

**"WE'RE ALL FAIRTRADE CONSUMERS NOW!"**  
**AN EXPLORATION OF THE MEANINGS, MORALITIES AND**  
**POLITICS OF FAIRTRADE CONSUMPTION**

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## **Abstract:**

The Fairtrade movement in the UK has witnessed impressive growth over the last ten years. Fairtrade products are now available beyond the dedicated network of church halls and Oxfam shops and through the mainstream retail sector. Whilst this growth has been widely represented as the result of thousands of individual citizen-consumers 'voting' for fairer trade, this thesis tells a different tale. Moving away from accounts of consumption that rely on models of conscious, expressive and reflexive choice, the study demonstrates the importance of paying attention to the increasing institutionalisation of forms of collective Fairtrade purchasing, as well as the ways in which orientations towards consumer goods are guided by levels of commitment to varied social practices.

Based within a Fairtrade town – a place with a community of Fairtrade supporters who are actively campaigning to switch the systems of collective provision within the town to Fairtrade-only lines – and employing a range of mixed-method research techniques, this thesis uniquely pays attention to both the 'Fairtrade supporter' and the 'non-Fairtrade supporter'. In so doing it highlights why attempts to change people's behaviour through the provision of information alone are unlikely to be successful. Consumers are not infinitely malleable and the practices that guide their routine consumption are supported by a whole range of collective structures, including cultural norms and discourses, institutional frameworks and infrastructures of provision. These are not easily transformed through interventions aimed at the individual level, in other words individuals' behaviours, attitudes and choices.

The thesis also contributes to debates about levels and types of citizen-engagement, interrogating the assumption that those who do not engage in Fairtrade consumption behaviour are apathetic or lack certain types of knowledge. Instead the findings suggest that citizen-consumers are capable of expressing reasoned objections and scepticism to the model of individual responsibility that is being directed towards them.

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## List of Abbreviations

ASI	Adam Smith Institute
ATO	Alternative Trading Organisation
CA	Consumers' Association
DFID	Department for International Development
ECRA	Ethical Consumer Research Association
EDM	Early Day Motion
FFAG	Fairville Fairtrade Action Group
FLO	Fairtrade Labelling Organisation
FTF	Fairtrade Foundation, UK
IMF	International Monetary Fund
LSA	Ligue Sociale d'Acheteurs
NCL	National Consumers' League
NGO	Non-Governmental Organisation
RA	Rainforest Alliance
WFTO	World Fairtrade Organisation
WTO	World Trade Organisation

## **Introduction: We're all Fairtrade consumers now!**

What do the BBC TV Centre, Boots the Chemist, Cadbury's, Harrods, Interflora, Nestlé, Sainsbury's, the town of Bristol and the Houses of Parliament have in common with one another? The answer is that they all offer or serve Fairtrade products. The small black, green, white and blue Fairtrade logo, which is sometimes thought to resemble a person waving and symbolises "a better deal for Third World Producers", can be found on a growing number of consumer products (over 300 at the time of writing) in a diverse array of retail spaces and locations across the UK. The Fairtrade<sup>1</sup> movement has come a long way since its humble beginnings in the 1940s when fairly traded artisan and craft goods produced by displaced and impoverished people were sold by Christians and philanthropists on church stalls; and later in the 1960s and 70s when a small number of products and commodities, including coffee, were sold through a specialist network of 'World Shops' and Alternative Trading Organisations (ATOs) (see Grimes, 2005; Jaffee, 2007; WFTO, 2009). Today there are roughly 1.5 million small-scale producers and workers organised into Fairtrade schemes in 58 developing countries, and sales of Fairtrade worldwide amounted to approximately €2.3 billion in 2007 representing a 47 per cent increase over sales in 2006 (FLO, 2009). The UK is one of the world's leading Fairtrade markets and has witnessed impressive sales figures which on average double in value every two years (FTF, 2009e; Krier, 2007). In 2008, UK sales of Fairtrade products reached a retail value of £713.6 million (FTF, 2009d) suggesting that the British public is both supportive of and actively interested in using their consumer power in order to improve the lives of farmers in the developing world.

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<sup>1</sup> The reader should note that there is a difference between 'Fair Trade' and 'Fairtrade'. Traditionally, 'Fairtrade' refers to the selection of products that have been certified according to the criteria laid down by the Fairtrade Labelling Organisation (FLO) and overseen in the UK by the Fairtrade Foundation (FTF), whilst 'Fair Trade' refers to a wider vision of development through trade and the related campaigning and advocacy work to support and raise awareness of this vision. Throughout this thesis, I have decided to use just the one term, 'Fairtrade', for ease and also because my Fairtrade supporters were joined in a campaigning network (a Fairtrade town) which met Fairtrade Foundation criteria, was promoting Fairtrade-certified products and was putting pressure on local councils, businesses and retail outlets to switch their system of provision to Fairtrade-certified lines.

The Fairtrade model presents itself as a simple solution to the problems of poverty created by unfair trading relations. The concerned Western shopper is told that by just choosing a different type of coffee or chocolate, which may or may not be more expensive than their regular brand, they can help to make a difference to the lives of families in the developing world who will now receive a 'fair' price for their produce. The global chain between the producer and the consumer is shortened as the active choice of a consumer in one corner of the world is connected to the improved livelihood of a producer in the other corner. Existing accounts of the 'Fairtrade consumer' by the Fairtrade movement, policy makers and academics tend to assume that the decision to purchase a Fairtrade product is the conscious choice of a 'citizen-consumer' who wants to register their support for producers in the developing world or, more politically, to 'vote' for fairer trade through their consumption (Bennett, 2004; Carter, 2001; Clarke et al, 2007; Goodman, 2004; Lamb, 2008; Lyon, 2006; Micheletti, 2003; Nicholls & Opal, 2005; Scammell, 2000; 2003; Shaw et al, 2006; Soper, 2004; 2008). Academic research has tended to understand the growth of the Fairtrade movement as the result of the conditions of late modernity where an increasingly reflexive self connects his/her everyday life decisions to global concerns and actively chooses Fairtrade in order to communicate their life-commitments to themselves and others.

Whilst Fairtrade consumption is represented as the positive and conscious choice of a citizen-consumer, this thesis argues that much of Fairtrade's market growth in recent years can be accounted for by the expansion of Fairtrade goods into mainstream retail outlets and the increasing tendency for businesses and public spaces and buildings to offer only Fairtrade options. Following the Co-operative Retail Group's lead in 2000 – who were the first supermarket to offer an own-brand Fairtrade chocolate range and who have continued to be a key supporter of the Fairtrade movement linking their support to their longer history of ethical trading practices – other mainstream supermarkets and retail outlets, with differing levels of commitment to the Fairtrade movement's aims, (Asda, Boots, Debenhams, Lidl, Sainsbury's, Marks & Spencer, Morrisons, Tesco and Waitrose) have launched their own-brand Fairtrade labelled products. In 2006, Sainsbury's

switched to selling only Fairtrade bananas and in 2007 they announced their decision to switch their own-brand coffee and tea to Fairtrade-only lines over the next three years. Sainsbury's sales of Fairtrade goods accounted for one third of Fairtrade retail sales in the UK in 2008 (Sainsbury's, 2009). More recently, Cadbury's, have switched one of the nation's favourite chocolate bars, Dairy Milk, to Fairtrade, Nestlé have announced their decision to switch KitKat bars to Fairtrade and Tate & Lyle have switched their retail sugar to Fairtrade.

Alongside the displays of support for the Fairtrade movement from mainstream retail outlets and large manufacturers, the growth of Fairtrade sales have also been influenced by the ever-growing network of Fairtrade Towns. A Fairtrade Town is defined as "a community which has made a commitment to supporting Fairtrade" in which the residents have significant levels of awareness and understanding of the Fairtrade concept and should regularly buy and use Fairtrade products (FTF, 2002: 1). One of the key aims of the Fairtrade Towns movement is to encourage local councils, businesses and retail outlets to make the switch to Fairtrade products, often by removing non-Fairtrade alternatives. Launched in the year 2000 following the efforts of a group of committed Fairtrade supporters in the small Lancashire town of Garstang, this active grassroots campaigning-network has grown significantly in the last nine years with over 400 Fairtrade Towns in the UK and 200 more campaigning for the status, as well as Fairtrade town campaigns in 17 countries around the world inspired by the UK example (FTF, 2009c). The Fairtrade Towns movement has also sparked a number of similar initiatives by churches, schools, workplaces and universities who have achieved, or are working towards, 'Fairtrade status'. In a recent report commissioned by the Fairtrade Foundation (FTF) examining the impact of the European Fairtrade Towns initiative it was claimed that:

*"Fairtrade Towns have an incredible and quite unique power. They bring the challenges facing developing world producers and the promise of positive action to make a difference into the immediate locale and everyday life of ordinary citizens. In the midst of a thriving Fairtrade Town campaign Fairtrade stops being 'out there' for people and becomes the cup of coffee they're offered in their local hairdresser, a new Fairtrade Mark sign in the store they visit several days a week or a chocolate sample they're offered in their local shopping centre. In other words, it becomes something they can hardly fail to notice and will almost certainly pause for thought about". (Taplin, 2009: 11)*

However, we would be wise to respond cautiously to the claim that the Fairtrade Town movement, and indeed the Fairtrade-switches by large corporations discussed above, has made Fairtrade something that "ordinary citizens... can hardly fail to notice".

As Fairtrade products have moved into mainstream markets, academic and policy attention has focused upon the veracity of the claims of the Fairtrade movement that it is able to improve the lives of disadvantaged producers in the developing world. Although the Fairtrade movement began as an aid to local development and as a challenge to global trading rules through the use of alternative trading networks like ATOS,<sup>2</sup> as the movement has moved into the mainstream this project has, for some, come under threat. For those who want to see greater benefits for producers, working with big corporate brands and supermarkets is seen as the best way to achieve this objective. But for those who see Fairtrade as "a counter-hegemonic political project" (Low & Davenport, 2006: 315), the paradox of growth has been that Fairtrade is anchored "within the same mainstream sector many sought to avoid" (Barrientos et al, 2007: 54). Raynolds et al's (2007) edited collection examines the impact of Fairtrade's market success on its movement commitments, and reveals how the pursuit of sales volumes as an end in itself has made it more difficult for the movement's aims to be realised. Focusing on the businesses, producers and social movements who are promoting, experiencing and challenging the increasingly market-driven approach to Fairtrade, their collection remains quiet about the impact of mainstreaming upon the consumers who will knowingly or unknowingly be consuming ever-more Fairtrade products. Indeed, this is a trend that is reflected in a large number of academic studies of the Fairtrade movement which have directed their attention towards the producers within the developing world who have been affected by the Fairtrade scheme and the NGOs and ATOS who have overseen this process, rather than towards the practices of Fairtrade consumption and support by 'ordinary citizens' (see Barrientos and Dolan,

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<sup>2</sup> In the 1970s when the Fairtrade movement was emerging, ATOS were established by a number of secular activist movements of the political Left. These ATOS sought to generate markets for products from socialist countries, like Cuba and Mozambique, that were unable to access conventional trade routes (Jaffee, 2007). Emerging from progressive social movements, these 'solidarity groups' had the much more explicitly political purpose to change the terms of world trade – for example, Twin Trading in the UK claimed that it would trade on "non-capitalist principles" in order to create jobs and reinforce the labour movement (Barrientos et al, 2007: 53). Its decision only to trade with cooperatives and concentrate on collective forms of ownership shaped subsequent Fairtrade labelling standards.

2006; Jaffee, 2007; Raynolds et al, 2007; Riedl, 2007). Additionally, the Fairtrade movement itself has only paid minimal attention to the role of the consumer in their internationally agreed definition of Fairtrade (FLO, 2009).

It is surprising that so little attention has been given to the consumer, especially in light of the fact that most people's contact with the Fairtrade movement in the developed world is likely to be through the Fairtrade marketing initiatives (like Fairtrade Fortnight, Fairtrade Towns, and Fairtrade promotional offers in supermarkets) which highlight the important role that consumers must play in a "citizen's movement for change" (FTF, 2009e). In their 'Charter of Fair Trade Principles', the Fairtrade Advocacy network (a coalition of the four main international Fairtrade organisations) reveal how they rely on being able to demonstrate they have widespread consumer support in order to be able to engage in their advocacy work (Fairtrade Advocacy Office, 2009: 4 & 5). As Clarke et al (2007a) suggest, it is only by representing the multiple acts of Fairtrade consumption as indicative of widespread public support that the Fairtrade movement is able to have an influential voice in the global debate on international trade. But what do the consumers really think? And what actually drives their consumption behaviours? I argue that if we are to fully interrogate the Fairtrade phenomenon and such representations of consumer support, attention must be paid to those who buy Fairtrade products and their opinions of the Fairtrade movement's aims and claims. This thesis provides such a consumer perspective.

The study of Fairtrade consumption within contemporary British society offers an exciting opportunity for sociological research because it provides a connection between so-called "spectacular consumption", that is consumption which connects to individuals' tastes and lifestyles and is spoken about with reference to theories of freedom and choice, and "ordinary consumption", that is consumption which requires little reflection and often occurs whilst conducting our daily routines (Gronow & Warde, 2001).<sup>3</sup> On the one hand, there are a number of individuals who do consciously and reflexively consume Fairtrade goods because they have a commitment to the aims

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<sup>3</sup> Of course, as Shove (2003) points out (and this thesis demonstrates) it is not always possible to make a clear distinction between spectacular and ordinary consumption.

of the Fairtrade movement and recognise the field of consumption as an additional sphere in which they can communicate their values and political voice. These 'Fairtrade supporters' are likely to be organised into Fairtrade town (or school, church, university or workplace) networks and be involved in activities which extend beyond individual consumption – for example, campaigning to shift systems of collective provisioning to Fairtrade within local places and spaces. On the other hand, because of the success of the actions of these Fairtrade supporters and the larger Fairtrade movement in intervening in the market and shifting systems of collective provisioning, Fairtrade products are now widely (and often solely) available in a diverse range of locations within the UK. Therefore, individuals who have no real commitment to the Fairtrade movement's aims and claims are increasingly consuming Fairtrade products without necessarily being aware that they are doing so. Those that happen to live in Fairtrade towns or visit supermarkets and public buildings that stock more Fairtrade items are likely to be regularly drinking Fairtrade coffee or eating Fairtrade bananas but are unlikely to be using these Fairtrade items in order to express their 'vote' for the Fairtrade movement. Their routine or 'ordinary' consumption has little to do with conscious choice and more to do with "contextual and collective constraint" (*ibid*: 4).

As individuals become more likely to consume Fairtrade products because of the changes in systems of collective provision within towns and supermarkets in the UK, it is important not to lose sight of the fact that these multiple acts of Fairtrade consumption continue to be represented in the public sphere as the desires of thousands of individual citizens for political change (Clarke et al, 2007a). This representation is perpetuated by both those organisations responsible for marketing Fairtrade and engaging in wider political advocacy networks (around issues of greater trade justice, human rights and Third World debt) because it enables them to claim they have mass support, and by academic researchers who have drawn from life-politics inspired accounts of consumption in a late modern world (Bennett, 2004; Goodman, 2004; Lyon, 2006; Micheletti, 2003; Nicholls & Opal, 2005; Scammell, 2000; 2003; Shaw et al, 2006). Such accounts suggest that all those who consume Fairtrade goods do so for similar reasons and with similar levels of awareness of the Fairtrade

movement's aims and claims. However, this thesis will argue that it is necessary to separate forms of support for the Fairtrade movement from the actual consumption of Fairtrade goods if we are to fully understand the Fairtrade phenomenon.

In order to achieve this, I apply a 'theory of practice approach' (Warde, 2005) so as to embed the act of Fairtrade consumption into its social context and web of social relations. A theory of practice approach to consumption enables us to move away from accounts of abstract individual choice and acknowledge the role that our engagements in various social practices play in driving our consumption behaviour. In this way, I am able to demonstrate how an individual's dispositions towards Fairtrade consumption are developed through their immersion in organised practices – for example, many of the Fairtrade supporters I spoke with first learnt about and came into contact with Fairtrade through their membership at the local church or Co-operative society (or some other organised network) and they connected their support of Fairtrade with these already-existing commitments. I suggest that attention must be paid to an individual's 'career' of Fairtrade support if we are to understand the meanings and motivations behind Fairtrade consumption. Indeed, those who had not been involved in practices of Fairtrade support were less likely to be committed to Fairtrade and more likely to organise their consumption according to different logics with alternative moralities.

By viewing Fairtrade consumption through a model of practice, I show how Fairtrade support encompasses a whole range of practices beyond consuming differently. Fairtrade support often involves joining or forming a local Fairtrade town (or church/school/workplace) network group, campaigning for the wider availability of Fairtrade products in one's town, holding a Fairtrade stall or event in order to promote the Fairtrade movement's aims to other interested individuals, writing to the local MP to encourage him/her to sign Early Day Motions in support of Fairtrade, or visiting a local school in order to educate young people about Fairtrade and related issues like Co-operation and Trade Justice. By widening the focus beyond consumption acts and paying attention to the context within which these acts occur, we will see how consumption is often not the most important

way for an individual to register their support for the Fairtrade movement. In fact, it was often the case that Fairtrade supporters did not actually always consume Fairtrade goods themselves but still counted themselves as Fairtrade supporters because they were involved in one or more of these other activities.

The representation of Fairtrade consumption as a form of individual political participation or citizenship presents an important arena for sociological exploration. For hundreds of years, the sphere of consumption has been used as a tool for the expression of political voice. However in recent years, appeals to the figure of the citizen-consumer/consumer-citizen have become increasingly prevalent – for example, within policy debates around the provision of public services in which the mantra of individual choice has been pervasive (see Malpass et al, 2008; Needham, 2007), and also within debates around wider forms of sustainable and healthy consumption practices which call upon citizen-consumers to change their behaviour in order to achieve a public goal. Whilst what follows will be a discussion of consumer-citizenship as exemplified within Fairtrade discourses, the issues raised do have wider implications. First, attempts to encourage citizen-consumers towards particular types of behaviour tend to place a great deal of emphasis on the importance of providing information to individuals so that they can choose wisely. However, we will see that this approach assumes that consumers'/citizens' behaviour is infinitely malleable and ignores the importance of an individual's existing commitments and practical concerns, as well as the local environment in which they are operating, which are likely to limit the 'choices' actually open to them and their ability or willingness to actually receive/absorb as well as act upon information.

Second, and closely related to the first point, this thesis encourages us to reconsider the passivity that is attributed to those who do not (knowingly) engage in citizen-consumer activity compared to those who do. It is often assumed that those who do not engage in a topic or practice of interest lack the necessary information or understandings in order to participate, rather than interest being directed to their own practices and priorities. Rather uniquely, I pay attention to 'non-Fairtrade supporters', who were likely to have consumed Fairtrade at some point but were often

unaware of Fairtrade when they were shopping and instead spoke about the ways in which their consumption was ordinarily ethical by virtue of the fact that it was connected to their commitments to their family and friends. When asked about Fairtrade, the majority of non-Fairtrade supporters could recognise the moral value of trying to help producers receive a fair price for their crop; they were, however, often quite critical of the suggestion that consuming Fairtrade was the only way to be a responsible citizen and sceptical that changing their individual consumption habits would have much impact upon poverty in the developing world. The moral, practical and political challenges made by non-Fairtrade supporters are taken seriously because these individuals are, after all, Fairtrade consumers whether they like it (or know it) or not, and it is therefore interesting to hear what they think rather than dismiss them as inert or irrelevant. Of course directing attention to a group of individuals who are defined through being outside of a particular circle forces the researcher to confront a difficult methodological problem of recruitment (because non-Fairtrade supporters are more diffuse than a group of 'anti-activists'), however every attempt ought to be made to gather their views because they enable us to interrogate the assumed passivity of non-participation. This approach has the potential to inform consideration of non-participants in studies of citizen engagement more generally.

In what follows, I highlight an important tension within the consumer-citizenship model which on the one hand promotes the power of individual choice, but on the other hand uses this to institutionalise forms of collective purchasing. I also demonstrate the importance of separating forms of support for the Fairtrade movement from the actual consumption of Fairtrade goods. When consumers and supporters of Fairtrade are taken to be the same and the only voices that are heard are those that combine the two (as exemplified in the quotation from Taplin above), I argue that we miss a great deal. On the one hand, the Fairtrade supporter may not actually (consistently) purchase Fairtrade, and may engage in a number of campaigning activities beyond what is required of the relatively passive citizen-consumer (in an activist context); on the other hand, consumers of Fairtrade goods may not even be aware of Fairtrade and far less be explicit supporters of its aims or

claims – indeed they may have specific critiques of the Fairtrade movement and reasoned scepticism which are not given a voice when consumers are conflated with supporters. We also miss a key contradiction in the citizen-consumer model which takes non-supporters to be 'blank sheets' to be imprinted with the principles and practices of consumer-citizenship at the same time as these individuals are unknowingly consuming Fairtrade and thus represented as already possessing these qualities. Whilst this thesis is about Fairtrade consumption, it affects the way we think about the malleability of consumer behaviour, the morality (or ethics) of consumption and forms of political participation more generally. It investigates the perceived differences between the supporter and the non-supporter and considers how individuals' engagements in particular social practices in specific cultural contexts are likely to influence their dispositions towards consumer goods and political/moral campaigns.

The rest of this chapter provides an account of how this study was conducted using a mixed-methods approach, followed by an outline of the structure of the thesis.

### **A mixed-method research design**

I began this research project informed by existing studies of Fairtrade consumption and the 'Fairtrade consumer', the majority of which came from researchers in the field of business, marketing and political science, which, as I have already indicated, offered an abstract image of the individual, reflexive citizen-consumer who uniformly acts with the knowledge of global injustices and a distrust in political institutions by choosing to consume Fairtrade products. This abstract image of the 'Fairtrade-consumer-as-global-citizen' is explicitly appealed to in the marketing material of the Fairtrade Foundation which calls upon *all* citizens to recognise their responsibility to global-others by altering their personal consumption routines. Unconvinced by this account which seemed to suggest that all individuals, regardless of their material and cultural circumstances and their existing political and ethical dispositions, would choose to use their consumption choices in specific ways in order to effect political change, I set out to find out who the 'Fairtrade consumer' or

'Fairtrade supporter' was and to understand how they gave meaning to their decision to use/support Fairtrade in the context of their individual lives and worldviews. How did these individuals organise their support of Fairtrade and how effective did they believe their individual consumption choices were at alleviating poverty in the developing world? I was also interested in those who did not count themselves as Fairtrade supporters (but may be 'accidental' or occasionally intentional Fairtrade consumers) because these individuals have been largely ignored in the existing accounts of Fairtrade consumption despite the fact that they, according to the reflexivity thesis and the Fairtrade movement, ought to be just as aware of the conditions of global exploitation and willing to act upon this information through their consumption as Fairtrade supporters have been. I found in the course of my research that these non-Fairtraders were often consuming Fairtrade without being aware of it, yet there remained the question of what it was that these individuals perceived was stopping them from using/supporting Fairtrade.

Box 1.1: Key Research Questions

1. Who are the Fairtrade supporters and how do they give meaning to and organise their support of Fairtrade in their daily lives?
2. Who are the non-Fairtrade supporters and how do their existing commitments and priorities orient them towards particular social practices and forms of consumption?
3. What is the attitude of non-Fairtrade supporters towards Fairtrade and how do they respond to the normative demands of Fairtrade campaigns that they should be changing their behaviour?
4. How does the UK Fairtrade movement mobilise the citizen-consumer? How effective do these citizen-consumers believe individual shopping choices are in the alleviation of global poverty relative to other individual actions?
5. How does the local context of a Fairtrade Town influence the forms of Fairtrade campaigning that can occur and the effective mobilisation of supporters and consumers?

Sociological and anthropological research tells us that the reasons why people consume certain goods are many and are anything but coherent or univocal (Sassatelli, 2007). The decision to

consume Fairtrade is likely to be influenced by, to name but a few, the way this consumer choice is represented in the public sphere and by our close friends and family, the existing commitments of the person doing the consuming (for example their commitment to family members or to particular social causes), hedonistic impulses, the price of the product, normative pressures which define 'good' taste and may provide an opportunity for an individual to display their ethical distinction, or a belief that this action is an effective way to alleviate poverty. Therefore, in order to address my key research questions (see box 1.1 above), I needed a research design which could reflect the complexity of Fairtrade consumption and support.

My research therefore employs a mixed-method research design using both quantitative and qualitative methods. In recent years, mixed-method designs have become increasingly popular because they can provide researchers with the opportunity to enhance and integrate findings from one method of data collection with another thus broadening the dimensions and scope of single research projects (Brannen, 1992; Bryman, 2006a, 2006b; Creswell, 2009; Moran-Ellis et al, 2006; Morse, 2003; Teddlie & Tashakkori, 2009). Whilst some people believe that quantitative and qualitative methods are incompatible owing to the distinctively different paradigms underlying each method, Bryman (2006b) has found that the 'paradigm wars' that used to rage between quantitatively and qualitatively-oriented researchers have become much less prominent with researchers increasingly adopting a 'pragmatic' approach. Pragmatism is an approach that is guided by the research questions and the suitability of different methodologies to answer these questions rather than a commitment to philosophical principles (Bryman, 2006b; Tashakkori & Teddlie, 2003). One of the most popular mixed-method approaches is 'triangulation' where the findings from one research method are used to corroborate the findings from another. However, Moran-Ellis et al (2006) suggest that this emphasis on corroboration has been overstated and instead encourage us to think of mixing-methods as an 'integrated research approach' because this allows the distinctive features of each research method to reflect the complexity of social life.

This research project is based upon a selection of qualitative methods (focus-groups, participant observation, document research and in-depth individual/couple interviews) conducted between January and July 2008 in a Fairtrade town, and the quantitative analysis of a question on the National Omnibus Survey (2002-2005). Using a 'sequential-mixed design' (Teddlie & Tashakkori, 2009), each phase of data collection built upon and informed the execution and analysis of the other phases. Although the research has a strong qualitative focus, I began with an analysis of National Omnibus Survey data which was the only publicly available data on Fairtrade consumption. This nationally representative survey provided the opportunity to explore who was most likely to think that buying Fairtrade goods was an effective individual way of alleviating poverty relative to other individual actions like donating to charity and putting pressure on politicians. The initial analysis of this dataset suggested that the types of people most likely to prioritise Fairtrade had socio-demographic profiles and particular attitudes towards development, and provided limited support for the association of Fairtrade consumption with forms of political participation/citizenship. In order to explore these findings further, and to address the remaining research questions, I embarked upon the second and third phases of data collection.

Because I was keen to discover both who the Fairtrade supporters were and the role of local contexts in constraining or enabling forms of consumer mobilisation, I employed a range of qualitative techniques within a Fairtrade town – the Fairtrade town has been given the fictional name 'Fairville' in order to protect the anonymity of my respondents. My use of a single town to conduct my research could be thought of as a single case-study design – a research strategy which aims to investigate "a contemporary phenomenon within its real-life context" (Yin, 1994: 13). However, because I have used several "units of analysis" (the town itself, and individuals and groups living within the town who had differing levels of support for Fairtrade), this case-study should be thought of as having an "embedded" design (*ibid.* 41). I chose to base the research in a Fairtrade town because it both gave me access to a group of committed Fairtrade supporters and provided the opportunity to explore how the distinctive features of the town of Fairville impacted upon the way

Fairtrade supporter networks developed. In addition, because Fairtrade towns must engage in promotional and campaigning activity to try to encourage more individuals to support the movement, I was also able to consider how citizen-consumers were mobilised on the local level and who was most likely to be convinced that consumption was an effective individual action and how this compared to the national movement's mobilisation techniques.

The second data collection phase involved conducting nine focus groups with Fairtrade supporters and non-Fairtraders supporters in Fairville, and observing how the town group and local businesses promoted Fairtrade during Fairtrade Fortnight. Fairtrade supporters were purposively sampled through their membership/involvement in the Fairtrade town group activities. However, as has already been noted recruiting non-Fairtrade supporters presented a distinct methodological challenge because it is difficult to identify individuals negatively by qualities that they lack. In order to address this problem, I advertised the non-Fairtrade focus groups as chocolate and coffee tasting sessions in local supermarkets and public spaces and through snowball sampling techniques (a discussion of this sampling strategy can be found in chapter 6). The focus groups provided great access to the ways groups of individuals understood Fairtrade (including how they rated this consumer action relative to other individual actions) and, along with the observation during Fairtrade Fortnight, some insight into why someone may or may not use Fairtrade and who the Fairtrade supporters were.

However, I was aware that I did not have any in-depth individual data which could tell me how people/couples organised their support of Fairtrade and how this may connect to their other interests and commitments. The focus groups and observations had led me to believe that those who consumed Fairtrade were not necessarily those who were distrustful of traditional political institutions – as the reflexivity thesis suggests – but people who were involved in a number of campaigning activities. So in the third phase of data collection, I conducted nineteen individual/couple interviews with Fairtraders and non-Fairtraders in order to find out how they organised their shopping, what their attitudes towards the Fairtrade movement were, how their

interests and commitments affected their shopping practices, and whether an individual's support of Fairtrade was connected to their engagement in already-existing practices. Having conducted the two qualitative phases, I returned to the Omnibus Survey data and carried out some additional analysis in the light of my findings. In this way, mixing methods has enabled me to use the findings from each method to inform the design, execution and analysis of the other methods.

In this thesis, the findings from each phase of data collection are presented in separate chapters. I have tried to retain the integrity of each method of data collection by allowing the key findings from each method to speak for themselves whilst at the same time, where relevant, highlighting how the results from the different phases have enhanced or complicated our understanding of these findings. The mixed-method design has therefore provided a more holistic account of Fairtrade consumption and support allowing the opportunity to explore individual involvement in varied social practices, the organisation of Fairtrade support and the mobilisation of citizen-consumers on the local and national level, the responses of groups of individuals to the attempts of various institutions to encourage them to use their consumption in particular ways, and the evaluations of the effectiveness of Fairtrade consumption relative to other actions from individuals and groups of individuals, both within Fairville and in a nationally representative sample.

## **Structure of the thesis**

The next chapter explores the existing research into Fairtrade consumption in more depth paying particular attention to how the conditions of late modernity and globalisation (Beck, 1994; Giddens, 1991) have been used as principal explanatory forces underlying individuals' motivations to use their consumption in political ways. By exploring how the identities of the 'citizen' and the 'consumer' have become hyphenated in discussions of 'new' forms of ethical consumption like Fairtrade, I demonstrate how the 'citizen-consumer' has been mobilised because of the efforts of a range of intermediary actors in a specific socio-political context. Although relatively little attention has been given to the social identity of the citizen-consumer, I conclude this chapter with an overview of

existing studies into the profile of the Fairtrade consumer and make a case for the importance of viewing consumption acts in the context of individuals' existing commitments and practices.

Taking the arguments of the last chapter one step further, chapter 3 explores the ways in which four historical consumer movements(18<sup>th</sup>-20<sup>th</sup> Century) emerged in specific cultural, economic and political contexts and how they each constructed a vision of citizenship which was attached to a notion of consumer power. We see how coalitions of interest groups appealed to the consumer as a way of gaining support for their wider social and political campaigns, and how individuals' motivations for engaging in consumer campaigns varied by social class and gender and were influenced by the ways these consumer items were represented. Rather than the 'consumer' discovering politics in contemporary debates around Fairtrade, this chapter will demonstrate how consumption has always been closely connected to issues of citizenship.

Chapter 4 explores how individuals are mobilised to support Fairtrade on the national and local level by focusing on two of the major promotional tools of the Fairtrade Foundation – Fairtrade Fortnight and the Fairtrade Towns movement. Through an examination of the Fairville Fairtrade town campaign, I reveal how the supporters of Fairtrade within a local campaign are often drawn from the existing configurations of interest-groups within a particular place meaning that knowledge of the Fairtrade campaign remains contained within relatively niche networks. Fairtrade Fortnight provides unique access to the institutions responsible for 'making' the Fairtrade consumer and by analysing the campaign materials and the events that occurred during Fairtrade Fortnight 2008, I demonstrate how two very different images of the 'Fairtrade consumer' are appealed to and constructed.

The next chapter presents the findings from the individual interviews with residents in Fairville. After introducing the theory of practice approach to consumption (Warde, 2005), I trace the 'careers' of four committed Fairtrade supporters focusing on how the actions of these individuals work to extend the practice of Fairtrade consumption and their existing commitments to ethical and political campaigns. The outward-looking practices of these Fairtrade supporters are

then compared to a narrative from a couple who have 'resisted recruitment' to the practice of Fairtrade support because of their commitment to a yogic-vegetarian lifestyle.

Chapter 6 explores the ways in which Fairtrade and non-Fairtrade supporters construct socio-economic, cultural and moral boundaries around Fairtrade consumption and the 'Fairtrade consumer' in order to justify why they do, or do not, use Fairtrade products. Discussions of social class are never too far away from characterisations of the 'Fairtrade consumer', whether its relevance was denied or affirmed, but rather than adopting a Bourdeian (1984) reading of this and assuming that Fairtrade consumption is used as a source of class distinction, this chapter will argue that we ought to pay attention to people's 'lay normativities' (Sayer, 2005a) because we will find that the morality of Fairtrade consumption is often valued regardless of its association with particular social groups.

Initially moving away from Fairville, Chapter 7 presents the findings from the National Omnibus Survey in order to explore how individuals rate the effectiveness of Fairtrade consumption relative to other individual actions, like donating to charity, paying one's taxes or putting pressure on politicians. Although consumption is represented as an important and new form of political participation, almost no attention has been given to how effective citizens believe this action to be. The findings from the survey are supplemented with views from respondents in Fairville who reveal some important challenges to the concept of individual consumer power.

The final chapter draws together the various arguments and reflects upon their implications for institutions that promote and support Fairtrade consumption, as well as existing and future sociological debates on (ethical) consumption practices.

## 2

### **When consumption and citizenship collide: the construction of the Fairtrade consumer**

The sheer enormity of global poverty can make people feel powerless. But your choices and your point of view are taken very seriously, by both business and politicians. Your voice can make a difference in the global trade debate – as both voter and consumer:

- Vote with your wallet – buy fairly traded goods

(Trade Matters, DFID, 2005: 36)

Fairtrade is not just about buying and selling. It is about creating a global family. One that links citizens in the rich world with farmers and workers in Peru or Burkina Faso or India [...] It is that bringing together of people which is the defining feature of Fairtrade – and one reason why so many people warm to it. Because it is putting people back into the heart of trade and chipping away at deeply ingrained injustices"

(Harriet Lamb, Executive Director of the Fairtrade Foundation, 2008: 2)

There has been a growing interest in addressing the potential Fairtrade consumer – whether as subjects of government policies, as customers of retail outlets, or as citizens of a global society. By purchasing a Fairtrade product ordinary people are told that they can make a difference to global poverty and reconnect with more personal trading relationships that a global capitalist system has undermined. Much of the existing academic literature surrounding the growth of Fairtrade consumption has tended to suggest that changes in contemporary society, such as the shift of power away from nation-states and the increased reflexivity of people's lifestyle choices, can help us to understand the increased popularity of Fairtrade products (Bennett, 2004; Goodman, 2004; Lyon, 2006; Micheletti, 2003; Murray & Raynolds, 2007; Scammell, 2003). Allusion to a new figure, the citizen-consumer, who uses their individual purchasing power to challenge unfair trading relations, appears as the driving force behind the growth of the Fairtrade movement. Fairtrade calls on individuals to contest the traditionally acquisitive and selfish sphere of consumption and act as citizens with responsibilities and duties in the global world, thereby merging the apparently dichotomous roles of self-interested consumer and politically minded citizen. However, on closer inspection the opposition of the spheres of consumption and citizenship is not as straightforward as popular representation suggests. Citizenship and consumption are multifaceted concepts and they

have not always been polarised in terms of their perceived levels of civic engagement but rather have been configured in different relationships with one another in different contexts and in relation to different products and services. This chapter pays attention to the particular ways in which citizenship and the consumer have been framed and how the Fairtrade citizen-consumer has been mobilised in relation to selected conceptions of both citizenship and consumption. I argue that it is important to take into consideration the role of intermediary actors (consumer organisations, governments, NGOs) and socio-political contexts in producing and sanctioning particular forms of participation and consumption and in according them meaning as acts of citizenship (see, for example, the opening quotations). This chapter reviews these important debates; and then raises the question of who is this Fairtrade citizen-consumer as well as how has s/he been appealed to and constructed. For, equally important is a consideration of the degree to which consumers actually assume these interpretations of their consumption as a form of citizenly action. In the last part of the chapter, therefore, I review what we know about the Fairtrade supporter and consumer and how the conflation of these two responses can help explain some of the confusion in clearly locating them.

### **Fairtrade, Globalisation and Reflexivity**

There has been a tendency to understand the rise of Fairtrade consumption as a response to the conditions of late modernity and global capitalist systems. At a time when Free Trade and neo-liberal policies are increasingly blamed with widening the gap between rich and poor, Fairtrade appears as a "modern-day market-based 'Robin Hood'... redistributing income from the consuming North to the producers in the South" (Goodman, 2004: 897). This section will focus on the ways in which narratives of globalisation and appeals to increased consumer reflexivity have been variously used to account for the growth of the Fairtrade movement.

### Globalisation and new roles for consumers

In a global economic system, we all rely on producers in the developing world to provide us with some of our most basic commodities and yet these producers are often living in conditions of poverty that are unimaginable for the consumer in the Western world. As the opening quotations to this chapter reveal, the Fairtrade movement is presented in the context of the negative effects of globalisation and the perceived failure of the free trade movement to provide real and long-lasting benefits to producers. Murray and Raynolds describe the Fairtrade movement as "the new globalization" which seeks to "re-frame globalisation from below" (Murray & Raynolds, 2007: 6). Globalisation is said to have led to a "race to the bottom" where transnational corporations are competing to exploit both people and the environment for the lowest possible input costs (*ibid.*). The IMF, World Bank, and the World Trade Organisation (WTO) have come under attack in recent years (for example anti-globalization protests at the WTO meeting in Seattle in 1999) for their promotion of neo-liberal policies and their failure to provide real access for many developing nations to the markets of the developed world – for example Global Exchange (2008) points out that many trade talks go on behind closed doors, meaning developing countries are subject to 'agreements' they were not aware were being discussed and, for those talks that do take place in public, developing nations are often unable to represent their interests because of a lack of trade personnel. The Fairtrade model attempts to address these imbalances in information and power in the current global market-system by agreeing minimum prices for crops and developing transparent and direct relationships with producers. This had led some to argue that "Fair Trade is a sustainable, market-based solution to global trade failures" (Nicholls and Opal, 2005: 19).

It is argued that because transnational corporations now operate outside of nation-state regulations (although in reality this is an oversimplified account of the relationship between national governments and multi-national corporations, see Jensen 2006), consumers now uniquely have "the power and duty to safeguard both fair economic distribution and the natural environment" (Sassatelli, 2006: 230; see also Scammell, 2000; Soper, 2008). Naomi Klein's influential book, *No*

*Logo*, used this idea to introduce a new brand of politics – which she has termed ‘anticorporatism’ – where consumers, on discovering the ‘truth’ behind global logos and their treatment of their workers and the environment, have enough “outrage” to “fuel the next big political movement” (Klein, 2000: xviii). Soper points out that companies’ reliance on our loyalty to their brands reveals “the growing subversive potential of consumption” (Soper, 2008: 202). Similarly Miller (1995) has argued that consumption is the ‘vanguard of history’ indicating a shift in political power away from production towards consumption and suggesting that that the IMF and political parties of the left and right “are increasingly the agents, not of international capitalists so much as international shopping” (Miller, 1995: 3).

It is within this context that the prototypical ‘Fairtrade consumer’ emerges who is urged to exercise his/her responsibilities as a citizen of the global world by purchasing Fairtrade. Individuals are increasingly told by Fairtrade organizations, and those other agencies which appeal to the potential Fairtrade consumer (for example government, businesses, NGOs, the media), that as the consumers of global capitalist products they hold some responsibility for the conditions under which those products were produced. In order to implicate the consumer in global chains of responsibility, Fairtrade advertising plays an important role in symbolically reducing the distance between consumers and producers and seemingly making caring-at-a-distance a ‘reality’ for more affluent consumers (Goodman, 2004; Raynolds, 2002; Wright, 2004). With close-up images of Fairtrade farmers and vignettes describing their family-life, consumers can begin to ‘know’ these people and empathise with their situation. As Harriet Lamb (Executive Director of the Fairtrade Foundation) remarked, in one of the opening quotations to this chapter, Fairtrade is about creating a “global family” and “bringing people together”. However, as Barnett et al (2005) point out, we should not assume that once chains of global relations are made visible it automatically becomes easier for all consumers to act upon them.

In an analysis of ethical consumption campaigns by the Ethical Consumer Research Association (ECRA) and the Fairtrade Foundation (FTF), Clarke et al (2007a) draw attention to the

rhetorical importance of the discourse of globalisation which implies a number of key changes in contemporary society and calls upon the empowered consumer to regulate economic institutions – to become “citizens of the world by virtue of their status as consumers” (*ibid*: 243). The authors suggest that by drawing attention to the consumers’ responsibility for systems of global exploitation and by calling on consumers to use the global market in order to act upon these responsibilities, ethical consumer organisations turn the discourse of globalisation, which traditionally highlights the dominance of companies over individuals and local places, into an affirmative narrative of consumer empowerment. However, Clarke et al also point out that the audience for this type of information tends to be rather self-selecting, providing narrative and informational resources for those who are already interested and have some sympathy with the Fairtrade movement’s aims, rather than for the generic ‘consumer’. I pay further attention to the implications of this finding below but for now it is enough to point out that the empowered global citizen-consumer, who is motivated to take responsibility for the global implications of their consumption, is not just anybody.

Discourses of globalisation tend to assume an uncomplicated shift from state regulation to market regulation oversimplifying the processes of globalisation (for example, ignoring the potential interactions between global and local processes (Robertson, 1992)), and overemphasise the independent role that consumers can play within the market given that corporations will often control the choices that consumers actually have. Nevertheless, allusions to the empowered global citizen-consumer continue to be applied to explain the rise of Fairtrade consumption (Bennett, 2004; Goodman, 2004; Scammell, 2000).

### Reflexive consumers

The use of discourses of globalisation to understand the rise of Fairtrade consumption is very often accompanied by allusions to an increasingly ‘reflexive’ consumer. Giddens (1990; 1991) and Beck (1992; 1994) have suggested that the conditions of late modernity – globalisation, space-time distanciation, detraditionalisation, individualisation – have created a climate in which a highly

reflexive self emerges. Reflexivity is the capacity of an individual subject to direct their awareness towards themselves, reflecting upon their own practices, and constantly examining and reforming these practices in the light of incoming information (Giddens, 1990: 38). Whilst reflexivity is not a new human capacity, Giddens suggests that it is radicalised in late modernity because as tradition loses hold, individuals are increasingly forced to negotiate their identity from a huge diversity of options in which the “dialectical interplay of the local and the global” are embedded (Giddens, 1991: 5). Individuals living within the conditions of late modernity have “no choice but to choose how to be and how to act” (Giddens, 1994: 75).

For both Giddens and Beck, there is a concern with how these changes alter the possibilities for political participation. For Beck, individuals become distrustful of the traditional political system feeling they are limited in their actions in this sphere and new demands for political participation emerge *outside* the political system in the form of a ‘new political culture’ governed by social movements (Beck, 1994: 185). As our traditional understandings of politics shift in late modernity, and as individuals must negotiate their own identities through their self-reflexive lifestyle choices, politics can increasingly be understood as a “politics of life decisions” (Giddens, 1991: 215). ‘Life politics’, or ‘sub politics’ as Beck (1994) terms it, bring to the fore moral questions about how we ought to live our lives and these moral issues are articulated both collectively, by governments and social movements, and individually in everyday lifestyle choices. In this way the reflexive project of the self becomes intimately entwined with life-political issues as individuals attempt to construct a coherent biographical narrative and maintain a sense of ontological security.

It is this increased capacity for the reflexive monitoring of our actions that some writers have suggested can help us to understand the emergence of Fairtrade consumption (Bennett, 2004; Goodman, 2004; Lyon, 2006; Micheletti, 2003; Murray & Raynolds, 2007; Scammell, 2003). The consumer is imagined to use the emerging global reflexive space to engage in a form of “self-directed life-politics” which draws on his/her “ability to self-actualize while constructing a morally justifiable form of life in the context of global interdependence” (Lyon, 2006: 456). Micheletti’s

work on political consumerism provides the most extensive application of the notion of life-politics to understand 'new' forms of politicised consumption, like Fairtrade. She argues that changes in the political landscape have politicized consumption so that our everyday lives as consumers are increasingly intertwined with global politics." (Micheletti, 2003: xi). She suggests that because consumers have to rely on the global marketplace for the provision of goods, most consumers are forced to trust the retailers and corporations we depend upon for our daily existence. However, this leaves us vulnerable especially when we are told about the bad practices of global corporations. In the face of our lack of control over production processes, citizens are prompted to "take politics in their own hands ...creating new arenas for responsibility-taking" (ibid: 5). Onto the political landscape emerges a new figure, the "citizen-consumer", who combines his/her role as consumer and citizen to develop "new coalitions to solve problems of risk society and global injustices" (ibid: 16).

Important to draw out here is how consumption and citizenship are imagined to hold *new* and *powerful* associations in the late modern/global society. Indeed, in many discussions of Fairtrade consumption it has become synonymous with consumer-citizenship. We can see how this discourse draws heavily on ideas of 'life politics' where consumers are imagined to find new opportunities to engage with political and moral questions in their daily lifestyle choices in the late modern world. Given the significance placed upon the figure of the citizen-consumer in understandings of Fairtrade consumption, the next section will explore how these two traditionally opposing identities have become hyphenated. However, in closing this section on reflexivity, the reader should be made aware that the 'reflexivity thesis' has "been greeted with a cacophony of critical voices" because of its tendency to lift individuals out of the social relations they are embedded within and to ignore a whole range of material, cultural and affective factors that are likely to constrain or enable an individual to construct their self-identity (Adams and Raisborough, 2008: 1169).

## **The rise of the citizen-consumer**

The request for consumers to ‘vote with their wallet’ made by the Department for International Development (DFID) in the opening quotation to this chapter, suggests that citizens are being called upon to use their purchasing choices as a way of demonstrating their responsibility to distant strangers. The use of the word ‘vote’ seems to imply a democratic process often associated with the rights of citizens within a nation. The authors of a recent study into the rise of the citizen-consumer point out that consumption and citizenship have traditionally been understood to sit at opposite ends of the political spectrum with the consumer indulging their individual, private wants in the market place and the citizen being an outward-looking figure who embraces the public interest (Clarke, Newman et al, 2007). In recent years the consumer-citizen/citizen-consumer has become an increasingly utilised concept(s) and has been widely applied to the Fairtrade consumer (Carter, 2001; Clarke et al, 2007; Lamb, 2008; Micheletti, 2003; Scammell, 2000; 2003; Soper, 2004; 2008). Indeed, Harriet Lamb explicitly refers to Fairtrade consumers as ‘citizens in the rich world’. Soper has suggested that the when individuals’ “self interested needs... come to encompass collective goods” it becomes possible to argue that consumption is “acquiring a ‘republican’ dimension and emerging as a site of citizenship” (Soper, 2004: 113). However, linking citizenship and consumption has been seen by some as a problematic task; for example, Bauman (1998) has argued that consumer society is inimical to a society based on collective welfare and responsibility. Articulating an enduring moral vision, Bauman understands consumption as a corrupting and individualizing force. It is for this reason that Clarke, Newman et al describe the citizen-consumer as “an uneasy hyphenated figure” (Clarke, Newman et al, 2007: 28).

## **Mobilising the citizen-consumer**

It is important to remember that Fairtrade consumption has only become aligned with citizenship because various commercial, civic, academic and political institutions have mobilised the Fairtrade consumer in this way. Whilst it may be the case that not all individuals who consume Fairtrade

necessarily understand their actions as a form of citizenship, the citizen-consumer remains an important figure through which to publically represent Fairtrade and to recruit supporters (Clarke et al, 2007a). We are encouraged to consider how the citizen-consumer has been constructed and made knowable. Miller and Rose (1997) have suggested that organisations that promote consumption use "productive" techniques – they focused on the forms of "psy-expertise" used by advertisers in the 1950s – to mobilise and 'make-up' 'the consumer'. In this way, 'the consumer' was understood as an active achievement of the various knowledge systems and intermediary actors who sought to understand the connections between 'human passions' and the specific qualities of particular consumer goods and used this knowledge "to act upon consumer choices" (Miller & Rose, 1997: 4). In a similar vein, Trentmann has recently argued that:

"consumers did not rise effortlessly as an automatic response to the spread of markets but had to be made. And this process of making occurred through mobilization in civil society and the state as well as in the commercial domain, under conditions of deprivation, war and constraint as well as affluence and choice, and articulated through traditions of political ideas and ethics" (Trentmann, 2006a: 6)

Therefore, the emergence of Fairtrade consumption as a form of citizenly action needs to be understood as the result of the efforts of various intermediary organisations and the wider socio-political context which has attributed powers to consumers.

The importance of paying attention to both the role of intermediary actors and the socio-political context when attempting to understand the construction of consumer identities is demonstrated effectively by Liz Cohen's (2003) *A Consumer's Republic*. Echoing the key arguments presented in this section, Cohen points out that although citizens and consumers are often considered as opposites, "no simple distinction between these roles held true over the course of the twentieth century" (Cohen, 2003: 8). Cohen instead argues that they were "ever-shifting categories that sometimes overlapped [and] often were in tension" (*ibid.*). Cohen focuses on different periods of American history – in particular, the New Deal Era (early 1930s), World War II, and the post-war era (which Cohen labels the 'Consumer's Republic) – and in each of these periods draws attention to how specific contexts enabled particular configurations of the relationship between

consumers and citizens to develop. She focuses on two competing configurations, the citizen consumer and the purchaser consumer, and reveals how what it meant to be a citizen or purchaser consumer changed over time. So for example, during the New Deal era, when concerted efforts were made by the Democratic administration to promote the recovery of the US economy, the citizen consumer was mobilised by policy makers in the Consumers Advisory Board and various female and African American-led groups to protect the rights, safety and fair treatment of the consumer. On the other hand, there also existed the image of the purchaser consumer which stressed the importance of the purchasing power of consumers for the "present and future health of the American capitalist economy" (*ibid*: 54). However, during World War II the citizen and purchaser consumer were subjected to wartime restrictions which placed the two roles into conflict so that the citizen consumer became aligned with ideas of sacrifice, whilst the purchaser consumer side-stepped rationing rules and price controls acting in their own self-interest to source consumer goods. Cohen makes clear that America was not in fact divided along these lines but rather consumers "wrestled with conflicting pressures within themselves, striking their own shifting balances between citizen and purchaser" (*ibid*: 69). By the post-war era, the roles of the citizen and purchaser consumer had come into alignment because, Cohen argued, there was a consensus amongst business, labour and government interests who wanted to protect the country from post-war depression and deliver post-war prosperity. Consuming an ever-increasing array of consumer goods was presented to the "purchaser as citizen" as a duty which enabled the growth and security of American industries.

Cohen's account is important for several reasons. Firstly, it encourages us to pay close attention to the role of business interests, labour concerns, protest movements (Cohen focused particularly on the ways that women and African-Americans used consumption as a tool for their own social and political campaigns over the three periods of history) and governmental policies in shaping the shifting relationship between consumption and citizenship. And following on from this, it suggests that configurations of the citizen and consumer are likely to be constructed in different

ways in different countries and historical periods and indeed, as suggested by Miller and Rose, in relation to different products and services.

With this in mind, I think it important to situate the emergence of the Fairtrade citizen-consumer, which emphasises consumer duty to the producer and new consumer power in a globalised world, in the context of the shift in the provision of public services in the UK which marked a moment when the 'consumer' became a much more important political figure (Kjærnes et al, 2007: 95). Similar to Cohen's account, I want to make a distinction between the concepts of *consumer-citizen* and *citizen-consumer*. There is a tendency to use the two terms interchangeably when attempting to describe Fairtrade consumer behaviour and, although they both blur the boundaries between the economic and political spheres and are understood to emerge from a similar political-cultural moment, I would argue they do not necessarily speak about the same consumer or embody the same types of social practices and relationships. I would suggest that the *consumer-citizen* emerged from neo-liberal policies of the Thatcherite Conservative government in the UK, and transatlantic New Right in the 1980s, which privatised public services and appealed to the consumer enshrined in neoclassical economics as a rational-economic actor regulating services in a market free from state intervention. This moment, marked by the diffusion of the economic doctrines of the New Right, drew the 'consumer' "into the limelight of public debate" (*ibid.*). The continual references to 'the consumer' in both economic and political language, "has provided a major impetus to a notion that consumers are increasingly active and powerful" which has led a number of powerful organisations to direct their attention to this figure at the close of the twentieth century (*ibid.*). In this moment, when the 'consumer' was conceptualised as a powerful figure across all major institutions, from government to consumer organisations, producers and multinational corporations, the idea of the Fairtrade *citizen-consumer* began to gain strength. The *citizen-consumer* was called upon to recognise the changing structure of contemporary society, which could no longer rely on political intervention to control the economy and redistribute wealth through a public welfare state and was subject to the control of world economic institutions (like the World

Bank and the IMF) who answered to the demands of multi-national corporations. Interest groups, like Oxfam, Traidcraft and the World Development Movement, increasingly appealed to and used this figure of the *citizen*-consumer to promote their demands for fairer trading rules with government institutions and businesses and to gain legitimacy for their own advocacy work. The Fairtrade consumer was thus mobilised as a citizen of the world who 'voted' through their purchases and whose interests were represented by the intermediary actors – NGOs, consumer organisations, social movements – who played a key role in their construction.

