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“The heart of the home”

locating the kitchen within the shifting emotional landscape of domestic life

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‘Kitchen Life’

- In 2011, Food Standards Agency commissioned a study of ‘in-home behaviours’.
- Aim to develop a better understanding of how FSA can help people to avoid becoming ill through food prepared in the home.
- Findings present what takes place in *real*, as opposed to *ideal*, kitchens.



What constitutes kitchen life?



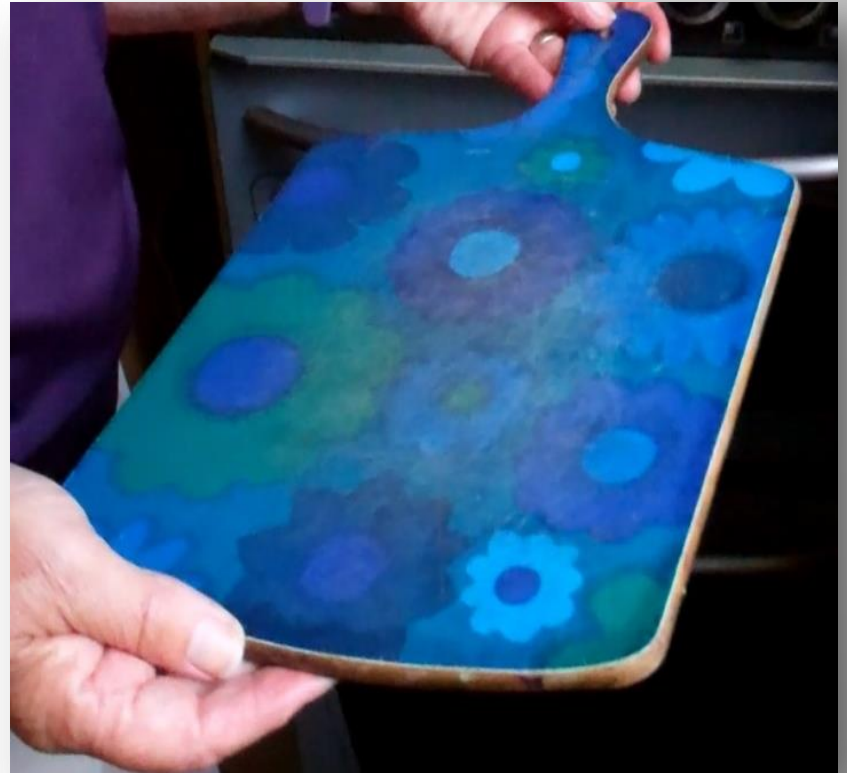
Kitchens as portraits



Continuities & connections



Convergences: past & present



Kitchens, agency & the life-course



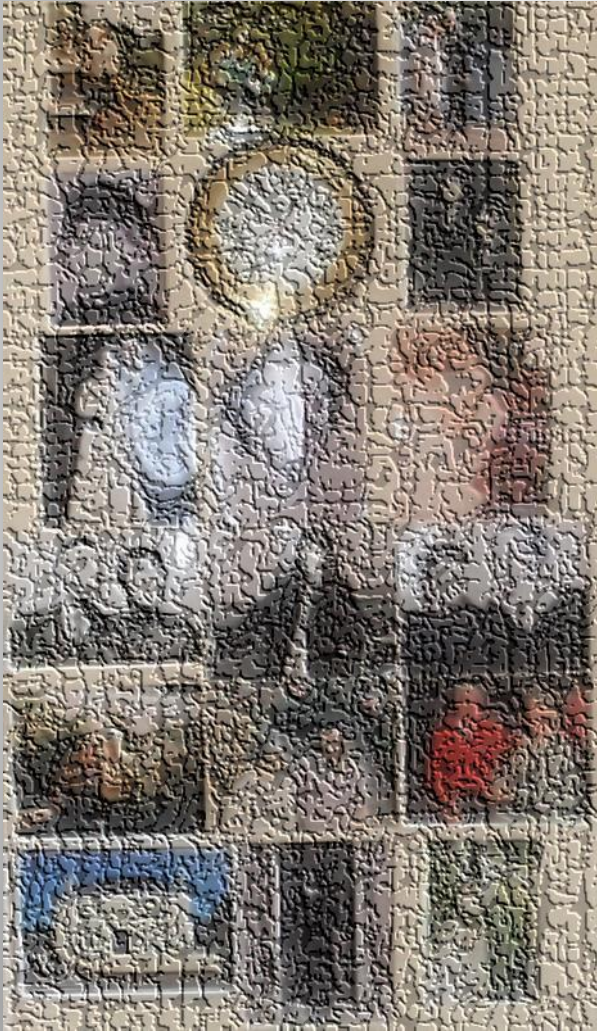
Uncanny kitchens: Joe (60s)

*“...It’s little things that niggle.
...Everyone’s got their own ways;
that’s one of mine ...**I am so used
to doing things my own way ...it’s
my kitchen.***

*...I’ve looked after myself for 20-
odd years and even before that. I
know the way I like to do things ...I
don’t like being told ‘Oh you’re
doing it wrong’. I’ve been doing it
for 50 years at least... it’s like
teaching your grandmother how to
suck eggs”.*



Uncanny kitchens: Harry (80+)



Reverse parenting: agency undermined?

*“...while I argue with her all the time I know, I mean, I appreciate that... she’d be the first there if I was in difficulty... **I don’t think I need help, but I let it go...** it keeps Catriona happy... **She thinks I’m an old dodderer, three-quarters of the way to senility** [laughs]. **I might be three-quarters, but I’m not there yet! I have to shoo her away”.***

Conclusions

- Kitchen is not just a site of food preparation, but – for many - central to the emotional landscape of home.
- Contains ‘untold stories of lives being lived’ (Llewellyn 2004: 246) reflected in the materiality of the space.
- A space for the ‘doing’ of family and gender, where relationships are negotiated and agency acquired - and lost - over the life-course.
- It can be – simultaneously – both the heart of the home, and a site of contestation which may sometimes be experienced as ‘uncanny’.