according to Nicholls and Opal (2005), ethical consumption is the result of improved available information on products and reliable labelling, along with increased requirements for manufacturer accountability, social and environmental responsibility (Sadler 2004, Zyglidopoulos 2002). Yet its definition, or definitions, remain contentious.

The Ethical Consumer movement is also grounded in a growing dissatisfaction and disenchantment with the production practices of many multi-national companies and the harmful consumption choices of Western consumers (Clarke *et al* 2007, McGregor 2006). As Barnett *et al* (2005, 26) explain,

> There has been the emergence of initiatives and movements campaigning around such issues as fair trade, corporate social responsibility, and sustainable consumption [...] It is this family of activities that we refer to here as "ethical consumption".

Ethical consumption is thought to require people making (considered and informed) adaptations to their consumer lifestyle, with the aim of reducing their negative effects on the environment, people and animals (Clark 2006). Terms such as fair trade (Dolan 2008), local (Holloway and Kneafsey 2000, Pratt 2008), organic (Dombos 2008), sustainability (Hobson 2003, Seyfang 2004), co-operative (Lang and Gabriel 2005), environmental responsibility (Harrison *et al* 1996, Hobson 2006), and community (Thompson and Coskuner-Balli 2007) are all discussed as part of ethical consumption narratives.

It may also be argued that the ethical consumption movement in the UK, since the late 1980's, has been strongly influenced by an amalgamation of movements: heightened consumer awareness of business practices (McGregor 2006), increasing corporate social responsibility mandates within business and corporations (Mackenzie and Rice 2001) and a buzz of academic interest in moral responsibilities (Smith 2000). By recognising that multiple phenomenon may have led to this consumer interest and a so-called consumer movement toward ethical behaviour, academics might further understand how various consumption ethics have developed. Although research, of an

increasing rate, is being published with regards to ethics in consumption, it is still an area in receipt of limited attention, in comparison to other studies of consumption (Mansvelt 2005). Carrigan *et al* (2004) also argue that previous research has not yet explained whether consumers actually translate their ethics and concerns into ethical purchasing behaviour. However, this assumes that only certain ethics, when practiced or 'translated', can be regarded as a form of 'ethical consumption'.

Ethical consumerism, as defined in *The Rough Guide to Ethical Shopping*, 'is about taking responsibility for you day-to-day impact upon the world' (Clark 2004, vii). For Shaw *et al* (2005, 185), ethical consumers are removed from 'ordinary' consumers, by definition and in practice,

> The term 'ethical consumer' [may be used] to describe those consumers who considered environmental issues, animal issues and ethical issues, including oppressive regimes and armaments, when shopping; this term is now widely used when referring to such a consumer group.

Ethical consumption is therefore regarded as a movement of morally conscious and ethically informed consumers, taking action against the unethical production practices that occur earlier in the 'life history' of a product. Using this definition, 65% of UK consumers classify themselves as ethical consumers (Nicholls and Opal 2005). For Brock (2005) and Michaelis (2006), collective action of this nature is a response to unethical actions, and the only means by which to achieve social change. While such accounts presume ethical consumers to be a connected network of peoples, Roebuck (1999) points out that literature on ethics typically focuses on individual behaviour in relations to others, as an exercise of moral-selving, and not on collective responsibility (Barnett *et al* 2004).

More specifically, the current ethical consumption or 'alternative consumerism' movement is marked by an accelerated interest in, for instance, 'green, ethical, Third world solidarity and fair trade orientations', associated with ethical trading practices (Lang and Gabriel 2005, 48). As described in the introduction to this chapter, ethical trading aims to reduce the negative impacts of consumption practices on the lives of producers and encourages transparent production procedures. When these processes are made visible to consumers, such knowledge and insight may enable them to make informed decisions (Freidberg 2003, Hilson 2008). Therefore, it is thought that with transparency and honesty in production processes come an increase in consumer knowledge and

understanding, which is translated into consumption practices. As one example of this, locally-embedded AFN's (see Chapter 3) seek to the eliminate invisibility of the production process, replacing it with a consumer who is both knowledgeable and actionable due to increased proximity to production practice (Lockie 2002, Raynolds 2002).

Although ethical consumption behaviours are, in their current form, considered a rather recent phenomenon, it is recognised that many of the different forms of 'ethical consumption' are not especially new, nor founded on new debates. For instance, the Co-operative movement in the UK dates back to the nineteenth century, and a concern for environment ethics (closely related to development ethics) can be traced back to the late 1960's (Lang and Gabriel 2005, Smith 2000). Thinking about current debates, Hickman (2005, 6) argues that:

> Ethical living [...] is not a movement with a strict manifesto or a set of rules. Rather, its aim is simply to promote a mindset that espouses a better awareness and a sense of conscience about one's actions. It is about long-term versus short-term. It is about moving from the "me" to the "we" culture.

Hence the formation and performance of ethics in consumption is as much about knowledge as it is about practice, or rather putting knowledge *into* practice. Likewise, Barnett *et al* (2005, 24) note that geographical discussions on moral actions tend to place knowledge and awareness of 'distant contexts' as a 'prerequisite for responsible action'. For Quastel (2008, 25), ethical consumption is a set of practices through which 'people seek to transform themselves to live in reciprocal relationships with other persons and nature'. Within many of these descriptions, however, there is a strong sense that to be an ethical consumer requires a change to one's habits, buying practices, and even preferences, to become more responsible.

Taking these definitions further, the practices associated with ethical consumption also play an important part in the construction of discourse, particularly when considering what, and who, this type of consumption involves. Firstly, as noted above, to be an ethical consumer is thought to involve behavioural change (Hobson 2003). As Thompson and Coskunder-Balli (2007, 286) explain in their assessment of Community Supported Agriculture (CSA), introducing consumers to new items and ways of purchasing eschews 'the efficient and routinized preparation and consumption of food'. As an alternative to the predictability of capitalist market, ethical consumption opens up avenues to

new forms of consumption, embedded into everyday practices and concerns (Clarke *et al* 2007). As such, to act upon ones ethics is considered desirable and necessary (Hinchliffe 1996). Consumer behavioural change is thought to be motivated by increased knowledge and understandings of production practices and/or the effects of consumption choices (Bickerstaff and Walker 2001, Holloway and Kneafsey 2000). These consumption changes can take a range of forms, as discussed previously, but there has tended to be a strong leaning in the discourse towards particular products that enable consumers to express their ethics. As part of this behavioural change, so-called ethical consumer practices include (i) buying 'ethical' products and (ii) boycotting. Sustainable practices are another form of ethical consumption in practice, such as recycling, energy conservation and waste management (see Hinchliffe 1996, Hobson 2003).

Consumers of today have access to a wide range of products, or 'devices' (Barnett *et al* 2005, 31), that are considered to be 'ethical' in terms of their production, through which consumers may express their morals. More specifically, ethical consumption in this sense seeks to make an impact through the purchasing of 'ethically loaded commodities' (Carrier 2008, Dombos 2008, 126). These items might be organic, local, fairly traded, free range, or not tested on animals, and are often priced at a premium, which is reflective of the improved conditions in which they were produced. As a result of purchasing these items, consumers would be enacting their responsibilities and supporting, for example, organic growing, co-operatives, fair trading, local production, and so on (Belk 1995, Whatmore and Thorne 1997). Additionally, Bryant and Goodman (2004, 348) propose that 'ethical' products 'shout to consumers about the socio-natural relations under which they were produced'. By making available information about how items are produced, consumers are able to 'resocialise and respatialise' their purchasing, enabling them to make new judgments on their food (Renting *et al* 2003, 398). Such so-called ethical products might be associated with particular spaces, such as the association of farmers' markets with local produce (see Holloway and Kneafsey 2000, Pratt 2008, Pretty *et al* 2005), meaning that sites of consumption are also integrated into ethical consumption discourses.

Conversely, boycotting, or 'buycotting', is defined as the active avoidance of buying certain goods or brands, because of associations with animal cruelty, genetic modifications, global warming, child labour or slavery, for example, and is a recognised form of ethical consumption (Brom 2000, Fine 2002, Holloway and Kneafsey 2000, Warde 1997). Boycotting is determined by two main factors: a

consumer's preference for the boycotted product and their access to its substitutes (Sen *et al* 2001). As is the case with buying ethical products, boycotting may also be determined by access and affordability. Consumers may avoid buying items produced under particular conditions or by specific companies, as a sign of their disapproval. Boycotting practices are quite difficult to trace, but the negative effect they can have on brand credibility is well documented (see Clark 2006). However, Clark (2004, vii) also points out that being ethical in ones consumption 'doesn't mean following a prescriptive list of evil companies and countries that need to be boycotted', but instead requires taking the time to understand one's own consumption habits and 'making your own decisions about what constitutes as ethical or unethical purchase'. Therefore, to be an ethical consumer requires an account of the circumstances, to situate ones ethics accordingly, by not buying particular products or consuming in a pre-given manner.

As within the aforementioned differences between boycotting and ethical purchasing, the term ethical consumption carries a variety of meanings, which may in fact hide any tensions or discrepancies between the different facets (Carrigan *et al* 2004, Pratt 2008, Seyfang 2004). Likewise, the values and specific ethics attached to 'ethical consumption' are numerous, unsurprising given the variety of definitions of practices that are subsumed under the expression (Doran 2009). However, there are a few clear themes. The first is responsibility; that through their consumption decisions, consumers might exercise a sense of responsibility for those that are affected as a result of their choices. The term is actually used in narratives of ethical consumption, such as 'corporate social responsibility' and 'environmental responsibility' (Barnett *et al* 2005, Harrison *et al* 1996, Hobson 2006, Miller 2001, Quastel 2008). However, there is no consensus as to where this responsibility lies, i.e. with companies, government or consumers as 'social actors' (Hobson 2003). However, as Foucault (1991, 103) argues, 'the state is no more than a composite reality and a mythicized abstraction, whose importance is a lot more limited than many of us think'. Therefore, the responsibility for consumption choices and impacts is difficult to attribute and, when accepted, is considered to be a virtue. Thus, to be an ethical consumer is to take responsibility for the harmful effects of consumption, to become informed, and subsequently to change one's behaviour in a bid to stop these effects.

In relation to this, the second influential value in ethical consumption discourses is benevolence, or showing compassion towards others. Although debates regarding the concept of 'caring at a

distance' (Silk 2000) have explored the tensions between benevolence and beneficence, both involve a strong element of concern (see Chapter 2). However, the ability for all consumers to express beneficence, or 'doing good or showing active kindness' (Smith 1998, 16), is not always possible in the current ethical consumption paradigm, since not all consumers have access to 'ethical goods', or to knowledge of production practices (Barnett *et al* 2005, Howard and Willmott 2001). Thus, what the different elements of ethical consumption do have in common is a care for others, or 'a felt concern for the good of other and for community with them', with obvious links to moral philosophy and the role of universalism (see Chapter 2, and also Baier 1987, 43, Carrigan *et al* 2004, Doran 2009, Stewart 2009). Other associated sentiments, concurrent with ethical consumption discourses, include trust (Howard and Willmott 2001) duty and obligation (Dolan 2005), desire and shame (Dombos 2008) and authenticity (Pratt 2008). In this sense, the phrase 'ethical consumption' is an umbrella concept to describe consumption choices that are motivated by an awareness of, and for the benefit of, others. The next section will take further this critique of ethical consumer discourses, to look at the problems of definition and application.

4.2: Critiquing Ethical Consumer Discourses

The previous section addressed the various definitions and understandings of ethical consumption, looking at the practices it includes, and where the responsibility lies for making ethical consumption decisions, according to relevant literature. Although it has been recognised that there are ambivalences in ethical consumption discourses (see Clarke *et al* 2007, Dombos 2008), these discourses have rarely been exposed and analysed alongside one another. In this section the varied and multiple discourses of ethical consumption will be explored and critiqued.

To start with, the term 'ethical consumption' is complex and multifaceted. The behaviours and sentiments that make up ethical consumption discourses are numerous, and the terms discussed above have become synonymous, or used interchangeably, e.g. 'green' and 'organic', thus lacking precision. There is also no consensus on what some of these forms of ethical consumption are, or what they entail (Seyfang 2004); whether buying ethical products, boycotting, or resource management. The terms associated with ethical consumption, such as 'ethical', 'fair' and 'green' are often applied as uncomplicated descriptions and taken-for-granted examples of ethical consumption in practice. Such terms also work on the assumption that consumption is 'an appropriate medium

through which to express political values' (Dolan 2005, 383). As Pratt (2008, 54) explains in his work on local food networks, the totalising character of alternative movements, and the discourse that surrounds them, 'hides the fact that the different qualities evoked for alternative foods do not in fact entail each other and may pull in different directions'. In this sense, the integration of terminology and moral dispositions, subsumed under the title of 'ethical consumption' has sought to bring together a range of processes and practices that are in fact independent of one another and, at times, tenuously linked.

There is also an assumption that providing consumers with information regarding the conditions in which their products are produced, or the impacts of their consumption, is central to changing behaviour (Barnett *et al* 2005), which ignores issues of accessibility. To express such ethical values is not possible for some consumers, simply because they lack the knowledge and understanding (as a prerequisite to responsible action), or they cannot afford the premiums of the abovementioned 'ethical' goods. As Howard and Willmott (2001, 119) aptly explain,

> Despite growing affluence, for a significant proportion of the population these [ethical] concerns are secondary to price and affordability. For them the ethical issue may be feeding their family well on a limited budget. In this context, ethical consumption can be seen as yet another means by which the privileged can differentiate themselves from the mass.

Similarly, Stern (2005) also notes that 'price, quality and innovation remain the overwhelming priorities for shoppers which far outweigh any thoughts about the ethical implications of the choices consumers make', whereby ethics are not always the top priority in consumption choices (Tullock and Lupton 2002, Wilk 2001). These external barriers to participation segregate the practices of ethical consumption into a different set of consumption activities, and isolate those who can afford to practice them from those for whom access is limited (Harrison *et al* 1996, Seyfang 2004, Smith 2000). Therefore, as Dolan (2005, 383) points out, 'the pursuit of an ethical agenda' by the methods currently available is 'conditioned by characteristics of class, race, ethnicity and gender'. As such, in some of the current discourses, the term 'ethical consumer' often refers to a particular demographic of people, who practice a particular form of ethical consumerism. Defining ethical consumption simply in terms of such consumer purchases and practices therefore limits the means by which consumers may themselves be defined as 'ethical', polarising the market into those individuals that can afford to be 'ethical' and those who cannot (Barnett *et al* 2004).

In addition, the word 'ethical' is limited in its social currency and understanding. From both a consumer and business perspective, the term 'ethical' is problematic, and rather loaded (Carmicheal 2001, Howard and Willmott 2001). Hence, other phrases have been suggested to better explain the processes behind morally motivated consumption, including 'actionable responsibility' (Eden 1995) and 'conscious consumption' (Howard and Willmott 2001). It has also been recognised that ethical consumption discourses often position themselves outside the realm of, or in addition to, 'everyday' or 'ordinary' values of consumption (Barnett *et al* 2005, Clarke *et al* 2007, Hall *et al* 2008), without giving attention to the moral questions that are bound up within daily decision-making (Miller 1998, Sayer 2003). As Sayer (2003) points out, whilst consumers may be 'influenced by moral sentiments, norms, and prescriptions', this does not always mean that they will act on these motivations. Yet, according to Harrison *et al* (1996) values already held towards the economy and the community are thought to influence people's willingness or otherwise to act in environmentally conscious ways, and the ethics of everyday consumption are inseparable from those now described under the term 'ethical consumption'.

Within these discourses, there also remains some uneasiness with the concept and attribution of 'responsibility', whether that of consumers, companies, the government, or NGO's etc. Foucault's theory of governmentality is useful here to further explain the role of the government and individuals. According to Foucault (1991, 91), practices of government are 'multifarious and concern many kinds of people: the head of a family, the superior of a convent, the teacher or tutor of a child or pupil', and therefore governance can be applied in numerous ways. Governmentality, however, 'is about how to govern' (Gordon 1991, 7), and is thought to be the result of a process by which the state 'gradually become 'governmentalized'' (Foucault 1991, 103). Quastel (2008) has also applied Foucault's theories of governmentality to ethical consumption, using the concept of self-governance. Describing the application of Foucault, Quastel (2008, 31) explains,

> Foucault's concept of "governmentality" is also pertinent to his concept of ethics. The term most generally refers to the "conduct of conduct", the ways some people in society govern the actions of others. When Foucault tells us in his later essays that governmentality implies the relationship of the self to itself, he is invoking particular modes of ethical deliberation whereby we relate to the self. *Askesis* is care for the self, and this is a relationship of the self to itself-ethics as *rapport à soi*. So Foucault is telling us that our ethical life is socially constructed and formed by social relations and institutions.

Therefore, by theorising ethical consumption as a form of governmentality of the self, ethics in consumption (as the expression of self-governance) are seen as a way to reject the formal beliefs instilled in people through social practices and education, in order to express one's 'true values and orientation' (p.32). In much of the literature regarding ethical consumption, the consumer is placed at the centre of discussions, as the bearer of knowledge and moral motivation for change. Behavioural change is therefore one way of expressing ethics, or these 'true values'. As Clarke *et al* (2007) note, much of the focus on ethical consumption research looks at 'the problem of how to motivate consumers to change *individual* or household consumption behaviour'.

Consumers may be encouraged to change their behaviour by using ascertained information and exercising responsibility in their consumption choices (Barnett *et al* 2005, Clarke *et al* 2007, Harrison *et al* 1996). Likewise, although Hobson (2003, 95) recognises the responsibility of 'all social actors' to 'optimise their efficient use of available resources by 'doing more with less"', the article still focuses on the role of individual's personal practices in terms of achieving sustainable consumption. Hinchliffe (1996, 53) similarly talks of the 'new mass *consumer* potential for social-environmental action'. As noted by Barnett *et al* (2004, 6), there exists a dual set of assumptions when thinking about responsible action:

> That providing information to consumers regarding the conditions of production and distribution of commodities is central to changing consumer behaviour, and that knowledge is also the key to putting pressure on corporations and governments.

Although consumers are expected, and required to act, or to educate themselves, it is however acknowledged that there is also a responsibility upon other social actors to provide the appropriate information (Eden 1998).

These social actors may indeed be companies, corporations or firms (i.e. the providers of goods), thought to exercise their responsibility through their marketing, policies and business practices (Barnett *et al* 2005). As Bell and Valentine (1997, 199) argue,

> [C]ompanies and products like Cafédirect tap into, and provide us with the knowledge (and the produce) we need in order to eat (and drink) responsibly. It is an important part of the process

whereby consumption is reoriented towards ethical positions- and if enough people make that shift, then maybe the corporations will genuinely make it too.

Here, the authors identify companies as having a responsibility to provide consumers with enough information to allow them to consume ethically or 'responsibly'. At the same time, they argue that consumers can encourage companies to trade ethically, leading to the question of whether consumers or companies need to change first. This is a question that Lynn (2003, 43) has already posed; 'which comes first, the ethics or the activism?'. Ethical trading initiatives (ETI's) are largely voluntary, although the main drivers encouraging companies to adopt ETI's include increased public awareness of overseas production, and a growing importance of ethical performance to corporate brands and reputations (Hughes *et al* 2007). Hence, ethical trade has become a form of reducing the vulnerability of large companies from negative publicity, making yet another ground for competition to attract consumers and increase profit margins (Freidberg 2003). As noted in Chapter 3, brand identity is essential in forming trusting relations with consumers, in which case it makes sense that ethical brand identities should also be important. In his study of the 'Helping the Earth' campaign in the UK, Hinchliffe (1996) also found that private firms and corporate bodies were considered by participants to be the most responsible for environmental problems, although there was a strong sense that they couldn't be trusted to act upon this responsibility (also see Carmichael 2001, Hobson 2003).

The issue of trust, with regards to corporate responsibility is also echoed by Howard and Willmott (2001, 124) who argue that 'companies need to open themselves up' and establish themselves as 'open and trustworthy'. To avoid doing this may be detrimental to the company or the brand. Mackenzie and Rice (2001, 125) also suggest that businesses are now required to lead the way 'towards a more ethical world', though they lack the authority and incentive to do so (see Seyfang 2004). It is argued that this responsibility to provide consumers with information may be expressed in a number of ways; such as through clear and efficient labelling and marketing (Dombos 2008, Pratt 2008), the employment of quality and motivated employees, along with the use of face-to-face interaction (Holloway and Kneafsey 2000, Mackenzie and Rice 2001), by advocating policies and procedures considered 'ethical' (Clarke *et al* 2007, Dolan 2005, Seyfang 2004), and through make their practices known and thus their business transparent (Carmichael 2001, Laczniak and Murphy 2006, Smith 2005).

Yet, to segregate certain behaviours and purchasing practices as 'ethical' forms of consumption, removed from other consumption practices, denies the potential for an inherent ethical nature of everyday consumption, as the next section will explore. Indeed, Quastel (2008, 37) even argues that ethical consumption 'is really no different from living according to an ethos, of becoming what we are', and Wilk (2001, 258) also suggests that 'moral issues can never be separated from consumer culture'. Therefore, amidst all the different definitions, terminology, practices and responsibilities that are encapsulated under the concept of 'ethical consumption', fragments start to appear within the discourse.

The 'ethical consumer' movement is currently defined and categorised by certain goods or devices and particular practices (Barnett *et al* 2005, Guthman 2004, Renting *et al* 2003), which then segregates such behaviour from everyday consumption, as distinctly or differently 'ethical'. In doing so, the potential for inherent ethics in everyday consumption is denied, and the ethics of consumption become very specific, constricting and limited. This relates back to the discussion in Chapter 2 regarding deontological and teleological ethics, with a need to focus more on how people behave within their knowledge (as well as access and affordability) parameters. This would involve seeing the action itself, in this case consumption, as either right or wrong (therefore deontological ethics) rather than judging the action on the outcome of their behaviour (teleological ethics).

4.3: Ethics in Consumption

As the previous section argued, ethics in consumption need not conform to particular values or practices in order for consumption to be deemed as 'ethical'. Indeed, there are many ways in which people might express an 'ethics of care' (Gilligan 1982) for others, such as family members. One way is through consumption practices, whether shopping, buying, or cooking for the family, or simply 'providing for others something they should be getting' (Murcott 1983). This moral responsibility (especially of the wife or mother, in the family setting) has been thoroughly explored within social studies, and the concept of caring through consumption is frequent and pervasive, particularly the acts of cooking and feeding the family (see Bugge and Almas 2006, Carrigan and Szmigin 2006, Charles and Kerr 1988, Devault 1991, Murcott 1983). For Warde (1999, 518) the 'compassionate comingling of domestic labour with food stuffs [...] sanctifies meal preparation in its symbolic family-

sustaining role'. The caring work involved in looking after the family renders such practices as ethical since they are enacted for the good of others (also see Chapter 2).

The extent to which consumption activities are carried out with the aim of enhancing the well-being of others has also been debated, such as the morality of convenience products, positioned as the opposite of a 'proper' meal and entangled with meanings of being a 'good' mother (see Carrigan and Szmigin 2006, Murcott 1983, Warde 1997). In addition, the corporeal aspects of consumption, taking into account that foods (and other items, such as cosmetics and medicines) are ingested into the body (Fine 2002) and the role of identity formation through consumption (as explored in Chapter 3) add to already-complex understandings of morality and consumption. Although, as Bugge and Almas (2006, 206) point out, everyday consumption practices, such as 'dinner at home', are 'practical, commonplace and repetitive', this is not to say that their practice is any less morally significant than more fetishised and fashionable consumption processes, such as those assumed under the title of 'ethical consumption'.

The act of shopping is also infused with ethical decision-making, such as deciding what is best for oneself (the consumer) and those one is shopping for (such as the family), though this is not to say that a concern for other issues is removed from the decision-making process. In the highly influential text *A Theory of Shopping,* Daniel Miller (1998, 2) centres his analysis of consumption on this very concept, arguing that love and devotion are central to shopping;

> [As] the activity you undertake nearly every day in order to obtain goods for those people for whom you are responsible- the goods you and they eat, wear and employ in a multitude of tasks.

In this sense, love (perhaps a synonym for 'care' in some cases), is a driving force behind one's responsibilities to provide for other family members. Though far more detailed and theorised, Miller's words echo those of Carrier (1990, 587), that shopping 'is a labor of love, for it is part of the work that maintains and regenerates the relationships that unite families'. Southerton (2001, 194), when investigating the consumption of kitchens, similarly discusses the emotional investments that people make into material items, that render 'kitchen practices as [being] symbolic of family values'. Added to this, feminist theories of the self have also explored the ethics care, and the ways in which

personal circumstances and relationships with those around us, such as the family, can have an impact upon self-identity (Griffiths 1995, Tronto 1993).

Unfortunately, the notion of 'love' is sometimes ill-fitting in this context, responsible for romanticising consumption practices and sweeping over the many tensions that exist within consumption decision-making, particularly within the family (see Devault 1991, Gregory 1995, Ungerson 1983). Similarly, as Belk (1995, 62) explains, the family unit is not always united in consumption decision-making, but is 'a fragile and symbolically rich human group relating to one another in ways that are increasingly mediated by consumption'. Yet, within these literatures, there remains a strong sense of the familial, and indeed, the familiar. Hence, consumption practices might be inherently ethical, in that they are an expression of people's values and principles (or ethical commitments), and within the family context these may well also include family values.

The notion of an inherent ethics of consumption (also see Chapter 1) echoes deontological accounts of ethics, in that what may be right (i.e. buying value branded products), does not always have positive consequences for others (such as damage to the environment, or supporting an unethical company). Instead, to consume ethically, by a revised definition, involves making decisions that are based on one's own moralities. Yet very few readings of these everyday moralities exist (Cloke 2002), where ethics in consumption are only discussed as being differentiated from everyday ethics, affecting only a small, albeit affluent proportion of the population. Therefore while knowledge and awareness may be prerequisites to ethical action (Barnett *et al* 2005, Goodman and DuPois 2002), there are no prescriptions of what this ethical action entails, especially not in terms of the goods consumers place in their shopping basket. Similarly, to date little research exists that looks to how these ethics are developed, negotiated and applied in everyday practices, such as consumption. At the same time, while 'surprisingly little attention has been paid to how retailers actually *learn* to trade ethically', there is an even greater void concerning how consumers learn to *consume* ethically (Bateman *et al* 2001, Hughes 2006, 1009). From the literature that has been reviewed within this chapter, it is clear that there is an apparent lack of academic understanding towards how ethics form and translate into everyday processes, such as consumption. The chapter conclusion below will condense the ideas discussed in this chapter, as well as identifying a number of key research questions as a means of investigating ethics in consumption.

4.4: Chapter Conclusion

This chapter has explored the relationship between ethics and consumption, starting with an exploration of the Ethical Consumer movement in section 4.1. Argued to be the result of a heightened consumer awareness of business practices, increasing corporate social responsibility discourses in business and a growing academic interest in moral responsibilities, the phrase 'ethical consumption' describes an alternative set of consumption behaviours and practices. However, definitions remain contentious, and many of the different forms of 'ethical consumption' are not especially new, nor founded on new debates. Ethical consumption involves taking action against unethical production practices, through adaptations to consumer lifestyles. As part of this behavioural change, ethical consumer practices include buying 'ethical' products, boycotting and sustainable lifestyle practices. There are also a number of themes within these discourses, including responsibility and benevolence. In this sense, 'ethical consumption' becomes an umbrella concept to describe consumption choices that are motivated by a concern for others.

Section 4.2 then went on to look at the discourses of ethical consumption, which to date have rarely been analysed alongside one another. It was shown that the behaviours and sentiments that make up ethical consumption discourses are numerous, and the terms used to discuss ethics in consumption have become synonymous and interchangeable, despite being tenuously linked. There is also an assumption that, by providing consumers with information, behavioural change is likely. Amidst these discourses there is also a lack of appreciation for the limits to access. These barriers to participation then manage to segregate the practices of ethical consumption and isolate those who can afford to practice them from those who cannot. The concepts of responsibility, openness and transparency were also discussed in relation to production practices, and it emerged that there are difficulties in attributing 'responsibility' to consumers, companies, or the government.

Section 4.3 explored the ways in which people might express an 'ethics of care' for others, such as family members, through everyday consumption practices, including cooking, feeding, shopping etc. Although these activities are commonplace, this does not mean they are any less morally significant than those described as 'ethical consumption'. Indeed, it was argued that the act of shopping is infused with ethical decision-making. There is also an argument for an inherent ethics of

consumption (also see Chapter 1). This section also noted that tensions exist within consumption decision-making, particularly within the family, as a source of ethical negotiation in consumption.

This chapter has explained how current ethical consumer discourses, despite having received increased academic study in recent years, are still an area in receipt of limited attention. Therefore more research is needed on this topic. In doing so, definitions of ethical consumption need reworking, and already there have emerged new terminologies such as 'actionable responsibility' and 'conscious consumption' (see section 4.2). Research also needs to take into account that current forms of ethical expression are limiting, inaccessible to some and dismiss the ethics that are part of 'ordinary' consumption practices. At the same time, responsibility is difficult to attribute, leading to a lack of accountability.

Taking this chapter, and the previous two chapters into account, a number of issues and research questions emerge on the subject of ethics in consumption (see the next page). Firstly, as Chapter 2 identified, more research needs to be conducted into everyday moral practice, moral education and the sources of moral learning. Academic research needs to not only explore these matters, but also account for how ethics vary between different people, and how they are expressed in different ways. In Chapter 2, the family emerged as an important aspect of moral learning, as well as the school environment. Therefore it is necessary to look more into how these sites of moral education influence on moral identity formation and ethical decision-making. Aside from the development of these moral ideals and narratives, more need also be known about how they translate into practice. Research Questions 1 and 2, in particular, have been devised to address these issues.

Likewise, Chapter 3 illustrated that more research is required concerning how consumers use their products beyond purchasing, and the different values that they attribute to their consumption. There is evidently scope for ethics in consumption to be further researched and for moral issues in consumption to be subject to additional analysis. Chapter 3 also concluded that more research is needed to explore more about how these everyday practices relate back to wider global issues, and how issues of production might be intertwined in consumption decisions. As such, further research is required into the everyday habits and practices of consumers, and how morals are incorporated into everyday decisions. Research Questions 1, 2 and 3 were created in order to investigate these

concerns, as well as the relationship between consumers (Research Questions 1 and 2) and producers (Research Question 3). However, since these everyday ethical practices have been largely marginalised from studies of the economy, there is a call for developing the means of investigating these practices and moral issues in a way that is appropriate, in terms of the participants involved and the means of collecting the data. Therefore, Research Question 4 has been produced to address this problem.

Lastly, Chapter 4 recognised that ethical consumer discourses require further academic attention, and that these discourses need to be explored more thoroughly. To do this, it has been argued that more research is needed that addresses whether ethical consumption and ordinary consumption can be disentangled, and how this works in practice. Research Question 1 in particular has been created to attend to this, although Research Questions 2 and 3 are also intended shed light on this matter. Chapter 4 also raised issues of responsibility and accountability, and as such, this thesis will address the responsibilities of different social actors in terms of ethics in consumption. To do this, Research Questions 1, 2 and 3, covering families, schools and companies, were formulated. Again, these everyday ethical decision-making processes require a fitting research design with which to sensitively and effectively approach these issues; Research Question 4 was formed to deal with this.

In order to address all these issues, this thesis aims to provide answers to the following questions;

1. How do family members develop morals and ethics in consumption practices and decisions?
2. What does the school environment teach young people about ethics and morals in consumption?
3. How do companies market their products as ethical, or market particular ethics?
4. How could each of the above questions be approached, using an appropriate research design?

The following chapter will now focus on the construction of a suitable research design, in order to best answer the above questions, looking at a range of methodological approaches, the fieldwork conducted and a number of ethical issues.

Chapter 5: Research Design

Studies surrounding consumption are known for using highly tailored, varied and more sophisticated ways of collecting data, compared to those used in production research, which, even when employing qualitative methods, often uses the 'safer' or less challenging techniques of interviews and focus groups. Research designs in consumption studies tend to be experimental, and there is no standardised way of 'doing' research on consumption. Instead, studies regarding consumption have involved a range of methods including interviews and group interviews, focus groups, participant observation, case studies and product analysis, which are often triangulated to produce a multi-method approach (see Barnett *et al* 2005, Clarke *et al* 2002, Colls and Evans 2008, Crewe and Collins 2006, Crewe and Gregson 1998, Shaw and Clarke 1999, Valentine 1999a, Valentine 1999b, Valentine and Longstaff 1998). Despite this multitude of techniques to examine issues of consumption, there are still a few key means of gathering data, and different disciplines often adhere to particular methodologies. For example, in past examples of consumption-based research, Business and Economics' papers tend to rely heavily on quantitative methods, occasionally supported by interviews, Sociologists largely favour qualitative techniques such as covert and overt observation, and Geographers are inclined make greater use of interviewing techniques and focus groups, although this is not a prescriptive list. What seems to be missing in all these approaches to consumption, however, is a critical examination of consumption in practice, using methods that are sensitive to the moral negotiations of everyday practices. Rather than researching consumption as a moment in time that can observed by the researcher, a conversation that is recorded, or indeed categorised into a box in a survey, this research aims to explore consumption as a complex and ever-changing process, and to reflect this complexity through an appropriate research design.

This chapter will therefore illustrate the importance of developing an appropriate research design with which to investigate the practice of morals in daily life and the 'lived' experiences of consumption. In order fully to explore the distinctive nature of consumption practices, access is required into the everyday lives of the consumer(s), and as will be explained, qualitative methods are the most sensitive to these demands. Also, so as to explore families, schools and companies, the research design should be tailored in order to adequately research within each of these fields. The research design for the thesis has therefore been arranged into three complementary, multi-sited methodological categories, to research families, the school environment and companies. This

qualitative design consists predominately of ethnographic research methods, namely ethnography with families, observations and focus groups in schools, and interviews with companies. Using this three-pronged approach, the research design has been tailored so as to address appropriately Research Questions 1-3 (see Chapter 4), but also to fulfil the aims of the thesis. The triangulation of these methods is thought to be especially useful in examining lived experiences, working closely with participants either in a particular setting and/or over a long period of time, all of which are highly relevant in this research. Therefore this chapter will not only detail the methodologies used within each aspect of the research, but also the reasons for which they were chosen. As such, this Chapter will also address Research Question 4, 'How could each of the above [1-3] questions be approached, using an appropriate research design?'.

As well as creating an appropriate research design, it is important to ensure that the research is carried out in an ethical and responsible manner. Contemporary research ethics, particularly ethical guidelines and codes of conduct, date back to the Nuremberg War Crimes Tribunal of 1946. According to Haggerty (2004), throughout the tribunal it was 'repeatedly emphasised that the experiments were conducted without the consent of the participants' (p.404). After assessing the multitude of horrific crimes carried out by Nazi physicians on unwilling subjects, the judges asserted that there should be a number of basic principles to adhere to, when carrying out research with human subjects, now known as the Nuremberg Code (Beauchamp *et al* 1982). The first item on this code now requires researchers to secure the consent of research subjects, consent which should be 'voluntary, competent, informed and comprehending' (Haggerty 2004, 404). This notion of informed, written consent has influenced research ethics ever since, and seeks to ensure that participation is based on adequate knowledge and understanding of the study at hand, i.e. the nature, duration, purpose, methods and potential hazards of the study (Murphy and Dingwall 2007). Where research ethics were previously informal and relative to specific disciplines, a more organised system has since been established, crystallised around the formal processes of research ethics councils and committees (Haggarty 2004).

As an Economic and Social Research Council (ESRC) funded research project, this study aims to meet the standards set by this Council, outlined in the Research Ethics Framework (REF). The document identifies six core principles that inform the REF, applying to all social science research, and should be addressed within research projects, where possible:

* Research should be designed, reviewed and undertaken to ensure integrity and quality
* Research staff and subjects must be informed fully about the purpose, methods and intended possible uses of the research, what their participation in the research entails and what risks, if any, are involved. Some variation is allowed in very specific and exceptional research contexts
* The confidentiality of information supplied by research subjects and the anonymity of respondents must be respected
* Research participants must participate in a voluntary way, free from any coercion
* Harm to research participants must be avoided
* The independence of research must be clear, and any conflicts of interest or partiality must be explicit

(ESRC 'Research Ethics Framework' 2005, 1)

The generic nature of these principles makes them open to interpretation and adaption, since they do not seek to address all research methodologies, but instead aim to be applicable throughout the social sciences. An example might be that in the REF, the ESRC recognise that participatory research is 'an ongoing and open-ended process' (p.24), and thus perhaps not suited to bureaucratic means of acquiring consent. This concept is also applicable to ethnographic research. For social scientists conducting ethnographic research, it might be useful to also refer to anthropological ethical codes, such as the Association of Social Anthropology (ASA) 'Ethical Guidelines for Good Research Practice', and use these alongside those of the ESRC. Designed with ethnographic research in mind, the ASA Ethical Guidelines regularly refer to the need to protect the privacy of participants, in terms of intrusion into private and personal domains of individuals or groups, as well as advising on renegotiated consent (for research over a period of time), relations with gatekeepers, and the sharing of research materials with participants. Due to their specificity, these guidelines address the reciprocal relationships that are common within ethnographic research. As well as adhering to the above ethical guidelines, all three aspects of the research design were also given ethical approval by the University Ethics Committee. The procedures used within this research to ensure ethical conduct will be explored in the following sections.

This chapter serves to describe, explain and justify the research design used to generate the data and thus provide working answers to the research questions outlined in the previous chapter. To do

this, the chapter is arranged into various sections and subsections. Section 5.1: Ethnography with Families will look at methodological approaches (5.11), gatekeepers and finding participants (5.12), the ethnographic fieldwork (5.13), and ethical issues (5.14). Section 5.2: Company Interviews will address methodological approaches (5.21), the company-based fieldwork (5.22) and ethical issues (5.23). Section 5.3: Researching the School Environment will also be structured according to the methodological approaches (5.31), the school-based fieldwork (5.32) and ethical issues (5.33), and the chapter will close with a conclusion (5.4).

5.1: Ethnography with Families

5.11: Methodological Approaches

As described in Chapter 3, consumption is an everyday practice that involves the negotiation of morals on a daily basis. In order to explore the everyday consumption practices of family members, it is necessary to establish close contact with the participants involved, and therefore the research design should be organised in a manner that is sensitive to this situation. Similarly, the methods also need to account for how these daily practices are played out in the context of the family and the home, and so the research design should be shaped to accommodate for the privacy of this setting. According to Gregory (1995, 32) qualitative research methods are appropriate, 'when the focus of attention is the process by which household members negotiate everyday life, and has been seen as the most appropriate tradition for research in the family'. It is also argued that ethnographic approaches, for example, go beyond the focus on individual accounts of family lives and enable researchers to explore the relational aspects of family life and the social contexts in which these unfold (Descartes 2007). Therefore, in order to explore the everyday consumption practices of family members as consumers (and also members with 'intimate relationships'- Southerton 2001, 193), and the values and beliefs that they hold, ethnography was considered to be the most appropriate and sensitive methodological approach.

As a research tool, ethnography is often advocated for its application to the study of everyday processes and events in the lives of ordinary people (Emerson *et al* 1995). Since Malinowski's 'original' ethnographic ventures in the Trobriand Islands, ethnography has traditionally involved the researcher participating (covertly or overtly) in people's daily lives, and collecting data on a number of issues (Hammersley and Atkinson 1983, Young 1979). Rather than being limited to a particular

timeframe or set of people, ethnography may instead be marked by whom, and what it involves. Ethnography may be described as a personal and intimate interaction,

> The ethnographer participates in the daily routines of this setting, develops ongoing relations with the people in it, and observes all the while what is going on.
>
> (Emerson *et al* 1995, 1)

Ethnography is also defined according to its temporality. Definitions often stress that 'the relationship between ethnographer and hosts unfolds over time' (Cassell 1982, 151), and that 'ethnography typically involves researchers spending extended periods of time (sometimes a year or longer) in one or more settings' (Murphy and Dingwall 2007, 2224). Ethnography allows for relationships to develop with participants and, as this research requires trusting and honest relations with participants, ethnography is a fitting choice.

Research over an extended period of time, such as ethnography, is also necessary in order to recognise the habitual aspects of consumption (as opposed to 'exotic' practices, see Cook *et al* 2004), which are rooted in experience. Ethnography engages with real life complexities, and can be used 'to understand parts of the world more or less as they are experienced and understood in the everyday lives of people who "live them out"' (Crang and Cook 2007, 1). Ethnographic methods can also provide the benefit of 'context' (Healy *et al* 2007), as Agar (1996, 58) explains,

> In part, ethnography resembles the common image of social science -questionnaires, tests, censuses, and so forth. But the ethnographer also eats with the group, works with them, relaxes with them, and hopefully comes to understand them.

The subjective nature of observation, and the immersion of the researcher into the everyday lives of participants, as noted above, have led to criticisms that ethnography 'is unscientific, or at best can only serve as a preliminary to the 'real' (that is, quantitative) work of social science', although these claims 'have declined sharply in many quarters' (Emerson *et al* 1995, Hammersley 1992, 1). There is a general consensus within the social sciences that ethnographic research can produce rich, detailed and insightful accounts of everyday experiences, promising 'at least the potential for a more nuanced and sophisticated understanding of the social significance of contemporary consumption practices' (Crewe 2000, 284). Therefore, an ethnographic research design can provide more refined and richer understandings of family consumption practices.

For Jackson and Thrift (1996), studying consumers in their everyday context was, and I would argue still is, necessary for understanding the nuances of individual consumption choices. They also argue that the active role of consumers had previously been ignored by geographers although this literature has expanded since the time of writing, as well as pointing out that 'there have been numerous theoretical calls in the discipline for the wider use of ethnographic studies of consumption, yet actual examples are still few and far between' (p.229). Conducting ethnography with families also allows for an in-situ perspective of consumption to be developed (Thompson 1996). However, it should also be remembered that the home, and indeed family life, is a private sphere where complex relationships exist behind closed doors (Miller 2001), opposed to the field of study usually encountered by researchers. While conducting interviews with couples within the home, Valentine (1999a) noted that household relationships are negotiated and contested in nature, which should be borne in mind when conducting research with families within the home. The need for privacy, the multiplicity of experiences of the family, and the complexity of the relationships within, make it difficult to gain access to willing participants, but also to conduct research once access has been achieved. However, it is also recognised that negotiations can take place outside the home, and that concepts of family extend beyond home life. Therefore ethnographies of the home often involve visiting, rather than living with participants, over an extended period of time, using a number of accumulated methods to form an ethnographic design (Blunt and Dowling 2006, Davies 1999, Miller 2001).