In their analysis of the ethical consumption campaigns, Clarke et al (2007a) explore this 'making' of the Fairtrade consumer and suggest that the relationship of this type of consumption to forms of political engagement is "a contingent achievement of strategically motivated actors with specific objectives in the public realm" (Clarke et al, 2007a: 231). They suggest that the mobilisation of the Fairtrade citizen-consumer identity is achieved by organisations like ECRA and the FTF, who both provide information to already-interested individuals and generate information about the Fairtrade consumer in order to make this figure visible in the public realm. On the one hand, ethical consumer organisations produce a number of publications, like *The Ethical Consumer* or *New Consumer*, and coordinate campaigns like Fairtrade Fortnight which attract a 'self selected' audience who are already concerned about the implications of their everyday consumption and who use these resources to sustain their engagement with Fairtrade. On the other hand, the same organisations that are responsible for providing information and narrative storylines to Fairtrade consumers are also responsible for generating information about the Fairtrade consumer and making this figure visible in the public realm. By collecting survey data detailing the potential size of the ethical consumer market and representing this as indicative of individuals' active consumption choices, it is possible to attract media coverage which is an important way these organisations can raise awareness about issues and establish "the legitimacy of their own claims and the validity of their own arguments" (ibid: 241). Organisations like Traidcraft, Oxfam, the FTF and Christian Aid are engaged in advocacy work with governments and corporations which relies on them being able

to show they have "broad-based popular support for the sorts of changes they are promoting", such as unfair trading rules and cancelling Third World Debt (*ibid.*). Their survey data, which details the various acts of Fairtrade consumption, provides them with this In this way, Clarke et al suggest that "it is acts, not identities or beliefs, which matter in mobilising the presence of 'ethical consumers' in the public realm" (*ibid.*). What is important is to show that Fairtrade products are being bought, which can then be represented as indicative of the active choices of thousands of consumers who support efforts to challenge fairer trading rules, even if in practice all those people who buy Fairtrade do not understand their consumption in this way or fit the image of the citizen-consumer.

This section has suggested that the alignment of Fairtrade consumption with conceptions of citizenship serves a particular agenda of those organisations that promote Fairtrade consumption and is made possible because of the wider socio-political context which has attributed power to the figure of the 'consumer'. However, it is also made possible because it assumes particular versions of the 'citizen' and 'consumer'. Both citizenship and consumption are contested categories which mean different things to different people in different contexts. Their conceptual separation has been maintained through the use of ideal-typical formulations of the consumer and citizen which fail to reflect the complexity of these two identities. Whilst citizenship is imagined to be an egalitarian, public and collective action and consumption is imagined to be a selfish, private and individualist action, scholars of both citizenship and consumer studies reveal a much more complex picture of these two spheres (Heater, 1999; Janowitz, 1994; Miller, 1998; Sassatelli, 2007; Soper & Trentmann, 2008).

### Traditions of citizenship

Heater identifies two traditions in the history of discussions on the nature of citizenship – "the civic republican style, which places its stress on duties, and the liberal style, which emphasises rights" (Heater, 1999: 4). It is the former of these which tends to be placed as a counterweight to consumption. Civic-republicanism comes from the model of ancient Greek society and was

expounded in the writings of Aristotle. The civic republican tradition calls for the balance between "freedom and rights for the individual on the one hand and commitment and duties to the community on the other" (Heater, 1994: 72). It assumes the active participation of all citizens who "share in the civic life of ruling and being ruled" (Aristotle, 1948 cited in Heater, 1994: 45). It has been argued that consumption eroded this tradition of citizenship because its "transnational and fluid forces" ran counter to the organising principles and mentality of republican citizenship which was based in small territories and communities (Soper and Trentmann, 2008: 3). The acquisitive nature of consumption, with its focus on personal pleasure, was seen to operate in direct opposition to the participation in public life demanded by the republican tradition.

Liberal citizenship, on the other hand, with its emphasis on citizens' rights and its separation of the public and private spheres, appears to sit more easily with the ideal-typical formulation of the consumer as an individualist chooser. Heater argues that it is this liberal interpretation of citizenship "that has shaped our current civic style" (Heater, 1999: 44). Liberal citizenship places few obligations upon the individual – mainly the payment of taxes – and accepts that the citizen has little attachment to their nation state and their fellow citizens. When thinking of liberal understandings of citizenship, it is fair to say that Marshall's *Citizenship and Social Class* (1950), which traces the gradual extension of citizenship rights from the civil, to the political, and finally to the social sphere, has been the most influential work. However, Marshall, like the majority of texts on citizenship, paid little attention to the role of consumption in the development of these rights. Hilton's (2003) examination of the type of consumption promoted by the value-for-money movement in post-war Britain – where consumers were directed to make informed consumption choices so that they could become a third force in society organised to defend their rights to safe and high quality products – seems to fit quite closely with the liberal approach to citizenship.

If we are to suggest that consumption is opposed to forms of civic participation and citizenship, it matters which tradition of citizenship we place it against. If consumption is understood as individual economic rational action, then its separation from citizenship is partially

maintained in the civic republican tradition but it is not sustained in the liberal tradition. Soper and Trentmann point out that it is important to be aware of the persistence of these different interpretations of citizenship when thinking about consumption because "these two traditions continue to provide protagonists with their main vocabularies in debating whether consumption is good or bad for public life" (Soper and Trentmann, 2008: 4)

If we look at the work of Horowitz, who has traced the anxieties surrounding affluence in American social thought from 1875 to 1979 (Horowitz, 1985; 2004), we can recognise the endurance of these two traditions in shaping the ways consumption has been represented and understood. Horowitz's work draws attention to the persistent characterisation of consumption as a "social problem" and a fear that the "self-indulgence of consumers" and "a rising or changing standard of living" has endangered the "health of America" (Horowitz, 1985: xvii). He discusses how various social commentators – from David Henry Thoreau and Alexis de Tocqueville in the 1800s to Lewis Mumford in the 1930s and Rachel Carson in the 1970s – have adopted a moralistic position in their calls for restrained consumption and the pursuit of more 'authentic', non-material needs in the path to achieving the good life. The Frankfurt school in particular adopted a moralist stance towards consumption suggesting that the pursuit of material possessions prevented the masses from realising their subordinate position in society and organising themselves politically to challenge the capitalist system (Adorno and Horkheimer, 1944; Marcuse, 1964). An important part of Horowitz's account for this discussion is that not all individuals are imagined to be equally as likely to succumb to "the dangers of decadence" or to lose their "self-control" (Horowitz, 1984: xi). The objects and practices which have formed the basis of moral judgements have been subject to change according to both who is doing the consuming – for example much of the moralist critique was directed at those in lower working-class positions – and when (historically) they are doing so. By the 1970s, Horowitz argues that there emerged a "post-moralist vision" which emphasized "the liberatory and democratic possibilities of consumer culture" (Horowitz, 2004: 3). This post-moralist position offered a more 'celebratory' view of consumption highlighting the opportunities it provides for self-realization,

protest and hedonism. It is possible to identify this post-moralism in the writings of cultural theorists – for example, the work of the CCCS, who suggested that consumption was a space in which identities could be created and dominant norms could be challenged (Clarke et al, 1975; Hall, 1980; Hebdige, 1979; Willis, 1978); from the growing interest in the sphere of advertising which promotes consumption as a meaningful social activity in itself (Nixon, 1996; 2003; Sassatelli, 2007); and in the work of anthropologists like Miller (1987; 2001) and Douglas and Isherwood (1979) who have suggested that, rather than promote a selfish individualism, material culture can “enhance their [individuals] humanity and develop their sociality” (Miller, 2001: 232). Whilst the moralist position developed its critique of consumption by appealing to a republican ideal of citizenship, in which citizens (with particular socio-economic characteristics) who engage in selfish consumer behaviour fail to respect their duties to one another for the good of society as a whole, the post-moralist position seems to draw on a more liberal tradition which values the rights of individual consumers to pursue their individual needs and remarks upon the positive benefits of this for developing bonds between individuals in society.

Horowitz is careful to make the reader aware that we have not actually witnessed a transition from moralism to post-moralism, not least because he suggests that moralism re-surfaced in the 1990s when the environmental and simple living movements provided a fresh wave of consumer critique, but rather that the 1970s represented a particular period when celebratory perspectives on consumption flourished and challenged much of what had come before it. Similarly, Sassatelli (2007) does not highlight a particular period during which consumption has been subject to either ‘apocalyptic’ or ‘celebratory’ views, but suggests we can find both perspectives in accounts of consumption to differing degrees from the birth of consumer society onwards. For Sassatelli, it is because the sphere of consumption can be both celebrated and denigrated that it is possible for it to emerge as a site of politics. Connections between consumption and ideas of democracy and individual rights and duties continue to be found throughout the 18<sup>th</sup> to 21<sup>st</sup> centuries, particularly demonstrated through the existence of a number of organised consumer movements, including the

Fairtrade movement, that have used consumption as a mechanism to challenge specific social, political, cultural and economic conditions (for a detailed discussion of some of these historical consumer movements see the next chapter).

### The elusive 'consumer'

Having discussed how differing understandings of citizenship have shaped attitudes towards consumption it should have become clear to the reader that 'the consumer' cannot really be understood as a purely rational economic actor indulging in their individual wants in the marketplace, but rather is a figure that only comes into being in relation to specific practices and objects. Writers in the fields of sociology, anthropology and cultural studies have given a great deal of attention to the different faces of the consumer and have attempted to understand this figure by paying close attention to the ways individuals use and give meaning to goods within a web of social relations. Indeed, Gabriel and Lang (2006) have introduced the concept of the 'unmanageable consumer' in order to highlight the multiple identities of the consumer – in a review of literature in the field of consumption, these authors identify the consumer as chooser, communicator, explorer, identity-seeker, hedonist, victim, rebel, activist and citizen. Importantly, consumption scholars have only been able to identify the multiple personalities of 'the consumer' because they have placed consumption acts into the contexts in which they occur concentrating on individual and social motivations (Bourdieu, 1984; Douglas & Isherwood, 1979; McCracken, 1975; Miller, 1998; Willis, 1978), the places and spaces of consumption (Jackson & Thrift, 1995; Low & Davenport, 2007; Malpass et al, 2007 Nixon, 1996; Zukin, 2008) and the institutions that mediate acquisition and use (Chatriot et al, 2006; Miller & Rose, 1997; Nixon, 2003; Sassatelli, 2006). These studies reveal how consumption is "informed by a variety of different logics" – for example consumers may act in order to maintain social relationships, to communicate their values, to shape and express their identity, or because they are influenced by hedonistic desires. Thus, the reasons behind consumption "are many and anything but univocal or coherent" as the ideal-typical formulation of

'the consumer' as a rational economic actor has suggested (Sassatelli, 2007: 54). Consumption can only be understood as a social phenomenon that occurs within ordinary social practices and therefore any attempt to categorise 'the consumer' as a universal figure fails to recognise this.

It is argued that the Fairtrade consumer is unique because s/he challenges the image of 'the consumer' as a passive, private and wasteful actor by engaging in an active, public and purposeful act. Sassatelli points out that there has been an enduring tendency to view consumption through a series of dichotomies – for example rational/irrational, active/passive, public/private – which risks making consumer culture into a "fetish concept" rather than an object of study (*ibid*: 122). Therefore, in light of the fact that consumption is informed by a 'variety of logics', it seems unlikely that the Fairtrade consumer's motivations for using Fairtrade will only reflect the imagined shift from private to public action. Rather, depending upon who does the consuming and where and when they do it, Fairtrade consumption could be both a public and a private action and could encompass motivations that are not entirely in keeping with the popular representations of Fairtrade consumerism. For example, an individual may buy a Fairtrade product because they believe it tastes better than other available options rather than because they want to support producers in the developing world, or individuals may buy Fairtrade because it both tastes better and communicates their ethical taste (Varul, 2008), or indeed, as the discussion in the Introduction made clear, they may buy Fairtrade without being aware of it because of changes in the way that Fairtrade products are distributed in mainstream retail outlets – they may simply want a banana.

The idea that those engaging in ethical consumer behaviour may do so for both hedonistic and ethical reasons is developed by Kate Soper (2008; 2009). Her concept of 'alternative hedonism' suggests that consuming differently can provide individuals with the "moral pleasure of knowing that one's consumption has contributed less than other alternatives to environmental destruction and social exploitation" (Soper, 2008: 195). Soper is careful to point out that the degree to which someone will experience alternative hedonism will depend upon their motives for engaging in ethical consumption practices in the first place – for example some people may decide to eat Organic food

primarily for personal health reasons rather than environmental reasons. For those that buy Organic food for self-interested motives, these individuals may experience a "self-interested form of altruism" in knowing that their personal decisions have wider ramifications (*ibid*: 196). In this way, we can see how consumption practices can at once be understood as self-interested and outward-looking, rather than imagining that Fairtrade/ethical consumerism involves a simple shift from the former to the latter. This therefore encourages us to look at how individuals understand Fairtrade and how decisions to buy Fairtrade occur within the context of individuals' lives rather than abstractly suggesting that the 'Fairtrade consumer' has become a citizen by choosing Fairtrade over non-Fairtrade products.

In her examination of critical consumerist organisations, Sassatelli (2006) cautions against assuming that those who engage in alternative consumer behaviour necessarily think of the practice as 'political' and, in keeping with her later work, suggests that consumption practices are likely to be motivated by a range of factors. However, at the same time she points to the role that critical consumerist organisations play in constructing the political consumer identity. She argues that the promotional material of associations like ECRA are responsible for substituting the traditional themes that we associate with promoting consumption - "taste", 'pleasure', 'fantasy', 'comfort', 'distinction', 'happiness' – with vocabulary which "draws on social and political activism (to purchase is to 'vote', 'protest', 'make oneself heard', 'change the world')” (*ibid*: 231). So for Sassatelli, it is at the level of representation that Fairtrade consumption becomes aligned with traditional political tropes, even if in practice consumers do not actually understand their consumption in this way.

We have seen that interpretations of consumption and citizenship are "less substantial and solid than their representation in the liberal social imaginary suggests" (Clarke, Newman et al, 2007: 4). Instead of acknowledging this elusiveness and diversity, the organisations that promote Fairtrade and the existing accounts of Fairtrade consumption hang a great deal on very specific formulations of the citizen and consumer which employ the dominant narratives of globalisation and reflexivity to

imply both the novelty of the construction and its salience in the global world. Clarke et al have suggested that, from the perspective of those organisations promoting ethical consumption, it does not matter why people buy Fairtrade or who does so, but rather what matters is the ability to show that Fairtrade products are popular and that consumption figures are growing. This is one consequence of the mainstreaming of Fairtrade which was discussed in the Introduction. However, while from a campaigning perspective the motivations of actors may be a matter of indifference – as long as they buy – from an academic perspective, it is important to interrogate and challenge the received perspective which attributes conscious choice to consumers and elides consumption and support to better understand exactly who the Fairtrade supporters actually are. The fact that the audiences for ethical consumption campaigns are likely to be those who are already disposed to support certain causes, means this question is not irrelevant to Fairtrade organisations themselves; and, as I show in chapter 4, they address this particular audience very directly at the same time as constructing a generic 'Fairtrade consumer' for them to promote. I therefore move on to spend some time considering who this "self-selecting" group are and whether they have any distinctive characteristics that could give us some insight into the ways that Fairtrade products are used and given meaning in everyday life.

### **Who is the Fairtrade supporter?**

Whilst when counting the 'acts' of Fairtrade consumption it may not matter whether the individual doing the consuming is aware of and/or supports Fairtrade, if we want to understand the role of Fairtrade in the construction of an individual's self-identity, it continues to matter that we explore exactly who the Fairtrade supporters are. It was suggested earlier that the use of the 'reflexivity thesis' as a framework upon which to hang explanations of Fairtrade consumption was problematic because of the tendency for proponents of this perspective to suggest that individuals are totally free "from the shackles of tradition and culture" to construct their self-identity (Adams, 2003: 222). If we follow through the implications of the reflexivity thesis to the extreme, we are left with the

suggestion that all individuals upon becoming aware of the existence of global inequalities will act upon this information by using their consumer power to construct a morally justifiable self-identity. This explanation (although exaggerated) ignores the fact that people from different social situations with different experiences are likely to be differentially motivated to act. Adams and Raisborough have suggested that what is needed is a more 'situated' account of reflexivity which acknowledges the continued importance of the "cultural, material and affective parameters" that were, until recently, understood as the key underpinnings of identity formation (Adams and Raisborough, 2008: 1169). More attention needs to be given to how reflexivity emerges in specific and localized contexts rather than constructing "a seemingly universal, disembedded and disembodied self" (*ibid*). Indeed, if we look at the small number of empirical studies that have reported on the socio-demographic characteristics of ethical consumer behaviour we persistently find that the propensity to engage in this behaviour is stratified according to social class, income, level of education and gender as well as being influenced by individuals' existing attitudes, practices and commitments, and the cultural contexts in which it is carried out. Those who *knowingly* engage in ethical consumer behaviour are likely to have particular characteristics and forms of knowledge that predispose them to use Fairtrade products but not all individuals are equally willing or able to take part in a 'self-directed life politics' in an emerging global reflexive space.

In what follows I examine two sets of explanations of Fairtrade consumption which raise doubts over the assumption that consumers' preferences for goods are completely free and malleable in the light of incoming information. I begin with those accounts of Fairtrade consumption which have paid attention to the social identity of the 'ethical consumer' and have found that this figure is frequently located in higher socio-economic groups. I will then turn to an emerging body of literature which stresses the importance of situating consumption acts into the social and cultural contexts they are embedded within and paying attention to how individuals develop orientations towards particular consumer goods.

### Examining social class and Fairtrade consumption

It is important to note that research which has specifically examined the profile of Fairtrade consumers is limited in comparison to that which has sought to understand ethical consumer behaviour more generally. Ethical consumerism, whilst including Fairtrade shopping, refers to a broader range of activities and concerns including recycling, using energy-efficient appliances, sustainable transport, vegetarianism and Organic foods to name but a few. The yearly ethical consumerism report published by the Co-operative Bank defines ethical consumerism as:

"personal allocation of funds, including consumption and investment, where choice has been informed by a particular issue – be it human rights, social justice, the environment or animal welfare" (Co-operative Bank, 2007: 19)

The reader should therefore be aware that much research conflates Fairtrade consumption with other areas of ethical purchasing behaviour that may or may not attract a similar type of consumer (Cherrier, 2005; Co-operative Bank, 2007; Cowe and Williams, 2001; Newholm, 2005; Tallontire et al, 2001; Worcester and Dawkins, 2005).

Ethical and Fairtrade consumers have mostly been identified using quantitative survey data which have mapped preference for ethical products against socio-demographic criteria. Findings from this research suggest that ethical and Fairtrade consumers tend to fall into higher socio-economic categories, be better educated, have higher incomes, be slightly older and tend to be women (Co-op, 2007; Dickson, 2005; European Commission, 1997; Littrell and Dickson, 1999; Tallontire et al, 2001). Given that most ethical products carry a more expensive price-tag than their 'unethical' alternatives, it is perhaps unsurprising that those in higher socio-economic groups with higher incomes and fewer financial responsibilities in later life are the most likely to buy them. Equally, given that Fairtrade products are usually food items, the higher propensity of women buying them probably reflects the gendered organisation of household consumption.

The tendency for Fairtrade consumers to fall into higher socio-economic groups encourages us to consider whether Fairtrade consumption is used by this group as a source of class distinction (Bourdieu, 1984). Bourdieu argued that people's tastes for consumer goods were intimately

connected to their social position so that those in higher social groups, with high levels of cultural capital, appreciated 'high' (or 'legitimate') culture whereas those in lower social groups enjoyed 'popular' culture. He suggested that individuals perform their distinction from class others when evaluating other's tastes and thus consumer goods and practices become the site for displaying cultural capital and asserting ones position in the social space. Bourdieu's classic work has been very influential, but has been heavily criticised for denying the consumer's individual agency and offering too deterministic a picture of social stratification, with tastes always expressive of a positional logic (Sassatelli, 2007: 95). Additionally, his suggestion that it is possible to identify what constitutes 'good taste' once and for all and across a selection of cultural fields has led to a number of important challenges (Bennett et al, 2009; Chan & Goldthorpe, 2007; Lamont, 1992; Peterson & Kern, 1996; Warde, 2009). For example, Peterson & Kern's finding that high status groups are not averse to 'middlebrow' or 'lowbrow' culture but rather adopt an 'omnivore' approach to the consumption of culture has been supported by two recent studies (Bennett et al, 2009; Chan & Goldthorpe, 2007). It has been suggested that what now characterises the cultural consumption of high/low status groups is their high/low levels of participation in a range of cultural practices.

If we were to apply Bourdieu's ideas to Fairtrade consumption, we might postulate that Fairtrade attracts middle class consumers because it provides them with the capacity to display their social distinction relative to those in lower socio-economic categories. However, this reading seems a little problematic because Fairtrade consumer goods do not appear to fulfil the requirements for being 'high-brow' cultural objects. The Fairtrade logo has been attached to supermarket-owned product lines as well as everyday-brands such as Cadbury's and Nescafe suggesting that Fairtrade is increasingly characterised not by its rarity but by its ordinariness. Having said this, Varul (2008b) detected the performance of distinction amongst Fairtrade consumers who compared their own morally worthy behaviour with the lack of care displayed by class others. Varul conducted a series of in-depth interviews with Fairtrade consumers and found that consumers construct themselves as ethical subjects through their engagement with Fairtrade consumption. This 'ethical self' was then

compared to the attitudes and behaviours of other people whose shopping habits exhibited "moral indifference" (Varul, 2008b: 8). Varul pointed out that these evaluative judgements were often aimed at competing sections of the middle classes (with references to 4x4 drivers or businessmen) but those on low-incomes were not immune. Varul says "often stereotyped under-class consumption behaviour (expensive branded track suits, game consoles etc.) was contrasted with [consumers'] own behaviours during past spots of low income (e.g. as students)" (*ibid.*). And this 'underclass' consumer behaviour was importantly used as a stark contrast to "the more authentic poverty" of Fairtrade farmers (*ibid.*).

Adams and Raisbourough's (2008) paper addresses this 'stark contrast' by comparing the representational imagery and discourses surrounding the deserving, yet distant Fairtrade farmers with the undeserving, yet proximate white working class. These authors highlight the moral significance of work in these representations; with Fairtrade farmers who are "engaged in their work and enjoying it" (*ibid.*: 1175), and the proximate white working class who are workshy, lazy, lacking in taste and denigrated by the use of terms such as 'chav' and 'pikey' (see Lawler, 2005; Nayak, 2005; McRobbie, 2004). Adams and Raisborough suggest that "what Fairtrade offers is an expansion of the space for middle class compassion, but for a different and distant 'deserving' poor" (Adams and Raisborough, 2008: 1175). In this way, they remind us of the persistence of an 'old bourgeois attitude' – "the bourgeois has always been ready to acknowledge virtue in the servant class when it finds it: pliant, loyal, living patiently in the attic, carrying on dutifully a service" (Thompson, 1980: 46–7, cited in *ibid.*: 1178).

However, although Adams and Raisborough concede that Fairtrade consumers tend to be found in the middle class, they are "reluctant to simply graft 'the middle-class consumer' into the moral economy of Fairtrade" (Adams and Raisborough, 2008: 1176). They draw on Sayer's (2005) concept of 'lay morality' in order to argue that Fairtrade consumers are likely to be found in all social classes. Sayer's work criticises Bourdieu's *Distinction* for ignoring the normative dimension of the struggles of the social field. He argues that "moral judgements are likely to be less sensitive [than

aesthetic ones] to the social position of the valuer and the valued" (Sayer, 2005b: 951) because ethical sentiments and norms have a 'universalising tendency' deriving from "the reciprocal character of social relations" and an awareness that we can be treated poorly (or well) by people regardless of their social class (Sayer, 2005a: 136). Because Fairtrade consumption is widely represented as a form of moral activity, with the "morally objective" aim of avoiding harm to others (Fegan, 2006: 125), Adams and Raisborough argue that those who consume Fairtrade are bound to cross-cut social divisions.

Interestingly, findings from some survey data bears out this conclusion (Cowe and Williams, 2001; De Pelsmaker et al, 2007; Pirotte, 2007). These studies, whilst acknowledging that Fairtrade and ethical consumers tend to be found in certain middle-class, middle-income groups, have made specific references to the problems of defining Fairtrade consumers on the basis of socio-demographic factors alone. In a review of the ethical consumer market in 2001, Cowe and Williams identified 5 per cent of the UK population as active ethical consumers, whom they termed 'global watchdogs'. Importantly the authors expressed their surprise at the make-up of this group because, although the most affluent in their sample were the most likely to be identified as 'global watchdogs', they also found that a third of this group could be classified in social classes C2DE, that the group contained a sizeable proportion of council tenants, and a quarter of the group read red-top tabloids. It may be the case that because this report was commissioned by the Co-operative Group, which has a particular interest in expanding the ethical market and their own market position, their emphasis on the non-exclusivity of the 'ethical consumer' was used to draw attention to the widespread support for the cooperative model of business in the public realm (as suggested in the section on mobilising the consumer above). Indeed Harriet Lamb, in a marketing chapter in a volume on ethical business strategy, argued that:

"it is becoming impossible to pin down the Fairtrade shoppers. They are as diverse as the product offerings covering all ages and income brackets and with an even national spread" (Lamb, 2007: 54).

Whilst it is possible to suggest that the executive director of the FTF is over-emphasising the non-exclusivity of Fairtrade consumption in order to attract more businesses to adopt ethical strategies and support the work of her organisation, it does seem to be the case that Fairtrade consumers do cross-cut socio-demographic categories. This may reflect the mainstreaming of Fairtrade which means that people are buying Fairtrade more regularly but not necessarily that they support Fairtrade. Nevertheless, in a review of a selection of academic and ethical organisation-sponsored quantitative studies, De Pelsmaker et al concluded that although highly educated individuals appear to be more positive about Fairtrade consumption than lower educated ones, "in terms of other socio-demographic characteristics the results are inconclusive" (De Pelsmaker et al, 2007: 112). This finding could lead us back to the much criticised reflexivity thesis with its emphasis on conscious choice and its tendency to ignore the distinctions between Fairtrade consumers. Fortunately, there is an emerging body of literature which provides an alternative approach allowing us to move beyond a deterministic reading of ethical consumption and social class at the same time as allowing us to pay attention to the social context in which this consumption is likely to emerge.

### Beyond choice: Social practices and Fairtrade consumption

In his examination of Oxfam World Shop customers in Belgium, Pirotte (2007) addresses the difficulties of identifying Fairtrade consumers on the basis of 'sociological profile' alone and suggests that the level and type of commitment to Fairtrade also needs to be examined if we are to understand the differentiation of consumption practices. Pirotte compared questionnaire responses from a representative sample of Belgian consumers with responses from questionnaires completed by World Shop customers (where Fairtrade products are sold in Belgium), and found that Oxfam clients tended to be both distinctive in terms of sociological profile – Pirotte identifies individuals with high incomes who are slightly older and also students – and in their levels of commitment to Fairtrade, measured in terms of means of access, reasons for buying, frequency of purchasing, budget used and involvement in associative networks. Interestingly given the debates discussed in

this chapter so far, Pirotte argues that Fairtrade consumers are “more committed citizens than ordinary consumers” who were often more involved with associations, “were more active in public actions (petitions, demonstrations, gifts, ethical investments) and more oriented towards the issues of the South” (Pirotte, 2007: 135). So Fairtrade consumers tended to be involved with cooperative or developmental associations and were generally agreed that poverty in developing countries was not the result of internal factors (like the mentality of the people and demographic conditions) but was rather the result of external factors (like debt and dependence on aid, unfair trading rules, colonialism).

Pirotte’s analysis supports a small number of studies which have stressed the importance of individuals’ involvement in social, environmental and community activities and networks for understanding Fairtrade consumption behaviour (Clarke et al, 2007b; Worcester and Dawkins, 2005; Wright and Heaton, 2007). Given that attempts to mobilise the Fairtrade citizen-consumer through ethical consumption campaigns are directed at those who are already disposed to support certain causes, it is perhaps not surprising that Pirotte found that those who were most committed to Fairtrade were also committed to other social and political campaigns. Although Pirotte alerts us to the importance of existing dispositions and commitments which results in “a tendency to act in accordance with the movement’s principles” (Pirotte, 2007: 131), he explains decisions to purchase Fairtrade as conscious choices rather than following through the implications of the importance of having existing commitments and resources or considering the ways in which consumption occurs in practice. Pirotte is not alone in this criticism as attempts to understand Fairtrade consumption have almost unanimously assumed that Fairtrade consumers consciously choose to purchase Fairtrade products over other items because of some individual, political or social motivation (for a rare exception to this, see Clarke et al, 2007b). However, this ignores a growing body of literature which draws attention to the importance of ‘routine’ and practical behaviour when individuals engage in any consumption behaviour (see Gronow and Warde, 2001; Sassatelli, 2007; Warde, 2005).

Those that have stressed the importance of routine consumption have drawn from theories of practice (see Bourdieu, 1990; Giddens, 1984; Schatzki, 1996; 2001) which is an approach that has variously sought to overcome the persistent attempts to explain social life in terms of either social structure or individual freedom. When applied to consumption (Warde, 2005), theories of practice stress the importance of paying attention to the situational, institutional and cultural contexts within which consumption occurs and view the consumer as an embodied subject whose orientation towards consumer goods develops through their involvement and commitment to specific practices – like parenthood or Christianity (see chapter 5 for more on theories of practice and consumption). For example, if a Fairtrade supporter is also a longstanding Co-operative supporter then it is likely that they will have been introduced to Fairtrade through this existing commitment and that their subsequent engagement in Fairtrade will be influenced by the fact that Co-operative stores sell a range of Fairtrade goods and the fact that the Cooperative movement aligns their movement aims with those of the Fairtrade movement (MacDonald, 2006). One of the main consequences of viewing consumption acts through this approach is to suggest that consumption is neither fully reflexive or freely chosen nor completely constrained by structural forces. So social class or gender may play an important role in enabling particular individuals to access Fairtrade (in terms of economic resources, holding particular attitudes towards hardworking farmers, having greater physical contact with Fairtrade products because of responsibility for supermarket shopping) but these alone cannot explain Fairtrade consumption and/or support. Similarly, the reflexivity thesis which places too much weight on the importance of individual choice (free from "the fixities of tradition" (Giddens, 1991: 214)) and the malleability of consumer preference in the light of new information, cannot account for the routine reproduction of much of our consumption behaviour which seems to have little to do with conscious choice and more to do with "contextual and collective constraint" (Gronow and Warde, 2001: 4). Adopting a theory of practice approach we are able to acknowledge that consumption practices are "creative acts" which are "irreducible to but not entirely outside of, the structural principles of a given culture" (Sassatelli, 2007: 107).

In order to highlight the importance of cultural context on the ways in which Fairtrade consumer behaviour is likely to develop, Varul (2009) has examined how the Fairtrade market is organised in the UK and Germany and has suggested that Fairtrade consumers understand their decision to purchase Fairtrade differently in these national contexts. In the UK, Varul argues, the privatisation of public services has led to an image of the consumer as an autonomous agent who exercises their right to free choice and in so doing regulates the market (a *consumer-citizen*). The Fairtrade consumer in the UK is able to access Fairtrade goods in mainstream retail outlets and understands Fairtrade as a business relationship based on a notion of equal exchange. By contrast, in Germany, there is an emphasis placed upon the rational planning of consumption and the consumer is an agent who is guided by expertise from the established agencies who are responsible for ensuring that Fairtrade farmers are protected. The Fairtrade consumer in Germany accesses Fairtrade goods through alternative retail outlets (the World Shop) and understands Fairtrade as something which educates producers and provides them with social welfare (that is, a guaranteed set of rights). For Varul, the national context of Fairtrade consumption informs the way that people are able to think about their responsibilities to distant others and influences the ways in which they are able to construct themselves as ethical consumers. Despite drawing attention to the important role that economic contexts and existing cultural representations are likely to have on the ways that individuals think about Fairtrade, Varul, like Pirotte and so many who have written about Fairtrade consumption, nevertheless talks about Fairtrade consumption as though it is always a conscious and knowing choice.

It seems to me that one of the key implications of the mainstreaming of Fairtrade goods in the UK market is that individuals with no real commitment to the aims of the Fairtrade movement are likely to be buying Fairtrade on a regular basis without being aware of it and therefore without necessarily using it as a tool to construct themselves as ethical subjects. On the other hand there will be those who are committed to the Fairtrade movement who do use their consumption of Fairtrade in order to construct and affirm themselves as "ethical selves" (*ibid*). It is therefore important to

separate individuals' attitudes towards Fairtrade from their consumption behaviour and not to neglect the distinction between the two in either direction.

Regardless of whether or not an individual actually consumes Fairtrade, it is important to be aware that Fairtrade consumption is widely represented in the UK as a 'good' thing to do by a range of institutions including the UK government (both local and national departments), the FTF, some of the main supermarkets and the media (see chapter 4) which, as Varul has pointed out, is likely to influence the way that individuals think about the Fairtrade 'choice'. The Fairtrade consumer has been constructed as a citizen-consumer which has both provided an orienting context for a number of individuals who are already engaged in ethical actions, and has promoted a particular normative vision of consumer responsibility in the wider public realm. Indeed, Fegan argues that Fairtrade consumption offers consumers "the promise" that they can secure "a degree of moral goodness through buying right" (Fegan, 2006: 123).

However, there is a danger when talking about explicitly 'ethical' consumption of painting those who do not (knowingly) organise their consumption along these principles as 'unethical' consumers. Barnett et al (2005b) warn against placing 'ethical' consumption against 'unethical' consumption because they believe that ethical concern is always embedded in consumption practices (Barnett et al, 2005b: 19). This idea is effectively demonstrated by Miller (1998) whose ethnographic account of shopping in London revealed how ordinary shopping practices provide the opportunity for individuals to express and develop their social relationships and how motives of care and love for family members are often constructed around moralities of thrift and self-sacrifice. Despite the fact that multiple moralities exist around consumption activity, it is relevant to explore how Fairtrade and non-Fairtrade supporters respond to those cultural and moral discourses which aim to govern them to use their consumption in particular ways. Heckman has pointed out that whilst there are "a plurality of moral voices", which are developed in the context of different forms of life and practices, there will necessarily be a "hierarchy of moral discourses" which introduce questions of power and subjection (Heckman, 1995: 40). She argues, drawing from Foucault, that an

individual can challenge these 'modes of subjection' by offering "local resistance" which questions the applicability of these hegemonic moral discourses to their local and personal situations (*ibid*: 84). In this case, it will be important to discover how those with differing levels of commitment to the Fairtrade movement respond to the suggestion that they ought to be using their consumption to fulfil their responsibilities to global others.

## **Conclusion**

This chapter began with two quotations from DFID and the FTF, each of which called upon the potential Fairtrade consumer/supporter to use their consumption as a way of demonstrating their responsibility to their fellow citizens and 'voting' for fairer global trading rules. It was suggested that these quotations were indicative of a wider set of academic and policy debates which have represented the growth of the Fairtrade movement as the consequence of globalisation and late modernity which has enabled thousands of reflexive consumers to use their consumption as a tool to exercise their political power at the same time as constructing themselves as responsible global citizens/ethical subjects. Although a number of academic studies have argued that Fairtrade consumption challenges the selfish individualism traditionally associated with the sphere of consumption, this chapter has shown that the fears of the acquisitive consumer undermining the public duty of the citizen have not always been well founded. We have seen that both citizenship and consumption are more complex than their popular representation suggests, and that the different traditions of citizenship have been used to provide very different accounts of the impact of consumption upon society. Fairtrade consumption has become aligned with notions of citizenship through the efforts of a range of intermediary actors with specific objectives in the public sphere. The construction of the consumer as a citizen, and the representation of the various acts of Fairtrade consumption as the active choices of citizen-consumers by organisations like the FTF work to sustain the support of the already-interested Fairtrader; to enable these organisations to

claim they have widespread public support; and to create a normative vision of consumer responsibility in the wider public realm.

Whilst the majority of existing research has operated with a very abstract image of the Fairtrade consumer as a reflexive, citizen-consumer, this chapter has suggested that this image needs to be re-evaluated in order to account for the specific contexts in which Fairtrade consumption emerges. I have suggested that because consumption occurs in ordinary social practices it is unlikely that all those who consume Fairtrade will do so for the same reason or with the same degree of commitment. It will therefore be important to pay attention to the ways in which people incorporate Fairtrade into the existing commitments in their daily lives and the role of social, cultural, political and economic contexts in shaping the way Fairtrade 'choices' are understood. In particular it will be important to examine how people with differing levels of commitment to the Fairtrade movement respond to the suggestion that they ought to be using their consumption in particular ways in order to enact their global responsibilities.

The chapters that follow explore these arguments in greater depth; chapter three offers a critique of the suggestion that Fairtrade consumption represents a new role for consumers through an examination of four historical consumer movements during the 18<sup>th</sup>, 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> Centuries. Chapter four examines two of the most important Fairtrade consumption promotional campaigns – Fairtrade Fortnight and the Fairtrade Towns movement – in order to provide an insight into the 'making' of the Fairtrade consumer in contemporary British society and to demonstrate that the types of individual most likely to be supportive of the Fairtrade movement are those with existing sympathies for the movement aims. Chapter five employs a theory of practice approach in order to demonstrate both how the Fairtrade supporter learns about and integrates their support of Fairtrade in their daily lives, and how the non-Fairtrade supporter might resist recruitment to this practice because of their existing commitments and sympathies. Chapters six and seven provide an opportunity to explore how Fairtrade supporters and non-Fairtrade supporters respond to those cultural and moral discourses that suggest that they ought to be using their consumption in

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particular ways in order to construct themselves as moral subjects and in order to support the political objectives of the Fairtrade movement.

## 3

### **Fairtrade as a continuing morality: Consumer Movements in the 18<sup>th</sup>-20<sup>th</sup> Centuries**

In the last chapter I spent some time exploring how existing accounts of the rise of Fairtrade consumption have used the conditions of late modernity (for example, globalisation, individualisation, detraditionalisation) as principal explanatory forces underlying individuals' motivations to use their consumption in political ways. The Fairtrade consumer is a figure who is well-informed about the existence of global inequalities and who, because of the declining influence of national political institutions and the increasing influence of multinational corporations, is able to reflexively use their daily consumption choices in order to 'vote' for fairer trade and to express their moral commitments to global others. Consumption has traditionally been understood as a sphere which privileges individual desires over collective duties to one's community but Fairtrade consumption supposedly represents a unique challenge to this understanding. Indeed, Goodman describes Fairtrade as a "novel morality" (Goodman, 2004: 903) and Fridell has argued that Fairtrade represents "the founding of a nascent international moral economy" with its promotion of a "critical consumer culture which challenges the individualistic, competitive and ethically impoverished culture of capitalism" (Fridell, 2006: 86). Fridell's use of the term 'moral economy' reminds us of E.P. Thompson's influential work on the activities of the 'English crowd' in the 18<sup>th</sup> century who sought to defend their traditional rights by rioting over grain prices and reasserting the concept of a just price against the tide of the emerging free-market economy. For Thompson, the free market led to "a de-moralising of the theory of trade and consumption" and to the demise of the moral economy (Thompson, 1991: 201). Fridell's suggestion that Fairtrade is an attempt to "re-moralise" the theory of trade and consumption seems to imply that everything after Free trade and before Fairtrade has been unable to connect with those lost traditional values of entitlement, fairness and community. However, as the discussion of Liz Cohen's work in the last chapter has demonstrated,

the assumption that consumption is an automatically selfish and apolitical sphere cannot be sustained because the identities of the consumers and citizen have regularly been stitched together creating linkages between the political and commercial domain (Nixon, 2008). One need only look at a selected number of organised consumer movements to realise that consumers have often been called upon to use their consumption to challenge particular social and political situations. Indeed, Thompson himself acknowledged that the moral economy did not disappear completely but "lingered for years somewhere in the bowels of the Co-operative Wholesale Society" (*ibid*: 258).

This chapter shows how a selection of organised consumer movements between the 18<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries – the Slave Grown Sugar Campaign (18<sup>th</sup> Century), the National Consumer's Leagues' White Label (late 19<sup>th</sup> Century), the Co-operative movement (mid 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> Centuries), and the Value for Money Movement (20<sup>th</sup> Century) – have mobilised different visions of consumer power in the pursuit of moral and political objectives. It will particularly focus on the ways in which coalitions of interest groups have come together at particular points in time in order to construct an image of the citizen-consumer. These different consumer movements are not intended to represent an exhaustive account of organised consumer activism during the 18<sup>th</sup>-20<sup>th</sup> centuries but have been chosen for the unique insights they can give us into the continuities between the Fairtrade movement and earlier forms of consumer activism. Importantly, these different movements demonstrate how the citizen-consumer had to be 'made' by various intermediary actors in specific socio-political, cultural and economic contexts rather than this figure emerging automatically because of changing societal conditions (Trentmann, 2006a). Each movement reveals how a variety of actors came together to construct a sense of being a 'consumer' in line with the aims of their campaigns, but also reveals how there was often a gap between the way the movement leaders represented their campaign and the way that consumers themselves organised and understood their consumption.

## **The Slave-grown sugar boycott**

In the 1780s, a small group of British Quakers formed a committee to protest against the slave trade. They wrote newspaper articles and sent out pamphlets across Britain to communicate the abolitionist message targeting the royal family and other notable individuals, including Members of Parliament whom they surreptitiously accessed with the aid of the doorkeepers of the Houses. Hochschild (2005) argues that Quakers had a fundamental belief in equality and democracy which made them natural enemies of slavery but were, at this time, politically marginalised and viewed as a fanatical religious sect. Their early attempts at campaigning went largely unnoticed amongst the British population, excepting, Hochschild notes, amongst former slaves who were probably more excluded than Quakers from the public sphere. Several years later, an alliance between a small group of Quakers and the leading abolitionist figures, Thomas Clarkson and Granville Sharp, marked the beginnings of the Abolitionist society which utilised the international Quaker network but drew on the Anglican Clarkson and Sharp to distribute the message to a wider public.

In 1791, the abolitionists were frustrated that their attempts to petition the Parliament to end the slave trade had failed, and they published a pamphlet by a leading Baptist campaigner, William Fox, which encouraged people to take action by abstaining from slave-grown sugar (Midgley, 1992; Sussman, 2000). This pamphlet went into 25 editions and 50,000 copies were printed in four months (Sussman, 2000: 38). At the height of this campaign it is suggested that around 300,000 families were abstaining from using slave-grown sugar. The mobilisation of a consumerist strategy to challenge the economic imperative for slavery was novel and was made possible because of a growing political and cultural awareness that consumption was a force that drove the economy, and because of the strategies of abolitionist campaigners who argued that the individual consumer was responsible for the violence of the slave trade.

Sussman suggests that the growth in the agency and power of individual consumers can be attributed in part to the shift from mercantile capitalism to free-market capitalism. By the end of the eighteenth century it was generally accepted that Adam Smith's theory, which stressed the important

role of (luxury) consumption in sustaining the economy, was accurate. Sussman argues that this “ideological development elevated individual consumers from passive participants in a mutually beneficial network of international trade to the arbiters of the moral and economic ramifications of that network” (Sussman, 2000: 18). Whilst mercantilist writers suggested that continued production of sugar was necessary to sustain the ways of life that British consumers had become accustomed to, abolitionist pamphlets re-imagined the relations between production and consumption and emphasised the connection between the consumer and the slave highlighting the responsibility of the consumer for the moral welfare of the slave.

“The slave trade is a chain of wretchedness, every link of which is stained with blood! and it involves with equal criminality THE AFRICAN TRADER-THE WEST INDIA SLAVE HOLDER-AND THE BRITISH CONSUMER!” (Allen, p7-8, cited in *ibid*: 40)

The British consumer was placed “at the head of a chain of actions” with the slave traders and plantation owners as mere “agents” of the consumer (*ibid*: 41). The most fervent abolitionists suggested that every person who habitually consumed West Indian sugar was “guilty of the crime of murder” (*ibid*: 43). The consumer was granted new responsibilities and powers in the emerging free-trade capitalist market and the abolitionists used these conditions to their advantage to convince their readers that “consumption involved... the ‘fundamental right’ to be able to choose” (*ibid*). The appeal to the power of individual consumer choice perpetuated in the abolitionist pamphlets helped to create a new form of political agency based on consumer power. However, given the fact that sugar was still considered a luxury commodity in this period, the agency of the consumer was “predicated on the luxury of choice” which was more likely to be available to bourgeois sections of the population than the labouring poor (*ibid*: 44).

In addition to the discourses that constructed consumers as culpable for slavery, Sussman points to the existence of a ‘consuming anxiety’. On a textual level, slave-grown sugar became synonymous with the flesh and blood of the slave. There was a suspicion that commodities which were produced under conditions of intolerable cruelty “retained traces of the violence with which they were appropriated” (Sussman, 2000: 13-14). Allusion to the ‘blood stain’d luxury’ (see Davies,

2001) or the 'blood-sweetened beverage' [tea] (see Hochschild, 2005) appeared as dominant tropes within the abolitionist literature. So whilst on the one hand consumers were asked by the Quaker campaign to abstain from consuming slave-grown produce as part of a "moral and spiritual commitment to the welfare of the slave" (Sussman, 2000: 37), at the same time there was an awareness of "the dangerous repercussions" the ingestion of slave grown sugar could have for the consumer. By linking the blood of the slave with slave-grown sugar, cannibalistic overtones were attached to the consumption of this commodity and this almost gothic imagery suggests that for some there was an irrational/fearful motivation behind their engagement in the abstention campaign.

Several writers have been keen to draw attention to role of women in the abstention campaign (Davies, 2001; Midgley, 1992; Sussman, 2000). Whilst women became quite active in anti-slavery societies in the nineteenth century, in the 1790s when the abstention campaign was launched, they were denied access to public forms of campaigning. Women, for example, were not allowed to be signatories on the petitions drawn up by abolitionists to be presented to Parliament (see Midgley, 1992). However, the abstention campaign offered women an opportunity to engage in political action in the domestic sphere. Midgley suggests that women often wrote imaginative poetry and anti-slavery literature which appealed to a sense of feminine sympathy and encouraged them to take part in the abstention campaign. Because women had the responsibility for household purchasing, they could use their decisions about family consumption to influence the men in their lives.

"Happening lately to be sometime from home, the females in my family had in my absence perused a pamphlet... On my return, I was surprised to find that they had entirely left off the use of Sugar, and banished it from the tea table" (cited in Midgley, 1982: 37)

Although Sussman has suggested that this construction of domestic femininity provided women with a form of political agency, Davies argues that the appeal to the 'figure of feminine sympathy' positioned women's involvement "outside the masculinised arena of 'political, commercial, or selfish considerations'" (Davies, 2001: 136). Women were seen as moral overseers of commercial interests

with an impartial interest in the outcome of the abolitionist struggle. Therefore, there was no simple relation between women's engagement in the abstention campaign and political agency because their role as moral overseers relied on them occupying a subordinate position in society.

It has been acknowledged that the sugar boycott was ineffective in bringing about an end to slavery, but was rather a powerful symbol of "a depth of popular feeling that, once harnessed, might yet prove decisive" (Oldfield, 1995: 58). Indeed Hochschild notes that by 1792 (a year after Parliament had failed to abolish the slave trade at the request of the Quaker-dominated abolitionist committee), even though there were numerous local abolition committees in every major town and city in the British Isles who organised petitions, wrote abolitionist pamphlets and supported the abstention campaign, Parliament again failed to abolish the slave trade and it was not until 1807 that the motion was passed. But the consumerist strategy did help to create grassroots coalitions between "the disenfranchised and the powerful, between public men and women, between producers and consumers and between colonized subjects and metropolitan citizens" (Sussman, 2000: 188). The 'consumer' was constructed as culpable for slavery in order to create popular support for the abolitionists' campaign and to highlight every individual's – including women's – responsibility for the fight against slavery. What was once a fringe movement, promoted by Quakers and free slaves, became a social movement with mass appeal. Whilst it is important not to overestimate the degree to which the consumer strategy alone brought about this shift, it should be understood as playing a significant role (*ibid*). Using the changing political and economic conditions to their advantage, abolitionists appealed to and constructed all individuals as 'consumers' who had the right and responsibility to choose to avoid slave-grown products.<sup>4</sup> It has been suggested that

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<sup>4</sup> Interestingly, the appeal to the consumer as culpable for slavery was also employed in the 1820s in America in the free-produce movement which promoted the consumption of goods produced by the labour of free men in a similar vein to the Fairtrade movement today (Glickman, 2004; 2006). However, the free-produce movement was largely unsuccessful possibly because abstention was more easily understood as a virtuous and moral form of engagement and in any case was more straightforward than sourcing free-labour alternatives. Indeed Glickman suggests that using consumption positively – rather than negatively – was often questioned by those who believed that "slaves would be better served if abolitionists spent their time in the political fight against slavery" (Glickman, 2004: 903). Boycott action has been a popular form of alternative politics throughout the twentieth century for example in the civil rights movement in the 'Don't shop where you can't work' campaigns and in the Gandhi-led Swadeshi movement which used home-industry to undermine British colonial power in India, and more recently in the 'No-Logo' inspired boycotts of brands like Nike and

not everyone who avoided slave-grown produce did so for the sake of the slave (some avoided the sugar through fear of ingesting the blood of the slave). Nevertheless, the boycott became a symbol of the objection of thousands of individuals to the horrors of the slave trade.

## **The National Consumers' Leagues**

In 1887, the secretary of the Women's Trade Union Association, Clementina Black, wrote an article which encouraged individuals to think of themselves as consumers with the power to challenge unfair working conditions in Britain. Black was concerned that some workers were underpaid and poorly treated by their employers and suggested that consumers could play some role in challenging this situation. Black published a 'white list' – as opposed to a black-list – of 'fair' (in terms of paying their staff reasonable wages and honouring their basic rights) shirtmakers, upholsterers, dressmakers and milliners in London in the hope that middle-class consumers could use this list to "exercise their duties to workers" (Hilton, 2003: 47). As a trade unionist, Black was interested in raising the wages and improving the conditions of workers; and although she acknowledged that an "appeal to the law" would be the most effective way to achieve her aims, she felt that there was a need to demonstrate that there was enough "public feeling" in support of the campaign (Black, 1887: 412). She therefore mobilised the consumer to take part in 'buycott' action led by the trade unionists and in order to achieve the aims of the trade union. Hilton notes that Black eventually turned away from this consumerist strategy because of the difficulties of keeping the consumer empowered with up-to-date information on the business practices of diverse firms.

Whilst the Consumer's League in Britain was a short-lived campaign, the 'white list' was an inspiration to other consumers in Europe and the US, who began their own leagues. The Consumers' Leagues outside of Britain have been widely researched both as early examples of female-led activism and consumer politics (Atley, 1978; Breckman, 1991; Coffin, 1991; Cohen, 2003;

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McDonalds. Boycotts, which encourage consumers to 'veto' certain goods, can perhaps be thought of as stronger and more straightforward political statements than buycotts which ask consumers to source alternative brands.

Chessel, 2006a; 2006b; Sklar, 1998). I focus here on the leagues in America and France because they reveal how organisations with similar strategies can have slightly diverging motivations for mobilising consumer power.

In America, the 'National Consumers' League' was led by Florence Kelley who had a strong allegiance to Quaker and Unitarian reform traditions. Founded in 1891, the American NCL emerged during the Progressive era – a time when organised workers were agitating for a 'living wage' and "a fair shake at consumption" through eight-hour working days and government regulated minimum wages and when consumers were increasingly identified as a "new category of American citizenry, an ideal broad-based constituency" who could be mobilised to address and reform social and political problems (Cohen, 2003: 21-22). The NCL was a middle-class women's reform organisation which utilised this emerging 'citizen-consumer' in order to lobby for reform to women's working conditions. Kelley worked hard to establish a strong network of local branches of the Consumers' League throughout America who could campaign locally for changes in state legislatures and she used existing women's organisations – in particular the General Federation of Women's Clubs – in order to build this grass-roots movement (Sklar, 1998). Initially, the NCL produced 'white lists', but later developed a White Label which was attached to women's undergarments to certify that the product had been produced under conditions that adhered to state factory law and did not involve forced overtime or child labour. In order to mobilise female shoppers to use their shopping choices to support the aims of the movement, the leagues' constructed "an imagined community of consumers and producers" using posters which contained images of sweatshops to inform women of the benefits of reforming their purchasing habits (*ibid*: 17). The imagined consumer of White Label goods was female and this underpinned the White Label campaign which "used aspects of women's gender identity [female undergarments] to reconstruct their politics" (*ibid*: 32). Sklar does point out, however, that the White Label also acted as a seal of approval for 'clean and healthful' conditions suggesting that some women may have bought these garments through fear that alternatives carried diseases such as smallpox rather than

from feelings of moral concern. Like the British league before it, the American NCL moved away from the White Label campaign by 1906 (principally to avoid conflict with the union label) and put its efforts into lobbying for minimum wage limits and maximum working hours drawing on its established grassroots network and public support in order to do so.

The American league drew therefore on a diverse network of women's organisations to mobilise a particular image of consumer power which, like the British league, could create popular support for changes in labour legislation. In France, the Ligue Sociale d'Acheteurs (LSA), whilst essentially utilising the same repertoire of actions, namely white lists and investigations into factory conditions, drew its support from a Social Catholic base which mobilised a different sort of citizen-consumer. Chessel (2006a; 2006b) points out that the LSA was a consumers' league that was organised by both men and women as a way of translating their Catholic religion "into daily practices which would ultimately affect a broader transformation of society according to religious principles" (Chessel, 2006a: 82). The League's founder Henriette Brunhes learnt about the activities of the American NCL and believed that a consumers' organisation offered a "solution for women in the search of practical social action" (Chessel, 2006b: 56). As a Catholic and a member of the 'grande bourgeoisie' (a group close to nobility in France), Brunhes drew support for the LSA from these social networks. Chessel reveals that the class-basis of this organisation was skewed towards those in the upper and middle classes and that this was evident in the types of reform suggestions the organisation proffered. In particular, the workers the LSA sought to help were only ever imagined as workers and not as consumers. So, for example, advice for women to plan ahead, buy in advance and try to encourage shops to close early on Saturdays and on the Sabbath reflected and promoted the "behavioural norms of the bourgeoisie" rather than taking into consideration the consumption practices of working women (Chessel, 2006b: 63). The membership of the LSA was not limited to bourgeois women, but also drew on prominent male Social Catholics located in the intellectual and commercial fields, in particular economists and lawyers who were keen to promote state intervention as opposed to the laissez-faire doctrine pursued by liberal thinkers. Unlike the

American NCL who lobbied the US government directly for reform changes, the LSA acted more indirectly. In particular the women of the LSA were never recognised as 'experts' so their 'indirect action' was usually organised by the men of the LSA who relayed the messages and research of the consumers' organisation to the other reforming institutions to which they belonged (Chessel, 2006b: 65). In this way, the LSA used consumer activism as an "opportunity to affect the mentality and social action of Catholics" as well as playing a role, principally through research into working conditions, in the wider movement to reform labour legislation (Chessel, 2006a: 93).

