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Thesis title:

An examination of the role of cuisine in cultural transmission with particular reference to the effects of migration upon the transmission of cultural information.

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of an MPhil degree

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Declaration of Authorship

I (Rebecca Kate Sheldon) hereby declare that this thesis and the work presented in it is entirely my own. Where I have consulted the work of others, this is always clearly stated.

Signed: _____

Date: 30th October 2014

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Abstract

Material culture is important as both product and agent in cultural inheritance and transmission. Cuisine (food and the material culture that surrounds it) is argued to be a significant part of most people's material culture and contributes to cultural inheritance in several ways. Cuisine provides a point of reference and association which helps people create cultural identity; it is a very visible marker of distinct cultural communities. Food used for special occasions can provide a particularly poignant, immediate and intimate 'aide memoir' of past events. This characteristic, combined with the possibility of replicating meals enables cuisine to be a valuable transmitter of cultural information across time and place. In addition, cuisine's material culture is part of the cultural niche (environment) that communities construct for themselves and, as such, changes to cuisine may alter the very cultural selection pressure operating upon people's cultural behaviour.

This thesis specifically sought to examine the impact of migration upon cultural transmission. Migration necessarily presents a threat to cultural continuity. Comparison of UK-born and immigrant resident groups, therefore, has potential to highlight the durability of different aspects of cultural transmission. Evidence was reviewed from the literature, Chapters 2 – 6, and from fieldwork data from a survey of just over 100 London residents, presented in Chapters 8 and 9. The main focus of the fieldwork examined how cuisine knowledge was acquired (*sources* and *modes* of learning) and how this was affected by migration. Evidence was found for the dominance of 'social learning' and 'vertical sources' for immigrants and those born in the UK. Although immigrant groups remained reliant on these sources, there was evidence of some change. Other differences between the two groups were observed such as perception of outside cuisine influence and willingness to embrace new cuisine ideas.

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