Since human geography embraced ethnography in the 1970's, the method has evolved from its previous concentration on 'home' and 'abroad', 'us' and 'them', to now looking at the intricacies of daily life that happen on the doorstep of the ethnographer (Crang and Cook 2007). From this, there emerged a plethora of studies regarding everyday practices in the workplace, shopping mall, and the home, making use of ethnographic techniques (see Bell 1993, Charles and Kerr 1988, Colls 2004, Devault 1991, Miller *et al* 1998). However, many of these studies of consumption focus on the act of purchasing consumer items, or on discussions regarding consumption choices. As Crewe (2000, 280) comments, 'little ethnographic or qualitative research has been reported on what people actually do with their purchases'. Alongside this, Miller (2001) also acknowledges that while in-depth, ethnographic studies of consumption exist, there lacks an insight into the private life of households and the consumption practices that occur within them. Many methods previously utilised to study consumption also seem to lack the ability to become 'involved', since they tend to stick at the peripheries (such as shopping observations and interviews), often stopping at a participant's front

door. Although many studies use ethnographic techniques, and are described as being ethnographic, few studies have entered the home and conducted such methods within this space, and/or over an extended period of time (for examples of ethnographies in the home, some including consumption, see Campbell 2005, Coupland 2005, Kremer-Sadlik and Paugh 2007, Money 2007, Pahl 2004, Stillerman 2004). However, there is a recognisable void within this research area, since most of these studies do not recognise or theorise the interconnections between ethical dispositions and everyday consumption practices.

Within ethnographic research, it is usually the case that a number of methods are employed in synchronisation (similar to triangulation), in order to build up an ethnographic research design and relations with participants. Participant observation is considered as the archetypal form of research employed by ethnographers and so often forms the base of enquiry (Davies 1999). This may be supported by other methods, such as interviewing, focus groups, video/photographic work, diaries, life histories and case studies, to name but a few (Crang and Cook 2007, Gregory 1995). Ethnographic research methods are regarded as especially useful in examining lived experiences, and as being able to reveal the complexities and subtleties of consumption practices (Bugge and Almas 2006). In the spirit of identifying new and experimental ways of researching the intricacies of family consumption practices, an ethnographic design was considered to be highly appropriate. This research will therefore adopt and fully embrace an ethnographic research design.

5.12: Gatekeepers and Finding Participants

Gatekeepers, or 'informants' that control the avenues of opportunity (Trinch 2001), were used a way of accessing participants. As the research involves close contact with family members, often in their own home, finding willing participants might have otherwise been difficult. Gatekeepers may hold either a formal position, thus having the ability to legitimate authority or grant permission, such as in the workplace, or they may possess more an informal role of authority, for example within religious circles (Hammersley and Atkinson 1983, Rossman and Rollis 2003). In this research, informal authority figures were used as gatekeepers to participants. According to Rossman and Rollis (2003, 164) 'anyone in an organisation can act as a gatekeeper', and their social networks might be used to attain access to possible participants (Bedford and Burgess 2001, Dowler 2001, Johnson 1990). Gatekeepers are often advocated within ethnographic work as useful social contacts. However, more is required of a researcher when meeting potential gatekeepers than just mere presence, but

in fact there needs to be a sustained and obvious attempt to create dyadic relations between them, for access to be achieved (Hammersley and Atkinson 1983, Mandel 2003).

When using gatekeepers as an avenue to participants, it is important to consider to whom one requires access and to choose gatekeepers accordingly (Barker and Weller 2003). Within the research, access was required to families, preferably from a range of backgrounds, such as affluence and ethnicity, but also of varying composition. However, because of the small sample size, it would not be possible to find enough families to reflect the diversity of family life in the UK. Therefore, organisations with suitable gatekeepers were selected on the basis that they covered a large, diverse geographical area. The North West was chosen as a suitable area of study, due to the diverse population, in terms of wealth and ethnicity, within this part of the UK. Therefore the gatekeepers were required to be located in this area, so that the catchment base of potential participants would also adhere to this specific geography. Even more importantly, the gatekeepers also needed to provide access to families, and so were selected on the basis that they encouraged social contact with members of the public (Hammersley and Atkinson 1983). In order to achieve this, a wide range of organisations were contacted, including places of worship, youth centres, community centres, nursery groups, and scouts and guides groups. As well as potentially providing access to families and therefore participants, these organisations also had sustained and well grounded links with various people in their daily lives (Cook 2005).

In April 2007, 221 organisations fitting the above description were contacted, after obtaining names and addresses from an online directory (Yellow Pages- yell.com). When communicating with gatekeepers, it is important for researchers to be clear about their intentions and the intentions of the research, since, as Hammersley and Atkinson (1983) argue, the relationship between research and gatekeeper is one based on trust. Similarly Valentine (2005, 116) suggests that,

> It is important [...] when you contact 'gatekeepers' in organisations and institutions that you make it clear exactly what sort of information you want and who you would like to talk to (preferably in writing).

All of these organisations were contacted with a standard letter which, in accordance with the above suggestions, stated the intentions of the research, what participation entailed, the information required from participants, and the need for suitable volunteers (Cook 2005, Johnson 1990). In total, nine responses were received (via email, letter and telephone) within four weeks of the letters being

sent out. Six of these were from organisations apologising that they could not take part, but three from those eager to be involved, which included one nursery, one place of worship and one youth centre. Meetings were held with each of these gatekeepers, and usually with the member in charge of the organisation, during which they were informed of their role in the research, in terms of finding participants. The gatekeepers were also informed of the methodological process for the wider research (for example the methodology, time period of the research, and confidentiality), and were told to pass this information on, in an effort to encourage participation (Kitchin and Tate 2000). From this, four families agreed to take part. Whilst others offered their participation, some withdrew before the research even started, and therefore it was necessary to pursue another avenue for participation. In December 2007 efforts were resumed to find more participating families, this time through the method of snowballing. Using personal and professional sources as a research tool, two further families were found.

5.13: Ethnographic Fieldwork

The ethnographic research involved six families living in North West England, from June 2007 to June 2009, and includes the Green family, the Grey family, the Johnson family, the Robinson family, the Silva family and the Smith family. All names have been changed for the purposes of anonymity, including both first names and surnames. The 'family' included parents, children and grandchildren, all as an important part of family decisions and choices regarding consumption. Each of these families took part in the research for between four and twenty four months, or in between 1-3 'episodes'. The term 'episode' refers to periods of participation, usually consisting of about 5–7 meetings over a period of 12–16 weeks. The time in between these episodes is here referred to as an 'interval', where active participation ceased, in order to give the families involved privacy and time for reflection. During this time, contact with participants was maintained using greetings/occasions cards, telephone calls, text messages, emails and a social networking website (see Hall 2009a). After much deliberation, the term 'episode' was felt to be the most appropriate way to describe these interactions, favoured over phrases such as 'term', 'period' and 'phase'. Although Gurney uses the term 'episodic ethnographies', whereby 'each episode is defined by the respondent and is constituted by a climatic event or turning point in a much longer oral history' (1997, 375), it is applied here in a different manner and for different reasons. The episodic ethnography that took place in this research was negotiated between participants and researcher, and did not rely on any such 'turning points'. Within the analysis, these episodes and the meetings

that took place within are referenced using a simple code, e.g. Episode 1 Meeting 3 is referred to as E1 M3, or Episode 2 Interview 3 would become E2 Int.3.

A number of methodologies have been utilised as part of this ethnographic design, and participation in these has largely depended on the choice of participants, the suitability of the method for the family, and the availability of participants depending on individual time constraints. This included:

- Ethnographic observations, both inside and outside of the home. The activities observed were dependent on the participants, although negotiated with the researcher. These included grocery shopping (in supermarkets, farmers' markets, local stores and box schemes), clothes shopping (in fashion stores and supermarkets) internet shopping, and eating meals (both cooked by participants in their own homes, and at cafes, restaurants or pubs). Other observations of daily life were carried out in the home.

- Interviews, including both group or family interviews and single-person interviews, which mostly took place in the home, but also in the workplace and whilst shopping. These were usually semi-structured, and most families have taken part in a range of interviews concerning a variety of issues, including holiday habits, the 'credit crunch' and past experiences of consumption.

- Participatory activities were also integrated into the ethnographic design, supporting the other methodologies by providing a more rounded description of family consumption choices and decision-making processes. These activities were suggested by both the researcher and participants, and included the analysis of receipts (collected by participants over 1-2 weeks, from their during grocery and clothes shopping), tours of kitchens and kitchen cupboards (often after shopping observation when helping participants put their purchases away), and photo diaries (a photographic diary of family consumption in-between meetings, which was then narrated by the participants).

The research, and the aforementioned methodologies, took place in a number of different spaces, across different towns/cities, although the family home was the base from which the ethnography extended. Meetings during the first episode revolved around 'standard' techniques such as interviews and observations, but by the second and third episode, participants were more willing to become involved in the aforementioned participatory activities, and to involve the researcher in

more social activities. This was also accompanied by increased contact in the interval between episodes, and a growing rapport with the participants, with some relationships developing into friendships (see Hall 2009a).

Within this research, steps have been taken to ensure the ethical treatment of ethnographic participants, according to the aforementioned ethical guidelines/principles. All participants were given information leaflets regarding the research, and only gave consent once they had read this and taken part in an initial, informal meeting. Given the episodic approach, written consent was obtained at the start of the research in the first and second episode, although verbal (and renegotiated) consent was considered appropriate for the third episode. The consent form outlined the terms of the research and the obligations of the researcher in the following format,

1. I confirm that I have read and have understood the information sheet for the above study. I have had the opportunity to consider the information, ask questions and have had these answered satisfactorily.

2. I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw at any time without giving any reason, without my rights being affected.

3. I understand that, under the Data Protection Act, I can at any time ask for access to the information I provide and I can also request the destruction of that information if I wish.

4. I agree to take part in the above study.

Participants were required to provide a tick by each of these statements, to declare their consent, as well as providing a signature. They were also reminded throughout the research that they were able to withdraw at any point, and that there were no problems with doing so. Anonymity was, and is, granted to all participants, as is confidentiality, and where possible within the family (see below). As Holdsworth observed when conducting linked interviews with individual family members, 'care needs to be exercised to protect the confidentiality of each interviewee from other family members' (2005, 553). Participants were regularly updated with the progress of the study, given feedback of results, when appropriate, and were also invited to take part in regular feedback sessions, addressing their feelings and thoughts on their participation. As mentioned previously, the research

design was also elapsed into ethnographic 'episodes', in order to manage these intimate relationships in an ethical manner, and to give time for reflection (Forbat and Henderson 2003).

5.14: Ethical Issues

When conducting ethnography with families, there emerge a number of ethical questions regarding relations with participants, the dynamics of the 'family' and the difficulties caused by long-term data collection and intense engagement. There are too many ethical issues to be discussed in depth in this chapter, and many of these debates have already been discussed in previous papers (see Hall 2009a and Hall 2009b), therefore some of the key issues will be discussed here. This will include issues of confidentiality, friendship and disengagement.

Issues surrounding confidentiality are particularly relevant in the context of family-based research. Whilst the conditions of consent, as described in the previous section, have been upheld and carefully maintained throughout the research, there are issues regarding family members (and others) who are mentioned by participants and regularly feature in their narratives. These individuals therefore become passive participants in the study, without giving their consent (Larossa *et al* 1981). All the participants mentioned other family members (and friends) in discussions, and I also had a few chance meetings with some of these people. Whilst I enjoyed hearing and observing these details, I was however apprehensive about how such people would feel about being discussed, and essentially being (non-consensual) co-participants. At the same time, it is important to remember that these co-participants may already know things about us as researchers, and that accepting the fluidity of these relationships may be essential to successful ethnography. There is also the possibility that participants and co-participants are happy with this arrangement, especially considering the dynamics of a family, and may even be an avenue they want to pursue.

> When I asked if there was any other way that I could learn about their family habits and practices...David suggested that I meet more of the family, such as his other children, and his grandchildren, to see if their habits had carried on through the generations and maybe to give more insight into my research. This was such a kind gesture, and would be brilliant, if we could arrange it.
>
> (Johnson E2 M5, 3)

Due to logistics and the time-scale of the research, I did not have the chance to meet more family members, though the above invitation was a sign of David's approval of the research. Therefore, whilst the co-participation of non-consenting participants does open up a can of (ethical) worms, at the same time it might indicate honest and open relations between researcher and participants, and a willingness to open up their life for the purposes of the research.

When conducting research with families, one may also encounter difficulties regarding confidentiality within the family. As Brody (2001) warns, family members may exert pressure on one another during the consent process. It may be that a researcher is given information from one participant about another family member, which has not been shared between the two members. In these situations, it is essential to remember that participants have the right to confidentiality, even from other members of their own family, unless they chose to tell them of their own accord. Another issue of family confidentiality is when one participant discloses information about another participant, in the context of a group interview. In conversations with members of the Grey family, they mentioned a few times that their daughter had a 'dreadful diet' and that she avoided eating in front of other people. During a group interview, I asked Paul and Cath if their consumption had changed after they had their daughter Claire. This opened up the floodgates to a sensitive issue that had been bubbling under the surface, and Claire started to cry during the interview. When conducting joint interviews researchers need to be sensitive to these family dynamics and interwoven experiences. It is also necessary to be aware that joint interviews may not be the place to talk about joint experiences, especially if they are contentious. As Larossa *et al* (1981, 310) explain, 'in family research, even the most innocent activities may be considered 'treasured family secrets' by subjects'. Family members also have less control in joint interviews, over what other family members say and any unanticipated topics that arise. At the same time, 'members of the same family, particularly from different generations, may have different sensitivities even to seemingly innocuous questions' (Margolin *et al* 2005, 159), as with the Grey family and their sensitivities surrounding food.

Another regular and frequently cited problem in ethnography is the possibility that participants will find out information about other participants of the same community (Ellis 1995). Of the six families that participated in the research, three of the families knew one another. Though they did not live in the same location, they had varying degrees of contact with one another, some direct and some

through other people. On a number of occasions, participants enquired about the well-being other participants, complemented the other families and participants, as well as casually asking about their personal family matters. Participants would also comment on the manner of other people's participation, such as asking how often I see them and when was the last time I spoke to them. I was always sure to give brief, sweeping answers to these questions, not only for the confidentiality of participants, but also in case I was giving away information, even just the smallest detail, which could have caused some disruption (Ortiz 2004). However, it is important not offend participants, who may be asking harmless questions, out of politeness, sheer curiosity, or just to make conversation. Additionally, this interest in other participants may not always have negative effects, and in one instance I was able to retrace a family, who wanted to resume their participation after moving house. There were also times when I received information about other participants, such as regarding illness or important family events that I would not have known otherwise. With the possibility that participants know one another, it also ensures that researchers are consistent in their approach (where possible), and that participants are treated in a uniform manner. Therefore, whilst retaining confidentiality is the biggest priority, researchers should make sure that they manage these boundaries in an ethical manner to ensure that no participants are offended, as their intentions will most of the time be harmless and may perhaps be beneficial.

The formation of friendships was a particularly difficult issue to deal with throughout the course of the ethnography, and this has been discussed in detail in a previous paper (Hall 2009a). However, for the purposes of this discussion, the problem will be outlined briefly here. The Grey family, for example, participated in the research for nearly two years, and would regularly refer to me as a 'family friend'. The rapport that resulted from this meant that some meetings were described as 'just a social [visit]'. The intervals between each episode were always discussed and arranged, participants were made aware of how often meetings would take place, and were given a rough date for the last meeting of the particular episode. However, an increasing intimacy with the Grey family meant that this structure was becoming a little more fluid, and the family seemed to indicate that this distance was not all together necessary. In a conversation I had with Cath Grey, as part an evaluation of Episode 2 (Grey E2 M7, 4), we discussed the 'mixed signals' that reduced contact might give out,

> It must be difficult not to make it look like you're using people, when you're not, and it would seem as though you were using people if you didn't stay in contact with them, and only contacted them when you needed something.

This discussion, and particularly Cath's comments, marked a turning point within the research. The notion of staying in contact 'only when you needed something' made it very apparent that I had the potential to really offend participants if I were to suddenly 'disappear', after having seen them on a regular basis over the course of a few months.

The concern of 'using people' is also forewarned by Cassell (1982), who argues that field relationships within ethnography are often marked by tension and ambiguity. Yet interactions with participants or subjects are a mutual endeavour where each side uses and is used, each side gives as well as getting (Cassell 1982, 151). However, friendships born from the research seem more strenuous than more 'organic' friendships, in part because they are considered as 'work'. Whilst I too considered the participants to be friends, I had not fully realised the implications of my actions on participants. Fuller (1999) argues that 'there is a need for the researcher to consider his/her place within the research process, not least because inclusion in this process is undeniable and unavoidable' (p.224), yet it is not possible to anticipate all potential reactions and conflicts. In response to this situation, I explained to the participant that I would be in contact, mainly by telephone calls, but that it would not be possible to maintain the visits to the same degree. In response to this growing need for a strategy to deal with this issue, I stayed in regular contact with the family over the months that followed, as well as sending them a thank-you card (as I did with all participants, at the end of each episode of participation). I made a considerable effort to keep up to date with this contact, and telephoned them around once a fortnight. The relationship seemed to continue as it had done previously, and after a few months arrangements were made for another meeting, in June 2008 (Episode 3). Although this situation was not necessarily directly resolved, the family were supportive and understanding of the importance of having intervals between each period of research, as allowing for reflection and evaluation, which were not detrimental to the relationships founded. In retrospect, this signified to me that the previous comments had been fuelled by the ability to be open and honest, and become integral to shaping the way that I perceive friendships within the field.

The mediums of communication used also raised interesting issues with regards to friendships with participants. As mentioned above, regular contact was maintained with families during the intervals between each research episode, using mainly telephone calls, although in some cases also through text messages and/or emails. Participants were also sent thank you cards at the end of each episode,

as well as Birthday cards and other occasion's cards, when appropriate. However, there were two significant occasions, when the method and means of contact were initiated by the participants using a social networking website to which I was subscribed. In April 2008, following the close of Episode 2, I received a request on a social networking website to add Graham Johnson as a 'friend'. Less than a week later, I also received a 'friend request' from Emma Robinson, along with a personal message (only viewable by sender and recipient). The dilemma in this scenario was whether or not to add the participants as 'friends' and communicate with them on the website. It might be considered unethical for me to add the participants, as they would be able to view private information about me, I would be able to view private information about them, and other people would be able to view that they were on my 'friends' list. However, ignoring or rejecting their invitation (by not adding them) or personal messages might also be considered unethical, and may have signalled to the participants that my friendship with them was only bound to the research and that I was not willing to acknowledge them outside of that arena.

Yet the dilemma also highlighted broader concerns, the first of which is the matter of participant confidentiality. Although it was perhaps not evident or of concern to them, Graham Johnson and Emma Robinson (alongside all other participants) had signed a consent form to take part in the research, which states that their identity would remain confidential. Therefore, it would be unethical to breach their confidentiality by having access to their personal information. Secondly, and in relation to this, was the issue of researcher confidentiality. By giving them access to information about me and people I know, they would be exposed to knowledge that they might not have had otherwise, and information that I might not have wanted them to have known. Thus, 'relational confidentiality' is something that was important to maintain, for there had to be some element of control about what personal information participants might glean, if only for the fact that they might find out something they did not like. The phrase 'relational confidentiality' is used to stress the importance of maintaining confidentiality for both participants and researchers within a research project. The notion of this confidentiality being 'relational' refers to the corresponding confidentiality that participants and researchers should maintain for one another, though is not bound to just ethnographic research. Maintaining a relational confidentiality is important within this research, as ethnographic relationships often result in a process of sharing between participants and researchers, yet there may be details that a researcher also does not want to share with participants. The concept of 'relational confidentiality' is therefore sensitive to both the personal life of researchers and participants, and their rights to privacy.

Thirdly, and again related to the above matters, there needs to be a point at which one's personal life remained separated from the research. Combining my 'private' life with my 'work' life would thus remove the opportunity for escapism, the ability to remove oneself from the field and from 'work'. In traditional ethnographic research, ethnographers usually ended up going 'home' at some point, whether back to their home country, town/city or separate social group. In fact, Bornstein (2007, 485) refers to ethnographers as being 'in the field as interactive members of a group (be it family or community) on a *temporary* basis'. Since neither of the first two are applicable, the third- a 'separate social group'- is essential. By adding participants as 'friends', two distinctively private social groups would integrate, leaving both parties in a vulnerable situation. Yet space and scale become displaced within this example. Accessible via the internet for anyone to join, other social networking websites have no bounds. As a result, these new technologies, of socialising within specific, purpose-built online spaces could cause future problems for ethnographers, for exiting the field may no longer be so easily achieved.

After investigating the website further and following technical advice from a few close friends, I figured out a way to resolve this situation. The website offers the ability to make certain functions private, and I had already removed the ability for anybody to view my 'profile' (webpage with basic information about me) that I did not add as a friend. Other functions also enabled me to prevent added friends on the website from seeing photos and videos that other people sent to me. I also removed pictures of me with other people, although I already maintained a rather basic (and private) profile to begin with. I also disallowed the participants from viewing comments my friends made to me and I disabled the ability for all friends to view my friends list. Once I'd made these changes I added them both as 'friends'. I also replied to Emma Robinson, and the two of us exchanged a short dialogue. By adding both Emma Robinson and Graham Johnson as 'friends' on the website, but disabling the ability for them to see extensive information about me, to see who my friends were, or for my friends to see them, this ruled out the possibility of them being exposed as a participant, or to find out detailed personal things about me. Therefore this was the most ethically sound decision I believe I could have made, and in fact another participant communicated with me on the website shortly after, also adding me as a friend. As this scenario demonstrates, there are many means of communicating with participants and thus in future, this method of communication might have further use alongside the research.

As discussed previously, when conducting ethnographic research with families, the researcher is likely to develop strong bonds with participants, which is in part due to the extended amount of time spent in the field, as well as the intimate nature of the family (Iverson 2009). This then means that when it comes to disengaging, especially with smaller groups of people, such as a family, the experience can be particularly testing (Snow 1980). As Kindon and Cupples (2003, 202) explain:

> We, along with our participants may 'forget' that we have to leave to write about our experiences and participants may place greater expectations upon us as a result of our longer and/or deeper involvement in their lives.

Leaving the field can therefore be an emotionally intense experience, producing feelings of guilt, relief and anxiety (Gallmeier 1991, Snow 1980). To enter the field and to conduct ethnographic research with families, researchers need to develop a rapport with family members. Yet, ironically, 'the better the rapport and closer the relationships, the more likely people will feel used when the researcher starts to leave' (Taylor 1991, 244). Hence leaving the field is a conundrum in itself, and one that is not so easily resolved (Ortiz 2004).

From my own experiences, leaving the field can be extremely difficult. The method for disengagement included reducing the frequency of contact, and limiting communication to telephone and written communication. Each experience was difficult for different reasons, but what each experience had had in common is an overwhelming regret to have to leave, knowing that I will miss the relationship I have built up with participants. When only half-way into the research, the issues of 'using' people for research was raised by a participant (as already discussed), and these feelings become ever more resonant when starting to leave the field. Although participants are aware that the relationship or friendship was formed within a research project, they might not always understand why a researcher cannot maintain the frequency of contact after the research.

When I had to disengage with the Robinson family, this was the first time I had actively started to leave the field. Emma was clearly aware of the tension between us getting to know each other through the research, and told me that 'you'll have to come and see us, you'll have to think of another study to do' (Episode 3 Meeting 6). Even when it came to thinking about leaving, I was unprepared. After my last meeting with the Robinsons, where I gave them thank-you gifts and explained that I had collected enough data with them, I felt particularly ambivalent about the disengagement process.

> I hadn't really thought about the prospect of saying goodbye to participants; I've been too caught up in actually doing the research to consider my own feelings. I knew I'd been putting off buying them thank you gifts, but when I did eventually make myself do it, I was surprised at how much effort I poured into it...I even got a bit teary when I was wrapping them and writing on the card. When I began to think about why I was so upset, I thought about how I had known them for so long, and how welcoming they were, and how they invited me into their lives; just nice, honest people. I would have liked them even if I had known them otherwise- maybe this is the problem. Had I let myself get too attached?
>
> (Robinson E3 M6, 1-2)

The process of disengagement is something that researchers should take time to think about and reflect upon, particularly in terms of how it might affect participants, as well as the person doing the research. Participants should also fully understand that the researchers will be leaving the field (and perhaps when), as a consequence of entering into it (Iverson 2009, Wolf 1991). Yet, whilst I would strongly advocate that researchers should themselves ourselves and participants for when they need to leave the field, this is easier said than done, since it is impossible to anticipate the relationships that will be developed with participants, nor the difficulties of leaving. For a more in-depth discussion of issues surrounding disengagement see Hall (2009b). Despite these ethical troubles, there are multiple personal and professional benefits to be had from carrying out ethnography, and I was fortune enough to have met some really understanding people through these experiences.

5.2: Company Interviews

5.21: Methodological Approaches

Another point of interest within this research, and with reference to Research Question 3 (see Chapter 4), is the role of businesses in marketing ethical products and company ethics, and the availability of information to consumers regarding consumer goods. As discussed in Chapter 3, knowledge is often considered a prerequisite for raising awareness amongst consumers of the production methods and conditions of their purchases, and the ethical implications of buying such consumer goods. So called 'ethical' products are often marketed on the basis that their previous production chains (networks or circuits, Hughes and Reimer 2004) have greater transparency than those of other products. In this sense, transparency becomes a value within these ethical economies, and becomes synonymous with ethical production. Although studies have looked at the roles and responsibilities of ethical economies (Blowfield 1999, Freidberg 2003, Hughes *et al* 2007), few have

gone so far as to consider how company ethics and/or ethical products are marketed, in light of these new forms of ethical expression.

To explore the marketing of ethical principles by companies, it makes sense to conduct research with the marketing and/or CSR sectors of a range of companies. In order to do this, a suitable methodology needs to be applied. There are a number of ways in which companies have been researched in the past. Studies that explore ethical economies, ethical consumption, ethical trading and so forth, tend to rely heavily on qualitative research methods. In particular, focus groups are often cited as an effective way of encouraging communication between people from different backgrounds, and in the past have been used as a political strategy for debate (Bennett 2002), as well as within studies of ethical consumption (see Barnett *et al* 2005). Surveys are also advocated within Business and Management literature, as providing a valid data set that is then analysed using quantitative techniques (Saunders *et al* 1997), and again have been used in research that explores ethical consumption debates (see Shaw *et al* 2005). However, neither of these methods would give participants the opportunity to talk in depth about the marketing ideas, campaigning and wider consumption patterns related to ethical consumerism, from the perspective of their specific organisation.

Instead, interviews are advocated as a methodology strongly suited to the business environment, again having been previously used in the study of ethical economies (see Hughes *et al* 2007). Interviews have been described as the tool of the sociologist, yet they are widely used throughout the social sciences, and are a vital component of ethnographic research. Smith (2001, 29) also refers to the interview transcript as 'probably the single largest source of qualitative data currently held by geographers'. In its simplest form, the interview involves the researcher asking questions and receiving answers from the participant, whether using structured, semi-structured or unstructured questioning. Whilst in-depth (unstructured) interviewing is thought to produce richer information, and structured interviewing is regarded as standardised and systematic, a semi-structured approach balances a rich, collective data set, with an essence of structure and consistency, where relying on a rigid set of questions is not always necessary (Robson 2002). Using a semi-structured questioning method allows for flexibility in each interview, and the use of similar questions also enable the comparison of responses between the companies (Bennett 2002, Saunders *et al* 1997). However, it should be noted that, regardless of the chosen questioning method, is impossible to replicate an

interview, due to the ways in which different participants approach and answer different questions, therefore impacting upon the flow of the conversation (Crang 2002, Lee 1993, Valentine 2005). Aside from questioning, the dynamics of an interview can also be determined by the relationship between the researcher and participant. According to Benny and Hughes (1977), it is essential to remain professional throughout an interview, which is made easier when one is not struggling between the two roles of researcher and friend. The dynamics of an interview also depend on whether the interview involves more than one person, and similar to focus groups, power relations are evident in group interviews, whereby certain individuals may be silenced by more dominant members (Valentine 2005). In order to gather data regarding the ethics of different companies, and the marketing of these ethics to consumers, interviews or 'corporate interviews' (Hughes 2006) were considered the most appropriate avenue of enquiry, for two particular reasons. Firstly, due to the suitability of the method of the setting, and secondly because of the nature of data generated.

On this first point, the familiarity of potential participants with this form of data collection or social setting is a good reason for use. Interviews are considered to be a useful tool for accessing people in managerial/business positions, as complementing the nature of their business. As a research method, interviews are frequently used in this area of study, perhaps because business persons are more accustomed to the interviewing format (see Colls and Evans 2008, Hughes 2006). Berg (2007) even describes interviews as 'business-like' (p. 106), almost as the language of business. Shurmer-Smith (2002) also argues that interviews are a good way to talk to public figures, and to extract their opinions on normative facts. Interviews, and meetings involving conversational exchange, are a manner of doing things that 'business types' are more used to. Indeed, Saunders *et al* (1997) state that managers (and the like) are more likely to participate in an interview than a questionnaire, as an interview gives them the opportunity to air their opinion, and to talk at length rather than to be restricted to a set of answers. Bennett (2002) also agrees that an interview is less of an interrogation, and more a way to collect the required information from ones participants and hearing individual stories, which in this case would be centred on the different approaches to ethical consumerism and the marketing of 'ethical' products. These interviews should be conducted in a formal manner (i.e. particular dress code, the strict organisation of times and dates), simply due to the nature of business and the need to comply with this when interviewing, or as Berg (2007, 91) calls the 'social performance' of the interview (Saunders *et al* 1997).

On the second point, regarding the nature of the data produced from interviews, interviewing allows for a targeted discussion of particular issues and specific research questions. In particular, the use of semi-structured interviews, as discussed previously, is particularly fitting to this context. In this case, questions can be tailored according to each specific company (Agar 1986), at the same time as the loose template of questioning provides the flexibility for participants to discuss the individuality of the ethics of the company. The transcribed interview is also an accessible format of document for when providing feed back to participants, who may request a copy of the transcript, as opposed to a research diary or observation notes. Conducting a number of company-based interviews means that, where interviews (according to business, marketing and economics literature) might otherwise support and validate questionnaire or survey data, these interviews can be used in conjunction with the ethnographic and school-based data.

5.22: Company-Based Fieldwork

Over 30 companies were contacted and invited to participate in the research, ranging in size, produce and operational scale (local, regional, national or international). In the initial stages of this aspect of the research, a sampling system was devised. Companies were sampled according to their location, type of business, whether or not they were an 'ethical' company, and the scale of their operations. However, with a difficulty in finding participating companies, a snowballing technique was instead applied. Each company was contacted by telephone, in order to locate the most suitable department or participant. This often depended on the size and type of the company, in that some companies did not have a CSR team, but more often than not would have a marketing department. However, for the smaller companies, it was nearly always the owner that participated in the interview. Once a suitable contact had been found, an email was sent to that individual or department, stating the details of the research, a number of example questions, with an invitation for participation in a face-to-face or telephone interview and an attached information leaflet.

Between May 2008 and August 2009 a total of thirteen companies participated in the research. The identity of these companies is confidential, therefore company names are replaced with descriptive statements, and each company is referred to within the text using a corresponding initial. The companies that were involved include: two national supermarket chains (H, L), an international confectionary company (M), a national department store (G), a national whole foods company (A), two local delicatessens (F, I), a national fashion and home-ware chain (J), an international beauty

and cosmetics company (C), a local artisan deli company (B), a national shoe company (K), a national building society (D) and an international bank (E). Semi-structured interview questions were used for each interview, with a total of between sixteen and eighteen questions, depending upon the company and the role/job description of the interviewee. Each set of questions was tailored to the particular company and the products or services that they provide. However, interview questioning was always structured around the history of the company, company ethics and principles, target customer(s), and the marketing tools used to communicate company ethics or ethical products, in that order.

Of these interviews, eight were conducted face-to-face at the company head quarters or store (in the case of smaller companies), four on the phone, and one by email. One of these interviews (with Company I) was conducted across a working day, during which time I participated in the daily running of the shop. In these thirteen interviews, fourteen people participated, whereby Company E wanted the CSR and marketing aspects of the business to be represented. The interviewees were staff members from either the CSR (Corporate Social Responsibility) sector of the company (six participants), the marketing department (four participants), or the owner/MD of the company (four participants), depending upon gatekeeper advice and the availability of participants. The interviews all lasted approximately an hour, and were audio recorded using a dictaphone, except in the case of Company M where the participant preferred for notes to be taken, Company I where ethnographic notes were recorded, and Company J where the interview was conducted through email.

After each interview, participants were provided with a copy of the interview transcript and asked to provide a signed consent form. In accordance with the guidelines of the University of Liverpool Ethics Committee, participants were asked to sign the consent form after the research, so as to achieve fully-informed consent. The participants were informed prior to the interview, with an initial telephone call and subsequent email (as explained previously) along with an information leaflet. The information leaflet contained five main sections, 'Taking part', 'What will it involve?', 'My research', 'What can you expect', and 'Other details'. Within this information leaflet, participants were informed that their participation would remain confidential (as would the company they work for), that they could withdraw at any time without reason, and they were also provided with the details of the Research Governance Office, should they need to make a complaint. The consent form outlined similar ethical issues, consisting of the same four points as those listed in Section 5.13. By

signing the consent form after the research, they would know what exactly they were consenting to, since the interview had been conducted, so therefore what information they had provided and what might be used.

5.23: Ethical Issues

Ethical issues were apparent before any of the interviews took place. In the first instance, there were difficulties in attracting companies and participants to take part in an interview. In the initial phone call and emailing stage, potential participants were always made aware of the nature of the research. However, taking part in research is time consuming, and as one potential participant explained in an email, 'I just don't have the time to help you with your research'. The topic in hand also seemed to detract certain companies from taking part. Although I tried to be as overt and honest as possible about the aims of the research and how the data would be used, as well as offering to provide participants with the questions beforehand and a copy of the interview afterwards, it was clear that some of the companies were unsure of my intentions, and suspected that I wanted to investigate their ethical credentials. The research also coincided with the peak of the UK 'credit crunch' in 2008, and this also meant that a lot of the companies that were approached did not have the time, or the resources, to participate. I was particularly fortunate to secure two interviews in the banking sector (D, E), although many more refused my invitations. Indeed, for an interview to take place with Company E, I had to provide a full personal reference.

Aside from finding willing participants, it was also difficult to locate potential participants in the first place. There were numerous occasions where I encountered gatekeepers that I had been unprepared for, often in the guise of telephone reception staff. These gatekeepers held the power to open up or block off access to participants and so therefore the progress of the research (Blaxter *et al* 2006, Hammersley and Atkinson 1983). When making the initial telephone calls to the companies, it was often a case of pot luck as to whether or not I would receive any help. On some occasions, I would receive an enormous amount of help from the reception staff, who might provide me with suggestions on whom to contact, or even a name, telephone number or email address. At other times, I would be given no help at all, and on others I would be passed back and forth between people. When I approached one company, I was given six different telephone numbers, that all lead back to the same number. The amount of assistance I received was not just dependent upon the individuals I spoke with, but also on the security of the company, especially in the case of the larger

companies. For some, it was company policy not to give out the details of any staff members, although others details could be given if a specific person was named, and on some occasions I would be redirected to the direct telephone line of an MD or Head of Department. There were also times when interviewees acted as gatekeepers, for example I was put into contact with Company B through Company I, or (new) gatekeepers were not required at all, whereby Company C , L and G were also approached using contacts I had made prior to starting the research.

Once the interviews had been conducted, there were relatively few ethical issues that arose. Some participants were slower than others at sending back the consent form, and some of the transcripts took a long time to complete, but there were generally few problems. Some participants, whilst giving their consent for the transcript to be used, once they had seen the written transcript, expressed that they were not particularly happy with their performance. Some of the comments received include:

> I did not realise I use so many 'yeah's' and 'really' in my speech, it is rather alarming!

> I sound like a right d**k in that transcript, I hate reading transcripts because I know that's actually what I sound like.

In order to ease any worries of this sort, it was made clear to participants that their interview transcript would be presented as a spoken interview. However, two of the companies were so dissatisfied with their interview transcript that they made changes to it, as they explained:

> I am happy for you to use the information in the interview. I have edited it as I read through only because it made it easier to read without the 'you know's' and 'sort of's' - how many of those are there!!

> I hope you don't mind, but I've made quite a few tracked changes to your interview notes - I just want to ensure that they messages I was trying to convey came through accurately.

In both these cases, the revised interviews were used in the data analysis. However, this did raise issues regarding confidentiality, for if the companies and the participants had not been arranged to be anonymous in the research, then I would have expected to have had a lot more requests to view and revise the interview transcripts. Despite these glitches, the company interviews were relatively simple to conduct, and participants were very accommodating about where and when the interviews took place. All thirteen interviews have been used in the analysis chapters, having provided a large amount of dense and useful information.

5.3: Researching the School Environment

5.31: Methodological Approaches

As discussed in Chapter 2, the moral education of young people is thought to derive from two main sources, primarily the home and family, and secondly from school education. However, very little is known about how young people today form their morals, and indeed less about how they form their morals in consumption (see Research Question 2, Chapter 4). In addition to this, the heightened awareness amongst consumers as part of the attention given to ethical economies (McGregor 2000) renders the discourses of 'ethical consumption' as well-known and popularised. However, what also remains unknown is the extent to which these discourses have impacted upon the school environment and indeed the moral education of young people. For Crewe and Collins (2006) young people are 'hyper social agents in their commodity worlds' (p.9), as social actors that display responsibility in their control over how they dress their bodies, as well as being vehicles for popular thought (Cull 2001, Smith 2000). As discussed in Chapter 3, consumption is an integral aspect of identity formation, and a way to construct and reconstruct personality (Edwards 2000). However, while Valentine (1999c) argues that few studies explore individual experiences of home in identity formation, it is even more difficult to find evidence of research that explore experiences of school in instilling moral and ethical principles into individuals. There is also a need to research the 'interconnectivity' of spheres of moral learning (Pike 2007a, Schuitema *et al* 2008), but also the ways in which different sites of moral education influence one another.

Therefore, researching the role of the school in moral education might help to explain the influence of school-based moral education on young people's understandings about ethics and moral in consumption, as well as the impacts of the recent ethical consumerism both on this moral education and on informing ordinary ethics in consumption. As such, the school environment, as a hub of moral education, is to be investigated. The school environment consists of a range of factors, including lessons, teachers, peers, school events and faith, if applicable (Fogelman 1997, Pike 2007b). In order to investigate the school environment, a number of methods are therefore required, to gather information regarding both the taught material of the curriculum, as well as student's perceptions of their moral education. As Valentine (2005) suggests, triangulation, or the use of multiple methods, is one way in which researchers can maximize their understanding of a research question, and methodological flexibility is useful for a comprehensive information base (Parr 1998, Rose 2001).

Secondary school pupils were chosen due to the prevalence of these topics in the curriculum (especially Key Stage 3), but also because of their ability to discuss more complex issues. Key stages are goals for educational development, which at secondary school include Key Stage 3 (age 11-14) and Key Stage 4 (age 14-16). Whilst recognising the developmental differences and distinctions between older and younger children, this research does take into account that these can also vary between different people (see Punch 2002). As will be discussed below, it is also easier to arrange research around these particular year groups. Also, whilst children's geographies have warned of the apparent agency of children and young people (Crewe and Collins 2006, Robb 2001), it remains to be seen whether young people will exhibit critical thought in terms of their moral views and their consumption choices, and if their perceptions of morality reflect the moral education that they have been taught at school or at home. The methodology is also based around qualitative techniques that have, in previous research, been recommended for when working with children and young people (see Thomas and O'Kane 1998).

Firstly, lesson observations were selected, whereby observation methods (as discussed in section 5.11), are useful for exploring sensitive issues in their everyday context (Healy *et al* 2007, Lee 1993). Lessons observation, as a research method, was chosen in order to give an insight into the actual information that young people learn regarding moral behaviour in school, the way these ideas are constructed and presented, and how these ethics may then be translated into their consumption choices. As discussed previously, the curriculum points to a number of subjects that are central to enabling students to develop a sense of morality and responsibility, and consumer awareness, all of which are 'developed' through each Key Stage (3-4) at secondary school. Therefore, lesson observations were carried out in the most relevant subjects. As discussed in Chapter 2, this includes PSHE, Citizenship, Geography, and R.E, and more loosely English and Physical Education, encompassing concepts that are relative to, and encourage, moral development (Lambert 1999, National Curriculum 2008, Pike 2007a, Pike 2007b, Schuitema *et al* 2008). Observations of school council meetings and whole-school events are also useful, in order to explore how young people interact within the school environment beyond the classroom (Pike 2007b).

Secondly, in order to capture the experiences of young people regarding their thoughts on the school environment, moral education and morals in consumption, focus groups were chosen. Focus groups have been described as a way to allow people to 'explain their world' (Thomas and O'Kane

1998), giving scope for the participants to voice their opinions openly (Murray 2006). Conradson (2005) also argues that focus groups are useful for gaining insight into a particular social or environmental issue, as well as being of use in the education setting. During these focus groups, usually containing 5-8 participants, and designed to explore a range of issues. Once the domain of market researchers (Murray 2006), focus groups are now increasingly used by social scientists, mostly having been used with adults. However, as Myfanwy *et al* (2002) and Murray (2006) argue, focus groups are an extremely useful and valuable method for doing research with young people, on their opinions and personal experiences.

Kindon (2003) argues that, when working with children and young people, their alternative ways of viewing the world need to be accounted for, emphasising the need to make research more accessible and fun. As a means of accounting for their 'varied social competencies and life experiences' (Punch 2002, 322), a range of methods should also be employed. A participatory task involving a range of cue cards (see below) was therefore incorporated into the focus groups, in order to explore the discourses of ethical consumption according to young consumers, but also to add an interactive element to the groups, as a way to encourage a richer, more analytical discussion. It should be borne in mind, however, that visual images can be subjective and situational, and with each participant comes a different interpretation (Rose 2001). Indeed, it has also been argued that no research can be thoroughly participatory, even if data are gathered through 'participatory' means, as it is then analysed solely by the researcher, as 'an extension of one's own gaze' (Kindon 2003, 144). Therefore, the cards were used more to encourage conversation, as with the ethnographic photos, rather than to be interpreted by the researcher. This multi-method approach is considered the most appropriate way to gather the necessary information, but also gives young people the ability to express themselves (Punch 2002), and to possibly learn something from the experience.

5.32: School-Based Fieldwork

Informed by the previous discussion, research in schools began in June 2008. A total of twenty four schools in the North West of England were contacted and invited to participate in the research, whether in the lesson observations, focus groups, or both. Within this district, ethnicity, affluence and education performance rates are all highly variable from the national average, and therefore likely to yield a wide range of participants. At the same time, with the small sample size, this

research does not aim to be representative of all UK schools, and it is recognised that the small number of participating schools makes it difficult to draw generalised results from the data. Instead the research takes an investigative approach, and the information gathered is rich and plentiful nonetheless. Secondary schools from one particular district of the North West were sampled according to a number of variables, including whether the school was faith/non faith based, whether it was mixed sex/all girls/all boys, and if it was average/high/low achieving. This information was then cross-referenced against a map of school catchment areas and postal codes, and the schools were approached in a particular order so as to achieve the most diverse sample. A letter and information leaflet was sent to the Head Teacher of the school, following a phone call to inform the school that they should expect a letter. Within the letter it was stated that an initial meeting could be arranged to provide more information about the study, after which they were under no obligation to take part.