Before concluding the discussion of the NCLs, it will be worthwhile to consider the claims that these leagues gave women the opportunity to perform acts of citizenship before they had been given the right to vote (Chessel, 2006a; 2006b; Sklar, 1998). It is suggested that because these organisations were predominantly run by women who used their positions to exert moral and political pressure on society, they should be understood as an early attempt by women to demonstrate their "value as equals to men in public life" (Sklar, 1998: 34). However, it would be wise to be a little cautious about interpreting women's engagement in the NCL campaigns as a preface to the fight for women's political rights. Prochaska (1980) considered the role that women have played in philanthropic organisations in the 19<sup>th</sup> century in Britain and suggested that those women who were involved in philanthropic efforts that addressed the emancipation of women were rarely preoccupied by the extension of the franchise to women. Rather, he suggested that many women engaged in philanthropy in order to express their distinctly feminine virtues of compassion and sympathy and, because the majority of women followed some form of religious doctrine, they used charity work as a 'mission' to demonstrate their salvation through service and self-sacrifice. In particular, women's claim to moral authority were based on their subordinate position in society and Prochaska detected a fear amongst female philanthropists that "if they entered the public arena they might lose their special qualities" which they only held because of their "confinement to home and family" (Prochaska, 1980: 226). Having said this Prochaska points to the important role women played in bringing their "domestic experience... to the world outside the home" and how through

their engagement in philanthropic work women began to be seen as competent individuals with valuable skills (*ibid*: 7). So whilst women's use of the sphere of consumption in the NCLs can be partially understood as act of citizenship we should be mindful of the fact that they were only really able to lay claims to their moral authority in this sphere because of their subordinate position within society, and that they may have been motivated to demonstrate their own virtue through consumption as much as oppose current labour legislation.

The female led NCLs across Europe and the US provide us with an important insight into the ways in which consumers were mobilised by differing social and religious organisations in the 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries. These citizen-consumers were encouraged to consider the production processes behind the products they consumed and were urged to use their shopping choices positively in order to improve labour conditions. We have seen how the leagues often used the public support and grassroots networks they had formed around their consumer campaigns in order to engage in the lobbying of government for reforms in labour legislation. Through examining the important national differences in the organising principles of the American and French leagues, we have seen how differing organisations in different social contexts have constructed and mobilised a slightly different citizen-consumer. Whilst there may have been self-interested motives in purchasing white labelled products because of hygiene fears and a desire to display feminine virtue, the NCLs highlight the important role of consumption in promoting labour reforms for both male and female workers and in providing a position for women (and Social Catholics) to act in the public sphere.

## **The Co-operative Movement**

Whilst the slave-grown sugar boycott and the NCLs were organised by and addressed towards middle class consumers, the Co-operative movement provides us with an example of consumer activism that originated from working-class concerns. The Co-operative movement "grew out of the critique and rejection of an increasingly individualistic, market-oriented and competitive mode of production/consumption in Eighteenth-century England" (Gurney, 1996: 11-12). Early examples

of cooperative associations can be found as early as the 1760s when flour mills were established by the urban poor to provide them with access to inexpensive and unadulterated bread. But Gurney has argued that the turning point came in the 1820s when the Owenite movement, which was growing popular with the working classes, recognised the potential of cooperative stores to re-order society according to Socialist principles. Several worker-owned stores and workshops were opened in 1828 with the intention of using the profits to invest in community-building projects (rather than the profits returning to the employers or retailers), and by 1832 close to 500 such stores were in existence (Taylor, 1983: 85). Given the growth and popularity of these stores and the widespread exploitation of working people in the marketplace – the most common abuses were short measure, adulteration of foodstuffs, truck and company stores (Gurney 2009: 95) – the radical working class movement, Chartism, “took up the weapon of political shopping” (*ibid*: 106). After their attempts to pressure national governments had failed, Chartists turned to cooperative storekeeping, but unlike the Owenite-led stores, the practice of cooperation was not based on forms of community-building in the hope of achieving some “far-off future utopia”, but was linked to attempts to radically transform existing political relations (*ibid*: 101). However, following the defeat of the general strike led by the Chartists in 1842, there was an acceptance that economic, social and political transformations needed to be separated out and the Cooperative society founded in Rochdale by Owenites and Chartists in 1844 emphasised this political neutrality (Gurney, 2009: 104).

The Equitable Pioneers of Rochdale have been called “the most influential consumer cooperative in European and American history” whose principles have served as an important foundation for the later cooperative movement (Furlough & Strikwerda, 1999: 8). Rochdale was a textile town which had become a centre of labour protest following the introduction of the power loom which displaced handloom weavers. Although Rochdale had high levels of poverty and unemployment in the 1840s, Fairbairn points out “the Rochdale Pioneers did not rise spontaneously from need, but were organized consciously by thinkers, activists, and leaders who functioned within a network of ideas and institutions” (Fairbairn, 1994: 4). The town had a strong Owenite movement

and a history of participation in the trade union movement and it was a group of Owenites, weavers, Chartists and temperance campaigners who came together to form the Equitable Pioneers. Drawing more from the Owenite tradition the retail cooperative was to be used as the first step in the creation of a utopian self-supporting community. The cooperative was a democratically controlled and member-owned business whose distribution of profits was related to member's purchases rather than upon their ownership of shares – the innovative 'divi'. Whilst the utopian cooperative community was never realised, these basic principles were applied to subsequent associations across the UK and, although the success of other cooperative associations in Britain was uneven and related to favourable local contexts, by the outbreak of the First World War cooperative membership had reached well over 3 million (see Gurney, 1996: 18). The creation of a Cooperative Wholesaling Society (CWS) in 1863 which supplied cooperative goods to the growing number of associations, the organisation of cooperative educational and social activities, and the development of the Women's Cooperative Guild all played an important role in this growth (Fairbairn, 1994; Gurney, 1996).

The Co-operative movement is particularly important when we come to consider how it configured the knowledge about its aims with the identity of the consumer. Gurney argues that the Co-operative movement did not seek short term political changes at the level of the state but rather sought to build a cultural revolution that would realise the transformative potential of the movement in the long-term. The Co-operative movement's "ultimate ambition was to reintegrate the economy into the common social life of the people" and in order to do this there was a need to create a feeling of community amongst its members (Gurney, 1999: 143). Consumers were encouraged to shop at Co-operative stores in a number of different ways. The 'divi' was an important way of securing the loyalty of the co-operative consumer, particularly for women on low incomes who could use their accumulated divi for special purchases. The movement placed a strong emphasis on the provision of social and cultural activities particularly education (lectures and reading rooms at libraries) because it was hoped that the working classes could become empowered and equipped

with the tools to transform existing social, economic and political relations. Working-class, married women were particularly important to the creation of a social life around the store both as daily shoppers and as organised members of the Women's Co-operative Guild. The local store, visited daily for basic provisions, was a "social nexus" where women met friends and neighbours and where they could be sure they would be treated civilly regardless of their income (Gurney, 1996: 62). The store arranged recreational activities such as tea parties, soirées, festivals and choirs, field days, galas and outings, demonstrations and marches (*ibid*: 65). The Cooperative Festival, which occurred yearly and displayed cooperative goods as well as providing entertainment for the whole family, can be seen as an alternative to advertising which helped to promote the Cooperative movement and working class members' loyalty to it. Many of these tactics have been employed by the present-day Fairtrade movement. For example, the yearly Fairtrade Fortnight which organises events to showcase Fairtrade products and tries to secure the commitment of already-existing supporters to the movement. The next chapter will consider this event in some depth.

The broad aim of the Cooperative movement was to create a 'Co-operative commonwealth' where workers and consumers would own and control the means of production and the oppositional culture built around the Co-operative consumer choice was supposed to generate "a new social feeling" which would challenge the individualist theories of society (*ibid*: 73). Whilst the construction of a cooperative culture around the stores aimed to mobilise consumers as "active members rather than passive consumers", we must be careful not to overestimate the degree to which all members subscribed to the cooperative culture (*ibid*: 60). Indeed Gurney notes how most rank-and-file members adopted a more flexible approach to consumption and often shopped at the Co-op for some items but then visited private or department stores for other items. Hilton (2003) has recently argued that for the majority of cooperative members the 'divi' was the main reason for shopping at the cooperative store and that few members were committed to seeing the cooperative commonwealth emerge. Although the dividend has long been criticised for de-radicalising the movement and moving it away from a community built on Owenite principles, Gurney argues that

the Co-operative movement produced "its own brand of utopianism" in the principle of the dividend and suggests a number of other reasons why the movement failed to fulfil its utopian potential (Gurney, 1996: 10).

The appeal to the all-inclusive category of the consumer was one of the reasons why Fabian socialists such as Beatrice Potter supported the movement (see Fairbairn, 1994: 15; Potter, 1891); yet Gurney believes that class collaboration obscured the fact that cooperation was a working-class association which exacerbated divisions in the movement. For example, the movement was often critical of industrial action, which they felt wasted valuable funds that could be put to better use in the development of the collective commonwealth. This placed it in conflict with both workers in the movement who felt that their wages were not sufficient and with the developing labour movement (Gurney, 1999: 155). Although the movement remained popular in the inter-war years, by the 1950s many of the contradictions within the movement came to a head (Gurney, 2005). Wedded to a tradition of thrift and self-improvement through education, it was unable to compete with the hedonistic and luxury consumption which marked much consumer spending in the post-war era. The principle of a collective of organised consumers was increasingly challenged by the ideology of an individualistic consumer who had begun to exert a "hegemonic influence across both polity and civil society" (Gurney, 2005: 959). This figure of the individual consumer (the focus of the Value for money movement, described below) undermined the cooperative alternative in economic and political spheres and consigned cooperation to the social and political margins (*ibid*: 987)

What this history of the Co-operative movement reveals is how a 'moral economy' of cooperation was developed in the nineteenth century that coexisted, and continues to co-exist, alongside the capitalist system. A new consumer identity emerged when knowledge about the Co-operative movement's aims were configured with the social institution of the co-operative culture. Whilst not all who shopped at the Co-op were committed to the emergence of a Co-operative Commonwealth, the movement organisers (mainly working-class activists drawn from the labour,

Owenite and Chartist movements) sought to construct an active community of consumers who would support the collective campaign, through the provision of the divi, and social and educational activities around the store. Despite the Co-operative movement's decline in the 1950s, it is important to consider the role of cooperation in the development of the contemporary Fairtrade movement. Fairtrade products have been sourced from worker cooperatives since the movement's inception in the 1970s and the Co-operative Retail Group have shown a great deal of support for the Fairtrade movement and other forms of ethical trading as a way of promoting their social values and differentiating themselves from other supermarkets (MacDonald, 2005; Pestoff, 2003). As the last chapter has indicated (and following chapters reveal), Fairtrade supporters are often active co-operators who join with other social and political activists in order to organise social events to promote Fairtrade and unite consumers under a common cause and culture. Whilst the Co-operative movement's support of Fairtrade has been at times contested (see Anderson, 2009), the movement remains important for its continued appeal to collective 'consumers' to use their choices to achieve wider social and political aims.

### **Value for Money Movement**

As has already been suggested, the Co-operative movement ran into difficulties in the 1950s and as a result it failed to take the lead in debates surrounding consumer protection in post-war Britain (Gurney, 2005; Hilton, 2001; 2003). Hilton's account of the Consumer's Association (CA) and its construction of the consumer as an *individual* who uses their informed consumer choices to act as a 'third force' in society suggests that consumer politics did not disappear following the demise of the Co-operative movement but it did radically change. Hilton argues that whilst the earlier forms of consumerism appealed to a consumer concerned with shortage and adulteration, the consumerism that emerged in post-war Britain was concerned with proliferation and plenty (Hilton, 2001: 247). Whilst it is important not to examine the history of consumer movements in terms of distinct epochal shifts (for example, from a period of necessity to one of affluence), it is possible to identify

a changing socio-political context following the Second World War and to examine how appeals to the consumer shifted accordingly. Just as Cohen (2003) identified the post-war era as a time when the consumer was encouraged to exercise their citizenly duty as a 'purchaser consumer' in an attempt to rebuild America, Britain similarly paid increasing attention to the role of the consumer in the regulation of the marketplace.

It is fair to say that consumers in the 1950s enjoyed greater disposable incomes and access to an ever-expanding assortment of consumer goods which were sold and promoted with new retailing methods such as "high-pressure sales techniques and manipulative advertising" (Hilton, 2001: 248). The rate of economic growth "outstripped the consumer's ability to stay informed of such developments" and the housewife, and increasingly male consumers, were in need of advice about how to discriminate between consumer goods (*ibid*). The CA was established in 1956 in order to provide such advice through the comparative testing of commercial products. The CA was a coalition of professional people – economists, engineers, scientists, academics, business executives and civil servants – from across the political spectrum who were "united by their faith in expertise and motivated by the common feeling that the consumer was insufficiently considered by British manufacturers" (Hilton, 2003: 199). The CA also drew on the expertise of existing consumer bodies, for example the Women's Advisory Committee (a coalition of socially and politically conservative women's organisations who were part of the British Standards Institute) who offered advice to middle-class housewives and promoted the importance of 'standards' as "the best means of promoting the interests of the consumer" (*ibid*: 181). The CA was headed by Michael Young, who had for some time considered the 'consumer' an important figure in attempts to answer social and economic questions. Young previously worked for the think-tank Political and Economic Planning in the 1930s which frequently placed the 'consumer' at the heart of its policy documents and when he joined the Labour Party in 1945 he was influenced by Antony Crossland.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> Anthony Crossland offered a challenge to Labour's ascetic tendencies and "saw no incongruity between high levels of consumption and socialist ideals of brotherly love" (Hilton, 2003: 271). Black (2004) suggested that Crossland's form of

The CA was keen to stress both its political neutrality with cross-party support – although there was a bias towards the centre-left agenda – and its independence from trade interests by refusing hospitality from companies and prohibiting Council members from having any connections to business (Hilton, 2003: 198 & 206). They aimed to provide consumers with impartial, expert advice in order to help them make informed and rational purchasing decisions. The CA were motivated by a critique of advertising and a belief that consumers needed to be protected from powerful producers and marketing strategies whose purpose was to dupe them into buying goods that were unsuited for their requirements. The CA engaged in the comparative testing of products drawing on the expertise of its staff, the outcomes of which were published in a member's monthly magazine called *Which?* offering 'best buy' advice. In their first year, *Which?* had 47,000 subscribers and by 1961 the membership had reached a quarter of a million (*ibid*: 210). The membership of *Which?* was heavily skewed towards those in the middle-class, described by Black as "a consumer aristocracy", and attempts to expand its membership and scope through public education and high-street advice centres were largely unsuccessful (Black, 2004: 63). Goods, such as kettles, washing machines and cars, were evaluated according to their use-value rather than for their aesthetic qualities which has led some to describe the advice as puritanical and ascetic (Aldridge, 1994; Black, 2004). Aldridge suggests that *Which?*'s celebration of use-value appealed to a consumer who "is disciplined in his or her approach to consumer choice, willing to defer gratification, unconcerned with superficialities, steeled against the siren song of advertising, and prepared to devote time to the serious business of rational consumption" (Aldridge, 1994: 907). In short, the CA appealed to the emergence of the male consumer in the 1950s who was at this time beginning to place "emotional and intellectual investment in consumption rather than production" (Hilton, 2003: 203). Whilst *Which?* appealed to and constructed the 'consumer' as a rational purchaser, it is unlikely that consumers organised their consumption solely on the basis of the information provided. Rather we

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Labour revisionism, later described by Young as the Social Democratic Party, made an important contribution to the development of the CA.

can imagine that *Which?* offered its subscribers an enjoyable and informative guide to a range of comparable goods, who then adopted a flexible approach to their shopping drawing on this information to differing degrees.

Hilton suggests that the CA should be understood as a political movement because the founders attached an idealistic vision to their rational direction of consumption and production. Many believed that it would be possible to create a better society with consumers acting as a counterweight to industry, forcing bad manufacturers to improve their standards and enabling good ones to prosper. In a society dominated by trade unions and manufacturers, consumers could become a 'third force' who could "better direct economic development" (ibid: 217). The CA set up a number of local consumer groups in the 1960s who could provide information to local members on where to buy goods recommended by *Which?* and this grassroots movement achieved a total of 5,000 members with fifty local consumer groups by 1963 (ibid: 214). However, it has been acknowledged that whilst the activist milieu of the CA were committed to consumerism as a social movement, the majority of the subscribers to *Which?* had little knowledge of the wider aims of the organisation (Black, 2004). The information provided by CA was directed towards individual consumers in order to enable them to achieve the best personal value for money. Unlike the Co-operative movement which aimed to construct a collective culture, the Value for Money movement provided information to the consumer that s/he would then use to act alone to "become a discriminating rather than an active consumer" (Black, 2004: 76).

Hilton has suggested that the appeal to the individual consumer, rather than a collective of consumers, was a development that was also occurring within the state, and it was for this reason that the CA was able to fill "more pages of the statute book than any other pressure group this century" (Hilton, 2005b: 316). Because the CA and the state shared some common assumptions about the role of consumer protection and a recognition of the rights of the individual consumer, they were "far more likely to have practical influence on government policy" with its reformist, individualist, rational economic agenda" (Hilton, 2001: 259). Indeed the consumerism promoted by

the CA, with its focus on individual consumer's rights (in keeping with the liberal tradition of citizenship), has arguably been the most dominant form of consumer politics in post-War Britain (*ibid*: 242).<sup>6</sup> The value-for-money 'consumer' was made in the context of changing societal conditions in post-War Britain (growing affluence, an ever-expanding range of consumer goods, and the political hegemony of the individual consumer) and through the efforts of a coalition of professional individuals whose expertise worked to both empower and speak for the consumer in the public sphere by influencing governmental policy.

### **Fairtrade as a continuing morality**

We have seen through an examination of these various consumer movements that Fairtrade consumption does not really represent a 'novel morality', as Goodman (2004) and others have argued, but rather a 'continuing morality'. The emergence of the new political economy of the free market did not demoralise the economy and trade (Thompson, 1991) but rather provided new ways of thinking about consumption and morality. This chapter has demonstrated how the 'consumer' has been appealed to and constructed by various social and political movements from the end of the 18<sup>th</sup> to the second half of 20<sup>th</sup> century as an individual (or as a collection of individuals) with new forms of power and the potential to achieve ambitious political, social and cultural aims. It is not the case that newly reflexive consumers have "discovered agency and morality only in recent battles for fair trade" but rather "consumers and social movements have throughout modern history played an integral role in the creation of global markets and imperial systems" (Trentmann, 2007: 1080). It is surprising therefore that such little attention and recognition has been given to these earlier movements which in many ways pioneered the types of consumer mobilisation so frequently invoked by Fairtrade organisations today. Discussions of Fairtrade have given great explanatory

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<sup>6</sup> Interestingly the comparative testing model has been employed by the Ethical Consumer Research Association in its publication *Ethical Consumer*, which provides 'best buy' advice on the basis of companies' commitment to animal rights, human rights, the environment, and the political regimes in the countries that products are sourced from. However, Which? (formerly the CA) has not really involved itself with ethical consumption initiatives. Hilton (2005a) argues that it needs to embrace the emerging concerns around Fairtrade and the environment and, in the spirit of Michael Young, take a position on the rights and duties of the consumer rather than allowing economic interests to dominate.

power to the emerging global capitalist system and the rise of consumer reflexivity; however, this chapter has shown how similar conditions (for example, the emerging free-market economy in the slave grown sugar campaign) have been utilised by social and political activists in order to construct an active (reflexive) consumer identity in earlier periods of modern history. Whilst, we must be aware that moralities of consumptions "are always specific to time and cultural context, and are mediated by other existing traditions" (*ibid*: 1097), paying attention to these historical constructions of consumer power, or as Glickman puts it "a longue duree perspective" (Glickman, 2004: 904), can reveal the important continuities and novelties of modern-day consumer activism.

Micheletti examined earlier examples of consumer movements in her study of contemporary consumer activism; but she argued that contemporary political consumerism, like Fairtrade, is "more global in orientation, focuses on postmaterial or postmodern concerns and... represents the public virtue more than a private virtue tradition of political consumerism" (Micheletti, 2003: 108). In other words, she argues that consumers in the past were more motivated by self-interested motives whilst consumers' actions today are more outward looking with a concern for global public duties. The consumer movements discussed in this chapter have demonstrated how the 'consumer' has been motivated by both public and private concerns and challenge Micheletti's conclusions. Similarly, whilst Clarke et al acknowledge that Fairtrade builds on the solidarity concerns of the labour movement, Co-operative societies and the trade justice movement, they argue that Fairtrade, unlike these earlier movements, "seeks to embed these in everyday concerns with the quality of goods and services consumed in homes and workplaces" (Clarke et al, 2007a: 236). The slave-grown sugar movement and the Co-operative movement, in particular, reveal how everyday consumer commodities have become the focus of wider social and political campaigns. Indeed the naming of workplaces and communities as Fairtrade spaces could be thought of as an attempt to create a collective culture around the movement's aim, in a similar vein to the activities of the Co-operative movement in the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries. This chapter has been an attempt to address the dismissal of earlier consumer movements in existing attempts to understand contemporary Fairtrade

consumption. It has shown how consumption has long been an arena for the expression of political concerns and has revealed the persistence of distinct consumerist strategies by those who have called the consumer to action, such as boycotts, buycotts, consumer education, provision of social and cultural events, and so on. Many of the important continuities will become apparent as this thesis develops, but I would like to end this chapter by drawing out some key points which will inform my approach to analysing the Fairtrade movement in subsequent chapters.

First, I think it is important to be aware that each of the organised consumer movements discussed relied upon a coalition of interested individuals and groups who appealed to the figure of a consumer that they themselves had constructed in line with their own concerns. The movement organisers often had explicit aims – whether that was ending the slave trade, reforming labour policy, building a Co-operative commonwealth, or creating a 'third force' in society – and they each used their figure of the 'consumer' to create popular support for these aims and/or influence government policy. We have seen how religious groups, trade unions, women's organisations and professionals have come together at different points in time and have constructed different formations of the 'consumer' dependent not only upon the interests of the movement organisers and grassroots activists, but also upon the specific social, cultural, economic and political contexts that these individuals worked within. For example, we saw through an examination of the National Consumer's Leagues in different national contexts how the different social make-up of these Consumer's Leagues within distinct social and political contexts had an impact on the forms of campaigning available to the leagues and the type of consumer they attempted to appeal to. Similarly, Gurney noted how the formation of Co-operative societies "were deeply rooted within their local environment, and social profile, ideology and cultural life could differ significantly between societies depending on the specificity of political traditions and socio-economic determinants" (Gurney, 1996: 24). Thus when we come to examine Fairtrade consumption it seems important to be aware that geographical and cultural contexts are as important in the 'making' of the consumer as the specific organisations and individuals that have defined, spoken for and politicised

this figure. It will be important to consider how the Fairtrade consumer is 'made' into an identifiable subject through an examination of both the national discourses and promotional strategies aimed at consumers as well as the role of local contexts in shaping the practice of Fairtrade support – something the next chapter will aim to address through an examination of the yearly Fairtrade Fortnight campaign at both the national and local level.

Although civil society organisations, governments and individuals construct a particular image of the 'consumer' in order to promote their specific agendas, it does not necessarily follow that individuals understand their consumption in the same way as these intermediary actors represent it. We have seen how at times there has been a gap between the campaign language and both the consumer's motivation for engaging in the campaign and the consumer's organisation of their consumption. The consumer has been variously encouraged to care about the politics of the products they consumed and yet 'consuming anxieties', a desire to draw attention to feminine virtue and the search for alternative products that appeal to their hedonistic (as opposed to utilitarian or rational) unconscious consuming desires have equally influenced consumers' motivations to buy or resist these products. I would therefore suggest that the only way to address the often ambivalent relationship between the campaign language and consumers' motivations for consuming/abstaining from particular products is through a close examination of the ways consumption practices occur within the context of consumers' lives. In keeping with the conclusions from the last chapter, I argue that we should pay attention to the different logics that motivate Fairtrade consumption and the ways individuals use and give meaning to these goods.

## 4

### **"Change Today, Choose Fairtrade": Fairville and the Fairtrade Fortnight Campaign**

Since 1995, the FTF have co-ordinated an annual promotional campaign called 'Fairtrade Fortnight'. Usually occurring during the first two weeks of March, Fairtrade Fortnight is a period when the organisations responsible for mobilising and constructing the Fairtrade consumer as a citizen with responsibilities towards producers in the developing world increase their campaigning work; providing information to already-interested individuals and increasing the visibility of Fairtrade and the 'Fairtrade consumer' in the public realm. Bringing together a wide range of intermediary actors from various fields – NGOs, businesses and retailers, the media, the government, producers – the campaign provides us with a unique insight into the key agencies responsible for 'making' the Fairtrade consumer (see Trentmann, 2006a; Miller and Rose, 1997). As we saw in the previous chapter, at different periods in modern history coalitions of individuals and interest groups have come together in order to construct a sense of being a 'consumer' in line with the aims of various social and political campaigns. Each of these coalitions was operating in very different cultural, political and economic contexts which had an important impact upon the type of citizen-consumer they were able to mobilise. Just as the organisation of National Consumer's League campaigns varied across countries, Varul (2009) has revealed how the Fairtrade consumer is appealed to differently in the UK and Germany because of the divergent ways Fairtrade consumption is represented, distributed and understood in these cultural contexts. Sassatelli points out that there are both "local and institutional logics... which orientate consumption practices on a daily basis" (Sassatelli, 2007: 101) which suggests that as well as there being national differences in the ways the citizen-consumer is mobilised, it is likely that there will also be local differences. Whilst Fairtrade Fortnight occurs all across the UK and is marked by a number of national events, it also relies upon a network of local supporters (often those who are organised in Fairtrade Town networks) who are

responsible for promoting this campaign in their local town, workplace or church. Therefore, it will be important to explore how this promotional campaign is organised on both the national and the local level.

In order to be able to highlight the local dimensions of this campaign, this chapter must begin by providing the reader with an account of how the Fairtrade Town where this study is based became established. Not only will this help the reader to contextualise the claims made in this chapter, but it will also be important for subsequent chapters where views from residents within this town are presented. In describing how the Fairtrade Town was founded in Fairville, I will draw attention to its unique features in order to demonstrate how the formation of Fairtrade town groups are deeply rooted within their local environment, just as Gurney (1996) has shown that the formation of local Co-operative societies were dependent upon the specificity of social and political traditions within a place. I then turn my attention to the 2008 Fairtrade Fortnight Campaign which called upon consumers to 'Change Today, Choose Fairtrade'. By focusing on the promotional material distributed by the FTF to local campaigners and the commercial sector, and the key media events that marked this Fortnight, I examine how the vision of the active Fairtrade consumer is constructed at the national and local level by a range of organisations and local interest groups.

### **Fairville: Placing the Fairtrade consumer**

When we pick up a pack of Fairtrade coffee or bananas, we will often find that the packet provides us with information about, and frequently pictures of, the producer who grew the product and the location of his/her crop. It has been argued that the use of these narratives and images work to "vividly emplace[s] the production of [Fairtrade products]... in cultural and geographical contexts" (Bryant and Goodman, 2004: 357). The attempt to "socially re-embed commodities" with the information of the conditions under which they were produced is a vital part of the Fairtrade concept and much of the literature on Fairtrade highlights the ways in which knowledge of the social relations of production and images of tropical landscapes and hard-working producers have become

central elements in the promotion of these commodities (Raynolds, 2002: 41; see also, Bryant and Goodman, 2004; Hudson and Hudson, 2003; Hughes, 2005; Wright, 2005). Whilst great attempts are made to insert the Fairtrade producer within communities in the South, discussions of the consumer, as the examination of the reflexivity thesis in chapter two suggested, are oddly detached from this process; imagined as free floating subjects situated somewhere in the developed world. The Fairtrade Town initiative provides a great opportunity to explore exactly who the Fairtrade consumers/supporters are and to embed the acts of Fairtrade consumption into their cultural context.

The Fairtrade Town movement began in the small Lancashire town of Garstang, following the efforts of a network of local activists who had been trying to encourage their small population (of just over 4000 people) to buy and support Fairtrade for a number of years. Headed by the local Oxfam group and supported by a number of local churches, and the local school and youth group, a campaign was launched in collaboration with local dairy farmers which linked fair prices for local farmers with fair prices for Fairtrade producers. Local shopkeepers, churches, workplaces and schools were asked to sign a pledge that they would use or sell Fairtrade and local products on their premises and over 90 per cent of premises signed-up to the pledge (see FTF, 2002; Garstang Fairtrade Town Website, 2009; Lamb, 2008). With such widespread public support, a public meeting was held in 2000 and the motion was passed to make Garstang a Fairtrade Town. The event attracted the attention of the regional and national media, as well as the then Under Secretary of State for International Development, George Foulkes, who said:

"I want to try to ensure that the initiative is followed in many other towns and cities throughout the whole of the United Kingdom and beyond, so that the beacon that has started in Garstang can spread like wildfire through the whole of the country."

(FTF, 2002: 11)

Although this grassroots movement had not been led by the FTF, given the opportunity it offered them to expand their supporter base (Nicholls & Opal, 2005), they embraced it and launched the Fairtrade Towns Initiative nationwide in 2001. The Fairtrade Town movement has grown

dramatically since its inception in 2000 and, at the time of writing, there are now over 400 Fairtrade Towns in the UK, with 200 more campaigning for the status, as well as Fairtrade town campaigns in 17 countries around the world inspired by the UK example (FTF, 2009c).

Given the size of the Fairtrade town movement both across the UK and the developed world, it seems important to move beyond the tale of one small town where local support for the scheme has been active and strong, and consider how other towns have managed to achieve the status paying particular attention to the distinct cultural contexts which are likely to have influenced these local campaigns. Malpass et al (2007a) did just this in their examination of the Bristol Fairtrade City campaign. The campaign in Bristol was driven by individuals within the local authority (who were responsible for procurement policy) who then recruited a range of interested activists and businesses from within the city – from Christian Aid, Traidcraft, Oxfam, Fairtrade coffee and clothing stores, the Co-op and school and university groups. Importantly, the Bristol campaign drew on existing coalitions and interests in order to recruit supporters as well as engaging in the re-imagination of Bristol's place-based identity. Bristol had been the second largest slave trading port in the country and the Fairtrade City campaign used this history of past trading relations to encourage people to think about their “emplacement as historical, situated subjects” and to consider how the buildings, streets and bridges around them were very likely a product of the wealth produced by the slave trade (Malpass et al, 2007a: 638).

Malpass et al argue that Fairtrade Towns have the potential to create “ethical landscapes of consumption” when they switch systems of collective provision within council buildings and public spaces to Fairtrade. By ensuring that certain places within a town serve only Fairtrade options they can be transformed into “ethical places embodying a global sense of place” (*ibid*: 634). Similarly, whilst Low and Davenport (2007) have expressed a concern that the ‘alternative’ character and political message of Fairtrade is being lost as it has become mainstreamed across the high street and is being sold by companies (like the large supermarkets) who do not necessarily have sound ethical business practices, they believe the creation of ‘legislated’ ethical spaces (that is, policies which

enforce Fairtrade provision in certain areas) and 'voluntary' ethical spaces (achieved through the actions of 'citizen-led activism') found in Fairtrade Towns can "re-integrate the political objectives" into alternative consumption environments and highlight the movement's aim to challenge global trading relations (*ibid*: 337). In my presentation of the way that Fairville established itself as a Fairtrade town, I will be questioning the degree to which the creation of these 'ethical spaces' constitute an 'alternative high street' challenging the mainstream appropriation of Fairtrade by retailers (Low and Davenport, 2005).

### Fairville

For the purposes of this research, this town has been given a fictional name in order to ensure the anonymity of the respondents. However some basic information about the town and its population will be useful to the reader. Once a market town and a centre for industry, Fairville is now largely a commercial town that is served by a Conservative majority council. In 2008 (the year this research was conducted), Fairville had a population of around 167,000.<sup>7</sup> Home to a large number of city-commuters, Fairville has a relatively affluent population with gross weekly earnings that are around 14 per cent higher than the national average. Of the economically active population, 83 per cent are in work and over half of these can be classified in SOC 2000 classification groups 1-3 (Managers and Senior Officials, Professional Occupations, Associate Professional and Technical Occupations). Fairville has a low unemployment rate amongst its economically active population which is 1.5 percentage points below the national average. It has a highly educated workforce with 30 per cent of working-age residents holding a degree-level qualification, or equivalent.

Walking down the high street, one can find the same chain-retail stores that appear in the majority of towns across the UK as well as some unique features. A small river runs through the town, and following its course, we could expect to pass a family feeding bread to the ducks, a large

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<sup>7</sup> The information about Fairville has been gathered from the ONS Website for Official Labour Market Statistics (Nomis, 2009). Population and earning statistics were gathered in 2008, the labour market statistics refer to the period between April 2008 and March 2009, and the educational statistics refer to the period between January and December 2008.

Tesco's, a Starbuck's coffee store, a shopping mall home to famous UK brands like Bhs, Waterstones and Dorothy Perkins, a bridge where workers are seated on the benches enjoying their lunch-break with Marks & Spencer's sandwiches or McDonalds burgers, and a Poundland diagonally opposite to the Co-operative department store. At the edge of the town next to the library, there is a covered marketplace where local butchers, greengrocers and market-traders sell their goods on selected days throughout the week. The main supermarkets – Asda, Sainsbury's, Tesco and Lidl – can be found on the outskirts of the town. For those wanting a taste of the local history of Fairville, the small Cathedral and museum are open for visitors on most days. With its predictable selection of high-street stores, office buildings, rail and bus stations, university campus, and council-run leisure centre and theatres, Fairville is a pretty unremarkable town but does have a large network of Co-operative stores which makes it somewhat distinct.

The campaign for Fairville to become a Fairtrade town began in 2002 (and was achieved in 2005), when Alfred, secretary of the local Trades Union Council (TUC) and active Co-operator wrote to the local newspaper suggesting Fairville should do more to support Fairtrade.<sup>8</sup> This article generated some initial interest, and Alfred, in collaboration with Marcus, the chair of the local Oxfam group, decided it would be a good idea to contact a number of existing groups in Fairville who might be interested in working towards Fairtrade town status. The inaugural meeting of the Fairville Fairtrade Action Group (FFAG) took place in mid-2003 and it was attended by 25 people representing fourteen local organisations; local faith and action groups (Amnesty International, CAFOD, the Cathedral group, Christian Aid, Churches Together, Friends of the Earth, Justice and Peace, Oxfam, Society of Friends, Unicef, Youth Council), political parties (Co-op Party, Green Party), as well as representatives from the local business community, particularly the Co-operative society which has a number of stores within Fairville. At the meeting, this group of already-interested individuals discussed how it would work together to meet the five goals laid down by the FTF in order to obtain Fairtrade status (see box 4.1).

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<sup>8</sup> The history of the Fairville campaign has been gathered from the minutes of the FFAG and through discussions with the groups' members.

Box 4.1: Five Goals to gain Fairtrade Town status

1. The local council must pass a resolution supporting Fairtrade and agree to serve Fairtrade tea and coffee at its meetings and in its offices and canteens.
2. A range of Fairtrade products must be readily available in the area's shops and local cafes/catering establishments.
3. Fairtrade products must be used by a number of local work places and community organisations
4. Attract media coverage and popular support for the campaign.
5. A local Fairtrade steering group is convened to ensure continued commitment to its Fairtrade Town status.

(FTF, 2002: i)

Firstly, it was necessary to elect a steering committee to organise the campaign and decide on the next steps. Seven people formed this first steering group, with Marcus as the chairperson and Alfred as the secretary, and representatives from the Co-op Party and Co-op society, Youth Council, Christian Aid and Justice and Peace. It was agreed that the first main duties were to seek popular, and in particular local authority, support for the scheme and to arrange a public meeting. To achieve these aims the steering committee contacted a number of local businesses, interest groups, schools and council members, organised a Fairtrade exhibition at the library and appeared on a local radio show. The first public meeting, held in October 2003, had a modest turnout of over 100 people and was attended by local councillors and a wide range of community actors. The key speakers at this meeting were Bruce Crowther, of Garstang fame,<sup>9</sup> and a banana producer from the Winward Isles who spoke about the benefits of Fairtrade.

Following on from the first public meeting, the motion to make Fairville a Fairtrade town was proposed by the Liberal Democrat party and was seconded by Conservatives with support from Labour at a local council meeting in November 2003. This cross-party support is believed to have been a crucial element in the success of gaining the support of the local council.<sup>10</sup> By spring 2004

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<sup>9</sup> Bruce was the chair of the Oxfam group in Garstang and has become well-known in Fairtrade circles and beyond. He featured in Gordon Brown's book, *Britain's Everyday Heroes*, and made the Independent on Sunday's top 100 happy list (Webster & Davies, 2008)

<sup>10</sup> Discussed in the focus group with key community representatives, see Appendix 1 for the make-up of this group.

the motion had been passed by the council who agreed to use Fairtrade tea and coffee for internal meetings and in council buildings in Fairville. Thus the council offices, the local swimming pool, and the theatres in Fairville changed their procurement policies and arguably became 'ethical places' through the removal of the choice of non-Fairtrade options. However, the degree to which this change was noticeable to those who lived in Fairville who were not connected to the Fairtrade campaign is questionable.

It is worth noting that whilst in Bristol the impetus for the switch to Fairtrade came from within the council who used the Fairtrade City Campaign to "promote the local reputation of the authority and the way it acts within its jurisdiction" (Malpass et al, 2007a: 638), in Fairville, the support of the council was achieved through a bottom-up approach. Importantly, the Fairville council did not appoint a 'Fairtrade officer' to push the Fairtrade agenda within the local authority and from discussions with the FFAG<sup>11</sup> there were some concerns raised about the enthusiasm of the council for the scheme. For example, the FFAG asked for a banner in the High street to publicise their Fairtrade town status and this did not materialise because the council did not want to fund the banner. Similarly, the group applied for community funding and was refused on the basis that the group were not doing anything to help the local community. However, in recent months the council have become more cooperative owing to the appointment of a new councillor to deal with the group's activities, and their increasing awareness of the activities of neighbouring Fairtrade towns which have created a certain amount of rivalry. What this discussion of the council's initial lack of enthusiasm reveals is the importance of paying attention to the local specificities of each Fairtrade town campaign whose coalitions and activities are likely to look very different depending upon the levels of support they receive from different institutions, community organisations, and businesses. So whilst in Bristol, the support of the council enabled "the widening of Fairtrade constituencies" beyond primarily faith-based social networks towards membership according to residency within a

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<sup>11</sup> Fairtrade Focus group 3, see Appendix 1 for the make-up of this group

place (*ibid.*), the support of Fairtrade within Fairville still relies heavily on faith-groups and other social and political activists.

In order to achieve Fairtrade town status, Fairville needed 20 retail outlets and 10 catering outlets each offering at least 2 Fairtrade options and by 2005 it had met these targets (exceeding the required number of retail outlets by 3 stores). By 2008, it had 44 retail outlets and 31 catering outlets. As has already been indicated, like many high streets across the UK, Fairville does not have a great number of independent stores and therefore the majority of Fairtrade goods are sold through chain retail outlets. Whilst the small town of Garstang was able to convince a large proportion of its small number of retail stores to stock Fairtrade, it was unlikely that in Fairville places like Starbuck's, Tesco's, Marks & Spencer's and Sainsbury's would be wholly influenced to stock Fairtrade by the efforts of local activists. Although large areas of Bristol are dominated by chain retail outlets, it was noted that the town already had areas that were dedicated 'Fairtrade spaces' – for example, Bristol is the home of the Fairtrade clothing company, Bishopston Trading Co. – where consumers were 'spoilt for ethical choice' (Barnett et al, 2007), suggesting that the already-existing make-up of towns can enable or constrain particular forms of campaigning. The concentration of availability of Fairtrade in Fairville within mainstream retail outlets challenges Low and Davenport's (2007) assumption that Fairtrade towns necessarily create an 'Alternative High Street' where the political message of Fairtrade is explicitly linked to the availability of Fairtrade goods in particular spaces. The retail outlets that are offering Fairtrade products have not changed their business practices along Fairtrade lines but have, on the whole, offered just a small number of token Fairtrade products. In order for an 'Alternative High Street' to develop, there would need to be a great deal of publicity within stores in Fairville to educate consumers that Fairtrade options have now become available or indeed even some awareness that the town had been granted Fairtrade status. Whilst in Garstang there was a visible transformation on achieving Fairtrade status with shops placing signs in their windows registering their support, a town sign stating 'World's First Fairtrade Town' and a large amount of publicity in the local media and community organisations educating the population

about the scheme, those residents whom I spoke with in Fairville, who were not actively involved in the Fairtrade town group's activities, knew very little about Fairtrade and were unaware that any transformation had occurred within their town. Whilst the FFAG has on several occasions attempted to seek permission to erect a Fairtrade town banner within Fairville and has tried hard to raise awareness of Fairtrade within the town, the environment within which they are working (limited support from the council, a high proportion of mainstream retail outlets) has provided distinct challenges which have constrained their efforts to create an Alternative High Street. On the other hand, the high proportion of mainstream retail outlets is also likely to have made the attempts to achieve Fairtrade status slightly easier for supporters in Fairville, given that decisions about stocking Fairtrade will have been taken at a national level meaning that local supporters will not have had to campaign too heavily to get their local retail stores to stock Fairtrade.

Having said this, the large number of Co-operative convenience stores within Fairville have been particularly influential in enabling the Fairtrade town to meet its quota of retail outlets and have offered support, both financially and practically, in the organisation of Fairtrade events in Fairville. Of the 44 retail stores in Fairville that offer Fairtrade options, 17 are Co-operative stores selling a wide range of Fairtrade products (beyond the required 2). The Fairville Co-operative society has its own board and therefore takes the decisions on the range of Fairtrade goods to make available. It is fair to say that without the support of the Co-operative society in Fairville, the town would have had to spend several more years working towards achieving the required number of retail outlets.<sup>12</sup> The Co-operative society has run promotional discounts in its stores during Fairtrade Fortnight and again later in the year, offering a 20 per cent discount on Fairtrade goods which has both increased Fairtrade sales and raised awareness amongst some of its customer-base. Since Co-operative stores already constituted 'alternative' retail spaces, it is difficult to say how far their involvement in Fairtrade has transformed people's perception of Fairville as a Fairtrade town,

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<sup>12</sup> The number of Co-operative stores selling Fairtrade in Fairville (17) has remained relatively constant throughout the campaign so when they put in their first application for Fairtrade status, the Co-operative stores made up the majority of their required number of retail stores (14 out of 23).

nevertheless it could be argued they have offered Fairville residents "integrated ethical spaces" where commitment to Fairtrade is integrated with other 'ethical' food concerns such as supporting local farmers and community projects (Low & Davenport, 2007: 346). The Co-operative society also became Fairville's 'Flagship Fairtrade employer' providing Fairtrade tea and coffee to all of its employees and promoting Fairtrade in the staff rooms at its stores. Amongst the other workplaces that made the switch to Fairtrade tea and coffee was an accounting firm, a solicitor's office, a hairdresser, the Nationwide Building society, an employment agency, and the local branch of the Transport Union and Unison offices (courtesy of Alfred!).

It is important to note the key role played by the TUC in the development of the Fairtrade coalition in Fairville because Trade Union involvement has been uncommon in Fairtrade Town campaigns across the country (Malpass et al, 2007a). The TUC has been active in Fairville for over 100 years, engaged in a number of local campaigns from supporting the miners strike in the 1980s, to forming an anti-Apartheid group and fighting to save a ward at a local hospital. Alfred, the instigator of the Fairtrade movement in Fairville, has been involved with the TUC for over 30 years, and learnt about Fairtrade through his attendance at the yearly May Day Rally run by the TUC. In fact, given that Alfred has also, for a number of years, sat on the board of the Fairville Cooperative society, which as an organisation has been heavily involved in the Fairville Fairtrade coalition, it is possible to suggest that he was a key situational factor behind the development of the Fairville group. Indeed, in discussions with Fairtrade supporters within Fairville, there was rarely anyone who did not know Alfred or have praise for him for the role that he had played in the local movement. It is interesting that both the Co-operative movement and the TUC have been involved in the Fairtrade movement in Fairville, given the fact that these wider movements have been in decline. Fairtrade appears to have provided the opportunity for these declining institutions to revitalise their campaigning efforts and to introduce their ideas to a wider network of potentially interested individuals – particularly the younger generation through their work in local schools.

The FFAG called extensively on the network on local churches and Christian organisations (including the Society of Friends (Quakers)) in order to meet the required number of local community organisations to achieve their status. Thirty-six churches in Fairville have committed to support Fairtrade in Fairville, with ten of these also making their own unique applications for 'Fairtrade Church' status. The location of Fairtrade support and events within Fairville is therefore heavily concentrated in faith-based networks. The most popular event ever held in Fairville took place at the Cathedral and attracted around 300 people. This was a public meeting organised during Fairtrade Fortnight which hosted a range of speakers, including a farmer from a cocoa cooperative in Belize, a local celebrity who had appeared on a hit ITV drama series, and the area Bishop, and attracted a front-page article in the local newspaper, as well as interest from the local radio and regional news networks. Beyond faith-based networks, other community organisations include the local Amnesty group, Soroptimists, Women's Institute, Friends of the Earth, Conservative club, and the Fairville Liberal Democrats, Green Party and Co-op Party. By having so many supporters from other groups, the FFAG is able to utilise these networks to promote Fairtrade at events that are already happening and to benefit from the publicity of these other events. For example, in 2004, the Oxfam group held a music gig at the local theatre and Fairtrade produce was made available at this event and the FFAG received some publicity as a result in the local newspaper and radio. Similarly, the FFAG regularly has a table at TUC rallies and at Co-operative organised events, and have appeared at local 'fun days', school events, church fetes and WI meetings.

Fairtrade events offer those interested the opportunity to meet and socialise with like-minded individuals, creating a sense of community amongst people who may or may not have come into contact with one another had it not been for their shared interest and belief in the Fairtrade movement. Fairtrade brings together a varied collection of individuals from Christians to Environmentalists, Human Rights campaigners, Co-operators, Trade Unionists and Trade Justice campaigners. The members of this quasi-religious coalition have a diverse set of existing commitments and dispositions that are strengthened and modified through engagement with one

another in the promotion of Fairtrade. The events work to create a culture of consumption organised around the active engagement of consumers in the fight against global poverty. In this way, we can begin to see the affinities between Fairtrade town networks and the ways the Co-operative movement in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century aimed to provide social and educational activities around the local Co-operative store in order to integrate the social life of the people into the economy (see last chapter and Gurney, 1996). However, the location of these social and educational activities tends to be restricted to particular places – the Church, Co-operative meetings and staff rooms, TUC events, interested schools – rather than community events that everyone is likely to know about; and their emphasis is not upon creating a commonwealth which will unite the working classes across the globe, but rather upon raising awareness of the plight of developing world producers and drawing attention to the responsibility of those attending these events towards these producers.

At the time of writing, the FFAG had just 19 members, most of whom have some connection to the range of organisations already indicated, and who paid a yearly subscription fee of £2 as an expression of their commitment to raise awareness of Fairtrade within their town. However, the number of people who regularly attend meetings or help the group is significantly fewer. The steering committee has remained relatively stable but does now include representatives from Traidcraft and a local school teacher. In order to maintain their Fairtrade status, the group must continue to try to encourage local retail stores, catering outlets, community organisations and businesses to use Fairtrade and run local events to raise awareness of their movement, particularly during Fairtrade Fortnight. Fairtrade Fortnight is *the* date in the Fairtrade calendar for the FFAG, with members working towards the future, or evaluating the past Fortnight throughout the year.

Before turning to the 2008 Fairtrade Fortnight campaign, it will be worth summarising some of the distinct features of the Fairville group which are likely to influence the type of citizen-consumer they will be able to mobilise during this campaign. Within Fairville, Fairtrade supporters have been drawn from distinct social networks (particularly faith groups, Co-operative members,

and local branches of social and political campaign groups) and unlike Bristol, the impetus for the Fairtrade campaign in Fairville came from these grass-roots activists who have had to work hard to keep the Council's support for the scheme. It is therefore likely that attempts to mobilise the citizen-consumer in Fairville will be led by its grassroots network at events in particular places (for example, churches and Co-operative meetings) rather than in public places. Unlike the small town of Garstang, Fairville Fairtrade supporters cannot boast that 90 per cent of its shopkeepers and community organisations are behind their cause with the distribution of Fairtrade products within Fairville being concentrated in mainstream retail outlets and its high number of Co-operative convenience stores. Thus, the degree to which those who have no involvement with the community organisations already indicated will notice that it is Fairtrade Fortnight will very likely be dependent upon the policies of the nationwide retailers and the local Co-op stores.

### **Fairtrade Fortnight 2008**

In 2008, Fairtrade Fortnight called upon consumers to 'Change Today, Choose Fairtrade'. The theme of this promotional campaign aimed to demonstrate to consumers that "through their daily choices, their actions can have a significant impact to benefit producers' lives in developing countries" (FTF, 2008e: 6). This national event called consumers to action by encouraging them to buy more Fairtrade goods and placed an emphasis on communicating the effectiveness of Fairtrade consumption as a tool for alleviating poverty in developing countries. The Fairtrade consumer was thus mobilised as a global citizen who had the responsibility and the power to use his/her consumption choices to make a difference. In order to explore how the Fairtrade consumer has been made into an identifiable subject by a range of intermediary actors and institutions, the rest of this chapter will focus on the ways the Fairtrade Fortnight campaign was organised, promoted, celebrated and defended on the national and the local level in 2008. It will begin by examining the promotional material distributed by the FTF to the local campaigners who were responsible for the 12,000 events that occurred during the Fortnight. I then look at the promotional material aimed at

the commercial sector revealing how two very different images of the Fairtrade consumer are constructed depending upon the audience, before moving on to consider how these two images are appropriated and defended in the public realm by different institutions. Finally, I examine the creative design concept uniting this campaign across a number of diverse locations considering how the consumer is being called to action through the careful representation of Fairtrade producers. Throughout this discussion, both the national-level and the local-level (principally within Fairville) elements of this campaign will be explored in order to demonstrate how the local context can impact upon the types of mobilisation that take place.

#### Campaigning for change: Fairtrade Fortnight events

For the first time, in 2008 the FTF launched Fairtrade Fortnight at a public event on the South Bank in London. More than 8,000 people attended the Fairtrade Fairground, opened by George Alagiah (the then patron of the FTF) which offered all the fun of the fair with a Fairtrade twist. There was a helter skelter ride, a tea-cup ride and a large pavement-sized game of snakes and ladders (where the snakes represented what happened to producers if consumers didn't buy Fairtrade or if producers experienced financial hardship because of government's inaction, and the ladders represented the positive effects of buying Fairtrade for the producers). There was a Fairtrade coconut shy, Fairtrade candyfloss, and opportunities for people to have their fortune read with Fairtrade tea leaves. Actors were dressed as Fairtrade bananas, and there were opportunities to hear from Fairtrade producers who told of how they had benefitted from selling their produce as Fairtrade. Also a first for 2008, the FTF launched the 'Choose Fairtrade' double-decker campaign bus at the Fairground which provided information about Fairtrade with interactive displays, activities and a Fairtrade producer. This bus was then set to visit 14 Fairtrade towns across the Fortnight to lend support to these towns' local events. With lots of Fairtrade companies (like Cafédirect, Divine, Liberation and Fairhills) offering free samples of their goods to Fairground goers, the event was an attempt to connect the consumption of Fairtrade with social and cultural activities for the whole family. There

was a desire to bring Fairtrade into the everyday lives of consumers and to encourage loyalty to the Fairtrade movement in a similar vein to the yearly festivals organised by the Co-operative movement which aimed to create a 'new social feeling' and commitment to the store (Gurney, 1996: 69).

Being held in such a central location with a wide range of activities, this launch event had the potential to attract people who were not already interested in Fairtrade or aware that it was Fairtrade Fortnight. Unlike the majority of events held over Fairtrade Fortnight, the launch event was led by the FTF who were responsible for bringing together businesses, Fairtrade celebrities, producers and consumers. Most of the 12,000 campaign events held during the Fortnight were organised and led by Fairtrade supporters in town groups (like Fairville, Garstang and Bristol), in schools and in places of worship who drew on the advice offered by the FTF in order to provide social and cultural activities in their town/institution (FTF, 2009b: 2-3). The FTF provides campaign resources to interested individuals/groups in order to help them organise their events and by examining this material we can discover both who is most likely to be involved in the promotion and active consumption of Fairtrade goods and how the FTF mobilises these individuals/groups as active citizen-consumers.

The FTF provides local campaigners with 'Action Guides' to give them ideas about the types of events that could be carried out over Fairtrade Fortnight and how to use these events to gain support from local businesses and media. The types of events suggested reflect the objectives of the Fairground event – for example, to provide social and cultural activities under the banner of support for Fairtrade. Interestingly these action guides are targeted at different sorts of campaigners with a general action guide (FTF 2008c), a Church action guide (FTF 2008d), and a Synagogue action guide (FTF 2008g). The general action guide states that all the events could be carried out by individuals, town groups, schools or workplaces but it is clear that the majority of events presume that the type of person likely to be involved in organising an event is someone who is already interested in Fairtrade and probably already connected to some form of local Fairtrade network. For example, campaigners are encouraged to hold Fairtrade Fashion shows, pub quizzes, sports days and cooking

competitions, all of which would require a base of supporters to organise them. As Clarke et al (2007a) have pointed out the target audience for ethical consumption campaigns are not those who have never thought about ethical consumption before, but are rather those who have existing sympathies which can be strengthened and sustained by the information and resources generated by campaigns like Fairtrade Fortnight.

In the Church and Synagogue guides, information is provided about running events in these places of worship with prayers and religious readings relevant to the Christian and Jewish faith, and supporters are told that buying and promoting Fairtrade is a way of "putting faith into action" in everyday ways (FTF, 2008b: 16). This connection of Fairtrade with the everyday expression of an individual's faith mobilises the Fairtrade consumer as an individual with existing dispositions and commitments that can be extended through their involvement in Fairtrade. The provision of separate guides for faith-based networks suggests that the FTF is aware that a large proportion of its supporters can be found in these locations. And indeed, the FTF acknowledges the important role of leading Christian organisations like Christian Aid, CAFOD and Traidcraft in establishing the FTF stating that "church groups have, for years, been one of the strongest support groups in the UK" (*ibid.*). Whilst there is a desire to utilise these faith-based networks to "spread the word" (FTF, 2008a: 11) about Fairtrade in a quasi-religious message, there is also a desire to move away from the association of Fairtrade with religious affiliation in order to enable the mainstreaming of Fairtrade beyond this niche (Malpass et al, 2007a). This will be particularly evident when we come to examine how the FTF communicated its objectives to their commercial partners.

Having considered who the guides are aimed towards and the types of activities that town-groups are advised to consider, let us turn our attention to the events that were organised in Fairville in order to see how the national campaign was played out on the local level. Like all the other town groups across the UK, the Fairville group had access to the resources provided by the FTF and they held 28 Fairtrade events over the Fortnight. Importantly, the majority of events were not directed at the general public (like the launch event led by the FTF) but were targeted at already-interested

individuals. Indeed, awareness of most of the Fairtrade events would have required involvement in the Fairtrade network, or regular attendance at particular places (like churches, universities, schools). Having said this, the Fairville group did hold two events directed towards the general public. As already indicated, Fairville is a market town with a regular food and general market being held on selected days during the week. On one of these days during Fairtrade Fortnight, the FFAG held a high-street market-stall where they gave away free samples of Fairtrade chocolate and encouraged shoppers to buy the Fairtrade goods from their stall and/or take a leaflet about Fairtrade. Using a market-stall to promote Fairtrade drew on the local organisation of the town and was a place-based attempt to connect local consumers with the wider Fairtrade movement aims. The FFAG also held an exhibition at the local library which provided information about the campaign in Fairville and the need to support Fairtrade. However, the degree to which the stall and the library exhibition encouraged those with little knowledge of, or support for, the Fairtrade movement to 'change today, choose Fairtrade' is debatable.

It is unsurprising, given the number of churches supportive of Fairtrade in Fairville, that a large proportion of Fairtrade events took place in church halls. There were Fairtrade stalls and Fairtrade coffee mornings held after church services, and one church organised a Fairtrade pot-luck dinner where people brought a dish made with Fairtrade ingredients to their church hall and then enjoyed a social evening with Fairtrade quizzes and a talk about the why it is important to support Fairtrade. The local university organised a Fairtrade tasting session, where Fairtrade goods were offered alongside non-Fairtrade goods and students were asked to try to spot the difference, and a debate about Fairtrade between students and academics. A handful of the local schools organised Fairtrade events including a Fairtrade fashion show, coffee mornings for staff, and a Fairtrade stall. Fairville's active TUC group held a Fairtrade tasting evening following one of their general meetings on local trade union activity and issues, and the Youth Environment Group and Oxfam organised a music gig, with Fairtrade refreshments. Fairtrade Fortnight is a chance for Fairtrade supporters to enjoy themselves (despite the organisation clearly involved) and to feel part of a bigger movement at

the same time as reinforcing their commitment. In this way, it is possible to argue that Fairtrade Fortnight is at least in part organised *for* the Fairtrade supporters as well as to ensure the continuing profile of the movement.

Fairville's Co-operative society sponsored a showing of the movie *Black Gold*, a film about the plight of Ethiopian Coffee Farmers, accompanied by a tasting of a wide selection of Co-operative Fairtrade products. The showing was well attended (around 150 people) and the Co-operative society used the event to announce their continued support for the Fairtrade movement linking it to the wider aims of the Co-operative movement and their intention to offer a 20 per cent discount on all Fairtrade goods over Fairtrade Fortnight. Interestingly, sales of Ethiopian coffee increased in Co-operative stores in the weeks following the showing of the movie suggesting that the portrayal of the difficulties faced by farmers in Ethiopia had an impact on local purchasing amongst some of the local population.

The range of events organised in Fairville over the Fortnight reflected the intentions of the FTF to connect awareness-raising activities around Fairtrade with social and cultural events. The purpose of these events was to provide opportunities for like-minded individuals to meet and socialise to help create a feeling of community based on shared beliefs and attitudes. However, those that attended and organised these events reflected the intended audience of the action guides provided by the FTF. The Fairtrade consumer in Fairville is likely to be connected in some way to the local co-operative movement, TUC or faith-based networks and is already aware of, or has some sympathy for, the aims of the Fairtrade movement. The tendency for Fairtrade events to be added-on to events that are already happening (for example coffee mornings after church, and the Fairtrade tasting after the TUC meeting) suggests that if individuals do not already attend these places or events then it is unlikely that they will be aware that they are occurring in their local community or that they would be interested to go. By way of example, I carried out four focus groups during Fairtrade Fortnight in Fairville with non-Fairtrade consumers, and not one of the thirty people who attended these groups knew that it was Fairtrade Fortnight or were aware of any

events in their town – although one person was aware that there was a discount on Fairtrade wine in the Co-op but did not know why.

In Fairville the majority of Fairtrade events were concentrated in relatively niche social networks meaning that the Fairtrade consumer that was mobilised within this local context was likely to be drawn from these existing networks. But since each Fairtrade town is likely to be slightly different drawing on a network of existing coalitions and the longer traditions and organisation of a particular place, the Fairtrade consumer mobilised in these different towns is also likely to differ. For example, in 2008, the Fairtrade group in Bristol, in collaboration with the Bristol music service, organised a concert performed by the 450-person strong local youth choir drawn from 14 local schools featuring a presentation from a Fairtrade producer and a short film about the benefits of Fairtrade (Bristol Fairtrade, 2008). It was attended by over 800 people (presumably relatives and friends of the performers) suggesting that the group had found a way to access potential Fairtrade support beyond its activist niche through its collaboration with the council (we will remember that the Fairtrade campaign in Bristol was initiated by the local authority). That is not to say that campaigning in Bristol necessarily succeeded in mobilising citizen-consumers beyond those who were already-connected to, or likely to sympathise with, the Fairtrade network, but rather to draw attention to the importance of local contexts in constraining or enabling particular types of Fairtrade campaigning to occur.

### Fairtrade in the mainstream

Fairtrade Fortnight is marked by a number of local Fairtrade events which tend to be found in particular locations and appeal to individuals who are supportive of particular causes. However, the FTF is also eager to use Fairtrade Fortnight to encourage its commercial partners to make greater commitments to Fairtrade in order to fulfil their agenda of getting Fairtrade into mainstream retail outlets. Whilst it makes great use of its existing network of supporters from faith groups and social and political campaign groups, the FTF is aware that there is a need to remove the association of

Fairtrade with this activist niche if it is to 'tip the balance' of trade towards Fairtrade (see FTF, 2008j). Indeed, one of the distinctive features of the distribution of Fairtrade in the UK is its concentration in mainstream markets (Varul, 2009). The desire to move Fairtrade into the mainstream can be seen most clearly in the 'Commercial Briefing Document' (FTF, 2008e) which provides an insight into the Fairtrade Fortnight strategy as presented to the organisation's commercial partners. In this document, the FTF states that:

"we aim to target anyone that eats, drinks, wears clothes and shops. So this means everyone! From our schools campaign to educate young children about trade issues and encourage them to raise awareness with parents, to workplaces challenging employees to begin sourcing Fairtrade catering options at work, to working with supermarkets to target shoppers of all ages with point of purchase campaigns, we aim to reach as many people as possible." (ibid.: 4)

Through highlighting their campaigning work in schools, workplaces and supermarkets – which are relatively 'universal' institutions – commercial partners are encouraged to pay attention to Fairtrade because of its potential appeal to all of their customer-base, not just those found in relatively niche social networks. However, as we have seen by looking at the intended audience of the Fairtrade Fortnight campaign resources and action guides, the FTF is aware that the typical Fairtrade consumer/supporter is not just 'anyone'. Yet they frequently call upon the all-inclusive category of the 'consumer' stressing the non-exclusivity of Fairtrade because it provides the impetus for campaigners and companies alike to continue to encourage more people to become Fairtrade consumers and support the FTF's work. As we shall see in a later chapter, non-exclusivity appears as a dominant trope in Fairtrade supporters' own understandings of the 'Fairtrade consumer'.

The commercial partners that were targeted by the FTF did use Fairtrade Fortnight to promote Fairtrade and attempt to increase sales of these goods (at the same time as demonstrating their corporate social responsibility credentials). Most of the major supermarket-retailers offered promotional discounts, or extra points for the purchase of Fairtrade goods tapping into people's desire for low prices rather than necessarily educating consumers about the need for trade justice. Supermarket chains, Co-op and Sainsbury's, used the period to announce that all of their own-brand

teas would now be Fairtrade. Similarly, the sugar manufacturers, Tate and Lyle, announced their intention to switch all of their retail sugar to Fairtrade. Virgin Trains ran Fairtrade promotions on board and the coffee-retail chain 'EAT' switched to Fairtrade coffee in store. What should be noticed about the ways in which manufacturers, retailers and Fairtrade licensees dealt with their promotion of Fairtrade products is how they all directed their strategies towards the mainstream market. By reducing the price of Fairtrade goods and removing the choice of non-Fairtrade options, it becomes possible to imagine that the Fairtrade consumer could be just 'anyone' because by using particular stores or brands people are being "inculcated knowingly or not, willingly or not" (Malpass et al, 2007a: 642) into the consumption of Fairtrade items. By shifting the systems of collective provision, individuals become Fairtrade consumers just by doing their weekly shop or by buying a cup of coffee at their local store, but they do not necessarily become knowledgeable about or supportive of the aims of the Fairtrade movement. We are reminded of what Clarke et al (2007a) said about the need to create "acts not identities" when mobilising and representing ethical consumers in the public realm. By showing that Fairtrade sales increase during Fairtrade Fortnight (FTF, 2008: 28) it becomes possible for the FTF to suggest that their promotional campaign generated widespread public support which can then be used to help the FTF claim legitimacy when they engage in their wider political advocacy work on trade justice issues. Although Fairtrade Fortnight is really for the existing supporters, through their work with corporations and by having a period of 'exposure' at which to measure change it makes it seem as if it 'works' on the general public.

In Fairville, the announcements by large supermarkets and manufacturers provided an opportunity for celebration over Fairtrade Fortnight. At the showing of *Black Gold*, the room was buzzing with the Tate & Lyle announcement. That this large manufacturer could see the benefit of Fairtrade and was switching its retail sugar to Fairtrade seemed to motivate Fairtrade supporters to continue campaigning and provided them with 'proof' of the popularity of their campaign. However, beyond the interested Fairtrade supporters, these announcements and the discounts and

promotions on Fairtrade goods in the large number of chain-retail stores and supermarkets in Fairville (like Tesco, Sainsbury's, Marks & Spencer's, Asda, Topshop and Debenhams) were largely unnoticed by my non-Fairtrade respondents. Whilst the small town of Garstang was able to encourage one of its local restaurants to offer a Fairtrade menu and the One World Shop to offer free Fairtrade food samples and promotional material creating the opportunity for an 'alternative high street' to develop (Garstang Fairtrade Town, 2008), in Fairville, because there are only a handful of independent shops selling Fairtrade goods (none of which ran any promotional events during the fortnight) the opportunity to link the availability of Fairtrade with its political message was lost. As Fairtrade moves into mainstream retail markets, the degree to which consumers are aware they are consuming Fairtrade will depend upon both the policies of the national chain-retail outlets, and the policies of the local independent stores and how far these places choose to communicate the switch to Fairtrade.

All of those that attended the non-Fairtrade focus groups would have recently come into contact with Fairtrade promotional displays when visiting their local supermarket and may have in fact made Fairtrade purchases in their weekly shopping (for example all of Sainsbury's bananas, and a large number of their teas and coffees are Fairtrade), and yet they were unaware that any campaign was running or of buying Fairtrade goods.<sup>13</sup> This is illustrated in the exchange below.

**Hazel:** I don't notice Fairtrade as I'm shopping... I notice Organic, I notice the new eat well or your new calorie

**Lisa:** Oh all those colour charts

**Hazel:** Yeah colour charts and I'll look at them. But I could have Fairtrade stuff in my house and I wouldn't have a clue, cos I don't notice it, I don't see it

**Jenny:** You don't search for those things.

**Hazel:** Yes, you don't actively know about it

(Non-Fairtrade Focus Group 1<sup>14</sup>)

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<sup>13</sup> Whilst one focus group respondent was aware that Fairtrade wine had been discounted in the Co-op, he did not know why it had been discounted which suggests that the Co-op did not do enough to connect the Fairtrade Fortnight message with its promotional discount. In fact, the discount was used by Michael (non Fairtrade Focus group 3, see Appendix 1) as a reason to question the Fairtrade movement because he wondered how it could be Fairtrade if they were selling it more cheaply than other wines.

<sup>14</sup> Turn to Appendix 1 for more information about these women and the make-up of each focus group.

The women in the extract above were in their 30s and mostly did their shopping at Sainsbury's and Tesco. Because they were not involved in any of the Fairville Fairtrade networks or had not seen or heard any local media coverage of the campaign, and because the places they visited in Fairville did not do enough to connect the political message of Fairtrade with the sale of the products, consuming Fairtrade became just another shopping choice which any consumer (regardless of their attitudes towards Fairtrade) could buy.

In this way, we can see that the Fairtrade movement ends up operating with two very different understandings of the Fairtrade consumer – on the one hand the Fairtrade consumer can be imagined as a global citizen who actively seeks out Fairtrade and encourages others to buy it for trade justice reasons, and on the other hand the Fairtrade consumer is 'anyone' who buys Fairtrade because it is all that is on offer or because it is cheaper than the alternatives. These two identities are utilised in different ways by the FTF depending upon the audience – with the former representing the popular and dominant image of the Fairtrade consumer when engaging in the political side of the campaign and when providing information to motivate local campaigners to continue their work, and the latter providing the impetus for commercial partners to increase their customer base and profits, and to create 'acts' which can be counted and presented in the public realm.

#### The appropriation of the dominant image of the Fairtrade consumer

As well as using the increased sales during Fairtrade Fortnight to demonstrate to the government that the FTF represents the public voice, the FTF also uses more traditional forms of political campaigning to get their message across. In partnership with Traidcraft, they launched a trade justice action card which could be sent to Gordon Brown to ask him to use his influence in G20 meetings to make all trade fair. These postcards could be ordered through the FTF and Traidcraft websites which means that they were most likely to be used by active Fairtrade supporters. 7,000 postcards were sent to Downing Street and during Fairtrade Fortnight Gordon Brown pledged his

support for Fairtrade during Prime Minister's Question Time (FTF, 2008g: 12). In addition, 87 MPs signed an Early Day Motion (EDM) which praised the FTF for their work to date, offered support for the FTF to introduce a Fairtrade Schools scheme, acknowledged that Fairtrade is "an established way for developing communities to trade their way out of poverty", and called for the government to fund proposals for the expansion of Fairtrade (UK Parliament, 2008). Importantly, DFID announced during Fairtrade Fortnight that it would be giving the Fairtrade Labelling Organisation £1.2 million<sup>15</sup> in order to help the movement expand over the next two years. The International Development secretary, Douglas Alexander, explained the decision by saying:

"UK consumers and businesses recognise the benefits of buying products from developing countries – both in terms of quality and as a simple and effective way of supporting the poorest people on this earth" (DFID, 2008)

The government is therefore taking on an image of the Fairtrade consumer as an active citizen-consumer who wants to and can make a difference to poverty in the developing world through their consumption choices. It aligns itself with the image that the FTF wants to project – that the increase in sales of Fairtrade and the pressure from a selected number of individuals and MPs (demonstrated by the postcard campaign and EDM) reflects a growing public feeling that some political action needs to be taken in order to improve conditions for developing world producers. However, it also offers an easy (and cheap) option for the government which places responsibility back onto the public rather than onto themselves. This image of the active citizen-consumer ignores the fact that Fairtrade is not likely to be of equal concern to all of the population and will often vary according to socio-demographic characteristics and existing attitudes. Indeed, whilst DFID's own public opinion survey (which will be analysed in Chapter 7) provides support for the notion that Fairtrade is one way that individuals can feel empowered to make a difference to poverty in the developing world, as we will see, it was not necessarily the most popular mechanism amongst the general UK population, with donating to charity occupying a stronger position.

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<sup>15</sup> Although this represents large sum for a particular organisation, it is only a small amount in relation to the overall overseas aid budget.

It is interesting that the FTF and government share a similar understanding of the power of the individual consumer to regulate global trading relations. It has been argued that because the Value-for-Money movement appealed to the individual model of the consumer it was able to have more influence over government policy than the other main consumer movement of the time which stressed the importance of the role of a collective of consumers in bringing about social change (the Co-operative movement) (see last chapter and Hilton, 2003). Whilst the FTF does in fact appeal to coalitions of consumers and to businesses who are engaged in the transformation of systems of collective provision, they represent the consumer as an individual who makes changes to their weekly shop to support Fairtrade. This representation of Fairtrade consumption as an individual market choice, as something that exists outside state regulation of business practices, enables the government to support Fairtrade without having to make a commitment to transforming global trading relations and intervening in the market. In reality, the UK government could not alone transform global trading relations because of the organisation of the global market, and in this way supporting Fairtrade could be seen as one way that the UK government can 'assuage its guilt' for its inability (or lack of desire) to make all trade fair.

### Defending the Fairtrade consumer

Many of the achievements of, and announcements made by, the various organisations and actors during Fairtrade Fortnight are picked up by the national and regional press. Indeed, a requirement of being a Fairtrade town is to generate media coverage of your activities and since most events run by town groups occur during Fairtrade Fortnight, media coverage during this period is higher than at other times during the year. In Fairville, media coverage of the town's events was located in the community news section of the local paper but they did not gain any high profile media coverage like they did during their first year of campaigning. The FTF claimed that they received 5,309 Fairtrade 'media hits' during Fairtrade fortnight; 71.6 per cent of which came from regional press, and 99.5 per cent of which was positive (FTF, 2008g: 20). Fairtrade farmers appeared on the

GMTV breakfast show, the cooking show 'Ready Steady Cook' on BBC2, and on the BBC News. In the National printed press, newspaper articles in the Observer (Mathiason, 2008), and Financial Times (Beattie, 2008) covered Tate and Lyle's switch to Fairtrade and the big funding injection from DFID. The Executive Director of the FTF, Harriet Lamb, released her book over Fairtrade Fortnight charting the difficulties of getting Fairtrade into the mainstream and the positive effects she had witnessed from her work with the FTF, which was reviewed in the Independent on Sunday (Heathcote, 2008). The FTF targeted women's magazines in particular during Fairtrade Fortnight because International Women's Day occurred during the two-week campaign and there was a desire to connect the consumption of Fairtrade with the promotion of women's rights across the globe. Most of the media coverage adopted a positive reading of Fairtrade as something which consumers could easily do to benefit producers' lives.

However, despite the FTF's claim that only 0.5 per cent of press coverage was negative, an opportunistically-timed release by the Adam Smith Institute (ASI), *Unfair Trade* (Sidwell, 2008), which questioned the degree to which Fairtrade helps producers, did account for a fair share of negative news coverage. Amongst the criticisms of Fairtrade offered, it was suggested that Fairtrade distorted the market leaving non-Fairtrade farmers worse off, meaning that it was an inefficient way for consumers to help the poor and aid economic development – counter to DFID's suggestion that Fairtrade could alleviate poverty and aid development. The ASI clearly had its own agenda (to promote free trade) and it used the Fairtrade Fortnight campaign to offer an alternative understanding of ethical trading relations calling upon the 'ethical consumer' to use different ethical labels (like the Rainforest Alliance and Utz Certified) which did not interfere in the market. This then forced the FTF to defend their construction of the Fairtrade consumer. In this way, we can see how the two organisations used the "real and discursive figure of the ethical consumer" (Clarke et al, 2007a: 238) to engage in a debate about the efficacy of their models of economic development through trade. It is interesting to look at the way the FTF defends their vision of the consumer:

"Two billion people work extremely hard to earn a living but still earn less than \$2 per day and the FAIRTRADE Mark enables British consumers to choose products that help address this injustice. As no-one is forced to join a fair trade producer organisation, or to buy Fairtrade products, you would think that free market economists like the Adam Smith Institute would be pleased at the way the British public has taken our voluntary label to its heart - and to the supermarket checkout - to the tune of nearly half a billion pounds worth of goods in 2007 alone" (FTF, 2008k)

I have already suggested that the Fairtrade movement operates with two different models of the consumer – the dominant image of the Fairtrade consumer as someone who chooses Fairtrade because they want to make a difference to global poverty always exists alongside attempts by the FTF, local campaigners and businesses to make the Fairtrade choice more desirable to consumers on the basis of availability and cost rather than the political aims of Fairtrade. In their response to the ASI, by relying on its understanding of the Fairtrade consumer as an active and reflexive chooser, the FTF conveniently ignores the growing tendency for Fairtrade goods to be distributed through systems of collective provision, which tend to remove the choice of non-Fairtrade options, and makes it far from always being a 'voluntary label'.

In order to defend against the claims that Fairtrade does 'more harm than good', the FTF called on British consumers to trust that they know what they are talking about because they have "had the privilege of seeing and hearing at first hand the difference that Fairtrade makes to poor communities" (*ibid*). The credibility and effectiveness of the Fairtrade scheme is secured by the authentic and personal accounts offered by Fairtrade farmers about their lives. In fact, the entire Fairtrade Fortnight campaign works to support this position. Uniting all the FTF's activities, local campaign events, and the support from commercial partners and government was the desire to communicate to consumers the benefits of Fairtrade for the producers and to make them feel good about making the Fairtrade 'choice'. This was achieved through the careful representation of Fairtrade producers both at their campaign events (which generated positive media coverage) and through a selection of striking images which pictured consumers and producers side-by-side. Because the representations of Fairtrade farmers during Fairtrade Fortnight are used to defend the

effectiveness of the Fairtrade scheme, it will be worthwhile considering how they call the Fairtrade consumer to action and how they communicate the importance of Fairtrade to the producer.

### Representations of the Fairtrade consumer and producer

The core proposition for the 2008 campaign was to make consumers "feel good by changing their choices and changing people's lives" (FTF, 2008e: 6). There were several ways in which the FTF ensured that its campaign made "real connections" between the "world of the consumer with the world of the producer" in order to achieve their core proposition (*ibid.*). Firstly, as we have seen the FTF arranged for a number of Fairtrade producers to be present at Fairtrade events organised by local town networks providing a first-hand narrative of the impacts of Fairtrade upon their life. Malpass et al have suggested that visits from Fairtrade producers to Fairtrade towns provide an occasion when "local meets global" in which consumers can rethink the global consequences of their local actions (Malpass et al, 2007a: 641-2). Whilst Fairville did not host a Fairtrade producer during Fairtrade Fortnight in 2008,<sup>16</sup> they did host a showing of the movie *Black Gold* which depicted the importance of Fairtrade for coffee producers. Both the visits from the Fairtrade producers and the implied reality (or *fabula*<sup>17</sup>) of the documentary film employ the predictable before/after narrative (that is before Fairtrade life was bad, after Fairtrade life is better) which imbues the majority of Fairtrade marketing. Fairtrade consumers are offered the opportunity to 'act at a distance'; romantically projected into faraway lands as "empowered actors" who are able to alleviate the suffering and hardship of the hard-working 'Other' by merely using a different brand of coffee (Varul, 2008: 661). Varul suggests that Fairtrade producers are regularly the subjects of 'romantic commodification' because they are used to add symbolic value to Fairtrade products justifying their

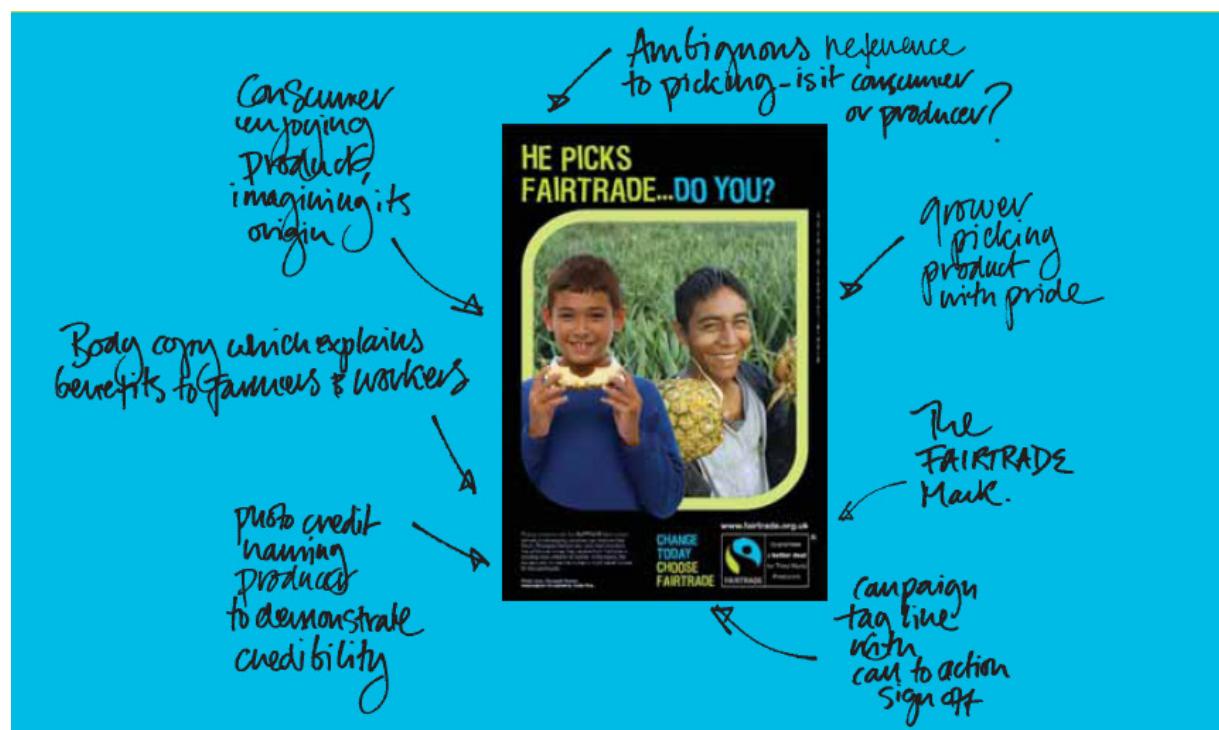
<sup>16</sup> In previous years, Fairville have hosted Fairtrade producers and these events were regularly described by Fairtrade supporters as something which had enabled them to connect the issue of Fairtrade with real people in distant communities and had provided them with an important reason for their continuing support of Fairtrade. In 2008, Fairtrade producers visited the towns of Bristol and Garstang because the FTF campaign bus made stops at these towns.

<sup>17</sup> Russian Formalists make a distinction between the *sjuzet* and the *fabula*. Most commonly used in literary analysis, the *sjuzet* refers to "the story as represented in the text" whilst the *fabula* refers to "the story as it would have been enacted in real time and space" (Lodge, 1990: 123). Stones (2002a; 2002b) has made use of this distinction in his analysis of documentary films in order to critically assess how far the *sjuzet* (the text) constructs a particular line of argumentation or implied thesis (*fabula*) about social reality.

higher price not on the basis of product quality but on the basis of the producer's "identifiable otherness" (ibid: 668).

For those who do not have access to Fairtrade producer visits or who have not seen any documentary footage, the second way the FTF tried to connect the consumer and producer was through the development of a creative design concept which featured striking images of producers next to consumers who used their produce. These images were used for point of sale displays in supermarkets, cafes and retail outlets, as promotional posters to announce campaign events, on web banners, on educational leaflets, and on the trade justice postcards to Gordon Brown. In this way, these images united the Fairtrade Fortnight campaign across a diverse set of locations (both locally within Fairville and nationally across the UK) and it will therefore be useful to spend some time considering how the Fairtrade consumer and producer are represented in them.

**Figure 4.1**



(Figure 4.1: Reproduced by permission of the Fairtrade Foundation, source FTF, 2008e: 6)

Figure 4.1 is an example of one of these campaign posters which has been annotated by the designers in order to reveal the intention of the creators. We will notice that whilst there is a partial

attempt to place the producer into a knowable geographical context and to expose the social relations behind production, the consumer remains oddly placeless. The FTF describes the advertising campaign's focus as:

"putting consumers in the world of the producer, to depict links between them and create a feeling of pride. The producer is proud of his/her work on producing a quality product, whilst the consumer is enjoying the product, thinking about its origins and is feeling proud of choosing Fairtrade" (Fairtrade Foundation, 2008f: 5)

The emphasis on pride suggests that the consumer and the producer are engaged in an equal exchange and that they both feel happy to be using/growing Fairtrade products. We are reminded of Kate Soper's (2008) suggestion that responsible forms of consumption can be a source of alternative hedonism for consumers who experience a "self-interested form of altruism" in knowing that their personal decisions have wider ramifications (*ibid*: 196). The consumer is encouraged to believe that the Fairtrade producer is not the alienated labourer one may find under a capitalist mode of production who has been separated from the products of their labour and therefore from his/her 'species-being' (Marx, 1844/1977: 65-69). Rather, the Fairtrade producer is imagined in the remote regions of the Third World engaging in traditional and authentic forms of 'real' labour production - "thus offering the consumer an escape from the hyperreal world of mass, packaged consumption" (Varul, 2008a: 662)

Adams and Raisborough have highlighted the importance of picturing Fairtrade producers who are "*engaged in their work and enjoying it*" claiming that these representations can make it easier for the consumer to recognise the Fairtrade producer as a member of the 'deserving poor' (Adams and Raisborough, 2008: 1175). They have suggested that these images are likely to have a particular impact upon middle class consumers who feel guilty about their relative affluence and who draw on these representations of deserving yet distant Fairtrade farmers in order to overcome this guilt. Similarly, Varul has suggested that Fairtrade advertisements often evoke feelings of shame or embarrassment because they confront consumers in the Western world with "our collective bad conscience" and expose us to the fact that we are "not yet beyond the colonialist mentality" (Varul,

2008a: 673). Although the phrase 'He picks Fairtrade... do you?', plays with the ambivalent positions of producer and consumer suggesting that either individual pictured could occupy both roles, there is no doubt who is the producer and who is the consumer. Rather than achieving the recognition of an equal commercial partner, the portrayal of the producer is always in the end in the "position of the servant" because the producer's situation is always dependent upon the continued purchasing and compassion of the consumer (Varul, 2008a: 669).

The Fairtrade Fortnight promotional material encourages the consumer to question how the conditions of their existence depend on the labour of these deserving farmers, and whilst it attempts to highlight the power of the consumer to address this issue in the 'benefits to farmers' section where the consumer is told how the extra money Fairtrade offers farmers goes towards "building schools, funding health clinics and implementing environmentally friendly farming practices" (FTF, 2008h), it also confronts us with our complicity in a system of disadvantage. It is interesting to compare how the FTF hails the consumer to care about the producer with how the Slave-grown sugar campaign, described in the previous chapter, encouraged the consumer to care about the welfare of the slave. Unlike the Slave-grown sugar campaign which tended to construct consumers as directly culpable for the system of slavery, attaching criminal and cannibalistic connotations to consumers' decisions to purchase slave-grown products and emphasising the differences between the consumer and the slave, this Fairtrade promotional campaign shies away from any overt statements of culpability and instead focuses on the positive benefits that producers and consumers can together achieve. It attempts to elide the distinction between the consumer and the producer, something that those who work in Fairtrade or Alternative Trading Organisations are also keen to do (Wheeler, 2006). Whilst we may feel a sense of embarrassment and guilt, the 'preferred' reading (Hall, 1980) (as demonstrated by the annotated comments) is supposed to be about 'making people feel good about their choices' emphasising the dignity of an equal partnership based on the similarity between the consumer and producer. That Fairtrade advertisements and marketing strategies fail to achieve this equal recognition is a product of the wider global capitalist system within which they are

embedded where Fairtrade producers are unable to achieve "truly fair interaction between inhabitants of the planet" because of institutionalised barriers to world markets (Varul, 2008a: 674). Fairtrade is a step in the right direction for these producers, but because its success depends upon the mobilisation of a powerful citizen-consumer whose continued purchasing secures their livelihood, it does not represent an equal partnership. The careful representation of Fairtrade farmers calls Western consumers to action and convinces some of them to use their purchasing choices differently, but whether these can be used as a defence of the Fairtrade system (as in the FTF's response to the ASI) is another question.

## **Conclusion**

This chapter has been an attempt to demonstrate the importance of the Fairtrade Fortnight campaign in the construction and mobilisation of the 'Fairtrade consumer' at the national and local level. By beginning with a discussion of how the Fairville Fairtrade town group became established, the reader was made aware of the ways in which local coalitions of interest groups form a community of shared interest around the support for Fairtrade. This discussion was used to contextualise the examination of the 2008 Fairtrade Fortnight campaign which relied upon the efforts of thousands of local Fairtrade supporters (like those found in Fairville) in order to communicate its message across the UK. Whilst the Fortnight is marked by a number of national events and resources (supermarket switches, governmental support, national news coverage, advertising images), the local organisations of specific Fairtrade towns will impact upon how far particular visions of the Fairtrade consumer are mobilised.

We have seen how various institutions and organisations have come together in order to mobilise two very different visions of the Fairtrade consumer. On the one hand, the dominant image of the Fairtrade consumer – which is perpetuated by the FTF, the government, businesses, the media and indeed individual Fairtrade supporters – is of an individual who uses their consumption choices to challenge global trading relations and support producers who want to trade

their way out of poverty. The dominant image of the Fairtrade consumer constructed during Fairtrade Fortnight must be seen as the achievement of a number of organisations who have drawn on the specific socio-political context, which has attributed greater powers to the figure of the 'consumer' (see chapter 2 for a discussion of the rise of the consumer-citizen/citizen-consumer), and have used this to serve diverse political, social and economic aims through the careful representation of the growth of Fairtrade consumption. On the other hand, there also exists an alternative framing of the Fairtrade consumer which draws on both the collective and accidental purchasing practices of organisations and individuals. For the latter consumer, buying Fairtrade need not be about supporting Third World producers or using consumption choices in new and reflexive ways, but may rather be about buying Fairtrade because it is all that is on offer or because it is cheaper than other brands.

The dominant image of the consumer as someone who cares about global poverty and uses their consumption choices positively is utilised by the FTF to create a collective culture around Fairtrade amongst already-interested individuals. The examination of their action guides revealed how the FTF are very aware that their most active supporters are those who are found in Fairtrade town networks and they encourage these individuals to organise social activities which will strengthen their support and motivation to continue campaigning. Local Fairtrade events provide individuals with diverse political and religious beliefs the opportunity to come together to create a community built on shared attitudes and to integrate the consumption of Fairtrade goods with the social practices of everyday life. Unlike the Co-operative movement which aimed to instigate a social revolution by educating the working classes and providing an alternative culture based on the shared situation of consumers and producers, the Fairtrade movement seems to provide an alternative culture for a selected group of consumers whose social situations are very different from the producers they aim to help. Whilst there is an emphasis by the FTF on creating a partnership based on equal recognition, as Varul has highlighted, the consumer and producer are not engaged in an equal exchange. The producer is always in need of the consumer's continued purchasing which

relies on the consumer sustaining motivation and belief in the effectiveness of the buying Fairtrade goods. The Fairtrade Fortnight campaign offers committed Fairtrade supporters both these resources.

As well as providing the opportunity for Fairtrade consumers to come together, the dominant image of the consumer as an individual reflexive chooser is used by the FTF to demonstrate the support of thousands of individual citizens for their movement aims. Regardless of why consumers buy Fairtrade, the construction of the Fairtrade consumer as someone who is 'voting' for fairer trade, is used to sustain their continued advocacy work and rebut criticisms such as those of the ASI (see Clarke et al, 2007a). Additionally central government relies on this construction of the consumer as an individual exercising their right to choose probably in order to protect themselves from claims that they are intervening in the market. However, a recent report from the 'Sustainable Consumption Roundtable' (SDR, 2007) – which included representatives from the government's independent advisory bodies, the Sustainable Development Commission and the National Consumer Council – called on both government and businesses to act as 'choice editors' by intervening in the market and removing alternatives thus directing consumers' choices towards more sustainable options. Whilst the report did not mention the Fairtrade town's scheme or the Fairtrade Fortnight campaign, it seems that the Fairtrade movement's emphasis on encouraging local and national government and business to offer only Fairtrade goods reflects their recommendations.

By paying attention to the way that the Fairtrade Fortnight campaign was organised on the local level, we have been able to see how the specific coalition of interests and the existing organisation of retail space have impacted upon the visibility of the campaign to residents within Fairville. The location of Fairtrade events in Fairville tended to be concentrated in particular places, and attracted an audience of Fairtrade supporters and sympathisers which have meant that it has struggled to move beyond its activist niche. With a high proportion of mainstream retail outlets offering Fairtrade products and a strong Co-operative society offering a Fairtrade discount, residents in Fairville had access to Fairtrade products at reduced prices or on promotional offers during

Fairtrade Fortnight, but residents not attached to the Fairtrade networks in Fairville knew very little about Fairtrade or were unaware of purchasing it. Other Fairtrade towns who have directed Fairtrade events more towards the general public and who have a higher proportion of independent stores may be better placed to communicate the political message of Fairtrade and connect it to the sale of these goods. In this way, both the dominant image of the Fairtrade consumer as an active chooser and the image of the Fairtrade consumer as an accidental purchaser co-exist in Fairville as they do in the national context. However, given the distinctive make-up of the FFAG and the location of the majority of their activities, the Fairtrade consumer as an individual citizen-consumer is rarely hailed at the local level.

What seems most important to draw out then is how the dominant image of the consumer is sustained and defended (particularly in the debate between the FTF and the ASI) across a number of institutions, when it seems that a vast proportion of Fairtrade purchases are increasingly likely to fall into the second image of the consumer as Fairtrade options become mainstreamed. When institutions and business organisations take the decision to switch their supply-chains to Fairtrade they may be responding to the pressure placed upon them by organisations like the FTF, or to the requests of local campaigners and Fairtrade supporters, or to a need to emphasise their corporate social responsibility credentials, or to the government support for Fairtrade, or a personal belief in the importance of Fairtrade, but in taking this decision they enrol a large number of individuals into the consumption of Fairtrade products regardless of whether these individuals are aware of it or like it. The community of local and national Fairtrade supporters, businesses, manufacturers and local and national government are in many ways acting as 'choice editors', rather than working on convincing individual consumers to "vote with their wallet" (see opening quotation from DFID in chapter 2). By shifting entire supply chains, public buildings and product-lines to Fairtrade, we have seen how Fairtrade consumption can become detached from the movement's political message so that the Fairtrade consumer becomes 'anybody'.

## 5

### **"Every day I have a cup of Fairtrade coffee, I'm a winner": The practice of being a Fairtrade supporter**

On a cold morning at the beginning of March 2008, I arrived in the high street in Fairville to assist the local town group with their market-stall which they were holding to promote and sell Fairtrade goods over Fairtrade Fortnight. The stall sold Ubuntu cola, Co-op chocolate, Traidcraft cereal and snack bars, and footballs and it was run by a committed band of Fairtrade supporters who were trying to increase awareness of Fairtrade in their high street. Val, a 57 year old Christian, sold a selection of Divine chocolates, whilst Alfred, the instigator of the Fairville Fairtrade Town Campaign shouted 'Come and get your free Fairtrade chocolate' to the mostly unresponsive shoppers walking by. This was one of the 28 events that was held over Fairtrade Fortnight by Fairtrade supporters in Fairville and it was one of the two events organised that was aimed at the general public. Most other events in Fairville, as we saw in the previous chapter, were held in places where support for Fairtrade was already relatively high, such as churches, trade union rallies, co-operative meetings. About half way through the morning, Alfred turned to me and said 'One of the hardest things is to get a reaction out of people. The number of times I've been in this high street campaigning and most of the time people just walk past; they don't wanna know'. On the stall that morning I noticed that the few people who did stop to find out what was going on and to buy the goods on offer tended to already know about and have some sympathy for Fairtrade (or were children eager for free chocolate!). I was beginning to realise that being a Fairtrade supporter was not simply about choosing one product over another, but rather involved having existing political and ethical commitments and sensibilities.

As discussed in Chapter 2, attempts to understand the rise of Fairtrade consumption have focused upon the image of a reflexive citizen-consumer who acts upon information about the poverty caused by global trading practices and uses their new-found individual consumer power to make a difference (Bennett, 2004; Goodman, 2004; Lyon, 2006; Micheletti, 2003; Murray &

Raynolds, 2007; Scammell, 2003). The aim of this chapter is to use Fairtrade and non-Fairtrade supporters' own narratives of their involvement in Fairtrade to demonstrate that this existing understanding does not provide a convincing account upon which to understand Fairtrade consumption. I suggested in chapter 2 that if we are to understand Fairtrade consumption fully we must take account of the situational, institutional, and cultural contexts in which this consumption practice occurs. The socio-demographic characteristics of the consumer, the places and spaces in which Fairtrade products are promoted and displayed, and the ways in which Fairtrade consumption is framed by the institutions responsible for mediating acquisition and use are all likely to have a significant impact upon the likelihood of an individual/group consuming Fairtrade. In the discussion of the activities of the Fairville Fairtrade town group in the previous chapter, we saw that the supporters of Fairtrade often have affiliations to other interest groups and community networks and use Fairtrade events as a way of both promoting Fairtrade to others within their social networks and as an opportunity to socialise with like-minded individuals. Interest in Fairtrade therefore often appears to emerge whilst engaging in related social practices and, as Clarke et al (2007a) note, attracts people with existing sympathies.

This chapter will use Warde's (2005) application of a theory of practice as a framework upon which to account for Fairtrade consumption and support. Warde has argued that consumption occurs in the course of pursuing organised social practices rather than because of "the outcome of personal choice" (*ibid*: 137). Therefore any attempt to understand the nature and process of consumption requires particular attention to be paid to the collective culture in which that consumption is embedded. In this way, consumers should not be thought of as merely users but as 'creative practitioners' who both constitute and reproduce practices through their activities (Shove and Pantzar, 2005). After outlining the central features of a theory of practice, the 'careers' of four committed Fairtrade supporters will be presented in order to show how the paths into Fairtrade consumption are informed by a range of commitments, and how the actions and activities of Fairtrade supporters reproduce and expand this practice. I will conclude with an examination of

the 'career' of a couple who are committed to a Yogic-vegetarian lifestyle in order to demonstrate how engagement in a very different set of social practices can lead to very different perceptions of, and dispositions towards, Fairtrade.

### **Consumption and theories of practice**

Existing literature on Fairtrade consumption has given great explanatory power to the figure of the citizen-consumer who in a late modern society makes a conscious choice to buy Fairtrade and in so doing constructs their own narrative of self-identity (Bennett, 2004; Lyon, 2006; Micheletti, 2003; Scammell, 2000; 2003). However, Adams and Raisborough (2008) have called for a more situated account of consumer reflexivity which can account for the continuing importance of material, cultural and affective factors whilst at the same time acknowledging the agency and creativity of individual consumers. Warde's (2005) application of a theory of practice model to understand consumption can provide this middle ground.

Theories of practice are diverse and, although there is no fully integrated theory of practice, Warde (2005) and Reckwitz (2002) suggest that the key proponents of this perspective are Bourdieu (1990), Giddens, (1984) and Schatzki, (1996; 2001). Theories of practice emerge from a desire to move away from social theories that explain social action in terms of either objectivism or subjectivism. Social action is neither determined by the free choices of rational actors nor is it completely constrained by social forces and norms. Rather practice theory, like other cultural theories, stresses the importance of the pre-existence of cognitive and symbolic structures of knowledge which enable people to interpret the world and behave in particular ways (Reckwitz, 2002). Theories of practice aim to understand both action and social order with reference to "shared or collective symbolic structures of knowledge" (*ibid*: 246). Unlike other cultural theories which place discourses, interaction and mental qualities at the centre of their social theories, practice theorists believe that practices are "the site where understanding is structured and intelligibility [is] articulated" (Schatzki, 1996: 12). A practice is:

"a routinised way in which bodies are moved, objects are handled, subjects are treated, things are described and the world is understood [...] It is a 'type' of behaving and understanding that appears at different locales, and at different points of time and is carried out by different bodies and minds" (Reckwitz, 2002: 250)

A practice is a co-ordinated entity (such as ways of consuming or working) which consists of "doings and sayings" which form a "nexus" that is linked together by understandings, procedures or rules and engagements (Warde, 2005: 134). In order for a practice to come into existence, it must be regularly enacted by individual bodies, who are the carriers of many practices (Reckwitz, 2002: 250).

A practice must be performed by these 'carriers' who will display "patterns of bodily behaviour" as well as "routinised ways of understanding, knowing how and desiring" (*ibid.*). This emphasis on habit and embodiment reminds us of Bourdieu's concept of *habitus*.<sup>18</sup> For practice theorists, social life is constituted by a multitude of social practices which are not created by social actors but are recreated by them as they go about their daily lives and learn to behave and think in particular ways.

Given the promise of theories of practice, it is surprising they have not been systematically applied to the area of consumption. Warde points out that whilst Bourdieu (1990) and Giddens (1984) have made prominent contributions to practice theory, they both seem to lay aside the implications of these theories in other works (Bourdieu, 1984; Giddens, 1991). Importantly it is these other works that have been most influential in current explanations of Fairtrade consumption.<sup>19</sup> An important starting point for developing a theory of practice approach to consumption is to recognise that consumption "is not itself a practice but is, rather, a moment in almost every practice" (Warde, 2005: 137). In carrying out a practice, we will often be required to use things/goods in a particular way and how we understand and actually use these things will be guided by the organisation of the practice rather than any personal decision about consuming. This implies that if we want to understand the importance of consuming Fairtrade we must look at the

<sup>18</sup> A system of "durable, transposable dispositions" which are embodied within agents from an early age and which has the capacity to generate and organise practices in specific ways according to "the historically and socially situated conditions of its production" (Bourdieu, 1990: 53& 55).

<sup>19</sup> For example, the attention paid to the reflexivity of Fairtrade consumption has been heavily influenced by Giddens' (1991) voluntaristic analysis of individual action in the construction of lifestyles in a late modern world. Whilst Varul has drawn upon Bourdieu's (1984) *Distinction* to suggest that tastes for Fairtrade serve "to distinguish between social status groups within the middle classes and, usually unintentionally, in relation to lower classes" (2008c: 1).

wider practices of Fairtrade support which are likely to generate desires for Fairtrade goods. Whilst this seems to create a constrained image of consumption which is wholly determined by the organisation of a social practice, Warde argues this is not the case because not everyone will engage in a practice with the same degree of competency or commitment. Practices are "internally differentiated on many dimensions" (*ibid*: 138). If we apply this to Fairtrade support, the ability to demonstrate support for Fairtrade will depend upon an individual's knowledge of the aims of the Fairtrade movement and their opportunities for learning about it, having access to Fairtrade products and the available resources (both money and time), previous ethical consumer behaviour, knowing other people who support Fairtrade, and so on. Following Warde's argument, we should differentiate a practice on the basis of the commitment of individuals to it and the "potential contribution of agents to the reproduction and development of the practice" (Warde, 2005: 138).

Whilst Bourdieu's account of consumption practices within *Distinction* was also concerned with the differentiation of consumption, he tended to attribute differences to external, transposable dispositions and structural determinants such as social class, rather than paying attention to how the organisation of practices results in their internal differentiation (Sassatelli, 2007: 107). If we follow a theory of practice approach to consumption, we should account for its social differentiation on the basis of "recruitment to, and activity within practices" rather than on the basis of "class-structured classifications" (Warde, 2005: 139).<sup>20</sup> Once an individual is enrolled within a practice, their "subsequent immersion...often has the features of a career" because it is through involvement in a practice "that the sources of changed behaviour lie" (*ibid*: 145 & 140). Importantly Warde wants to make clear that it is through pursuing organised practices that dispositions and orientations towards certain consumer goods develop rather than consumption being the result of individuals exercising personal choice

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<sup>20</sup> Bourdieu did hint at the importance of the internal differentiation of practices in *Distinction*. For example, his discussion of the meaning of sporting practices revealed how past experience, as well as the type of team, the place and the equipment etc. used were likely to differentiate the practice (Bourdieu, 1984: 211). Whilst he resorts to a class structured account of sporting practices, he did acknowledge recruitment and activity within practices.

In the suggestion that an individual's career within a practice should become of focal concern, we see echoes of the ideas presented in classical ethnographical work on subcultures (Becker, 1963; Willis, 1978). In these accounts, consumption practices were closely tied to social contexts, and immersion within particular subcultures created forms of understanding and provided opportunities for developing dispositions towards specific substances or cultural artefacts. As we saw in the last chapter, it does seem that a collective culture is organised around Fairtrade support in Fairtrade town networks but consuming Fairtrade products does not seem to be a requirement of entry. Whilst the participants in the alternative subcultures described by Willis and Becker understood their consumption of drugs or particular modes of transport as something which highlighted their exclusivity from mainstream society, the practices of Fairtrade support are geared towards encouraging more people to consume Fairtrade and campaigning to move Fairtrade into mainstream retail sectors. Fairtrade supporters seem to have disconnected the consumption of Fairtrade from membership in alternative subcultures. This is probably heavily influenced by the cultural context of Fairtrade consumption within the UK because as Varul (2009) has revealed, in Germany where Fairtrade is distributed through dedicated Fairtrade shops, Fairtrade supporters are more likely to stress the exclusivity of their Fairtrade consumption. The forms that practices can take are likely to be conditional upon "time, space and social context" which enables collective learning within practices to develop in a particular way (Warde, 2005:139).

As individuals engage in a practice they are reproducing this practice in a manner that is neither fully conscious nor reflexive, and they are likely to be oriented by their past experiences which have enabled routinised ways of 'doing and saying' to develop. In a similar sense to Bourdieu's *habitus*, these past experiences (beginning from early childhood socialisation) are embodied within individuals and act as a system of "cognitive and motivating structures" when faced with similarly structured practices (Bourdieu, 1990: 53). The individual is the "unique crossing point of practices" (Reckwitz, 2002: 256) and therefore the routines of consumption they carry out are likely to be influenced by their engagement in a multiplicity of social practices. Warde

suggests this raises the important issue of whether consumption guided by different practices forms a coherent and consistent pattern. As people engage in a number of varied practices, what counts as a consistent pattern is likely to be open to dispute and will not necessarily be understood in the same way by those with differing levels of commitment to particular social practices.

I will now turn to the narratives of Fairtrade supporters and non-Fairtrade supporters living in Fairville, in order to apply, develop and explore some of the ideas presented in this section. Before doing so, I will take a short detour to discuss how I gathered my data in household interviews and methodological issues arising from this.

### **Methodological focus: Household Interviews**

The data presented in this chapter has been drawn from a selection of household interviews with people living in Fairville. The majority of the nineteen interviews were conducted in respondents' homes with the individuals/couples responsible for shopping decisions within their household. Eleven of these interviews were conducted with Fairtraders and eight with non-Fairtraders and they lasted between 45 and 90 minutes each.<sup>21</sup> Fairtraders are defined as committed Fairtrade supporters whereas non-Fairtraders are residents in Fairville with no connection to the Fairville town group networks. I used a purposive sampling method (see Ritchie et al, 2003) to recruit respondents with particular characteristics (that is, living in Fairville and being (or not being) a Fairtrade supporter). My Fairtraders were either from the Fairville Fairtrade town group or were recruited at one of the Fairtrade events I attended during Fairtrade Fortnight. The non-Fairtraders were more difficult to recruit because it is more difficult identify people by the absence of a particular characteristic. I met a number of non-Fairtraders through my focus group interviews (see next chapter) and through a snowball sampling method I used these contacts to identify others who were willing to participate in an interview. I made no assumptions about whether non-Fairtraders actually bought Fairtrade (and indeed some of them did) but rather I aimed to examine how understandings and involvement with

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<sup>21</sup> See appendix 1 for a short description of each interviewee.

Fairtrade differed between those inside the Fairtrade group and related networks and those outside. In this way, the two groups offered the opportunity to look at how differential levels of commitment affect the practice of Fairtrade support.

The reader needs to be made aware that the sample of Fairtraders has distinctive characteristics. Over half of the Fairtraders were nearing or past retirement age and whilst every attempt was made to seek Fairtraders outside of this age limit (I spoke with a young couple in their 30s, 2 men in their 30s and 2 women in their 40s), the make-up of the Fairville Fairtrade group and related networks was heavily weighted towards the older age brackets. Having attended a number of Fairtrade events in Fairville, I feel that the ageing sample achieved in this research reflects the nature of Fairtrade support in Fairville. Putnam (2000), in his examination of civil associations in America, revealed a generational gap with older cohorts more likely to participate than younger ones. Similarly, recent findings from the Citizenship Survey in England and Wales reveal that those aged 50-74 were more likely (44 per cent) to have engaged in civic participation compared with those aged 16-24 (23 per cent) (Department for Communities and Local Government, 2008: 5). Since Fairtrade town groups are a form of civic association, the age of respondents in this research appears to reflect national trends in participation.

Following a mixed-method research design, my interviews were semi structured around themes which had emerged, or remained unexplored, in the quantitative data and in the focus group and observational phase of the research. Because the interviews were semi-structured, I was able to pursue any unexpected themes that arose from the discussions with the interviewees without the constraints of a rigid structure (see Lofland et al, 2006; Mason, 2002). Unlike the focus groups (discussed in the next chapter), all my interviewees were aware that I was interested in Fairtrade and were told that the purpose of the interview was to discuss how they organised their shopping and how they understood and/or used different ethical products. It has been noted that there is a danger of social desirability bias when questioning people about their ethical consumption choices with individuals over-reporting their propensity to engage in ethical consumer behaviour (Clavin and

Lewis, 2005; Worcester and Dawkins, 2005). Using qualitative data methods, which allows the researcher to delve into the actual actions, motivations and influences behind participants' ethical behaviour, can perhaps limit the degree to which individuals conform to an ethical ideal but cannot eliminate this completely. To minimise social desirability bias in my research, I asked respondents to have a shopping receipt to hand which I used as a focusing exercise. The receipts, which represented a recent shopping visit, encouraged respondents to recall what they had done in a specific context. Rather than simply having a general discussion with participants about their ethical shopping choices, the receipts provided a record of actual purchases. Whilst it is possible that respondents bought more ethical products the week before the interview because they knew they would be discussing this, I found that the receipts often provided opportunities for respondents to reflect upon the absence or presence of items on their list suggesting that they had not gone out of their way to buy more ethical products for the purpose of the receipt.<sup>22</sup> In this way, the receipts provided insights into respondents' shopping routines – the places, spaces, times and products – as well as the types of issues that tended to influence their consumption 'choices'.