The three participating schools were varied in their student base and attainment level. Initially, four schools agreed to participate and took part in the initial meeting, however following a number of union-related incidents, one of these schools decided to withdraw. School A is a non faith, mixed sex, average achieving school. School B is a faith, mixed sex, high achieving school. School C is a faith, single sex, high achieving school. It was also decided best practice to carry out a pilot study in one school (School A), to formulate a structured research design and to trial the lesson observations and focus groups as appropriate methodologies. Therefore, two lesson observations of Year 9 Citizenship, along with two focus groups, one group consisting of six Year 9 pupils and the other of six Year 7 pupils, took place in School A from April - July 2008. Once these methods had been piloted, arrangements were made to conduct research in School B. As a starting point, I was invited to observe a school council meeting, as this was felt to be relevant to the research topic and would also 'get my face recognised' by pupils within the school. Four lesson observations then took place, Year 8 Geography, Year 9 Geography, Year 9 R.E. and Year 9 Citizenship, followed by one focus group, containing five Year 9 pupils, in May - July 2008. Research in School C took place in August 2009, consisting of four lessons observations, including Year 10 Geography, Year 8 PSHE and two classes of Year 9 R.E. This school was reluctant to involve any of the pupils in focus groups.

Therefore a total of ten lesson observations, one school council observation (referred to in analysis as 'Obs.') and three focus groups (coded as 'FG') took place. Notes were taken during all the

observation exercises and later typed into diaries. The focus groups discussions were audio recorded on a dictaphone, and then transcribed following the discussion, along with a corresponding diary and seating plan. Each of these discussions lasted approximately one hour, covering a range of questions. The questions posed to the young participants were semi-structured into four areas of enquiry, covering 'School lessons', 'Own opinions', 'School Environment' and an 'Evaluation', to encourage participants to discuss their lessons, their consumption choices and the influence of the school environment. These focus groups, as described in the previous section, also included a participatory task. This task involved the participants collectively ordering a set of nine cards, firstly into an order of importance, and then into an order of achievability. The cards stated an 'ethical issue' on each, along with a simple picture, and included stop animal cruelty, preventing climate change, stop sweatshop labour, stop child labour, buying from local area, buying Fairtrade goods, buying organic goods, rights for women workers, and recycling.

Informed consent was required, and was obtained at every stage of the research. In addition, each school and participant would remain anonymous, where the names of all the focus group participants have been changed and replaced with pseudonyms. In accordance with advice from the University of Liverpool Ethics Committee, Head Teacher consent was required for entry into the school and therefore for research to take place. A recent CRB check was also required as standard. The Head Teacher from each school signed a consent form that requested that they read the information leaflet, and stated the terms and conditions of the research, such as anonymity and confidentiality, as well as the right to withdraw from the study at any time. Head Teacher consent was also valid in order for the lesson observations (and school council observations) to take place, along with the informal consent of the teacher leading the lesson. Pupil consent was not required for the lesson observations, since it was the content of the lessons being observed, or rather the dissemination of the curriculum and of moral education, and not pupil behaviour.

However, parental and participant consent were required for the focus groups. The focus group discussions were arranged to take place either during a designated lunch break or during lessons where participation was not deemed to impact upon the pupil's learning. In order to inform the Head Teacher, teachers (of the observed lessons) and parents (of the focus groups participants) about the research, and to assist them in their decision to participate, an information leaflet was provided. This information leaflet, similar to the company leaflet described in section 5.22, laid out

the aims of the research, as well as that participants could expect to remain anonymous, and that they had the right to withdraw at any time. The parental consent form was sent home with those pupils who opted to participate, and they could only participate once parental consent had been acquired. The consent form contained a letter explaining the details of the focus group, and what participation would involve. The letter also contained a slip at the end which the parent/guardian was required to fill, with the name of the child, the name of the parent/guardian and a signature to signify their consent.

A similar leaflet was also produced and provided to the young participants of the focus groups, and also required the participants to agree to the following statements:

* I have read the information outlined in the information sheet.
* I agree to take part in the study described in the information sheet.
* The researcher has answered all my outstanding questions about the study and its purpose.
* I understand that I can withdraw from the study at any time.
* I understand that all data will be anonymous and confidential (everything I say is private and all names are changed). Only the investigators at the Geography Department at the University of Liverpool will have access to the raw data.
* I understand that, in accordance to the Data Protection Act, I can at any time ask for access to the information I provide or for it to be destroyed.

As is apparent, the language and layout used for the previous information leaflets was adapted accordingly for the young participants. The consent form for these participants was included on the back page of this leaflet, in order to make the consent process simpler. Once Head Teacher, Parent/Guardian and pupil consent was obtained, the focus groups could take place.

5.33: Ethical Issues

Most of the ethical issues regarding research in schools were confined to the pre-research stage, such as deciding upon the forms of informed consent, and obtaining a CRB check. However, a few issues did arise. Firstly, the pilot study highlighted the difficulties of conducting research with secondary school pupils, whereby there were only a few occasions where any year groups above

Year 9 took part, given the pressures of the curriculum for GCSE students in Years 10 and 11. Indeed, it would have been very difficult to limit the study to one particular year group, in part because the school timetable was open to spontaneous change, but also because access was highly dependent upon the content of the lesson, and whether or not it was relative to the research. There were also a few times when lesson observations were cancelled at short notice, either because the teacher was absent and the planned lesson had to be postponed, or because a whole school event was taking place instead, for example. Secondly, all the focus groups took place in areas where I could be supervised (albeit from afar) by a member of staff, as a matter of safety, for both participants and myself. In School A, the focus groups took place in the library, supervised by library staff. It might therefore be suggested that the responses that the participants gave might have been impacted by the staff presence, whereby their ability to express freedom of speech, particularly about their school lessons, was restrained. Whilst this should be borne in mind when considering the focus group data, during all the focus groups the staff members were seated too far away to hear the details of the conversation, but near enough to observe the behaviour.

On the whole, the lesson observations and focus groups ran smoothly. However, during one focus group, a participant started asking personal details, at a point in the discussion regarding recycling access:

> **Participant**: where do you live, can I ask, if you don't mind me asking?
>
> **Sarah**: somewhere where I can't recycle!
>
> **Participant**: oh I thought you were going to say somewhere where I can't tell you. Why can't you say where you live? Are you not allowed?
>
> **Sarah**: it's just not important is it?
>
> **Participant**: I'm not going to stalk you

In this short discourse, the participant actually indicates the (extreme) ethical issues of giving participants information about one's personal life, but also the unequal nature of research, in that the focus groups required the participants to impart information about themselves, whilst the researcher is under no such pressure, or obligation, to answer personal questions about themselves. As Hammersley (1992) warns, it is important not to take advantage of, or to exercise power over, participants, and yet such ethical issues are not so clear cut. Following the focus group mentioned

above, the situation was explained to the teacher taking the lesson, and the issue was not raised again, either within or beyond the focus group.

Lastly, following research in School C, I was contacted by a teacher that had allowed me to observe her lesson. After the lesson, she asked if I had enjoyed it, and I expressed that she had an interesting and innovative teaching style. As a result of this sweeping comment, I received an email from the teacher with a request:

> Dear Sarah
> I hope that you don't mind me asking but following your comments about my lessons on Friday 25th August, could you please do me a huge favour and email the Head Teacher and my head of department or send them both letters outlining my lesson and teaching. It's just we are facing an informal inspection this Friday and it would be very much appreciated as well as being useful for my portfolio (therefore forwarding a copy to myself).

I replied to the participant explaining that, whilst I did enjoy the lesson, I did not gather information on her teaching style, but more on the content of the lesson. This being said, I was unable to comment on either student responses or teaching style that I observed, in a formal manner. The other issue that I expressed was that the school, the pupils and the teachers, should all remain anonymous within my research, and if I my name were to be attached to any documents associated with the school, then anonymity could no longer be granted, and subsequently I would not be honouring the ethical guidelines that I have agreed to respect. I also expressed that if the teacher wanted to discuss the matter further, then she was welcome to telephone me. This therefore raised a particular ethical issue regarding reciprocity in research, and the notion of giving something back. Although the teacher in this case only required a small favour, I was not qualified to fulfil the request. At the same time, I felt particularly guilty that the teacher had allowed me to observe his/her lesson, and I could not return the favour. As discussed with regards to reciprocity in ethnography, the nature of research essentially involves taking from participants, without really giving much back. However, by ensuring that the research is conducted in the most ethical manner possible, such as providing fully informed consent, guaranteeing anonymity and allowing participants to withdraw whenever they wish, these negative effects might be reduced.

5.4: Chapter Conclusion

Within this chapter, the multi-sited research design has been described in full, from the justifications behind the methodologies, to the fieldwork conducted and the ethical issues that ensued. The three-pronged approach has been discussed as the most effective way to explore families, schools and companies, and also to address the research questions and aims. To research family experiences and negotiations of consumption, ethnography was chosen as the most appropriate methodology. This was for a number of reasons, in part due to the topic in hand, where everyday consumption choices require an approach that studies such practices in an everyday context, but also because of the very nature of the topic. Doing research with families, as discussed, needs to take into account the close relationships that family members have with one another, along with the tensions that may exist between different members. As shown, ethical dilemmas can occur when these relationships are not treated with sensitivity, and issues of confidentiality and disengagement serve as examples of this. Despite the difficulties of conducting ethnography, not just these ethical problems but also the fact that keeping up these relationships is especially time consuming, the method proved to be especially productive and as a result a wealth of data was collected.

Similarly, whilst there were difficulties in acquiring participants to take part in the company interviews, it emerged that the methodology was well suited to the topic. The use of interviewing techniques worked particularly well and participants seemed comfortable in this environment. Using this method, the participants were also able to adjust the method according to their particular needs. As such, one of the interviews was conducting via email, due to time constraints but also an eagerness to be involved, and some took place on the telephone, because it was difficult to arrange a face to face interview, whether because of distance, availability or access. One participant even requested that I work in the store with them, so that they could 'see how they did things'. In this sense, the method was appropriate for the day-to-day routines of individuals working for companies, in that data could be gathered in a manner that was suited to both participant and researcher. In spite of some of the ethical difficulties that arose, regarding the use of the data (which was dealt with in a quick and agreeable manner), these interviews were rich with specific and detailed information.

For the schools-based research, lesson observations and focus groups proved to be an effective way in which to explore the school environment, whilst being ethically sound. Despite difficulties in

encouraging participating schools, the observations and focus groups discussions that took place were all successful and produced a large amount of useful data. The teachers and the pupils from the schools that took part in the research were also enthusiastic about the topic and were complementary of the ways in which the research was carried out. However, issues were raised regarding reciprocity, both in terms of the information given participants about oneself, and reciprocity once the research has ended. Whilst every effort was made to conduct the research in an ethical manner, these issues did arise. However, they were dealt with in a sensitive and considered manner.

As indicated, a vast amount of rich data was produced from the methodologies discussed, by using tailored and appropriate research designs. As is apparent from these discussions, it is difficult to separate the process of data collection from the ethical dilemmas that ensue as a part of the research. The following chapters make full use of the data collected from the multi-sited, three-pronged research design, including the ethnographic research from 2007-2009, the thirteen company interviews and fieldwork from three schools. The analysis chapters are arranged as such; Chapter 6: Articulating Ethics and Morals, Chapter 7: Negotiating Morals, Negotiating Consumption and Chapter 8: Responsibility through Consumption.

The data have been organised in this way for a number of reasons. Firstly, it emerged within the theoretical chapters that there is a need to discern between narratives and practices within consumption, in order to understand how morals in consumption form and how ethical decisions are made. Therefore the analysis was required to address both what people say about their morals and how these morals emerge and translate into practice. At the same time, very little is known yet about the nature of moral balancing within consumption, and how morals are expressed in consumption amidst ordinarily ethical consumption choices. As such, it was also necessary to explore the decision-making processing surrounding consumption and the ways in which consumption can be used as an outlet for people's moral identities. In order to achieve this, the data have been organised in a manner that explores firstly the narratives of consumption (Chapter 6), the moral negotiations of consumption (Chapter 7) and the ways in which responsibilities can be enacted and expressed (Chapter 8). As a result, there is a progression within these chapters, moving from narratives, to negotiations, to practice, with various common themes weaved throughout.

Taking each of these chapters in turn, Chapter 6 looks at the definitions and distinctions, locations and teachings of ethics, in order to explore consumer narratives. The articulation of morals and ethics in everyday accounts is important to show how consumers fix their narratives in order to explain their own behaviour. Chapter 7 explores how moral negotiations take place within consumption, focussing on the negotiation processes surrounding health, money, waste and ethical concerns, as themes that emerged from the data. The negotiation of morals within everyday consumption decision-making is important for understanding how morals translate from narrative to practice. Chapter 8 then examines the expression of ethics through consumption choices, and the impacts of these choices. In particular, this discussion centres on the concept of responsibility, in terms of transparency and trust, self and collective, and enacting responsibility. The chapter therefore aims to address how responsibility is attributed to different social actors, the ways in which consumers might become responsible for their consumption decisions (and the impacts of these choices) and how responsibilities can be articulated in practice.

Chapter 6: Articulating Ethics and Morals

The theoretical debates discussed in Chapter 2, regarding the various approaches to moral philosophy, such as teleological and deontological theories, illustrated how ethics and morals are a complex equation of right, wrong, good, bad, action and consequence. This chapter aims to build upon this literature, and specifically the theoretical debates that describe themselves as 'Moral Geographies'. As already discussed, whilst Geography engages with Philosophical debates, there is little reciprocation (Smith 1997 and 1999). At the same time, the literature on ethical consumption has yet to critically engage with these philosophical theories, or indeed to question the ethics of consumption in an everyday context. Therefore, to understand how ethics are articulated in consumption, it is first of all necessary to explore how they are understood and applied, where they come from and how they are formed. This chapter will unravel the concepts of ethics and morality as both ideas and practices, as the first step to understanding how ethics can influence behaviour. To do this, I aim to bring clarity to understandings and practices of ethics and morality and to examine what they mean to different people, how they differ between consumers, where they are located and originate, how they are taught and disseminated, and how they might be expressed, such as through consumption.

This chapter is based upon the narratives of participants, or what people say about their ethics, and how they fix these narratives as understandings of their own behaviour. This form of data collection and presentation, pioneered by narrative ethnographers, is considered as a relatively recent move 'to increase the voice of the 'other' through more active involvement of research participants in the co-production of ethnographic accounts, narratives, or texts' (Sluka and Robben 2007, 19). According to Tedlock (1991), narrative ethnography involves focusing upon the ethnographic dialogue with participants, and not on the ethnographer, such as using observational notes. Miller (1998, 66) in fact refers to the ethnographic narratives used in his book *A Theory of Shopping* as 'discourses', which he defines as 'nothing more pretentious than that which people tend to say'. These narratives, therefore, not only explain how participants perceive and feel about particular issues (shopping in the case of Miller, ethics in this chapter), but how these ideas inform their practice. Similarly, McNamara (2009, 161) used storytelling, associated with feminist ethnography, as part of social work research. She argued that 'the meanings [women] ascribe to situations, events

and processes have often gone unheard', and that story telling can result in 'thick descriptions and conversational narratives'.

In addition, the narratives within this chapter tended to be built on a rather static notion of morality, whereby morality was conceived as passing through the family, generation after generation, and constructed over time and space. This then raises questions about how concepts (and paradigms) of morality ever change, if they are simply passed between people. Yet, the morality that participants discussed was not necessarily the morality that they practiced, but rather their moral ideals. In this sense, the discussions within this chapter are based around what and how participants think about morality, and Chapter 7 then deals with how morality is performed. This chapter is therefore arranged into four sections, 6.1: Defining and Distinguishing Ethics, 6.2: Locating Ethics, and 6.3: Teaching and Learning About Ethics, followed by a brief conclusion (6.4).

6.1: Defining and Distinguishing Ethics

Discourses of morality, and concepts of right and wrong, good and bad, resound within the data. The logical starting point of analysis is to first examine how ethics are understood by participants, what they are and what they mean in different contexts. Therefore within this section, the foundations will be laid in place, for what the terms 'ethics' and 'morals' mean, but also how they differ between different people and institutions, within their narratives. To do this, the family ethnographic research, school-based data and corporate interviews are discussed in turn, and their definitions of morals and ethics are distinguished from one another.

During observed discussions and arranged interviews, it was rare for ethnographic participants to talk specifically about morals or ethics, unless directly asked about these matters. This is not to say that moral issues were not present, as will be discussed later, but more that the everyday vocabulary of family life rarely included this terminology. When specifically asked what they thought morals and ethics were, Tom and Emma explained,

Emma: [they are] a belief that something is right

Tom: code, a moral code to conduct life

Emma: it's different for everybody, if you have certain opinions, and you try to do everything by that code.

Tom: for a lot of people, their moral code is based on what everyone says

Emma: what society says is what everyone does

Tom: and some people's are a bit wishy washy, they don't stand up, they just go with the flow

Emma: ... people have their own morals.

(Robinson E3 M5, 2-3)

Here, Tom's use of the phrase 'wishy washy' might be viewed as a negative, derogatory judgement on those who are not deemed to hold strong morals, alongside his description of these people as going with the 'flow' i.e. the flow of what society (and 'everyone' in it) says is right. For Tom, to have no fixed morals or strong ethical beliefs is therefore a sign of a weak character, as lacking integrity, conviction and resistant to the pull of the 'flow'. The terms 'ethics' and 'morals' are also associated with one another, and may be used in an interchangeable manner, as Smith (2000) has also indicated. They were regarded as overarching concepts, or rules to live by, relative to 'life' and 'society', although people with stronger characters might 'stand up' and have their own personal ethics. For the four families that practiced a religion (all of Christian denomination), religion was often associated with moral beliefs, as having 'a moral side' (Green E1 Int.1, 6) or 'moral code' (Grey E1 Int.1, 4). Religion was often discussed as having provided a moral guideline, an indicator for when making moral decisions, rather than being the purveyor of correct moral thought. For other people who were not especially religious, they also recognised that their personal opinions were 'a product of the way they had been brought up [...] with morals' (Smith E1 M1, 4). In short, morals were regarded as a personal matter and existing at the individual level, which might be influenced by larger institutions, such as society, religion, or government.

For most participants, the abstract concepts of 'ethics' and 'morality' were better explained by the use of more accessible language, such as the term 'principle', along with others phrases such as 'standards', 'philosophy', 'values', and 'should' or 'should not'. These terms were used to reflect upon the personal qualities of the participants, their own judgements and philosophies on life, and were used in conversation when expressing their own ideas of right and wrong, good and bad. Morals were very much part of who participants saw themselves to be, or their identity, and were influenced by their upbringing (see Section 6.2). However, some participants clearly distinguished

between personal preference and personal morals. During an interview with the Grey family at their home, they discussed how their choice not to smoke or drink was a 'personal preference, it isn't because of morals'. In this case, smoking and drinking are avoided because they are neither likeable nor enjoyable to the participants, not necessarily because they are considered as 'wrong', and therefore distinguished from moral motivation. With a closer reading of the data, to distinguish between decisions based on ethical commitments or personal preference, there emerged two particular areas where participants expressed strong ethical beliefs about the correct way to behave, or the standards and principles by which they choose to live their lives; caring for themselves and caring for other people. For ethnographic participants in this research, living in accordance with at least one of these morals is what it means to be ethical.

With regards to caring for oneself, participants often expressed egocentric concerns for their own well being, and positioned their own health and happiness as important determinants when making decisions. To care for oneself, in terms of fitness, appearance, diet and quality of life was spoken about as something that was not only important, but as necessary to providing personal happiness, and was therefore seen as the right thing to do (Hay and Foley 1998, Russell 1946). Although much of this happiness was associated with making choices based on likes and dislikes, good or right decisions were considered as those that enhanced personal wellbeing, thus being intertwined with personal preference. As Tom Robinson (E3 M5, 6) explained,

> You have to figure out what's moral, but the influence on me verges in lifestyle choices more than moral choices, like it's moral to keep a healthy body, which I've developed since having been ill, and crossed over to that way of thinking.

Keeping healthy, or 'that way of thinking', was therefore associated with having positive consequences, such as warding off illness, as in the example above. However, within Tom's explanation, there is a strong sense of self-governance over morals, that they should be 'figured out', and that 'choices' are made by the individual.

Also within these conversations, the word 'moral' was often used to explain something that was considered both as right and for the pursuit of good consequences. Other participants also positioned a desire to keep healthy as a moral decision, and one influenced by religious understandings. As Cath (Grey E2 Int.3, 3) explained about her teenage daughter Clare's diet,

> I think her eating habits, funnily enough, I think it's [improved] as well with being at the church, because they're forever saying to you keeping the word of wisdom isn't just about not drinking tea or coffee or alcohol, it's about looking after yourself as well, you know, eating a bit more healthier. So I think slowly, where before she was living on a terrible diet really, slowly she's started thinking well, you know, I should be eating better and it's foolish to not do certain things, you know what I mean?

Interestingly, in these discussions, keeping a healthy body was not necessarily about personal preference, but instead looking after oneself was considered a principle in itself and, as discussed in Section 6.3, was also something that should be passed onto those around you. Chapter 7 will also deal with the ways in which health is negotiated within everyday consumption decision-making.

However, there were times within these discussions when 'moral balancing' came into light, in terms of everyday consumption choices, such as happiness versus healthiness, despite both being strong influences when making decisions about personal consumption. This was often an issue centred around food, particularly when thinking about the effects of a bad diet (Green), or feeling 'better about myself if I've done a good job [with a meal] and it's healthy' (Robinson E1 Int. 2, 11). Despite being conscious of his health, and that of his wife and daughter, for Paul Grey happiness is a greater concern; 'I buy food for the taste, so I wouldn't go for the half fat thinking well, that's going to make me healthier, because it doesn't taste as nice' (E1 Int. 1). For many participants, buying an item because they liked it was more important than how much it cost, though such principles were frequently curbed by affordability. For David Johnson, this attitude was regarded as 'a different philosophy...if we see something we like, we just go and buy it' (E2 Int. 1, 5). This philosophy, for the Johnson family, is rooted in past experiences of financial hardship, as later chapters will explore. Thus whilst distinguishing between personal morals and personal preference might be difficult, and at times very fuzzy, it is clear that everyday decisions are a complex entanglement of morality and personality. It should also be noted that discussions with participants, from which these data are extracted, were centred on their consumption choices. It may well be that an ethic of care for oneself is particularly prominent within consumption narratives, perhaps due to the association of consumption with health, identity and happiness, for instance. Yet, this does not make these morals any less significant, particularly if consumption is considered to be such an important aspect of everyday family life and thus, as a consequence, also of everyday family decisions and 'moral balancing' (see Chapter 7).

One of the most cited and talked about ethics from the ethnography is care and concern for others. These 'others' (i.e. those other than oneself) are often well known by the participants, such as close relatives or friends, though at times participants did talk about their efforts to care for more distant others, even those they may not have met. Caring for 'others' was often discussed in a beneficent and altruistic manner, as debates regarding caring 'for' and 'about' have already established (see Cloke 2002, Silk 2000, Tronto 1993). Steps may be taken to actively impact upon the lives of these 'others' for the better, or to do things for their benefit. The most frequently discussed form of care for others was the parent-child relationship, which is encircled by strong moral responsibilities and ethical commitments. Household members responsible for feeding the family, often the mother, spoke about concerns for their children's health, and a necessity to provide for them. Often participants spoke about the need to protect their children from various harms, perhaps because of their own experiences and decisions,

> **Tom**: I've looked into the preservatives and chemicals that are used, and things like that, and how much, if you eat non-organic stuff, you're drinking quite a lot of pesticides, and they mess you up, so, I've got to think of it like that
>
> **Emma**: because at first it was just you on organic food
>
> **Tom**: yeah, I was on organic, just myself...
>
> **Emma**: and now I give the kids
>
> **Tom**: ...to cut out toxins, because I had a lot of toxins in my body, so I didn't want to put any more in, and I looked into it, and I don't want to put any into the kids either.

(Robinson E1 Int.1, 5)

The idea of feeding something to the children that you, as a parent, would avoid, was deemed by Tom as highly unethical. This was largely because of his assumed parental responsibility to look after his children, but also because caring for only oneself, if you have children, is considered a selfish act. When discussing his 'responsibility' for his son William, Joseph Green commented, 'he is effectively the centre of our world, whether we like it or not' (E1 Int.2, 4-5), and so therefore central to family decision-making. As well as shielding children from making bad decisions, and indeed being careful not to make bad decisions for them, some participants spoke about providing for their children's betterment, such as teaching them how to be good people (Kay 1975), and how to make the right decisions, as explored in Section 6.3.

The relationship between couples (married or otherwise) also emerged as having particular moral significance, in that couples should look after one another, as an integral aspect of their relationship. In one interview, Paul Grey spoke about his concerted efforts to help his wife Cath with her diet, 'I just went everywhere, up and down...no expense spared, to make sure that she had all the [recommended] food, so that she lost the weight' (E1 Int. 1, 17). Here, moral negotiations lead to health being placed above cost. Paul also makes it clear that his efforts are multiple, and involved travelling far and spending generously, in order to not only please his wife, but also to consequently improve her health. Ethical decisions were discussed as a routine part of family life, and doing the best (and making the right decisions) for the *entire* family, such as providing 'a better diet' (Green E1 M2, 5), or 'encouraging all the family to eat health foods' (Grey E1 M1, 2), was a common feature of family consumption practices. At times, family ethics transcended those of the immediate family, widening the peripheries of concern and care,

> When I say [doing what] make[s] us happy, that doesn't mean us as a four, it means happy as a life, like mum, Edward and my dad, the family, the wider family, you know, kindness to others.
>
> (Joanne Smith E1 Int.1, 21)

In this instance, and in relation to the previous discussion, to care, whether for oneself or others, involves providing happiness. Thus actions regarded as morally correct are often associated with having good consequence, and so are aligned with teleological approaches to moral theory. To care for yourself, and those around you, is considered to have good consequences and is therefore defined as correct (or morally right), but also an obligation (see 1.3). However, participants did not always recognise the distinction between caring 'for' and 'about', despite the fact that there are potentially different levels of altruism and moral motivation involved (Popke 2003, Silk 2002, Tronto 1993).

Yet, to be kind and considerate towards others, arguably a moral philosophy in itself, was not always just for the benefit of the recipient, but also for the provider. Participants spoke about caring for others and reaping rewards for themselves, such as David Johnson, who during a feedback session, told me that the family took part in the research 'on the principles that it's important to help students who require people for their studies because his own children have all attended or plan to attend University and he hopes they will receive help from people too' (E2 M1, 2). On another unrelated occasion, David also described the feelings he experienced as a teenager when helping a blind woman to cross the road, as providing 'satisfaction, [a] reward in its own right' (E2 M4, 19).

Cath Grey also expressed more charitable impulses towards issues that would directly affect her, such as giving money to the church, rather than 'an unknown charity that I couldn't see' (E2 Int.1, 11), indicating a link between visibility and trust (see Chapter 8). Therefore, as Popke (2003) also argues, although motivation might be stronger to help those nearest and dearest, caring for more distant, and even unknown others, is something that is encouraged and deemed in a positive light (also see Griffiths 1995). However, the motivation for caring for others, whilst consisting of benevolent concerns, also carries with it elements of individualism and a desire for personal reward. In this sense, personal morals become entangled between the good of the action, and the good of the consequence.

As discussed, for the ethnographic participants, the terms ethics and morals were not commonplace in everyday conversation, as was also observed within the school-based research. In fact, of the ten observations carried out between the three schools, these terms were not at all mentioned in the lessons, despite one lesson even being entitled 'Morals and Money'. Alongside this, within the focus groups, the terms were only used once they had been introduced in questions, though this is not to say that they do not have any use value, or that understandings are absent. Within these discussions, it was apparent that morals were considered as something the students 'already know' about (Chloe, School B FG1, 4), and were associated with 'decision-making' (Lewis, School A FG1, 3). If young people are already aware of what ethics are, if by another name, then this indicates learning at an early age. Therefore ethics may vary depending upon, and are relative to, different personal circumstances. This is something that the participants were aware of, and in the extract below Lewis describes the moral lessons that he thinks are taught in his Geography classes,

> **Lewis**: it's like, it explains that [some people are] not, like, as fortunate and they have got to follow like different paths maybe and because they've been brought up the way that they have, they've got like different beliefs and ways of doing things, rather than the same way that we might do something.
>
> **Sarah**: OK, so it's relative then?
>
> **Lewis**: yeah, and that like effects their decisions and stuff.

(School A FG 1, 5)

Here, both personal circumstances and moral dispositions are considered to be relative to 'fortune', an insinuation that caring for others is a moral necessity, because people cannot control their fate.

As discussed later in this chapter, the pupils also recognised that morals had longevity, and were something that you were 'brought up with' from a young age. In terms of language, the pupils tended to talk about 'should' and 'should not' when discussing moral issues, and regularly voiced their own ideas about right and wrong, e.g. 'we should [recycle] because trees are being cut down, and they're needed to prevent pollution' (Lucy, School B FG1, 10). Yet, these 'should's' are not always translated into 'do's'. Therefore, the pupils were aware of the tensions in decision-making, and that there were some actions that were presumed to be the right way to behave. There were no necessarily prevailing morals, although the religious influence of the school did have an impact, where applicable (see Section 6.2).

Although the key terminology was not used in lessons, moral issues still ranked high on the agenda. From observing the range of different lessons, across a range of different age groups, what was apparent was that morals were inferred in most parts of the curriculum (see Lambert 1999, Pike 2007b, Schuitema *et al* 2008). From the lessons observed, a range of moral debates were touched upon, including sex before marriage, abortion, getting qualifications, pollution, religious conflict, wealth disparities, and racism. Similarly, within the focus groups, participants found it easy to provide examples of lessons that deal with moral debates, as the extract below demonstrates.

> **Sarah**: Can anyone give any examples of a lesson where you've learned about ideas of right and wrong?
>
> **Amy**: racism
>
> **Megan**: racism, yeah
>
> **Sarah**: and what lesson was that in?
>
> **Megan & Amy**: R.E.
>
> **Lewis**: history...'cos of, like Adolf Hitler and that
>
> **Megan**: and like in [Citizenship], about like drugs and all that, tells you, like wrong, and how to act and all that, in the future
>
> **Sarah**: how about Geography?
>
> **Lewis**: not really, it doesn't really teach you about doing right and wrong, it's just
>
> **Amy**: it shows you the differences

Megan: yeah, but it does actually, just a little tiny bit, shows you about the environment and stuff

(School A, FG 1, 3)

As demonstrated here, the pupils were able to recognise the moral aspects of different lessons, and to distinguish between right and wrong, as well as how to be moral now and how to grow up to be moral in the future. Other examples mentioned in the focus groups included drinking alcohol, hurting people's feelings and violence as wrong decisions, and keeping fit, and healthy and recycling as right decisions. Some participants in School A (FG2, 7) discussed the presence of moral issues within lessons as not being 'upfront' enough,

Hannah: well I suppose you learn [about right and wrong] in every lesson though don't you?

Owen: yeah, just in a secret way... you don't realise

The notion of 'secret ways' of learning infers that young people are aware of the moral messages that are disseminated in the school environment, but that these messages are not overt or instantly recognisable. However, the moral complexities of ethical decision-making were largely absent from the lessons observed, and there was very little debate to distinguish between different ethics, or to explain why exactly a decision might be right or wrong.

In contrast to this idea of 'hidden' ethics in education, for the companies that took part in interviews, ethics were very much at the forefront of the business and prominent in our discussions. Again, similar to the ethnographic research, the terms ethics and morals were used interchangeably with 'values', 'standards', 'principles' and 'right and wrong'. When talking about the specific values of the company, multiple ethics were discussed, and no two companies expressed that they had the same morals, since 'everybody has a different definition of ethical' (Company C, 5), and 'one person's ethics are another person's different way of doing business' (Company E, 4). For some, the main concern, or rather 'what we're about', is 'bringing good food to people on whatever budget they're on' (Company A, 2). For others, to be ethical meant to provide 'excellent customer service and to get local produce wherever possible' (Company I, 2). Therefore, for some companies, the ethics that they endorse are connected to the ethics of production that they practice (Hall 2009c). Some companies referred to specific schemes that they followed, 'we try to be an ethical company. One of the ways we do so is to support Fairtrade, but this is not the only way we try to be ethical and do good things' (Company M, 4), indicating that 'ethical' and 'good' might be two different things. In

this sense, ethics not only vary between companies, but are also multiple within. In fact, some of the companies interviewed had over half a dozen ethics that underpinned the business. According to one participant, company ethics are also regulated by the market,

> Our definition of ethics is what our customers consider to be ethical. So they've said that yes, as a bank, what we consider to be ethical behaviour is the exclusion of finance to certain business activities, whether that's fossil fuel extraction, arms oppressing regimes, animal testing for cosmetic or household purposes [...] All of the policies mentioned earlier are underpinned by a consumer mandate, [and] consumers have the chance to say yes I agree, no I disagree.
>
> (Company E, 10)

In this sense, company ethics might be as wide ranging and as multiple as consumer ethics, such as those observed within the ethnography, and perhaps intertwined. Other participants recognised the role of consumer ethics as being just one part of their broader moral concerns, such as the Company H participant, who specified 'the health of consumers, [...] our suppliers, the environment, the communities in which we operate, and also our colleagues' (p.1) as their five categories of corporate responsibility. Whilst in the case of some companies, customers might play an important, even democratic role, such as those with high levels of membership, the very nature of business means that the expression of a variety of consumer ethics and appeasing all moral viewpoints is very difficult, if not impossible.

Therefore, the concept of consumer-led business ethics is somewhat limited. Whilst admittedly, the company interviews revealed the use of similar terminology and definitions of 'ethics' as found in the ethnographic research, the use of the term 'ethics' was far more explicit and frequent, and seemed to be used in a more formal and regulated manner. Participants from the company interviews spoke about a range of business ethics, including ethical policies, audits, consumers, sourcing, compliance, investment and standards. One participant even spoke about the USP, or 'unique selling point' of the company, when asked about the values of the business (Company K, 2). These terms are all 'recognised standard industry phrase[s]' (Company D, 8), and as such were associated with specific business behaviours. Such recognisably 'ethical' practices, whilst being justified by some participants as existing 'because we believe it to be the right thing to do' (Company H, 2), were still regulated and formalised by CSR procedures and principles. In this sense, the word

‘ethics’ appears to holds its own currency in the business sense, often coming ‘under the umbrella of corporate social responsibility’ (Company L, 1), which, as a concept, is relatively new (Sadler 2004).

However participants had to be careful and thus very clear about what claims they made with regards to these formalised forms of ‘ethics’. One participant described the business as having ‘a very clear framework’ for defining ‘what we mean by ethical, what we mean by unethical’ (Company E, 10). Another participant explained that, in the case of Ethical Investment, for example,

> If you’re using ethical with a small ‘e’, in the sense that we are responsible, a responsible organisation, then I would say yes we definitely are [ethical]....Ethical Investments, uppercase E and uppercase I, which is a recognised term, no. But as an ethical company, and the principles and values that we live by, I think we can certainly say that we are.
>
> (Company D, 8)

As was implicit in these discussions, there are legal consequences to over claiming. The image of the brand would also be in danger should false claims be made, as well as it being irresponsible. Participants were also careful to distinguish between these recognised forms of ethics, and the founding principles of the company. Indeed, there was a general recognition that the values of a company, and the principles that influenced everyday practice, were more relative to ideals and internal standards,

> There’s about 5 or 6 key statements about the principles underlying [the company...] Ethics and values are slightly different, how we invest ethically is different to the underlying values of the company.
>
> (Company E, 3)

Hence, putting these values into practice was regarded as something different, and often it was this practice that was referred to as ‘ethics’, as a form of applied values, or principles in action (see Chapter 7). It also seemed that ethics were considered as somewhat a component of business, and although participants did express that they were ‘not just an add-on’ (Company L, 11), others distinguished between the different responsibilities of business; ‘we’d happily buy from abroad, and I don’t think that’s an ethical situation, that’s a commercial decision’ (Company B, 2).

Many of the values that participants spoke about, whether they were formalised into an ethical policy or not, were related to the individual(s) that created the company. In particular, when defining the ethics of the company, the ethics of the founder of the business were extremely influential, and in many cases actively shape the ethics of the business today. In the case of Company C, the 'strong personal views' (p.1) of the founder were still honoured by the company today in policies that had been standardised, in order to ensure that these values are 'embedded into the way the whole business operates' (p.3). One participant even described the owner of a local cheese store as an 'inspiring founder' (I, 11). For Companies A and K, the vegetarian ethics of the original owner of the business, i.e. 'we came from this preachy 'thou shalt not' vegetarian company' (A, 13), were very much part of the values that the company still held. Here, the term 'preachy' has negative undertones, of forcing morals onto consumers, even though the participant recognises the impact of this heritage on the ethics of the company. For other companies, the religious views of the founders were important, for example Company M, where the participant cited the 'ethical Quaker roots' (p.1) of the founding members as a major influence on the company values. Here the participant uses the words 'ethical' and 'Quaker' as one synonymous term, implying a relationship between the two. These ethical 'foundations' (G, 11), or the influence and personal values of certain inspirational individuals would seem to have shaped the current ethics of the company and what they regard as ethical, adding authenticity to their claims of business ethics (see Chapter 8).

Within this section, terminologies and understandings of ethics and morals have been discussed, drawing comparisons and distinctions between the different sources of evidence. Although ethics and morals are not especially alien concepts, they are often considered to be abstract and inapplicable in everyday conversation, especially in the case of the ethnographic and school-based research. Instead, ethnographic participants spoke more around discourses of care, for themselves and for others, and the pursuit of happiness was central to these ethics. In the school based research, ethics were discussed with regards to practical examples, however evidence of differentiating and debating between moral viewpoints was largely absent from the data. For the businesses involved, the term 'ethics' was a frequently discussed and utilised concept, perhaps due to the standardised nature of business language and company policies. Given these different definitions and articulations, the following section goes onto investigate these understandings further, to try and situate ethics, both in terms of where they are and where they come from, based upon the narratives of participants. The next chapter will examine how ethics are negotiated within,

and form around, everyday consumption decisions, thus going beyond these narratives to look at ethics in practice.

6.2: Locating Ethics

To further understand the ethics of consumption it is also important to identify where ethics are situated, where they come from, and from where they derive. Attempting to locate all ethics is of course impossible, but what this section aims to achieve is to explore where ethics are perceived to be situated, according to different participants. Within this section, social traditions, family heritage, and faith feature as the main sources of ethics (in that they are practiced here and now, but are shaped by past experiences), and there is a strong association within the data between morality and the past, where ethics are often thought to be located.

Within the ethnographic research, the participants formed ideas of right and wrong largely around two particular sources; tradition and faith. Going along with tradition was something that all participants spoke about, whether the traditions of society or the traditions of the family. British society was conceived as having social norms, in terms of morality, to which 'everyone' in society adhered, as the quote below illustrates (also see p.98-99),

> **Tom**: for a lot of people, their moral code is based on what everyone says
>
> **Emma**: what society says is what everyone does
>
> (Robinson E3 M5, 2-3)

Societal traditions, such as; eating together at the table, 'sat down to the old fashioned way of eating- meat and two veg' (Smith E1 Int. 1, 12), growing up with 'all the shops you needed on one road' (Silva E1 M2, 4), growing your own vegetables, being brought up 'to know where food comes from' (Green E1 M2, 3), and putting your children's needs above your own (Johnson), were commonly discussed as being the right or 'proper' way to behave, underpinned by a sense of tradition and upbringing. Here, as Bell and Valentine (1997) have argued, nostalgia becomes part of these experiences and narratives, and has the potential to influence practice. However, these social ethics were intersected with family ethics and traditions, which were discussed as having had more of an influence, perhaps because they can be more easily identified.

Family traditions, or 'the way we were brought up' (Smith E1 Int.1, 13), were cited as providing participants with their current understandings of right and wrong, and narratives were fixed in the present, as an unchanged expression of the past. Although many of our discussions featured around consumption, given the nature of the research, participants did often speak in more generalised terms about their ethical standpoints and the influence of tradition. For David and Ann, their experiences with their four children were prominent in their narratives,

> **David**: I've never thought about [the children's experiences of cooking], how it makes them different to other families, because I'm assuming there must be other families like us who do similar things, and prepare their children, and they've all got different ways haven't they? I don't think you can say one way is better than another, they're just different ways...I don't think there is any right way
>
> **Ann**: no, I think there's just varied ways
>
> (Johnson E2 Int. 1, 6)

Participants, as in the above example, were often reluctant to assert their own ethics as being the most correct or the only way of going about things. Instead, ethics were regarded as a symptom of the way that you are brought up, and since people are brought up differently, different ethics and opinions emerge between different people, although ethics were considered as relatively fixed within the family. Recognising these multiple family ethics was an indication that ethics might also be located in choice, and that this choice could be exercised at the individual level and also negotiated with family traditions.

Family traditions of consumption also influenced the ethics of the participants. In particular, many of these narratives were related to money, and how participant's attitudes towards money and their ethics of spending correlated with their 'upbringing' (Smith E2 Int.2, 3). Participants spoke about 'developing attitudes towards money' (Robinson E2 M3, 3) from their parents, which echoes Bourdieu's theory of 'Habitus' and the reproduction of social capital, and the family home was often the site of their moral learning. Explaining more about the role of upbringing, Joseph Green (E1 Int.1, 2) spoke about the influence of his parent's own experiences in shaping his morals,

> Effectively [we] are going back to a more traditional diet, because my parents grew up in the post war years, when you're talking about real deprivation and rationing, in their cases, because they were both born prior to the war, so they can certainly both remember rationing.

> So they both had that sort of attitude, if you haven't got a lot to spend on food then you'd better make sure that everything you eat is nutritious, and it's very much sort of steeped throughout the generations of our family, so that's pretty much engrained in me.

In this sense, ethics are located in family history and past experiences, which have then become family traditions of consumption. Joseph Green regarded eating in a traditional manner, such as eating 'proper' food and spending money carefully, not only as the right thing to do, but right because he was brought up to do so. The significance and cultural poignancy of these experiences, such as post-1945 deprivation, and how they shape existing habits, is particularly interesting. Joanne and Edward Smith discussed markedly similar experiences in the way that they were raised, as the diary extract below illustrates,

> Joanne spoke about how she does not 'do' credit and that neither she nor Edward take out loans. She said that this is a product of the way that they were brought up, not saying that it is right or wrong, but that they were both one of four children, in families that did not have a lot of money. Edward reiterated her point by saying that they both came from families where they didn't have much money, but that they were brought up with morals, even when they started to have money available to them, they still knew how to save and stretch, so things don't always come easily.
>
> (Smith E1 M1, 4)

Therefore, experiences of family life from childhood and interactions with family traditions have actively influenced these participant's own personal morals and their perceptions of right and wrong. Here, family circumstances, such as being part of a large family, was a recurring theme, and one that highly influenced moral negotiations. Hence, ethics were regarded as being very much situated in the past, having existed before birth (aligned with the theory of Universalism), and as something that people pick up from family traditions along the life course.

Alongside family tradition, faith was also discussed as a major influence on ethical beliefs and as a source of moral understanding. Although, as mentioned previously, not all participants followed a faith or practiced a religion, this was not to say that faith was absent from their understandings of right and wrong. For the Green family, both Nicola and Joseph's parents were religious, and this influenced their understandings of ethics, and where ethics are located, even though they do not practice or attend church themselves. In one interview, Nicola spoke about the moral side to religion, as the part of religion that she enjoyed, and expressed that she 'would probably allow [her

son] to have the same type of religious upbringing that I had' (E1 Int. 1, 7). This religious upbringing was, as Nicola later explained, something that her parents wanted her to continue with and to teach her son, William, almost a moral obligation to continue a religious tradition. However, Nicola said that she would prefer for him to 'be tolerant of other religions and other ideas', perhaps because this 'moral side' of religion, of respect and tolerance, is the part of which she approves.