Whilst going through the list, we discussed the specific ethical shopping issues that mattered to respondents. I specifically asked respondents to tell me how they had learnt about different ethical shopping 'choices' and lifestyles and whether their interest in, for example, Fairtrade or Organic had spanned beyond shopping into other areas of their life. Using a model of practice approach to understand consumption, the recruitment and career of individuals within a practice becomes a focal concern in order to gauge the commitment of the respondent to the practice. With non-Fairtraders, who often had few ethical products on their list, we discussed what they knew and thought about ethical shopping with a particular focus on Fairtrade.

The data presented in the following section will focus in depth upon the practices of four committed Fairtrade supporters with supporting evidence from the other Fairtrade interviews where

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<sup>22</sup> So for example, Claire told me that she had bought Fairtrade pears this week because they were on special offer but that she wouldn't normally do this because she would prefer to buy pears grown in the UK, and Leon didn't have any Fairtrade coffee or sugar on his list because he didn't need any that week but said that he would normally buy them (and then proceeded to show me the contents of his kitchen cupboards to prove this!)

relevant. The particular case studies have been chosen for their richness and their diversity, revealing the internal differentiation of the practice of being a Fairtrade supporter. Having discussed how those who are committed to Fairtrade organise and understand their support of Fairtrade, I turn to a couple who are committed to a very different set of social practices in order to demonstrate how these practices guides individuals towards particular types of consumption and away from Fairtrade support.

## **Case studies**

### **Alfred**

Alfred is a 70-year old<sup>23</sup> retired NHS Catering Manager who we will remember was involved with the Fairtrade town campaign in Fairville from the start. Alfred has spent much of his working life as a chef on ocean cruise-liners. Consequently he has travelled extensively and has seen first hand the poverty in many tourist destinations. From a young age, Alfred became interested in politics and he joined the Communist Party in his 20s. He also became involved with the labour movement whilst working on the ships. He is an active trade union council member and is presently the secretary for the local group in Fairville. He also supports the co-operative movement and is on the board of the Fairville Co-op society. He does all of his food shopping at the Co-op as "a matter of principle". Alfred is a social campaigner and has been involved in a *very* long list of local campaigns including fighting to save a ward at a local hospital and supporting the actions of striking bus drivers who had been sacked. He has boycotted South African products in the past and continues to boycott Esso Oil and products from Israel.

Alfred's decision to become involved with Fairtrade came after a faith-based group sold Fairtrade products at an annual Trade Union rally. He learnt about Fairtrade there and pursued his interest in subsequent years. He says:

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<sup>23</sup> This is the age Alfred was at the time of the interview in 2008, that is he was born in 1938. Reader should note all subsequent ages will also refer to the age of respondents at the time of the interview.

*I think it first arose when some neighbours up the road offered to do a Traidcraft stall at a May rally of the Trades Council many, many years ago, and they came for two or three years. Then it sort of dropped off the horizon really but then through reading various literature and the Ethical Consumer and a whole number of other things I suppose, the Fairtrade concept came into my consciousness. And I knew we should be doing something about it and I suppose I was buying Fairtrade for years and then I raised the whole issue at the Trades Council and that's how I really got involved*

It is interesting to note that Alfred's involvement in Fairtrade stemmed from his engagement in the Trades Union Council and local Co-operative movement which are both traditionally understood as working class associations. Research into Fairtrade consumption has tended to assume that middle class consumers are more likely to consume Fairtrade than their working-class counterparts (Adams & Raisborough, 2008; Varul, 2008b; 2009). However, we have already seen that attempts at profiling the Fairtrade consumer have found that socio-economic status is not alone enough to predict the likelihood of consuming Fairtrade with engagement in social and political campaign groups, and particular attitudes towards development being equally important (Pirotte, 2007). Alfred, as a self-defined member of the working class, is keen to stress that social class is not relevant and that anyone can be a Fairtrade consumer as long as they possess a "social conscience" (a popular refrain amongst Fairtrader supporters), which for Alfred is developed through engagement in political and social campaigns.

There are two important implications of Alfred's belief that there is no necessary relationship between Fairtrade consumption and social class. Firstly, his assertion of the non-exclusivity of Fairtrade can perhaps be understood with reference to the organisation of Fairtrade support, which aims to encourage as many people as possible to consume Fairtrade in order to achieve the maximum benefit to the Fairtrade producers. The institutional framing of Fairtrade support appeals to the all-inclusive category of the 'consumer' and, as suggested in the previous chapter, the campaigning material made available to Fairtrade supporters reflects this. Alfred as a key actor in the Fairville campaign group is engaged in the active promotion of Fairtrade in Fairville, and therefore his commitment to these practices are guiding his understanding of Fairtrade consumption as something that 'anyone' can do regardless of their social class.

Secondly, Alfred's suggestion that he, and others, have developed a "social conscience" through their activities with the Trade Union and other campaigning groups reveals how these organised practices have created particular dispositions which steer individuals towards Fairtrade. Sayer has argued that an individual's ethical dispositions are embodied in the habitus and that their strength will depend upon "the frequency with which they are activated" (Sayer, 2005a: 44-5). An individual's past experiences and the frequency with which they engage in 'moral activities' (in other words activities that require them to act upon their moral emotions) are important in the development of dispositions towards Fairtrade support.

Indeed, Alfred clearly understands his involvement in the Fairtrade campaign as an extension of an already-existent campaigning identity. He explains:

*You know, it's a direct benefit, I mean, I think I may have said to you before, that we've been involved in many campaigns but every day you have a cup of Fairtrade coffee or drink some Fairtrade tea or eat a Fairtrade banana, you're a winner. So you get a little victory every day and that's got to be good. It's good for me and it's good for the producers. And I think that's very important actually because you know, we do need these little victories, these little boosts to keep us going. (Laughs). It's quite simple really.*

Alfred has a very long history of campaigning in which he admits he's "lost more than I've won", but by consuming Fairtrade products he is able to re-imagine this history and have a "victory every day". Importantly, we see elements of what Soper (2008) calls 'alternative hedonism' in this statement, as Alfred professes a sense of moral pleasure in knowing his consumption is making a difference. Soper suggests that new forms of ethical consumption should be understood and promoted, not as purely altruistic acts but as practices which provide consumers with new forms of desire. Both self-interested and altruistic motives combine in different ways challenging the supposed individualism of economic approaches to consumer behaviour. Indeed, a number of Fairtrade supporters described how consuming Fairtrade gave them a "warm glow" or a sense of pride in knowing that their shopping choices were "doing good". However, this 'warm feeling' did not persuade every Fairtrade supporter to buy Fairtrade if the product itself was perceived to be of a lower quality. Indeed Alfred's wife, June, jokingly remarked

*Alfie will buy Fairtrade and eat Fairtrade even if he doesn't like it (Laughs). But I won't.*

(June, age 76, retired secondary school teacher)

Whilst, for Alfred, consuming Fairtrade is important, regardless of the quality of the product, for the majority of other respondents ethics could not override their desire for value-for-money and quality.

It is fair to say that Alfred is one of the most committed Fairtrade supporters in Fairville. He strongly believes in Fairtrade and spends much of his free time trying to expand the movement both locally within Fairville and beyond. He organises events in neighbouring towns to encourage them to work towards Fairtrade status, speaks with local suppliers to get them to stock Fairtrade, and is the secretary of the Fairville Fairtrade Action Group. We can see that Alfred's performance of the practice of Fairtrade support extends beyond merely buying Fairtrade products in his own shopping and moves into activities to encourage others to buy Fairtrade. For example, through campaigns to shift systems of collective provision which encourage shops and public places in Fairville to stock only Fairtrade, Alfred's actions work to both reproduce and extend the practice of Fairtrade consumption by making Fairtrade products more widely available and removing the need for consumers to make an active 'choice' in favour of Fairtrade. But there is also a sense in which Alfred is able to draw upon these newly created networks around Fairtrade in order to promote and extend his other commitments. Alfred regularly sends emails to Fairtrade supporters to promote Trade Union and Co-operative events suggesting that engagement with Fairtrade provides him with sources of social capital that he can make use of in his pursuit of other social and political campaigns. Being a Fairtrade supporter both extends existing commitments into new arenas and provides opportunities to revitalise and promote those existing commitments.

### Phillipa

Phillipa is a 60-year old Christian charity worker and is a regular member of the Fairville Fairtrade Town group – she is not involved in the steering committee but occasionally attends meetings and pays subscriptions. She has three grown-up children and her husband is a vicar at a local church.

Phillipa is the administrator for a Christian charity which organises events for youth groups, such as craft sessions, short breaks and outdoor activities, as a way of introducing young people to Christianity. She has been a volunteer and latterly paid employee at this charity for 25 years, and prior to this, she worked for the homeless charity, Shelter, and for a publishing company. Phillipa does not have a car because she is concerned about carbon emissions and has chosen to do her shopping online but admits "it's a constant anxiety" knowing whether she's actually reducing her emissions by having her food delivered. She regularly buys local and organic food as well as Fairtrade (and indeed admits that Organic is more important to her than Fairtrade) and actively avoids Tesco because of its aggressive policies. She prefers Waitrose believing it to be "the most ethical supermarket". She uses the Traidcraft stall at her local church for many of her basic Fairtrade goods, but admits that she "wouldn't restrict [her] shopping because of Fairtrade, but would try and buy Fairtrade if it was an obvious sort of thing". This is an important point to highlight, because despite the fact that she counts herself as a Fairtrade supporter, she does not always consume Fairtrade goods. Indeed, a number of Fairtrade supporters whom I spoke with also adopted a more flexible approach to their Fairtrade shopping (buying Fairtrade only in some cases) which seems to suggest the consumption of Fairtrade products is not the only way to 'do' Fairtrade support.

Phillipa found it hard to remember exactly how she learnt about Fairtrade but places her first interest in the 1960s:

*I don't know why, it was that sort of period; we just were emerging into married life at a time when Amnesty International and Fairtrade were opening. Yeah, so it was I think I was just that generation you know. And erm, it wasn't particularly around before. [...] I think it was just that that's what came out of you know, people like me who were young in the 60's, all those sort of things were terribly important at the time.*

Phillipa describes the importance of this political-cultural moment and how her involvement in particular protest movements sparked her initial interest in Fairtrade. This interest increased when her local church asked her to run a Traidcraft stall which she did as a hobby whilst her children were young, nearly 30 years ago. She is also encouraged to support Fairtrade through her cousin who

works for Oxfam in South America, who relays stories about how the money is used on the ground. Additionally through her involvement with the church – which is involved in missionary work providing funding for a pharmacy in Kenya – Phillipa has met some Kenyan tea producers who have told her of some of the difficulties they face producing their crop which has encouraged her to believe that “buying [food] from a responsible supplier seems about the safest thing you can do”.

Just as Alfred understood his involvement as closely linked to his personal history of engagement in social and political campaigns, Phillipa understands her support for Fairtrade as closely linked to her faith.

*Oh well, it's hugely, because you know, my faith is what motivates everything else in my life, so it's bound to be. Erm, and it's interesting therefore to, with people like my cousins who are erm, I mean they both come from incredibly Christian backgrounds, but they absolutely have abandoned any idea of faith themselves. And so, how much of their hugely ethical stance on things is to do with their background and therefore comes out of a sort of Christian tradition. Erm, but on the other hand actually, you know, erm, I think that, yes, I think in my case it's hugely motivated by my faith. But, on the other hand, I wouldn't say that there's any sense in which Christians have a monopoly on ethics. [...]It just happens in my case. Probably if I didn't have any faith I'd be absolutely foul, so it's just as well (laughs).*

Importantly, we again see how past experiences and commitments seem to orient people towards Fairtrade options and ethical lifestyles. Indeed a number of Fairtrade supporters had come across Fairtrade at their church and understood their decision to purchase Fairtrade as intimately connected with their faith - so for Grace, for example, choosing Fairtrade was just one part of living a “personally acceptable Quakerly life”, and for Sue, consuming Fairtrade and holding a Traidcraft stall at her local church was “a practical extension of her religious faith”.<sup>24</sup> Whilst religious motivations are clearly personally important to Phillipa, she is also keen to stress that you don’t have to be a Christian to be a Fairtrade supporter. Just as Alfred denied any necessary association between social class and Fairtrade and rather characterised the Fairtrade supporter as someone who held a “social conscience”, Phillipa also suggests that the possession of particular ethical dispositions is likely to influence individuals towards Fairtrade support. Although her cousins no longer adhere

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<sup>24</sup> The connection between faith and Fairtrade is a surprisingly under-researched area given the role of religious charities in the establishment of the Fairtrade movement. Indeed four of the five founding organisations of the FTF in the UK have connections with particular religious faiths – Traidcraft (described as ‘a Christian response to poverty’), Christian Aid, Oxfam (associated with Quakerism) and the Catholic Agency for Overseas Development (CAFOD). And, as we saw in the last chapter, the FTF directs its campaign guides towards faith groups.

to the Christian faith, Phillipa suspects that their "ethical stance" and commitment to Fairtrade is likely to have been born from Christian teaching in early childhood, and taken forward into new arenas of their lives. Being a Fairtrade supporter seems to involve holding particular ethical dispositions from which follow engagement in a range of social practices. Whilst there is an attempt to construct Fairtrade as a non-exclusive activity, a moral boundary (a social conscience) is drawn between Fairtrade supporters and non-Fairtrade supporters. The drawing of boundaries around Fairtrade consumption will be explored in depth in the next chapter.

Although Phillipa rejects the necessary association between faith and Fairtrade, she was unique amongst Fairtraders in Fairville in representing her ability to consume Fairtrade in class terms.

*I think there is a sort of middle-classness about it and I think that erm, it's more expensive, so you also have to be able to say I can afford to do that. And I've got this friend who doesn't buy Fairtrade and only has £20 for her food bill and she was very poor in her childhood and so she's never lost that erm, habit in her shopping, so she would never buy organic and she certainly wouldn't buy Fairtrade and she absolutely gets hot and bothered when people talk about the planet; she couldn't give a blah about the planet because her concern is about just keeping her head above water and so she can get quite cross about Fairtrade. She sees it as a sort of gloss on the cake of middle-class morality. Erm, and one has to be quite cautious about it. So I think that there is a sense in which it's fine for people like me now, when, we're both in work and our children are grown up and we may not, we're obviously not earning a lot of money, but erm, but we can afford to choose what we buy [...] so I think there's bound to be a sort of middle class element to it. Erm, but...of course there's an element also where it's easier to buy Fairtrade, if you're not actually hugely rich. I mean, if I were hugely rich I might have a four wheel drive car and drive to the supermarket, I don't know (Laughs). It's just that I can have a concern because it all fits in quite easily, but you know, if in fact, my husband went everywhere by helicopter, I don't know if I'd still feel the same, perhaps I wouldn't. I'd hate to, I wouldn't like to say you know, whatever happened I'd always have the same concern, because I don't know that I would. I'd probably be thinking about my next Dior outfit and going to a spa or something (Laughs). It's a bit inevitable that people like me will be able to be erm...*

Phillipa here seems acutely aware that Fairtrade consumption may not be open to everyone and suggests that there are clear class/income and lifestyle limits to the practice. Phillipa draws a distinction between her own lifestyle and consumption practices and how she imagines those with greater or lesser incomes and different lifestyle concerns would behave. The exclusivity of Fairtrade is established in her statement, with those in higher status groups, in particular, slightly denigrated for their engagement in conspicuous and environmentally damaging forms of consumption.

Interestingly, Phillipa does not set up a stark opposition between herself as an ethical consumer and the 'other' as an un-ethical consumer, but uses the opportunity to reflect upon her own involvement in Fairtrade practices. She describes her own involvement as "inevitable" and reveals how Fairtrade "fits in" to her other concerns quite easily. Whilst social class and stage in the life-course are viewed as crucial to her likelihood of consuming Fairtrade, just as important are her previous experiences which reveal a long career of involvement in and commitment to Fairtrade and similar practices (for example running a Traidcraft stall, buying Organic food). Importantly, she puts herself 'into the shoes' of the 'other' and imagines that if she operated in this different world where she were "rich" or only had £20 to spend on food, she would not necessarily be interested in Fairtrade. Her reflections upon the contexts which have shaped her own dispositions towards Fairtrade have made her sensitive to the possibility that not everyone will be equally concerned to consume Fairtrade. We are encouraged to think of her consumption through a model of practice because the 'choices' she has open to her seem dependent upon the range of practices she engages in. She seems to realise that her own and other people's consumption practices have a "bounded reflexivity" (Sassatelli, 2007) operating within the conditions in which they find themselves and therefore she does not blame those who don't buy Fairtrade for their failure to act.

Phillipa is not quite as committed as Alfred to extending the practice of Fairtrade consumption to others. She does not see herself as a campaigner, and says she thinks that's why Fairtrade suits her. She describes it as "a pain free way of doing one's bit". Although she does not think of herself as an active campaigner, more of an "armchair supporter", she has contacted several local stores in Fairville to ask them to stock Fairtrade and supports the Fairville Fairtrade town group through membership subscriptions. As the Fairtrade movement has organised itself into the mainstream, Phillipa feels that being a Fairtrade supporter has become easier and that it doesn't need "people like me pottering about with their stall". For Phillipa, as the Fairtrade movement has grown the practice of being a Fairtrade supporter has changed and she has adapted to these changes. This

is an interesting point because it reveals how established ways of supporting Fairtrade have altered along with the shifting cultural and economic context of Fairtrade.

### Claire and John

Claire and John are in their mid-30s and have been married for 12 years. They have two young children, a girl aged four and a boy aged seven. I met Claire and John at a screening of the movie *Black Gold* which was showing at a theatre in Fairville during Fairtrade Fortnight. The two are not involved in the Fairville Fairtrade Town campaign because with young children they don't feel they have enough time; but they have been Fairtrade supporters for at least the last nine years. Despite not being involved in the Fairville campaign, the couple always make a point of asking for Fairtrade when shopping and have handed in 'stock-it' postcards to local stores as part of the Fairtrade Fortnight campaign (see last chapter). Claire is currently taking a break from work to raise her children but used to be a Maths and P.E. teacher at a local secondary school and John works full-time for an IT firm. They try to use the local market for local produce and buy their toiletries from the Co-op because these have not been tested on animals. They use Asda for the rest of their shopping. They used to belong to the Suma cooperative (a company that supplies wholesale vegetarian, organic and Fairtrade foods) with a number of other local residents although they haven't bought anything from them for a while now. They are both vegetarians but for different reasons; for Claire it was a desire not to be implicated in the harm of animals, and for John becoming a vegetarian emerged from a desire to reduce his consumption of world resources because it takes more grain and energy to feed and butcher an animal than it does to eat pulses. They both enjoy using charity shops for clothes and other goods and see this as a way of helping others through their shopping.

They both learnt about Fairtrade through John's involvement with the local Oxfam group. They remembered how they had stood outside Tesco's along with the local Amnesty group giving out free chocolates before Fairville had organised itself into a Fairtrade town. Whilst Claire learnt about Fairtrade through her husband's involvement in Oxfam, she has also been in contact with

Fairtrade through her church, and, like Phillipa, describes how her support links in with her Christian faith. Claire is also involved with other charitable activities through her church and we can see how these different actions work to construct her as "someone who cares".

*I like to think I do think about people in the Third World as well. I mean, we do this operation, the Shoebox Appeal at Christmas, sending a shoebox of toys and things out to children, erm, charities and schools do it and that's Third World. Erm, and the Harvest for the Hungry around here where you fill a box up with either flour, sugar, erm, or there's just family food parcels, with biscuits, erm, pasta, rice, basic things. Yes, we're involved with that. It's not going to the Third World, but it goes to Romania. The Harvest for the Hungry was set up from Fairville from the Baptist Church. So erm, yeah, we, I certainly think of the Third World and children and people anyway. (Claire)*

Claire and John have diverging understandings and motivations for supporting Fairtrade which can perhaps be understood if we look at their trajectory or 'career' as Fairtrade supporters. Whilst both Claire and John came into contact with Fairtrade through the same organisation, they have pursued their interest in differing organisations and through different practices which have provided distinctive contexts they have drawn upon to realise their Fairtrade support. John has continued to pursue his support for Fairtrade through his involvement in the local Oxfam group and has also learnt about Fairtrade through his membership of the World Development Movement (WDM), from which he receives information and calls to action about Fairtrade and development issues. For Claire, contact with Fairtrade has mostly come from involvement in her church which engages in charitable outreach work and through doing the weekly shopping where Fairtrade purchases are made. This interesting exchange between the couple reveals their different takes of the purpose of supporting Fairtrade and draws on wider political debates and ideologies about Fairtrade.

**Claire:** *It's a charity isn't it? I'd see it as giving weekly money to charity.*

**John:** *I wouldn't say it's a charity.*

**Claire:** *Wouldn't you?*

**John:** *No. If I buy a fish from the Fishmonger's it's not charity. It's business.*

**Claire:** *But it's not Fairtrade. We're talking about Fairtrade[*

**John:**

*[Its business]*

**Claire:**

*[When I buy vegetables or*

*whatever I see it as I give the money to charity each week, in effect you're giving it to the producer aren't you?*

**John:** *If it wasn't Fairtrade the producer would still get the money*

**Claire:** *Yeah, but it's getting a fair price for a producer.*

**John:** *So you think that's charity that they should...get the fair price? [bemused laughter]*

**Claire:** *Yeah, because it's a charity as in helping someone.*

**John:** *But they should be getting it anyway. Shouldn't they get a fair price anyway?*

**Claire:** *They should, yeah.*

**John:** *So it's not charity.*

**Claire:** *No, well, that's how I see it, yeah, a way of helping.*

For Claire, who purchases the majority of the Fairtrade food for the household, the extra cost of Fairtrade products is understood as a form of charitable giving. Whilst she acknowledges that she is aiming to help producers get a "fair price" she sees this as an extension of the other activities she's involved with which work to "help others" (Harvest for the Hungry, Shoebox Appeals). The financial exchange is very much understood by her as using her relative privilege to help others rather than participating in an equal trading relationship. However, John appears to be drawing on the discursive resources of the trade justice organisations, Oxfam and WDM, which stress the concepts of 'trade not aid' and producer empowerment through 'fair exchange', in order to construct his understanding of, and reasons for supporting Fairtrade. As a member and supporter of these various trade justice organisations, he adapts the established forms of knowledge, the 'doings and sayings', within these practices and applies them to Fairtrade support. For John, Fairtrade is an important way of alleviating poverty for Third World producers and a business-model which gives producers 'dignity'. The rather heated exchange between the couple reveals the internal differentiation of being a Fairtrade supporter and how individuals can have and develop different motivations for, and understandings of, engaging in the practice.<sup>25</sup> Whilst Fairtrade support can be used as a source of commonality between individuals, for this couple it appears to be a source of conflict; and in more ways than one, as I show.

Claire has the main responsibility for the household shopping – a trend reflected in numerous studies on the gender division of labour in the household (Miller, 1995; Pahl, 2000) and amongst a

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<sup>25</sup> For example, Leon, a 34-year old musician, understood his consumption of Fairtrade as working to protect the environment in developing countries because if crops were not profitable for producers they may start damaging the environment through deforestation. And Oliver, a retired senior local government official, understood his consumption of Fairtrade as a way of 'stabilising the world' and ensuring that producers and their families stay in their own countries rather than becoming refugees in other parts of the world.

number of the younger participants I spoke with in Fairville. When we were discussing her most recent shopping visit she pointed out that sometimes she does not buy Fairtrade because of a desire to support local produce and the extra cost (both environmental and monetary) of Fairtrade.

*Usually I would look for the British, if not I'd go for the Fairtrade ones. Bananas, we always get Fairtrade bananas but, when they are really yellow, I will go for the other ones because the yellow ones aren't going to last the week. Usually I tend to get... what did I do today (looks at receipt) I got one Fairtrade and then a small bunch of the others, non Fairtrade. Today...yes, I got the Fairtrade Clementines, I got two bags of those because last week I bought one bag of the non-Fairtrade Satsuma's, because one was £1.88 and one was £1.08. So I thought 80p difference was quite a lot. Erm, but I had the Clementines this week so I got both because they were only £1.40-something. You know, I was comparing the prices as well and that worked out better. And also the Clementines were from Argentina, Fairtrade Argentina, and the non Fairtrade ones were from South Africa I think, so mileage wise as well you know was what was going on there. (Claire)*

For Claire, there was a need to balance a number of competing concerns and take account of both ethical issues and practical matters of buying food for the family at a reasonable price that will last them for the week. However John later voices a different opinion about the way he would approach Fairtrade shopping if he did it.

*John: If something's Fairtrade I don't tend to look at the price. I bought some Muesli from there once, it was quite expensive actually.*

*Claire: What was it?*

*John: Fairtrade, Fairtrade muesli.*

*Claire: Perhaps we need to have a conversation about how much we should spend really. I start looking at prices thinking 'oo you know', I don't know I just look at prices, whereas you said if it's Fairtrade you don't tend to look at it.*

What is particularly interesting about this exchange is how John's opinions on the cost of consuming Fairtrade relative to non-Fairtrade goods seem to be based on his occasional experiences of carrying out the weekly shopping. Claire, who does most of the shopping for the family, is more sensitive to the price of Fairtrade goods because she is accustomed to shopping to a particular budget and is guided by particular ways of 'doing' the weekly shop to ensure the varied needs of her family are met. Claire is steered away from the more expensive Fairtrade items because she is pursuing a different social practice when she is shopping for her family. When she can both support Fairtrade and nourish her family, when the "norms of different practices are consistent with each other" (Warde, 2005: 144), she fulfils her commitment to both. But when these norms clash, she seems to

prioritise her commitment to her family. On the other hand, whilst there is no doubt that John is just as committed to his family as Claire, because the practice of household shopping is not an arena in which he expresses this commitment, he sees no real problem with consuming the often more expensive Fairtrade options. This is in keeping with research by Pahl (2000) on the gendering of spending within the household. She showed that women tend to be responsible for the collective expenditure of households, whereas men are more preoccupied with individual rather than collective expenditure. This exchange again seems to reveal how Fairtrade support can become a source of conflict rather than commonality, and demonstrates that not all Fairtrade supporters will engage in the practice from the same position or with the same degree of commitment.

Claire and John provide just one illustration of the difficulties felt by all respondents (Fairtraders and non-Fairtraders) of negotiating competing demands and balancing ethical, practical and family preferences when shopping. Debates around new forms of consumer-citizenship and discourses promoting Fairtrade suggest that consumers are increasingly using their individual consumption to 'vote' for fairer trade; but in many ways I found that individual consumption practices revealed just as many 'votes' for unfair trading relations. Because Fairtrade supporters admitted that they did not always buy Fairtrade and instead prioritised other concerns such as price, quality, and competing ethical consumer products like Organic and local food, we are encouraged to question the importance, or *not*, of consuming Fairtrade products for being a Fairtrade supporter. For most Fairtrade supporters what it means to be a Fairtrade supporter extends beyond individual shopping choices. Often the actions of Fairtrade supporters in Fairtrade town networks work to encourage others to learn about Fairtrade – like organising events such as Fairtrade fashion shows and Fairtrade coffee mornings, etc., and giving gifts that are Fairtrade to promote awareness; or work to remove the choice of non-Fairtrade products from the shelves through campaigns to shift systems of collective provision – like 'stock it' postcards requesting that local stores and spaces provide Fairtrade options. All these actions extend the practice of Fairtrade support to other interested individuals and create a *collective* practice of which individual consumption is merely one

part. For Claire and John and Alfred and Phillipa, buying Fairtrade products is an important part of the practice of Fairtrade support, but through looking at the range of other activities they engage in, we can see that consumption is not the only, or even the main, way to 'do' Fairtrade support.

### Resisting Recruitment

Having examined the narratives of committed Fairtrade supporters and the activities which seem to form the collective structure of the practice of Fairtrade support, it will be useful to consider how individuals who are not committed to Fairtrade respond to this practice. Whilst the alternative culture built around Fairtrade in the Fairville Fairtrade town networks aims to encourage more people to use Fairtrade, it is not necessarily the case that non-Fairtraders are aware of this culture (see last chapter) or perceive it similarly to the Fairtraders. Warde suggests that gauging the different levels of commitment to a practice can help us to understand its differentiation and in particular it will be important to consider how individuals resist "being recruited in the first place" (Warde, 2005: 145). The case study presented here demonstrates how engagement in a very different set of social practices can lead to very different understandings of, and commitments towards, Fairtrade. The reader should be aware that this particular case study has been chosen because the couple had a passionate commitment to an alternative social practice, Yogic-vegetarianism – the majority of non-Fairtraders did not exhibit this level of commitment when discussing their shopping routines, although they did often reveal strong commitments towards family members (like Claire, above).

Helen is a 43-year old planning officer who practises sports massage therapy in the evenings and is studying for a Masters in planning. Mark is a 37-year old recycling officer who has just started studying for a degree in the environment and social science. They both work in local government but they do not work at Fairville council (so are not likely to be consuming Fairtrade at work). They have been living in Fairville for four years and do the majority of their food shopping online at Sainsbury's in order to give them more free time at the weekends. Helen and Mark are committed to a Yogic-vegetarian lifestyle. Mark thinks that he decided to become a vegetarian after the foot

and mouth crisis when he got "a real realisation that big companies were cutting corners to maximise profits and therefore taking advantage of me". However, Helen reflects that it was their attendance at a meditation course seven years ago that really made them embrace vegetarianism. They were told at this course that they would get more from their meditation if they followed a traditional Indian Yogic-diet.<sup>26</sup> This diet is supposed to promote positive self-being by reducing the ingestion of particular substances (such as meat, eggs, garlic, onions, caffeine, chemicals) which have a negative effect upon the body and mind. As they continue to meditate on a daily basis (for 20 minutes every morning), they also continue to follow this diet as part of their commitment to the yogic lifestyle. Mark and Helen believe that pursuing this lifestyle has enabled them to experience "clarity and lightness of mind". As Mark explains:

*To butcher an animal, to kill it, is such a violent act and you cannot help that adrenaline being released into the molecules of that meat. So if I then consume those molecules that's going to then effect the vibrational rate of my blood which is then renewing all the cells in my body. That's going to make me more aggressive; it's going to make me more volatile, a bit more angry, because the foundation of my nurturing is based in such a violent act. So it's with that understanding I feel so much clearer up here [points to his head].*

Their consumption of foodstuffs and toiletries is guided by their understandings and performance of yogic principles and teachings. They like to buy Organic foodstuffs wherever they can afford to in order to avoid chemicals and pesticides and they source all of their toiletries from an Organic firm, Green People. However, they did point out that with high mortgage repayments and limited disposable income, they are unable to completely switch to Organic lines, which was quite frustrating for Mark. They are particularly concerned to use food which has not been touched by human hands – they will only eat bread that has been produced in a factory because they do not

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<sup>26</sup> Mouze states that "Unlike modern scientists, yogis are not interested in the chemical content (protein, vitamins, etc...) of the food. Instead, food is traditionally classified according to its effect on the body and mind, using the three Gunas: *Sattra* (the quality of love, light and life), *Raja* (the quality of activity and passion, lacking stability) and *Tamas* (the quality of darkness and inertia, dragging us into ignorance and attachment)" (Mouze, 2009: 1). He also states that vegetarianism is an important issue with a yogic diet. "Not only are fish and meat specifically listed amongst the "food injurious to the yoga" by the Hatha Yoga Pradipika (I, 59), but eating the flesh of dead animals violates the first principle of yogic ethics (yamas) as laid down by Patanjali in the Yoga Sutras, that of non- violence (ahimsa). Yogis believe that the fear of death permeates every cell of the body of an animal when it is slaughtered, and therefore, the traditional yogic diet is lacto-vegetarian and avoids eggs as well as all animal flesh" (ibid).

want their bread to be made by a baker who pummels the bread with his/her negativity. Helen tries to cook everything from scratch because most ready-made vegetarian foods tend to contain onions and garlic and because this way she can ensure that the positive consciousness that she develops through meditation "is going into the food".

As the couple have become immersed in the yogi lifestyle, they have become more committed to this practice. They regularly attend a local meditation centre and have visited a spiritual meditation university in India on a number of occasions where they meet with other like-minded individuals and collectively experience the power of meditation and share cooking ideas. They admit that it is hard to meditate on a daily basis so they enjoy doing so with others because it is easier to generate positive thoughts in an environment where this is all that people do. Unlike Fairtrade supporters, they do not spend their free time trying to recruit more people to the practice; rather, they prefer to spend their free time walking in the countryside and generating greater self-awareness and positive energy. Once they have generated enough positive energy, they feel they are able to share this with others, for example, inviting friends to dinner, or creating a relaxing environment for Helen to conduct sports massage within. But like the practice of Fairtrade support, being a Yogic-vegetarian seems to extend beyond merely consuming differently – as Mark says "since we've changed our diet we have changed so much".

When I asked them about Fairtrade consumption and the concept of helping others through their shopping, they had slightly different views on this consumer label. Helen admits that when she first heard about Fairtrade through an article on the news, she thought it was "a brilliant idea", and she thought that their coffee tasted better than other varieties. However, after seeing some negative news coverage on Fairtrade detailing how the money does not get back to the farmers, she is now unsure whether Fairtrade is not just "a loss leader" used by supermarkets to get you to shop with them. On looking at their receipt, because they shop at Sainsbury's they had bought Fairtrade bananas, but this was by default rather than because she had picked Fairtrade especially. She says:

*I mean I wouldn't deliberately not buy something Fairtrade, you know, if it was what I wanted and that was all there was, I'd buy it, and I'd probably feel that oh you know I've bought Fairtrade, but it wouldn't be a conscious choice to actually go and get it*

Whilst Helen is rather ambivalent towards Fairtrade, Mark suggests that Fairtrade is not particularly relevant to his understanding of yogic principles. Because yogis do not like traces of violence to be attached to the food that they eat, I was curious whether this would mean they would be drawn towards Fairtrade. However, Mark explained why this was not the case (providing an interesting contrast with the Slave-grown Sugar Campaign, discussed in Chapter 3):

*I know that you've got some child slave who's beaten up or whatever to pick the coffee beans and stuff but I'm not consuming that kid, whereas that animal that was one minute eating the grass and then gets this funny feeling that all his mates are disappearing, and they say they start sweating before they even get the bolt in their head and that adrenaline has entered all those molecules and then people consume that. So even if that kid is being beaten, or maybe even killed or whatever; I'm not going to consume that act. But if I eat a dead animal that's been murdered, I'm consuming that act aren't I? It's becoming part of me. That's the kind of the difference*

Because Fairtrade is not about ingesting violence in the same way that the consumption of meat is, Mark is not interested in this consumer label. He also revealed how he was very suspicious of Fairtrade because it is sold in the supermarkets whose sole purpose is to "stitch us up" in order to make a profit. Mark does not trust supermarkets and uses them only because he cannot afford to adopt a completely self-sufficient and Organic lifestyle. Although Mark will use Organic foods supplied through supermarkets, he does this in order to protect himself against harmful chemicals that will affect his capacity to meditate effectively. Using Fairtrade products does not make sense in the context of his practices which are based around principles of self-preservation.

Whilst the practice of Fairtrade support encourages individuals to engage in activities which promote the consumption of Fairtrade goods amongst like-minded individuals and the wider population, for Helen and Mark being a Yogic-vegetarian is about engaging in activities that enable them to develop into positive selves. Helen and Mark were unaware that Fairville was a Fairtrade town and were not aware of any promotional events in their town because the principles around which they organised their lives were very different from Fairtrade supporters. They do not belong to any local campaigning or Christian faith-based networks and their consumption is oriented by

their concern for their own bodies and minds rather than a concern for Third World producers. That is not to say that Helen and Mark are unethical or selfish consumers but rather that their approach to achieving social change is based first and foremost on practices that begin with the self. I want to end this section with a quotation from Mark, which was in response to a question about how individuals can make a difference to global poverty or environmental destruction, because it reveals their alternative political ideology.

*Try and get to know the self and if the core wants happiness and peace then try and develop that within the self. You don't need anything out there to develop those. You need food and if you can produce your own then great, but if not, then use the basic ingredients first. Get to know the self - if everyone spent time doing that then, we mentioned and agreed earlier, that you can change the atmosphere of a room through your moods, your thoughts; so if everyone tried to focus on happiness and peace, not flowery things but solid vibrations, then you change the whole world.*

## **Conclusions: Returning to a theory of practice**

*I wouldn't say I woke up one morning and decided to be involved [with Fairtrade]*

(Jenny, age 42, Youth worker)

The case studies presented in this chapter and the above quotation from a committed Fairtrade supporter highlight the importance of viewing Fairtrade consumption through a model of practice approach. Existing accounts of Fairtrade consumption which rely on an abstract image of the reflexive citizen-consumer who suddenly becomes aware of injustices in the global trading system and seeks to use their individual consumer power to 'vote' for fairer trading relations do not pay enough attention to how this reflexivity emerges or to how differing levels of commitment to Fairtrade lead to the internal differentiation of the social practice of Fairtrade support. In addition the narrow focus on consumption ignores the fact that consuming Fairtrade is not necessarily the only, or indeed the most important, way to 'do' Fairtrade support.

I have demonstrated how an individual's awareness of, and engagement with, Fairtrade often emerges (or fails to emerge) whilst they are pursuing their existing commitments. The Fairtrade supporters in this study have all learnt about Fairtrade through their involvement in existing social networks, for example at their local church, Oxfam group, Co-operative movement and Trades

Council; and their dispositions towards Fairtrade have been closely connected to this initial interest. Clarke et al reached similar conclusions in their article on the political rationalities of Fairtrade consumption where they suggested that people who engage in Fairtrade activities "do not do so by recognising themselves as consumers but rather use consumption practices to express existing commitment to various ethical and political projects" (Clarke et al, 2007b: 594). However, I believe it is a mistake to understand the relationship between Fairtrade support and involvement in existing networks as a one-way relationship. It is not the case that Fairtrade supporters only understand their engagement in Fairtrade activities as part of what it means to be a good Christian or as an expression of their commitment to the Co-operative movement, but rather being a Fairtrade supporter becomes a unique practice in itself which feeds into and modifies existing practices and commitments. For example, being a Fairtrade supporter can provide individuals with sources of social capital that can be made use of in the pursuit of other political and social campaigns. Fairtrade seems to have revitalised the declining institutions of the Trade Union and the Co-operative movement, so that what it now means to support co-operation feeds into and draws upon what it means to be a Fairtrade supporter.

We can clearly see that Fairtrade (and non-Fairtrade) supporters engage in ethical reflection and reflexively monitor and adjust their actions (Phillipa's account was particularly rich in this respect), but it does not necessarily follow on from this that we can understand an individual's support of Fairtrade as a completely conscious choice. Drawing on Bourdieu's concept of habitus, theories of practice suggest that individuals are oriented in the world by their embodied dispositions which are a product of their previous experiences and the social conditions in which they find themselves. We saw how past engagement in political and social campaign groups, and faith networks were understood by Fairtrade supporters as an important way of developing particular ethical dispositions, the 'social conscience', which then made them more likely to be drawn towards Fairtrade. Equally important are the existence of cultural resources, such as the discursive resources drawn upon by John in his discussion of why he supported Fairtrade, which guide how people are

able to think about and represent Fairtrade. Reflexivity is not a free-floating, boundless capacity but emerges in specific cultural and material conditions and is performed by agents whose dispositions towards Fairtrade are deeply entrenched and embodied – there are “emotional and corporeal as well as cognitive bases of behaviour” (*ibid*: 140). Fairtrade support is a practice that is performed by agents whose reflexivity is bounded by the multiplicity of social practices they engage in.

Fairtrade support is a collective practice; an alternative culture which allows its participants to attach meaning to their everyday actions and ways of life. This culture provides a shared language for a group of individuals who often come from quite diverse networks, many of them faith-based networks. This quasi-religious culture is organised around the promotion and celebration of Fairtrade and is differentiated on a number of dimensions. Whilst individuals may learn about Fairtrade in similar ways (with the church being the most likely in Fairville), they do not necessarily pursue their involvement in identical ways nor do they understand their support of Fairtrade in the same way. Individuals who engage in the practice of Fairtrade support do so with differing degrees of commitment for its development and reproduction and with diverse motivations. There are those who commit a great deal of their free time to organising social events to promote the movement and encourage like-minded individuals to join them and support Fairtrade, and there are those who engage less in activities to promote Fairtrade but still encourage local stores to stock Fairtrade. Some Fairtrade supporters do not prioritise Fairtrade products over price and other ethical concerns in their own individual shopping whilst others do. We have seen that some Fairtrade supporters use Fairtrade because they believe this will empower producers in the Third World, whilst others use Fairtrade because they see this as one way of reducing environmental degradation or as a charitable way of helping disadvantaged individuals. Individuals receive differential rewards from engaging in Fairtrade support with most expressing feelings of alternative hedonism from engaging in Fairtrade consumption (it both tastes good and does good), whilst others can use their engagement in Fairtrade networks as a way of gaining social capital to help them in other campaigns. Paying

attention to an individual's trajectory or 'career' within the practice can often account for these differentiated "understandings, procedures and engagements" (Warde, 2005: 134).

By considering how Fairtrade support occurs in practice, we are forced to ask how important the act of consuming Fairtrade is to this practice. An individual can consume Fairtrade without being a Fairtrade supporter (for example Helen and Mark), and an individual can count themselves as a Fairtrade supporter without always consuming Fairtrade. 'Doing' Fairtrade support is not achieved by individual shopping practices alone but rather involves participating in a wide range of activities— like campaigning to shift systems of collective provision, organising events to promote Fairtrade, giving Fairtrade gifts – of which individual consumption was merely one part. Many of the Fairtrade and non-Fairtrade supporters were oriented by a number of different social practices which made always shopping for Fairtrade impractical or irrelevant. Competing ethical labels, family concerns, price and quality were all factors that made Fairtrade options less appealing. This chapter has revealed that people are often not consistent – or at least they struggle hard to be so.

It is important to remember that those who are outsiders to this social practice do not necessarily understand Fairtrade consumption and support in the same way as insiders do. Indeed those who engage in a very different set of social practices can be oriented away from Fairtrade because the established conventions, or 'doings and sayings', of these practices clash with the conventions of Fairtrade support. Whilst most Fairtrade supporters are keen to stress the non-exclusivity of Fairtrade consumption and want to detach this act from the involvement in alternative subcultures, we have seen that there are clear differences between Fairtrade supporters and those who are less committed or uncommitted to Fairtrade. The tendency to stress the non-exclusivity of Fairtrade consumption reflects the organisation of Fairtrade support which seeks to expand the movement by bringing it into mainstream markets. However, we saw in the rejection of any necessary relationship between social-demographic characteristics or religion and Fairtrade consumption how Alfred and Phillipa both constructed a moral boundary between Fairtrade supporters and non-Fairtrade supporters thus constructing it as a different kind of exclusive activity.

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The next chapter takes up this point and explores how Fairtrade and non-Fairtrade supporters understand the distinctiveness of Fairtrade consumption, and the extent to which it is conceived as exclusive or universal.

## 6

### **"Mrs Jo Soap' really doesn't know anything about Fairtrade": The normalisation and exclusivity of Fairtrade consumption**

Fairtrade consumption is represented by some of the most powerful institutions in society as a moral duty and a form of global citizenship (see chapter 4). Local and national government support Fairtrade, schools teach about Fairtrade consumption as part of the National Curriculum for KS4 citizenship and geography, both print and television media feature a high proportion of positive stories about Fairtrade especially during Fairtrade Fortnight, business and retailers promote Fairtrade options, and a number of churches (and other sites of worship) are encouraging their congregations to switch to Fairtrade. Fegan has argued that Fairtrade consumption "deems itself to be based upon morally objective grounds" and calls upon individuals to recognise and act upon universal understandings of the avoidance of harm to humans (Fegan, 2006: 125). Indeed, George Alagiah (ex-patron of the FTF) famously branded Alex Singleton (Free trade advocate) 'immoral' in a debate about Fairtrade because Alex offered a critique of the Fairtrade model (Waitrose, 2007). However, it is important to remember that Fairtrade consumption is a moral duty that comes at a price. Despite the switches to Fairtrade-only lines by a number of chain-retail outlets and manufacturers, there remains a perception that Fairtrade goods are more expensive than non-Fairtrade lines – a perception that is well-founded if we look at the price of Fairtrade products beyond the handful of commodities (such as coffee, tea, bananas and chocolate) that have successfully penetrated the market. At the same time as Fairtrade consumption is represented as something that we ought to be doing, it is also the case that Fairtrade goods cost more money. It is therefore likely that those who do not organise their consumption along Fairtrade-lines will feel resistant and defensive to the suggestion that they ought to change their ways.

This chapter will explore how Fairtrade and non-Fairtrade supporters draw socio-economic, cultural and moral boundaries around Fairtrade consumption and the 'Fairtrade consumer' in order

to justify why they do or do not buy Fairtrade. Bourdieu (1984) has argued that boundary-drawing is motivated by a desire to display one's class distinction, and Varul (2008a) has drawn from this work in order to argue that Fairtrade consumers use Fairtrade goods in order to display their "ethical taste" over class others. Although the last chapter suggested that we ought to internally differentiate a practice on the basis of an individual's recruitment and commitment to it rather than on the basis of structural determinants like an individual's social class, this chapter, whilst continuing to highlight the importance of viewing consumption through a model of practice, deals with participants' own evaluations of the differentiation of the practice of being a Fairtrade supporter/consumer. We will see that debates about social class are never too far away from discussions of Fairtrade consumption whether its relevance is denied or affirmed. However, because we are dealing with individuals' "lay normativities" – that is those everyday rationales which matter greatly to actors concerning "what is of value, how to live, what is worth striving for and what is not" (Sayer, 2005a: 6) – it was not simply the case that those who perceived Fairtrade consumption as a classed pursuit sought to maintain its exclusive status nor did they "refuse what they were refused" (Bourdieu, 1984: 471). After spending some time examining how Sayer (2005a) has re-worked Bourdieu's analysis to take account of the normative dimension of the struggles of the social field, this chapter will use focus group data to explore how Fairtrade consumption is constructed as both an exclusive and a normal (moral) activity.

### **Uncovering the normative dimension**

The majority of the respondents who participated in this research either maintained or rejected the idea that Fairtrade consumption was a middle-class pursuit. This finding moved me to consider the applicability of Bourdieu's (1984) suggestion that people's tastes for cultural products are markers of their social class. Bourdieu argued that 'taste' unites all those "who are the product of similar conditions while distinguishing them from all others" (*ibid*: 56). Bourdieu believed that we feel 'disgust' and aversion towards different life-styles and that it is the working classes who persistently

provide "a negative reference point" (*ibid*: 57). Varul (2008b) detected the performance of distinction amongst Fairtrade consumers who compared their own morally worthy behaviour with the lack of care displayed by competing sections of the middle classes and low-income groups. Varul argued that Fairtrade goods are often appreciated because of both their aesthetic qualities (that is, they taste and look better than alternatives) and because the search for an ethically best-buy reveals one's superior knowledge. However, because Varul did not speak with non-Fairtrade supporters, he was unable to comment upon how far those without a 'taste' for Fairtrade regarded this activity as distinctive. Bourdieu argued that because the working classes learn through the conditions of their existence (characterised by their proximity to necessity) to "refuse what they are refused" and to "like what they have", their dominated taste is always forced to "define itself in terms of the dominant aesthetics" (*ibid*: 471,175 & 41). They therefore respond to the practices and objects of 'legitimate culture' by simultaneously recognising its value and rejecting it, believing it to be "not for the likes of us" (*ibid*: 471). In this way, adopting a Bourdieuan reading, the tendency for non-Fairtrade supporters to regard Fairtrade consumption as a middle class activity could be seen as an attempt to distance themselves from and refuse objects that they could not afford or identify with.

However it seems problematic to assume that Fairtrade consumption only attracts middle class consumers who use these goods in order to display their social distinction over class others because not only did Fairtrade supporters tend to stress the non-exclusivity of Fairtrade consumption, but a number of those who regarded Fairtrade as a predominantly middle-class activity could themselves be classified in middle-class positions. Bourdieu's account was drawn from his analysis of two social surveys conducted in 1960s France where a more rigid class-structure prevailed than characterises Britain today. In an extensive survey of consumer tastes in modern Britain, Bennett et al (2008) found that although lower-class participants were uninterested in

'legitimate culture'<sup>27</sup> it was hard to detect a distinctive lower or middle class culture because the middle-classes actively engaged in popular culture. There is a growing trend towards omnivorosity and the authors suggest that this orientation is the most dominant expression of cultural capital in Britain today. Importantly, they found that there was "little sense of overt cultural superiority or condescension on the part of the middle classes" and that respondents tended to deny a "cultural hierarchy of value" (*ibid*: 252 & 255). They suggested that this was because "almost no one publicly defends traditional standards, or legitimate culture, for its own sake" (*ibid*). Therefore the claims of the non-exclusivity of Fairtrade consumption from Fairtrade supporters could reflect this omnivorous orientation and the difficulties felt by these respondents of characterising cultural activities according to social class. However, it does not account for why non-Fairtrade supporters associated Fairtrade consumption with particular social status groups, nor can it account for their felt need to justify why they did not use Fairtrade.

Although Varul argued that Fairtrade consumers perceived Fairtrade consumption as a source of social distinction, he also suggested that buying Fairtrade is one way in which people construct themselves as 'ethical (or moral) selves' through everyday practices. This raises an important issue since Sayer maintains that we can only understand morality if we accept that it "spills out beyond such [social] divisions and sometimes ignores them" (Sayer, 2005b: 951). Sayer has written extensively upon the subject of morality and the subjective experience of social class (Sayer, 2002; 2005a, 2005b), and has criticised Bourdieu for ignoring the normative dimension of the struggles of the social field. Sayer suggests that people are embarrassed (as well as resentful, guilty, defensive and shamed) by the existence of class inequalities and they tend to search for alternative ways to justify their distinctiveness. Moral boundary drawing, for example, offers individuals the opportunity to value and differentiate themselves from others without having to draw on social class. But,

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<sup>27</sup> For example, visiting art galleries, museums, theatre and classical concerts. Bennett et al suggested that whilst there is a class pattern to consumption behaviour and cultural participation, "many aspects of cultural life are shared by people who inhabit diverse social positions". Importantly, the lower classes do not feel excluded from cultural activity; however they can sometimes feel aggrieved if they believe they are being looked down upon because of their non-participation (*ibid*. 252).

importantly these justifications are always made in the context of, and often in response to, class inequalities. However, Sayer reveals how moral boundary drawing has a "crucial ambivalence at its heart" because although it gives us reasons to differentiate ourselves from others, "it also treats the merits claimed for our own group as universally valid" (*ibid*: 184). So holding a particular moral quality (like consuming Fairtrade or helping distant others) might be used as a way of valuing oneself, but at the same time we believe it possible for that moral quality to be found in anyone regardless of their social position. That is not to say that moral judgements are not sometimes (or even often) made on the basis of the social position but rather to acknowledge that some goods can be valued regardless of their association with particular social status groups. For Sayer, ethical sentiments and norms have a 'universalising tendency' or 'generalising moment' deriving from "the reciprocal character of social relations" (*ibid*: 136).

Sayer highlights the importance of looking at the various ways in which people differentiate themselves from others and reveals how the symbolic boundaries that people draw may not always operate in alignment with one another. Lamont (1992) reached similar conclusions in her study of middle-class working men in France and America, and proposed that individuals draw boundaries along three separate axes – socio-economic, cultural and moral. Socio-economic boundaries are drawn on the basis of judgements concerning someone's social position as indicated by their wealth, power and professional success; cultural boundaries are drawn on the basis of education, intelligence, taste and command of high culture; and moral boundaries are drawn on the basis of evaluations of moral character and can refer to things like honesty, integrity, and care for others (Lamont, 1992: 4). Unlike Bourdieu, Sayer and Lamont suggest that moral boundaries are unlikely to always be indicative of class position because people can pursue particular commitments even if they do not bring them any external rewards (but do bring them internal rewards). Sayer argues that we must pay more attention to people's "lay normativities" which go beyond issues of the unequal distribution of goods and recognition and move to questions of "what is good or bad, how we or

others should behave and what we or others should do" because these are the things that matter greatly to actors concerning their "commitments, identities and ways of life" (Sayer, 2005a: 5 & 6).

However, it is important to remember that definitions of 'good' or 'bad' behaviour will be heavily influenced by existing "cultural repertoires" which identify the "general definitions of valued traits" which will inevitably introduce questions of power into individuals' evaluations of 'universal' moral qualities (Lamont, 1992: 7). If we take account of the fact that Fairtrade consumption is represented as an explicitly ethical activity which relies on individuals being able to pay the often higher price for Fairtrade goods in order to achieve a "degree of moral goodness" (Fegan, 2006: 123), we can begin to see how evaluations of the distinctiveness of Fairtrade consumption by social class are likely to be complicated by individuals' lay normativities. Whilst it may be possible to suggest that morality can have a 'universalizing character', we cannot assume that we all act upon and understand moral imperatives in exactly the same way.