Other participants, however, placed more emphasis on faith and religion, and therefore it occupied a more visible position in the lives and their everyday decisions. For the Grey family, their decision not to consume caffeine was as a result of their faith, 'since they have returned back to their church they have removed stimulants from their diet, so caffeine is now allowed [...] an example being that Clare loved cherry cola, but because there isn't a caffeine free alternative, she doesn't ever drink it- on principle' (E1 M4, 4). In a later interview, Cath Grey spoke of 'church standards', and as Paul Grey explained, 'the moral code is that you don't drink tea or coffee, so we don't' (E1 Int.1, 4). This unquestioned acceptance of the church's moral code might exemplify what Tom Robinson earlier described as 'going with the flow' (p.2). Hence, for the Grey family, their personal standards are aligned with the moral standards of their faith. The Robinson family also recognised that their active participation in religious activity impacted upon their ethics and values, as a consequence of being 'born into' their church (E1 Int.1, 10). They later went on to explain that,

> **Emma**: it doesn't affect us that great a deal though does it, religion?
>
> **Tom**: it's just the way we've been brought up
>
> **Emma**: if we were suddenly converted to the church then it probably would mean...
>
> **Tom**: it would have a big impact
>
> **Emma**: yeah
>
> **Tom**: it might be a change, but because we've just been brought up with it from an early age, it's just the norm, so there's no change [...] we don't have to adapt our lifestyle to it, to the church, it's just our way of life.
>
> (Robinson E1 Int.1, 12)

Within the above extract, there is a sense that, like tradition, the influence of faith is pervasive, but is also relative to personal lifestyle choices and family experiences. It was also conceptualised as something that one might not be aware or conscious of, or rather that religious influences are not

always recognisable by oneself. There is a sense that faith and religion might also influence family traditions, or be traditions in themselves, as something continued throughout generations, hoping to be passed on - to and by - our children. With the concept of faith or religion, and thus moral values, having existed before people are born, morals again become located in the past. The influence of tradition and faith upon personal ethics and the notion of individual morals as rooted in family-based understandings of right and wrong is marked within the ethnographic research, although this is not to say that ethics are not open to change, or are not challenged. Chapter 7 will deal with the issues of negotiating ethics in everyday decision-making, but also the negotiation of ethics when life-changing events occur.

In keeping with the concept of ethics as lodged and fixed in the past, 'heritage' was often cited as one of the most important sources of ethics in the company interviews. As participants discussed, the morals of a company are often authenticated by, and embedded within, its heritage and origins. Heritage and ethics were regarded as interrelated, along with the identity of the company, 'who you are as an organisation' (D, 5) and 'what the business is about' (E, 10). One participant, when describing the ethics of the company they work for, added 'these are our company values and it's just part of our culture as a business, and it's part of our heritage ever since we began' (H, 6). Heritage, therefore, should not only have longevity but also pervasiveness, and as such this history influences how a company operates today. Some participants also expressed that an authentic heritage was important when marketing company ethics, and spoke about the 'DNA', perhaps another way of saying 'nature', of the company (E, 11 and M, 2) and the integrity of the brand. In the financial sector, heritage was also associated with the 'stability of the company' (D, 5). Interestingly some participants even suggested that their company had been practicing ethics when 'ethics weren't a big thing' (E, 2), 'before the term 'ethical business' even existed' (M, 4) although 'we may not have called it CSR in the early days' (G, 2). This idea that ethics have been practiced in business before they were defined as such has already been addressed in a previous paper (Hall 2009c), although in this context, the ethics of the company were thought to pre-date corporate social responsibility, having been embedded in, and thus integral to, the heritage of the business.

Thinking more carefully about the concept of heritage, participants spoke about the history of the company as putting them in a good position for the future, similar to the way in which upbringing was perceived by the ethnographic participants. Having a strong heritage was regarded as a positive

asset for the company, such as having an ethical founder (as discussed previously), which could be used as a springboard for ethical claims. Having had somewhat of a head start in business ethics, these companies could now develop further, 'grow up' (C, 3) from their heritage, yet still remaining loyal to their principles and values. This notion of 'growing', both from and beyond the company heritage, is positioned as a natural process in business, yet exposes a tension between continuity- appeasing the past, and change- as the future. Hence the foundations that the company had been built upon, such as personal, individual ethics, were still respected today, and in some cases had not changed,

> When our founder [X] handed the business over [...] there was a formal constitution which basically governs and guides the way that we do business and that's changed a relatively small amount over the years and that forms the foundations of who we are as a business and how we operate.
>
> (Company G, 2)

As illustrated, company ethics may be located in specific policies pioneered by former important figures in the business, whose identity then merges with the identity of the company. Here there is also a link made between individual identity and company identity. This authentic heritage 'underpins' the values of the company (E, 1) and continuing these ethics ensures that the heritage of the company remain strong and unchanged. This notion of unchanged ethics was an important one, for not only were ethics judged according to their authenticity and genuineness, given how long the company had existed for, but also that the heritage was still visible and apparent today. This has already been discussed in relation to the ethnographic data (pg.2), whereby people with strong, unchanged ethics were valued more highly than those whose ethics were flexible, which was considered as a sign of weakness and poor character. In this sense, if there was a heritage of ethical business practices within the company then business ethics were regarded as more credible and genuine.

When discussing ethics, the role of staff members emerged as integral to maintaining the ethics of the company and to keeping the heritage 'alive'. As one participant put it, 'values [are] kind of in everybody's job' (C, 5). Other participants spoke about how the values of the company were 'ingrained into people from when they join' (H, 2), or transferred onto 'new people who join' (M, 2). In this sense, many of the interviewees located a responsibility for the 'ethical upkeep' of the company with their staff. It was felt important that staff members employed within the company not

only agreed with the ethics of the company, but actively enhanced them and were 'on board' (L, 9). In one interview, when asked whether the company was an ethical company, the participant replied 'I wouldn't be here if it wasn't' (A, 7). In some cases, such as Company C, the participant involved in the interview was in fact responsible for ensuring that all business decisions were consistent with the values of the company, and therefore upholding the heritage of the company. Aside from supporting the company whilst at work, some participants spoke about how they actively invested in the companies they worked for, as customers,

> Are a lot of the staff [customers]? Yeah, yeah they are, because people that work here, I guess you wouldn't work here unless you believed in what we were doing really, and the whole ethos of putting our members first and being for the benefit of our members, is cascaded down so everyone understand that that's what we're here to do [...] and at the end of the day, the staff that are trying to sell those products, how can they do that when they don't believe in them themselves?
>
> (Company D, 10)

This seemed to be encouraged by most of the companies, for staff to become customers and participants in the business beyond their work responsibilities. It was also considered as the upmost sign of credibility and belief in a business, and authenticity to claims of an ethical heritage. In this sense, the staff become a marketing tool for ethics (as discussed later), but they also become sites at which ethics are somehow located and embodied, becoming promoters of the business they work for and witnesses of its ethics and heritage.

The school environment was also cited as a location for moral understanding, mostly within the schools research, but also by participants from the ethnography. Whilst the school environment is composed of teachers, peers, curriculum, lessons etc. as sources of moral learning, lessons are arguably the most formal manner in which to teach morals at school. Thinking about lesson content, as discussed in the previous section, the lesson observations and focus groups brought to light the moral debates that young people are exposed to at school. In addition to this, the moral undertones of many school subjects renders lesson content as integral to ethical and moral understandings. From the lessons observed, Citizenship and RE were instrumental in disseminating morals at school (see Covell *et al* 2008, Pike 2007a), although definitions of ethics are often aligned with social, cultural and religious discourses, such as abortion and war as 'wrong', and equality and marriage as

'right', for instance. The focus group participants also recognised the moral significance of lesson content, as the following excerpts illustrate,

> **Lewis**: R.E. does [teach you] a little bit about that's right and what's wrong...you do a little bit on like decision making, and what's right to do.
>
> (School A FG 1, 3)

> **Ekta**: we learn about loads of religions [in R.E.], like how they are different from each other and what the rules are and stuff like that.
>
> (School B FG 1, 3)

> **Beth**: In lessons like [Citizenship] we learn about like relationships and stuff and how to like react to other people.
>
> (School A FG 2, 5)

> **Liam**: because we're all like young teenagers and we're growing up and stuff, [Citizenship], it like [...] helps you and tells you things you can do.
>
> (School A FG 2, 6)

In all these examples, the participants recognised the content of their lessons as providing them with a basis of moral understanding, even if they did not articulate it as such. One participant even argued that 'there would be no point in school if [lessons] weren't important' (School A FG 1, 24), and a similar argument was raised in another focus group, 'the whole point of school is basically telling you about right and wrong and then saying how it's right and wrong' (School A FG 2, 7). Interestingly, both participants from the different focus groups referred to the 'point of school', indicating that schooling is considered, if not expected, to have a purpose, and that learning should be both meaningful and useful, outside the school context. Also, within these narratives there is a sense that lesson content is not the only site of morals, but rather the general school environment is just as important.

The school environment and the content of lessons, both from those observed and discussed within the focus groups, were often influenced by the religious teachings of the school. In one lesson observation at School C, students were taught that Confirmation in the Catholic Church required, and would result in, a number of 'moral' characteristics, including maturity, responsibility, sharing,

strength, character, wisdom, understanding, knowledge, truth and caring (Obs. 4, 1-2). To have these qualities, and to be Confirmed, was therefore being taught as the right thing to do. Similarly, other lessons spoke of the acceptability of 'having a family and children' (School C Obs. 2, 2), and how this led to a situation where 'trust' (School A Obs. 2, 3) could be expected. Focus group participants from School A (FG2, 4) also talked about how religious views were forced onto them to 'try and convert you to be religious'. Therefore, despite being a non-faith school, there was still a religious, albeit Christian, influence. In School B, a faith based school (but not of Christian denomination), similar religious sentiments influenced moral learning, from having a lesson dedicated to studying the designated faith, to having rules in the school regarding food consumption, which, when ignored, 'was an insult for anyone of the faith' (School B Obs. 5, 1). Hence religion, along with social traditions (influenced by faith) of right and wrong, are evident within the school environment, and in the everyday schooling of the young people involved, both inside and outside the classroom.

However, home life experiences were also prominent in the young people's understandings of right and wrong. During focus group discussions, 'family' or 'parents' were always mentioned and therefore home life emerged as a locale for ethics and values, as already argued in Chapter 2 (also see Halstead 1999, Schuitema *et al 2008*). A number of participants felt that they had prior knowledge of ethics that transcended their in-school learning, located in home-based experiences. As Chloe explained, 'we pretty much already know what's right and wrong' (School B FG 1, 4), a riposte to the notion that the school environment has the dominant influence on ones' moral conduct. Similar to findings from the ethnography, participants also recognised that moral beliefs are impacted by upbringing, 'because [people have] been brought up the way that they have, they've got different beliefs and ways of doing things, rather than the same way that we might do something' (School A FG 1, 5). In this example, as was argued in the introduction to this chapter, 'beliefs' are set apart from 'ways of doing things' or practices, even if unintentionally. Similarly, for some participants, moral awareness was thought to be rooted in childhood. For example, Lewis mentioned that 'you know from when you were a little kid that you shouldn't hurt someone's feelings' (School A FG 1, 4), and Liam described that 'outside school and in your social life and stuff you learn things when you're young, then like you adapt on them in secondary school' (School A FG 2, 8). In this sense, participants felt as though they were equipped to deal with moral issues, as they were already aware of what is right and wrong. School education therefore acts as a supplement to

this knowledge (Covell and Howe 2001), and participants also recognised that morals might be located in more than one place.

Throughout this section, the various sources from which participants understand ethics to originate have been discussed, with recurrent themes of past experience, heritage and upbringing. In terms of situating ethics, from the data examined it would seem that ethics are largely perceived to be located in tradition, history and faith or religion. Within the ethnographic research, social and family traditions, and faith or religion were particularly important, and ethics emerged as being tangled together with these, and in past experiences. The role of heritage was inescapable in the company data, since ethics were regarded to be embedded in this heritage, but this heritage is also thought to authenticate the ethics of a company. In this sense, heritage, or business ethics, cannot be instantaneously created or manufactured, but instead become established over time. In the school-based research, family was cited as a locale of moral understandings, although lesson content and the school (religious) environment were conceived as having also played a part. To take these ideas further, the next section looks at the responsibilities to teach ethics and how people learn the difference between right and wrong.

6.3: Teaching and Learning About Ethics

The previous section explored the various places where morals are 'located', or rather, the sources of moral understanding. Following on, this section aims to delimit who is thought to teach ethics, as well as who has the responsibility for teaching them. Again using the three data sources, this section will address the importance of home-based experiences, particularly the central role and responsibility of parents for teaching ethics to their children. The importance and responsibilities of the school environment for teaching morals are also discussed, although this often features as an addition to ethics taught primarily at home.

Ethnographic participants regularly spoke of their responsibilities for their own children's moral understandings, but also of how their own morals (and perhaps responsibilities) are shaped by what they themselves had learned from their parents. Taking these in turn, participants expressed that they had a moral responsibility to teach their children the difference between right and wrong, or as David Johnson articulated, 'your mum and dad [have] ways of preparing you for adult life' (E2 Int.1,

6). Here, adults are positioned by David as moral beings, and children in need of being taught morals. It was generally accepted by most participants that 'children learn things from home' (Robinson E2 M3, 4), and that these home experiences involved learning from ones parents or other significant family members. Joanne Smith also described how learning to stretch and save with money would be 'a good lesson to give the girls for when they go to University, to be able to budget and take responsibility for their money' (E1 M1, 4). The terms 'learn', 'teach' and 'lesson' are commonplace in the ethnographic data. In an interview with the Robinsons, I discussed with them the parental responsibility to teach morals and what it encompasses,

Sarah: whose responsibility do you think it is to teach people about ethics?

Emma: parents

Tom: first and foremost it's your family [...] there's no formal structure for teaching morals, you kind of pick it up, unless make an effort to teach them...well it's a mix of parents and school

Emma: but initially parents, and probably the curriculum

Tom: it should really be home, but it's more becoming education, because a lot of the time parents commit a lot of their time to work, but home is a good place to teach it

Emma: but the government can have more of an influence on people at school

Tom: yeah, and sometimes there can be a conflict of home and school

Emma: lots of people go along with what the school teaches, but you should have the authority for bringing up your own kids.

(Robinson E3 M5, 4)

As the extract above demonstrates, the teaching of morals is thought to be best conducted at home, and although 'formal' school education does play a part, this parental responsibility and 'authority' cannot be replaced or substituted by school-based education. In addition, to not teach your children morals was considered as a sign of failure as a parent, as Emma Robinson explained, 'we've got a responsibility to educate them about stuff, and if I didn't then I wouldn't be doing my job as a parent' (E3 M5, 4). David Johnson also talked of a situation with one of his sons, where he was concerned that he had 'taught them wrong' (E2 Int.1, 12). In this sense, teaching morals to your children is regarded as a parental responsibility and a moral obligation in itself; to educate your children and prepare them for adult life.

The morals that participants learned in childhood were very important in many of these narratives, and influenced their teaching of morals to their own children. As Edward Smith stated in an interview, 'the way you're brought up affects how you bring up your own urchins' (E1 Int.1, 13). Here, Edward's use of the word 'urchins' perhaps holds a deeper significance than just being a synonym for 'children', but in fact implies that (his) children require taming, as wayward creatures that need to be restrained. Joseph Green also spoke about how 'you rely on your own knowledge, which is engrained in you from growing up' (E1 Int. 2, 7) in order to teach your own children right from wrong. Other participants pointed to the influence of their family members (see Halstead 1999, Kay 1975), as the ones responsible for bringing them up, and so thus for instilling morals. For Emma and Tom Robinson, sitting together and eating 'as a family', as they had done when they were younger, was perceived as the ideal and correct way to behave. This had therefore become an important aspect of their home life with their own children, as something they have 'always done' (E1 Int.2, 9-10). In addition to this, Emma spoke about how her ethic of being careful with money was directly influenced by parents,

> Emma said that she feels guilty if she spends money, and that she keeps a book, writing down exactly how much she's spent each day. Emma said that she thinks she developed this from her mum. When Emma and her siblings were younger, they would be provided for very well, but her Mum has dressed in the same clothes for the last 20 years [...] They would have nice clothes as kids and the house was kept nice, despite them not having much for years.
>
> (Robinson E2 M3, 3)

As observed, Emma now beholds a similar responsibility and family ethic to that which she grew up with, and in particular she cites her mother as being highly influential. Therefore, ethics and morals, whilst being rooted in upbringing, are more specifically regarded as a parental responsibility and a moral, perhaps also social, obligation to teach and influence your children. Likewise, this obligation is often shaped by an individual's own moral learning.

However, as already highlighted, the responsibility to teach morals was, at times, attributed to gender. In one discussion with Emma Robinson, she explained that she taught both her eldest children, Mary and Peter, about sex education. Indeed, she 'saw it as a mother's job to teach them these things' (E3 M3, 2), rather than school education. This not only points towards the responsibility of the mother, perhaps related to gender-specific caring roles (see Chapter 3), but also to a disenchantment with school education and a desire to ensure that children are taught

information that parents want them to learn. Indeed, McNamara (2009, 169) argues that 'women are both the traditional caregivers and the traditional story tellers in our society'. Therefore these narratives of care are also regarded as a female responsibility. When speaking about the morals that they learned at home, participants also placed the female head of the household as the most significant influence. Again, the caring responsibilities of the mother meant that she was most likely to educate her children about, for example, healthy eating. As Nicola Green described, she had a desire to '[go] back to the way that I ate when I was younger, so like when my mum cooked for us it was all healthy stuff' (E1 Int.1, 2). Cath Grey also explained that ideas of right and wrong are taught 'traditionally [by] your mum' (E1 Int.1, 14). Therefore, the responsibilities and moral obligations assigned to parents may indeed be greater, and more demanding, for those occupying a mothering role.

The responsibilities of school education, whilst being regarded as secondary to the moral foundations built at home (as perhaps they are within this discussion), were still present within the ethnography. As discussed in the previous section, the school environment is somewhat synonymous with moral learning. Some of the young ethnographic participants did, at times, mention the influence of their schooling, such as Clare Grey, who felt that the nation-wide change in school dinners had positively influenced her diet. Jenny Smith also said that her Geography lessons had informed her about sweatshop labour. Likewise, Hudson (2005) discusses the potential for more room in the curriculum for such topics. However, adult participants from the ethnography expressed doubt and scepticism about whether they wanted the school to have an influence over their children's moral learning. For instance, Emma and Tom Robinson saw school education as a way for the government to 'manipulate people' (E3 M5, 3), and in the case of Citizenship classes, 'Emma thought it was wrong that the government had introduced these classes because they would just be teaching you what they think is right and wrong' (E3 M1, 4). Cath and Paul Brown talked about the negative influence of 'a trendy teacher' (E1 M1, 2) when their daughter Clare was around five years old. According to Paul 'this teacher said 'oh you can't eat animals and stuff like that' (E2 Int.2, 3), which influenced Clare's decision not to (knowingly) eat meat for most of her childhood. Despite many years having passed, Cath and Paul were still obviously angry about this situation, as signifying a loss of control of over their daughter's moral education, and mentioned it on numerous occasions. In this sense, whilst moral teaching at school is perceived as influential, it was felt that it should not conflict with morals taught at home or undermine parental responsibilities (Covell and Howe 2001, Kay 1975).

Adding to this, the research conducted in schools provided a similar set of assumptions; that whilst school education does have a responsibility to teach young people about right and wrong, the foundations are laid at home (also discussed in Section 6.2). However, the focus group discussions, which form the basis of this evidence, revolved less around who is responsible, and more around the lack of responsibility (and at times, competence) of the school. There were occasions when participants referred to their parents as teaching them morals. There were references to young people seeing their parents buying certain items or smoking, for instance, and accepting it as the right thing to do because 'it's just what you've always had' (School A FG2, 11). Yet, for the most part, the moral learning conducted at school was the main area of discussion. For many participants, school education regarding morals was rather repetitive, and acted more as reminder of right and wrong. When asked about the role of school and lessons in teaching them about morals, participants said that they had 'already done' similar topics at junior school (School A FG2, 4), describing their lessons as teaching them 'the basic stuff that we already know' (School B FG1, 2). Others talked about how they were 'happy [with] what I know already'. Another participant added that 'if you learn more about [ethics in consumption], it will put you off' (School A FG2, 28); that sometimes there is no need to learn more than you already know.

In addition, the school environment might not always be the most appropriate place to teach ethics and morals. For instance, the observation of a sex education class (School A) illustrated that a noisy and crowded classroom environment is not a sensitive way to conduct such teaching. In another observation – a Citizenship lesson on morals and money (School B) - the lesson material was met with disinterest by pupils, perhaps explained by the fact that they did not learn anything especially new. Yet during a focus group at School A (FG1, 24), when asked whether the school influenced the participant's opinions of right and wrong, Lewis replied 'of course [lessons] are important because there wouldn't be a point in school if they weren't important' (also see p.117). There also emerged a heavy influence of teachers, as those accountable for teaching, for the levels of interest/disinterest in lesson content,

> **Hannah:** some of the lessons that involve my school life are influenced by the teachers who cooperate together to give us a good learning
>
> **Owen:** education?
>
> **Hannah:** education. And so I think, if it's a nice teacher then you'll do well
>
> (School A FG2, 2)

The notion of teachers 'cooperating' together implies some sort of school community for moral learning, and responsibility within this community potentially lies with teachers. This sentiment was expressed by other participants, particularly the notion that the personality of the teacher can have an impact on ones learning experience, as already discussed in the case of Clare Grey. In another focus group, when asked whether their lessons had an impact on their behaviour, James said that 'it depends what teacher, and if it's a good lesson' (School B FG1, 18). Therefore, it may well be that teachers were considered responsible for teaching morals, but only in terms of the context of the school community and the extent to which the school is responsible, and so long as this teaching did not clash with moral learning at home.

At the same time participants did recognise that it was possible for the school to influence their beliefs, such as Hannah who described her teachers as '[making] you feel like you should always believe in God'. Again this only led to disinterest, since according to Toby, 'you don't really believe in what you're going to be taught, so you just can't be bothered about it' (School A FG2, 4). Indeed particular schools may have a moral obligation to teach pupils about religion, which might be complicated with moral learning and enforcing certain beliefs. This lack of interest in lesson content was at times met with a lack of seriousness, perhaps because of the repetitive nature of moral learning. The influence of school was also questioned in another focus group discussion, when Samuel spoke about how 'you go out of the boundaries when you're out of school' (School A FG1, 24). The influence of the school is regarded as bounded and temporal, and thus responsibility to educate morals must come from elsewhere. Similarly, the fact that the school was not considered as the hub of moral learning implies that the responsibilities for this lie elsewhere. In short, whilst the school, and the teachers within, might exert some influence, they are not necessarily responsible to teach the difference between right and wrong, since opinions had already been set from prior experiences and teaching elsewhere, such as the home.

Perhaps as a consequence of this reliance on morals taught at home, and in part at school, there seemed to be little scope or necessity for companies to teach ethics to consumers, and nor were companies mentioned within the rest of the data as being purveyors of ethics. Instead of teaching ethics, most of the companies saw themselves as facilitating choice to customers, including a choice of whether to learn about ethics, and choice in terms of the products available and their ethical 'profile'. In terms of learning about ethics, participants expressed that to 'press' ethics (F, 10), or to

'preach' (C, 10) to consumers might actually put them off, since 'not all our customers want to hear about [ethical issues] all the time' (H, 4). Another participant explained,

> A lot of companies do use products to raise awareness and to educate consumers on ethical and sustainable issues. Different customers will react to this in different ways- some will embrace this and others don't always want to be reminded of these things [...] Some consumers prefer to find out about [the company] through their own learning [...] and others want to be reminded of this. Given these differences, [the company] doesn't want to overtly push sustainability as this can be seen as a turn off to some.
>
> (Company M, 7)

Thus forcibly trying to teach ethics to consumers was regarded as bad for business, having the potential to alienate consumers and indeed turn them off from being customers. In this sense, profit margins are prioritised over moral learning. It was clear that many of the companies did not consider themselves to be responsible for educating consumers about ethics, and that rather than overtly stressing right and wrong, consumers should be 'encouraged' to make ethical purchasing decisions (D, 11 and H, 5), and be offered 'an alternative' (K, 6). In one interview, when asked what ethics the company might teach to consumers, the participant did not even provide an answer, finding the question 'non-applicable' (J, 5). One explanation for this might be that consumers were perceived as already being 'educated' (A, 4 and M, 6) and 'well informed' (L, 10) about ethical issues, although it was not stated how (see Chapter 7). In addition, if consumers were not informed, then it was not the responsibility of business to ensure this; 'we're happy to provide you with all the information [...] but it's up to you as the consumer to make those responsible decisions' (H, 7). Therefore the process of decision-making is considered as one way of expressing morals, or rather a form of ethics in practice. This was a common feature of the interviews, the notion that consumers should find out 'for themselves' (M, 3), whilst still 'giving them a choice' (L, 7). Therefore, the companies saw themselves as removed from any kind of obligation to teach ethics, but rather voluntarily supplied information to consumers if they want to learn, which was positioned as part of being a responsible business (this is discussed in further detail in Chapter 8).

However, the interviewees were clear about the company's responsibilities towards teaching their employees, perhaps associated with this 'responsible business' model, as well as the integral role of staff in promoting the ethics of the company (as discussed in the previous section). Participants suggested that educating employees was necessary, in order to keep them up to date on 'big

changes' in the business (G, 9), or 'with regards to changes in procedures' (B, 1). Employees were therefore taught about ethics and values specific to the company. Companies actively educated their staff, and the methods used for teaching ethics were various. Examples include using 'product manuals', so that the staff can pass information onto customers (C, 9), using 'daily huddles and monthly briefings' as a way to 'get across key messages for colleagues who work in store' (H, 2), or even 'invest[ing] heavily' in the recruitment process, to ensure that the right calibre of people are employed in the first place (J, 4). This form of knowledge exchange is central to understanding how business ethics form within a company and how they work in practice (Hughes *et al* 2007). In Company C (p.3), for example,

> [E]veryone, when they join, gets an induction course, and everyone makes mistakes obviously, but people do try and make sure by and large that every decision they make touches one of these, the values [of the company].

Again, decision-making is situated as part of ethical practice, which will be unpacked in the next chapter. Other formalised methods of teaching ethics, such as those above, were also discussed in other interviews. In the case of Company L, the teaching of ethics was argued to be 'embod[ied] in everyday business practice', such as making sure 'the values and principles of the business' are 'part of everyone's performance appraisal' (p. 5). Yet, in some cases, the staff did not need educating, because their ethics were already aligned with those of the company they work for. An example is the interviewee for Company A, who suggested that 'you won't last very long [here] if you didn't have an active interest in how the business is run' (p. 9). In this sense, teaching ethics to employees was essential to making sure that the values of the company were being practiced by all of the staff members and that a voice was being given to these ethics. This has previously been argued as essential to maintaining the company heritage, and therefore for the benefit of the business, rather than individuals. However, if staff members were already 'on board' and had personal values that ran parallel to those of the company, teaching company ethics was not entirely necessary.

From these discussions, the responsibilities for teaching morals, whilst being multiple, mainly lie with parents, or those occupying a parental role. The responsibility to teach children right and wrong was described as a moral and social obligation, and this in turn influences how those children grow up and carry these morals into adulthood, and even when starting their own family. School-based moral learning occupied a supportive role in these narratives, whereby school lessons and individual teachers might be influential, although the foundations of moral learning are thought to be laid at

home, prior to school education. For the companies involved, the responsibility to educate only extended in so far as the responsibility to offer information to customers, and to educate their own staff (regarding company ethics).

6.4: Chapter Conclusion

Within this chapter, the various articulations and understandings of ethics and morality -what they mean, where they are located, how they are taught, and forms of expression- have raised a number of interesting issues with regards to the everyday application of moral beliefs. Section 6.1 looked at the ways in which participants defined the terms 'ethics' and 'morals' and found that, for the most part, these terms were not used in everyday exchange. Instead, synonyms such as 'principles', 'values' and 'standards' had greater currency, and ethical actions were often associated with care and concern, for oneself and for others. However, for the companies involved, the terminology used was formalised and standardised, and the terms 'ethics' and 'morals' were commonplace, holding significance within the business environment, and were used in an uncomplicated manner. This raises questions with regards to access and whether, when businesses talk of their ethical credentials, consumers understand what they are referring to. There were also issues raised in terms of how ethics are thus applied, and whether the ethics of business are different to the ethics of the consumer.

In Section 6.2, ethics were discussed as being located in the past, whether in upbringing, social/family tradition, faith or religion, or company heritage. In all three data sets, the importance of the past was unavoidable, and was influential in shaping consumer's understandings of ethical conduct. In this sense, past experiences and learning help to fix and inform people's knowledge of what it is to be ethical, and influence their narratives. This section indicated that a prior existence of ethics, such as particular rules of society, are laid out and govern individual behaviour. In order to fully explore how the location of ethics can influence practice, the following analysis chapters will look more closely at how personal ethics are formed, around pre-existing social values that already apply, and how people navigate their personal experience with these ethical norms.

Section 6.3 looked at the teaching and learning of ethics. Moving on from the previous section regarding the location of ethics, this section aimed to distinguish between where ethics come from

and how they are disseminated. The responsibility of parents in teaching morals to their children was a central theme in both the ethnographic and school based research. Teaching ethics to children, whether at home or school, was considered as one way to ensure that the moral foundations of society were passed onto future generations, who would then be responsible for teaching ethics to their children. The influence of the school was secondary to that of home-based teaching. This is perhaps related to the moral obligation of parents to provide a moral basis, but also because home experiences are prior to school-based learning, and thus set the precedent. Interestingly, the role of companies paled in comparison (as will be discussed later in Chapter 8), which brings to light issues of responsibility in the current consumerism discourses. Where this chapter leaves is where the next begins. Chapter 7 will look at how ethics can be expressed in consumption, and the ways in which morals are negotiated alongside health, money, waste and ethical consumerism, drawing out some of the complexities of everyday consumption practices.

Chapter 7: Negotiating Morals, Negotiating Consumption

Taking the narratives explored previously, this chapter will explore how moral beliefs might be expressed in practice. In particular, the negotiation of morals within everyday consumption decision-making forms the basis of this discussion. The concept of the 'everyday' is often associated with ideas of routine and familiarity, as the mundane and uninteresting, yet under theorised parts of family life (Dupois and Thorns 1998). As discussed in Chapter 3, since the Cultural turn in academia in the 1980's, perspectives of consumption have shifted away from economic accounts that place production as more important than consumption, and there has been a steady increasing number of academic works on the subject, also paralleling the consumer boom of the 1980s (Goss 2004). Ray and Sayer (1999) also argue that, rather than being passive to market forces, consumption practices are actually a sign of creative activity and cultural innovation. Consumption is therefore an appropriate example of the everyday practice and negotiation of morals, and as discussed in Chapter 2, the term 'ethics' in fact derives from the Greek *thea* meaning 'habitats' (Cutchin 2002). This chapter aims to explore the creative and intricate practices of everyday consumption, and the ways in which different forms of repeated practices, also referred to in Chapter 3 as 'modes of operations' (de Certeau 1984), or 'practical consciousness' (Giddens 1984), are used as a way to express, but also act as a site for the negotiation of, ethical beliefs.

As part of these everyday practices and negotiations of consumption, the construction of identity plays an important role, and morality and identity are often discussed as an extension of one another (see Finch and Mason 1993). As Chapter 3 has already explored, consumption is an important part of identity formation, whereby people construct their personalities around what they purchase, nurturing an individualised style (Edwards 2000, Sayer 1999). As a prolific writer on consumption and identity, Gill Valentine has argued that consumption plays a crucial role in young people's identity formation (2003), as well as household identity formation (1999c). In particular, food consumption is singled out as impacting upon consumers' self-identity, whereby what people eat (and where they eat) can be used to construct the space in which they consume, the relations within it, and the identities which constitute it (Bell and Valentine 1997). Identity, like consumption, is recognised as being neither fixed or immutable (Miller 1998), but at the same time is influenced by class distinctions and thus taste (Bourdieu 1984). However, whilst social scientists have looked to material culture as a way to explore individual identity, very little is known about how identities are

formed, and indeed how they are influenced by individual ethics. With an increase of commodification in all spheres of social life, and an integration of consumption into the construction of personal identity, consumption is considered to be an embodied, everyday experience (Crewe 2003, Roe 2006). In addition to these corporeal aspects of consumption, in that foods (and other items, such as cosmetics and medicines) are ingested into the body (Fine 2002), the role of identity formation through consumption adds to already-complex understandings of morality and consumption.

This chapter therefore explores consumption within an ethical framework, and the ways in which these ethics are negotiated in everyday practices of consumption. As analysis of the three forms of evidence will illustrate, everyday consumption practices are one way to express and negotiate ethical beliefs. From the data there emerged a number of spheres through which to explore the negotiations of morals, which can be noted by their prevalence in the data, and have helped to structure this chapter: Health Issues in Consumption (7.1), Morals and Money (7.2), Waste and Resource Management (7.3) and Ethical Consumerism (7.4), followed by a Chapter Conclusion (7.5).

7.1: Health Issues in Consumption

This section will look specifically at health issues (namely health concerns, medical conditions, nutrition, well-being and dieting), and how health impacts upon everyday consumption choices. According to Warde (1997, 94) 'health is now the dominant value in discussions of food'. Similarly, Devault (1991, 217) argues that 'virtually everyone in a contemporary industrial society is exposed to some sort of food and nutrition discourse'. Health is therefore an unavoidable issue when analysing consumption decision-making, mainly because of the intimate relationship between food, health, and the body (see Bell and Valentine 1997, Mansvelt 2005, Valentine 1999c). This section will therefore look at the role of health within consumption choices, and the ways in which health is negotiated alongside other factors, such as money, family responsibilities, convenience and preference, in decision-making processes.

Within the ethnographic research, health was a regular feature in consumption decision-making, and in some cases health was positioned as an immovable obstacle and discursive practice, particularly in the case of medical conditions. Ann and David Johnson were conscious of the impacts of their

food consumption on their already-existing medical conditions. Ann had to make a conscious effort to intake as much calcium as possible due to her osteoporosis. For example, 'when choosing milk, she puts both a red top [skimmed] and green top [semi-skimmed] in the trolley', since 'more calcium can be found in red top milk than the other types' (E2 M2, 1). During the same shopping observation, Ann 'picked up a white Warburton's loaf, because that's David's favourite, but also because white bread has more calcium in it than brown bread' (p. 4). In this case, when the rest of the family have a preference for a particular food, they do not alter their diet to suit, but instead consume according to both health and preference. These examples therefore illustrate how medical conditions may be accounted for and negotiated in the family context. At the same time, Ann's responsibility for the shopping means that she can ensure that her dietary needs are met, as well as catering for the preferences of her husband and son, regenerating their family dynamic (Carrier 1995, Devault 1991, Ungerson 1983). For David, his recent diagnosis (c2007) of high cholesterol made him think differently about the foods he consumed, although he was already conscious of his weight. However, David found it difficult to balance his health condition with preferences. His consumption therefore had to be policed by Ann, who had to remind him that, for example, Anchor Butter 'wouldn't help him lose weight' (E3 M1, 2), and that because he had to start 'losing weight' (E3 M3, 10), it was not a good idea for him to eat one of the ice buns I had brought along to a forest outing. Health concerns may therefore not only shape consumption choices, but also the ways in which consumption practices are negotiated, in order to ensure that all family members are satisfied.

For the Robinsons, health was a central and fixed element in their food consumption choices. In 2006-2007, Tom Robinson was diagnosed with M.E., associated with a large amount of toxins in his body. In order to alleviate his symptoms, Tom changed diet (removing wheat, dairy and sugar, and only consuming organic produce) and started taking suggested supplements and vitamins. The family recognised the impact that Tom's health has on their consumption practices and their attitudes towards food, where at different times both Emma and Tom referred to health as a 'priority', above cost (E1 Int.1, 12) or buying fair-traded items (E1 M3, 3). In one interview, they discussed the ways in which health affects their everyday consumption,

> **Emma:** ...Your diet affects a lot, doesn't it? His diet affects [what we eat] in that we have to look for alternative ways of making things... like I tend to follow a recipe all the way, or the way I used to do things I'd replace certain things because he can't eat wheat or, you know, we use recipes that are for people who can't eat all those things, and cater for you.

Sarah: Right, so health [is important]?

Emma: Yeah, health, we tend to find that a lot of those things are not nice, you know the books you buy for people who can't eat too much dairy, some of it's nice but [...] some other stuff is really horrid, so I probably prefer to follow a recipe that I like, used to use, and just replace it, because it just tastes better.

(Robinson E1 Int.1, 3)

As already discussed within the above quote, Emma's way of coping with Tom's dietary requirements has been to adapt or find 'alternative ways' of making meals, by supplementing foods for things that Tom can eat, such as replacing pasta with rice, wheat flour with spelt flour, and sugar with pineapple juice or rice milk (also see Warde 1997). When making lasagne, for example, Emma will 'cook it without the cheese and just with the sauce', because Tom cannot eat Cheese, 'and then afterwards, for me and the children's I'll just put like parmesan over it' (E1 Int. 1, 4). Sometimes they all eat the same evening meal, but often Emma finds a way for them all to have something similar, that they can all enjoy. However, there were times when non-food consumption choices would alter because of Tom's health, for example their ability to go out at night would depend on if he was 'well or not, if you were up to it' (E1 Int.2, 9). Tom referred to their lifestyle changes as a 'massive shift' (E1 M2, 3) and this means that 'I have to care less about morals' in consumption choices (E3 M5, 7). As Emma also explained, 'everything changed, because it had to' (E1 Int.3, 10). In this way, Emma manages to negotiate between Tom's health and individual preference, to create a meal of compromise. However, health is the principle factor around which consumption choices are negotiated and meals are catered around.

Nicola Green also consumed organic produce for health reasons, but instead as a way to lose weight and reduce the consumption of 'toxins'. Her interest in organic foods developed when a friend told her that she had lost weight after pregnancy by eating organic healthy food, so Nicola tried this and it worked. She was also encouraged to consume organic produce after watching a television programme about 'what bits of an animal go into sausages', and has since 'stopped eating normal sausages all together', in both cases trusting lay discourses of health, rather than medical discourses. Whilst recognising that 'organic meat is more expensive', she genuinely perceived it to be 'better for her and her family' (E1 M2, 3), and so therefore the health benefits outweigh monetary cost. Organic products are here defined as 'best' for the family as they are regarded as healthier. Therefore, Nicola feels as though she is looking after other family members, thus fulfilling her moral

responsibilities as a mother and wife (Charles and Kerr 1988, Murcott 1983). At the same time, constructions of what is 'healthy' are entangled with ideals about organic products, and an assumption that they can be trusted (thus trust is placed in the product being able to deliver, rather than the certifiers or the farmers). Feeding her family organic produce also gave Nicola peace of mind, that the foods would be 'safe' with an assurance that, in the case of fruit, 'if they are not organic then they are likely to have pesticides on the skin' (E1 M2, 4). Nicola seemed to have high expectations of her organic produce, not only in terms of increased safety, but also that it was better for her and more natural, therefore equating to a healthier lifestyle (Lowe and Ward 1997). However, since she purchased her organic products via weekly 'vegetable box' deliveries, there were also 'financial benefits' to consuming in this manner, 'not only due to reduced waste and buying things you don't need, but there are also no deals to catch your eye' (E1 M2, 6). For Nicola Green, the decision to consume organic food was one that encompassed dietary preferences, health concerns, monetary costs, convenience and a moral maternal responsibility, all of which were negotiated to form particular consumption habits.

Dieting to lose weight also emerged within the ethnographic research, as already discussed in the case of the Johnson and Green families. Joanne Smith's decision to diet was, according to her, a choice that 'didn't affect' the consumption choices of other family members (E1 Int.1, 11). Similar to Emma Robinson, Joanne would cook meals that were suitable both for her, by accounting for her dietary preferences, and for the rest of the family, as she discussed with her daughter Jenny,

> **Jenny**: when you started [going to Weight Watchers] you used to have, some nights, something totally different to what we were eating, just because we were eating something that was high in points at Weight Watchers [...] because sometimes, say we were having chips or something, you'd have a soup instead
>
> **Joanne**: yeah
>
> **Jenny**: [...] you'd have butternut squash instead
>
> **Joanne**: yeah, I used butternut squash instead of potatoes. So yeah, there's a slight difference in what we eat but not enough that I would say its two different meals.
>
> (Smith E1 Int.1, 10-11)

Here, Joanne positions these consumption practices as a form of compromise. By making meals with a 'slight difference' and by substituting ingredients, she ensures that they eat a similar and therefore shared meal, but also that their preferences are catered for. These considerations would also be made whilst shopping, for example Joanne was observed buying two kinds of mayonnaise, 'full fat for Edward, and extra light for her' (E1 M3, 2), and different crisps for different family members, Pringles for the girls, and 'Weight Watchers' snacks for herself (E1 M2, 3) (see Charles and Kerr 1988, Warde 1997). In this sense, health, or rather, dietary issues were negotiated through particular shopping and cooking practices, which ensured that all members were catered for without having to compromise entirely.

Health issues were prominent in the school-based focus group discussions, in that participants recognised health discourses in the content of their lessons, and how these lessons might influence their behaviour. During these focus group, pupils explained that their P.E. lessons taught them to 'keep fit and do exercise' because 'otherwise you'll be unhealthy' (A FG1, 3, 4), their Citizenship classes showed them that 'drugs and cigarettes' are 'nasty' (A FG2, 6), and Food Technology educated pupils in 'healthy living', such as not 'put[ting] sugar in stuff' (B FG1, 3 and A FG2, 27) (White 1990). There were also times during the lessons observations when health issues in consumption were raised. For example, in a Year 9 Geography lesson, pupils discussed the impacts of traffic congestion and debated between public transport versus car usage. During the discussion, pupils made a direct link between car use and exercising, arguing that an overreliance on the car (as a consumption choice) was creating a 'lazy society' and that 'we should just walk more' (School B, Obs. 2, 2). These discourses are also rather binary in nature, with 'healthiness' positioned as a good and desirable quality, and 'unhealthiness' as bad,

Sarah: do you think any of your lessons teach you about what's right and wrong in terms of things you consume, things you wear or eat?

Charlotte: I'd say cooking, because it says which foods are healthy for you, and which foods are bad and aren't healthy for you

Sarah: brilliant, can you give an example?

Charlotte: like apples are healthy and chocolate isn't

(School A FG1, 6)

In the above extract, not only does the pupil indicate the importance of lesson content to understanding health issues, in this case Food Technology as educating her on healthy eating, but also how this information might be applied when making consumption decisions, such as which foods to choose. However, due to discrepancies between narrative and behaviour (as discussed in Chapter 6), this does not necessarily mean that such knowledge (i.e. that apples are 'healthy', thus good, and chocolate is unhealthy, thus bad) will be translated into practice (also see Charles and Kerr 1988).