MacIntyre (1981) and Heckman (1995) have both argued that we must seek to understand the virtue or morality of particular acts in the context of the 'practices' and the 'moral traditions'/'forms of life' they are embedded within.<sup>28</sup> For these authors, it becomes possible for a plurality of different understandings of morality to co-exist within a culture, each of which are produced and justified by agents engaging in organised practices. This seems to raise the possibility that any form

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<sup>28</sup> MacIntyre (1981) has argued that we can only understand the virtue of particular acts if we place them into the context of three stages of development. Firstly, we must look at the 'practice' they are embedded within. For MacIntyre a practice should be thought of as "any coherent and complex form of socially established cooperative human activity through which goods internal to that form of activity are realised" in the course of trying to achieve 'standards of excellence' relevant to that activity (MacIntyre, 1981: 187). In this way, practices are conceived of in a slightly different way than we thought of them in the last chapter, so that the practice of being a Fairtrade supporter in this case would involve collective activity to achieve excellent standards of campaigning or wide public support. Nevertheless, taken together with the second stage of development, the 'narrative order of a single human life', which involves placing acts into the wider history of an individual's life in order to make sense of the goodness of this act in the context of other areas of activity individuals are engaged in, MacIntyre's understanding of virtue through practice can be taken to mean roughly the same as it did in the last chapter. Lastly, Macintyre stresses the importance of "moral traditions" by which he refers to the collective histories which sustain, and enable us to make sense of, practices. So buying or supporting Fairtrade can be understood as part of what it means to be a Christian (or a Trade Unionist, Co-operator etc.) with its existing collective traditions of what goods or virtues ought to be valued. Heckman (1995) reaches a similar conclusion in her examination of the relationship between the development of 'moral voice' and subjectivity. Starting from Gilligan's challenge to the masculine conception of morality which has prioritised the 'justice voice' over the 'care voice', Heckman has argued that it is possible for a plurality of 'moral voices' to coexist each of will be developed through practices and are justified by the internal rules of particular 'forms of life'. 'Forms of life' can be understood in a similar sense to MacIntyre's 'collective traditions' – Heckman draws on Wittgenstein's notion of language games to suggest that moral voices are justified internally by the cultural, historical and contextual conditions they are created within.

of consumption (whether implicitly ethical or not) could be viewed as a moral act depending upon the place of that consumption in the performance of social practices. Indeed, Barnett et al (2005b) point to the 'ordinarily ethical' nature of much of our consumption behaviour and warn against counterposing 'ethical consumption' against 'everyday consumption'. Whilst it is possible for multiple moralities around consumption activity to co-exist, Heckman encourages us to consider questions of power and hegemony because, within any given culture, there will inevitably be "a hierarchy of moral discourses" (Heckman, 1995: 40). Drawing from Foucault,<sup>29</sup> Heckman suggests that individuals will be governed through various 'modes of subjection' to alter their practices and think about ethics and morality in particular ways. However, this does not mean that individuals will necessarily alter their practices in line with these hegemonic moral discourses but rather, because 'moral voices' are always developed in the context of "contingent and local practices", individuals will often be compelled to engage in "local resistance" (*ibid*: 149 & 84). By this, she means that ethical subjects will draw on alternative moral understandings which have emerged through engagement in a different set of practices, or collective traditions, in order to justify why these 'modes of subjection' do not apply to their local and particular situations.

Whilst it may be the case that no-one defends legitimate culture (Bennett et al, 2008), Fairtrade consumption is 'publicly defended' by a range of actors across a number of important institutions which may therefore place it into a 'moral hierarchy of value'. Therefore the struggles of the social field with regard to Fairtrade consumption are likely to be about which ways of life and definitions of morality ought to be most valued. If we accept that it is possible for multiple moralities surrounding consumption to co-exist, what moral status does Fairtrade consumption hold within the hierarchy of 'moral voices'? Are we able to argue that Fairtrade's appeal to an individual's sense of moral responsibility for the avoidance of harm towards distant others can create a 'generalising

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<sup>29</sup> Foucault (1984: 352-355) argued that there are four dimensions of ethics which enable individuals to construct themselves as moral subjects; the identification of morally-relevant realms of behaviour, the use of different modes of subjection to invite people to take account of their moral obligations, a recognition of how we can change ourselves in order to become ethical subjects, and finally, the identification of the 'kind of being to which we aspire' when we act in a moral way.

moment' (Sayer, 2005a) in which everyone, regardless of their socio-demographic characteristics and social interests and attitudes, agrees in the value of this moral act? It would seem, following Heckman, that this is likely to depend on the ways in which Fairtrade is represented and how far the 'modes of subjection' consumers are placed under relate to an individual's already-existing practices and commitments. In order to examine these questions, it will be necessary to turn to the empirical data. I will be paying particular attention to the ways in which lay normativities are expressed and how Fairtrade and non-Fairtrade supporters draw moral, cultural or socio-economic boundaries around Fairtrade consumption and the 'Fairtrade consumer'. Before I can turn my attention to this task, I discuss why focus group data was so suited to this sort of enquiry.

### **Methodological Focus: Focus-Groups**

Focus-groups are a great tool for accessing group meanings, processes and norms, which has made them popular among academic researchers in recent years (Bloor et al: 2001; Finch & Lewis, 2003; Krueger & Casey, 2000; Morgan, 1997; Stewart et al, 2007). The focus group provides a unique opportunity for a group of individuals, who may or may not be known to each other, to come together to examine, and in some cases challenge, the normative and collective understandings that underpin our taken-for-granted assumptions (Bloor et al, 2001). Because the morality of Fairtrade consumption tends to be taken for granted by a variety of organisations and actors, and because discourses surrounding Fairtrade consumption act as a possible 'mode of subjection' in their calls for individuals to act, it could be argued that that these representations provide a normative frame upon which consumers can draw in order to evaluate their own and others' consumption practices. Importantly, we must remember that because "the cut-off line between 'good' commodities and 'bad' ones is the object of an ongoing social and political conflict", it is unlikely that everyone will accept the normative demands placed upon them by Fairtrade organisations and other institutions (Sassatelli, 2007: 159). In this way, the focus group methodology gave individuals the opportunity to

discuss and reflect upon their moral responsibility for distant others through their consumption choices.

The data presented in this chapter is based on eight focus group discussions that took place between January and April 2008. I conducted four focus groups with non-Fairtrade supporters and four with Fairtrade supporters, and each lasted around an hour and a half. The non-Fairtrade focus groups were conducted during Fairtrade Fortnight 2008 - a time of the year when awareness of Fairtrade should be at its highest. As I noted in the previous chapter, recruiting non-Fairtrade consumers was a difficult task because it is difficult to identify people negatively by characteristics they lack. I was aware that if focus group participants were aware of my interest in Fairtrade this might affect the types of people who attended the interview. That is only individuals who had already thought about or were interested in Fairtrade or people who held strong opinions on the subject would turn up; and it would increase the likelihood of socially desirable responses in favour of Fairtrade. Social desirability bias is "the pervasive tendency of individuals to present themselves in the most favourable manner relative to prevailing social norms and mores" (King & Bruner, 2000: 80); and I believed that if I announced the focus group as discussions about Fairtrade, given the representation of Fairtrade as a morally worthy form of consumption, participants might be more inclined to respond favourably towards it. I therefore advertised the focus groups as chocolate and coffee tasting sessions (in local supermarkets and in the village hall where the groups were to be conducted) and used the chocolate and coffee tasting as a 'focusing exercise' (Bloor et al, 2001) before moving to a discussion of the factors that influenced people when shopping for these commodities. The selection of coffees and chocolates included at least one Fairtrade option as well as an Organic option in order to provide an alternative 'ethical' choice. Whilst there were some drawbacks to recruiting the focus groups on this basis, the majority of those who attended did not think of themselves as Fairtrade consumers and none were involved in the Fairville Fairtrade Town network.

Two of the non-Fairtrade focus groups consisted of existing friendship networks<sup>30</sup> (a group of men and women in their 30s, and a group of non-employed mothers) and two were composed of strangers (one group of 5 men and 4 women of varying ages and professions, and one group of Sainsbury's shoppers comprising 4 men and 2 women). The sampling of these focus groups was perhaps not ideal but it should be remembered that "there has been an over-emphasis on the degree of control researchers have over relevant characteristics of individuals in their groups and often the exact composition of the groups will reflect circumstance rather than planning" (Kitzinger & Barbour, 1999 in Bloor et al, 2001: 21). Faced with the choice of having not enough participants to run a group and having a group that doesn't quite match your requirements but is large enough to go ahead, the researcher must weigh up the benefits and drawbacks of the two options. I was very fortunate that all the non-Fairtrade supporters who were recruited attended their discussion-group as non-attendance is often the biggest problem of focus-group research.<sup>31</sup>

The Fairtrade supporter focus groups were advertised as discussions about Fairtrade and because I was targeting Fairtrade supporters through the Fairtrade town network there could be no doubt of my interests and the purpose of the discussion. Because the Fairtrade network in Fairville was so small, it was inevitable that the participants in the Fairtrade focus groups were acquainted with one another. I aimed to ensure that there were equal numbers of men and women in the focus groups and that groups were organised around the context of participants' interest in Fairtrade – one group were members of the local Co-op, one group were attached to the Fairtrade group at the local

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<sup>30</sup> Stewart et al (2007) reveal that there is a debate as to whether to use strangers or pre-existing groups when recruiting for focus groups. Whilst the former will perhaps be more likely to freely express their opinion without fear of any repercussions in their daily lives, the latter perhaps enables the researcher access to those "networks in which people might normally discuss (or evade) the sorts of issues likely to be raised in the research session" (Kitzinger & Barbour (1999) cited in Finch & Lewis, 2003: 192).

<sup>31</sup> It should perhaps be noted that all participants were given £15 to remunerate them for their attendance. There is some debate about whether it is advisable to offer monetary incentives for attendance to focus groups, however it is generally accepted that because of the nature of focus group interviews (asking a participant to attend a group at a time and place the researcher has chosen) some incentive must be offered (see Bloor et al, 2001; Krueger & Casey, 2000).

university, one group were the dedicated members of FFAG, and one group were members of the FFAG but not heavily involved in the group's activities.<sup>32</sup>

It is generally accepted that members of focus groups will search for consensus, in a process known as 'norming', when discussing and reflecting upon issues collectively, in order to create a sense of group cohesion (Finch & Lewis, 2003). In the non-Fairtrade groups, where most participants agreed that the things that mattered to them were taste, price and familiarity, the consensus tended to form around the idea that the Fairtrade consumer 'was not like us' and in this way members may have exaggerated the characteristic differences of Fairtrade consumers. Similarly, in the Fairtrade groups, where participants recognised one another as committed Fairtrade supporters, the consensus formed around the identification with the Fairtrade consumer, which in some cases resulted in groups stressing the non-exclusivity of Fairtrade consumption and performing its ordinariness. Given that this chapter is concerned with whether people perceive Fairtrade consumption as a distinctive activity and how they draw symbolic boundaries, it is important for the reader to be aware how the two sets of focus groups formed a consensus around a different set of issues. However, using a mixed-method research design, we have seen that responses in individual interviews do demonstrate that Fairtrade and non-Fairtrade consumers continue to hold these understandings of the exclusivity of Fairtrade, even if they are present to a lesser degree.<sup>33</sup> Nevertheless, it is interesting to observe how the claims of non-exclusivity made in the last chapter compare with those given by focus group participants.

### **The Fairtrade consumer is not like us, but...**

Participants in the non-Fairtrade focus groups classified both Fairtrade consumers and the practice of Fairtrade consumption/support using different symbolic boundaries around Fairtrade

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<sup>32</sup> A detailed breakdown of the make-up of each focus group can be found in Appendix 1.

<sup>33</sup> As we have already seen in the last chapter, the Fairtrade supporters continued to stress the non-exclusivity of Fairtrade consumption in the individual interviews, and although not illustrated in Helen and Mark's narrative, the majority of non-Fairtrade supporters understood the Fairtrade consumer as an individual with distinctive socio-economic, cultural and moral characteristics.

consumption. The boundaries were regularly used in varying ways, with moral boundaries often being valued in and of themselves. But equally, there were examples of 'local resistance' to the notion that Fairtrade consumption is the only way to be a moral/ethical consumer.

The following exchange took place between a group of mothers (aged 32-45) who were all taking a break from employment, and whose previous occupations can be classified in the Standard Occupational Classification structure (SOC, 2000) in groups 4-7 (Secretarial, Skilled trade (catering) and sales occupations).<sup>34</sup>

**Moderator:** *So what sort of person do you think buys Fairtrade?*

**Fran:** *Someone with a conscience, someone... social status I think is a contribution*

**Lindsey:** *Yes it comes into it*

**Fran:** *It does, like the Organic social status, people like to be seen*

**Ling and Amanda:** *Hmm [nods]*

**Fran:** *Like recycling, it's very trendy to be seen recycling now, erm I mean Carla told me off cos obviously I'm driving the car around all the time with the kids and she was saying about the carbon and I said, 'But you sit there and chain smoke', if you're worried about the... she just went all quiet and I said well ok then. But it is a conscience thing I think. And if you can then its great, if you can afford to do it.*

(Non-Fairtrade focus group 2)

The group argues that Fairtrade consumers are those who can afford to spend more on their shopping and who do so in order to project an image of their social status through their 'conspicuous consumption'. If we apply Bourdieu's ideas to their characterisation of Fairtrade consumers, it is possible to suggest that this group of women were making a distinction between their own approach to consumption which they claim operates according to a logic of necessity and the consumption of those with higher economic and cultural capital who make shopping choices according to different criteria based upon their 'distance from necessity'. In this way, Fran's criticism of those "trendy" shoppers who recycle lots and buy Organic food - earlier discussed by this group as something that only "people with money to waste" will buy – can be partly understood as a judgement which reflects this different level of cultural capital. However, Fran's agreement that Fairtrade consumption is "great if you can afford to do it", suggests that there is more going on here than simply "refusing what she is refused" (Bourdieu, 1984: 471).

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<sup>34</sup> A discussion of the SOC (2000) scheme can be found in Appendix 1.

There are perhaps two different ways of reading this statement; on the one hand we could take a Bourdieuian approach and suggest that because the dominated taste must always define itself in the terms of the dominant tastes, Fran recognises the value of Fairtrade consumption at the same time as she recognises that it is "not for the likes of us" (*ibid*). On this basis, we would have to assume that consuming Fairtrade is widely recognised as a dominant taste and that aesthetic and moral judgements are always in alignment. On the other hand, we could read Fran's statement as an example of the potential autonomy of moral judgements from aesthetic and socio-economic judgements, so that certain goods and practices can be understood as "valuable regardless of whether the dominant happen to value them" (Sayer, 2005a: 121). Because Fairtrade has made Fran, in her own words, "aware of other people's suffering", it could be suggested that she can see the value of Fairtrade as a moral good in its own right. Having said this, her description of her friend's attempt to make her more aware of the environmental impact of her consumption hints at a challenge, or as Heckman terms it 'local resistance', to the attempts of various ethical consumption discourses to encourage people to alter their practices in line with their campaigns. Even if she recognises the value of Fairtrade and low-carbon consumption, she uses her own circumstances – which include being a single parent on a tight budget who has to feed and chauffeur four children – to defend her reasons for not using Fairtrade and to construct herself as a different kind of 'respectable' subject through the prioritisation of the moral care for her children. Sayer, drawing from Skeggs (1997), has argued that when individuals are denied access to certain goods because of their position in society, this inequality can cause them great distress and encourage them to search for alternative ways to gain respectability. In the hierarchy of moral discourses, caring for her family takes priority and reduces the relevance of those discourses which stress the care for distant others. Like the Bourdieuian approach, we can see that the moral boundary in this case (possessing a 'conscience') does operate in accordance with socio-economic and cultural boundaries, but importantly, the second reading allows for the expression of lay normativities revealing the

possibility that certain actions can be understood as 'good' regardless of their association with hegemonic discourses and particular social status groups.

The problems of assuming that the moral boundaries drawn around Fairtrade consumption necessarily operate in the same way as aesthetic and socio-economic boundaries can be seen in the discussion amongst the group of Sainsbury's shoppers who were aged between 21 and 42 and can be classified in SOC (2000) groups 2-5 (professional, associate professional, administrative and skilled trade occupations).

**Moderator:** *So do you think there's a particular sort of person that buys Fairtrade?*

**Dave:** Rich [small laugh]

**Emma:** Middle class

**Karl:** Stupid [laughs] ... I'm only joking

**Diana:** No I would think, despite the little bit of [cynicism]

**Karl:** [Naïve [rather

**Diana:** [I would still think that it's a thinking person that buys it, I still think that if you go for Fairtrade you have got some morals about things, I mean even though I am cynical and I might not always buy it myself, a better me would buy it. I always think that if I had more money I would possibly buy that.]

**Nicole:** Yeah, yeah I agree with Diana on that

**Emma:** I don't think its all about money, I think you know even if you've got plenty of money you still would make, you could still make discerning decisions about how you spend it and rich people don't waste their money.

**Diana:** No, I think that's my excuse to myself if I don't buy it, but when I've got more money I will.

(Non-Fairtrade focus group 4)

Although it is initially suggested that the 'Fairtrade consumer' is someone who occupies an affluent middle-class position who has the capacity to pay for expensive Fairtrade goods, this is discussed by the group who come to a different understanding of the relationship between income and Fairtrade consumption. Diana characterises the 'Fairtrade consumer' as a "thinking person" and someone who has "some morals about things" in a similar way to how Fran discussed the Fairtrade consumer in the previous extract. Interestingly, although Diana seems to identify with both of these statements, she distances herself from consuming Fairtrade because she believes it to be too expensive. She can imagine that "a better me would buy it" but this is countered by her own acknowledgement that using socio-economic boundaries are only "an excuse to herself". As Emma confirms to her, an individual's income does not automatically determine their decision to buy

Fairtrade goods, they also need to possess certain forms of cultural capital and moral dispositions that allow them to make "discerning decisions". Unlike the first extract where Fran sees income as a real obstacle preventing her from engaging in Fairtrade consumption, we see in this extract how income becomes an illusory barrier. Socio-economic and moral judgements do not necessarily operate in alignment with one another because it is possible to be 'rich' and not engage in ethical purchasing behaviour.

Karl's assertion that the 'Fairtrade consumer' is naive, which is later expanded upon and discussed further by the group, is worth considering because it reveals a defensive challenge to the Fairtrade movement's attempt to encourage individuals to alter their consumption behaviour. Rather than revealing one's 'superior knowledge', as Varul found in Fairtrade consumers' own accounts of their consumption, Karl describes the Fairtrade consumer as an individual who lacks certain forms of knowledge because of their inability to see through the marketing messages and gather 'real' facts about the effects of this label upon farmers in the Third World – as he says "they're sold on the label and sold on this whole premise that this is going to help a better world... with no obvious evidence". Karl feels that it is important to justify why he does not consume Fairtrade which suggests that he is aware that Fairtrade is generally represented as a morally sound consumer choice. His cynicism and defensiveness towards this consumer label are based upon his belief that Fairtrade does not help to alleviate poverty in the developing world in the way that it is portrayed. This will be a particular focus of the next chapter when we examine how respondents rated the effectiveness of Fairtrade consumption as an individual political action. For now, it is important to draw attention to how Karl draws a cultural boundary (rather than a socio-economic or moral boundary) between himself and Fairtrade consumers in order to defend himself from those hegemonic discourses which are attempting to govern him in a particular way and in the process constructs himself as a more 'savvy' consumer – whilst Fairtrade consumers are "sucked into buying things based on what the packaging says", he is not!

To this point, we have seen that the morality of Fairtrade consumption has generally remained unquestioned. It has been accepted that those who buy Fairtrade are doing so because they believe (even if misguidedly) that they are helping people in the Third World. However, it was not always the case that participants agreed that those who consume Fairtrade are necessarily morally superior individuals. It is interesting to look at the ways in which the morality of the 'Fairtrade consumer' is challenged with reference to socio-economic and cultural judgements, as well as to alternative moral boundaries, in the following extract. The discussion between Joe, a Black-British gas Engineer and Michael, a White-British carpenter who are both in their 30s takes place following my request for Joe to expand upon his earlier claim that Fairtrade consumers, just like supermarkets who refuse to give you a plastic bag whilst leaving the lights on during the day themselves, have 'double standards'.

**Moderator:** *Ok you said there that you think Fairtrade shoppers have double standards, can you tell me a bit more about that?*

**Joe:** *Well they drive 4x4's*

**Michael:** *I was gonna say that, they think they're doing some good to another country by buying that sort of product and helping out, but it comes to some sort of famine relief or something like that, like a natural disaster, I don't think they're first to put their hands in their pocket*

**Joe:** *No!*

**Michael:** *But they think they're doing a good by buying something like that erm because they're not actually seeing no end result you know, as you say they're still going out in their 4x4's or sort of E-type Jag's [*

**Joe:** *[Course they are... going on aeroplanes [*

**Michael:** *[and still living it up. You know that's probably how they make themselves feel good.*

**Joe:** *That's it, they make themselves feel better first by saying 'Well I've done my bit' and then that's enough. But they don't advertise the fact that they've got this other stuff going on in their house.*

**Michael:** *Cos they've done their little bit by buying a packet of coffee which is Fairtrade.*

(Non-Fairtrade focus group 3)

It is clear in this exchange that socio-economic and moral boundaries are being heavily drawn around those who consume Fairtrade. Those that buy Fairtrade are people with high disposable incomes who consume Fairtrade in order to "make themselves feel better" whilst also engaging in a selection of environmentally damaging forms of consumption. Joe and Michael are drawing attention to the contradictions that they see in those people who are trying to make them change their practices in line with the normative demands of ethical consumption campaigns. Articulating

the recent public debates surrounding irresponsible consumption, in particular the 4x4 drivers who have been increasingly blamed for climate change, the men seem to be questioning why they ought to buy Fairtrade when those that they imagine are encouraging them to buy it are "living it up". At a time when practices of individual consumption were being placed under increased scrutiny and hegemonic discourses framed certain actions as unethical,<sup>35</sup> we see how 'local resistance' to these 'modes of subjection' are made on the basis that these changes have made life difficult or more expensive for the 'ordinary' consumer. As we saw in the first focus group extract, Fran's dismissal of her friend's attempts to encourage her to think about the environmental impact of her consumption, reveals that not all individuals are equally convinced of the applicability of these moral discourses to their own personal situations. For Joe and Michael, we could argue that a protest is articulated against those members of society, which later included supermarkets and local councils, who wanted to stop them from doing what they enjoy whilst at the same time being responsible for the same 'bad' practices. At the heart of this protest is a real sense of inequality in that whilst people like them will be losing out because of these changes, those who can afford to drive 'E-type Jags' will be relatively unaffected and are able to buy Fairtrade coffee in order to appear to the world as morally-superior.

Focus group participants were aware that those who buy Fairtrade are automatically assumed to be good people and their responses to this often revealed a struggle for equal recognition. They demonstrated their awareness that there is more than one way for an individual to constitute him/herself as a moral subject through involvement in different social practices, but because of the existence of a 'hierarchy of moral discourses' they felt they were not always recognised for their efforts. For example, Michael drew attention to the fact that he will often give money to famine relief and natural disaster charities confirming himself as a moral subject in a different (and in his opinion superior) way. By paying attention to his 'lay normativities', we find that it is not that

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<sup>35</sup> At the time of these interviews, legislation was proposed to increase the vehicle tax on 'gas-guzzling' 4x4's and sports cars as well as increasing the tax for other more 'regular' vehicles (Milmo, 2008), and discussions were also underway proposing the end of free plastic bags at supermarket checkouts and the introduction of a 5p charge (Sparrow, 2008)

Michael does not care about people in the Third World, but that he believes that Fairtrade consumption is not necessarily the only, or indeed the best, way to achieve this aim. For Michael it is important to evaluate the ethics of an action in the context of the range of practices an individual is engaged in, and because he imagines, rightly or wrongly, that Fairtrade consumers only buy Fairtrade in order to make themselves feel better after driving around in their 4x4 cars, he rejects the automatically assigned moral-status of the Fairtrade consumer.

It was, however, quite unusual for groups to reject the morality of Fairtrade consumption outright; instead what tended to happen was that people offered reasons why they were not concerned with Fairtrade which involved placing their consumption choices into the context of the range of practices they were engaged in and the different issues they were concerned with before agreeing that they might consider Fairtrade in the future.

**Lisa:** *See when I buy for my baby I buy Organic. Fairtrade does not help my baby and her digestive system so I'm sorry, nah...*

**Hazel:** *So it is the benefit to us, it's not the benefit to them we're looking at.*

**Lisa:** Yes

**Hazel:** *I think what we're doing is about us, not about...*

**Lisa:** Yes like vitamins and minerals I look at, I don't look to paying somebody to pick my tea-leaves. However there may be the odd product that I will buy.

(Non-Fairtrade focus group 1)

Lisa reveals how the care for her child is at the forefront of her mind when she is shopping in this exchange. Similar to Claire in the previous chapter (who supported Fairtrade yet prioritised nourishing her family over Fairtrade concerns), Lisa is demonstrating how her ordinary consumption is embedded in the wider relations of care for her family and significant others. We are reminded of Miller's ethnographic account of everyday consumption behaviours and the importance of paying attention to how the pursuit of and commitment to particular social practices (like parenthood) will cultivate individuals' orientations and dispositions towards consumer goods. Importantly, Lisa does not dismiss Fairtrade consumption completely because she acknowledges that "there may be the odd product that I will buy". It is possible that she makes this statement in order to appease herself to her fellow participants and, using the dominant representation of

Fairtrade consumption as a medium for moral action, demonstrates that she is not unethical because she still buys Fairtrade occasionally. However, it is also possible that Lisa makes this statement because she can see the value of Fairtrade consumption as a moral action even if it rarely enters her field of concern. Later when the group were discussing the effectiveness of different individual actions, Lisa demonstrates this. She admits that she would prefer to give to charity but reveals how she feels it is important for everybody to try to do something to help other people and says "if you only ever buy Fairtrade bananas then great, you're doing something".

An extract from the second focus group provides another good example of an alternative understanding of ethical consumption which ends in an agreement of the moral value of Fairtrade as a concept. In order to set the context for this, Amanda was very concerned for the welfare of animals (particularly following a recent documentary showing the mistreatment of chickens) and the group had had a long discussion about caring for animals before the following extract took place.

**Moderator:** *Ok so we're obviously quite concerned about animals and the way that they've been treated. Fairtrade's about helping [people]*

**Lindsey:** *[people]*

**Moderator:** *So I was just wondering what you think about it in terms of that. Cos if you're concerned about animals[*

**Danielle:** *[Why aren't we concerned about people?*

**Amanda:** *I think I'm more concerned about animals than I am people, because I mean people could consciously do things themselves or they're put into it, whereas animals they haven't got a choice have they.*

**Danielle:** *But what about those children that are working for 5p a day*

**Fran:** *Yeah... if they're lucky. I mean they are forced into that situation.*

**Amanda:** *But then is that our fault?*

**Fran:** *Well the thing is you're supposed to help other people aren't you?*

**Danielle:** *So are we thinking, should we go more for the Fairtrade stuff, to buy more Fairtrade is that to help those children?*

**Amanda:** *I think I'll be more aware, yeah*

(Non-Fairtrade focus group 2)

Amanda began talking about animal welfare after she had admitted that she was unlikely to buy Fairtrade because she generally used her shopping choices to care for her son who had ADHD and who needed particular sorts of food in order to manage his medical condition. So perhaps like Lisa, in order to appease herself to the group for rejecting Fairtrade, she offered an alternative understanding of ethical consumption – based on care for animals – to construct herself, and gain

recognition as, an alternative a moral subject. However, what is interesting about this exchange is how Amanda was persuaded to re-think her position on Fairtrade after Danielle raises the issue of child labour and Fran says that we "ought to help other people". Of course we could say that Amanda's agreement that she would be "more aware" of these issues was a product of the process of the group discussion where members search for consensus, but I would argue that because Amanda was not afraid of voicing her opinion even when it differed from the majority of the group and because she did not really change her position on Fairtrade when she later argued that she was unlikely to be able to fit Fairtrade shopping choices into her tight budget, we are witnessing at this point in the focus group a 'generalising moment' where lay understandings of what constitutes morality are guided by a duty of care for other people (compassion) and an awareness of the reciprocity of social life (Sayer, 2005a). In particular, once the issue of Fairtrade was related to child labour, this group of mothers could relate to and supported the value of Fairtrade which perhaps connected to their wider moral practices surrounding parenthood. We saw a similar situation in Michael's dismissal of Fairtrade consumers and the practice of Fairtrade consumption as a false morality pursued only by those who want to hide their 'bad' behaviour, which was countered by Michael's agreement that it is important to give money to charity to help people who are suffering in the Third World.

It seems that whilst Fairtrade as a consumption practice is often understood as the preserve of people with high economic and (sometimes) cultural capital, the concept that Fairtrade provokes – understood as a duty to care for other people – does not necessarily interact with these economic and cultural judgements. Focus group participants tended to agree with and could see the value of helping people in the Third World even if they found ways to justify why they did not, or could not, organise their consumption along these lines. As Sayer has argued, morality has a 'universalising character' because we can recognise that we ought to treat people with respect and dignity regardless of social divisions. Of course participants were likely to have been heavily influenced by the prevalence of liberal-humanist discourses within our society which will have constrained how they

were able to evaluate the morality of Fairtrade consumption, but Sayer and Heckman both warn against characterising morality as "mere internalised and memorised bits of social scripts" (Sayer, 2005a: 7). Our moral beliefs are central to who we are; they are not arbitrary or subject to the "vagaries of preferences that characterise other choices that subjects make" (Heckman, 1995: 113). We are able to challenge or resist hegemonic moral discourses, and the fact that the non-Fairtraders did not challenge the suggestion that we ought to treat others with respect, reveals a shared understanding of morality when engaging in arguments about Fairtrade. However, the 'modes of subjection' which attempted to govern them to act upon this shared understanding of morality in a particular way – by consuming more expensive consumer goods – did often meet with resistance and encouraged respondents to assert socio-economic, cultural and alternative moral boundaries around their own and others' practices in order to justify their inaction or gain recognition for engaging in different moral actions.

Having considered the ways in which non-Fairtrade consumers classified someone who is not like them, let us now turn to the ways in which Fairtrade supporters understood and classified the Fairtrade consumer – a figure they identified strongly with.

### **Anyone can be a Fairtrade consumer, but...**

I suggested in the previous chapter that Fairtrade supporters stressed the non-exclusivity of the practice of Fairtrade consumption. The tendency to argue that anyone can be a Fairtrade consumer is probably heavily influenced by the representation of Fairtrade through public discourses and campaign resources which concentrate on, and encourage Fairtrade supporters to appeal to, the all-inclusive figure of the 'consumer' in order to gain wide support for the movement aims (see Chapter 4). Claims of non-exclusivity may also reflect the growing orientations towards omnivorousness where individuals are imagined to be able to participate in a range of activities regardless of any association of those activities with particular class groups. However, when we examine Fairtrade supporters' claims of non-exclusivity more closely we find that they are not quite as simple as they

first appear. Just as Savage et al found that individuals' claims to 'ordinariness' were "defined relationally" so that comparisons between the 'ordinary' and the 'non-ordinary' were polluted with references to class (Savage et al, 2001: 876), we too find that Fairtrade supporters' classifications of Fairtrade consumption draw on a number of symbolic boundaries – some of which can be read along class lines.

Let us begin with an extract from a focus group conducted with a Fairtrade group at a local university. Jackie is a Student Support Officer and Keith is a Chaplain. They are both in their 50s.

**Moderator:** *What sort of person do you think buys Fairtrade?*

**Jackie:** *People like us, normal people really... might be a bit, I don't know sometimes you just get a bit more aware don't you but, I don't think we're rushing out to buy it because we think we're... I dunno!*

**Keith:** *Its interesting, a few years ago we did a town collection for a Chaplaincy-inspired and led project [...] and the extraordinary thing was that the most generous givers were old people and people who obviously hadn't*

**Jackie:** *[Hadn't got much]*

**Keith:** *[who hadn't got much. Now whether one could translate that to the purchase of Fairtrade goods I don't know err because Fairtrade goods are much more widely disseminated and everyone needs coffee and tea, you know; but I have a feeling that its people whose consciences have already been pricked or who knows what it is actually to try and live on a budget and you know who may have more sympathy with the campaign.]*

**Jackie:** *Yeah fairly normal people that might have read something and it just kind of gets stuck in their minds doesn't it.*

(Fairtrade focus group 2)

The Fairtrade consumer can be anybody but it is generally someone who is more aware and has "read something" about the subject. Jackie constructs a cultural boundary between the Fairtrade and the non-Fairtrade consumer but obviously feels a bit uncomfortable classifying the practice as something that is superior to how others organise their shopping. Her statement with its telling pause, "I don't think we're rushing out to buy it because we think we're... I dunno", suggests that she is aware and cautious about the fact that Fairtrade consumption may be associated with the display of distinction. Bennett et al (2009) found that middle-class respondents tended to be open to diversity and shied away from snobbish remarks about other people's tastes. However, they also detected the continued existence of subtle boundaries which respondents used when assessing their own cultural participation. Jackie's hesitant characterisation of the Fairtrade consumer reveals this

complex and subtle superiority – she is aware that Fairtrade is a ‘good taste’ and may therefore appeal to a particular sort of person but she doesn’t want to (at this point) invoke a ‘hierarchy of value’.

Interestingly, one of the ways in which the non-exclusivity of Fairtrade consumption was achieved in the focus group was through identifying the practice with people in lower-class positions. Keith speculates that the people who might buy Fairtrade are those “who haven’t got much” and suggests that these people are more likely to have sympathy with the movement’s aims. Keith tries to claim the ordinariness of Fairtrade consumption but in so doing reveals his own distance from those ‘who haven’t got much’. He offers a romantic characterisation of the experience of poverty amongst people living within the UK and suggests that these people will be able to identify with the aims of the Fairtrade movement because they, like the Fairtrade farmers, will have had the experience of living on a budget and will want to help. The experience of poverty is imagined to create certain moral dispositions and an automatic sympathy towards others who are struggling under ‘similar’ conditions. We are reminded of Adams and Raisbourough’s (2008) suggestion that Fairtrade farmers are represented as the ‘deserving poor’ which is likely to evoke feelings of compassion and sympathy amongst relatively affluent consumers. In a sense the moral status attached to the struggling yet noble Fairtrade farmer is projected by Keith onto those who ‘haven’t got much’ in this country. Keith eschews the general assumption that the Fairtrade consumer occupies a middle-class position, but at the same time, he draws a moral boundary that relies upon the imagined experience of poverty, from which he is disassociated. In distancing himself from ‘the poor’, he reveals the classed underpinnings of his perspective.

It is interesting to note that later in the focus group Keith and Jackie’s description of those who are unlikely to be interested in Fairtrade seems to offer quite a different understanding of the morality of those in lower-class positions.

**Keith:** *But you see if we’re looking at, why do we buy this product... we buy this product because by buying that product that directly benefits Mr X or Miss Y in country Z. Now why cant that actually also feed into why do we need to buy this foodstuff and not that foodstuff to ensure that our children*

*don't grow up obese, you know in one sense we're talking about the same kind of lifestyle choices we're talking about food which saves lives, you know and on the broadest possible canvas not making our kids eat turkey twisters should be seen as as important as buying this coffee or this flour or whatever it is because the choice of that foodstuff means that it will save lives. So I think potentially if we can see Fairtrade as interlinked with so many other things... sorry.*

**Jackie:** *No I agree with that, I think there's always gonna be so many people that you kind of see walking down smoking cigarettes and flicking their butts, and having turkey twizzlers in their bags who just really don't care do they, no... what's it got to do with me kind of thing*

**Keith:** *Its very hard to see how you could ever get past the hard core where nothing is going to influence them... not even war and natural disaster*

**Jackie:** *I know [small laugh] ... no to me I'm like really anti-smoking and you hear some people saying 'I ain't got enough money to feed the kids', but bugger me they manage to find a packet of cigarettes everyday and you think come on, you know*

Their classification of those who don't buy Fairtrade is here much more in keeping with Varul's suggestion that Fairtrade consumers use Fairtrade in order to display their ethical distinction. In keeping with his earlier romanticisation of 'the poor', Keith suggests that the issues are the same whether it is the welfare of your own child or of a distant child. However, in this extract he uses the existence of shared concerns and priorities to condemn on a common basis rather than to praise. Keith suggests that we ought to take a more holistic approach towards the ethical consumption of foodstuffs, paying particular attention to the 'turkey twizzlers' which caused such debate around issues of nutrition and social class. 'Turkey twizzlers' became the focus of a campaign to improve school dinners led by the chef Jamie Oliver; but it has been pointed out that this was a "deeply moralistic campaign" which did not hide a "snobbish disdain for people's behaviour and values" (O'Neil, 2008). Jackie quickly associates those who feed their children turkey twizzlers with the type of person who is unlikely to consider Fairtrade. Whereas she earlier seemed quite cautious about suggesting that those who buy Fairtrade come from a particular class position and indeed agreed with the almost romanticised account of the morality of 'those who didn't have much', she here classifies the non-Fairtrade consumer as someone engaged in a whole range of what we might consider 'underclass' behaviour. She draws socio-economic, cultural and moral boundaries around those irresponsible and uncaring mothers who claim to be unable to feed their children but then

smoke a packet of cigarettes everyday. We can see that those "normal people" who buy Fairtrade are, after all, quite distinctive along class lines.

We find a similarly ambiguous challenge to the assumption that Fairtrade consumption is a middle-class activity in the discussion between Val, a retired Executive Officer in the Civil Service and Patrick, a University lecturer (both of whom are committed Christians) in the Fairville Fairtrade Town focus-group.

**Val:** *I mean what I notice having come from a much poorer area, in [name of town], what is very moving is that sometimes you see quite poor people struggling to buy Fairtrade because they can identify so much with the cause, and they'll often be very responsive and I'm always a little surprised that Fairville isn't more responsive because it is more affluent*

**Moderator:** *Do you think affluence is important then?*

**Patrick:** *Well if you're affluent you can buy more, you can also buy dearer can't you, you don't have to buy the cheapest.*

**Val:** *I mean I always say in talks that you know one of the obstacles to Fairtrade, people often assume that the primary obstacle is price, I think that's a little bit misleading but obviously you're not gonna get the rock bottom cheapest because if you've got that, then you've squeezed everyone in the chain and obviously the producer is the easiest to squeeze. Quality for quality, Fairtrade as food often stands up in price to similar products.*

(Fairtrade focus group 4)

We will notice how Val, like Keith, attempts to challenge the general assumption that Fairtrade consumption is exclusively a middle-class activity by associating this activity with "poor people". Again there is a romantic characterisation (or speculation) that the experience of poverty creates particular moral dispositions that make those in lower-class positions more likely to support Fairtrade. Although she describes how she has witnessed "quite poor people struggling to buy Fairtrade", I would suspect that Val could only have witnessed this at her then-local church where she ran a Fairtrade stall suggesting that those 'poor people's' commitment to Fairtrade may have been part of their wider commitment to their Christian faith rather than solely a product of their class-position. What is particularly interesting about the exchange is how on the one hand Val believes that "poor people" will often struggle to buy Fairtrade because they understand that it is important to help others, and yet on the other she believes that greater wealth ought to make it easier to pay the premium for Fairtrade goods and states that "obviously you're not going to get the rock bottom cheapest". She seems to both deny and then acknowledge the importance of price in

her attempt to match her proselytising with the fact that Fairtrade items have to guarantee a particular price. Val sustains the romantic image of the poor yet moral consumer, but also reveals her distance from this position because she ignores the reality that a number of 'poor people' are very likely to have to buy the cheapest-range of goods in order to feed their families even if that does "squeeze" the producer. However, Val's characterisation of the struggling, Christian Fairtrade consumer raises an important connection to the arguments put forward in the previous chapter

Through the application of a theory of practice it was demonstrated that the Fairtrade supporter is often an individual who becomes aware of Fairtrade through their engagement in existing networks and activities. The focus-group data supports this position with the majority of focus-group participants recognising that the Fairtrade consumer has particular moral and cultural dispositions towards Fairtrade that are developed through their involvement in existing commitments. In the following extract – which takes place in the focus group with Fairtrade supporters who are not heavily involved in the town group activities – someone in the group (Sandra) had suggested that Fairtrade was a "very middle class thing, Guardian readers", but this was challenged by another member of the group (Linda) who counted herself as 'working class'; the discussion that followed is very illuminating.

**Moderator:** So do you think that affluence is important then?

**Linda:** Hmm... once you get to a certain amount of money... erm you are always looking for the best deal, well no the people that erm, erm...

**Kathy:** [laughs] You're tryin' to word it in a certain way

**Linda:** The people that acquire a lot of money usually do so at the expense of other people, the people that give a lot of money away usually remain poor, but they are more kind of socially aware.

**Moderator:** What does everybody else think of that?

**Sandra:** Well I, I, to... in my mind sort of classes, the middle class and working class is not just about money, its about an attitude I think, and I think there's always been a left wing ethically conscious section of the working class and I hope that that's where I fit in[

**Linda:**

[Yes! [

**Sandra:**

[yes but... I've got to admit

that my lifestyle now is, I live in a middle class area surrounded by middle class people, I've come away from my roots, then again back to the [gestures to another member, Milena], I had a very evangelical Christian upbringing so I suppose that's part of it I think. There's always people that have erm ethics as an important part of the way they live their lives.

**Tim:** Hmm, I mean money isn't always going to come down to it, I mean if you are literally on the breadline, yes you wont be buying Fairtrade cos it is more expensive, but I guess I started buying it when I was buying for myself as a student and at that point, I didn't have the money, I lived on

*overdraft but ... because you're always buying things that you wouldn't say, wasn't literally just bread and water, you could afford to spend an extra 20p on a jar of coffee so you know its getting that balance.*

**Peter:** I think people that buy Fairtrade tend to be people who are more socially conscious, more, maybe Christian, maybe political, maybe liberal or some reason like that, that they're perhaps a bit more thinking about things, but there's also the financial thing as well, I think if you really are in a difficult financial position, you're gonna look for what's cheapest not necessarily what's Fairtrade, but once you have a, once the financial side isn't the key thing then I tend to think it tends to be people who've got a more progressive or Christian, or humanist, or something like that, even though not how much money you've got cos just because you're rich, you probably might not buy Fairtrade.

(Fairtrade focus group 3)

In many ways, we can recognise the position that is put forward here in the discussion amongst non-Fairtrade consumers in the Sainsbury's focus group. The Fairtrade consumer is someone who has some 'morals about things' or in this case the Fairtrade consumer is more "socially conscious". What this discussion seems to add to the non-Fairtrade one is a consideration of where those moral dispositions are likely to have originated from. Because of the rejection of the association between social class and Fairtrade consumption put forward by Linda, Sandra reflects upon what it is about her that makes her consume Fairtrade apart from her social class. She picks up on something that another participant had already mentioned and reveals that her "evangelical Christian upbringing" is likely to be a significant factor. Importantly, those people who have always had "ethics as an important part of the way they live their lives" are likely to be Fairtrade consumers. Macintyre and Heckman have argued that it is important to understand virtue/moral beliefs in the context of the practices and longer traditions they are embedded within as well as in the context of the narrative of an individual's life. Sandra seems to be suggesting that her upbringing instilled certain values in her with regard to how she ought to behave towards others which have had an impact upon the ways she orients herself in the world. The practice of Fairtrade support makes sense in the context of both her life narrative and the longer traditions and values associated with Quakerism. The suggestion that Fairtrade consumers are people who have certain moral dispositions which have been developed through involvement in adjacent practices is also supported by Peter who implies that the 'socially conscious' are not only those with religious backgrounds but can be those who are more liberal or progressive in outlook possibly as a result of engagement in political activity.

However, Peter is also very aware that those without sufficient economic capital are likely to be constrained from using Fairtrade in order to express their duties towards others.

Despite the fact that the group deny the relevance of social class through paying attention to social practices, it is important to note that Linda initially (hesitantly) distances Fairtrade consumption from social class by arguing that those who are rich are unlikely to consider Fairtrade because they have "acquired their money at the expense of others". A socio-economic and moral boundary is drawn around Fairtrade consumers because they are people who care about the impact of their choices on others, unlike the indifferent and unscrupulous whose economic and social position is founded upon the exploitation of others. It is interesting how the possession of large amounts of money is often, by both non-Fairtrade and Fairtrade participants (including Phillipa in the last chapter), understood to limit the likelihood and credibility of consuming Fairtrade. Rather than adopting a snobbish orientation towards the practices of those in lower class positions, the socio-economic and moral boundaries work together to differentiate and establish the moral worth of the Fairtrade consumer from those who conspicuously and irresponsibly consume goods regardless of the financial or moral cost.

Varul (2008) has argued that Fairtrade supporters often distinguished their own morally worthy behaviour from the moral indifference exhibited by competing sections of the middle classes. Drawing from Bourdieu who suggested that those fractions of the middle class who were closest together competed with one another over the valuation of cultural practices and the related advantages these practices brought, it seems important to probe a little further into what these 'competing' fractions are struggling for. Whilst Bourdieu suggested that there was a need to maintain the rarity of consumer practices to ensure the advantages were only accessible to those from particular social positions, we ought to remember that Fairtrade consumption is not characterised by its rarity but is rather widely available and is expanding into mainstream markets partly *because* of the practices of the Fairtrade supporters. Fairtrade consumers do not seem to be able to use their support of Fairtrade to ensure capital advantages for themselves – they may achieve

"sub-cultural capital" in which they are able to gain respect and reputation but this is not really exchangeable beyond relatively contained social networks (see Bennett et al, 2009: 255).<sup>36</sup> Following Sayer, it seems possible to suggest that Fairtrade consumption is pursued because it is seen as valuable in its own right regardless of its association with any social status group and regardless of whether it brings any external rewards to Fairtrade supporters. The struggles of the social field in this case seem to be about which ways of life and whose definitions of morality ought to be most valued.

The relationship between social class and Fairtrade consumption tended to be a very thorny issue in the focus groups with the majority of participants seeking to distance the practice of Fairtrade consumption away from any class group. However, as we have seen, despite their claims of non-exclusivity, further inspection reveals how the Fairtrade consumer is often constructed as distinctive on the basis of socio-economic, cultural and moral boundaries. One of the rare overt classifications of the Fairtrade consumer along these boundaries demonstrates this.

*Matt: I think you, far be it from me to tell you how to conduct your own research but erm my sense is that essentially Fairtrade is being driven by middle class, liberal, left-leaning for the most part people. And they're, they're only a relatively small segment of the population and really if Fairtrade is going to take off then it has to penetrate much more forcefully other large segments and notably 'Jo Soap' out there, or 'Mrs Jo Soap' who really doesn't know anything about Fairtrade erm and I hope that therefore perhaps in your focus groups you might include some of those. Otherwise I think you'd get a skewed picture.*

(Fairtrade focus group 1)

Matt's classification occurred at the very end of the Co-op member focus group, and associates the Fairtrade consumer with the liberal middle classes whilst suggesting that the non-Fairtrade consumer is someone who lacks the knowledge to choose Fairtrade and who watches 'low-brow' daytime television. Despite the potentially denigrating nature of the characterisation of the non-Fairtrade consumer as 'Mrs Jo Soap', Matt's statement also reveals a desire to understand this figure. He wants to know why 'Mrs Jo Soap' is not interested in Fairtrade in order for Fairtrade to 'penetrate' the market more successfully. As a committed Fairtrade supporter whose practices are organised

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<sup>36</sup> For example, Alfred used his position in the Fairville campaign to advertise other events he was organising for the TUC or Co-op. He gained some social capital but it is unlikely this would have been recognised beyond these networks.

around expanding the market for Fairtrade goods, Matt is aware that Fairtrade consumption is currently carried out by those with particular characteristics, but he clearly wants to imagine a time when it will not be, when it will be non-exclusive. In this way, even the most overt characterisation of the Fairtrade consumer as exclusive is tempered by a desire for non-exclusivity. We can see that the situation is a little more complex than the Fairtrade consumer using Fairtrade consumption as a form of class distinction (Varul, 2008b). To be sure there is an element of this, but to understand it solely as this is to ignore the claims of and calls for non-exclusivity. Fairtrade consumption is promoted by Fairtrade supporters who are pursuing this practice because they believe in its moral value. It is fair to say that all the Fairtrade participants agreed that Fairtrade consumption had moral value regardless of who did it. So Matt would be quite happy if 'Mrs Jo Soap' starting buying Fairtrade because this would mean that there would be greater benefits to the producers. Like the non-Fairtrade supporters who could recognise the moral value of Fairtrade regardless of whether they actually bought it, Matt is suggesting that consuming Fairtrade has a moral value in and of itself regardless of its association with any social group. However, we should not neglect to consider how questions of power are introduced into his statement; Mrs Jo Soap ought to buy Fairtrade regardless of whether she is interested in Fairtrade because both Fairtrade supporters and the institutions that promote Fairtrade believe that it is the right thing to do.

### **Conclusion: The normalisation and exclusivity of Fairtrade consumption**

It is perhaps important to begin this summarizing discussion by noting the potentially diminishing relevance of the classifications of the 'Fairtrade consumer' utilised by respondents given the increasingly mainstreamed nature of Fairtrade provision. Throughout this thesis, I have argued that more and more people are likely to be consuming Fairtrade without being aware of it or without expressing a strong commitment to the aims of the Fairtrade movement. Yet in spite of this we have seen how for the most part the 'Fairtrade consumer' continues to be constructed as an individual with distinctive characteristics. In this way, it is better to think of the classifications made

in this chapter as referring more to those individuals who are committed Fairtrade supporters rather than accidental or occasional Fairtrade purchasers.

This chapter has focused principally on the ways in which Fairtrade and non-Fairtrade supporters have characterised the 'Fairtrade consumer' and how they used different symbolic boundaries and their lay normativities in order to justify or defend their level of support for Fairtrade. Although Fairtrade supporters and non-Fairtrade supporters differed with regard to the strength of the symbolic boundaries they employed to define the 'Fairtrade consumer', we have seen that both groups understood this figure to occupy a particular socio-economic position and to hold (or lack) particular forms of knowledge and moral dispositions that predisposed them to choose (or not choose) Fairtrade. Whilst Varul, drawing from Bourdieu, argued that those who consume Fairtrade do so in order to display their ethical and cultural distinction over class-others, I have shown that it is problematic to assume that ethical and cultural judgements always operate in alignment with one another or to assume that Fairtrade is necessarily used as a form of class display. To be sure, we have found some support for Varul's claim with both Fairtrade and non-Fairtrade participants recognising that Fairtrade consumption can be used by individuals as a way of demonstrating their social status and morality. However, I have argued that to understand Fairtrade consumption purely as a form of class-display is to ignore how Fairtrade as a form of moral action might be valued regardless of its association with any group. Judgements of morality are very often inflected with judgements about social class and cultural capital, but moral boundaries can operate independently of these judgements. So although non-Fairtrade participants did understand the Fairtrade consumer as exclusive on the basis of social class and interest in other 'ethical' consumption practices (like Organics and not using plastic bags), and described how they often felt excluded from engaging in Fairtrade consumption because they lacked economic capital, there was also some agreement in the moral value of Fairtrade consumption regardless of these factors. The non-Fairtraders tended to acknowledge the worthiness of helping people in the Third world, even if they did not follow these judgements through to the actual purchase of Fairtrade goods. On the

other hand, although Fairtrade participants' stereotyped accounts of the lack of care shown by those in lower-class positions effectively demonstrated the continuing existence of moralising discourses that stigmatize the consumption behaviours and ways of life of the working classes (Horowitz, 1985), their claims that the Fairtrade consumer could be anyone revealed how the moral value of Fairtrade consumption is recognised regardless of who carries it out. If 'Mrs Jo Soap' started buying Fairtrade tomorrow this would be understood as something positive – by Fairtrade supporters, if not by 'Mrs Jo Soap' – rather than a threat to the exclusivity of the practice.

By paying attention to individuals' lay normativities we have seen how participants have debated the moral value of Fairtrade and how this has complicated their attempts to classify Fairtrade consumption according to socio-economic indicators. However, I have argued that it is important not to forget that Fairtrade consumption is widely represented by a number of powerful institutions in society as one way in which individuals can secure a degree of 'moral goodness'. It has been suggested that preferences for music and art are less likely to be defended with reference to a 'cultural hierarchy of value', however Fairtrade consumption, because it represents a statement about how we ought to treat, and behave with regard to, our fellow humans, does seem to be judged according to a moral hierarchy of value. Despite the fact that there can exist a plurality of 'moral voices' that are justified in accordance with particular forms of life (for example religious lifestyles or parenthood), within any culture there will be a 'hierarchy of moral discourses'. Questions of power are therefore inevitably raised as people must compete over whose definition of morality is most valid. In order to constitute oneself as a moral subject using Fairtrade consumption, you have to be willing and able to pay for this and you have to believe that the avoidance of harm to distant others is more important than, or as important as, other ethical choices – like harm to animals and the environment, and care for close and significant others. Fairtrade consumption places demands on individuals to act in accordance with a particular understanding of morality and it equates morality with the capacity to pay an ethical surcharge. In this way, moral boundaries around Fairtrade

consumption are inevitably tied to socio-economic and cultural boundaries but they are not reducible to them.

Non-Fairtrade supporters were clearly aware that Fairtrade consumption is automatically assigned a moral value, and they responded to this with varying degrees of resistance and defensiveness. There was a felt need to justify their inaction and to gain respectability by appealing to and demonstrating their engagement in alternative moral actions. In so doing, they excused themselves from consuming Fairtrade on the basis of insufficient resources, competing priorities and a denial of the mechanism of Fairtrade to bring real benefits to the producers. This 'local resistance', however, was always made with an awareness of the moral value of the concept of Fairtrade so that the majority of non-Fairtrade respondents agreed and supported the idea of Fairtrade (taken to reflect some form of duty to distant [child] others) even if they rejected the imperative to act upon this idea by consuming Fairtrade. Focus group participants revealed a shared consensus in the moral value of helping distant others and this can perhaps be understood to reflect the pervasiveness of liberal-humanist moral discourses within our society which have guided participants' evaluations of Fairtrade consumption.

Fairtrade supporters, on the other hand, were acting in the knowledge that they were engaging in a widely defended morally responsible form of consumption and evaluated the distinctiveness of Fairtrade with varying degrees of pride and uneasiness. Either because of the prevalence of an omnivorous orientation which denies a hierarchy of cultural value, or because their practices were organised around the promotion of Fairtrade, Fairtrade supporters refuted that Fairtrade consumption was an exclusive activity and were mostly quite cautious and hesitant in their characterisations of the 'Fairtrade consumer'. However their claims of non-exclusivity and denial of the importance of social class often worked to reveal their distance from those in lower class positions. Nevertheless it is important not to lose sight of the fact that Fairtrade supporters are committed to Fairtrade regardless of any external rewards that pursing this practice may bring. Participants' reflections on their commitment towards Fairtrade lent support to the conclusions

from the previous chapter suggesting that dispositions towards Fairtrade goods are cultivated in the pursuit of adjacent practices, and are thus closely tied to individuals' identities and ways of life.