The role of health in the school participant's consumption choices was rarely approached, perhaps because health was a lesser concern to them within consumption decision-making. However some participants did discuss how their consumption decisions might be influenced by health-related issues. Chloe, for example, explained how she was not concerned about where the things she eats come from, 'but then my mum was saying that it can cause stuff, like spraying pesticides and stuff, but I'm not really worried' (B FG1, 6). Here, Chloe's concerns regarding the safety of food is a direct influence of her mother's concerns over her consumption, but at the same time this influence was not pervasive enough to influence her behaviour. The example of packed lunches was also raised a number of times, in relation to healthy eating,

> **Lewis**: [...] my mum does [my packed lunch] in the morning, but if I was to pick I'd still probably pick the same things, because I know that I need to have something healthy as well, so I wouldn't just put like crisps and all biscuits in like that, I mean my mum does do it but it doesn't matter who would do it because we'd both do the same.
>
> (School A FG1, 20)

In this example, the participant infers a moral responsibility for his personal fitness and a 'need' for his packed lunches to include healthy foods. He identifies consumption decisions as a matter of negotiation, such as compromising with his mother about having 'something healthy' in his packed lunch. He also negotiates his preference for 'crisps and biscuits' with his responsibility to eat healthily. In another focus group, Hannah spoke of a similar negotiation process with her mother, with whom she trades off healthy foods against foods of preference; 'if I'm not OK with [my lunch], I'll say 'oh can I have this instead of this', and she'll go 'yeah', but if it's like crisps instead of an apple, she'll say like 'no, I'd like you to have an apple, but you can have a packet of crisps as well then" (A FG2, 25). In a similar vein, Owen described himself as 'selfish' for the choices he makes when buying his school dinners, because he rarely chooses the healthy option (A FG2, 25). Health was therefore

shown to be a negotiating factor when making consumption choices, albeit many of these examples involve a parental influence. Also, whilst the school pupils were not overly concerned with health issues, they still expressed a sense of personal responsibility for ensuring that they remained healthy, such as choosing healthy foods and exercising, which was a regarded as the right thing to do and thus arguably a moral decision (also see Chapter 8 for a discussion of the 'self').

Within the company interviews, discourses regarding the health of consumers are most relevant for those companies dealing with food products, due to the corporeal nature of food consumption, and the direct impacts of diet on healthiness (Fine 2002). Some participants spoke about health in relation to the content of foods. For Company M, the use of organic ingredients in their confectionary products was perceived to have a range of benefits, including making the products 'better for people' (M, 2), due to the reduced chemical content. Similarly, for Company F (p.7), local honey is a favoured and popular product, for health related reasons,

> We always stock up in [local] honey for two reasons, a) it's local, and b) the theory goes round that if you have local honey, then it builds up your immunity for hay fever, because you're taking in local pollen and, you know, the flowers that [the bees have] taken [...] the pollen from, [they] will be the pollen that actually sets off asthma, and it builds up an immunity.

The two reasons discussed above for selling locally produced honey are indeed positioned as separate issues. The first relates to the provenance of the product, whereby the 'local' origin of the honey provides automatic credibility, and is presented as a valid, somehow uncomplicated explanation for the product being 'good' (Pratt 2008). The second reason relates to the specific health benefits, where due to the local production, the item might provide consumers with immunity to hay fever and asthma, therefore encouraging consumers to choose the item. Interestingly, in the interview with Company B, a producer of artisan savoury products, the participant failed to approach consumer health issues. Indeed, the only instance where the content of the produce was mentioned was with regards to finding alternative ingredients, should they find themselves 'running out of an ingredient', and even so, this was instead defined as an 'ethical dilemma' (B, 4).

The issue of informing consumers about health also arose within the company interviews, and for one supermarket chain (Company L), the issue of 'health and nutrition' (p.2) was in fact subsumed under 'the umbrella of corporate social responsibility' (p.1). In this case, the participant spoke about

the responsibility of the company to provide customers with health information, but leaving the decision with them rather than editing choice. The participant from Company H also discussed the corporate responsibility of the company to inform consumers about 'healthy concept(s)', explaining that 'healthy food doesn't need to be expensive [...] it's actually far cheaper to cook from scratch than to buy a pre-packaged convenience food' (p.5). Therefore health may be negotiated with other factors during consumption decision-making, such as affordability and convenience. Similarly, in the interview with Company A, health choices were referred to as 'lifestyle choices', and using the example of 'organic milk', the participant described consumers as 'light greens' and 'faddy' if they buy this product, 'because the nutritional profile has been proven to be better [yet] they'll also put Nescafe next to it' (p.3). Here, health choices are again positioned as separate from 'ethical' choices, whereby organic milk might be chosen either for its nutritional profile or as a sign of support for organic farming methods. Therefore the issue of 'health', as a factor in consumer decision-making, was addressed by participants in very different ways, although health was identified as an issue removed from ethical concerns, and indeed money concerns.

Yet there are instances where these debates also applied to non-food consumer items, in terms of their impact on personal health. In the case of cosmetics, albeit not consumed orally, they are nonetheless ingested in one form or another into the body (Fine 2002). For example,

> There's new trend on mineral make up, where it's much purer, 99% of just the pure minerals [...] people are more interested in natural products, so I think we've got both ethical customers, and people wanting natural things.
>
> (Company C, 6-7)

Here, the cosmetic item at the centre of the conversation is insinuated to have health benefits, due to the 'purer' and more 'natural' ingredients used in the composition, which is therefore considered instrumental in consumption decision-making. In this quote, the participant discerns between consumers that make decisions based on ethical concerns and choices according to health concerns. Due to this, the company navigates between these two kinds of consumer by offering products that appeal to both. At the same time, there is an assumption that consumers have faith in these products and that they trust the claims the companies make, which is negotiated alongside decision-making practices, through which consumers may constitute themselves (what Foucault (1988) describes as the 'technologies of the self'). Other non-food companies also spoke about the health benefits of their particular products, such as Company K, for whom the ethics of the company (i.e.

making shoes that contained 'no animal product whatsoever') were negotiated with the quality and comfort of the products. This involved ensuring that the shoes were 'made from really high quality', 'breathable materials' and were 'not just plastic shoes', thus were both 'environmentally friendly' and 'foot friendly' (K, 2). The financed-based companies also dealt with health related products in a more tenuous manner, described as 'protective products, such as life insurance' (D, 7), as a consumer item based around caring for 'dependents' in the event of ill health and/or death (D, 6). However, there was a sense within all these discussions of consumer health that the company was there to provide a particular product or service, and that health-related choices were ultimately down to the consumer, for whom these decisions would be negotiated amongst other factors.

Within this analysis, health, as another factor to negotiate within consumption decision-making, was often positioned by participants as a largely immovable object, around which consumption choices had to be manoeuvred. At the same time, consumers also respond to changing health discourses and issues, meaning that choices based on health are not entirely fixed. Interestingly, the health discourses discussed were strongly linked to the narratives discussed in Chapter 6, regarding concern and care for family members, and the subsequent association with gendered responsibilities. The following section will examine the ways in which money is another influential factor within consumption decision-making, negotiated alongside ethical concerns, but also health and waste.

7.2: Morals and Money

Moving on to address another part of consumer decision-making, this section is dedicated to analysing the relationship between ethics and money. The discussion of the ethnographic literature will mainly focus on the ways in which participant negotiate between morals and money in practice, particularly looking at the notion of 'needs' and 'wants', preparation and planning techniques, and the negotiation between affordability and ethical consumption. The company-based data then follows this discussion, looking at the monetary aspects of ethical consumption and ethical production, followed by an analysis of the school based research, focussing on how consumption is taught as both a financial and moral practice. As discussed in Chapter 4, the relationship between ethics and consumption is recognised as a complicated one, encompassing recurrent issues such as responsibility, gender and tradition (see Charles and Kerr 1988, Horowitz 1985), and this section aims to draw out some of these complexities.

Affordability was recognised by ethnographic participants as one of the main constraints on consumption choices, and as a result featured in most discussions and observations. From this, there emerged a number of ways in which affordability can be negotiated with ethical concerns, within consumer decision-making practices. To start, participants often referred to the 'wants' and 'needs' of their family as a basis for making consumption decisions, and this served to illustrate both financial and ethical considerations within decision-making. In the case of the Johnson family, due to their past experiences of financial hardship, they had developed a particular set of values surrounding their consumption choices, the most significant of these being the notion of a 'need' versus a 'want'. This became somewhat of a family motto, as Ann explained during an interview (E2 Int.1, 13),

> We used to have the saying 'is it a need or a want'. And a 'need' was always seen to, a 'want' wasn't. But David can subtly define between a need and a want, he can negotiate between a need and a want sometimes, can't you?

This idea, that a 'want' and a 'need' are negotiated alongside one another by family members during consumption decision-making, indicates that these factors are not rigid, but instead are dictated by circumstance. At the first meeting, Ann also mentioned that 'a need always comes before a want' (E1 M1, 4), and remarked another time, whilst out grocery shopping, that 'a need is greater than a want' (E1 M2, 6). In these instances, a need was defined as something they could not do without, and could not be compromised upon, as opposed to a want, which was something that was desirable but not necessarily vital. These concepts also translate well when thinking about morals within consumption decision-making. For example during a receipt analysis exercise, David discussed that 'his philosophy [to consumption] was that if he wants something and he can afford it then he gets it' (E3 M4, 5). Therefore, affordability was decided upon depending on the use-value of a product, i.e. whether it was needed or wanted, but was also associated with care-giving, in that Ann Johnson considered it her responsibility to ensure that the 'needs' of her family were met (also see Chapter 6).

For the Robinson family, the concept of 'need' versus 'want' was again apparent in consumption decision-making processes. Tom and Emma were quite clear that Tom's health had to be catered for, no matter what (and thus a 'need'), which involved necessary dietary requirements (as discussed in Section 7.2). These requirements involved buying 'expensive' foods such as 'rice milk or goat's milk' (E1 Int.1, 9) and costly medication 'made from all natural ingredients' (E3 M1, 5). When explaining

how they made consumption decisions, Tom stated that, 'we could do [the shopping] for cheaper, but then it wouldn't be as healthy, so the priority then is health, and then its financial, well, health for me' (E1 Int.1, 12). Interestingly, Tom here refers to his health as a 'priority' when making consumption choices, but does not differentiate between his priorities and those of his family. He also recognises that not only does his health dictate family consumption decisions, but that these decisions are led more by his personal well-being than the ability to afford the necessary items (see Murcott 1983). Therefore, in this instance, the health needs of Tom are placed above the financial abilities of the family as a unit, as albeit a complicated example of morals versus money.

The Smith family also spoke about the role of money in their consumption choices, and making decisions based on their needs and wants. In the first meeting, Joanne spoke about how she 'buys things for a purpose, and it depends on what the product is, rather than the cost' (E1 M1, 3). Again, this raises the idea that a product should have a use-value, and that this use or need is more important than expense (see Hall *et al* 2008, Lapavitas 2004, Marx 1886). Later on, at the same meeting (p.4), Joanne explicitly referred to the negotiation of needs and wants, and explained that,

> If you want, need or can afford an item, then you can justify getting it. I think that kids also need teaching the value of money, and if they want something then they have to save for it.

Therefore, for Joanne Smith, needs, wants and affordability are in fact negotiated alongside one another, and are all regarded as legitimate reasons for consumption. Yet also entangled in these decisions are ethical issues, involving the teaching of morals to their children (see Section 7.3). These morals are, rather tellingly, related to their use of money, in that being thrifty with money is regarded as a positive characteristic (Miller 1998). Similarly, in a later interview, Edward described his practice of clothes shopping as 'needs must' (E1 Int.1, 5), which was, as Joanne indicated, used as a legitimate reason for consumption. At the same time, in the above extract, by explaining that if the children 'want' something they have to save for it, this distinguishes a want from a need, and indeed that it is less imperative to satisfy a 'want' than a 'need'. Joanne also discussed the concept of a 'treat', as an already recognised aspect of consumption decision making (see Miller 1998, 40-49), and something different to a need or a want. Instead, a treat was defined according to its frequency of use, rather than use-value, for example when going to the caravan for longer periods of time, 'we eat eggs, and then they would have been a treat, because we were there for a week' (E2 M3, 8). However, it was clear that, within consumption choices, a treat was closer in definition to a 'want', since the item would be desirable but not a necessity. Within these examples, consumption

decisions involved regular and complex negotiations, that take into account not only affordability and ethical concerns, but also the ways in which a product might be used and the sentiments that are attached to its consumption.

Another practice involving the negotiation of morals and money was the act of planning and preparing consumption. As in the case of Nicola Green, forward planning, or thinking in the 'long-term' (E1 Int.1, 9) was one way in which consumption choices were negotiated. For instance, when making everyday food consumption choices, Nicola and Joseph Green would eat foods they purchased in 'going-off order' (E1 M2, 6), so as to ensure that all foods would be eaten and thus reducing waste, both in terms of money and waste of the actual food, since '[food] getting thrown in the bin is a sin' (E1 Int.2, 3) (see Section 7.3 for further analysis of 'waste'). Within their decision-making, Nicola and Joseph would also consider how and where the foods they consumed were produced, and in particular spoke about the concept of 'seasonality'. Not only did they consider seasonality to be a less expensive way of eating, but it was also regarded as more 'old fashioned' and 'traditional way' of consuming (E1 Int.1, 3). There was a definite sense of nostalgia and heritage in this discussion (also see Section 6.2), with the direct reference to tradition and the idea of having 'gone back' to a way of consumption, that was indeed positioned as being a positive step. There was also a strong association with thriftiness, in that money could be saved by planning ahead and only using what you can grow. These ideas seem to have transferred onto notions of seasonality, whereby even though the family did not grow the foods themselves, they actively chose to consume products that were in (British) season. By making decisions according to the seasonality of produce, consumers are required to 'think more about what you are going to eat' (E1 Int.1, 3), and to plan around availability rather than making choices based on preference (somewhat echoing the previous discussion on 'needs' and 'wants'). In some sense, when using seasonality as a factor for making decisions, choices are not actively made at all, but are rather dictated by availability. Making consumption decisions according to seasonality has also been discussed in wider debates of ethical consumption, and more specifically local production and carbon usage (see Chapter 4).

Buying in bulk was another observed practice or form of planning, which also involved the negotiation of ethics and affordability. In particular, buying in bulk was one way of being prepared, and a form of planning ahead, as well as being more convenient in practice, since return trips to the store are lessened (see Warde 1999). Buying items in large quantities was also one way of saving

money, ensuring that necessary items could be bought, and therefore stored for later use, often at a lower cost,

> We like to buy in bulk, regardless of the product [...] after our financial struggles we [the family] are always prepared to make and prepare meals, because it makes your money go further. The benefit to buying practically with food mainly comes down to the fact that it makes your money go further.

Within this extract (E1 M1, 3) David Johnson repeatedly talks about 'preparing' and the notion of thinking 'practically' about how to spend your money, similar to Joseph Green's comment noted previously regarding seasonality. Indeed, the Johnson family were observed continuing with these habits. For example, during Easter time in 2008 I went shopping with David and Ann to Morrison's, where they purchased 17 Easter eggs, for the children and grandchildren, because they were only a pound each, therefore both planning ahead and buying in bulk. As Ann Johnson elaborated, this current habit of buying in bulk developed because of their past financial difficulties,

> When we were poor, and David was a fireman, we used to literally live on beans on toast, and soup and toast, and because we couldn't afford to eat we'd usually eat at other people's houses three to four times a week. As a fireman, David used to earn about 36 pounds a month, and our family eating habits started around this time.

Thus for this family, the act of buying in bulk, as part of their family shopping habits, was the result of a negotiation between the moral obligation to provide for the family, whilst at the same time being able to do so in an affordable manner, due to their (previously) low income (see Section 6.2 regarding the importance of past experiences). The Grey family also discussed similar experiences of financial difficulty, which impacted upon their consumption choices, where they would 'have chips six times a week', and to save further money still, Paul would 'go out and buy ten pounds worth of spuds' (E1 Int.1, 20-21). Hence, bulk buying would seem to be the result of a negotiation between money, ethics, convenience and past experience, as well as requiring forward thinking and preparation.

There were also numerous examples of planning and preparation practices that were non-food related. For example, Emma Robinson often spoke about the ways in which she planned for expensive times of the year, such as birthdays and Christmas, using preparation techniques. During October 2008, Emma took part in a receipt analysis task, during which time she had already started buying Christmas presents for the children, including a Power Rangers scooter for Peter (which, at

the time, was on clearance), and a Mulan Doll for Mary, which 'would be stored away until Christmas Day' (E3 M3, 1). She also spoke about everyday consumption practices involving this same technique, such as buying clothes for the children in the sale, but buying 'the next size up, for them to grow into' (E3 M2, 7), and similar to Ann Johnson, she found 'buying and storing' to be the effective with food consumption (E3 Int.3, 10). Emma would also keep a check of her finances on an everyday basis, 'keeping a book and writing down exactly how much she spend every day' (E2 M3, 3), which emerged to be part of her responsibility to the rest of her family, as the maternal figure (see Section 6.3). Here, the negotiation of morals and money is expressed using preparation techniques, as a result of Emma's responsibility to ensure that her children are well-dressed on an everyday basis. This was considered to be part of her responsibility as a mother, but also her desire to make her children happy, by ensuring they receive the Christmas presents they want (see Charles and Kerr 1988).

When thinking about morals and money, another theme that was arose within the ethnographic data was the consumption of so-called 'ethical products', and the tensions between buying these products and consumer affordability. For the Silva family, living off one wage (because Paulo was a student) meant that they had a very little disposable income, 'spending [their] money mainly on food' (E1 M1, 3). They therefore had to stick to a tight budget, or be 'frugal' as Kim described it, so 'spending most of their money at Tesco' (E1 M1, 3), although Kim admitted to being 'desperate to be less reliant on Tesco for their shopping' (E1 M3, 2). They were also unable to spend as much money as they would have liked on foods and other (locally produced) consumerables at the farmers' market (as their preferred shopping location), which they recognised as being 'quite expensive' (E1 M1, 3). These negotiations between financial circumstances and personal consumption ethics, including buying locally and avoiding certain branded products, often resulted in consumption choices that appeased both their purse strings and their moral conscience. For example, during the fourth meeting, Paulo and Kim embarked on their weekly shopping, which involved visiting both their local farmers' market and Tesco respectively. Whilst at the farmers' market, they decided to 'treat' themselves to a few limited items, including local yogurt, turkey legs, chicken breast, beef mince, bread, olive oil, mushrooms, onions, duck eggs and some homemade cakes. As noted in the research diary, 'they were really excited to be buying these items' (E1 M4, 2), and Kim expressed a similar excitement when, after shopping at Tesco and the farmers' market, she came under the weekly budget (£45 total, spending £30 at the farmers' market, £15 in Tesco). By compromising their shopping habits in this way, Kim and Paulo attempted to negotiate between affordability and

personal ethics (and preference), or 'doing their bit', which they achieved by shopping at different places for different items; the farmers' market for a few 'treats', and topping up their shopping at Tesco.

Other participants also discussed the expensive nature of ethical products, and often this was posed as a reason for not buying such items. Paul Grey, for instance, explained how he had 'never been into fair trade or anything like that', but rather would consume in a more preference-led manner, and 'buy what we like, provided it's in our budget' (E1 Int.1, 18), thus placing affordability and preference as the main factors in his decision-making. For Joanne Smith, the expense of ethical foods, such as 'free range chicken', 'fair trade bananas', and 'organics' [sic], was again a deterrent against buying 'ethically', but she admitted that it might be different 'if money wasn't an object' (see Barnett *et al* 2005, Guthman 2004, Renting *et al* 2003). Instead, Joanne explained that she 'needs to budget, and the girls have expensive hobbies that need to be paid for' (E1 M2, 3). Therefore, when negotiating between money and morals, Joanne would actually appease both of these factors, whereby thrifty spending was for the benefit of her family. However, she also recognised that the negotiation between ethics and money was not so straightforward,

> I just feel, as a society, we're also cruel to humans as well as animals, we're not a very nice world that we live in, on a whole, and we can't afford to be righteous to what we spend our money on, because for me, to be over food, I would have to be it on clothes and I can't, or we haven't got that level of income to be there.

The idea that consuming ethical products is a 'righteous' thing to do is an interesting concept and would seem to support the current consumer discourses that position ethical products as luxury items (see Barnett *et al* 2005). Similarly, in an earlier meeting, Joanne spoke about how she thought it was 'hypocritical for people to be so concerned about free range farming when so much cheap labour takes place when it comes to making clothes' (E1 M2, 1). Within both these extracts, Joanne identifies that the decision to purchase ethical products was a complex one, not just involving ethics and money, but also requiring a negotiation between different kinds of ethics within consumption choices, as well as opting for some kind of consistency in her shopping ethics. Therefore, as the previous examples illustrate, there are numerous tensions that surface when making consumption choices, between money and ethics, personal ethics and so-called 'ethical consumption', and also when choosing between ethical products themselves. These debates are discussed in further detail in Section 7.4.

Within the company-based discussions, the relationship between morals and money in consumption was again associated with negotiation. One example of this relationship was the notion of 'ethics for money', that ethics can be bought, such as in the form of so-called ethical products (Barnett *et al* 2005, Harrison *et al* 2005). For example, in the interview with Company M, the participant discussed how they charge a 'higher price' to 'reflect' the values of the company, as well as later discussing how there are some 'super ethical consumers' who 'will buy things they perceive as ethical regardless of the cost [and] people choose to spend their money in different ways' (p.4, p.6). Here, ethics are positioned both as something that can be purchased, but also as more important than price, when making consumption decisions. Using a Marxist critique, one might also argue that the added value here, to which added cost is attributed, is trust. Interestingly, within this quote the participant refers to 'choice' as something that everyone has, with an assumption that everyone has the choice of how to spend their money. The interview with Company C (7) raised similar issues, where the participant stated that 'lots of people say they are bothered until it starts costing more or until they can't get what they just wanted'. In this respect, ethics are the most important factor in decision-making, placed here above both cost and preference, and indeed it is suggested that a genuine 'ethical consumer' is one that places ethics as the foremost factor. In the interview with Company H (7), the same issue was raised, of ethics costing money,

> In reality there will always be a price differential and you know quality of stuff, and levels of responsibility that we can embed in a higher tier product, such as our [Brand] range, well the higher price will enable us to offer customers more in terms of ethics and responsibility.

Here, the participant suggests an uncomplicated link between charging higher price and offering 'more' morals, which leaves little scope to recognise consumers that do not purchase 'ethical' products as 'ethical consumers'. At the same time, the notion of 'more morals' is an interesting one, and suggests that morals in consumption can take a number of forms, and that a scale of morality exists, as opposed to right and wrong in absolute terms.

Some companies also spoke about the negotiation between profits and ethics in the way that the company is run, such as Company K (5), which was described as 'principle driven', and Company B (1), the participant from which described his job as ensuring that the 'company is going in the right direction [both] profitably and ethically'. The practices of Company F are another example of this, in that the business supports local artisans by selling their products in store, though they do not charge for this service, instead seeing it as being part of the community. Many of the interviewees from the

companies were aware that the everyday running of the business involved both financial and ethical dilemmas, but that negotiation might not always be necessary,

> [The Company] also accepts the fact that whilst wishing to deliver outstanding value to our customers, it must not be at the expense of ethical considerations that would be to their embarrassment.
>
> (Company J, 5)

In this example, ethics are considered to work alongside profit generation, but are also the responsibility of the company, since the repercussions of unethical practices can be passed down to the consumer. In the case of Company F, although the foods on sale are priced higher than the supermarkets, it was felt that customers were instead offered a 'more personal service' (p.2), therefore customers were assumed to make a decision to shop there in future, based on this practice. Company I (6), another food retailer, also expressed that profits should not be made on poor quality produce, and that 'stuff has been thrown in the bin before because I wasn't happy with it [...] I won't compromise on quality'. Therefore, keeping the customer happy and providing a good service (as ethics unto themselves), are considered as more important than making a profit on poor-quality goods. Company H also spoke about how they made 'significant financial investments' in particular projects, should they consider it to be 'the right thing to do' (p.2). It can therefore be argued that money and morals are, at times, compatible and that both are present during decision-making, whether for producers or consumers.

Leading on from this, for the financial organisations that participated, the requirement to provide customers with maximum (financial) rewards was important, but should only be achieved with risk-free investments and with decisions made 'for the benefit of our members'. This moral translated directly into practice for one particular financial organisation, who explained that 'we've always been quite cautious, because we're mindful that it's our members' money that we are putting at risk' (D, 3). In this sense, because of the nature of the company, being careful with customers' money and increasing their savings (or saving them money) was considered as the right thing to do. This was a similar story for Company E, a Bank, whereby one participant spoke about 'an ethical approach to finance' (p.4), again implying a synergy between the ethics and money. The participant also spoke about the founding morals of the company, including that the 'bank should look after its customers and members money' (p. 2). The act (and language used) of 'looking after' and being 'mindful' or 'cautious' may also be interpreted as a form of care-giving towards customers, inferring

an element of responsibility on the part of business (see Carmichael 2001). In this interview with Company E, the two participants involved also claimed that 'business has a role beyond just making a profit' (p.2), yet at the same time they referred to ethics as 'secondary' (p.8) and that the insurance arm of the business could not afford to be choosey about the companies it invested in, 'because of the need to get the best return for the investors' (p.3). Therefore, whilst money and ethics might times be compatible, particularly when thinking about providing value for, and looking after customers, there are other occasions when the drive for financial gain has greater force than ethical concerns, thus decisions are made with this in mind.

Similar negotiations between money and morals were discussed by companies from the retail sector, such as Company J, which markets its products largely on 'low prices' and 'unbeatable value for money' (p.1). However within these discussions there was an understanding that some consumers could not afford luxury, ethically produced items (see above), but this was not to say that ethics were absent within their consumption decision-making (see Clarke *et al* 2007, Dombos 2008). The interviewee was keen to stress that despite the cheap prices, quality was still delivered, and that lower prices could be offered because of adjustments made during production, such as buying directly from the manufacturer and locating out of town. Interestingly, the target customer of the company was described as 'female, aged 25-65, likely to have a family and buys for the whole family as well as their home' (J, 3). Untangling the thick description, the participant flags not only the gendered responsibility of a mother to provide for her family (see Section 6.3), but also the responsibility of the company to provide 'value for money' goods to these customers, and so enabling consumers in their care-giving roles. A similar concept was discussed by Company H, a supermarket chain, who was 'trying to appeal to lower income shoppers', by marketing a particular campaign that encourages people to 'cook from scratch' (p.5), which is cheaper than buying convenience foods, again balancing (personal) morals with money. Other interviewees, however, recognised that money and morals had to be negotiated alongside one another and that there might be some occasions when some morals would have to take a backseat to affordability. In the interview with Company A (5-6), this issue was rather well articulated by the participant,

> If you have to feed your kids, then you will do whatever you know, morals come very low on the pyramid of needs, and it's feeding your kids at the top.

The pyramid of needs, in this example, is akin to the process of consumption decision-making, although what the participant fails to point out is that feeding your family may be, as argued in

Chapter 6, a form of ethical behaviour in itself. Within consumption decision-making, morals and money are negotiated in various ways, depending on the situation and the moral values at hand. Despite this, within the company interviews, the dominant discourse of consumption choices is that morals and money are polarised issues, and that decisions can rarely satisfy both these demands.

For the pupils from the school-based research, consumption was understood as a process of negotiation and choice, involving both money and morals. During some of the lesson observations, although the lesson content did not directly address these issues, the importance of money in consumption decision-making was emphasised. During two different lessons at School C, pupils were taught that 'greed', in terms of money or possessions, was a negative quality to display, and that happiness should be sought in other ways. For example, in an R.E. class (C, Obs.4, 1), a video clip from the film Pocahontas shown to the class, followed by a class discussion, explained that seeing happiness in terms of 'gold or money' was a 'negative character trait', perhaps better described as materialism. During a mixed curriculum lesson looking at career choices, pupils worked on an exercise called 'the real game' (C, Obs.2, 1). In previous lessons they had written a list of all the things they would buy/own once they had a job (such as a house and car), and following this they had each been allocated with a 'profession'. Many of the students were disappointed with their allocated profession, upon realising that it would not pay them enough to afford all the things they wanted. As the teacher explained 'they hadn't realised how much these things cost', and that it was a bad thing to get into debt (p.2). As already discussed in Chapter 6 (Sections 6.1 and 6.3), the lesson entitled 'Morals and Money' observed at School B (Obs.4), was devoid of any discussion regarding the negotiation of morals and money, but instead looked at facts on monies and currencies. Other lesson observations, more tenuously related in topic, also provided data on this issue, such as a Geography lesson at School B, where pupils were asked to debate between the following two statements,

1. We believe the government should build more roads to ease congestion and to make it easier to travel by car.

2. We believe the government should make public transport cheaper and more efficient and penalise people for using their cars.

(School B Obs.2, 1)

Within the debate that ensued, although there was a heavy lenience of agreement towards the second statement, some pupils did argue for the case of the first, that it was wrong to penalise

people for their car usage, or to make car drivers pay congestion charges. In this respect, concerns for the environment were considered secondary to 'punishing' people for having a car, adding further dimensions to these negotiations, between environmental ethics and individual rights. Although these examples from the lesson observations are all rather different, a constant feature is the negotiation between morals and money. In particular, it is clear that the two are not considered as compatible, as well as the perceived negative, materialistic relationship that may develop between people and money.

Within the focus group discussions, money was indicated as a factor of consumer decision-making, although more often than not it was mentioned in response to questioning, rather than being raised by participants themselves. Although it was recognised that money was a feature of everyday consumption choices, the participants rarely spoke about their own choices, but instead discussed decision-making in a rather disconnected manner, such as what 'you' could do, such as their parents or society in general. They also expressed a lack of concern for money, in that their consumption decisions were centred around preference rather than affordability, both of which raises issues about young people's responsibility for consumption choices (see Hudson 2005 and Pike 2007a),

> **Sarah**: how about cost, does that come into it for you, or do you find that that's not really something that you worry about?
>
> **Lucy**: it depends what it is you're looking at, like if it was clothes
>
> **Chloe**: I guess you should, but I don't really worry about the costs
>
> **Sarah**: OK is that more, again is that more a concern for your parents do you think?
>
> **Chloe, Lucy, Ekta, Daniel**: yeah
>
> **Lucy**: yeah it is, like if you are paying yourself you need money for some other stuff as well, so it matters what it costs really.

(School B FG 1, 6-7)

In the extract above, although the participants recognise money as important in decision-making, particularly when accounting for a budget (as Lucy indicates at the end of the quote), it is not something they worry about or have to consider in their own consumption choices (presuming that they have to make any). Issues of responsibility are also discussed in the next chapter.

The school participants also displayed rather irrational and naive understandings of money, particularly in terms of how money is negotiated in practice and within different circumstances. For example, in two separate focus groups, participants referred to buying fair trade and organic goods as an 'easy' thing to do (A FG1, 18 and A FG2, 20). Participants' understandings of the relationship between morals and money were rather uncomplicated, and there was little consideration of affordability issues, or that morals might be expressed in other ways, beyond the more formalised, and arguably fashionable routes (Hall *et al* 2008). Instead, affordability was recognised as a concern and responsibility for parents, as the participants from the previous extract went on to explain,

> **Sarah**: do you have responsibility in that way, or do find that if you were to go out and want some clothes or some food that that's not really something for you to worry about, is that something your parents or guardians would?
>
> **Daniel**: well...
>
> **Chloe**: I buy my own clothes, but I guess your mum and dad buys your food, so you don't really worry about that [...] my mum normally buys like, she'll buy clothes I like, but like, she doesn't really worry about the cost
>
> (School B FG 1, 7)

Here, the everyday negotiations of consumption are recognised as being carried out by adults, or more specifically parents, in terms of both food and clothing purchases (see Finch and Mason 1993, Murcott 1983). These reduced understandings of negotiation practices in consumption were paralleled with a reduced responsibility for making consumption decisions, and as such the negotiation between money and morals was not something that these young participants were particularly experienced in. However, within the focus group discussions, participants expressed greater interest and wider knowledge of money and morals in production, which was invariably linked to consumption choices. This issue will be addressed in the following chapter.

In this section, the relationship between money and morals has been shown to be a complex one, particularly for consumers when making decisions and negotiating between different products and places to shop. The following section will go on to look at narratives of waste, and how these narratives are expressed and negotiated in practice.

7.3: Waste and Resource Management

As discussed in Chapter 3, the progression of consumer goods from raw product to disposal may be described as a product 'life-cycle' (also see Appadurai 1986 and Cook *et al* 2004), and often takes into account the environmental consequences of production, consumption, and disposal (including recycling for reproduction). However, whilst product lifecycles encompass social, economic and environmental processes of production, consumption, and disposal, there has been a considerable emphasis upon the initial stages of production, leaving consumption practices (Eden *et al* 2008), or what happens to the item once bought, often to be marginalised within such accounts (see Barr 2004, Bekin *et al* 2007). This section will therefore address the otherwise marginalised role of waste and resource management within consumer choices, and the ways in which waste is negotiated within everyday consumption decision-making.

For the ethnographic participants, another strong value that many family members held, with regards to their consumption decision-making, was resource management, or rather taking care with resources, be it money, food or other materials. In particular, to 'waste' something was considered unethical, and a form of misuse and thoughtlessness, as Barr (2004) also found. For the Robinson family, this waste was largely associated with money. In a later interview, when asked about what morals were important to them, Tom told me that 'I don't like waste, or spending money on things I don't need' (E3 M5). This sentiment was echoed by other participants, for instance the Johnson family - who regularly avoided wasting their money on food that was close dated (and thus likely to become 'waste'), the Green family - who buy from charity shops where possible and consider it 'an awful waste of money' to buy new children's toys (E1 M1, 7), and Joanne Smith - who regarded it as a waste of money to pay for her daughter's cut and blow dry if she was only going to put it in a pony tail for work. Participants from other parts of the research also discussed these issues, such as focus group discussions in schools, whereby students spoke about how people 'don't think twice' about 'leav[ing] the light on', and even though 'they know how serious [climate change] is, they just don't take it into mind' (School A FG2, 13). Within these narratives, the notion of 'waste' was associated with wasting (through misuse) rather than waste disposal.

There was also an association with the avoidance of waste as a form of caring for the environment, and that consumption should only take place if there was a necessity. As observed in the Robinson household, 'if they already have it in the house, they didn't see the point in buying any more' (E1

M2). However, there were times when, for instance, Emma avoided using carrier bags at some stores because they had to be paid for 'and they already had so many at home' (E2 M4), yet used the free ones in other stores. In this sense, waste is just as much about a waste of money as a waste of resources, as Emma once articulated 'we can't really afford to waste' (E1 M3). In this instance, it is difficult to establish whether Emma is here using 'we' in reference to her family responsibilities, or to collective social responsibilities (to be discussed in Chapter 7). Joseph Green (E1 Int.1, 10) also explained that the main factor in his consumption decision-making is his own and his family's health, and their financial wellbeing, but that environmental issues, again with the example of plastic bags, are another motivator to avoid wastage,

> **Sarah:** on what grounds do you make decisions about what you consume?
>
> **Joseph:** ... it's definitely health, definitely cost, obviously, definitely convenience, but that's not so much an issue because we can get anything where we live
>
> **Sarah:** because you can drive?
>
> **Joseph:** yeah, everything is within a ten-minute drive. Environmental issues, yes... one thing I would say, plastic bags, I tend to reuse those, that's a recent change of habit, rather than just pulling another dozen off the thing at the checkout then probably throwing them in the bin. I tend to recycle plastic bags...I tend to recycle more generally, bottles and that sort of thing, so yes there are environmental issues in there, but overall I'd say the main ones are health reasons and financial reasons

Alongside this, taking care with resources and using them frugally was considered a form of positive action, in terms of saving money in the long run, and at times as a way to help the environment. In the case of the Johnson family, they created a food storage in their basement, which they were then able to live off for six months when David quit his job. They regarded this form of saving, as the antithesis of wasting, to be highly productive and in short, a life saver. For Emma and Tom Robinson, it was more important to spend a greater amount of money on the things they needed, such as organic produce, and to use these items fully and wholly, rather than to buy items that were cheaper and waste them. As such, it would seem that the avoidance of waste for monetary purposes is inseparable from concerns about wasting resources and environmental issues. In this sense, the family value of avoiding waste is a practiced form of ethics. Yet the ethics of caring for oneself is again complicated by an ethics of caring about, for instance, environmental issues, and where the two meet, or even part, is very difficult to determine.

Similar issues also arose in the school-based research with regards to avoiding waste for environmental reasons. Focus Group participants were particularly enthusiastic about recycling, as something that they could engage in. Recycling was described as a being 'healthier for the environment' (School A FG2, 15), whereby 'healthiness' becomes synonymous with 'good', and it was argued that 'we should do it because trees are being cut down and they're need to prevent pollution' (School B FG1, 10). Elaborating on these ideas, Owen, from another focus group participant, explained,

> Recycling, it's using the same stuff again and we are going to run out of this stuff, if we keep using it as we are now, we're going to run out in like fifty years the world's going to run out of coal and stuff, that's why we're doing all the recycling.
>
> (School A FG 2, 18)

Although the reasoning and explanation in this narrative may not be strictly correct, recycling is here regarded as both a form of waste reduction and environmental protection. During a School Council Observation, a discussion arose that brought together a number of the topics mentioned in this section, regarding the installation of a water cooler,

> The teacher mentioned that the school would be having a water machine fitted for the pupils, and that they would start to encourage them to buy bottles but to reuse them, instead of buying new bottles each time or using plastic cups. Not only was this an environmental scheme, he explained, but it was also aimed to encourage healthy living.
>
> (School B Obs.5)

As with findings from the ethnographic research, this would suggest that environmental motivations in consumption decision-making may be multifaceted and include factors such as health, waste and money when making consumption choices.

Within the company interviews, issues regarding the sustainability of consumer goods arose, as a way to apply ethics of resource management and environmental concern in consumption choices,

> [We are] starting to look at what standards do we want to set for [our] own brand products in terms of quality, safety etc, but also starting to look at the ethical areas as well. So with something like large electricals, then it's about promoting the most energy efficient models

> [...] I also think that the market is growing now with consumers that are more demanding and have more of an appetite for sustainable products.
>
> (Company G, 4)

As discussed further in the following section, the products that the company offer were seen as a form of expressing particular personal ethics or values. In this case, it was thought possible to appease concerns for sustainability and resource management by offering products that were energy efficient and thus solutions. The participant from Company M was one of few to discuss waste management, 'in terms of environmental packaging, we currently use recycled wrapper packaging [...] and recycled board' (p.3), although this was more in relation to the practices of the company than consumers.

Within this section, resource management and notions of waste emerged as a form of ethical expression, and another example of the negotiation of ethics in action. In terms of managing resources, it was shown that care is taken when handling resources, whether money, consumerables or waste, through cautious and thoughtful usage. This management was discussed both in terms of waste as misuse, and waste as the antithesis of conservation. Many of the issues raised here in this section are carried forward to the next, which looks at ethical consumerism (see below), and will examine how particular consumption practices might be used to express personal ethics, as well as the discrepancies between narrative and practice.

7.4: Ethical Consumerism

Within Chapter 3, consumption was situated as a practice not only central to family decision making (Bell and Valentine, 1997), but also to identity and personality formation, simply because of the impact it has on people's lives in a 'consumer society' (Rattansi and Phoenix 1997). As emerged from the narratives of consumption choices, ethics might be expressed in a number of ways, which are also concurrent with ethical consumption discourses; consuming to support an issue, and consuming as a form of boycotting. The previous section explored issues of waste, sustainability and resource management, and although these issues are discussed as part of ethical consumer discourses (see Chapter 4), this section will look specifically at buying practices of ethical consumption and whether these can be disentangled from ordinary consumption.

From the ethnographic data, it became apparent that one way to express ethics in consumption is to purchase goods that are aligned with personal ethics e.g. to support a particular issue, or indeed buying the product because of the benefits it can provide. Consuming in support of a certain cause, such as a humanitarian, political or environmental issue, was discussed by a number of participants. In many of these cases, the motivations behind this form of consumption were seemingly concurrent with recent social understandings of the 'right thing to do', and perhaps a form of what Tom Robinson coined as 'going with the flow'. Many of these narratives were concurrent with recent ethical consumption debates, although as discussed in Chapter 4, the expression of ethics in consumption, using these means, is not an especially new one. Paulo Silva, for example, admitted to being solidarity-orientated towards his heritage, in that he tries to buy things from Latin America, wherever possible. For the Johnson family, climate change was cited as one of the instigating factors in them buying a forest, for the conservation element as well as it acting as a form of carbon offsetting (see Chapter 8). In a later interview, they discussed other consumption-based activities that also expressed these environmental concerns,

> **David**: [...] I put a little email, there's a thing on my emails now that says 'please don't print this if you don't need to print it, save the environment and paper', because someone sent it to me and I thought 'brilliant'. So I put that on the bottom of my emails now, and I try to print as little as possible now....you know, and I'm just more aware [...] in the past we've looked at hybrid cars, that's half electric, half petrol, we didn't make the move to do it, but we bought you [Ann] a very frugal car, and we've got, I've got, a very frugal big car with a diesel engine. I just think generally we're just doing you know, a lot.
>
> (Johnson E2 Int.1, 15)

Hence, David states that he is consciously changing his and his family's consumption choices to be more reflective of the family's values and principles regarding environmental conservation. This is also a form of resource management, as discussed in the previous section. However, these decisions, whilst being driven by ethical beliefs, were also the result of more complex decision-making processes that also involved issues of health, money and preference.

Support of other issues, such as fair trade (Fairtrade the brand, and fairly traded goods) was well documented, and ethnographic participants spoke about buying fairly traded goods because they agreed with the ethics that they considered such products to encapsulate. In some cases, participants might be influenced to support a cause because of a family influence. This was the case

for Emma Robinson, whereby a member of her family had strong affiliations with the Fairtrade movement. In a number of discussions with both Emma and Tom they spoke about the benefits of fair trade, in contrast with slavery and exploitation associated with other forms of production. The Johnson family also expressed their support of fair trading regimes, saying that they buy select fair trade produce, such as bananas. The Fairtrade brand was one that around half of the pupils from the focus groups recognised in the participatory task, and attributed buying such items as one way to express care and to have a positive effect on the lives of other people (also see Dolan 2008). As one pupil explained, 'it means that people get paid fairly for like, if there's a farmer and he's growing corn, then instead of getting like 50p he gets like £2' (School A FG2, 14), and another participant also spoke about the 'fair treatment' of producers (School B FG1, 11). Again, the 'growth of the Fairtrade brand' (C, 6) was also mentioned within company interviews, as an 'established scheme' (L, 6) that allowed consumers to purchase goods 'guilt free', knowing that 'there are no kids in the supply chain' (C, 7). However, as Emma Robinson pointed out, there is scope for confusing customers about the ethical positioning of products, for example 'a lot of the fair trade stuff is put with the organic stuff' (E3 M5, 6). In general, buying fairly traded goods was positioned as one way to express a dissatisfaction with unethical production practices, otherwise referred to as ethical 'devices' (Barnett *et al* 2005, Dombos 2008). However, this is not to say that only fair trade and other so-called ethical items have an ethical reading, but rather than these ethics have been marketed and branded.

Local purchasing was another consumer ethic that emerged in the ethnographic data, and the 'notion' of goods being produced locally was something that participant felt fondly about (see Holloway and Kneafsey 2000, and Chapter 8). For example, Nicola Green said that 'she liked the idea of butter coming from a local farm, rather than miles away like the ones you get in the supermarkets' (E1 M1, 2). Kim and Paulo Silva were also enthused about local produce, and were regular customers of their local farmers' market, as a sign of their support. For the school pupils who participated in the research, local produce was associated with a reduction in 'air miles' (School B FG1, 9) and thus having environmental benefits, as opposed to buying things from far away, 'like strawberries from Taiwan', which was associated with an increase in 'pollution' (School A FG2, 15). However in another focus group discussion, one participant explained that 'it's much easier to buy from your local area to stop foreign children working' (School A FG1, 15). Therefore, the assumed accessibility of local produce made this form of consumption an 'easy' way to help a number of causes all at the same time. Within the company interviews, locally produced goods were considered to be a growing 'ethical' market, and according to Company A (2), 'people are purchasing ethically,

or rather their ethical trigger seems to be local and authentic'. Similarly, as a participant from Company F explained, 'people want to buy things that haven't travelled very far, and they want to buy local things' (p.2). This participant also spoke about encouraging customers to 'support local shops' (p.10). Participants from another local-based company (I, 2) even spoke about supporting other local businesses, in that the staff members 'don't go more than 10 miles themselves to get their own food'. These debates on locality and authenticity continue in Chapter 8, alongside discussions related to caring and scale.

Organic production was another topic that was raised, whereby Nicola Green preferred to 'get the organic box, rather than getting vegetables from the supermarket, in an attempt to be more green and eat more organic foods' (E1 M1, 2). Some participants even differentiated between organic goods from different places, such as Emma Robinson who said that she would prefer not to buy organic goods from a supermarket as they are 'often well travelled' (E1 M1, 2), which links back to the notion of locality and scale. The example of organic also tended to be a rather complex one, since issues of trading and locality tended to be based more on politics and propinquity. Consuming organic produce was also conceived as being as much for the benefit of the environment as for oneself and one's family (see below). In the interview with Company M, the participant explained that 'there are many benefits to organic food, such as no chemical pesticides, no chemical fertilisers, no growth hormones used with animals [and therefore] this is more environmentally friendly and better for people, animals, wildlife [etc]' (p.2). This is also something that the school pupils highlighted; that supporting a cause, such as organic production and consumption, might have multiple benefits,

> **Hannah**: ...I think buying organic goods will affect the environment but nowhere near as, like, well it's important but it's not
>
> **Beth**: it is for yourself though isn't it?
>
> **Hannah**: it's like a personal lifestyle decision isn't it?
>
> **Sarah**: OK, and do you think it has worldwide benefits?
>
> **Hannah**: yeah it does, but like, it's whether you want to buy it or not.
>
> (School A FG 2, 19)

Interestingly, the notion of consuming for the good of oneself has already been touched upon in Chapter 6 (section 6.1), when thinking about the motivations behind caring for others, and whether such altruism is motivated by personal gain. Yet expressing ethics in this way, despite the motivation, is not so clear-cut. Although buying and consuming particular products is one way to apply personal ethics in consumption choices, participants from all areas of the research recognised that supporting certain movements or causes was not always economically possible and involved a renegotiation of consumption choices and habits.

Consumption as an expression of ethics may also include buying for the good of oneself and one's family. At times, this form of consumption was associated with benefits to health, and these narratives often centred on food consumption. In the case of the Grey family, daughter Clare experienced difficulties eating as a child, which resulted in her having an awkward diet. In an effort to combat this, and to encourage her to eat, her parents chose to buy products that she might enjoy eating, 'she didn't want to eat [so] we used to get her this teddy bear ham with a face on' (E2 Int.3, 3). In previous discussions, Cath Grey also said that she used to feed Clare meat as a child, even though she wanted to be vegetarian, and instead used to tell her that it was 'processed' vegetables 'so that way [she] could get her to eat' (E1 Int.1, 21). By doing this, she could be assured that Clare was getting a rounded diet and not missing any nutrients that she might have otherwise had, since she already had a poor diet.

The example of the Robinson family is also particularly useful when thinking about consumption as a form of caring. After being diagnosed with M.E. (see section 7.1), Tom Robinson was advised by a nutritionist to change his diet, removing wheat, dairy and sugar, as well as consuming only organic foods, where possible. As a result, Tom and his wife Emma have since researched more into organic foods, developing a greater concern for the environment in the meantime; 'we've looked more into what's happening with foods, so we probably, even if it wasn't your health now, you'd probably keep buying it, wouldn't you?' (E1 Int.1, 5). Although Emma would like to think that they would still choose to consume in this way, even if they did not have to, there is still a distinction between the narrative and the performance. This form of ethics, of caring for one's own health, was also discussed in company interviews. In the interview with Company M, the participant spoke about the health benefits of organic, and the need to supply consumers with information related to health, such as allergies or diets. The interviewee from Company C also spoke about customers 'wanting natural

things' (p. 6), which the company were deemed to provide. However, in practice, 'natural' could either mean products that are free of artificial ingredients, or products that do not harm the environment, as a form of conservation (as discussed earlier in this chapter).

Boycotting or avoiding particular goods was another way to express ethics through consumption choices. Participants spoke about boycotting particular brands, which was often associated with the production activities of these companies, such as Kim Silva, who 'made a conscious decision never to buy Nike trainers based on what she had heard about their 'bad practice' and she avoids buying Coca Cola, for the same reason' (E1 M2, 3), or rather, the same ethic. In this example, Kim's narratives were in fact built on stories themselves. As already argued in Chapter 4, the negative effect that boycotts can have on brand credibility is well documented (Clark 2006). Interviewees from the company interviews also recognised that consumers can be dissatisfied with company practices, such as those 'who feel that it is bad for small companies to be 'gobbled up' by multinationals' (p.5), and may express this sentiment through boycotting. The notion of companies being 'gobbled up' is rather animated, and interestingly relates back to (food) consumption, with negative connotations.

The issue of battery farming was also pervasive in the data, as an example of boycotting as a consumer practice. Whilst shopping with the Silva family, they refused to buy chicken from the supermarket, assuming that it is battery farmed and thus buying it would be a form of supporting these production practices. The Johnson family avoided eating non- free range eggs for the same reason. In an interview with Company H, the topic of battery farming arose, in that consumers were perceived to have become 'engaged in the subject', and were 'not going back on their ethical purchasing decisions' (p. 3). However, as one participant from a school focus group pointed out, consuming in this way might also satisfy other demands, such as for quality and health, 'humanity doesn't always made enough sacrifices for other things...like we want like the chickens to run around because we want the best eggs (School A FG 1, 16). The 'bad conditions' (School A FG2, 10) of chicken rearing, for example, were therefore used as a reason to both avoid battery farmed produce, and to consume free-range produce. In boycotting a product or set of products, consumers are then obligated to consume in a manner that is complementary of this boycotting and does not undermine these ethics, such as in the case of anti-battery, pro-free range discourses. For some companies, such as Company K (p.6), the company ethos is to provide another option, such as 'an

alternative to leather', for those who boycott against unethical practices, since 'it's not just showing people the horrors of what happens to animals, but actually being positive and making a difference'.

Also discussed frequently were health scares, such as the BSE and bird flu epidemics, and the impacts on consumption choices, such as not buying English Beef or Eastern European chicken. Consumers might also boycott specific brands based on such health issues, e.g. David Johnson avoids buying Holland's Pies after the BSE scare, Nicola Green refuses to buy Bernard Matthews chicken after a publicised bird-flu incident or Cadbury's after reports of salmonella poisoning, and Emma Robinson avoids Coca Cola and Pepsi after learning about the effects of fizzy drinks and aspartame. School pupils also discussed their experiences of avoiding certain foods, for health reasons, such as Samuel, who explained that as part of a 'healthy schools' initiative, his school 'got rid of all the unhealthy things...they got rid of all the sweets and everything, all the fizzy drinks' (School A FG1, 21). These debates also need not focus just on food consumption. In one lesson observation (School B Obs. 2), pupils were asked to debate the impacts of traffic congestion, and they discussed environmental damage as one such example. Issues regarding the impacts on health also arose, as well as how avoiding petrol consumption and car use might alleviate these problems.

Therefore, according to the data, ethics can be expressed in a variety of ways. Consumption might be motivated by concern for a particular cause, such as fair trading, local production, organic techniques, or for personal concerns and concerns for others. Within these discussions it was difficult to determine the motivating ethics behind these consumption choices, where personal gain and altruism become rather entangled, and indeed how they become resolved in practice is a complicated matter. Boycotting and avoidance strategies might also be used to express dissatisfaction with a brand or certain production practices, or due to health concerns. Ethics can therefore be expressed in consumption through active consumption to support a cause or avoidance as a form of rejection, in accordance with one's personal morals and beliefs.

7.5: Chapter Conclusion

Within this chapter, the relationship between ethics and consumption has been untangled, with an analysis of the negotiation of morals in everyday consumption choices. With a focus on health, money, waste and resource management, and ethical consumerism, this chapter has illustrated how

morals become translated from narratives, such as those explored in Chapter 6, into everyday practices. Personal identity and ethics are extremely pervasive in consumer decision-making, and add to an already complicated negotiation process. However, as well as unpacking some of these complex negotiations, this chapter has also aimed to broaden the scope of understanding when thinking about moral decision-making in consumption, and to redefine the parameters of ethical consumption.

Within Section 7.1, health emerged as a central negotiation factor within consumer decision-making. Indeed, for the ethnographic participants, health was regarded as an immoveable object, around which consumption choices would take place, and as a discursive practice, largely informed by medical opinion and lay discourses. Health demands would rarely be negotiated with, whereby health would not take a backseat to any other factor within consumption. For the school based participants, health discourses were prominent in lesson observations and discussions, and although the pupils recognised a moral responsibility to look after their bodies, this was considered to be a personal concern. The company interviews found that the health of consumers was something that the companies take very seriously, and although consumers were thought of as responsible for their own decisions (see Chapter 8 for more on this), the companies did take responsibility for informing customers on health issues.

In Section 7.2, the data were used to further analyse the relationship between morals and money. Affordability was recognised as a major constraint on consumption, especially for the ethnographic participants, for whom decisions would also depend upon the use-value of a product, in terms of whether or not items were deemed as affordable. Affordability was negotiated and expressed in a number of ways, such as through an understanding of 'needs' and 'wants', planning and preparation, and tensions with ethical consumerism. For the companies, money and morals were recognised as a source of negotiation, for both consumers and the companies themselves, in terms of profits versus ethics. However, the matter of choice meant that consumers were able to make these decisions in the first place, and offering a choice, in terms of both 'ethical' products and lower priced ranges, to cater for a variety of consumers, was regarded as the responsibility of business (see Chapter 8). From the school-based research, it seemed that although the pupils recognised the role of money in decision making, this was not something they could relate to, largely due to a lack of experience with money.

Section 7.3 addressed the issues of waste and resource management as a way to express personal ethics in consumption. For the ethnographic participants, understandings of waste were often related to the misuse and wastage of consumer items, rather than waste as a form of disposal. Avoiding waste was also considered as ethical, as a form of caring for the environment by managing resources in a sustainable manner. Waste, or rather careful resource management, was also discussed in relation to frugality, and thus discourses of waste became entangled with money, ethics and the environment. In the school-based research, recycling was singled out as a form of waste reduction and environmental protection, and thus good or ethical. For the companies, discussions of waste tended to relate to discourses of sustainability and conservation, which could be expressed through resources management and waste-less consumption, and thus the responsibility of consumers. The following Chapter, in Section 8.3, explores these ideas and expressions of responsibility in further detail.

Lastly, Section 7.4 discussed the ways in which consumption might be used as an avenue to express ethics and moral values. Items may be bought as a sign of support for an issue, or to support production practices, as well as being for the good of the self. Consumers might also avoid or boycott certain products or brands as a sign of unhappiness with a particular company or their practices, or because of health concerns. Many of these demonstrations of ethics related back to issues discussed in Chapter 6 regarding care and concern, as the underlying motivation in these consumption choices. The next chapter will address the intricacies of these consumption choices, and the ways in which decision-making is navigated with responsibility, by looking at issues of trust, the self and the collective, and enacting responsibility through consumption.

Chapter 8: Responsibility through Consumption

As discussed in Chapter 4, within ethical consumption discourses there remains uneasiness with the concept and attribution of 'responsibility', whether that of consumers, companies, the government, or NGO's etc. In much of the literature regarding ethical consumption, the consumer is placed at the centre of discussions, as the bearer of knowledge and moral motivation for change. As Clarke *et al* (2007) note, much of the focus on ethical consumption research looks at 'the problem of how to motivate consumers to change *individual* or household consumption behaviour'. Consumers are encouraged to change their behaviour, using ascertained information, by exercising responsibility in their consumption choices (see Barnett *et al* 2005, Clarke *et al* 2007, Harrison *et al* 1996). Although discourses of ethical consumption point to the responsibility of all social actors to be responsible, by 'doing more with less' (Hobson 2003, 95), there is still a strong focus on the role of individual personal practices and choices. Within the ethical consumption literature, it has been noted that consumers require information before they can change their behaviour. Knowledge is considered to be a prerequisite to responsible action (Barnett *et al* 2005) in that consumers are expected and required to act, and to educate themselves. However, it is also acknowledged that there is a responsibility upon other social actors to provide the appropriate information (Eden 1998).

What remains unanswered is how discourses of ethical consumption vary between different social actors and members of society, how responsibility is attributed and distributed, and the ways in which consumers might become responsible for their consumption decisions and the impacts of these choices. However, as the previous chapter illustrated, there are external barriers to so-called ethical consumerism, and limited understandings of ethics in consumption, which segregate the practices of ethical consumption into a different set of consumption activities. This then isolates those who can afford to practice them from those for whom access is limited (Harrison *et al* 1996, Seyfang 2004, Smith 2000). This chapter aims to explore these themes further, looking at the ways in which consumers might express responsibility in their consumption choices and assessing how responsible they feel for the impacts of their consumption. As such, this chapter is made up of three thematic sections, 8.1: Transparency and Trust, 8.2: Self and Collective and 8.3: Enacting Responsibility, followed by 8.4: Chapter Conclusion.

8.1: Transparency and Trust

In the previous chapters, trust and knowledge have emerged as important issues, particularly when thinking about consumer choices and the decision-making process. This section will directly address the relationship between transparency and trust. This involves exploring the relationship between production and consumption, since the term transparency is often associated with production practice and supply chains, and trust with consumer choices (see Nicholls and Opal 2005). This section will explore how trust and transparency relate to one another, and how important they are in enabling consumers to enact their responsibilities.

For the companies that took part in the research, the term 'transparency' was frequently used within the interviews, as a regular part of corporate vocabulary. Within these discussions, the word 'transparent' was used as an adjective, whereby some participants described the business they worked for as 'a transparent company' (Company C, 9). At the same time, 'transparency' was used alongside, but also as a synonym for, terms such as traceability, visibility, openness, honesty etc. The transparency of the supply chain, and the visibility of the production process to consumers, was signalled as being one of the main ways in which a company may be described as ethical (Carmichael 2001, Laczniak and Murphy 2006, Smith 2005). It was argued that companies should be fully aware of the workings of their own supply chains, and that 'you must look at your supply chains, you must have ethical audits' (Company C, 3). It was also argued that companies should inform consumers on how their purchases are produced,

> People like to know [...] the heritage of things that you're selling, and if you can actually show the origin of stuff, and say to people, this is [X] who does the farmers' market, she lives next door to [the X] pub, if you say things like that, people know where it is and you can prove to people, [that] this is it, and people come in and see that you're doing this.
>
> (Company F, 3)

In this sense, part of achieving transparency within supply chains is about showing consumers not only where items were made and their heritage (see Chapter 6), but also by whom they were made. Within this extract, the local nature of the supply chain makes the production process seem more familiar and easier to trace, implying an element of scale to trust. It might also be defined as a way of making the global more local, or rather putting consumers in touch with the local features of their globally-produced goods. For larger companies, there was a pressure to achieve 'spotless supply chain[s]' (Company G, 6), and to be 'as visible as we can' (Company A, 5). Having said this, the

motives behind making the supply chain visible were not always obvious: whether it was for the benefit of the company, or to appease the consumer.

Imparting knowledge to the consumer was also thought to be an important part of achieving transparency of the supply chain. In the case of Company I, during the day-long observation at the store, the owner spoke about the supply chain of a particular brand of cheese, how 'it can be made from 500 cows, not from one site or local, or terroir' (p.5), and was equally open with customers about where the cheese they were buying came from. Similarly, the participant from Company A spoke about how 'people trust us to do the work [...] people will buy things from us because they know that we have done' (p.6), and later elaborated on the relationship between trust and transparency,

> I think if we didn't have that visibility, if it was just about price, if we were a Tesco and Asda type situation where it was all about 7p cans of beans, there's lots more cheaper people out there, people don't come to us to buy cheap tins of beans, because we're not the cheapest, but what they are absolutely assured of is that they have line of sight to the producer, we've actually, we've ticked every box from field to fork, what a rubbish term, but you know what I mean?

Here, the participant also talks about sight, with an emphasis on being able to 'see' and visualise the workings of the supply chain. By having this visibility, it is possible to trace how products are made, and to trust that companies are producing items in an ethical manner. Trust was therefore directly associated with the visibility and traceability of supply chains. However, this presents an uncomplicated assumption that, by making production procedures known and easy to trace, a company, and its subsequent supply chains, can be trusted. Similarly, the relationship between trust and transparency is an interesting one. To trust a company would imply that prior knowledge is not required, however trust is here defined as being dependent upon the knowledge available and so impacting on consumer decisions.

Alongside open relationships with consumers, honest and reciprocal relations were also sought with suppliers, as the linchpins of the supply chain. Some participants even spoke about the two in the same breath; that ethical business is 'about being open with your customers [and] being open with your suppliers about what the relationship is' (Company E, 4), or 'dealing fairly and honestly with our suppliers and our customers' (Company G, 5). The use of the term 'open' within both of these

extracts is interesting, and indeed the fact that customers and suppliers are discussed in the same forum indicates that these participants acknowledge a responsibility to, and a relationship with, both. The idea of an 'open relationship' with suppliers, as part of creating a transparent business, was a constant theme in the company interviews;

> Talking about transparency, openness with our suppliers, and we do have a very open relationship with them, our suppliers work to joint business objectives, and we have joint business plans with them, we invite them to supplier conferences twice a year, and we try and share as much information with them, and there is this constant dialogue. It's not just us as a [company] placing demands on the producer.
>
> (Company H, 8)

For this participant, an open and transparent relationship with suppliers was defined as sharing information with them and having a 'constant dialogue', perhaps also a consistent relationship. By having this constant flow of communication and by inviting them to businesses events, suppliers are kept in the loop, which would seem to be part of these trusting relations. In the extract above, the participant also seems to stress a move towards equality in these relations, that it is not just the company 'placing demands' on producers, but rather about working together and 'sharing' information. However, there also emerge two different definitions of trust, one that relies on the 'opening up' of supply chains, and another on honesty. Although on the face of it, the two might appear very similar, honesty implies a relationship of 'knowing' with the consumer or supplier. Honesty in this sense is more about truthfulness and integrity, where openness is about transparency and visibility.

When thinking about transparency in practice, there were certain formalised procedures that were conducive to creating transparent production practices, particularly audits, standardising procedures and quality control (Clarke *et al* 2007, Dolan 2005, Seyfang 2004). Continuing this idea of transparency for trusting relations, the participant from Company J explained that 'audits are conducted in a spirit of co-operation with management, supervisors and factory floor employees' (p.4), thus encompassing a range of actors. These audits were argued to be for the benefit of all members of the supply chain, not just to create transparency for consumers, but for the well-being of the producers as well,

> You must have ethical audits of [the company], well first tier suppliers anyway, and make sure there is not child labour, make sure there is good health and safety conditions, that everyone

is being paid properly, there aren't excessive hours, all those sort of issues are again part of protecting human rights.

(Company C, 3)

These formalised procedures for creating transparent production processes were mainly practiced by the larger, nation-wide companies, although this is not to say that these audits were depersonalised. In fact, during the interview with Company A, the participant described how one of his colleagues 'went out to South America recently to audit a couple of our suppliers and he said the poverty literally made him weep on a number of occasions' (p.6). By having these audits in place, the supply chains of the company could be monitored, enabling companies to 'set targets and performance measures' (Company L, 1), with a mind to improve them. One participant also spoke about the role of quality control procedures in providing transparency, 'with stringent quality control you can buy in complete confidence' (Company J, 2). Therefore, by carrying out these standard practices, the companies felt that they were working towards transparent production procedures, in the hope of gaining the trust and confidence of their consumer audience.

Some participants also argued that, just as having open supply chains and honest relations can breed trust amongst different actors in the production process, so too does a lack of secrecy and honesty about mistakes. Secrecy and concealment were considered unethical by some participants, albeit part and parcel of business; 'there's so much in the food industry that's hidden secrets, well they're not hidden secrets at all, people know about them but they choose not to tell the consumer' (Company A, 4). Being quiet about mistakes and wrongdoings was therefore considered unethical practice since it contradicts honest relations. Admitting to mistakes was a way to win the trust of the consumer and would portray a company as being truthful and scrupulous,

If [the company] finds out something's going wrong, it will just say so, even if it's something it's done wrong itself, you know, just be transparent, say so, you know put your hand up and try and do better next time. And that does create trust.

(Company C, 6)

Admitting to mistakes and 'putting your hands up' therefore signals to consumers that a company is willing to accept responsibility for any mistakes that it makes. This sentiment was echoed by the owner of Company K (p.6), who also found that owning up to mistakes was a form of positive marketing. He explained that 'on a couple of occasions [we] had shoes with bits of leather on them

and had to do recalls', but described the response as 'positive' after some customers emailed saying 'thanks for letting us know and being upfront'. Therefore, trust could be achieved in a number of ways, not only by making positive and ethical aspects of the supply chain visible, but also by coming clean about any errors made in the process.

Communicating this transparency was central to developing positive relationships with suppliers and consumers and therefore 'open and honest' communication with consumers was also important (Company D, 8). One of the main ways of doing this was through labels 'on the packet' (Company H, 4), which were heralded by some as being the most useful method by which to communicate information to consumers. Labels can provide information on 'nutritional content' or ingredients (H, 4), site of origin, site of production, the 'recycled content' of the product (C, 8), and might display a 'story on the back' (A, 10), although 'there are strict regulatory requirements about what companies need to include on labels' (Company M, 5). For Company C, when the business first started, there was a heavy reliance on labelling to communicate with consumers; 'hand written labels [...] were stuck on the bottles and people used to sit in the kitchen with a blender making stuff and then writing the labels and putting them on' (p.1). Labelling might also be used to display certification logos, 'you can see the Soil Association logo on our product labels' (M, 2), and a plethora of these are in use today, whereby 'everything has got its own mark and stamp' (Company L, 7). These certification schemes are often sources of trust, that a company has employed certain practices in production, and therefore the logo serves to convey this to the consumer (Dombos 2008, Pratt 2008).

However, some participants were cynical about the use of labels. It was argued that 'as a consumer, it can be quite overwhelming' to read the labelling on products (Company L, 7), since 'there is a lot of information on labels in general, and it's not easy to truly understand all of the details unless one knows a lot about labels' (Company M, 5). The volume of information displayed might therefore impact upon the use value of the label as a communication method,

> Labels are so crowded [...] you've got against animal testing, you've got the recycling symbols, if we've got community trade ingredients in, but because we label in French and English, under European labelling regulations, the labels get very crowded and I'm not totally too sure how many people read labels.
>
> (Company C, 7)

Here, the participant confirms the idea of labels being crowded, but also suggests that this detracts consumers from reading what the labels say. During the interview with Company A, the participant also interrogated the use value of labels as a marketing tool, explaining how the company had changed the font used on their products, because the one they were using was 'invisible to [consumers] on a shelf' (p.10), meaning the information would not be absorbed. Along a similar vein, it was also suggested that logos for certification schemes were difficult for consumers to understand and digest, as 'probably the vast majority of people maybe wouldn't know the real details about what the certification actually meant, or necessarily want to know' (Company L, 8). Taking this into account, rather than communicating information to the consumer, in a bid to increase the transparency of a production chain and subsequently make a company more trustworthy, labels might in fact hinder this task, especially if they are difficult to read, understand and digest.

Ensuring that consumers were fully and correctly informed was also a feature of discussions regarding transparency, and in particular the act of over-claiming was frowned upon. Some companies singled out print media as a source for transparency, particularly with the use of photographic material, for example,

> Quality can be shown through good photography e.g. clean and representative of the product, also close up detail shots.
>
> (Company J, 2)

> [We] offer very straight forward explanations of what the products [do], no over claiming, no use of glamorous models, no advertising, just very straight, this is what it is, this is why it's good, lets sell it like it is.
>
> (Company C, 2)

In both of these extracts, advertising is signalled as being a potential source for false claims about a product, and therefore misinforming the consumer. By portraying products as accurately as possible, photography might act as a form of visibility for the consumer, enabling them to trust that a company has provided an honest representation of the product. At the same time, some of the companies recognised that they were not entirely honest with their customer base, and that marketing could be used to both promote and shield information from the consumer. In some cases, it would seem to be harmless, for example Company A, 'in our price list, I don't think we actually make reference to the fact that we're a vegetarian company' (p.4), and Company D, 'we don't

publicise that its ethical lending' (p.3). In these cases, it seemed that the companies were weary of being pigeon holed if they made particular claims through their marketing. Yet, for other companies, the absence of information on print material or labels was rather telling of their marketing intentions, such as Company M; 'there is no reference on the product packaging that [X] owns [the company], so some people are not aware that we're owned by [X]' (p.5). In this example, it might have been detrimental for Company M to advertise who their investors are, which suggests that transparency is not always a positive marketing tool for some companies, especially if it exposes them to critique. Consumer trust might therefore be achieved with honest, open and transparent marketing techniques.

Attracting loyal customers also involved creating trusting relations with consumers, particularly through branding. Loyalty, as an adjective, regularly emerged in the company-based interviews, to describe a type of customer who revisited the brand/store on a regular basis. For example, during the interview with Company C, the participant explained that 'we do have those customers] that are very loyal to [the brand], and you know they do take the trouble to find out what's going on' (p. 6). Here, loyalty is associated with a passion for the brand and the ethics of the company. Loyal customers were defined by another participant as those 'who come back year after year, and tell their friends' (K, 3), presumably therefore attracting more customers to the store. Some companies reward customers for their loyalty, through formalised systems such as 'loyalty cards' (H, 4) which, in turn, could be used as avenue to communicate with customers. In the case of Company C, not only was a 'customer loyalty card' available, but the company was in the process of changing the system, upon the advice of customers, so that 'rather than just [being] a discount card', it would also be 'a bit more individual to me' (p.8). Another participant also indicated that regular customers would have their loyalty to the brand or store repaid to them through preferential treatment,

> We'll try our very, very best not to have to repossess a customers' property [...] we'll work with that customer to try and help them, we'll refer them free of charge to a debt counselling service, we will work with them to try and come up with a payment plan [...] because we're a mutual we're about helping our customers to the best of our abilities, and if that means fighting really hard to make sure that the customer stays in their home, then that's what we'll do.
>
> (Company D, 9)

Here, therefore, the ethics of the company, as a 'mutual', shape the ways in which they treat customers, particularly in terms of the dedication the company shows in helping customers. In these examples, customers were perceived as loyal if they revisited to the store or company, or made multiple purchases or transactions, and they were then rewarded for this loyalty upon returning. Company or brand loyalty is therefore synonymous with credibility and constant custom (see Erdem and Swait 2004, Goss 2004), and loyalty was considered to be a sign of trust.

For the ethnographic participants, their trust of certain brands and products was borne out of a sense of transparency, such as knowing what to expect, or having read the labels before. Contrary to his claims of 'having no pattern' of shopping, David Johnson actually later described himself as a 'creature of habit'. Indeed over a three week period he collected multiple receipts from four main stores; nine from Tesco, three from Asda, seven from Costco and two from Staples, indicating the discrepancy between narrative (see Chapter 6) and practice (see Chapter 7). As David explained, 'I go to the same place if I can and I get to know all the staff and they get to know me, and then they can tell me what deals are on' (E3 M4, 7). Similarly, although Emma Robinson did not regard herself to be 'brand loyal' (E1 M1, 3), she was observed making purchasing decisions based on the brand of particular items, such as buying Kerrygold butter out of preference and familiarity, or 'always get[ting] 'Ribena 100% fruit' from Home and Bargain's, as it's £2 everywhere else' (E3 M3, 2). Emma's familiarity with certain shops and certain brands was a feature of one particular observation,

> As we were walking around, Emma was just placing things in the trolley, almost automatically. I asked if she was memorising what she was getting, because she hadn't brought a list, and she said that she almost always comes here for the same thing, so she follows the same pattern [...] She also said that she doesn't need to read labels anymore because she's got a feeling for what's ok and what's not, and since she buys the same things all the time, it's easy to remember.
>
> (Robinson E2 M4, 3)

Here, Emma's familiarity with the store enabled her to develop a particular routine of shopping, in terms of the route that she takes around the store and the goods that she purchases. In this sense, her brand loyalty may be less to do with a specific preference for the goods sold, but rather for the convenience and ease of the activity, such as her familiarity with the store layout, encouraging her to follow a set 'pattern', and the produce available, with which she is so familiar she need not read

the labels. Cath Brown suggested that there was a 'psychological' element to her husband Paul's choice of Heinz beans or Birdseye fish fingers, in that he wouldn't be able to tell the difference unless he saw the packaging for himself (E1 M2, 7). For the Johnson family, however, their 'kids could tell when they weren't [eating] Heinz beans' (E1 M1, 3). These knowledges, either driven by taste or visual indicators, encourage consumers to trust in particular products or brands because of what they know about them. Trust and loyalty therefore form a mutually dependent relationship.

As already discussed, local production was also associated with transparency, and participants indicated that local products were more trustworthy. This was often because the supply chains were more visible, therefore the consumer is able to trust the origins of the produce. For the Robinson family, because of their preference for locally produced foods (and Tom's dietary requirement for fresh vegetables), they exhibited a loyalty toward their local shopping community. During Episode 1 (before they moved house), they would shop at a local Greengrocers 'every Thursday morning', because the food was delivered on a Wednesday night, so 'is freshest for sale' (E1 M1, 2), as well as being 'cheaper than the supermarket' (E1 Int.1, 8). They would always follow this visit with a stop at the fishmongers, as 'a fishmonger parks his van in a nearby car-park every Thursday' (E1 M2, 4). By continuing with this routine, Tom's diet was being catered for (see Chapter 7), as well as their preference for shopping at local stores, as opposed to supermarkets. There were, however, discrepancies of opinion on what information children should told, particularly in terms of the food that they consume. The Robinson family, for instance, made sure to inform their children about the foods they eat: 'we tell them what's in it, and then they decide' (E3 M5, 4). However, the Grey family had a markedly different attitude, and in fact used to tell their daughter that burgers were 'protein [and] that it didn't come from animals, so we said that to her for years, and we got away with that for years' (E2 Int.1, 3). Say something here about morality. Similar to the previous discussion, therefore, transparency was not always recognised as a positive asset during consumption, and might act as a deterrent rather than an incentive.

As highlighted by the corporate interviews, labels are one of the main ways in which consumers gather information about the goods they consume, and therefore visibility of the production process. Indeed, Emma Robinson would 'check labels out of habit' (E1 M1, 3), and David Johnson even announced, 'I love reading labels to see where things are coming from' (E2 Int.1, 15). For some, reading the label was just a means to an end, such as Joanne Smith, for whom the only reason to

address a label was to consult the ingredient and nutritional profile of an item. This was mainly for dieting purposes, since 'we've got no allergies so we don't really need to look at things, and the only reason I look at it is [for] what saturated fat is in it' (E1 Int.1, 12). Other participants also indicated that labels could provide transparency on health issues, such as aiding decisions based on 'daily fat intake' (Green E1 Int.2, 10). For the Robinson family, checking labels was the main way for them to become informed about the things they consume. The main motivation for which was for health reasons, 'to check the ingredients' (E1 Int.2, 3), particularly if 'something is new' (E1 Int.1, 8). With a reliance on labels, the Robinson family were the most attuned of all the ethnographic participants about marketing through labelling, and spoke about the use of pictures on product labels. Tom argued that visual imagery 'doesn't tell him anything about how the product is made, the conditions under which it is made, and the way that the people who made it are treated' (E2 M3, 2). This suggests that, whilst labels might be an important source of information about ingredients and the origin of a product, there is very little information to indicate how the product has been produced, and thus whether it has been produced in an ethical manner.

The use value of labels was also questioned by the ethnographic participants (as within some of the corporate interviews) where some expressed scepticism in trusting what labels said, which works against achieving transparency. Cath Brown, for example, 'avoids buying foods entitled 'good for you' because she felt that they were rarely good for you' (E1 M1, 3). This relates back to the previous discussion of over-claiming, in that labelling for marketing can actually be detrimental if false claims are made. Having provided consumers with the information they require, it was also suggested that a label would become redundant after its initial use,

> You know what you are going for most of the time, you know, you've got a rough idea, you might look at something once and go I'm not eating that, that's full of this or full of that, and then you would completely rule that out for future trips as well, so every time you go you don't go 'oh let's check out the calorie content of a tin of Heinz baked beans', because you know roughly what it is and it will influence your decision
>
> (Joseph Green E1 Int.2, 10)

Within this extract, Joseph makes a clear link between the use of labels and habitual decision-making. Emma Robinson also expressed a similar opinion, that 'she doesn't need to read labels anymore because she's got a feeling for what's OK [for Tom's health] and what's not, and since she buys the same things all the time, it's easy to remember' (E2 M4, 3). In this sense, with repeated use,

the label almost becomes invisible, and even though a consumer might see or purchase an item, this is not to say that the label will be read and digested. This has obvious implications when ingredients change, or when alterations are made to other pieces of information displayed on the label.

Certification schemes and logos were also noted as a way for consumers to invest trust into particular products, and the most oft mentioned were the Fairtrade label and organic certification. For some participants, the visibility of the Fairtrade logo was a sign that 'it's OK, because you know that the people who made it got a decent wage' (Robinson E2 M3, 2). Similarly, during a shopping observation, Nicola Green said 'she would prefer to have a label on [the bananas], just for peace of mind, because she trusts the Fairtrade logo' (E1 M2, 3). For both these participants, the logo is effective in informing them of the supply chain of the product, therefore offering transparency and encouraging trust. In this way, the opening up of supply chains is becoming a branded form of trust, in that companies market 'ethical' products on the basis that they have open and honest production practices. Similar discourses of trust and transparency were also expressed regarding organic items. For example, upon choosing between different brands of porridge oats during a shopping observation, David Johnson decided upon an organic variety, not because he expected them to taste different, but that 'paying more for organic is different' (E1 M2, 5). Therefore in buying organic goods, rather than paying for quality, David would be paying for something else, such as trust in the way the product has been made (Barnett *et al* 2005).

Another case in hand is Emma and Tom Robinson, who spoke about how 'they prefer not to buy Asda's organic goods because they are well travelled and they think some of the goodness must come out of them during the journey' (E1 M1, 2). On other occasions, they also debated whether or not different countries 'will have their organic own standards' (E3 M1, 4). There were also insinuations that these certification standards might result in a void of information for consumers, as the corporate interviewees also suggested, since consumers do not always know what the logos stand for and what they mean. Paulo Silva was particularly critical of certification schemes,

> Fairtrade [is] a problematic term because it's a matter of opinion what is and is not Fairtrade, and in my country people in the vicinity know how food is produced because it is produced by people that they know, and by methods that everyone knows about, and so there is no need to label things fair and unfair trade.
>
> (Silva E1 M1, 2)

Here, Paulo argues that a Fairtrade label should not be necessary for transparency, but that transparency can be sought through other sources, such as with increased propinquity. In this respect, rather than there being a linear relationship between transparency, knowledge and trust, these factors are in fact entangled in a complex relationship, whereby knowledge does not always translate to transparency, and transparency does not always necessitate trust.

Within the schools research, the relationship between transparency and trust was again discussed. Branded products were mentioned as a source of consumer trust, and confidence in the brand was thought to be the result of knowledge and familiarity of a product, thus developed over time, rather than being absolute. These points were raised in a focus group discussion, when discussing preference for particular brands/stores,

> **Sarah**: how about brand names, do any of you like to buy certain brands?
>
> **Liam**: I do buy brands, but if I could get something the same for cheaper I wouldn't be as bothered
>
> **Owen**: yeah
>
> **Hannah**: well if it was like, you know it I was like looking at chocolate or something and I saw Dairy milk, but then I saw Tesco value for like 30p and Dairy milk for like £1 or the same amount, I'd probably go for the Dairy milk, just because it's a better known brand and sometimes Tesco value can be like a bit dodgy and like
>
> **Abigail**: really Tesco-ish
>
> **Hannah**: and like the cheaper brand, you're not really that sure about it, where as Dairy milk is like popular and stuff
>
> (School A FG 2, 11)

In this extract, the participants come to an agreement about the value of the 'brand', in this case a confectionary company, compared to a preference for another brand, from a supermarket chain. Their discussion echoes sentiments of loyalty to the brand, often associated with familiarity, trust and tradition. Similarly, a lack of trust can have an impact upon consumption choices, as Owen describes below.

Owen: [...] I don't normally buy anything that's like 'value', but my mum bought me this fresh orange juice the other day and it was Tesco value, and I said I didn't want to try it in case it was a bit like sweeter or had bits in, because it was like 50p or something, and I had it, and it tasted dead nice and I thought it would taste horrible and it would be all dodgy but it was like the nicest orange juice ever, and I keep getting it now. I don't buy anything else value, just that, it was gorgeous.

(School A FG 2, 12)

Owen demonstrates a lack of trust in the 'value' brand, based on a lack of knowledge or experience, but also a dislike for the brand itself. This was founded on an assumption of how it might taste ('horrible') and that it would be 'dodgy', therefore untrustworthy, what with being a cheaper brand. Here, however, Owen recognises that these assumptions are unsubstantiated, and trusting his mum's choice, he tried the product and subsequently changed his mind. This, and the previous example, illustrate how knowledge and trust work together to create brand loyalties.

Taking further the concept of trust in consumption, 'knowing where things come from' was considered essential by the participants, in order to be able to trust in the quality of a product and any claims made about the item and its origins, i.e. 'where they grow the food and what they do to it' (School B FG1, 5). Interestingly, school education was indicated as having a role to play in this, and Geography lessons were picked out as having informed pupils about, for example, how 'they make clothes' (School A FG1, 5), or 'where chickens came from [sic]' (School A FG2, 8). In this latter example, pupils in the class 'watched a big video [...] and there was someone under cover in a chicken factory and there was all like dirt and stuff'. This idea of 'uncovering' a dark, dirty secret indicates that consumers feel that they are kept in the dark about production practices, and that by making these parts of the supply chain visible, we can invest more trust in the products that we consume (Howard and Willmott 2001). The pupils also described another Geography lesson, in which they were told 'to check the bottom of their shoes to see where they were from' (School A FG2, 9), as part of an exercise to inform the students about where their clothes were produced. Labels, and labelling, were often used in this way, to inform the pupils about the origins of their consumer goods. They were aware that they could look 'on the back' of their hi-fi (School A FG2, 9) to know where it came from, or look for a certification label to check 'that the people who grew the product get paid equal' (School B FG1, 9). However, knowing where something is made is not the same as knowing how it is made.

Visibility plays an important role in these discussions. For some participants, when making consumption decisions, the way a product 'looks' (School A FG1, 7, School B FG1, 6) was regarded as central to their decision-making, and would speak to the consumer about the quality of the item. At the same time, visibility and trust were also deemed as important, in terms of being able to see how a product had been made, particularly when informing ethical choices,

> **Beth**: it won't have an effect because you haven't seen it
>
> **Hannah**: yeah
>
> **Owen**: [...] like if you're looking at something then you think about it unless you've actually seen it like on a programme or something you don't really think about it at all, you'd still buy it
>
> (School A FG 2, 9)

Thinking further about the theme of visibility, Beth's comment is rather telling, and implies a direct relationship between visibility and effect, and a linear process of seeing, knowing, and caring. Yet, as Owen points out, to know how a product is made, even if you do not agree with the production process, will not always detract you from purchasing the item. Lewis articulated a similar point;

> Sometimes you forget about these things, like you don't really think about them, you just eat the stuff, but sometimes, you might be sitting down, and you might just think about, like where it's come from, and how the people might have to work hard to get you the food and things like that, but mostly you tend to just forget.
>
> (School A FG 1, 6)

To know where our food, clothes, electrical items etc. are made, and to be aware of the conditions under which they are produced, is not necessarily a prerequisite to making ethical decisions. As the extracts above illustrate, we can forget the information we learn, choose to ignore it, or even rebel against it. Therefore our choices can be informed, even if they do not enact the knowledge we have received. However trusting in the products we consume, made possible by visibility of, and transparency in, the supply chain is the first step in enabling consumers to acquire the necessary information in order to be able to make informed decisions.

Within this section, the issues of trust and transparency have emerged as a having an important role within consumer choices. Central to the relationship between transparency and trust is knowledge; that by having information on the ways in which items are produced, we might be able to invest

trust in these items. This therefore influences consumer decision-making and the ability to express responsibility and ethics through consumption choices. The next section will address the role of the self and the collective, and the influence of these two viewpoints on our ability to perform our responsibilities.

8.2: Self and Collective

This section will look at how the role of the self and the collective can impact upon consumer responsibilities. Ideas about the self and the other were explored in Chapter 7, and are associated with ethical consumption debates for having an impact on ethics in consumption. Often regarded as opposing and incompatible concerns, Badhwar (1993) suggests that altruism and self-interest are, to some extent, a false dichotomy (see Chapter 2). In particularly, this sections looks at how the notion of the self and the collective might influence consumer choices, in terms of the products we buy, but also how responsible we feel to others, if at all, and how we express this.

The moral responsibilities towards the self and the collective were thought to have an impact upon consumption choices, according to the school-based participants. Language is an important tool in this part of the analysis, and the use of dichotomous terminology, such as 'us' and 'them', and 'me' and 'everyone', served as markers in the dialogue for when ideas about the self and collective were raised. The concept of difference is important within these discussions, as a way of exploring how young people position themselves in relation to others, and therefore whether the self or the collective become the main motivator in consumption decision-making. The pupils in the focus groups were particularly attuned to concept of difference, and during one discussion, the students spoke about how lessons such as Geography 'tell you a bit about how different people have different jobs and live [...] different lives', and how they are 'different to us' (School A FG1, 4, 5). In another focus group, Owen talked about the role of his lessons in teaching him about difference, and 'how you shouldn't be racist about people and it's just their beliefs and all that' (School A FG2, 6). These extracts also imply sensitivity to the need to accept and embrace different cultures and beliefs, as a prerequisite to collective care, and pupils were also encouraged to care for unknown others, despite these differences.