Despite detecting a consensus around the moral value of the concept that Fairtrade provokes amongst individuals with differing levels of commitment to Fairtrade, we should acknowledge that those who did not knowingly organise their consumption along Fairtrade lines offered a number of normative and practical justifications for why they do not use Fairtrade. In this chapter, I have mainly focused upon how individuals have explained their reasons for not consuming Fairtrade on the basis of social class and their involvement in different social practices which have generated alternative moral priorities and understandings. I have not paid much attention to the resistance from non-Fairtrade supporters which dealt with their evaluations of the effectiveness of the mechanism of Fairtrade consumption as a tool for alleviating poverty in the developing world. Respondents raised important questions about the legitimacy of those discourses which were attempting to govern them to consume Fairtrade products on the basis that this action was able to bring real benefits to Third World farmers. These questions will be examined in the next chapter using both quantitative and qualitative data sources.

## **'If the government can't make a difference then what difference can we make?': Fairtrade and consumer power**

It has been argued that 'new' forms of ethical consumerism, like Fairtrade, can be understood as forms of individual political participation (Dickinson & Carsky, 2005; Follesdal, 2006; Goodman, 2004; Lyon, 2006; Micheletti, 2003; Murray & Raynolds, 2007; Scammell, 2003; Shaw et al, 2006). As we saw in chapter 2, the writings of Giddens (1991) and Beck (1994) have been employed to suggest that people's decisions to consume ethically ought to be understood as arising from the conditions of late modernity in which everyday life decisions take on political significance. As citizens lose faith in the power of national governments to pass laws that will improve the situation of global workers, it has been suggested they search for alternative ways to challenge global inequalities; they "take politics into their own hands" when they recognise that their role as consumers can offer a "new arena for responsibility-taking" (Micheletti, 2003: 5). This image of the empowered citizen-consumer who actively chooses Fairtrade in order to express their support for farmers in the developing world has become the dominant image of the Fairtrade consumer in the public realm because of the efforts of a range of intermediary actors who have specific political objectives in sustaining this image, in particular the FTF (see chapter 4; Clarke et at, 2007a). However, as we saw in the previous chapter, and in the discussion of historical consumer campaigns, there is often a gap between the campaign language and the understandings and engagements of consumers with these campaigns. It is a mistake to assume that all individuals, regardless of their existing commitments and socio-economic position, believe that they are able to, or are equally interested to, use their individual consumption to make a difference to global poverty. However it should also be noted that in spite of whether individuals understand Fairtrade consumption as a form of political participation, many of them will be regularly consuming Fairtrade

because of the changes to systems of collective provision that have occurred in local and national government and supermarket and chain-retail outlets.

Whilst a number of studies have quantitatively examined the relationship between individual characteristics and the propensity to consume Fairtrade (Cowen and Williams, 2000; De Pelsmaker et al, 2007; Pirotte, 2007; Dickson, 2005; Shaw, 2005; Tallontire et al, 2001; Worcester & Dawkins, 2005), almost no attention has been paid to how individuals evaluate the effectiveness of Fairtrade as an individual action relative to other individual actions. This is quite surprising given the claims that consumers in a late-modern, risk-society are looking beyond 'traditional' politics in order to enact their citizenly duties. Interestingly, Andersen and Tobiasen found that those individuals who boycott or buyboycott consumer goods do not generally distrust political institutions and politicians but instead regard all forms of political participation as more efficient than individuals who do not engage in political consumerism (Andersen and Tobiasen, 2006: 213-4). Similarly, Clarke et al (2007a) have pointed out that those who consume Fairtrade are no less likely to be engaged in other forms of activism, like signing petitions, going on demonstration marches or writing to MPs. We have seen that committed Fairtrade supporters are often engaged in a whole range of 'political' activities through their membership in Fairtrade Town group and related social networks. So it is not necessarily the case, as life-politics inspired accounts would have it, that those who consume Fairtrade products do so because they are disillusioned and distrustful of traditional political modes of engagements or political institutions. Indeed, it should not be forgotten that the UK government (both locally and nationally) publicly supports Fairtrade and actually plays a role defending the construction of the Fairtrade consumer as an active citizen who vote with their pockets in order to improve the lives of farmers in the developing world.

Whilst Fairtrade supporters may engage in both individual and collective activism, no-one has examined whether they believe that Fairtrade consumption is a more effective way that they can contribute to the alleviation of poverty in developing countries than donating to charity, paying taxes, or putting pressure on politicians. Given that Fairtrade organisations tend to portray trade as

a better solution to global development than government or charitable aid (the frequently invoked "Trade is better than Aid" slogan), and stress the power of the individual consumer over national and international governmental organisations, we might suspect that Fairtrade supporters would prioritise Fairtrade over other individual actions. However, given that many Fairtrade supporters do not always consume Fairtrade goods, and instead put their energies into encouraging members of the public, local businesses, organisations and council buildings to use or stock Fairtrade, their evaluations of the effectiveness of individual consumer power might not coincide with the FTF's representation of it.

Equally little attention has been given to how those who do not engage in 'political' consumerism evaluate the effectiveness of their consumer power relative to other individual actions. We saw in the last chapter how, despite the fact that they recognised the moral value of Fairtrade, non-Fairtrade supporters offered a number of practical and normative reasons why they could not or did not alter their consumption in line with the aims of Fairtrade campaigns. Some have described this as the 'attitude-behaviour' gap where people profess to care about issues like fair wages and conditions for farmers, but then their actual behaviour does not reflect this concern. Jackson (2005) suggests that the reasons for consumers' inaction is due to the fact that they are 'locked-in' to unsustainable consumption patterns because of both the infrastructure of modern urban-living and because of their deeply held emotional commitments to certain practices of consumption. However, this tends to assume that the "problem when it comes to changing patterns of consumption is the *consumer*" (Malpass et al, 2007b: 244). It is the consumer who is responsible for solving the world's problems and therefore it is the consumer who must be worked upon in order to achieve various social and political goals. Malpass et al offer a "scandalous suggestion" in order to deal with the persistent findings that consumers reject or make excuses for the fact they do not organise their consumption in a sustainable way (*ibid*: 245). They suggest that rather than hear these rejections as excuses from *consumers*, we should listen to them as statements from *citizens* who are "asserting finite limits to how much they, as individuals, can be expected to be responsible for"

(*ibid*: 247). In keeping with this suggestion, this chapter will be considering whether the alleviation of global poverty through consumption 'choices' is something that non-Fairtrade supporters feel is within their power or responsibility to achieve.

This chapter will begin by asking how individuals evaluate the effectiveness of Fairtrade consumption as a 'political' action relative to the other actions open to them which aim to achieve a similar end-result (that is, the reduction of poverty in developing countries). Moving away from the residents of Fairville, I will be drawing on data from the National Omnibus Survey between 2002 and 2005 Module 236, 'Public Attitudes to Development', commissioned by the government department that has been most supportive of the Fairtrade movement and has awarded several generous financial grants to the FTF over the past five years; the Department for International Development (DFID) (ONS 2002; 2003; 2004a; 2005). Supporting the conclusions of previous chapters, we will see that those who prioritise Fairtrade over other actions tend to have high levels of concern for poverty in the developing world as well as distinctive socio-economic and demographic characteristics. Returning to the residents of Fairville, I then examine how Fairtrade supporters and non-Fairtrade supporters responded to a similar question to that asked in the Omnibus Survey providing insights into how those with differing levels of commitment to Fairtrade evaluated the effectiveness of individual consumer power. Before we turn to the analysis, let us first examine how the findings of this chapter were reached.

### **Methodological Focus: An integrated multi-method approach**

As outlined in the Introduction, this project has employed a mixed-method approach combining both qualitative and quantitative research methods. We have already seen how the distinctive features of the two qualitative methods (individual interviews and focus groups) have been used in order to address different research questions and how participants' understanding of Fairtrade support has changed slightly depending upon the context in which they were asked to discuss the subject. This chapter draws extensively upon participants' understandings of the effectiveness of

Fairtrade using survey research data. Despite the fact that this is the last chapter of the thesis, the reader should be aware that the quantitative analysis was initially conducted before, and informed, the fieldwork in Fairville. After conducting the fieldwork, I returned to the quantitative material and carried out additional analysis in light of my findings from the qualitative data. Adopting an 'integrated mixed-method approach', I have tried to retain the integrity of each method of data collection whilst at the same time allowing the key findings from each method to inform the execution and analysis of the other methods of data collection (Moran-Ellis et al 2006). Before I can discuss how this worked in practice, I first provide an overview of specific questions asked on the National Omnibus Survey and reveal why they were so suited to finding out how individuals rate the effectiveness of buying Fairtrade goods relative to other individual actions.

### The National Omnibus Survey

The Omnibus Survey is carried out monthly by the centre for National Statistics and usually achieves a sample of around 1,800 adults per survey month (although in 2005 a sample of 1,250 adults was achieved), with one adult selected per household. Whilst the Omnibus Survey has been carried out in more recent years, in 2006 the question of interest for the purposes of this analysis was altered and in 2007 and 2008, the research was conducted by a private agency and the data was therefore unavailable. Using a conventional multi-stage random probability design, the Omnibus Survey selects one adult (defined as age 16 or over) at random in each sampled household. All interviews are conducted face-to-face and the response rate is typically around 65 per cent. I have pooled the data for the four survey rounds, providing a sample size of 6,581 individuals. The data is weighted to correct for the higher probability of being sampled in small households.

The question of interest asked respondents to choose the three most effective ways they could contribute to reducing poverty in developing countries. It read;

***In which ways, if any, do you think you as an individual can most effectively contribute to reducing poverty in developing countries? Please choose up to three ways. Starting with the most important and then the next most important and so on. (Show card)***

1. Paying taxes - a proportion of which is spent on International Aid by the Government
2. Donating to charities or other appeals on behalf of developing countries
3. Supporting socially responsible business and investment
4. Buying Fair trade goods
5. Working in a developing country to promote development
6. Being involved in church or campaign groups working on behalf of developing countries
7. Putting pressure on politicians to increase the assistance which the Government gives to developing countries
8. Travelling to a developing country as a tourist
9. Other (please specify)
10. Do not think can contribute effectively as an individual to reducing poverty in developing countries (Spontaneous only)

(Office for National Statistics, 2005 [Technical Report: 105])

This question offers us the opportunity to discover how effective individual consumers believe 'Buying Fairtrade goods' is at alleviating poverty in developing countries relative to other individual and political solutions, and because it asks respondents to rate their answers according to importance, we can explore whether people believe that consumer power is more important than other individual actions. This question also minimises the possibility of socially desirable responses that favour Fairtrade because rather than situating Fairtrade consumption as 'the' desirable response, it instead asks the respondent to choose from an array of other individual actions that are all given equal weight. Unlike previous research that has found that people tend to "over-claim their propensity to purchase ethically" (Worcester & Dawkins, 2005: 197), respondents in this survey are not asked to reveal whether they have ever actually bought Fairtrade or intend to buy Fairtrade in the future.

Module 236 also asked a range of questions about respondents' attitudes towards poverty in developing countries and the role of governments, charities and international organisations in its reduction, two of which (level of concern about poverty and opinions on the role the UK Government ought to be playing in the reduction of poverty) are used to gauge the likelihood of

individuals prioritising Fairtrade over other actions.<sup>37</sup> In addition, the core questionnaire of the Omnibus Survey collects a range of demographic and socio-economic information (for example age, sex, education, occupation and personal income) and these are used to examine the correlates of prioritising Fairtrade.

#### Selection of relevant variables to include in the analysis

There were two main questions that I wanted to address using the Omnibus Survey data. First, what are the characteristics of those people who have prioritised the category 'buying fair trade goods', that is who have identified this as the most important or second most important way they can contribute? Second, what are the characteristics of those people who prioritise 'buying fair trade goods' relative to other individual actions, such as donating to charity, paying taxes and putting pressure on politicians? And has the likelihood of choosing Fairtrade over other individual actions changed over the four years of the Omnibus Survey? The first question provides an important addition to the existing research on the profiling of Fairtrade supporters, whilst the second question can go some way to helping us understand the degree to which individuals evaluate the effectiveness of consumer action versus other actions and whether their evaluations have changed as awareness-raising campaigns for Fairtrade (Fairtrade Fortnight, the growing numbers of Fairtrade towns) have increased over the four years.

Before conducting the fieldwork, I looked at the existing research into the profile of Fairtrade consumers and selected socio-economic and demographic measures (sex, age, income,<sup>38</sup> socio-economic classification, level of education), as well as levels of concern about poverty, as variables that were likely to have an impact on the likelihood of choosing Fairtrade. After conducting the fieldwork, I thought it would be important to include an independent variable which measured an

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<sup>37</sup> These questions can be found in Appendix 2

<sup>38</sup> Income is measured in the Omnibus using a single-income question which bands income into discrete categories. Micklewright & Schnepf (2007) suggest that when using banded income categories in regression analysis it is common practice to convert the categorical variable into a continuous one by allocating individuals to the mid-point of their income groups, with individuals in the top unbounded interval being assigned to an estimate of the group mean using an external source. Therefore in the regression analysis, I used estimates from the Family Resources Survey to estimate the incomes of men and women in the unbounded category.

individual's opinions about the role the UK Government ought to be playing in the alleviation of global poverty. As the discussions in chapters 4 and 5 have demonstrated, those who support Fairtrade are often involved in a range of individual and collective forms of activism and are not, as a life-politics inspired understanding of ethical consumption might suggest, engaging in Fairtrade consumption because they are distrustful of the traditional political system. This variable (which asked whether individuals thought the government ought to be strengthening world trade or providing more aid) proved to have significant effects on the likelihood of prioritising Fairtrade.

To tackle the first question, I used a binary logistic regression in order to examine the associations between my selected variables of interest and my dependent variable (the likelihood of prioritising Fairtrade). In this way, I was able to determine the effect of each independent variable whilst holding the other variables in the model constant. I then used this information to predict the probability of an individual (with fixed values of the independent variables) choosing Fairtrade. For the second question, I used a multinomial logistic regression in order to examine whether those who prioritised Fairtrade were significantly different in terms of their socio-demographic profile and their attitudes towards poverty in developing countries than those who had prioritised other individual actions. In order to construct a dependent variable for this second question, I had to convert the three-answer responses given by respondents to the Omnibus Survey question into a single 'profile' variable. In creating the profile variable, it was important to ensure that those who had prioritised Fairtrade were not placed into any of the other categories. The ordering of the variable also had to be carefully considered because each category was overwritten by the one that followed. Therefore, the 'other' category was defined first because I was less interested in those who specified these individual actions than I was in those who prioritised 'paying taxes'. The 'paying taxes' option, unlike the other options in the Omnibus Survey question, is something the majority of individuals were likely to be compulsorily doing already. Although recognised as one of the key obligations of citizenship (Marshall, 1950), paying one's taxes does not require an individual to devote their time or

**Table 7.1: The Profile Variable**

Categories of the Profile Variable	Answer 1	Answer 2	Answer 3	Number	Percentage
<b>Other</b>	If none of the other categories	If none of the other categories	If none of the other categories	323	4.91
<b>Fairtrade</b>	If 'Buying Fairtrade' or 'Supporting socially responsible businesses' <sup>39</sup>	If 'Buying Fairtrade' and answer 1 is 'supporting socially responsible businesses'		1,156	17.57
<b>No Impact</b>	If they don't think they can have an impact			545	8.28
<b>Charity</b>	If 'Donating to Charity'	If 'Donating to Charity' and if answer 1 is not Fairtrade	If 'Donating to Charity' and answer 1 or 2 is not Fairtrade	1,363	20.71
<b>Campaigning for change</b> <sup>40</sup>	If 'Pressure on politicians' or 'campaign groups'	If 'Pressure on politicians' or 'campaign groups' and if answer 1 is not Fairtrade	If 'Pressure on politicians' or 'campaign groups' and if answer 1 or 2 is not Fairtrade	1,342	20.39
<b>Tax</b>	If 'Paying taxes'	If 'paying taxes' and if answer 1 is not Fairtrade	If 'paying taxes' and if answer 1 or 2 not Fairtrade	1,852	28.14
				6,581	100.00

<sup>39</sup> I felt that those who had placed 'supporting socially responsible businesses and investment' first followed by Fairtrade ought to be considered in the same category as those who prioritised Fairtrade, because both responses involve using consumer choices.

<sup>40</sup> Before I conducted the fieldwork, I had placed those who prioritised 'paying taxes' and 'putting pressure on politicians' into the same category as 'traditional' political solutions in the profile variable. After conducting the fieldwork however, I felt that, because Fairtrade supporters did not seem to be any less likely to put pressure on politicians than those who did not buy Fairtrade, I ought to separate the two actions. Equally, I had originally placed those who prioritised joining 'church or campaign groups' into the 'other' category and given that the majority of Fairtrade supporters in Fairville were attached to either a church or campaign group, I felt that they should be included in one of the main categories. I therefore placed those who prioritised putting pressure onto politicians and joining campaign groups into the same category (Campaigning for change) whilst I placed those who prioritised paying taxes into another.

money above and beyond this obligation to contribute to the alleviation of poverty on a daily basis in the same way that Fairtrade consumption, or campaigning, individually or collectively, might. The organisation and ordering of this profile variable is illustrated in Table 7.1 above.

### Returning to Fairville

Whilst the survey data gives some insight into how people rate the effectiveness of individual consumer choices as a mechanism to alleviate poverty in developing countries, as well as who is most likely to believe that Fairtrade is an effective individual action, we must remember that this data does not give us information on whether individuals act upon their evaluations and actually buy Fairtrade goods, nor can it tell us whether those who prioritised another action might still regularly buy Fairtrade despite the fact they think this action has a limited effect. Informed by my initial analysis of the Omnibus Survey, I asked respondents to tell me how effective they thought individual shopping choices were in the alleviation of global poverty. However, it was often the case that discussions of the effectiveness of Fairtrade relative to other actions emerged naturally in the interactions without me having to actually ask about this directly. In presenting their opinions on the effectiveness of consumer power, I will be drawing on data from both the individual interviews and focus groups (including the focus group with key representatives from Fairville's political community). The individual interviews provide insights into how people's personal experiences and already-existing practices inform their evaluations of the effectiveness of Fairtrade, whilst the focus group data provide respondents with the opportunity to discuss and challenge those discourses which have framed individual consumption as more effective than governmental or charitable aid.

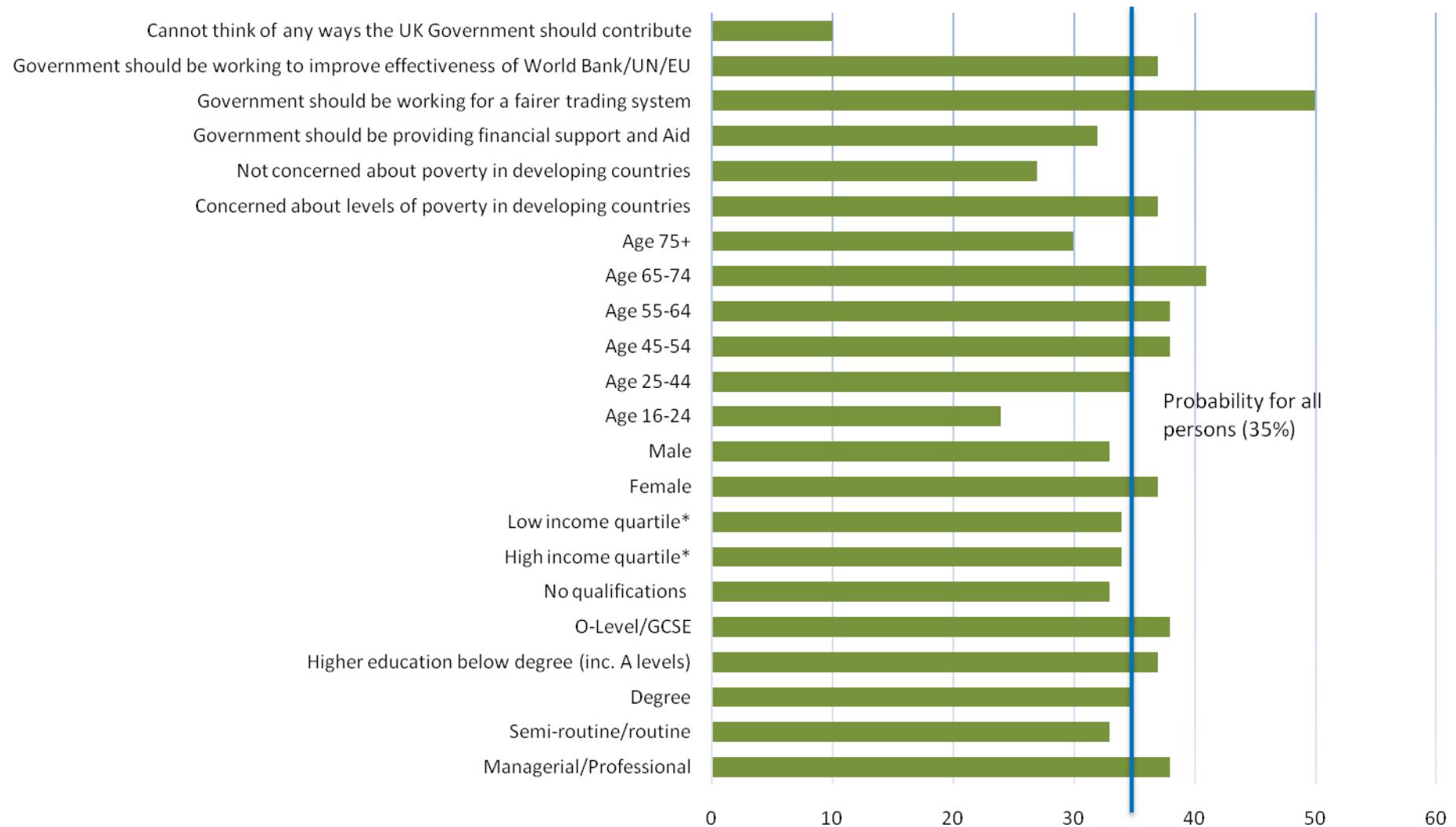
## **Individual contributions to the alleviation of poverty: The National Omnibus Survey**

### Prioritising Fairtrade

Let us begin by addressing the first main question using the Omnibus Survey data: what are the characteristics of those who have identified 'buying Fairtrade goods' as the most important or second most important way they can contribute? Graph 7.1 reveals the probability of individuals prioritising Fairtrade according to a range of individual factors. Overall, the probability of placing Fairtrade first or second is 35 per cent, and this varies according to socio-economic status, level of education, sex and age as well as by the level of concern shown for poverty in developing countries and one's opinions about the role the UK government ought to be playing. Those in managerial/professional positions, women and those in older age categories are more likely to choose Fairtrade than those in semi-routine/routine occupations, men and those in younger age categories. An individual's level of education has an interesting effect, with those who have degrees being slightly less likely to choose Fairtrade than those who are educated to A-level or GCSE-level. It may be that having a degree increases the likelihood of choosing one of the other individual actions over Fairtrade. It is interesting that income has little effect on the probability of choosing Fairtrade given the discussions amongst Fairtrade and non-Fairtrade supporters in the previous chapter who suggested that income alone was insufficient to explain why someone might buy Fairtrade and the need to look at people's attitudes and the range of practices they are engaged in in order to understand why they might be disposed to support Fairtrade.

Attitudes of concern towards poverty in developing countries increase the probability of choosing Fairtrade with those who display high levels of concern more likely to prioritise Fairtrade. By contrast, those who are unconcerned about poverty in developing countries and those who do not have an opinion about the role the UK government ought to be playing are up to three times less likely to choose Fairtrade. Those who think that the government ought to be working towards creating a fairer world trading system are, unsurprisingly, more likely to prioritise Fairtrade.

## Graph 7.1: The probability of prioritising 'buying Fairtrade goods'



Interestingly, those who think the government ought to provide more financial aid or help strengthen the role of international organisations are more likely to choose Fairtrade than those who are unconcerned about poverty. This suggests that people who prioritise Fairtrade may not see Fairtrade as a superior alternative to governmental aid and the work of international organisations in the alleviation of poverty, but rather as an important supplement to these other activities.<sup>41</sup>

Whilst Graph 7.1 provides us with insight into the probability of prioritising Fairtrade, it cannot tell us the effect of individual characteristics/attitudes when controlling for other factors. For example, it may be that when we are controlling for levels of concern about poverty in the developing world, socio-demographic characteristics become insignificant (as Fairtrade supporters in Fairville tended to argue). Table 7.2 provides the results of several binary logistic regression models which reveal the direction of effect of each independent variable on the likelihood of choosing Fairtrade whilst controlling for all the other variables; Models 1 and 2 use socio-economic and demographic characteristics,<sup>42</sup> whilst Models 3 and 4 introduce the attitude variables. The regression models provide us with a similar picture to that provided in Graph 7.1 with the additional information that the likelihood of choosing Fairtrade has increased yearly which may reflect increased awareness or belief in the effectiveness of Fairtrade over this time period. However, it reveals that, even when controlling for attitudes of concern for poverty and opinions on the role that the UK government ought to be playing, other things being equal, women, older people and those in higher socio-economic groups were still more likely to prioritise Fairtrade than the average individual. This supports Pirotte's (2008) study which found that both attitudes towards development and socio-economic characteristics are important if we are to understand the likelihood of an individual supporting Fairtrade.

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<sup>41</sup> As we have seen Fairtrade supporters often use Fairtrade consumption to extend their already-existing commitments and activities around social and political campaigns, and Fairtrade organisations provide campaigners with the resources to link their support of Fairtrade to wider forms of activism (for example, through providing campaign cards to be sent to MPs, and through distributing promotional material to already-existing campaign networks).

<sup>42</sup> Income was taken out of the second model because it was insignificant and remained so, even when socio-economic status was not included in the regression.

**TABLE 7.2:** Binary Logistic Regression, dependent variable 'Prioritises Buying Fairtrade Goods'

	Model 1 (SE)	Model 2 (SE)	Model 2 (SE)	Model 4 (SE)
Female	<b>0.214**</b> (0.065)	<b>0.219***</b> (0.060)	<b>0.186**</b> (0.060)	<b>0.233***</b> (0.061)
Age in years (16+) <sup>1</sup>	<b>0.005**</b> (0.002)	<b>0.004*</b> (0.002)	<b>0.004*</b> (0.002)	<b>0.004*</b> (0.002)
Year (2002-2005) <sup>2</sup>	<b>0.096**</b> (0.028)	<b>0.103***</b> (0.026)	<b>0.109***</b> (0.027)	<b>0.101***</b> (0.027)
NS Socio-economic classification				
- Managerial/Professional (Ref)	0	0	0	0
- Intermediate	<b>-0.202*</b> (0.101)	-0.164 (0.095)	-0.160 (0.095)	-0.144 (0.097)
- Small employers	-0.085 (0.126)	-0.116 (0.118)	-0.116 (0.118)	-0.072 (0.118)
- Lower supervisory	-0.036 (0.118)	-0.029 (0.111)	-0.016 (0.111)	-0.012 (0.112)
- Semi routine/routine	<b>-0.245**</b> (0.091)	<b>-0.245**</b> (0.083)	<b>-0.224**</b> (0.083)	<b>-0.189*</b> (0.085)
- Not classified	<b>-0.588***</b> (0.156)	<b>-0.657***</b> (0.143)	<b>-0.611***</b> (0.114)	<b>-0.584***</b> (0.146)
Education level				
- Degree	0.022 (-0.117)	-0.004 (-0.109)	-0.074 (-0.111)	-0.181 (-0.112)
- Below degree	0.118 (-0.081)	0.138 (-0.077)	0.093 (-0.078)	0.044 (-0.079)
- Other <sup>3</sup>	0.265 (-0.305)	0.332 (-0.278)	0.306 (-0.276)	0.354 (-0.280)
- No Qualifications (Ref)	0	0	0	0
Income*	-2.28e-06 (-2.28e-06)			
Concern about poverty				
- Concerned (Ref)			0	0
- No Strong Feelings			<b>-0.148*</b> (0.074)	-0.109 (0.075)
- Not concerned			<b>-0.419***</b> (0.112)	-0.171 (0.118)
- Don't Know if concerned			<b>-2.363***</b> (0.588)	<b>-1.272*</b> (0.589)
Opinions of UK Gov action				
- Working towards a fairer trading system (Ref)				0
- Provide aid				<b>-0.785***</b> (0.094)
- Strengthen Int. Org.				<b>-0.512**</b> (0.163)
- Cant think of any ways				<b>-2.141***</b> (0.227)
- Other <sup>4</sup>				<b>-0.569***</b> (0.085)
Constant	<b>-1.036***</b> (0.165)	<b>-1.112***</b> (0.130)	<b>-1.071***</b> (0.131)	<b>-0.593***</b> (0.151)
Number of Observations	5998	6572	6553	6241
Degrees of Freedom	(12/5986)	(11/6561)	(14/6539)	(18/6403)
F	4.53	6.07	6.61	11.40
Probability > F	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000

\*\*\* $p < 0.001$ ; \*\* $p < 0.01$ ; \* $p < 0.05$

<sup>1</sup> Age was also entered using dummies which revealed a small non-linear effect so those over the ages of 75 were statistically no more likely to choose Fairtrade than those aged 16-25.

<sup>2</sup> Dummies for year were also tried but the effect of year was linear.

<sup>3</sup> Full-time students, those who have never worked or are long-term unemployed, and those whose occupation is not stated or is inadequately described

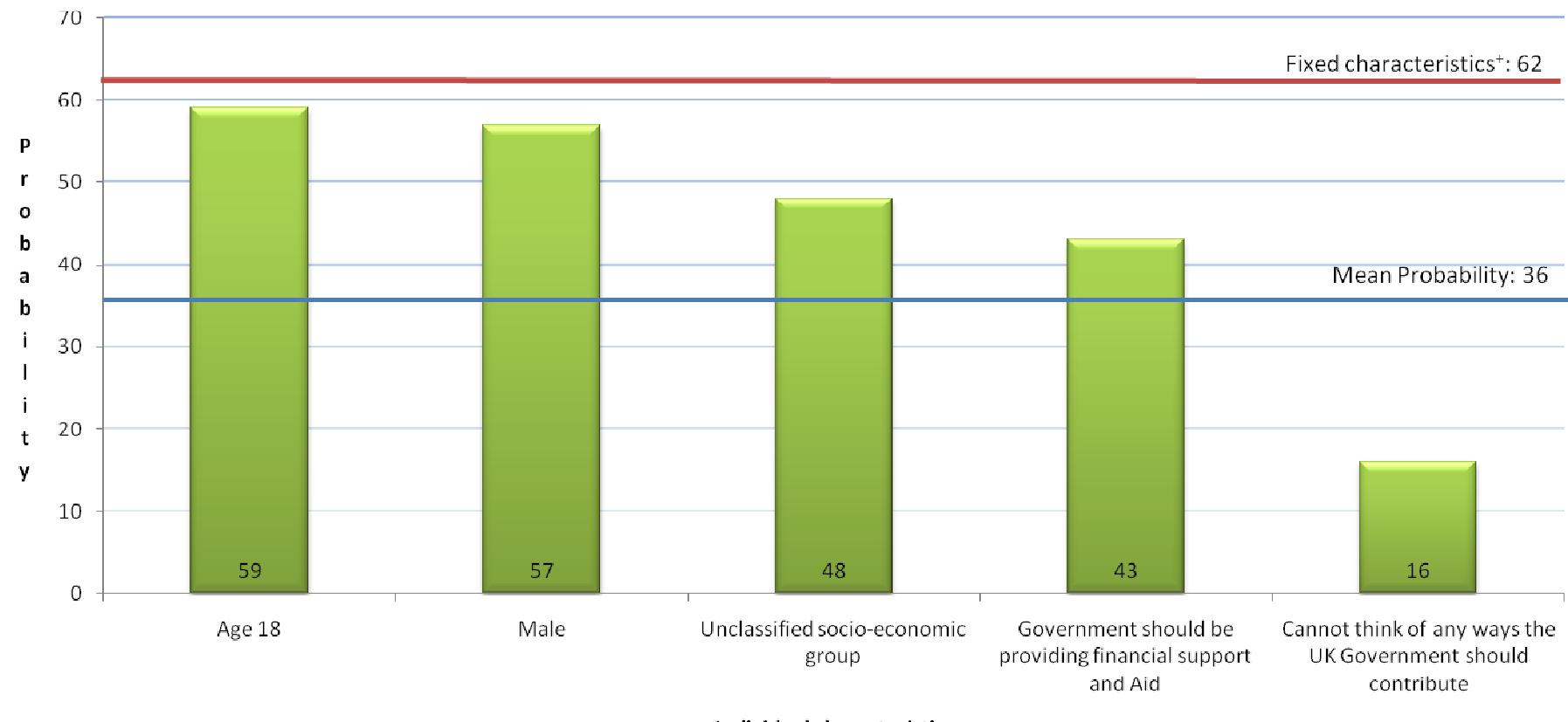
<sup>4</sup> Encouraging increased private sector investment, reducing conflict and war, cancel debts owed by developing countries, specified 'other'

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In order to illustrate the strength of the effect of the independent variables upon the likelihood of prioritising Fairtrade, let us use some predicted probabilities. Graph 7.2 reveals how the probability of choosing Fairtrade varies according to an individual's age, gender, socio-economic group and their opinion on the role of the UK government. We can see that those with a particular set of 'optimal' fixed characteristics have a probability of 62 per cent of prioritising Fairtrade compared to an average probability of only 36 per cent in the sample as whole. Men are less likely to prioritise Fairtrade than otherwise similar women to the tune of 5 percentage points, which may reflect the fact that women "remain the gender which bear the mantle of responsibility" for shopping (Miller, 1998: 96). Despite Fairtrade supporters' tendency to stress the classless nature of Fairtrade consumption (see last chapter), it appears that an individual's socio-economic status does have an important impact on the likelihood of prioritising Fairtrade. Those who hold identical demographic profiles and attitudes but come from socio-economic groups at the opposite ends of the spectrum differ in their probability of prioritising Fairtrade by up to 14 percentage points.

Although the likelihood of prioritising Fairtrade does not increase greatly as an individual gets older, – in graph 7.2 the likelihood of choosing Fairtrade increases by just 3 percentage points between the ages of 18 and 55 – the fact that it increases at all is particularly interesting given both the characteristics and the attitudes of Fairtrade supporters in Fairville. Whilst the majority of committed Fairtrade supporters in Fairville tended to belong to older age groups, there was an assumption that the best way to increase the support of Fairtrade in Fairville was through interacting with the schools (which now have to teach about Fairtrade on the National Curriculum) because in their experience of local campaigning, children were more responsive to the Fairtrade message than their parents. However, the analysis of the Omnibus Survey data suggests that those in younger age

### Graph 7.2: Predicted Probabilities using Binary Logistic Regression Coefficients



<sup>t</sup>Note: Fixed Characteristics are for a 55-year old woman with below degree level qualifications, in a professional occupation, who is concerned about poverty and thinks the government ought to be working towards a fairer world trading system responding in 2005. All probabilities have been rounded to the nearest whole number.

categories were less likely to prioritise Fairtrade, other things being equal. Because we are controlling for attitudes, it may be that in absolute terms younger people hold attitudes that are more likely to dispose them towards Fairtrade. For example, if younger people are more open than older people in general (and it is often the assumption that young people are more open), then the age effect would be comparing the less open with the less open older people. If this were the case, then it might justify the approach of Fairtraders in trying to mobilise younger people. The age effect may also be accounted for by the fact that Fairtrade was not introduced onto the National Curriculum until 2002, so those younger individuals included in the Omnibus Survey had not actually been taught about Fairtrade at school. However, when the Omnibus Survey was carried out in 2008, TNS (2008) found that those in the youngest age category (16-24) did not agree strongly that Fairtrade was an effective individual action. Younger adults seem to be less convinced of the efficacy of Fairtrade as an individual action and are likely to prioritise the alternative actions. However, with cross-sectional data we are unable to say with certainty whether this is an age or a cohort effect - it might be that those in younger cohorts will be just as unlikely to choose Fairtrade when they reach the older age categories, or it may be that as these younger people age they will become more likely to choose Fairtrade.

Those people who do not have an opinion on the role the UK government ought to be playing in the alleviation of global poverty are more than three times less likely to prioritise Fairtrade than an individual with exactly the same profile who believes that government ought to be working towards a fairer world trading system (see fixed characteristic in Graph 7.2). This is particularly interesting because it tends to suggest that those who choose Fairtrade do not do so because they distrust traditional political institutions and want to enact their citizenly-duties in an alternative sphere as consumers, but rather that they believe there is a role for both consumers and governments to play in the alleviation of global poverty.

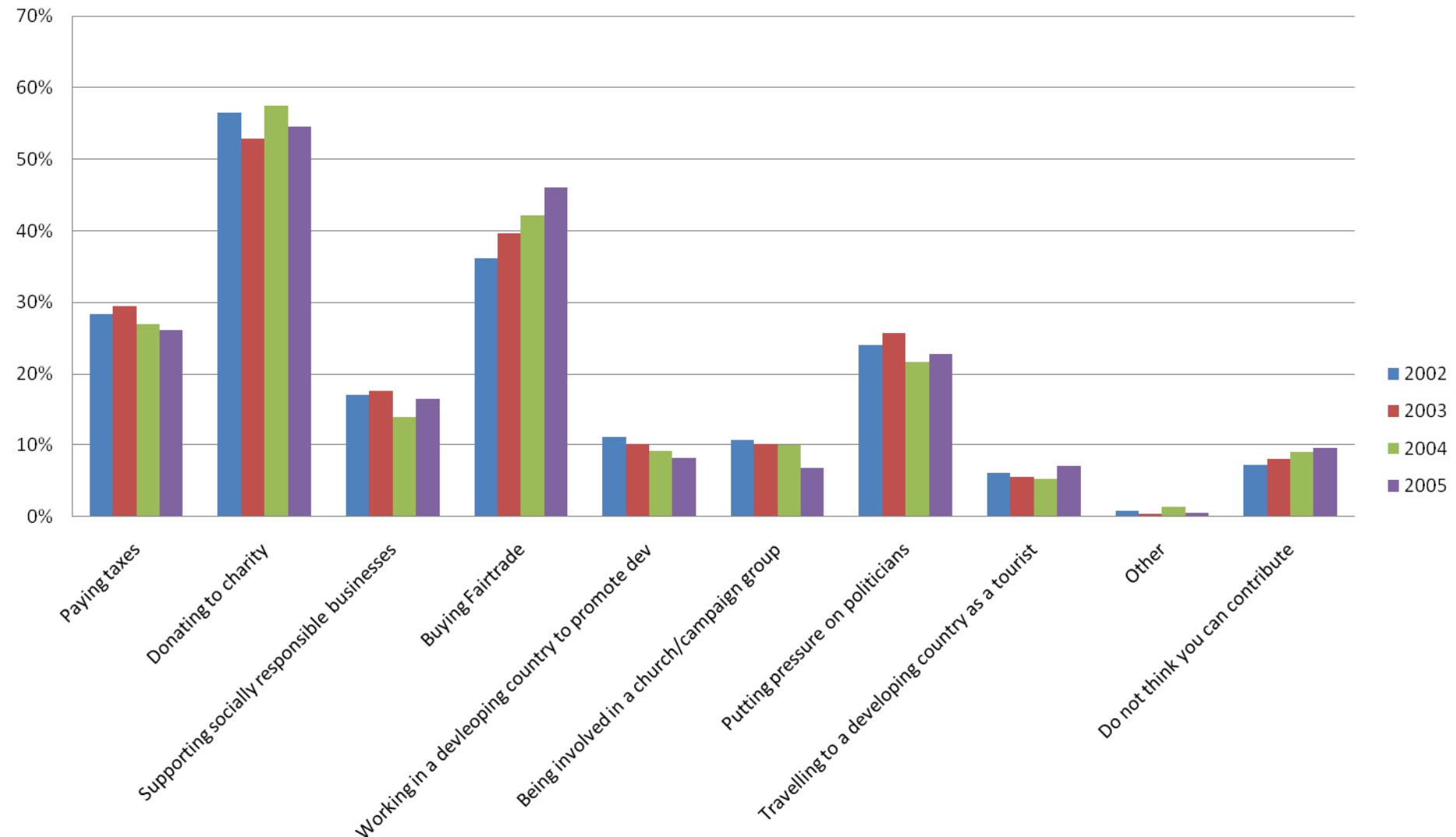
Those who thought the government ought to be providing more financial aid were less likely to choose Fairtrade than those who believed that the government ought to be working towards

a fairer world trading system. It seems likely that those who think the UK government ought to be providing more financial aid will have prioritised the option 'paying taxes which will be spent on International Aid' rather than 'buying Fairtrade goods'. Those who think the government ought to be working for a fairer world trade system seem to subscribe to the dominant discourses surrounding the effectiveness of trade over aid and are therefore likely to place 'buying Fairtrade goods' over 'paying taxes'. In order to explore this further, it will be necessary to turn to the second stage of the analysis which looks at the characteristics of those who prioritise other individual actions over consuming Fairtrade.

### Fairtrade relative to other actions

This section will examine whether those who prioritise other individual actions over Fairtrade are significantly different (in terms of socio-demographic and attitude profile) than those who prioritise Fairtrade and whether the likelihood of prioritising Fairtrade over other actions has increased as awareness-raising campaigns for Fairtrade have become more prevalent. To begin, let us first look at how individuals rated the effectiveness of all the different individual actions offered in the Omnibus Survey question. Graph 7.3 shows the percentage of people who placed their chosen action as the most effective or second most effective way they could contribute. We can see that donating to charity is the most popular response, followed by buying Fairtrade, paying taxes and putting pressure on politicians. Given that 'Buying Fairtrade' is the second most popular response and the percentage of people choosing Fairtrade has increased on a yearly basis, as Fairtrade has grown in popularity, it seems possible to argue that an increasing number of individuals – like those identified in the binary regression model – do believe that consumption is an effective way of tackling social problems like poverty. It is interesting to note that the number of people who prioritised paying taxes, working in a developing country and being involved in campaign groups have, on the whole, steadily decreased over the four year period, whilst the number of people who

**Graph 7.3: The most effective ways of alleviating poverty 2002-2005**



feel they cannot have an impact has increased. Although this seems to lend some support to the suggestion that Fairtrade consumption is offering some individuals the opportunity to participate in political action in alternative spheres, it also appears that Fairtrade is not offering those who do not believe they can have an impact (such as those who are uninterested in or distrustful of the political system) a new opportunity to participate.

Having examined the basic trends across the answers to the Omnibus Survey question, we now want to find out whether those who prioritised one of the other individual actions over Fairtrade are different from those who have not. In order to achieve this, I have constructed a multinomial logistic regression model using the derived 'profile' variable (described in the methodology section) as the dependent variable (assigning 'buying Fairtrade goods' to the base category). This will allow us to compare the effects of the independent variables on the likelihood of prioritising another action over Fairtrade. The results of this regression analysis are presented in Table 7.3. Whilst in the binary logistic regression, it was noted that education and income were not good predictors of the likelihood of choosing Fairtrade, in the multinomial model they become significant variables when we look at the likelihood of an individual prioritising 'paying taxes' over Fairtrade or thinking they cannot have an impact on poverty in the developing world. Those who have higher incomes and hold educational qualifications are more likely to believe that the most effective way they can individually contribute to the alleviation of poverty is through paying their taxes which will then be spent on International Aid.

Graph 7.4 illustrates how the likelihood of being in the 'paying taxes' group relative to the 'buying Fairtrade' group (of the profile options outlined in the methodology) changes with different values of the independent variables. In keeping with earlier findings, an individual's likelihood of choosing Fairtrade increases with age whereas their likelihood of choosing 'paying taxes' decreases with age. Women are less likely than men to choose 'paying taxes' but are more likely to choose Fairtrade than men. As we can see a 25 year old man who has a high income and is in a professional

**TABLE 7.3:** Multinomial logistic regression, likelihood of prioritising 'Buying Fairtrade' relative to other individual actions

	Coefficient for 'Other' (SE)	Coefficient for 'No Impact' (SE)	Coefficient for 'Donating' (SE)	Coefficient for 'Campaigning for change' (SE)	Coefficient for 'Paying taxes' (SE)
Female	-0.139 (0.188)	-0.107 (0.153)	<b>0.237*</b> (0.102)	-0.016 (0.101)	<b>-0.308**</b> (0.096)
Age in years (16+)	-0.003 (0.006)	<b>0.015***</b> (0.004)	<b>-0.010**</b> (0.003)	<b>-0.009**</b> (0.003)	<b>-0.010***</b> (0.003)
NS Socio-economic classification					
- Managerial/Professional (Ref)	0	0	0	0	0
- Intermediate	-0.015 (0.305)	0.433 (0.255)	0.147 (0.160)	<b>0.327*</b> (0.159)	0.156 (0.148)
- Small employers	-0.235 (0.340)	0.228 (0.288)	0.082 (0.188)	0.115 (0.190)	-0.330 (0.185)
- Lower supervisory	-0.037 (0.328)	0.147 (0.277)	0.114 (0.178)	0.071 (0.178)	-0.156 (0.171)
- Semi routine/routine	0.013 (0.257)	0.313 (0.221)	0.266 (0.137)	0.236 (0.138)	0.055 (0.137)
- Not classified	0.191 (0.497)	<b>1.041**</b> (0.356)	<b>0.525*</b> (0.247)	<b>0.733**</b> (0.243)	0.307 (0.239)
Education level					
- Degree	-0.054 (0.312)	<b>-1.115**</b> (0.363)	-0.251 (0.180)	0.083 (0.176)	<b>0.430*</b> (0.172)
- Below Degree	-0.170 (0.227)	-0.301 (0.174)	-0.171 (0.122)	-0.087 (0.123)	<b>0.269*</b> (0.121)
- Other <sup>1</sup>	0.770 (0.717)	-0.037 (0.741)	0.332 (0.513)	0.075 (0.544)	0.905 (0.478)
- No Qualifications (Ref)	0	0	0	0	0
Income	<b>1.57E-05*</b> (7.86E-06)	-1.57E-06 (8.07E-06)	2.95E-07 (4.67E-06)	-3.03E-06 (4.63E-06)	<b>1.21E-05**</b> (4.06E-06)
Year (2002-2005)	-0.140	0.109	-0.043	<b>-0.146***</b>	<b>-0.107**</b>

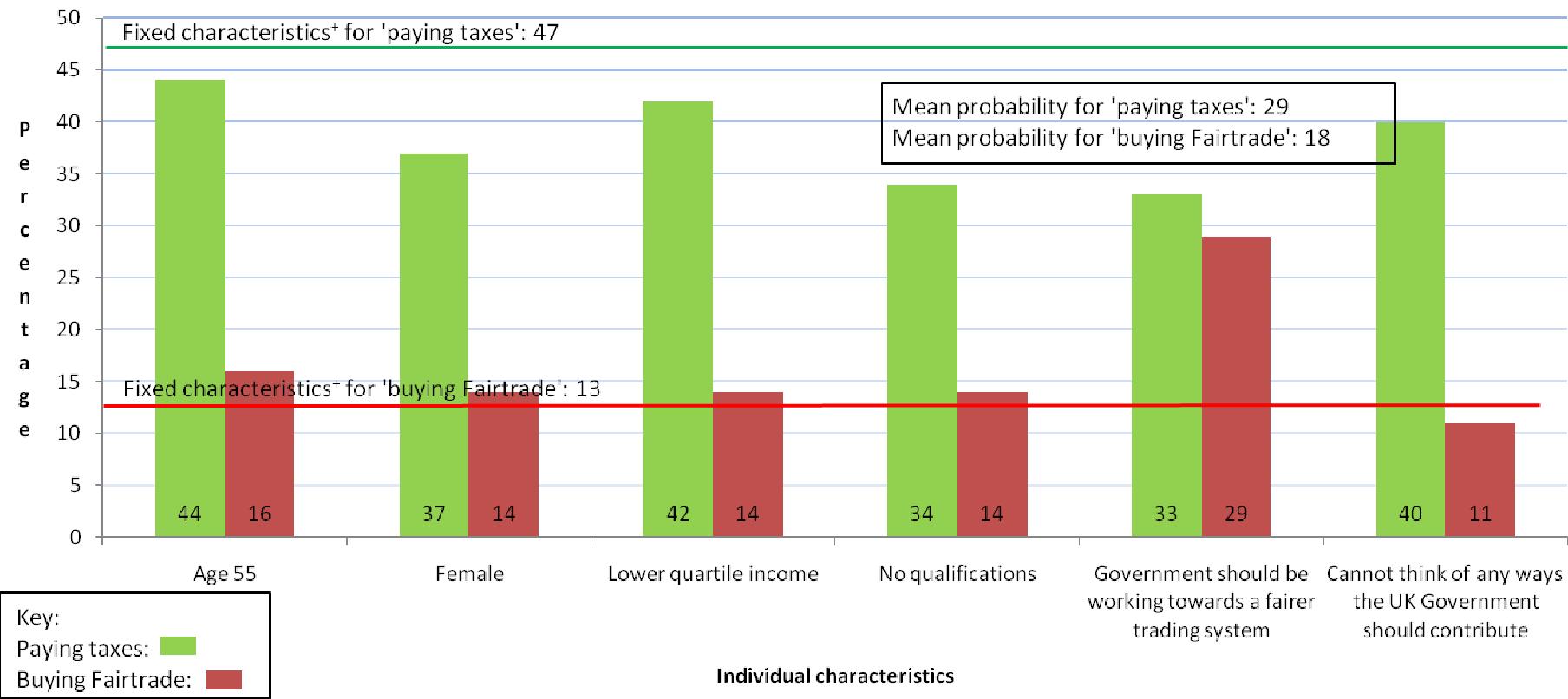
	(0.083)	(0.067)	(0.043)	(0.043)	(0.041)
	Coefficient for 'Other' (SE)	Coefficient for 'No Impact' (SE)	Coefficient for 'Donating' (SE)	Coefficient for 'Campaigning for change' (SE)	Coefficient for 'Paying taxes' (SE)
Concern about poverty					
- Concerned (Ref)	0	0	0	0	0
- No Strong Feelings	<b>0.576**</b> (0.202)	<b>1.016***</b> (0.164)	0.044 (0.120)	<b>-0.249*</b> (0.124)	-0.050 (0.113)
- Not concerned	<b>0.836***</b> (0.247)	<b>1.526***</b> (0.198)	-0.268 (0.177)	<b>-0.432*</b> (0.184)	<b>-0.648***</b> (0.175)
- Don't Know if concerned	<b>2.698***</b> (0.750)	1.317 (0.818)	0.477 (0.727)	-1.308 (1.179)	0.082 (0.829)
Opinions of UK Gov action					
- Working towards a fairer trading system (Ref)	0	0	0	0	0
- Provide aid	<b>0.572*</b> (0.285)	<b>0.654**</b> (0.239)	<b>0.979***</b> (0.145)	<b>0.774***</b> (0.151)	<b>1.168***</b> (0.138)
- Strengthen Int. Org.	-0.010 (0.445)	0.220 (0.388)	0.157 (0.267)	<b>0.587*</b> (0.251)	<b>0.478*</b> (0.235)
- Cant think of any ways	<b>2.215***</b> (0.432)	<b>3.197***</b> (0.382)	1.461*** (0.363)	0.190 (0.482)	<b>1.009**</b> (0.391)
- Other <sup>2</sup>	<b>0.558*</b> (0.247)	<b>0.478*</b> (0.214)	<b>0.495***</b> (0.131)	<b>0.834***</b> (0.132)	<b>0.689***</b> (0.123)
Constant	<b>-2.074***</b> (0.605)	<b>-3.216***</b> (0.468)	0.021 (0.313)	0.281 (0.308)	0.305 (0.292)
Number of Observations			5898		
Degrees of Freedom			95/5803		
F			10.20		
Probability > F			0.0000		

\*\*\* $p < 0.001$ ; \*\* $p < 0.01$ ; \* $p < 0.05$

<sup>1</sup> Full-time students, those who have never worked or are long-term unemployed, and those whose occupation is not stated or is inadequately described

<sup>2</sup> Encouraging increased private sector investment, reducing conflict and war, cancel debts owed by developing countries, specified 'other'

**Graph 7.4: Comparison of the probability of prioritising 'Paying Taxes' and the probability of prioritising 'Buying Fairtrade' according to fixed characteristics**



<sup>t</sup>Note: Fixed Characteristics are for a 25-year old man with degree level qualifications, in a lower supervisory or technical occupation, in the highest income quartile who is concerned about poverty and thinks the government ought to providing more aid responding in 2005. All probabilities have been rounded to the nearest whole number.

occupation has a probability that is 5 percentage points higher than a man with the same characteristics who is in the lowest income quartile of prioritising paying taxes. Whereas, the likelihood of this man choosing 'buying Fairtrade' increases by 8 per cent from the highest income quartile to the lowest income quartile. It is interesting that, other things being equal, having a lower income is positively associated with the chances of choosing Fairtrade and negatively associated with support for paying taxes. Given that we are controlling for levels of concern about poverty, this suggests that the characterisations of the 'Fairtrade consumer' by Keith and Val in the previous chapter – that concerned rich people are less likely to support Fairtrade than concerned poor people – were reasonably accurate. Despite the suggestion that Fairtrade supporters seemed to romanticise the experience of poverty, it appears that their stereotypes were more or less correct.

Importantly, we can see in graph 7.4 that those who believe that the UK government ought to be providing more financial aid to developing countries are 43 per cent more likely to prioritise paying taxes than those who support working towards a fairer world trading system. This indicates that government action through aid is regarded as more effective by this group than the creation of a fairer global market. However, it should be noted that according to the regression coefficients, those who prioritised paying taxes were more likely to hold any views of UK government action (including the opinion that the government could not make any difference) other than that it should support a fairer trading system which suggests that they believe there are limits to what the government can achieve in terms of regulating the world trade arena. Nevertheless, they do seem to be more likely to believe that the government can find the money to provide aid. This suggests that they do not subscribe to the dominant discourses which stress the importance of individual citizen-consumer power or the superiority of trade over aid. On the other hand, those who believed that the UK government ought to be working towards a fairer trading system were 125 per cent more likely to prioritise Fairtrade than those who supported the provision of financial aid; and those who prioritised Fairtrade were less likely to believe that there was nothing the government could do than those who prioritised paying taxes. This suggests that those who are likely to believe that Fairtrade

consumption is an effective individual action are also likely to believe that there is a continued need for the government, as well as the individual consumer, to support fairer trading relations. It also demonstrates a consistent underlying conviction in the power of trade (whether through individual action or through government regulation) rather than aid to make a difference to world poverty.