For the students who took part in the research, consumption decisions made for the benefit of the self were understood as selfish and egocentric. Selfishness, as a concept, cropped up a lot in discussions of the self and others. This concept was often associated with a greater concern for, or prioritising of, oneself in decision-making, rather than a complete disregard for others. During a focus group discussion, some participants attempted to explain this through the example of organic goods and climate change reduction,

Hannah: yeah I think buying organic goods will affect the environment but like nowhere near as like, well it is important, but it's not

Beth: it is for yourself though isn't it

Hannah: it's like a personal lifestyle decision isn't it

Sarah: OK, and do you think it has worldwide benefits?

Hannah: yeah it does, but like it's whether you want to buy it or not

(School A FG 2, 19)

Here the participants make a strong distinction between making decisions for the benefit of the environment, and making decisions 'for yourself', as well as pointing out that benevolent concerns are not always enacted, even if they are recognised. Therefore selfishness, rather than being about forgetting or not considering others, instead implies a lack of consideration within consumer behaviour. At the same time, we might question whether there is ever such a thing as a purely altruistic action, and whether it is possible to make decisions that always place others first, or to make choices that are to the detriment of the self. A similar point was raised in another focus group discussion, that 'not everyone's always going to want to buy organic goods' (School A FG1, 14), even if they are interested in preventing climate change. Interpreting this line of thinking, it would seem that by making decisions based on wants and personal preferences, consumers might satisfy their personal demands, but these decisions would be for the benefit of only the self and one's personal happiness.

With this in mind, consumption choices based purely on preference and therefore ignoring the working conditions endured or production practices used in the making of the product were considered unethical, and, as mentioned previously, selfish;

Hannah: it's going to sound really selfish but I don't mean it in a bad way; if you go into Primark and see a really nice top but then someone tells you 'oh it's made in China', like a really bad place, you'll think about it but it probably won't influence you like not to get the top

(School A FG2, 9)

Here, Hannah defines the purchasing of items made in an unethical manner as 'selfish' (or unconsidered), and insinuates that the preference for a 'nice' product would usually be the governing factor in her consumption decision-making, even if it were the wrong decision. Her use of the word 'bad' is particularly revealing, and on the first occasion she uses it as a synonym for 'negative', the second time for 'unethical' (see Chapter 6 for limits to language). Her characterisation of China as a 'bad place' is also open to interpretation, whereby she identifies the place as 'bad', as opposed to the production practices. This might be explained by the fact that sweatshops and third world factories are associated with these particular practices, and China is often at the forefront of consumer imaginaries regarding mass consumption. Indeed, only a few moments before the above extract, another participant had spoken about how consumer items are 'normally' labelled with 'made in China' (p.9). In addition, at the time of the focus group, a television programme had recently aired exposing the unethical production chains of Primark, and could have influenced the participants' understandings of sweatshop labour. Interestingly, Primark is considered to be the antithesis of ethical consumption, yet it does not necessarily disguise the unethical nature of its supply chains (also see the previous section). This would also suggest that all products have an ethical dimension of some form or another, whether right or wrong.

Participants also discussed notions of the self and collective in relation to the impacts of their consumption choices. For one participant, it was regarded as important to try to prevent climate change because of the 'effects [on] our children and stuff' (School B FG1, 11), in that self-centred motivations might extend beyond the self, into future generations (Smith 2000). Others spoke about 'the world we are living in' as a collective resource, and therefore a collective responsibility to take care of it (School B FG1, 10). In short, consumption decisions should bear in mind both other people and the impacts that consumption might have on others. However, enacting this responsibility was not always possible,

> You might be able to say [Climate Change is] our fault, and it is, but if we'd done it we should be able to change it, but people just can't be bothered, and go 'oh no someone else will do it', and then another person will say that and it just ends up [as] the whole world says it.
>
> (School A FG2, 13)

Here, Owen indicates two forms of responsibility; taking responsibility for Climate change ('fault'), and behaving in a responsible manner (in what you 'do'), as Section 8.3 explores. Within these extracts, the themes of responsibility, self and action are drawn together, and individuals are cited with having the ability to 'change' their behaviour and their choices, presumably. However there appears a tension between individual behaviours and worldwide changes. Later in the same interview, Abigail also spoke about how 'some people are just lazy' (p.22), when it comes to helping the environment, echoing Owens idea that people cannot be 'bothered'. There is also an issue here regarding consensus, in that for change to occur, it requires effort beyond the individual, but rather the effort of individuals all working towards the same goal.

The pupils from the focus groups indicated that wider social and humanitarian responsibilities, or altruistic tendencies, were central to the notion of the collective, and discussions sometimes touched on the ideals of fairness and justice. One participant explained how she felt that 'foreign countries tak[ing] advantage of people from poorer countries' was 'really not fair' (School A FG2, 13), and another participant also expressed that 'people in Asia [...] get treated so horribly and they're so poor as well, it just doesn't make any sense' (School A FG2, 12). These discussions of international trade and the exploitation of workers are layered with understandings of morality and social justice, and participants expressed sympathy for people involved in unethical labour, for example 'making people poor is worse than making us happy' (School A FG2, 12). In relation to this, solidarity amongst humankind was also considered important, and although touched on very little, participants tended to discuss humanitarian issues with a lot more zeal and passion than ecological/environmental issues. As one participant explained, '[stopping] sweatshop [labour] is more important than buying organic goods' (School A FG1, 14).

Individual-based consumption choices were also regarded as being more susceptible to change, or rather easier to manipulate than collective decision-making, as indicated in Chapter 7. Within the focus groups, participants thought that the ease of changing consumption choices depended upon whether the change was required by the individual or a collective. Recycling, buying locally, buying

organic and fair trade goods were all regarded as 'easy' changes or choices, because they required individual effort or only involved purchasing the particular item. As one participant explained, in reference to fair trade products, 'it's not up to anyone else, it's your decision' (School A FG2, 20). In all of these cases, the term 'easy' is used to explain the straightforward and simple access to particular goods and the action of buying, which is essentially problematic. However, the participants were aware of these complications, and understood that consumption decisions were constrained by individual circumstances beyond preference, such as affordability (as discussed in Chapter 7) and access, which potentially make these changes difficult to achieve.

Physical access was especially important, and location was often considered a constraint to access, for example, 'it depends where you live, both of them [recycling and buying locally], it's really dependent on where you live' (School A FG2, 23). More specifically, proximity to shops and resources was instrumental, whereby 'if you live in the country, you have to ride all the way down to the village' (School A FG2, 22), not to mention the production capacity of the area i.e. 'do most areas make everything you need?' (School A FG1, 16). On the other hand, wide access to household-based recycling facilities meant that responsibilities to recycle and manage waste in an efficient manner were considered easy to achieve,

Toby: recycling isn't very hard, everyone [does it]

Abigail: it's already done

Owen: yeah, everyone's got a green box now, so basically just stick them in and they get collected

(School A FG 2, 21)

This extract also indicates that ease in terms of access is also related to the amount of personal input. Individual responsibility for recycling only extends as far as putting items into the dustbin, and responsibility for disposing of the waste created is offloaded onto someone else (local governments, namely). Other participants spoke about other forms of access, best described as ideological barriers to access, such as time constraints; 'my Dad goes out at six o clock in the morning and comes home at seven o clock at night. He doesn't have time to worry about the environment' (School A FG2, 13). Here, the issue is less about access to resources, or even intent, but a lack of available time in which to 'worry' or indeed think about the environment. The rhetoric here is aligned with the politics of individualisation, that people have worries of their own to shoulder which are more immediate than

taking care of the environment (Stern 2005, Tullock and Lupton 2002, Wilk 2001). Therefore, individual changes to consumption choices were regarded as easy and possible, once the factors of affordability and accessibility were addressed.

On the other hand, stopping animal cruelty, sweatshop labour, child labour, Climate change and rights for women workers, were thought to require collective, multiple (i.e. changing more than one behaviour/habit), large-scale changes, which thus made them more difficult to orchestrate. Indeed, within two Geography lessons observations, students were informed that 'the major environmental issues in the world today' (School B Obs.1, 2) included the emission of 'pollution, air pollution, carbon dioxide', adding to the 'greenhouse effect [which is] causing the Earth's temperature to rise' (School B Obs.2, 3). The difference between individual and collective responsible action were explained by Lewis,

> I don't know, is this right, but if you buy from your local [area], you could just do a campaign to get people to like buy more organic food, but you can't just send a leaflet all around the world saying 'stop animal cruelty', to every home, everywhere. But in your local area you could easily go round posting letters through the door about organic food, and at least some people would take it into, like, their heads, and buy organic food.
>
> (School A FG1, 18-19)

Therefore, local and organic consumption are considered easier than changing animal cruelty. This was because of the scale of this type of consumption, based on propinquity to, and the tangibility of, the necessary resources. At the same time, changing a worldwide problem is beyond the scope or ability of the individual and their campaigning capacity. There is also some confusion in this extract between local and organic goods, where Lewis alternates between the two within his answer, an indication of the disjointed and indeed complex discourses of ethical consumption (see Hall 2009c).

In addition, collective changes were thought only to be possible with collective agreement amongst individuals, thus marking the point at which the self and the collective affect one another. Making changes relative to the 'whole world' was considered the 'hardest' thing to do (School A FG2, 21), as opposed to the ease of individual-based changes, since people do not always agree on everything, so therefore collective action may be difficult. Preoccupation with the self, or selfish behaviour was

considered as a barrier to achieving collective responsible action, as the two extracts below illustrate, both of which refer to the difficulties of preventing animal cruelty.

> **Ryan:** I think animal cruelty would be quite low [on the list], because it would be quite hard to achieve, because everyone wants to eat chicken
>
> (School A FG1, 18)

> **Chloe:** not everyone is against [animal cruelty]
>
> **Ekta:** some people would prefer to have fur coats
>
> (School B FG1, 13)

Individual preferences, or rather preferences that are shared amongst consumers, as well as a lack of uniformity or agreement, are hereby cited as barriers to collective change, posing the self and the collective as dichotomous entities. Therefore, whilst individual changes might be regarded as easier to carry out because they take place at the scale of the self, collectives are in fact made up of individuals, and achieving wide-scale change, amongst multiple individuals is more problematic due to difference in preferences, choices and morals.

For the companies that took part in the research, collective decision-making lies parallel with ethical business practice, and responsibilities to staff and producers, along with local communities and members (discussed later), were a main point of discussion. Supporting and helping the workforce, such as through financial investment and training schemes, was considered as 'the right thing to do', particularly if it made for 'a more efficient business' (H, 3). In another interview, the participant described how one product was 'made by a community trade supplier' and 'so it's made in the right way' (C, 5). The use of the term 'right' indicates an association between collective responsibility and moral correctness. Interviewees also spoke about how they surpassed their responsibilities to their workforce,

> It has been necessary to go beyond a simple customer supplier relationship and to accept the responsibility of improving the working conditions of our supplier workforce in partnership with our suppliers, to improve conditions and quality of working life.
>
> (Company J, 4)

Responsibilities towards the workforce are described as being 'accepted', since the business is taking on a role for which it is not usually liable. The participant also recognises a shared responsibility with suppliers for workers and their working conditions. Interestingly, however, the participant refers specifically to the 'working life' of staff members, thus making a distinction between responsibilities for their home and work life. In an interview with Company G, a similar point was raised regarding the boundaries of responsibility, posing the question, 'do [our customers] think we have a responsibility [...] or is it somebody else's remit?' (p.7). It is therefore recognised that businesses should be responsible for their workforce, but as to how far this concern extends is a topic of disagreement.

Collective ideals were integral to the companies organised as cooperatives, unsurprising since the cooperative model is founded on a concept of collectivism (Lang and Gabriel 2005), which similar to utilitarianism (see Chapter 2). There was a sense within the interviews that the collective nature of the cooperative was, for some employees and consumers, part of a moral decision on where to work or how to consume, and as described by one participant 'cooperative working is the right way to go' (A, 8). Cooperatives are also built on democratic principles, ensuring that all members get a say in what the cooperative does, and that all operations are for the benefit of the majority, as the example below illustrates,

> We don't have seven figures to spend on a marketing budget, we just don't have it. The co-op wouldn't let us spend it, they'd rather have another truck than to take a page out in the Observer Food Magazine every month.
>
> (Company A, 10)

The use of language in the above quote, such as 'us' and 'they' is evidence of this collective identity. This extract also explains the decision-making process when deciding how to spend the communal fund, which is determined by the majority. Similarly, in other cooperatives, payment for membership ensures members 'a say on a local level' (E, 4). For Company D, the building society structure, i.e. consisting of 'members', was conducive to this democratic environment, in that decisions made are for 'the greater good for the rest of the members' (p.9), which is itself a rewording of the definition of utilitarianism. Although discussing the cooperative in a strictly economic sense, these quotations illustrate how members of a cooperative have a responsibility to other members, and that decisions should be made with them in mind. At the same time it should be noted that such co-operatives are

rather easy to become involved in, because they are already organised, making participation somewhat uncomplicated.

Working as a cooperative therefore means ensuring that you 'do the right thing' with investors' money, and indeed 'every cooperative is guided by these same values and principles' (E, 3). The whole concept of the cooperative also travelled further than the cooperative members, but instead was a philosophy that carried beyond profit-making:

> We're not responsible to shareholders, we're responsible to our members. We have a responsibility to our local community in terms of how we fit within the local community and the things we do to support them. We have a responsibility to our employees, and our past employees, and also definitely with our suppliers, so we make sure that, you know, we're not just trying to do business that will put them out of business.
>
> (Company E, 4)

The main rhetoric in this example is multiple responsibilities, such as to the different people to whom responsibility extends, and the avenues through which responsibility can be enacted. Responsibility is described as an overarching concept, but also as something that can be practiced, whether by supporting local communities, or protecting their suppliers. However, at no point within this extract does the participant mention the responsibilities of the consumer. Instead, the company would seem to be responsible to members in order to be a responsible business, as the next section will explore in further detail.

Collective action in the form of supporting the local community and local businesses was also a feature of company interviews. This was most relevant for the smaller, local-based companies, for whom creating a local community was just as important as maintaining it. These companies often saw themselves as the centre of their local communities and actively participated within them, for example,

> We have a bulletin board, you know, for leaflets and stuff, and there's leaflets on the wall telling you what's going on in the village, and I think it's important to have that sort of community thing.
>
> (Company F, 3)

Here, community is associated with people knowing what is happening in their local area, and the shop becomes involved in this by acting as hub for information. This participant also spoke specifically about supporting local businesses, and argued that 'you have to work together' (F, 10). He would also refer people to the local butchers, and said that having local amenities in close range, or 'having the two together', is 'one way of bringing people in' (F, 4). The company also took a more active role in supporting local businesses by 'selling stuff from a local supplier' (p.9), such as locally brewed beers, locally baked bread, cheeseboards made by a local carpenter, local home-made chutneys, and locally produced cheeses. Company I also spoke about creating community through supporting local businesses, such as 'buy[ing] their bread from the local baker to make their sandwiches', and in turn, 'the local hotel buys its cheese from him' (I, 3, 5). The owner of the company set up a Twitter account (a social networking blog) for 'local shopkeepers to stay in touch with each other' (I, 5), enabling local business owners to communicate with one another. From this, they set up further strategies for supporting one another's businesses, for example the owner of Company I had set up a deal with a local cafe, whereby if customers buy a sandwich from the deli, they can buy a hot drink from the cafe for one pound. By working together in this way, the local businesses were not only working collectively and constructing community, but actively promoting one another's business. Although the owner described it as being 'entirely commercial' (p.5), there was evidently a community being formed that attended to concerns about altruism and collectivism, at the same time as creating a profit.

Some of the larger, national-scale companies also highlighted the role of local communities, and collective responsibilities within these communities. For Company L, having a positive impact on the local communities in which they 'operate' was part of their corporate social responsibility. As the participant explained, 'it's about reducing your impact on the environment, it's about contributing to communities in a positive way' (p.2). The interview with Company D echoed these sentiments, 'we really want to make a difference in the communities in which our members live and work' (D, 8). Different ways of having a positive impact on these local communities included 'making positive contributions' (L, 5), as well as 'building a profile in the local communities [and] getting branches to support local community activities' (L, 9), or by supporting 'smaller local charities' (D, 8). Responsibilities towards the local community were therefore expressed through active and positive engagement in local events and issues. As well as using the term 'community', the participant from Company D also talked about 'locality' (p.9) or the 'areas in which we are operating' (p.12). The cooperative companies, as mentioned previously, also discussed their role within their local

communities. For Company A, it was regarded as 'important that we have direct links into the community, [such as] with social enterprises' (p.14), and Company E spoke about the need to become more 'community based' (p.14). Important within these examples of local community responsibilities is a sense of scale, at which these networks of care operate and to which responsibilities extend (Barnett *et al* 2004, Cutchin 2002, Proctor 1998). In particular, the propinquity and closeness of the companies to their communities rendered these responsibilities as an inevitable and unavoidable, and with decreased distance comes increased responsibility (see Popke 2003, Silk 2000).

There were other times when the relationship between the self and collective seemed fuzzy, in terms of where one finished and the other began. For Company D, the purpose of the building society was 'to maximise the benefits of membership', which might be associated with communality and collectivism, by being a member of a large organisation. Yet at the same time, the individual becomes the main beneficiary in this scenario, by reaping the financial benefits of membership. Similarly, in an interview with Company C, the participant spoke about how individual behaviours, such as 'us[ing] refillable bottles', contributed towards wider collective objectives; 'the environment is on everyone's agenda' (p.5). The example of the cooperative also brings this issue to light, because even though decisions are made in favour of the collective, individuals benefit from the shared outputs of the cooperative because they 'own it' (A, 8). Therefore, the concepts of the self and the collective might not be as dichotomous as posed in the beginning of this section, but instead work to mutually construct one another, whereby the self is part of a collective, and the collective is constructed of multiple individuals.

For the ethnographic participants, understandings of the self and the collective were apparent both in our discussions and in their decision-making practices. Participants were aware of a distinction between their responsibility to themselves and their family, and their responsibilities to 'others' (see Chapters 2 and 4). Examples include responsibilities to animals, 'I am conscious of antibiotics in meat, that's something that troubles me quite a lot' (Green E1 Int.1, 5), to other people, such as foreign workers, 'we've become a bit more aware of [...] the basic wage that people get' (Robinson E1 Int.1, 13), or the environment,

> Joanne mentioned how their carbon footprint is reduced because they don't go on holidays abroad, although she did point out that the idea of the carbon footprint isn't something that

> they use very often. They give the girls a choice, telling them 'you can't have this, this and this if you want a foreign holiday', but luckily they like going away in this country.
>
> (Smith E1 M1, 5)

Within this diary extract, the preferences of the self are positioned as the priority during decision-making, whilst having positive, albeit unintentional benefits to the environment. As also discussed in the school-based research, responsibilities of the self and towards others were perceived as dependent upon affordability and accessibility (Howard and Willmott 2001). As Kim Silva explained, 'we buy Fairtrade or organic or local [goods] when we can afford it, and just generally when we can afford or can take the time to do' (E1 M1, 2). However, it is important to go beyond these narratives of self and collective, to understand how they are translated into practice, and how they impact upon consumption choices.

For the Grey family, notions of the self and the collective were most apparent when the family were discussing faith-related consumption practices, as one way to express their faith. As part of their membership to the church, they were required to pay a tithe of 10% of their income, creating a pool of money which 'stays in England' and was 'there to be used' for all church members (E2 Int.1, 12, 7). This collective pot of money is available for things such as entertainment and events for members, maintenance and occupation of the religious building, and supporting members with a low income. In this sense, even being a member of the church was a form of collective action. As Cath explained,

> The way we look at it is that you don't only pay your tithing because you're going to get something out of it, because there's a lot of things that we may not necessarily do, and other people don't do, but pay the tithing.
>
> (Grey E2 Int.1, 11)

However, because of the communal nature of this resource, they had strong feelings about fairness and in particular that this shared pool of money should not be abused by church members. Paul also spoke about how they were happy to support 'genuine' cases, in terms of the church supporting unemployed members, but were suspicious of those that join when (are rather, because) they are unemployed. Whilst recognising the benefits of the tithing system, they were drawn towards more individualistic behavioural choices, and said that 'we'd have to sell the house before we had to start thinking about somebody else paying our mortgage for us [...] but that's just our standards' (E.1

Int.2, 13). To act as part of a collective is therefore more complex than making choices based on the self or the group, but is also about ensuring that the good of the collective is not damaged by the choices of the individual. However, the collective to which this is referring to is, in many ways, an extension of the self.

The Grey family also spoke often about the fellowship of the church, and for Cath and Paul, one way of participating in this fellowship was by opening their door to other members of the church, such as inviting people around to dinner. Once a week, and every week throughout their participation in the research, the family invited two missionaries for a meal. They explained that they 'should feed them' because 'they've given up a big piece of their lives' (E2 Int.1, 8). Although they described themselves as generous, there was also an element of 'feel[ing] obliged' (E2 Int.1, 7), perhaps even a pressure to perform in front of other church members. At times, the need to appear charitable was a source of contempt, whereby they also invited other church members for dinner because they thought that they should. On one occasion when they invited a family over for Sunday dinner, 'the[ir] plates [were] full, and we gave them afters and like they really went overboard, we put spray cream on the table, and they went really overboard with the spray cream, and we were like "oh there's no need for that"' (E2 Int.1, 7). To Cath and Paul, this behaviour was seen as a defiance of social etiquette, and their over-eating was interpreted as being as a lack of gratefulness, and an abuse of their generosity. These experiences did not deter them from continuing with these practices, whereby they cooked a meal for me during most of our meeting at their home, and at one point also bought, prepared and cooked a meal for a wedding reception. However, these examples do bring about questions regarding altruistic behaviour (as discussed earlier in this section). Although the Grey family positioned their behaviour as being for the benefit of others, their sense of obligation and their performance of fellowship obscure their motivations.

Using the Robinson family as another example, their consumption decisions were often influenced by Tom's health, as explained in Chapter 7, and therefore were largely self-motivated. Tom would often take control of the food shopping for the family, 'which meant that he could buy whatever he wants' (E1 M2, 1). At the same time, however, the camaraderie of the rest of the family, in helping and encouraging Tom was a sign of collective action, albeit limited to the scale of the family. The family would 'all eat the same thing' (E1 Int. 1, 4), and Emma would avoid buying certain items altogether, at times even resorting to hiding foods he is unable to eat from him, 'just so that he

doesn't see them [...] so it means that me and the kids get something that we want' (E1 Int.2, 2). The preferences of the rest of the family are therefore sacrificed for the health requirements of Tom, arguably as an act of solidarity. As a result of these circumstances, Emma and Tom were also more attuned to their responsibilities towards their children, in terms of the diet they provide. Although, as Emma commented, 'if he's [Tom] not there I'd probably sack off a lot' (E1 Int.2, 5), her and Tom were committed to providing a healthy diet for themselves and their children because, as Tom put it,

> I was on organic [...] to cut out toxins, I had a lot of toxins in my body, so I didn't want to put any more in, and I looked into it, and I don't want to put them into my kids either.
>
> (Robinson E1 Int.1, 5)

As a consequence of their consumption practices, Emma and Tom became more informed about, and started to support, organic and local food networks. However, as argued in Chapter 7, they recognised that the motivating factor in these decisions was health, and 'not mainly the environment factor'. They described their decisions as being 'more selfish' (E1 Int.1, 12), because they were for the benefit of themselves and their children. Altruistic motivations that place the self as the centre of decision-making, whilst being individualistic in nature, can therefore impact upon the collective, at different scales- from the family, to the environment in general.

The Johnson family provide an interesting example when thinking about the role of the self and the collective in ethical consumption practices. In 2007, the family made the decision to invest their savings into a 30-acre forest,

> They explained that they had had the idea of buying a forest for a long time, but it was only when David suggested it properly, and Ann agreed that it was a good idea, that they set about looking. David said that Ann did not usually agree with how he wanted to spend the money, and when she agreed to this, he knew that it must be a good idea. It was a while before they found the forest, though they had been looking for a long time. They saw two before they found this one, neither of which came to fruition. However, they found this one, when they saw a small sign which just said 'land for sale'. They followed it up, and ended up buying around 30 acres, at £2,500 per acre, which involved taking out a 7-year mortgage.
>
> (Johnson E3 M2, 2)

At our very first meeting, they mentioned that one of the reasons for this purchase was that it acted as 'a contribution to their carbon offsetting' (E1 M1, 5), and David elaborated on this in a later interview,

> I think we're all more aware of what's happening with the environment [...] over the years if you look at the number of air miles I've done, I've flown all over the world and look at carbon emissions and things like that, it's nice to be able to do something and preserve it, for time and prosperity. So we bought a large plot of land.
>
> (Johnson E2 Int.1, 19)

This extract describes the purchasing and consumption of the forest as a response to their carbon consumption. At the same time, it is described as a voluntary contribution, with an indication that buying the forest was done out of 'niceness'. By making this purchase, they have ensured that it will be 'protected' and 'nurtured', although they recognise that 'buying the forest will not have any difference at all on global warming' (E2 Int.1, 21). It was, however, described as a 'sound investment', that would not 'depreciate in value (E2 Int.1, 21) and would be available for their 'children's children' (E2 Int.1, 19). The forest was considered to be a shared resource, and thus arguably collective. However, David and Ann encouraged their family member to describe it as 'ours' (E3 M2, 4), and only family and close friends were invited to use the forest. Despite being both a family and environmental investment, the decision to buy the forest would seem to have been predominantly motivated by self-centred intentions.

Within this section, the issues of self and collective have been explored in accordance with consumption choices. Although initially posed as dichotomous categories of decision-making, the role of the self and the collective have been shown to be difficult to separate, and often both are present in consumption choices. Therefore to understand how consumers might make responsible decisions also requires an understanding how the self influences the collective, and rather than seeing decisions made for the self as unethical, it would be more productive to consider how individual decisions can be shaped for the benefit of the collective. The next section goes on to further explore issues of responsibility both for the impacts of consumption and the role of consumers.

8.3: Enacting Responsibility

The previous sections in this chapter have addressed the ways in which consumers might become responsible for their actions, through the avenues of trust (8.1) and an awareness of others (8.2). This section aims to build upon these discussions, to look at how responsibility might be attributed, or rather, who is deemed to be responsible for consumption and the impacts of consumer choices. The debates mostly centre on individuals (or consumers) and companies (or producers). Within this section, issues surrounding consumer knowledge, choice, and agency arise, whereby attributing responsibility either wholly to consumers for the choices they make, or to companies for the choices they provide, does not make for an agreeable conclusion.

In terms of taking responsibility for the impacts of consumption, some of the companies saw themselves as being instrumental in tackling 'global social problem[s]' (A, 5), and that 'businesses now understand what their obligations are' (C, 5). Company C and Company M, for instance, were both involved in the roundtable for sustainable palm oil, 'to try and get the industry to a better place' (C, 3). By taking an active role in these issues, these businesses appeared to be accepting responsibility for environmental damage, or in this case, for the depletion of palm oil resources. Also, by engaging in a solution, they considered themselves to be acting in a moral fashion. Some companies even went as far as working to change the law,

> [The company] helped change the law, so in Europe it is now illegal to test on animals.
>
> (Company C, 2)

> For every new piece of legislation that comes in, we have a look at the implications for our whole business, and have conversation such as 'well, if this is the legislation, how can we influence that legislation?'
>
> (Company L, 4)

There is a general sense here, for the companies that engage in this kind of pro-active behaviour, that they were working to change the law to benefit other than just themselves and their own business practice. For Company H, campaigning for social and environmental issues and working to bring about change was described as part of 'being a responsible retailer' (p.2), although this was not necessarily in their remit. Similarly, Company L spoke about how 'the boundaries of our responsibility go beyond just our own operations [...] it's also about how we go about sourcing the products that we sell in our stores' (p.2), although one might question how far these boundaries of

responsibility extend. By exerting an influence on legislation and policy, these companies were actively engaging in issues beyond their own operations, and therefore expressing and acknowledging responsibility.

The companies that took part in the research also spoke of a responsibility to inform consumers of how their consumption could impact upon the environment or other people, as already indicated in Chapter 1 (Section 1.3). However, and in relation to the discussion in this chapter, a clear distinction was made between 'educating' and 'informing'. Informing consumers, about business practices and processes, was considered a sign of a responsible company, and as discussed in Section 8.1, was necessary to achieve transparency in production and consumer trust. Participants spoke about 'impart[ing] knowledge to people', giving 'advice' (Company F, 5), 'passing information onto customers' (Company I, 11) and providing 'a bit of background information' (Company K, 3). However, educating consumers was thought of as being above and beyond the call of duty:

> We are not an education body and we don't seek to fill a role that government and education fills itself, however we are very much part of that process [...] there's only so many message that consumers will always pick up on and whilst we would always seek to educate them and provide that level of information, not everyone will want to pick up on it.
>
> (Company H, 7)

Therefore, in terms of educating consumers, companies did not consider themselves a responsible 'body'. Rather, they occupied a role somewhere in-between, such as 'bringing issues to the forefront' (Company G, 9), or 'hold[ing] a mirror up' (Company A, 7) to consumers. When companies did speak about educating consumers, they spoke about isolated incidents, in that 'it is really on an ad-hoc basis' (Company D, 11). In the above quote from Company H, the participant cites the government as responsible for providing education, or as Foucault describes it, 'to shape, guide or affect' behaviour (Gordon 1991). Yet, as discussed in Chapter 7, pupils are rarely taught about everyday consumer dilemmas at school. In short, companies were accepting of their responsibility to provide consumers with information, but not responsibility for educating their consumption choices (see Mackenzie and Rice 2001, Seyfang 2004).

The company representatives felt that consumers were ultimately responsible for their consumption choices and therefore the impact of these choices. Interviewees expressed that they wanted to

avoid preaching to consumers (Company C), but instead offer them products that allow them to exercise responsibility; 'to give them choice' (Company D, 10) and 'to let people know what the options are' (Company A, 14). To do this, companies should provide information, and accept responsibility for the supply chain of their products, but leave the final decision to the customer,

> With all the products that we offer, we offer customers a choice, and we would never take away choice, unless we thought there was a really convincing reason to do so, but it's at the end of the day saying, these are your choices and it's up to you if you want to buy a higher welfare chicken, or whether you want to buy standard.
>
> (Company H, 7)

Here, the participant indicates a limit to the responsibility of the company, which is thought to extend as far as production and the information that is communicated to consumers, but also a responsibility to provide choice to the consumer. By providing this choice, consumers are then left with the dilemma of which products they should purchase, thus leaving them with the ultimate responsibility. Yet, the companies did not regard themselves to be responsible for consumers, nor for the choices that they make.

In terms of what consumers can do, making conscientious consumption decisions was held as one of the main ways to enact responsibility, and that through such mediums consumers 'can be very powerful' (Company C, 10). For Company H, although the health of their customers was regarded as a 'priority', it was argued that consumers 'should take responsibility for their own health, and we're happy to provide you with all the information, all the labelling that we can, and we're going to make all our products as health as we can, but it's up to you as the consumer to make those responsible decisions' (p.7). A similar point was made during another interview, along with a clear distinction between responsibilities of consumers and companies,

> Individuals have a responsibility, we all have a responsibility. Whilst we can do things as a company, and as a responsible business that's absolutely what we should be doing, but actually we all as individuals have a role to play in this. So if we are going to tackle issues like climate change, or even packaging, waste and recycling, then there is a degree of onus on individuals taking responsibility for that and actually looking at their own behaviour and seeing what they can change to have a more positive impact.
>
> (Company L, 10)

The participant here clearly identifies the individual as having a specific responsibility (or 'onus') for a) their own behaviour, such as the items they choose to consume and b) the consequences of their consumption choices, such as climate change. There was a consensus that decisions were 'down to individuals' (Company E, 7), and that companies should 'let them make the choice' (Company A, 14). Within other interviews, it was also recognised that consumers might not always agree on the same issues, for example 'we have some customers [that] want all animal testing to be excluded, but we don't because a majority of customers don't think along those lines' (E, 10). Therefore, by offering consumers a choice, there is always the potential for consumers to exercise their personal ethics or preferences, and so make decisions that are best for themselves, which might not always benefit others.

When thinking about responsibility for the impacts of consumption choices, the ethnographic participants varied in where, and with whom, they placed this responsibility. Many recognised that some consumers, sometimes themselves, could take responsibility through their consumption choices, such as buying 'ethical' products, avoiding unethically produced items, for fear of 'promoting these practices' (Johnson E1 M1, 5), or through disposal practices, as discussed in the previous chapter (also see Carrigan *et al* 2004). Participants also acknowledged that, by changing their consumption practices, they could express responsibility for the impacts of their consumption, including subsequent global (social and environmental) problems. As Emma Robinson indicated,

> Emma spoke about the environmental damage that consumerism can cause, such as emissions in China because so many things are made there, so that we can have all the things that we have. She also commented that one reason why this country [UK] is so developed is because most of the stuff has been sent abroad and become someone else's problem.
>
> (Robinson E2 M3, 2)

The diary extract above illustrates how environmental and social problems, or rather addressing these problems, are considered to be the responsibility of the consumer, due to the high levels of demand for consumerables. She also insinuates that the state has shirked the responsibilities for these problems by relocating production. The Johnson family also spoke about how they were trying to 'adapt' their lifestyle and were 'just generally trying to be greener' (E2 Int.1, 15), and later said that 'in the past they wouldn't have even considered it' (E2 Int.1, 16). Along a similar theme, Joseph Green stated that 'there's an influence on you now to become more aware of doing your bit, which I don't think was there even two or three years [ago], I think things have changed rapidly in the last

couple of years' (Green E1 Int.2, 11). Here, Joseph does not state who has made him more aware, but it may well be that social marketing conducted by the government has informed these opinions, subtly influencing his behaviour. The extracts from these families indicate not only that there is a responsibility upon consumers, but that it is increasing, presumably with the increasing effects of consumption (such as Climate Change).

However, more often than not, participants expressed negativity and cynicism about how likely and able consumers are to be responsible. David Johnson (E1 M1, 5) told me that 'many people are too stuck in their own habits of food consumption, which are harmful to the environment', an indication that consumers are ultimately responsible. For those ethnographic participants that did accept that they were in some way accountable, they discussed how the issue was not a clear case and that it is difficult to express responsibility. One such example was Emma Robinson, who exclaimed 'I can only do my best, like I shop in charity shops, but then I might be putting people out of work by not shopping in other place' (E3 M5, 6). This quote echoes some of the themes discussed in the previous chapter, regarding the negotiation of morals in consumption. Joanne Smith (E1 M2, 1) also argued, rather forcefully too, that 'it's hypocritical for people to be so concerned about free range farming when so much cheap labour takes place when it comes to making clothes'. Here, responsibility is defined as an overarching concept, and not one that you can apply minimally. Similarly, in a later interview, Edward spoke about how consumers should in fact support sweatshop labour, for the benefits that it provides to workers,

Sarah: Does [unethical production] affect your decisions or is it at the back of your mind?

Jenny: no

Edward: it doesn't though, well I don't think about it in that way, but most of these countries, the people, I know they're described as sweatshops, for those people getting a wage, it's not forced labour, they chose to go and work there, and they keep going and it's quite often a better standard of living than they had when they'd got no work whatsoever, so there's that side of things, but as I say, it doesn't worry me in the least.

(Smith E1 Int.1, 19-20)

In the exchange above, Edward indicates that he feels resolved of any responsibility for sweatshop labourers, because it provides an income for people who, according to him, would otherwise be out of work. Other participants were also dubious of how far their responsibility reached, and suggested

that they would rather help people in their community 'than giving it [money] to an unknown charity' (Grey E2 M3, 11). This echoes the 'caring at a distance' debates, as discussed in Chapter 2. For some participants, the issue was less about accepting responsibility, and more about the avenues through which it could be performed. As Paulo Silva explained, 'people might think that they have done their 'bit' by just buying a Fairtrade item, without really having to do much thinking about the product otherwise' (E1 M1, 2). This insinuates that responsibility should be something we enact in all aspects of our everyday routines, and not just in our consumption choices.

Instead of responsibility being solely that of the consumer, the ethnographic participants pointed to companies as being responsible for their production practices, and for the choice of products that they offer to consumers (Hinchliffe 1996, Hobson 2003). During our discussions, participants often expressed distaste toward the availability of cheap, mass produced items, and associated this with the use of sweatshop labour and poor wages, where 'people are paid pittance' (Robinson E3 M5, 6). It was argued that changing these practices was the responsibility of the companies who support them, and that by doing this, consumers can make more ethical choices. As Joanne Smith explained, 'if they want to stop sweatshops and things like that, they're going to have to stop bringing in cheap clothes' (E1 Int.1, 20). Interestingly, within this quotation, Joanne talks about 'they', rather than 'I', indicating that the responsibility for addressing sweatshop labour lies with the companies that use this type of labour. Other participants also spoke about companies needing to take responsibility of their supply chains, such as Nicola Green, who felt that, 'making and selling things as cheaply as some shops do is unethical in itself' (E1 M1, 6). In a later interview, she elaborated on the responsibilities of specific businesses and sectors,

> It bothers me about people being paid a fair price for what they've done[...] the big supermarkets irritate me about the amount of money that they make, particularly out of coffee and that sort of thing. Even Starbucks annoy me actually when I think about it, because they have some fair trade and then the rest of it isn't at all is it?
>
> (Green E1 Int.1, 5)

Here, Nicola defines production practices as the responsibility of companies, ensuring that they are ethical, such as paying their producers a fair price for their work, or growers a fair price for their crop. At the same time, she indicates a responsibility within business in terms of the choices they provide to consumers. Therefore, whilst recognising the impact that consumers can have with the

choices that they make, the rhetoric was that if companies did not offer unethical products, then consumers could not buy them.

Contrary to the corporate interview data discussed previously, the ethnographic participants also considered it to be the responsibility of companies to limit consumer choice, rather than consumers being given the ultimate decision. It would seem that choice and responsibility thus become entangled together within consumption decision-making. Some participants were eager for their choices to be limited, if it ensured that the products they consume were ethically produced, for example 'changing it to where all bananas are Fairtrade, like Sainsbury's' (Smith E1 Int.1, 21), or by 'having no plastic bags' available (Johnson E2 M4, 18). Emma Robinson made a similar point, that the food she buys 'should all be Fairtrade', and ethical products should be positioned less as a luxury and more as a 'norm', in terms of both their cost and marketing, as the extract below illustrates,

> Supermarkets make fair trade things more expensive, and with things like clothes you just have to do what you can with what you know. Money doesn't have to come into it, the value added onto fair trade makes it into a luxury, but it should just be normally priced.
>
> (Robinson E3 M5, 6)

Therefore, to some participants, being offering a juxtaposed choice would seem to enhance the unethical nature of some products in comparison to their 'ethical' counterparts, and it was considered to be a company's responsibility to refine the choices they offer to consumers, therefore enabling them to make responsible decisions. Interestingly, participants spoke less positively of the government limiting choice, such as 'the law where we're not allowed to [eat] certain stuff [in schools]', and Jamie Oliver was mentioned numerous times throughout the research in relation to this issue (Grey E1 Int.1, 14). The influence of the government in encouraging consumers to be responsible was also questioned, for example Joseph Green referred to the government's attitude toward healthy eating and obesity as 'a drip-drip approach' (E1 Int.2, 9). This again indicates that social marketing, as a tool of governance, is influential in changing people's behaviour, with campaigns regarding smoking, alcohol, energy and tax etc. being used to educate citizens on a range of public health/social issues (see Holdsworth and Robinson 2008). Interestingly, the government were rarely cited, less so than in the school and company-based research, where the debate for responsibility mainly sat between consumers and companies. This might be the case because, in terms of the governance of consumption choices, consumers considered their decisions to be the

result of self-governance or 'askesis' (see Quastel 2008, 45), rather than governance at the level of the state, perhaps because of the personal and private nature of consumption.

Responsibility was again a complicated issue for the school-based participants, for whom there was no clear consensus on who was responsible for the impacts of consumption. During the focus group discussions, participants spoke about how they would 'like to learn more about sweatshops' (School A FG1, 25). Participants felt that they 'should' make an effort to 'look into' (School A FG2, 9) what they consume, such as 'what shops we buy from, how they get their clothes and whatever they sell' (School B FG1, 21). However, they sensed that it would take a lot for any change to take place, 'if the climate was like changing drastically, people might start to [change]' (Chloe, School B FG1, 15). Despite this, there was a direct association between consumers becoming informed and then acting out their responsibilities (Barnett *et al* 2005), for example Lewis explained that 'I'd like to learn a bit more, as I was talking about before, of how they kill animals, and maybe what you could do to stop it being as mean' (School A FG1, 25). Others, however, were less enthused about become responsible for their consumption,

> **Sarah:** do you learn anything about where your clothes are made, or does that not really worry you?
>
> **Hannah:** I don't really mind
>
> **Beth:** so long as it looks good, I don't really care
>
> **Hannah and Beth:** [laughing]

(School A FG 2, 27)

In this extract, the participants state a lack of interest in learning where their clothes are made, accentuated here by their laughter, and only place value in the aesthetics of their goods and in how they are used. For some, the lack of responsibility was perhaps due to a lack of understanding of the issues in hand (see Chapter 6), as well as how they might be responsible consumers; 'it's dead confusing though, knowing how to prevent climate change' (School A FG1, 13).

When discussing the responsibility of consumers, preventing climate change was one of the main points of discussion. In particular, consumption choices were indicated as one way to exert

responsibility. In the extract below, the participants discuss a number of positive behavioural changes,

Ekta: yeah, there are ways to achieve [preventing climate change], like

Chloe: like if you stop using as many sprays and

Ekta: if you stop using the car, use public transport

Chloe: start taking the bus

Ekta: use less cars

(School B FG 1, 14)

Alongside the extract above, other participants also spoke about how they could change their own behaviour and enact this responsibility, at the point of their consumption choices. Daniel, for example, discussed how his role as a consumer could help to prevent climate change, such as by 'buying things that don't have pesticides' (School B FG1, 8). Similarly, during Focus Group 2 at School A, participants recognised that climate change could be prevented with consumer behavioural changes, such as not 'using all the energy, like electric and gas' or 'leave lights on, and TV's on standby' (p.13). Campaigning was also recognised as one way to perform this responsibility,

Lewis: we've just done Climate Day [...] before that we learnt a bit about it, maybe not a lot but I think from having climate day its changed my opinions on it and it's made me more aware, of saving the planet while I still can

(School A FG 1, 26)

Here, Lewis indicates that he has a personal responsibility to 'save the planet', which has develop alongside a heightened awareness of climate change. Within these focus group discussions, the participants often discussed what 'could' and 'should' be done to prevent, for example, sweatshop labour, climate change, or animal cruelty. However, they often used the second-person or 'you' in these descriptions, instead of the first-person or 'me', and so rarely spoke about their own efforts.

However, enacting responsibility through consumption choices was not always so easy. In terms of affordability, the school-based participants recognised that 'it could be difficult' for everyone to purchase ethical products, based on the higher prices (School A FG2, 21). This was particularly the case for organic and fair trade items, where solutions such as 'you've got to lower the government's

prices' (School B FG1, 15), or 'make it cheaper, like [in] Tesco's' (School A FG2, 21) were suggested as a way of making these products more accessible. The students seemed to understand the concept of added value, suggesting that the government could lower the prices of organic goods, which would then make the items cheaper in supermarkets, 'because if they're getting it for less, they can sell it for less' (School B FG1, 14). There is an implication here that the government should prioritise ethical production over profit making, albeit with a mistaken assumption that the government benefit from the sale of consumer goods. However, the participants do indicate that they are aware of social marketing and the governance of the state, even if they do not term it as such, and conceptualise government as having the ability to make ethical consumption 'thinkable and practicable' (Gordon 1991, 3). Participants also discussed how information about climate change should be disseminated, that 'they', presumably the government, 'should put it on adverts and stuff like 'take the train' or something' (School A FG2, 13). In these examples, the government was considered to be an appropriate medium through which to conduct change, because 'you can't really change their decisions' (School A FG2, 23), and there was an assumption that the government is already doing something about the issue. One participant also touched on the notion of relative value, that fair trade and organic goods were more expensive in comparison, and that 'they [supermarkets] should just sell fair trade and organic and nobody would know the difference' (School A FG2, 21). Although money was recognised as a debilitating factor, participants felt that that if consumers were able to afford these so-called ethical products, then 'they should try and pay for it' (School A FG1, 17). These answers indicate a responsibility located outside of the individual, but within governments, institutions and organisations.

From the discussion within this section, there would appear to be a distinct lack of conclusion in terms of attributing responsibility for the impacts of consumption. From the company interviews, it emerged that whilst companies recognise a responsibility to their producers, and a responsibility to provide information and choice to consumers, their role stops there. In short, the ultimate decision, and therefore the consequences of these decisions, is thought to sit with the consumer. However, from the ethnographic research, a very different story emerged. The participants spoke about how they might enact responsibility, but held companies accountable for their production practices and the choices that they offer, in an assumption (perhaps correctly so) that unethical production leads to unethical consumption. The school-based participants again recognised that they could perform responsibilities through their consumption choices, and even campaigning, but felt that companies made the process more difficult by charging higher prices for ethical products. Therefore, the pupils

saw it as the responsibility of companies to make ethical products cheaper, but also for the government to take action and to provide information.

8.4: Chapter Conclusion

This chapter has explored the ways in which consumer can express and enact their responsibilities both within consumption and for the impacts of their consumption. The complex relationship between knowledge, ethics and responsibility have been illustrated within this chapter, whereby consumer decision-making would seem to be a useful example of how these factors work together, on an everyday basis.

Section 8.1 looked at the relationship between transparency and trust which, for the companies that took part, was a commonly discussed topic. The companies saw it as their responsibility to show consumer where and how their products were produced, and communicated this mainly through product labelling. However, these companies were insistent that they have a responsibility to inform, and not to educate, and to make clear and honest claims. For the ethnographic participants, trust in consumer goods was perceived to be borne out of transparency, knowledge and experience. Labels and certification schemes were cited as the main ways in which consumers might become informed about where products are made, although there was less information available on how they were produced. From the school-based research it was again found that there is a void in terms of consumers acquiring information on how products are made, and thus making it difficult for them to enact and accept responsibility.

Within Section 8.2, the categories of the self and the collective were explored in terms of the discourses of responsibility and ethical action. The school-based participants were attuned to the concept of difference (between the self and others), and cited their in-school learning as an influence on this. They spoke about 'selfishness', which applied to making consumption choices only for oneself, or choices that ignored the production and ethics of consumer products. They spoke about a collective responsibility towards the impact of climate change, and thought that individual changes were more susceptible to manipulation. Collective changes were thought to require collective agreement, on a large (national and international) scale, and therefore were difficult to orchestrate. For the companies, collective decision-making was synonymous with ethical business

practice, such as making decisions with staff and suppliers in mind. Collective ideals were integral to the ethos of the co-operative companies, although most companies spoke about supporting local communities and local businesses. There also emerged a fuzziness in the distinction between the self and the collective, since individuals often benefit from collective decisions, alongside the fact that the collective is constructed of multiple individuals. For the ethnographic participants, to act as part of a collective is far more complex than making choices based on the self or the group, but also about ensuring that the good of the collective is not damaged by the choices of the individual. The collective was also discussed as being an extension of the self. Questions were also raised regarding altruistic behaviour, where care for others is often motivated by a sense of obligation and a performance of fellowship. Collective action could also be limited to the scale of the family, such as helping and encouraging other members. However, whilst family and environmental concerns might be an indication of collective action, it seemed that these behaviours were primarily and predominantly motivated by self-centred intentions.

As illustrated in Section 8.3, companies saw themselves as going above and beyond the call of duty when they worked to change legislation, and considered this as a sign of a responsible business. Whilst admitting to have a responsibility for their production practices, along with a duty to inform consumers and provide them with choice, it was regarded as beyond their remit to educate consumers. This was thought of as being the role of government. Nor did the companies regard themselves as responsible for the decisions that consumers make, nor for the social and environmental impacts of their consumer choices, and instead saw consumers as ultimately responsible. The ethnographic participants spoke about how they could enact responsibility through their consumption choices, and saw this responsibility as something that was increasing. However, they were cynical about how able they were to be responsible, and how far this responsibility could extend. They regarded companies, as opposed to the government, as responsible for their production practice and for the choices that they offered to consumers, in that they should limit choice if it means that consumers can make responsible decisions more easily. For the school pupils, although there were tensions between enacting responsibility and personal preferences, consumption was considered as one of the main ways in which people could express their accountability. However, changing behaviour was seen as difficult, and responsibility for consumer choices was in fact located outside the individual and instead within governments and companies. Hence, there would appear to be a clear divide of opinion in who is considered responsible for the impacts of consumption: consumers feel that their ability to exert responsibility is limited, where as

companies, whilst accepting responsibility for their production practices, shun the notion of being an educator to consumers, and prefer to take the role of 'knowledge facilitator'. The following chapter will now go on to draw themes from this chapter and the two previous analysis chapters, to bring together some final conclusions and implications of the research.

Chapter 9: Conclusion

As explored in Chapters 6, 7 and 8, everyday consumption practices are far from being mundane and monotonous, as they have previously been assumed to be, but rather the intricacies of everyday consumer behaviour are brimming with complexity and meaning. As a commonplace behavioural practice, consumption choices have shown themselves to be a useful exemplar for understanding everyday ethical decision-making. Consumption provides a useful parameter for exploring the formation, articulation and negotiation of ethics and morals, as an activity in which most people engage, on a daily basis (see Chapters 2 and 3). The recent ethical consumer movement, as described in Chapter 4, also brings many of these issues to the fore, in terms of the different moral dilemmas that people experience in their consumption choices. However, current discourses limit the scope to recognise more than one way of being an 'ethical consumer'. Researching ethics in consumption involves the opening up of the relationship between product and practice, and between narrative and behaviour. As such, the previous analysis chapters were ordered in a progressive fashion, indicating a relationship between what people say, what they do, and the outcomes of their behaviour. The result is an abundance of rich, critical data, in part due to the multi-site research design, but also because of the all-encompassing nature of the topic, making for three very dense analytical chapters. This final chapter will reflect on the thick description of previous chapters, and will amalgamate these accounts by providing clear conclusions to the research questions, using the data discussed in each analysis chapter. As a reminder to the reader, as outlined earlier in Chapter 4 (p.60), the research questions that frame this thesis are:

1. How do family members develop morals and ethics in consumption practices and decisions?
2. What does the school environment teach young people about ethics and morals in consumption?
3. How do companies market their products as ethical, or market particular ethics?
4. How could each of the above questions be approached, using an appropriate research design?

The chapter is therefore structured as follows: 9.1: Finding Meaning in the Messiness, 9.2: Moral Development and Family Consumption Practices, 9.3: Ethics and Morals in the School Environment,

9.4: Marketing Ethics and Ethical Products, 9.5: Developing an Appropriate Research Design and 9.6: Implications and New Research Agendas.

9.1: Finding Meaning in the Messiness

As noted above, the analysis chapters within this thesis are noticeably dense, explained in part by the topic in hand, but also due to the nature of the data collection. Indeed, the density of the analysis and the volume of data is evidence of the centrality of consumption to our everyday lives. In some form or another, whether by eating, using or purchasing, either food, clothing or fuel, actively or passively, we consume on a daily basis. Consumption, as a behaviour, is enacted, or performed, and is entangled with ethical dilemmas and moral confusion. It encompasses a range of sites, spaces, people and places, many of which we are unaware of and go unnoticed. As discussed in Chapter 5, previous studies of consumption have explored the daily routines of consumers using ethnographic research methods, but many of them fall short of conveying the complexity of daily consumption practices. Daniel Miller's influential text and ethnography *A Theory of Shopping*, for instance, reflects on the shopping practices of families based in North London. Faced with large volumes of data, it is reasonable that in order to make ethnographic research understandable to the reader, and for the findings to seem more punchy, the analysis becomes divided thematically; in this case, into 'love', 'devotion' and 'sacrificial ritual', as discussed in Chapter 4. Whilst this has the benefit of making the analysis more digestible to the reader, what becomes lost is the very essence of consumption, that messiness that makes everyday consumption complex and confusing, and, of course, contextual.

It is for these reasons that the research findings have a certain messiness to them, because researching consumption is not an easy or a simple task. Previous studies of ethical consumption have tip-toed around ethnography, investing in ethnographic research methods, but most studies lack the longevity or depth that a more traditional ethnographic approach is argued to offer. Barnett *et al's* (2005) study of ethical consumption, for example, as part of the 'Cultures of Consumption' research project, investigated the role of knowledge within ethical consumption, with the use of focus group discussions. Indeed, a wealth of data was produced on what people think and know about ethical consumption, but there was a severe absence of 'doing' ethical consumption. This research also reinforced the current discourses of ethical consumption, by recognising and giving attention to certain practices and activities as 'ethical', rather than looking at the ways in which

ethics are negotiated alongside one another. This thesis has aimed to embrace this messiness, both theoretically and in the execution of the research design, to look at what people say about their ethics and consumption, and then how this translates into practice. The following sections aim to bring clarity to the issues discussed in Chapters 6, 7 and 8, and to provide an explanation of the methods used and described in Chapter 5.

9.2: Moral Development and Family Consumption Practices

As discussed in Chapter 2 and 4, there is a need to develop academic engagement between moral theory and ethics in an everyday context, and although philosophical approaches can be applied to everyday processes, there remains a lack of understanding as to how morals develop in practice, such as in consumption. However, researching this topic fully is particularly difficult, not only because of the time and effort required to track developments such as this, but also the level of detail and intimacy that is required to do research with families. Whilst the ethnographic research presented does not claim to explain how all family members, and even those families involved, develop morals in consumption, what it does provide is a very detailed account of how participants view their own morals, how they negotiate them and how they express them through consumption. The remainder of this section will address the first research question, 'How do family members develop morals and ethics in consumption practices and decisions?' using the data discussed in previous chapters.

Firstly, Chapter 6 used the narratives of participants to look at how morals are defined, as well as how, and from where, they are thought to form. Morals were often described at the individual level, and were strongly linked to identity (see Chapter 3), and therefore were described as having developed in similar ways to which we would expect identity to develop. Experience was signalled as one of the main ways in which family members develop morals in their consumption choices, through trial and error, moral balancing and tussling with decisions, in that morals might change with changing circumstances and influences. However, morals that were resistant and resilient to change were considered to be the sign of a strong moral character. Ethical decisions were found to be a routine part of everyday family life, and consumption is too an everyday routine. Often, these personal moral codes were influenced by wider institutions and organisations. In particular, tradition and faith were identified as a key source of moral understanding, and both could be expressed

through lifestyle choices, such as consumption. The family was also cited as a locale for tradition and sometimes faith (in terms of providing a moral code), in the sense that social norms are pervasive, and could be passed on through the family with repeated practices. Morals were regarded a symptom of a person's upbringing, but inflicted by past experiences of consumption, which could in turn influence the morals that consumers teach to their own children. Morals in consumption develop over time, and draw on a range of past experiences and influences from different family members. Developing morals within family consumption was also influenced by the context of the family itself, in terms of a (gendered) moral responsibility to care for family members. The participants also discussed a moral obligation to educate their children on the difference between right and wrong, which constituted part of being a 'good parent'. Ethics in personal consumption may therefore develop alongside these family narratives, whereby these experiences of consumption shape and help to form our consumer identities.

Chapter 7 then worked to build on these accounts, by looking at the ways in which morals were negotiated with one another, and how they were therefore expressed in practice. Morals emerged as not only being negotiable, but also as developing through negotiation practices. The example of health was particularly interesting, whereby health issues in consumption were nearly always positioned as a priority, an enforced condition that required family members to rethink and renegotiate their moral boundaries. Also, if only one family member had to consume in a particular manner for health reasons, whether because of a condition, dieting or just preference, then other family members would negotiate their consumption practices in accordance. Affordability, as expected, was discussed as the biggest constraint on consumption, as a situational factor that was difficult to alter, but to which consumption choices would adjust. As part of the negotiation between money and morals, certain measures emerged as a way to reconcile the two. For instance, family members would make decisions based on needs and wants, whereby a need would always be satisfied, often regardless of the monetary cost. This raised questions of value, and of how meeting the needs of family members is an ethical priority. Contingency measures were also utilised, such as planning ahead, storing and buying in bulk, as a coping strategy for everyday consumption demands. The moral obligation to provide for the family raised interesting issues about thriftiness as a form of care-giving (as well as making family members happy) and thus a way to express morals through consumption. Tensions between cost and ethical products are another example of these negotiations, as a clash of ethical principles. In terms of waste, it was shown that consumers develop their ethics through use and misuse. Resource management was just as much about conservation

and sustainability as it was about frugality, which emerged as a family value unto itself, as part of a complex relationship between wasting, money and ethics. Lastly, the recent ethical consumer movement was another source of negotiation. Consumers are constantly being informed about new or pressing social and environmental issues, which throw up new dilemmas, and as a result their ethics are regularly being negotiated to account for these new knowledges. Ethics can therefore be developed through consumption, such as by supporting a cause, or boycotting. Morals and knowledge emerged as having a complicated relationship, in that knowing more about consumer items was associated with being able to make ethical choices, therefore a direct association was presumed between knowing and doing. Ethical products might also be negotiated alongside one another, and at times they were compatible with other issues such as health (e.g. organic produce) or even monetary concerns (e.g. local products). Negotiations were therefore a regular aspect of consumption, whereby not only are ethics negotiated, but they are actually formed through the act of negotiation.

From the intricacies of decision-making processes, Chapter 8 then took a further step to look at the ways in which consumption practices might be used to express responsibility. Responsibility could be developed through relations of trust, according to the ethnographic data, whereby knowledge, transparency and visibility provided an interesting lens through which to understand responsible consumerism. Experience proved important in these discussions, and knowing what to expect of products, and whether they would deliver, was a major avenue to trust. Some participants actively informed themselves, such as by reading labels, yet at the same time were critical of labels and whether or not they could be trusted. Certification schemes were also mentioned, in that they could be trusted to oversee the production process (depending upon the particular certification). Developing trust in consumption was as much about people trusting the products that they consume as the companies that make them. In terms of self and collective identities, the families emerged as having responsibilities that mainly extended as far as themselves and their family. Their ability to exert responsibility for unknown others was largely seen as dependent upon affordability and access, which was often beyond the control of the participants. Ethics would seem to develop alongside these understandings of other people (as well as animals and the environment) and the potential to express care and concern. However, concern for others was often an extension of care for the self, or rather it was not a truly altruistic action. Therefore, despite the dichotomous categories of care, it emerged that the self and the collective were actually interwoven and difficult to segregate. Enacting these responsibilities, such as through consumption choices, was also

discussed. Consumption choices might be tailored to address social and environmental problems, dependent upon personal choices and ethical standpoints. However, exercising responsibility, and as such developing moralities, is made difficult by the wide range of product choices made available to consumers, which leaves difficult decision-making as their responsibility. In this sense, choice and responsibility are also entangled, in that responsibility and ethics impact upon decisions, but decisions are seen to indicate responsibility.

Family members therefore form their morals through repeated practices, both within their own consumption choices, as well as passing these morals onto younger generations, such as their children. These repeated practices of consumption often lead to the circumvention of certain traditional or social moral obligations, namely the caring role of the mother in the family. Yet, if this is the case, one might ask how anything ever changes. Indeed, family members, and their morals, are susceptible to change, particularly in situations where health or money is at risk. Family members also learn how to adapt their morals to particular situations, and to one another, although unchangeable morals were often regarded as more credible as a sign of a 'good' character. Similarly, negotiation and re-negotiation is one of the main ways in which family members form their morals in consumption, almost as a constant work-in-progress, and in need of regular maintenance. Morals are also formed through expression, and the participating family members would consciously, and thus actively, negotiate their ethics by informing themselves on consumption-related issues, which at times led to changes in their consumption choices. Yet, despite having the resources to make informed decisions, this is not to say that family members will always act upon this knowledge. Indeed, going back to the matter of negotiation, affordability and access are often determinants of whether or not certain morals can be exerted in consumption decision-making. At the same time, this is not to say that decisions are then devoid of moral reason or unethical in nature. On the contrary, ethics are often highly visible in the consumption practices of the family members, if we take into account the ordinarily ethical choices they make, such as providing adequately for their family. In this sense, experience and knowledge can be questioned as prerequisites to responsible action, for such actions may enact a different set of responsibilities, such as to the family.

9.3: Ethics and Morals in the School Environment

The previous analysis chapters have also explored the role of the school environment, in terms of lessons, teaching and peer groups, in educating young people about ethics and morals. In Chapter 2, the school was discussed as having a central role in moral education, albeit secondary to home-based moral education. However, rather than exploring consumption and ethics as something removed from home experiences, school lessons (using observation) and the experiences of young people (using focus groups) were investigated alongside the ethnographic data discussed above, and the company data discussed later. By creating these wider accounts of ethics in consumption, encompassing a range of consumers and sites of moral learning, the research aims to open up discourses of ethical consumption to further critique, using the lessons and the peer relations that make up the school environment. This section will now go on to provide more refined answers and conclusions to the second research question 'What does the school environment teach young people about ethics and morals [in consumption]?', using the data explored in the previous analysis chapters.

Using the narratives of participants, Chapter 6 explored their understandings of morality, such as definitions used, and the location and teaching of morals, from focus group discussions and lesson observations. Within these observations and discussions, there emerged a noticeable absence of moral learning as experienced at school, and indeed the influence of this moral learning was also questioned. The participants from the focus groups identified ethics as something that you learn and form from a young age, although they indicated that the school environment did display some moral aspects, such as moral undertones/messages in lessons. Within these lessons there was a heavy reliance on examples of ethical behaviour, as recognised in the lesson observations, rather than discussions of morality as a concept. Teachers were also noted as being responsible for communicating this moral education, although they were criticised for pressing their personal opinions onto their pupils. However, young people expected their home life to have a role in their moral education, and therefore the moral significance of lesson content might go unnoticed. The general school environment was also indicated as a source for moral education, more often than not faith-based, although religious teachings were regarded with suspicion by some participants. However, the home was cited as the source of moral leaning, in that prior knowledge of ethics and morals transcend in-school learning. Since these moral foundations were thought to be laid at home and from a young age, school education was not only regarded as a supplement but also a reminder

of what they already know, making this form of education uninteresting and repetitive to the participants. It was also discussed that the school environment might even be an inappropriate place in which to teach ethics and morals, given this lack of interest, but also the rigid and formal nature of the classroom. In this sense, the school environment illustrates to young people that the school is just one place in which people received a moral education, and that morals and ethics are mainly formed and taught at home, thus rendering school-based moral learning somewhat obsolete.

Looking at the ways in which these ethics are translated into behaviour, Chapter 7 explored the ways in which the school environment influenced the practice and negotiation of ethics in consumption choices. According to the focus group participants, consumers have a personal responsibility for their own health and the health of the environment. Discourses of health were particularly interesting and resonated with (binary) moral understandings of right and wrong, in that healthiness was synonymous with 'good' and un-healthiness was considered to be 'bad'. Similarly, money was also understood in a dichotomous manner, in that placing value or significance on money was considered to be a sign of greed, materiality and a generally negative quality, which might be reflective of the young people's lack of experience with money, especially financial difficulties. The negotiation between morals and money was an issue also integrated into the content of some of the observed lessons, with a distinct message that the two are not compatible. Indeed, money was also mentioned a key feature of ethical decision-making, but at the same time, like decision-making itself, was not considered to be the responsibility of young people, but more a concern for their parents. In terms of resource management and waste, the young people considered recycling and sustainable consumption as being good for the environment, as an expression of care, and thus regarded as the 'right thing to do'. The young people were also taught that they could enact their ethics in consumption through the purchasing of particular products, replicating discourses of ethical consumption and the use of certain 'devices' (Barnett *et al* 2005). The participants also expressed understandings of ethical and unethical production, which they again tended to separate into binary conditions of good and bad, right and wrong. Therefore, in terms of expressing morals in consumption, the school environment teaches young people that morals are negotiable and renegotiable, although the extent to which the complexities of these decisions are communicated to the pupils is questionable.

Chapter 8 then explored how ethics are translated into practice and the ways in which they can enable consumers to be responsible. For the school-based participants, trust was considered a necessity in their consumption choices, such as towards a brand or company. Trust requires time to develop, and in turn forms honest and open relations. Knowing where things come from was thought to enable trust, and keeping certain pieces of information secret was counterproductive and a sign of unethical production. The participants identified trust and visibility (of the supply chain) as a requirement for making ethical choices, although there was an assumed linear process of seeing, knowing and then caring. However, some participants indicated that knowing more about where their items came from was not always an instigator for responsible action, in the sense that unethical production does not always deter consumers from making purchases. From the focus groups and observations, it emerged that school education also teaches young people to care for 'others' and to be sensitive to different cultures and beliefs. They were also taught that selfishness is an unethical quality, and that making ethical decisions involves thinking beyond the needs of yourself, and enacting these ethics. It was again recognised that benevolent concerns towards others were good and well, but that they were not always acted upon or placed above personal demands. At the same time, making decisions that ignored the working conditions or production practices endured by other people or were dismissive of environmental damage were considered unethical. However, tensions existed in terms of carrying out moral actions, since individual behaviour was considered to be easy to change (to bring about social and environmental change), and social behaviours as difficult to alter, and yet the participants spoke about their resistance to changing their own behaviour. There was a lack of responsibility, as far as the participants were concerned, on young people to perform ethics through consumption practices, due to their lack of responsibility for their consumption choices, as well as then citing companies and the government as the source of responsibility.

Therefore, whilst the school environment teaches young people about the ways in which ethics enter our everyday practices, this teaching is very much simplified into real-life examples and scenarios, with a strong reliance on binary thinking, of good and bad, right and wrong. It has emerged that young people are not taught enough about morality as a relative concept, or that morals are negotiable and open to change. Although ethics in consumption were raised on (few) occasions, it is clear that young people engage very little with these debates. Their naivety and perceptions of their responsibility and ethical decision-making may be the result of a reduced responsibility within the family context, but also the lack of school-based education on this issue. It is

also notable that there is a heavy dependence on the focus group data, since these discussions were so detailed, but also because the lesson observations provided little data on ethics in consumption, which is telling in itself. In short, the school environment does not teach young people enough about ethical debates and everyday dilemmas such as consumption choices, or provide them with the skills to make moral and responsible decisions in their own consumption.

9.4: Marketing Ethics and Ethical Products

Within the analysis chapters, the company-based interviews focussed on the ethics of the companies that took part, how they developed into what they are today, and the ways in which these ethics are marketed towards consumers. The ethical consumption discourses discussed in Chapter 4 explored the responsibilities of business for their production processes, the information they give to consumers and the choices that they offer to them. Taking into account these company accounts, the research takes a step closer to understanding the relationship between people and the products they consume, and the ways in which ethics in consumption might be influenced by producers. This section will therefore address the third research question, 'How do companies market their products as ethical, or market particular ethics?' using these company interviews.

In Chapter 6 it emerged that ethics were commonly regarded as a multiple and complex issue, often differing between companies. Company ethics were spoken about as being regulated by the market, and related to demand and profit, as well as being inseparable from consumer ethics. Ethics were described using a range of terms, most of which were 'industry standard', and under an umbrella of corporate social responsibility. The companies often conformed to these industry norms, as well as setting their own ethical framework. They have to be clear on what their ethics are and the claims that they make, since there are legal consequences to over claiming. The participants often differentiated between principles and ethics: principles, or ideals, were morals upon which the company was based, which were often marketed using imaginaries of the owner or founder of the company. Ethics instead refers to the ways in which these morals are put into practice. Heritage was therefore essential when locating ethics and a strong moral heritage was seen as a positive and marketable asset for a company. The moral identity of founding members or the principles that formed the company were often capitalised upon, and used to build a reputation, even acting as a

springboard for ethical claims. Similar to the ethnographic findings, ethics were therefore thought to be established in the past and over time. In keeping loyal to the principles founded when the company began, it was argued that the current ethical stance of the company was more genuine, credible and authentic. One way of keeping these ethics 'alive' was through the staff, who themselves become a marketing tool, almost as the embodiment of company ethics. Staff members were educated about the company, so as to communicate key messages to consumers. However, in terms of educating consumers, there was a careful line between teaching and preaching, the latter of which was considered bad for business. Marketing ethics should not alienate customers, but should bring about an awareness of social and environmental issues, and companies could partake in this education voluntarily, although did not consider themselves as responsible.

Looking at the negotiation of morals, Chapter 7 explored the ways in which morals can be balanced alongside one another. For the companies involved, a healthy lifestyle and healthy products were often marketed as ethical, and there was a great deal of overlap in the definitions of good and right. Companies saw themselves as responsible for informing consumers about health issues related to the products that they sold, but in terms of negotiating health alongside other factors, this was considered to be the responsibility of the consumer. When looking at morals and money, it emerged that ethics were considered as something that could be bought, in that being marketable they were also valuable. Companies were also thought of as responsible for ensuring that customers receive good value for money, as a way of ensuring that customers could provide for their families, and indeed it was thought unethical to overcharge consumers or to be risky with their money. However, business and ethics were regarded as largely irreconcilable principles, in that companies were run for profit, which would be prioritised over ethical issues. Resource management issues, on the other hand, were often compatible with company ethics. Ensuring that products were environmentally sustainable was regarded as synonymous with ethical business, and was thought to be the responsibility of the producer rather than consumers. However, as Chapter 8 explored further, consumers were therefore responsible for the ways in which they used the products that they chose. The final section of Chapter 7 looked at the negotiation of ethical consumerism issues with everyday ethical dilemmas, and noted that companies worked to appease as many ethical triggers as possible. Local produce seemed to be a popular choice amongst consumers, and local products were often marketed for their authenticity and traceability. Many of the companies also saw themselves as providing a service or alternative to consumers, through the products that they make available.

Chapter 8 then went on to address the ways in which ethics are expressed in practice, and how these relate to discourses of responsibility. Trust, transparency and visibility were all part of a marketing vocabulary, whereby knowledge was assumed to have an automatic link to ethical behaviour. It was thought that, by opening up and showing consumers where products made, and who by, then this makes the production process more familiar and thus the company honest and trustworthy. The marketing tools necessary to enable this honesty included labelling, photographic material and in-store staff. The companies also sought open and honest relations with their suppliers, and wanted to be seen to be sharing information with these colleagues. Alongside this, they would also participate in more formalised procedures such as audits and quality control checks. A lack of openness about production practices within product marketing was also associated with unethical behaviour, as though companies that lacked transparency had something to hide, and 'coming clean' was something that was encouraged. In relation to this, staff members should also be treated in an ethical manner, and the ethics of the company could be displayed through the management of the business. As an example of this, for the cooperative companies that took part, their ideals were marketed, either intentionally or unintentionally, through their approach to having a collective moral identity. Similarly, local businesses also worked together to form a local community, and even the larger, nationally based companies that took part regarded local communities as important. This obviously raises issue about ethics and scale; how far responsibility for consumerism extends and to what measure businesses can enact their responsibilities. Engagement in collective action was taken to be a sign of responsible business, although the boundaries of responsibility again came into question. In terms of marketing these ethics, the companies stressed a responsibility to inform but not to educate consumers, which was indeed the purpose of much of their marketing. The companies expressed a responsibility for their own supply chains, and a need to 'know' them, but this responsibility did not extend to consumer choices, or for the consequences of these choices.

Therefore, the companies marketed their ethics or ethical products using a few key methods. The form of the marketing used was particularly important, in that it was considered ethical to be honest within company marketing, and over-claiming was seen as unethical and a cause for suspicion. Terms such as trust, transparency and visibility were regularly used, as part of a marketing vocabulary, with the use of labelling, photographic material and in-store staff to further press a sense of honesty. The heritage of the company was often used to market the ethical nature of the business. Heritage is a way to prove that the ethics of the company are credible and authentic, in

that they are longstanding and genuine, and they evidence that that company has stuck to its original principles. Staff members were often used to market the ethics of the company, of which they were informed, and indeed the treatment of staff members was something that some companies sought to market, as a way of defining themselves as an ethical company. The ethics of a company were also marketed in terms of the products or services it provides. The companies would aim to appease (and please) the 'ordinary' ethics of their customers, particularly in terms of health and monetary (for value for money) concerns, in order to cater for a variety of 'ethical' requirements. The companies would also market their performed responsibilities, yet enacting responsibility was often seen as in excess, or as a voluntary measure, and marketed as such. Consumer choices, and the consequences of these choices, were considered to be beyond the control or responsibility of business.

9.5: Developing an Appropriate Research Design

As Chapter 5 explored, due to the various avenues of enquiry within this thesis, looking at the role of family, the school environment and company marketing in consumer ethics, a corresponding research design was required in order to appropriately explore each of these themes. The use of all three data sets within each analysis chapter adds to this complexity, and at times makes the analysis chapters, the flow of the sections and the discussion within them, seem confusing, unpredictable and unrelated. It is hoped that, using this writing style, the reader can more easily embrace the confused, even opaque nature of everyday consumption, both in theory and practice, and as a research subject. Rather than repeating the arguments and justifications for methodology laid out in the Research Design chapter, this section will instead evaluate the appropriateness of the research design post-analysis, and therefore with hindsight. Using a few key examples of the appropriateness of the methodologies, this section will therefore address the fourth and final research question, 'How could each of the above questions be approached, using an appropriate research design?'. Developing an appropriate research design to investigate ethics in consumption involves celebrating the complex, perhaps sometimes erratic nature of consumption, and crafting a methodological strategy that not only accounts for this, but that also reflects it. In this respect, the methodologies need to be insightful, sensitive but also innovative given that, to date, no other research has approached ethics in consumption in this manner (either the topic or the multi-sited approach).

In terms of researching families, Chapter 5 has explored how methods need to account for family routines, and the tensions that might exist between different members. This means that, in order to explore how everyday practices, such as consumption, are played out in the context of the family, the research design needs to be shaped to accommodate for the privacy of the home and family setting. Ethnography provides this sensitivity, and enables the researcher to explore such daily routines and negotiations of consumption in a manner that is complementary of these practices. The ethnographic approach involved the formation of relationships with participants, so that they felt comfortable taking part in the research, and the use of a range of ethnographic techniques. In terms of the time devoted to developing trusting relationships with participants, some families participated for two years. The relations that subsequently developed over this time then created an environment in which participants were comfortable in sharing the intricacies of their daily routines, and would welcome me to observe them. It also opened up space for discussion, and participants felt comfortable in expressing their opinions, such as their morals and ethics, which are, after all, personal and private. The range of methods that were available for participants to partake in, whether observations, interviews or participatory tasks (see Chapter 5), also created an interactive and flexible research design, where participants could take control of their participation, in terms of the activities that they chose and where these activities took place. Indeed, some families were more comfortable with observations rather than interviews, some preferred to meet at their home or at a shop or cafe, others were keen to take part in photographic diaries, while other family members preferred to narrate these photos at interview. As the same time, ethnography also allows for a certain amount of spontaneity, and accounts for changes in daily routines. Indeed, much of the ethnographic research was reflective of a sense of being 'in situ', of things happening and therefore being recorded, often based on sheer luck or coincidence.

Similarly, using interviews to conduct research with companies also proved to be the most appropriate methodology. Interviewing was sensitive to the business environment in which these participants were based. The format of the interview (questioning and answering) was one with which they were all very familiar, alongside the professional ambience that is associated with interviews, which made some of these encounters a rather formal affair. However, just as important as developing a fitting research design and using suitable methods, is the use of appropriate mediums of communication with participants. Again, with a mind to keep methods as interactive and as innovative as possible, technology, namely the internet, was a central factor in these interviews. From the preliminary stages of the interviews, the companies and individual participants

were contacted using email, which remained to be the staple form of contact for all the interviewees. Before an interview took place, the company website was researched for background information, to make sure that the interview questions were informed and targeted. Within the interview, most of the participants discussed the company website, and directed my attention to it, often as a source of further information about the company. After the interview, emails were also used to send consent forms and transcriptions. Recognising the integral nature of this medium of contact and using it appropriately therefore ensured that the methods were as appropriate to the topic and the participants as possible.

Likewise, for the school-based research, using observations and focus groups seemed to be the most suitable way in which to gather information about the school environment. The lesson and school council observations provided greater insight into the moral substance of the curriculum, and focus groups discussions into the perspectives of the pupils. Again, to make the research design as suitable as possible, but also with the aim of developing innovative methodologies, the focus groups also incorporated a participatory task. Not only did this break up the discussion, so that the participants did not lose interest, but it also ensured that participants who were not quite as outspoken as their peers could feel as involved in the session. Interacting in this way was something that the pupils seemed to enjoy, and encouraged a discourse among them, rather than a focus group discussion based on questions and answers. Although using observations, focus groups and participatory tasks is not necessarily groundbreaking, using them together in this way, and for the topic at hand, could be described as somewhat of an innovative approach.

These examples have illustrated the importance of developing an appropriate research design which is targeted not only to the particular topic at hand, but also to the participants that are involved and the environment in which they are situated. Different methods had to be developed for family member, school pupils and company employees, which also took into account their situations at home, at school and at work. By developing an appropriate set of methodologies for each aspect of the research, the result is a wider research design that is tailored to explore ethics in consumption in the most efficient and effective way possible.

9.6: Implications and New Research Agendas

Taking these responses to the four research questions, there are a number of final conclusions and implications, along with a reflection on new research agendas. Firstly, the assumption within much of the Ethical Consumer discourse asserts that ethics are relative to specific issues (e.g. organic farming, fair trading, recycling etc), and that they are expressed in particular ways, namely through consumer behaviours such as conscious purchasing, boycotting and resource management. Consumption is often positioned as innately unethical and destructive. However, this research has shown that ethics in consumption are not refined to these specific forms of practice, but are in fact evident in everyday consumption. Rather than consumption consisting of ethical and unethical forms of practice, I would argue that what we have is a tangled web of moral negotiations, where consumers have to negotiate money, preference, health, access and so on, on a regular basis. Ethical concerns are therefore plural, and ethical consumer discourses such as social, environmental, political, humanitarian and ecological concerns, enter into a web which already contains everyday ethical dilemmas. As one participant described it, consumers have a 'pyramid of needs', and at the top of this pyramid is the need to provide for themselves and their family. Other issues are secondary to this, whilst this is not to say that they are marginalised, but that they simply come lower down on the pyramid. Ethics can therefore be expressed in a multitude of ways, and not necessarily just those that adhere to a prescriptive list of so-called ethical actions or a model of ethical consumerism. These ethical dilemmas and negotiations therefore expose the everyday ethics of consumption as something that is no more and no less of a moral issue than ethical consumerism. It might also be suggested that, in this case, ethical consumption conceals more and wider debates than it encourages, a point to which I will return shortly.

At the same time, one of the main assumptions within ethical consumer discourses is that knowledge is a prerequisite to ethical action. Whilst on the face it this might seem like a logical hypothesis, what this linear concept fails to recognise is that knowledge is not uniformly or equally accessible. As discussed in Chapter 2, and as shown in Chapter 6, understandings of ethics and morality are various and multiple, and change between individuals, families and institutions. As Chapter 7 illustrated, our morals are plural and negotiable, and this knowledge is only part of the decision-making process. The concept of a direct knowledge-for-action relationship is therefore too simplified and ignores the everyday difficulties and dilemmas that consumers have to face. Yet, if knowledge does not necessarily impact upon practice, and if ethics are based upon experience and

upbringing, having been passed down within and between families and society (see Chapter 6), then one might ask how anything ever changes, and how progress can be made. This also leads to the question of who is responsible for making said changes. Indeed, as explored in Chapter 8, what is needed are big, step changes to consumption habits, on the scale of the everyday, and therefore at the level of the individual. Consumers are required to make substantial alterations to their practices, and to change their habits, if social and environmental change is to occur. The problem might therefore not lie in the access to knowledge, but perhaps in the ability and willingness to make these changes and to branch out from that with which we are comfortable. Enacting responsibilities is not as simple as thinking and doing, but involves a complex system of negotiation, renegotiation, and eventual change.

It is also important to note that thriftiness and frugality are often positioned as opposite concerns to ethical consumerism. Indeed, much of the time, in both academic and in lay discourses, money is seen as an obstacle to ethical consumerism, since ethical products are usually marked at a higher price and marketed alongside 'luxury' items. What these understandings seem to ignore, however, is that boycotting activities and sustainable consumption (such as recycling and waste management) actually cost very little, if anything at all. Yet, money and ethics are also regarded as dichotomous because of the availability of low cost, mass produced goods, which are often presumed to have been made in an unethical manner. For consumers, such as low-income families, who rely on these cheaper items to provide for their family, it is assumed that ethics are removed from their 'pyramid of needs'. However, what this research has shown is that affordability, like any other factor, is just as important within ethical decision-making. Thrift and frugality are therefore sometimes the ethics by which people are able to perform their moral obligations towards their family and provide them with the diet, clothing and everyday amenities that they need to live. Rather than assuming that monetary concerns are opposed to ethical considerations, or that ethics are removed from monetary decisions, by theorising ethics in this way, we can further understand the relationship between ethics and consumption.

What is therefore needed is a reassessment and reconfiguration of how to address ethics in consumption, which is currently laden with assumptions, judgements and class distinctions, whether or not they are overt. This thesis therefore has created an argument for an *ethics of consumption*, rather than ethical consumption, which recognises the importance of everyday ethical decision-

making, and consumption as a behaviour that goes hand-in-hand with moral debates. This creates scope for further research on how ethics are translated from narrative and experience into practice, and to recognise ethics as something integral to consumption choices, regardless of the final decision. Rather than research than concentrates on a particular kind of ethical expression, by critiquing the current discourse this thesis has opened up the possibilities for new understandings of morality and consumption, and perhaps even new ways of teaching and marketing these ethics.

Indeed, a number of policy implications emerge amidst these reflections. First of all, there are implications for moral education. Currently, moral education in schools does not address ethical issues in consumption, despite both ethics and consumption having been demonstrated as integral to identity formation. It might be appropriate for moral education in schools to therefore address the ethical dilemmas that face consumers, as means of educating young people as future (if not already) consuming citizens, but also as a way of ensuring that discourses of ethics in consumption become more widely understood. Secondly, there are also implications in terms of product marketing. In light of the recent financial crisis (or 'credit crunch'), where we are now seeing a movement towards thrift and frugality, ethics in consumption are as potent as ever. Company and brand marketing might therefore need to take into account the various forms of ethics in consumption, so as to ensure that consumers are educated in their 'ethical' choices, and so that the current and limiting definitions of 'ethical consumption' are not perpetuated. Thirdly, there are massive implications in terms of responsibility and accountability. Within this thesis there have emerged disjointed opinions about where to place responsibility for consumption, and for the impacts of consumption. Consumers cite companies as responsible for their production chains and for providing choice, as well as having the potential to limit choice. The government is also cited as having the responsibility to educate consumers (again, a need for moral education that accounts for consumption) and to ensure that the impacts of consumption are being dealt with. Whilst accepting the responsibility to provide choice and responsibility for their supply chains, companies regarded the onus as being on consumers to make ultimate, and therefore crucial, choices. Amidst all this finger-pointing, there seems to be a greater need for accountability of consumers, industry and government.

There is also a need to accept and embrace new forms of 'doing' qualitative research, namely the use of social networking websites. When conducting both the ethnographic research with families

and interviews with companies, social networking websites, such as 'Facebook' and 'Twitter', were advocated by participants, whether being used as a method of communication with me, or as a way for people and businesses to communicate with one another. Negotiating communication with participants on social networking websites is a contemporary form of a traditional dilemma which ethnographers may increasingly have to consider. These websites might make research easier or more difficult. They make available information about our personal lives that we may not intend to give to participants, as well as making their identities (as 'friend' or participant) known. The concept of 'relational confidentiality', as explored in Chapter 5, allowing privacy for both participants and researchers in their personal lives, is a notion that may be utilised when untangling ethical dilemmas within research, such as when doing research that uses social networking websites in some capacity. There is a need for recognition of the challenges that social networking websites might pose for researchers trying to exit the field, when the field becomes flexible and placeless.

However, at the same time, social networking websites provide a vast new area in which to conduct research and to create innovative approaches to emerging social issues. Not only do these sites generate new forms and lines of communication with participants, such as the ways in which they have been used and observed within this thesis, but the space of these social networks has effectively emerged as a site for research. The very nature of social networking websites throws up issues of accessibility and confidentiality. The fact that these websites are constantly growing in users and members also means that these new spaces are creating novel and contemporary geographies, as well adding to existing debates. Likewise, social networking websites have been critiqued for their unruly and uncontrollable nature, such as changing their privacy settings without properly informing users, an issue which has attracted a great deal of media attention in the UK context. This raises important security issues for users and for service providers, albeit an interesting avenue for research. Therefore, there are both theoretical and methodological gains to be made by utilising these exciting technologies, and using them in an innovative way, with the potential to change the face of social science research.

Lastly, this thesis makes significant contributions to current moral geography debates and discourses surrounding morality, responsibility and ethics in consumption. It is clear that discourses of ethical consumption are fragmented, prescriptive and limiting. As noted above, these discourses actually conceal more than they explain, in that definitions of ethical consumption limit the relationship

between ethics and consumption to particular purchases and practices, that are to all intents and purposes accessible and affordable for only a small demographic of consumers. At the same time, the 'ethical everyday' is absent within these discourses, such as the daily dilemmas that consumers encounter in their decision-making, between factors such as money, health and preference, often in an effort to meet their moral obligations. By promoting these ethical consumption behaviours as a way (or indeed, the only way) to express moral values in consumption, ethical consumption practices become even more fetishized and removed from everyday accounts of consumption. Similarly, to segregate certain behaviours as 'ethical' forms of consumption, removed from 'ordinary' consumption, denies the potential for an inherent ethical nature of everyday consumption, and for moral issues to be present in 'ordinary' consumption practices.

Therefore, to critique ethical consumer discourses fully involves accepting that all consumption practices and decision-making processes have a moral reading, whether ethical or unethical, and that these morals are highly contextual and plural. If future research into ethical consumption debates can move beyond the limiting definitions around which it is currently based, to take into account the *ethics of consumption*, rather than ethical consumption, then we can build further on debates regarding responsibility and accountability. In particular, such research would be at the forefront of Climate Change debates, as arguably the biggest threat facing the world today. Also, by moving research away from current understandings of ethics and consumption, we can start to break open the black box of consumption, as this thesis has initiated, to untangle the complex network of morality that is everyday ethical consumption.

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