The likelihood of choosing 'paying taxes' increased by 38 per cent from an individual with no qualifications to an individual with degree-level qualifications, whereas the likelihood of 'buying Fairtrade' decreased by 12 per cent from an individual with no qualifications to an individual with degree-level qualifications. The fact that those who are better educated are more likely to prioritise paying taxes and are less likely to prioritise buying Fairtrade than the less well qualified raises doubts over those debates about consumer reflexivity which assume that the only thing that stands in the way of people becoming responsible citizen-consumers is more information, and instead highlights the importance of paying attention to the ways individuals learn about and integrate Fairtrade into their lives. This finding is also very interesting because if we think of paying taxes as a rather passive form of action, it casts doubts on the perspective that (educated) people often like to put forward – that high levels of education leads to more active engagement in the political process.

People who have little interest in poverty in the developing world are more likely to believe that they cannot have an impact and despite the fact that there have been a number of awareness-raising campaigns during the period of the Omnibus Survey (such as Fairtrade Fortnight, a growing number of Fairtrade towns), there was no significant change over the four years in the likelihood of an individual choosing Fairtrade over 'no impact'. This suggests that Fairtrade is not offering new ways for people who are not already-interested in, or who do not already have some sympathy for, the movement to engage in 'life-political' action. Conversely, the likelihood of prioritising 'campaigning for change' (putting pressure on politicians, joining a church or campaign group) did decrease relative to choosing Fairtrade during the four-year period which seems to suggest that Fairtrade was more appealing to those people who were already engaged in campaigning activity and who had some sympathy for the Fairtrade movement's aims. As we have seen in Fairville,

committed Fairtrade supporters are individuals who are usually involved in a number of adjacent practices (like joining local campaign or church groups) through which they come into contact with Fairtrade. It seems likely, that Fairtrade offers these already-interested campaigners the opportunity to broaden, not substitute, their engagement by using consumer action. Having said this, the likelihood of people prioritising donating to charity over Fairtrade has not decreased over the four year period which suggests that not everyone with existing sympathies towards development issues understands Fairtrade as an effective individual action.

The fact that the likelihood of prioritising paying taxes and 'campaigning for change' over buying Fairtrade did decrease over the four years may offer some limited support for Micheletti's claims that 'new' forms of political consumerism "signal[s] that citizens are looking outside traditional politics and civil society" to have an impact on important issues (Micheletti, 2003: 3). However, we should interpret these findings cautiously given the fact that whilst 46 per cent of respondents in 2005 claimed that 'buying Fairtrade goods' was an effective way of alleviating poverty in developing countries, it is unlikely that 46 per cent of the UK population knowingly bought Fairtrade on a regular basis given that Fairtrade retail sales figures only totalled £195 million in 2005 (FTF, 2009d). It is likely that respondents in the Omnibus Survey have drawn on the hegemonic discourses and promotional strategies of the Fairtrade movement which have suggested that Fairtrade consumption is a powerful and effective individual action (see Sassatelli, 2006), and have applied this understanding to their evaluation of the different responses offered in the Omnibus Survey question. However, they have not necessarily taken this evaluation of the effectiveness of Fairtrade to the supermarket – suggesting that is might be a good action is others do it.

There has been a tendency to understand individuals' unwillingness to participate in political consumerism as a symptom of their apathy – for example Hilton has argued that "consumerism has its tremendous limitations as a social and political movement in the immense gulf between the aims of its leaders and the apathy of its rank and file" (Hilton, 2003: 3). However, Yeo (1974) encourages us not to dismiss low levels of participation under the label of 'apathy' as if this label enables us to

put an end to the matter. Rather he points out that the language of apathy tends to conveniently attribute blame and moral failings to individuals or collectivities which are not necessarily inherent to them but are the product of the structures and systems within the society in which they live (Yeo, 1974: 287). As Malpass et al (2007b) have pointed out citizens are often justifiably sceptical about the ethical problematization of consumer practices which place responsibility for global problems in the hands of individuals rather than in the political, economic and legal structures which coordinate global trading relations. Those who believe they have 'no impact' or who choose an alternative solution like 'paying taxes' (which requires very little of them beyond the automatic deduction from their wages), or who agree that Fairtrade might be an effective individual action but do not buy it themselves, should perhaps not be understood as apathetic or uninterested but rather as challenging the assumption that their individual consumer action will be effective given the organisation of global trading systems. With this in mind, let us now turn to the views from residents in Fairville, starting with those who have high levels of commitment to the Fairtrade movement.

### **Fairtrade versus other actions: Opinions from the residents in Fairville**

#### Fairtrade Supporters

Given the findings from the Omnibus Survey – which suggested that those who chose Fairtrade are those who have clear opinions on the role the government ought to be playing in the alleviation of global poverty and which offered only limited support for the suggestion that individuals are looking to the sphere of consumption to make political statements – and what we already know about Fairtrade supporters' practices, we might have doubts about whether committed Fairtraders would evaluate Fairtrade consumption as a more effective individual action over other individual and governmental actions. In this section, we see that to a certain extent, Fairtrade supporters in Fairville do defend Fairtrade as an important individual action; although we should remember that as Fairtrade supporters were asked to talk about why they supported Fairtrade, it is very unlikely that they would not express the merits of Fairtrade over other actions. However, this does not mean that

they do not engage in the other actions, or that they necessarily believe that consumers can, alone, alleviate global poverty.

As we saw in the Omnibus Survey, those who prioritised Fairtrade tended to be more likely to think that the government ought to be working towards a fairer world trading system rather than providing more financial aid. The qualitative data supports this finding with the majority of Fairtraders agreeing with those dominant discourses which frame trade as a more effective solution to poverty than aid.

***Oliver:** I think one of the things that we've learnt is that so much Government Aid is wasted and just money poured down the drain. Because your Fairtrade premium goes straight to the people on the ground floor, and the village gets round and decides whether they're going to spend it on new fences for their gardens, which I think one lot did to stop the animals getting in, or that they invest, whatever they do. In the case of the government, we know that an awful lot of governments, not just the black African ones, a lot of governments steal the money and use it for all sorts of graft. Erm...I think there's pretty strong evidence that Fairtrade is probably a darn sight more effective than sending a few billion pounds over.*

***Erica:** I think Fairtrade helps them stand on their own two feet.*

***Oliver:** Yeah, and they want to, to be fair to them.*

***Erica:** Whereas, Government Aid, you send it over to these foreign countries and you've got people that are employed over there to distribute it out, so they're taking part of it before it's actually going to where it's supposed to be going. And so, I think Fairtrade is far superior I feel.*

(Oliver, 65 years, retired Senior Civil Servant; Erica, 63 retired Registrar)

For Oliver and Erica, there is a feeling that Fairtrade is a more direct, and therefore effective, way of ensuring that their money reaches the people who need it most. Not only do the benefits from Fairtrade get to the people on the ground who can decide for themselves how the money is spent, but Fairtrade encourages self sufficiency and encourages producers to "stand on their own two feet". Whilst it might seem that Oliver favours individual consumption over governmental action, it is interesting to be aware of the fact that he is a member of the Co-op Party and is therefore involved in the wider political movement to encourage a fairer world trading system. So even if on the one hand he believes that governmental aid may be stolen by corrupt governments, he also believes that as part of a larger political movement, it is possible to work with these governments to improve the situation for people living in poverty. As a keen bee-keeper, Oliver also regularly donates to the charity 'Bees Abroad' – an organisation which supports beekeeping projects in the

developing world – suggesting again that he does not use Fairtrade consumption as an alternative to other individual actions.

The understanding of Fairtrade as a more direct way of getting money to the people who need it is demonstrated by John who explains why he would favour buying Fairtrade goods over putting pressure onto his local MP.

*If I want things to change it's easier to buy a Fairtrade pear than to tell my MP that Fairtrade is great for everyone. Because then he's got to convince his party; he's got to convince the public; then he's got to go into the European whoever, and then there's the whole, it takes about ten million years, if it is approved; to get approved. Whereas, I suppose consumerism is my direct action. And it's immediate. And you don't need many consumers to make a difference in the sense that, if everyone, at Easter bought a Fairtrade Easter egg, not a big one but a small one, that would be a huge volume of Fairtrade Easter eggs that would be sold. But it's a small expense to the consumer. So I think that says a lot more than a long winded way of going through your MP for anything.*

Despite the fact that John understands consumerism as a more direct action, he still regularly fills in campaign cards sent to him by the World Development Movement and Oxfam, and has written to his MP on a number of issues. Whilst he may prioritise Fairtrade, he still sees the value of engaging in a range of actions in order to get his point of view heard. Although Fairtrade is understood as an important individual action, Fairtrade supporters use Fairtrade as an extension to an already-existing repertoire of behaviours, like donating to charity and campaigning in groups.

Whilst consumer action is seen as important, there remains an awareness of the limits of consumer power and the vital role that governments and charities must continue to perform.

**Moderator:** *So just talking there about aid, I mean how do you rate the effectiveness of Fairtrade as a means of promoting international development then?*

**Beth:** *I think its very effective but I mean, [laughs] I don't have any statistics I don't know if anyone else has*

**Lyn:** *I mean it's difficult because only those people that are producing those sorts of things are getting that aid, and there are a lot of other people who aren't in that world who still need aid and you know there are other charities which, you know I'm sure we all support in our own way, hopefully that are getting at those other people [...] but there are a lot of others apart from producers of coffee and food and things like that, that need help.*

**Peter:** *From my perspective, Fairtrade is important for the reasons I mentioned earlier, but it can never, it would never even try to replace certainly governmental aid*

**Lyn:** *Hmm [nods in agreement]*

**Peter:** *And obviously the various churches and the charities do a lot of work in developing countries but it is just, it's an extra, but you could never, I mean as you said, you could never replace government aid and government negotiation on multi-national agreements to support places, I mean we're talking basically places like Africa and South America, and you could never replace those*

*things with Fairtrade but it obviously does help individuals and also, we come back to the fact of people doing something personally to help, and handing money over to an organisation that's trying to do something.*

(Focus group with key community representatives)

On reading this extract one might wonder why someone like Lyn or Peter continues to buy Fairtrade given the fact they are aware that it only helps a small percentage of the people who are living in poverty. Although Fairtrade can never hope to replace the efforts of governments and charities to alleviate the huge problem of global poverty, Peter's suggestion that Fairtrade supporters choose Fairtrade in order to do something "personally to help" seems particularly illuminating. Consuming Fairtrade is seen as a way in which people can express their commitments and feel that they are contributing in their own personal way to the alleviation of poverty of some of the people who are suffering in the world. In his study of ethical consumers, Newholm argued that often the most important motivation for individuals to use ethical products was a need "to feel comfortable with themselves" (Newholm, 2000: 114). We can perhaps see the same thing here; despite the fact that they are aware that it will not make a huge difference to global poverty, Fairtrade supporters felt a need to express their values through their consumption.

**Claire:** *If you feel concerned about something then you must do something about it, and even though you might think well its only a drop in the ocean, you know the ocean's made up of lots of drops I think I heard someone say [laughs], I'm a believer in the snowball effect and the fact that you can influence other people by talking about it, raising awareness and err you know spreading that way as well as actually buying the products, tell people why you're doing that. I think it's important and can work that way.*

**Milena:** *You know instead of saying, you know something is wrong and you don't do anything about it, it is better to at least ... you know you're doing your bit and yeah I completely agree with that you know like you said, many people will do it and then things will change*

(Fairtrade Focus Group 3)

Importantly we find here, a recurrent theme in Fairtrade supporters' understanding of the effectiveness of their individual consumption; a feeling of a community of like-minded individuals who are together 'sending a message' to supermarkets, big businesses and governments of their desire for a larger political change. Although the Omnibus Survey asked individuals to rate the effectiveness of their individual actions, and the literature on the growth of political consumerism suggests that the power is now in the hands of the *individual* consumer, it was very rare for Fairtrade

supporters to discuss the effectiveness of their shopping 'choices' without reference to an imagined community of other Fairtrade consumers. As Milena optimistically makes clear, if lots of people buy Fairtrade then things will change. Each individual consumption act is seen to strengthen a collective movement.

*If it was just me doing it then it wouldn't be effective at all. Erm...absolutely zilch, just makes me feel better. I'm an optimist, I think that me plus lots of other me's are doing it and it is making a difference, just the fact that there are more Fairtrade items appearing on shelves. Tesco are doing their own Fairtrade orange juices, their own Fairtrade coffee, that sort of thing. ... So, yes, I am an eternal optimist and me making that choice is making a difference because if I'm making a choice then I believe in my head that other people are doing it as well. I also believe that if I stop making that choice then other people are stopping as well, so, yeah, I really do think it makes a difference.*

(Leon, 34 year-old Musician)

It is interesting that Leon is able to imagine the impact of aggregate individual acts of consumption because we will see that this concept was either absent, or treated with great scepticism, by non-Fairtrade supporters. Whilst Fairtrade supporters receive 'proof' that their collective purchases can 'make a difference', through, for example visits from producers to the town network meetings, information from the FTF and increased Fairtrade products on the supermarket shelves, non-Fairtraders generally do not have access to, or notice, this. Being involved in the Fairtrade town network and various other organisations (for example Leon is also involved with Oxfam and a youth environmental group in Fairville), Fairtrade supporters are able to socialise with like-minded individuals which not only enables them to support Fairtrade in ways beyond individual consumption but perhaps also makes it easier for them to imagine the impact of their consumption as part of a collective movement.

Although Fairtrade supporters may prioritise buying Fairtrade over other individual actions, they do reveal clear limits to the effects of individual consumer power. Indeed, as we have seen, a number of Fairtrade supporters do not actually always consume Fairtrade and instead are engaged in a collective practice which is organised around awareness-raising campaigns and local promotional activities. Fairtraders seem aware that consumer politics could never replace alternative forms of aid and governmental intervention, but they see it is an important way that both individuals can express

their commitments and feel they are making a difference, and groups of individuals can send a message to those in power to make greater political changes. Importantly, however the majority of the Fairtrade supporters in Fairville are involved in the wider campaign for trade justice and therefore do not limit their engagement to just shopping differently.

### Non-Fairtrade supporters

The Omnibus Survey suggested that those who prioritise another option over Fairtrade are those who tended to have different attitudes towards the role of the UK government, or had low levels of interest and relative concern towards issues affecting the developing world. Whilst some non-Fairtrade supporters clearly had an interest and concern about poverty in developing countries, the majority of non-Fairtrade supporters were either not that interested or had not had any experiences which had made them believe that individual consumer power could be very effective. Importantly, none of the non-Fairtraders were involved in campaign groups fighting for the alleviation of global poverty and were therefore presented with Fairtrade as an individual consumer action rather than something to supplement a range of already-existing activities.

Because I spoke with a diverse collection of 'ordinary' consumers, I found a number of varied reasons why someone might choose another individual action over Fairtrade. However, as with the Fairtrade supporters, an individual's evaluations of the effectiveness of their chosen action were closely linked to their experiences and the practices they were involved with. Sarah, a 29 year old student studying for a degree in social work had spent eight years working as a tour guide in South America. Whilst she occasionally bought Fairtrade she was concerned that she didn't know whether the money she spent on Fairtrade goods actually got back to the producers. She thought that one of the best ways to help those in poverty was through visiting developing countries and supporting their economies through tourism. She highlighted the importance of the money actually getting to the 'local people' so in a sense her argument was quite similar to those offered by Fairtrade supporters, because it favoured using consumption – albeit within developing countries rather than

through local consumption practices – as a more direct way of reaching those people that needed it most.

By contrast, Maria, an Economist in her 30s, argued that Fairtrade was an ineffective way to alleviate poverty in the developing world and suggested that poverty would be more effectively relieved by governmental policy changes such as lifting the ban on GM foods and reducing the Common Agricultural Policy. Maria, like the majority of non-Fairtrade supporters, was unconvinced that the consumer could be sure that what they bought actually translated into better conditions for the producers.

*It may be very cynical and sceptical but I don't think there's enough monitoring to tell who is getting the money anyway, so, it's a market distortion as far as I'm concerned and it may actually do more harm than good. So I wouldn't choose a product on the basis that it's Fairtrade. I've thought about this, its not that I haven't ... unfortunately that's how I feel [laughs]*

Maria's position on Fairtrade is probably heavily influenced by her professional credentials and the fact that economists have, in general, challenged the claims of the Fairtrade movement (see Sidwell, 2008). However, she was not alone in holding sceptical views about the possibility of using consumer power to challenge global trading relations, with the majority of non-Fairtraders voicing some scepticism about the claims of the Fairtrade movement.

There tended to be two main ways in which non-Fairtraders questioned the legitimacy of those discourses which were attempting to govern them to change their individual consumption behaviour on the basis that this action was able to contribute to the alleviation of poverty in the developing world. Firstly, unlike Fairtrade supporters who believed that Fairtrade was a more direct way of helping those in poverty because it would circumvent the corruption found in governments in the Third World, non-Fairtraders thought that corruption in the developing world was unavoidable and therefore anything they did was unlikely to make any difference.

***Moderator: Do you think we can make a difference to poverty through our consumption choices?***

***Lisa: Again you don't know how much goes to that country so I don't know.***

***Jenny: I think people are quite sceptical because we raise all this money and, like when we did Live Aid and all that and we raised phenomenal amounts of money and really in reality it hasn't made a huge difference***

**Karen:** *It just doesn't get through*

**Jenny:** *We know that the governments are corrupt and we know that the governments are really rich but the people who the money should have gone to are really poor. So I think there is this scepticism about whether the money is getting to the right place*

**Paul:** *I think it's the scepticism cos you don't see it yourself and I'm sure that it has made a hell of a difference to a lot of people's lives but you just don't see it*

**Linda:** *It's like you'd almost like to see the money that you've paid what's that gonna go and buy, you almost like want to see it leaving from your account*

**Jenny:** *I wanna see a mud hut somewhere [laughs]*

**Linda:** *Yeah that's what you want to see the book that you bought for the children or whatever*

(Non-Fairtrade Focus Group 1)

Despite the fact that the Fairtrade movement relies heavily upon promotional strategies that aim to connect the consumer and producer in global chains of responsibility (for example through producer visits, and striking visual campaigns), non-Fairtrade supporters do not tend to notice or be involved in networks where this information is distributed. But they, too, want to *see* the direct connection that the Fairtrade supporters feel they get. Whilst Fairtrade supporters feel that they have the privileged position of seeing on some level how their cup of coffee makes a difference, these participants do not think it is possible to *see* or make a difference. They draw on their experiences of having donated to large charitable appeals like Comic Relief and Live Aid and use the lack of visibility of the impact of this action as a reason for not supporting Fairtrade. We ought to remember that the situation of the focus group may have exaggerated participants' tendency to reject Fairtrade as they searched for a consensus as a group of non-Fairtrade consumers, however we do find similar arguments in individual/household interviews, and therefore in keeping with Malpass et al's (2007b) 'scandalous suggestion', for now let us listen to these statements as reasonable and well-reasoned arguments from citizens who are voicing objections to how much they, as individuals, can be expected to be responsible for.

This leads us into the second main way non-Fairtraders challenged the suggestion that they ought to be using their individual consumption to alleviate poverty in the Third World. Unlike Fairtraders, non-Fairtraders had difficulty connecting their individual choices to a wider collective movement which meant that they were less likely to see consumption as an effective individual action.

**Steven:** I mean you also think you're just one person aren't you at the end of the day, and if I buy that [Fairtrade] that's not gonna help a farmer keep in business is it.

**Michael:** No if you don't buy it, it's still not gonna affect anything personally

**Joe:** No, he's only gonna lose like 10p or something for a packet of coffee, so I'm not actually gonna pay much more

**Kim:** But if a million people changed their minds with you, then I suppose it would

**Steven:** Yeah I know, I understand that... but then you only think of yourself don't you

**Kim:** Yes, I guess so.

**Steven:** The money doesn't filter down, cos it'll come into the country and the government will say well we'll have some of that, otherwise we'll shut you down and what do they do? That's the problem, you get people like Mugabe obviously who just runs their country, and all the money just rises to him basically

**Jesse:** That's right

**Michael:** Yes his empire's still going up and up

**Steven:** If the government can't make a difference then what difference can we make? That's the way you see it.

(Non-Fairtrade focus group 3)

In this extract it is interesting to see how Steven rejects the idea of consumer-citizenship. If the government is unable to tackle the corruption in African countries then what difference can he make by paying an extra 10 pence for a packet of coffee? Whilst Steven clearly has doubts about the capacity of the UK government to improve the situation for farmers, he does not see this as opening up new avenues for the expression of individual consumer power as the literature on consumer reflexivity tends to assume. Although Kim points out that if a million people switched to Fairtrade then this might have an impact, Steven has trouble imagining his individual consumption as part of a wider collective. As an individual, Steven is not empowered as a customer of transnational corporations nor does he have the ability or responsibility to tackle the problem of poverty in the corrupt developing world.

Rather than taking-up their responsibilities as citizen-consumers, individuals tended to argue that their consumption, which was often intimately tied to other personal commitments and practices, like parenthood for example (see last chapter), could not be expected to bear the level of responsibility that policy makers have placed upon it. In many cases, they called for some organised body, generally either supermarkets or governments, to act in order to improve the conditions for workers.

**Hazel:** But is it down to us to do Fairtrade or is it down to governments to insist on Fairtrade by companies

**Linda:** *Yeah if people don't know about it then obviously no-one's been educated enough about buying it, cos considering that not a lot of us knew about it and we're just a handful of us, you know what does everybody else not know about it.*

**Hazel:** *But why should two different chocolate bars 50-75 per cent exactly the same, one is Fairtrade and the other one isn't, so is it down to us to decide what's Fairtrade or shouldn't it just be somebody else deciding it... that we shouldn't do Fairtrade it shouldn't be down to the consumer it should be up to the governments to Fairtrade with other countries, not us buying one kind of chocolate over another.*

(Non-Fairtrade Focus Group 1)

We see here how Hazel argues for governmental action over individual consumer choices. Interestingly we find a parallel here between the attitudes of Fairtrade and non-Fairtrade supporters towards the role of the government in the alleviation of poverty in the developing world. Both call for greater governmental intervention and policy changes but whilst Fairtrade supporters believe that the amalgamated impact of their purchases will send a message that will cause a catalyst for this greater political change, non-Fairtrade supporters are arguing that governments and big businesses ought to act regardless of their preference for one type of chocolate over another. In a sense, the non-Fairtraders are supporting the removal of 'choice'. However, they are calling for the removal of choice by changing trading relations. This does not necessarily imply a switch to Fairtrade, which is a particular consumer label.

Like the respondents in Malpass et al's study, non-Fairtrade consumers articulated a "justifiable scepticism towards the whole frame of 'responsibility' that [was] being addressed to them" (Malpass et al, 2007b: 247). As the analysis of the Omnibus Survey suggested, those who do not believe that consumption is an effective way of alleviating poverty in the Third World are not necessarily uninterested and apathetic consumers but may be individuals who are expressing reasonable doubts about the practicality and legitimacy of altering their consumption practices in line with debates about global responsibility. It has often been the case that academic and policy discourses have assumed that consumers ought to be willing to acknowledge their responsibilities as citizens and have entered into the moral language of blame when individuals do not do so. However, as Malpass et al point out, what these discourses are often unable or unwilling to hear is the degree to which citizens (not consumers) are able to challenge and question these assumptions

(ibid: 253). If those who promote Fairtrade consumption are serious about attributing new responsibilities and powers to citizen-consumers a dialogue must be opened for these citizens to discuss, contest and contribute to the debate as citizens, rather than assuming that all individual consumers are equally willing and able to participate.

## **Conclusion**

In this chapter, I have looked at how individuals rate the effectiveness of Fairtrade consumption relative to other political and individual actions. It is surprising that so little research has been conducted in this area given the tendency for academics, campaigners and policy makers to understand Fairtrade consumption as a consequence of the conditions of late modern society marked by the decreasing faith in the power of national governments to control the business and trading practices of multi-national corporations. Although it has been argued that citizens are using the sphere of consumption in their search for new arenas of responsibility-taking, I have attempted to demonstrate that it is not necessarily the case that Fairtrade supporters use Fairtrade consumption instead of engaging in more traditional forms of political participation, but rather they use Fairtrade as an important extension to an already-existent repertoire of collective and individual campaigning activities. On the other hand, I have argued that those who are not committed Fairtrade supporters, despite the fact that they may be unknowingly consuming Fairtrade on a regular basis, are likely to question both the effectiveness of Fairtrade as an individual 'political' action and the assumption that they should be expected to be responsible for the alleviation of poverty through their consumption practices.

Although Fairtrade supporters and the Fairtrade movement tend to stress the non-exclusivity of Fairtrade consumption, we have seen that those who are most likely to believe that buying Fairtrade goods is an effective individual action do have distinctive socio-economic and demographic characteristics (women, older people and those in higher socio-economic groups) as well as attitudes of concern for poverty in developing countries. However, it does seem that

Fairtrade support cannot be explained by socio-demographic profile alone and that attitudes and opinions are equally important if we are to understand why someone might choose Fairtrade. It was interesting that income and education had little impact on the likelihood of prioritising Fairtrade but became significant when we looked at the likelihood of prioritising 'paying taxes' or believing you could have 'no impact' over Fairtrade consumption. In the last chapter we saw how Fairtrade supporters in Fairville suggested that those with high incomes were less likely to choose Fairtrade because they were unconcerned about poverty in the developing world. When controlling for levels of concern, we found some support for their characterisations of the 'poor Fairtrade consumer' because having a lower income was positively associated with the chances of choosing Fairtrade and negatively associated with support for paying taxes. Those who prioritised paying taxes over Fairtrade were more likely to believe that the government ought to be providing more aid to developing countries than working towards a fairer trading system suggesting that these people were rejecting the dominant discourses which have framed trade as a more important means of development than aid. On the other hand, those who prioritised Fairtrade held a consistent underlying belief in the power of trade (whether through individual action or through government regulation) rather than aid to make a difference to world poverty. The fact that individuals who are educated to degree-level (controlling for level of concern) were more likely than those less highly educated to support the rather conventional, and arguably passive choice of taxes as an 'effective' outcome, and that education was not important for Fairtrade support, raises doubts over those debates which have stressed the importance of greater education in order to mobilise individuals as citizen-consumers.

This chapter has found further support for the suggestion that those who are committed Fairtrade supporters have existing sympathies for the aims of the Fairtrade movement. Those who are unconcerned about poverty in the developing world and do not have an opinion on the role the government ought to be playing in the alleviation of global poverty are the most likely to believe that there is nothing they can do that will have any impact. Despite increasing calls to consumers to use

their consumption to enact their citizenly duties, the likelihood of believing you cannot have an impact has not significantly changed over the four years of the Omnibus Survey – in other words Fairtrade does not open up new opportunities and convince the apathetic to become engaged but rather converts the converted. Indeed, the likelihood of prioritising 'campaigning for change' over Fairtrade has decreased over time which suggests that those individuals who are already disposed to engage in individual or collective activism are the ones who are being persuaded to choose Fairtrade.

Whilst the likelihood of prioritising 'paying taxes' and 'campaigning for change' over Fairtrade decreased over the four year period of the Omnibus Survey offering some limited support for the suggestion that individuals are using the sphere of consumption to enact their citizenly responsibilities rather than traditional spheres of politics, we must interpret this finding cautiously for several reasons. Firstly, despite the fact that some individuals evaluated buying Fairtrade as an effective individual action, it is not necessarily the case that these individuals actually regularly purchased Fairtrade given the sales figures of Fairtrade products over the same period. Secondly, it may not be that those who are committed to Fairtrade will be buying Fairtrade instead of engaging in the traditional sphere of politics but more likely that they will be buying Fairtrade in addition to more traditional political actions. In the first stage of the Omnibus Survey analysis we saw that those who did not know what the UK government could do to alleviate global poverty were up to three times less likely to choose Fairtrade than those who thought the government ought to be working towards a fairer world trading system. It is those who believe the government continues to have an important role to play who choose Fairtrade. Indeed, in Fairville, a number of Fairtrade supporters were also members of political parties which suggests that they believe that consumers and governments must both play their part in the alleviation of global poverty.

It is clear from the comments of the committed Fairtrade supporters in Fairville that they do understand their Fairtrade consumption as a reflexive life-political (or citizen-consumer) action which will send a message to those in power to improve global trading relations. However, as we saw in Chapter 5, whilst practices of Fairtrade support require individuals to engage in the reflexive

monitoring of their action, we should be careful not to overestimate how far their consumption can be understood as a completely conscious choice. Their reflexivity emerges from their engagement in a whole range of existing practices and commitments. Rather than primarily engaging in Fairtrade consumption because they believe it will alleviate global poverty, we have seen how Fairtrade supporters often use Fairtrade in order to express their commitments and to feel that they are doing something personally to help. They are keenly aware of the sheer enormity of the problem of global poverty and they join with other like-minded individuals in order to collectively demonstrate the Fairtrade message. The power of the *individual* citizen-consumer is limited but Fairtrade supporters are able to conceptualise the aggregate impact of their purchases because of their involvement in a collective culture organised around local town networks. Fairtrade supporters know that in order for Fairtrade to be effective a large number of people will have to buy Fairtrade and even then they stress the importance of a continued need for campaigning around trade justice issues as well as political and economic intervention in the market. This is perhaps why the practice of being a Fairtrade supporter involves campaigning to shift systems of collective provision rather than trying to convince every individual that Fairtrade is an important and effective citizenly action.

We have seen that non-Fairtrade supporters tend to reject the concept of the citizen-consumer and the suggestion that individuals can have an impact on global poverty through their consumption practices. Whilst they may be able to see the moral value of Fairtrade consumption and recognise that it may be an effective action if enough people do it, they raised serious questions both over whether Fairtrade offered a superior alternative to already-existing efforts to reduce poverty in the developing world given the lack of global visibility and the corruption in Third World governments, and whether global citizenship was a burden their consumption ought to be expected to bear. Non-Fairtraders tended to believe that alleviating poverty was something that governments and global businesses ought to have responsibility for. Whilst some might hear this statement as an attempt by apathetic consumers to shift the blame from themselves onto others, this chapter has suggested that we ought to listen to these views because they are being made by citizens who are

challenging those (that is, FTF, Fairtrade supporters, supermarkets, local and national government, school, churches) who are defining how they ought to be using their 'vote'. As citizen-consumers, non-Fairtraders pointed out that their consumption practices were linked to their existing commitments and could not automatically be altered in line with the demands of the Fairtrade movement. They rejected the notion of consumer 'choice' as a meaningful tool for alleviating poverty in the developing world and yet regarded the concept of Fairtrade as worthy. On the one hand we might think that because non-Fairtraders have expressed a desire for governments and businesses to take responsibility for the alleviation of poverty, the shifting of systems of collective provision towards Fairtrade-only lines by an ever-increasing number of supermarkets, businesses and public buildings is answering their demands. On the other hand, however, we might argue that by shifting systems of collective provision, the opportunity is being removed for citizen-consumers to engage in a democratic debate about the effectiveness of the various ways of alleviating global poverty and a discussion about whose responsibility this important task should to fall to.

## **Conclusion: The meanings, moralities and politics of Fairtrade consumption**

Visiting Fairville today, I am struck by the achievements of a small group of dedicated and committed Fairtrade supporters whose efforts go largely unnoticed by the majority of visitors to the town. I recently attended a meeting at the Fairville Borough Council Offices and on observing that the tea, coffee and sugar I was served was Fairtrade, I asked several of my fellow-attendees whether they too had noticed this – they had not! My already-existing interest in, and awareness of, the Fairtrade movement and the activities of the town group in Fairville meant that I could hardly fail to notice that Fairtrade products were on offer at this meeting, whereas my colleagues just saw another cup of coffee and a welcome break from the all-day meeting. We have seen throughout this thesis that although Fairtrade towns and the wider Fairtrade movement have largely succeeded in bringing a selection of Fairtrade products into the everyday lives of ordinary citizens, they often do this without these citizens being aware of it and therefore regardless of citizens' opinions of Fairtrade.

This thesis has considered the implications of the distribution of Fairtrade products spanning beyond relatively niche social networks and spaces (like Traidcraft stalls at the local church and Oxfam shops) to mainstream retail outlets, public buildings and workplaces from the perspective of the consumer. Whilst great attention has been given to the implications of the mainstreaming project from the perspective of NGOs, producer groups and Fairtrade businesses (Raynolds and Murray, 2007), the impact this project has had upon the 'Fairtrade consumer' has remained a relatively under-researched area. Using a mixed-method approach, this thesis has considered how both Fairtrade supporters and those with limited commitment to the Fairtrade movement have responded to the attempts by a range of intermediary actors to govern them to use their consumption 'choices' in particular ways and has explored their diverging understandings of and engagements with Fairtrade goods. It provides a number of important challenges to the existing

literature on Fairtrade and ethical consumerism which has tended to assume that Fairtrade represents a new form of consumer activism guided by the activities of individual citizen-consumers who are voluntarily and reflexively using their consumption 'choices' to register their support for the plight of developing world producers. I will use this concluding chapter to summarise the key arguments presented in this thesis and to reflect upon the implications of these arguments for local and national Fairtrade networks and the institutions that promote and support Fairtrade consumption, as well as existing and future sociological debates on (ethical) consumption practices.

### **The dominant representation of the Fairtrade consumer**

Academics, policy makers and movement activists tend to represent the act of Fairtrade consumption as the action of an individual who is supportive of the Fairtrade movement's aims and who wants to 'vote' for fairer trade through their purchases. However, this thesis has demonstrated the importance of placing consumption acts into their social and cultural contexts and discovering how they are given meaning in individuals' everyday lives rather than assuming that the dominant representation and understandings of Fairtrade consumption are taken on by all those that use Fairtrade goods. By paying attention to the ways in which Fairtrade goods are distributed within the UK, it has become apparent that not everyone who consumes Fairtrade is likely to be doing so in order to make a political or moral statement.

We have seen how the FTF has overseen and employed a number of strategies to enable Fairtrade products to enter into mainstream markets. Supermarkets and chain-retail outlets, such as the Co-op, Sainsbury's and EAT, and manufacturers, such as Tate & Lyle and Cadbury's, have switched entire product ranges to Fairtrade-only options. Additionally, partly because of the actions of a dedicated network of Fairtrade supporters in towns, churches, school and universities, there are an ever-growing number of local and national government offices and workplaces that have changed their provisioning policies so that only Fairtrade teas and coffees are available. One of the key implications of Fairtrade products moving into mainstream markets is the detachment of any

necessary support for the Fairtrade movement from the consumption of Fairtrade products. Fairtrade consumption is now often occurring because of the changes in systems of collective provision at supermarkets and public spaces which restrict the 'choices' that individuals can actually make, pushing them towards Fairtrade options. Far from being the conscious and reflexive choice it is often assumed to be, the act of Fairtrade consumption for some people appears to be more the product of contextual constraint.

Despite the fact that Fairtrade is often consumed because it is all that is available or because a promotional offer makes it cheaper than alternatives, the dominant image of the 'Fairtrade consumer' within the public realm remains that of the individual citizen-consumer who buys Fairtrade in order to 'vote' for fairer trade. It was suggested that the construction of the 'Fairtrade consumer' as a citizen-consumer is the active achievement of the FTF and other advocacy organisations who can represent the various acts of Fairtrade consumption as indicative of their wide public support (Clarke et al 2007a). This dominant image is also appropriated by a range of intermediary institutions and actors (for example, government departments like DFID, and individual Fairtrade supporters) because it characterises Fairtrade consumption as an individual market choice arguably diminishing the need for greater state intervention and providing motivational resources to the dedicated Fairtrade supporter who can continue to campaign and try to convince others of the benefits of Fairtrade. However in reality, this dominant image always operates alongside the policies of small and large retailers and businesses as well as town councils, schools and churches, which are aimed at increasing the volume of Fairtrade sales through the removal of non-Fairtrade options.

The fact that the Fairtrade movement continues to represent the various acts of Fairtrade consumption as the voluntary actions of individuals who are enacting their citizenly duties towards Fairtrade farmers raises important questions about the legitimacy of this brand of consumer 'politics'. If Fairtrade consumption was not represented as the intentional 'vote' of thousands of individuals for the support of the Fairtrade movement aims, then the shifts towards Fairtrade-only

lines would perhaps not be seen as problematic. But in light of the discourses highlighting the political and citizenly nature of Fairtrade consumption 'choices', it seems that the wider Fairtrade movement (including all those institutions and individuals who publically support and campaign for Fairtrade), will need to seriously evaluate both how it continues to portray the multiple acts of Fairtrade consumption at the same time as it sets out to constrain the 'votes' of consumers.

### **Practices of Fairtrade consumption and support**

Whilst a number of Fairtrade consumption acts are unlikely to be indicative of support for the Fairtrade movement because of shifts in systems of collective provisioning, it is important not to lose sight of the fact that there remains a dedicated network of Fairtrade supporters who have played, and continue to play, a role in shifting these systems of collective provision and in actively promoting the Fairtrade movement. Within the UK, there is a huge network of Fairtrade towns (as well as churches, schools and universities) that are campaigning for the greater distribution of Fairtrade products in local places and retail outlets at the same time as creating a collective culture around the practices of Fairtrade support. Just as the Co-operative movement in the 19<sup>th</sup> Century sought to integrate the movement aims into the social life of the people (Gurney, 1996), so too are the local and national Fairtrade movement working to integrate the consumption and support of Fairtrade goods into the everyday lives of ordinary citizens. However, the Fairtrade message is not necessarily being heard by a broad spectrum of citizens because Fairtrade support is often concentrated in relatively niche social networks. For example, within Fairville, those who are most supportive and knowledgeable of the movement's aims are those from faith groups and social and political campaigning networks.

Whilst this thesis has been a tale about the changing nature of Fairtrade consumption, it has also been a tale about activities beyond consumption. Fairtrade supporters are individuals who are engaged in a range of collective activities, such as organising social events, like quiz nights, fashion shows, and coffee mornings under the banner of Fairtrade support, arranging public meetings and

exhibitions, and visiting supermarkets, local businesses and workplaces to encourage them to switch to Fairtrade. This collective practice is based around raising awareness of the Fairtrade movement in particular places and encouraging others to consume differently (with or without their knowledge). It therefore extends beyond individual consumption routines and moves into forms of civic participation. Indeed, we have seen that consuming Fairtrade is not necessarily a pre-requisite for being a Fairtrade supporter - you can be a Fairtrade supporter without always consuming Fairtrade and you can regularly consume Fairtrade without being a Fairtrade supporter.

Having said this, the majority of Fairtrade supporters do at some point knowingly use Fairtrade goods but it does not follow that we should understand these acts as the product of completely conscious and reflexive choices. Rather, we should view them in the context of the wider practice of Fairtrade support they are embedded within. It is engagement in this collective practice that orients Fairtrade supporters towards Fairtrade goods. The Fairtrade supporter does not meet Fairtrade for the first time in the supermarket and become immediately interested in consuming this product and promoting the Fairtrade movement. It was rather the case that they were already motivated to want to 'do their bit' and had developed an interest in Fairtrade through their involvement in a number of diverse social practices and traditions (for example, Co-operation, Christianity, and Environmentalism) which guided how they were able to understand and pursue the practice of Fairtrade support. The FTF and other national and international advocacy organisations (like Oxfam, Co-op, CAFOD, Christian Aid etc.) as well as local Fairtrade coalitions provide narrative and discursive resources, or 'doings and sayings', which Fairtrade supporters draw on in order to understand and give meaning to their daily practices, and to construct themselves as ethical subjects in their everyday lives. The practice of Fairtrade support calls upon and extends individuals' existing commitments and practices and in so doing becomes a unique practice and a source of identification in itself.

The career or trajectory of the Fairtrade supporter reveals that dispositions towards consumer goods are deeply entrenched and embodied within individuals as a product of their past experiences

and engagements. In this way, it was argued that the reflexivity of Fairtrade consumption must be understood as bounded (rather than free-floating or boundless) by both individuals' existing practices and by material, cultural and affective factors which are likely to constrain or enable individuals' understandings of and engagements with Fairtrade. We cannot assume that all individuals are equally interested and able to engage in life-political action through the consumption of Fairtrade goods because the cultural contexts that agents operate, and have operated, within – for example, the distinct local coalitions of Fairtrade support within towns as well as the national representation and distribution of Fairtrade products within the UK compared to elsewhere (Varul, 2009) – will provide them with unique and established ways of understanding, or 'doings and sayings', which enable them to reflect upon and alter their existing practices at the same time as constructing their self-identity. Because dispositions towards consumer goods are neither completely conscious nor reflexive, it seems that attempts to change people's consumer behaviour by simply providing them with more information about the importance of Fairtrade are likely to be unsuccessful.

The attention this thesis has given to the ways individuals have learnt about and integrated Fairtrade consumption and support into their everyday lives has important implications for future sociological studies of consumption. If orientations towards goods are developed in the course of pursuing our commitments to organised social practices, rather than because of our personal choices, it seems that more attention must be given to how individuals are recruited to social practices which enable these dispositions to develop in the first place. Whilst I have suggested that involvement in practices of Co-operation or Christianity seemed to make the individuals in this study more likely to become interested in Fairtrade, it seems just as likely that there exist a number of Co-operators and Christians who engage in the same adjacent practices but who have not become Fairtrade supporters. Although examining the career of the Fairtrade supporter reveals the internal differentiation of Fairtrade support and the diverse routes into and understandings and performance of this practice, it does not give enough attention to past experiences beyond the confines of the

particular social practice in question. A more in-depth biographical or life-history approach could perhaps be employed to provide insights into where individuals' dispositions and commitments towards particular social practices emerge from which in turn will enable us to better understand the social differentiation of consumption.

Additionally, the attention given to the importance of place in enabling particular social practices to emerge could be usefully extended in future studies. We have seen how the creation of a collective culture and distinct coalitions of interest around practices of Fairtrade support within towns are often the product of existing interests and the longer history of particular places. Within Fairville, the strong Co-operative and TUC movements and active faith-based networks, as well as the large number of chain-retail stores and limited support from the local council, had an important impact on the types of mobilisation and campaigning that could take place. This unique combination of business, retail outlets and institutions, with differing levels of commitment to the Fairtrade movement, within particular towns is likely to mean that each Fairtrade town network will look slightly different. Fairtrade supporters create an environment in which their own practices can flourish and in so doing they have an impact upon the availability of Fairtrade products within towns, workplaces and schools. This suggests that future studies of consumer behaviour ought to pay close attention to local contexts, considering the opportunities and constraints these contexts create for consumers 'in-place' to engage in particular types of consuming activity.

### **Outsiders to the practice**

The voice from the 'ordinary consumer' or non-Fairtrade supporter has been given a special place within this thesis because these individuals are often forgotten in accounts of Fairtrade consumption. As Fairtrade has been promoted by a number of key institutions within society – for example local and national government departments and buildings, schools, churches and faith networks, chain-retail outlets and supermarkets, manufacturers and the media – ordinary consumers with no real commitment to the Fairtrade movement are increasingly being encouraged to alter their

consumption routines according to Fairtrade principles. Fairtrade consumption is represented as an immediate action that everyone can and should participate in because it claims to be able to alleviate poverty and suffering in the developing world and seems to require very little of the individual beyond switching to a sometimes more expensive brand of consumer good. However, this simple message assumes that our consumption routines are both infinitely malleable in the light of new information and are the product of completely conscious and unconstrained choices as well as a suitable arena in which to honour our responsibilities to global others.

Through applying a theory of practice approach to understand the consumer behaviour of Fairtrade supporters it was demonstrated that our orientations towards consumer goods emerge through our engagement in organised practices. It follows from this that those who are outsiders to the practice of Fairtrade support are unlikely to share the same understandings of and interests in Fairtrade goods. Non-Fairtrade supporters have a range of interests and are involved in a multitude of social practices – just like Fairtrade supporters – and these can work to guide them away from the Fairtrade consumer label because it is not relevant to their existing commitments and concerns. Importantly, it was not the case that these individuals were ‘unethical’ consumers or uninterested in issues affecting the developing world but rather that their consumption was informed by different logics and moralities which placed an emphasis on the care of family members and friends, animal welfare or self-preservation and was therefore not understood as an arena for the expression of the care for distant others.

The fact that non-Fairtrade supporters perceived there to be clear socio-economic, cultural and moral boundaries between themselves and Fairtrade consumers raises some important questions about the validity of those discourses that are attempting to govern them towards Fairtrade. Because Fairtrade consumption is supported by a number of powerful institutions within society, individuals sense that their ‘choice’ to consume or not consume Fairtrade is subject to an evaluative judgement regarding which ways of life and definitions of morality are worth valuing. This inevitably creates power struggles within the social field as individuals attempt to justify why they are

worthy of recognition and others are not. We saw how non-Fairtrade supporters challenged the 'modes of subjection' (Heckman, 1995) of Fairtrade moral discourses with varying degrees of defensiveness often by appealing to the local contexts that have shaped their moral dispositions (for example, having to feed a family on limited finances) in order to construct themselves as alternative moral subjects and to justify their inaction. Evaluations of Fairtrade consumption by non-Fairtraders revealed issues of social inequality – because of the often higher price of certain Fairtrade goods – and therefore the differential levels of access to valued resources. This suggests that there is a continued need to pay attention to classed patterns of cultural consumption and to explore in greater depth how those who are denied access to valued resources attempt to construct themselves as respectable subjects in different ways.

It has been demonstrated that the relationship between social class and Fairtrade consumption is a complicated one because those who are outsiders to the practices of Fairtrade support tend to believe this activity is differentiated by social class and income, whereas those inside the practice tend to deny its relevance. Whilst, some Fairtrade supporters claims to ordinariness and use of symbolic boundaries unwittingly revealed their distance from those in lower class positions and the continued existence of moralising discourses towards the practices of those in lower class groups, the fact that the practice of Fairtrade support is organised around encouraging others to use Fairtrade by appealing to the all-inclusive figure of the consumer suggests that Fairtraders recognise the value of Fairtrade consumption regardless of who carries it out. Similarly, although, non-Fairtrade supporters rejected Fairtrade consumption because they believed it to be too expensive or perceived that it was only carried out by those who have particular interests (for example, concern for the environment or Organic food) and occupy middle-class positions, they did not deny the moral value of Fairtrade consumption outright. That is, they did not "refuse what they were refused" (Bourdieu, 1984: 471). By listening to individuals' 'lay normativities' (Sayer, 2005a) we have seen how the morality of Fairtrade consumption is often valued in itself regardless of any external rewards it may bring to the consumer. Because of the prevalence of liberal-humanist discourses, and

an awareness of the reciprocal nature of social relations, non-Fairtraders often did agree that they ought to be supportive of the Fairtrade movement because this was something that is working towards helping the most disadvantaged farmers in the world whose labour they rely on for their daily comfort. However, this recognition rarely translated into a commitment towards (actively/knowingly) consuming Fairtrade goods on a regular basis because these individuals' consumption was guided by other practices and because of a 'justifiable scepticism' about the effectiveness of consuming Fairtrade in order to alleviate poverty in the developing world.

It is important to remember that multiple moralities exist around consumption and Fairtrade is just one of the many ways of constructing oneself as an ethical or responsible consumer. Ethical and sustainable consumption campaigns will always compete with those 'ordinarily ethical' moralities of consumption that are guided by our commitment to close family and friends (Barnett, 2005b). In recent years, we have seen a number of ethical and moral consumption campaigns around issues of sustainable living and the need to adopt more environmentally friendly forms of transport and energy use in order to save the planet, as well as healthy living programmes which are aimed at tackling problems of obesity and poor health. Because these campaigns are bringing people's ways of life and consumption practices under greater scrutiny in the name of distinct moral and political projects, it is essential to listen to the normative dimensions of individuals' responses to these campaigns. Those who are responsible for implementing ethical and sustainable consumption campaigns, and indeed future studies exploring these campaigns, will need to take account of people's 'lay normativities' – those everyday rationales which matter greatly to actors concerning "what is of value, how to live, what is worth striving for and what is not" (Sayer, 2005a: 6) – if they are to have any success in encouraging people to switch to more sustainable lifestyles or if they are to understand what motivates individuals towards different consumer goods and practices.

If the Fairtrade movement wishes to encourage individuals towards Fairtrade options, it seems it will have to find a way to connect Fairtrade concerns with the ordinarily ethical nature of individuals' existing consumption routines. For example, in chapter six we saw how Amanda briefly

became more interested in Fairtrade when it connected to her moral practices of parenthood. Whilst shifting systems of collective provision on one level seems to answer this requirement by removing the need for individuals to question or alter their existing practices, it seems unlikely that it will generate strong feelings of commitment towards the Fairtrade movement or engagement in the wider practices of Fairtrade support. Rather, it appears to circumvent the need to connect individuals' everyday rationales and ideas about 'what is worth valuing' with the movement aims and instead enforce a particular vision of the morality of consumption which might be quite legitimate if Fairtrade consumption is in fact an effective way of alleviating poverty in the developing world.

### **The politics of Fairtrade consumption**

Whilst it is often suggested that the Fairtrade movement represents a new brand of consumer politics made possible because of the global organisation of trading relationships and a general distrust of the power of traditional political institutions to improve the lives of individuals within the developing world, this thesis has argued that using the arena of consumption in order to raise awareness of, and have an impact upon, moral and political projects is not new. Through an examination of four consumer movements in the 18<sup>th</sup> to 20<sup>th</sup> centuries, we have seen how coalitions of interested groups have come together at different periods in history in order to mobilise a particular vision of consumer power in order to generate support for their movement aims and/or to influence governmental policy. In this way, the Fairtrade consumer movement does not represent a novel form of consumer politics but rather a continuation of a long history of attempts to use the sphere of consumption as a tool to exercise political power. Despite the fact that earlier consumer movements tend to be dismissed in existing attempts to understand Fairtrade consumption, this thesis has suggested that the Fairtrade movement shares several important continuities with earlier movements. Just like those historical consumer movements that preceded it, the Fairtrade movement is the product of a distinct partnership – between developmental charities, faith groups, social and political campaigning networks and alternative trading

organisations – who together have constructed an image of the ‘citizen-consumer’. The Fairtrade ‘citizen-consumer’ is an individual who votes with their pocket for fairer trading relationships and who engages with the Fairtrade movement because of a lack of trust in the ‘traditional’ political system and an awareness that as a ‘consumer’ in a world occupied by global corporations they now have the power to make a difference. And, just like earlier consumer movements that constructed a figure of the consumer in line with their campaign language and movement aims, there exists a gap between this dominant representation of the Fairtrade consumer and the ways that individuals, who knowingly or unknowingly use Fairtrade products, understand the effectiveness of their individual actions.

As the analysis of the National Omnibus Survey revealed, Fairtrade consumption tends to be understood as an effective individual action by a group of individuals who have distinctive characteristics. Other things being equal, those in higher socio-economic groups, older age categories, women and those who believed the government ought to be working towards a fairer world trading system were the most likely to prioritise buying Fairtrade goods. Unlike those accounts which have suggested that individuals are turning away from traditional politics and using the arena of consumption as an alternative way of expressing their ‘vote’, those who prioritised Fairtrade were not individuals who displayed a lack of interest in the role of the UK government in the alleviation of global poverty but were individuals who believed there remains a role for both the government and consumers to play. Indeed, Fairtrade supporters within Fairville seemed to use Fairtrade consumption and campaigning as an addition to an existing repertoire of political and moral actions – like writing to MPs, going on demonstration marches, signing petitions, joining political parties and campaigning groups and donating to charity – rather than as a substitute. On the other hand, those who felt there was no role the government could play to alleviate global poverty were less likely to prioritise Fairtrade and more likely to believe there was nothing they could individually do. This, along with the finding that the number of people who felt they could have ‘no impact’ remained relatively stable over the four years of the Omnibus Survey whilst those

who had prioritised 'campaigning for change' decreased over the four years relative to Fairtrade consumption, suggests that Fairtrade is not opening up new opportunities for the uninterested to become engaged, but rather converts the converted.

Whilst Fairtrade supporters in Fairville tended to understand their decision to consume Fairtrade in a similar way to how the Fairtrade movement has constructed their image of the citizen-consumer – that is, as an important way of registering their support for producers in the Third World and a way of demonstrating their desire for greater trade justice – it is important to note that these Fairtrade supporters were engaged in a range of activities beyond consuming differently and tended to imagine the amalgamated impact of their collective purchases rather than the power of the individual citizen-consumer . This is important because non-Fairtraders tended to lack this concept of collective action and raised serious questions about the effectiveness of *individual* consumption choices as a means of alleviating poverty in the developing world. They felt that because of the ingrained injustices within our global trading system (corrupt Third World governments, the organisation of world trade and the limited effect of existing charitable efforts like Live Aid) the impact of them consuming a different cup of coffee was likely to be negligible. Whilst it has generally been the practice to attribute moral failings and blame to those who do not consume Fairtrade, I have argued that we should not understand non-Fairtrade supporters as apathetic and uninterested individuals but rather as individuals who are capable of articulating reasonable and well-reasoned arguments, or as Malpass et al (2008) call it a 'justifiable scepticism', about the effectiveness of Fairtrade consumption in the light of their understandings of existing social structures and global conditions.

Although Fairtrade supporters were equally aware of the problems of corruption within the Third World and the limited effect of Fairtrade consumption as a means of tackling the huge issue of global poverty, their involvement in Fairtrade town networks and access to Fairtrade resources provided them with some 'proof' of the effectiveness of Fairtrade in improving the lives of Fairtrade producers as well as working to reassure them that they are part of a collective of like-minded

individuals who are working together for the same ends. Even though they were aware of the limited impact of Fairtrade on a global scale and the continued need for the efforts from governments and charities, they consumed Fairtrade as a way of expressing their commitments and demonstrating to themselves and others that they are making a difference, even if only to a relatively small proportion of world producers.

In light of the perspectives from non-Fairtrade supporters and the awareness from Fairtrade supporters that Fairtrade consumption on its own was unlikely to have a great effect upon global poverty, it seems important to return to a consideration of the legitimacy of those moral discourses that are attempting to govern individuals towards Fairtrade options and the policies of large and small retailers, government offices and buildings, schools, churches and manufacturers who are shifting systems of collective provision to Fairtrade-only options. If Fairtrade consumption is an effective individual action and there is agreement amongst 'ordinary citizens' and academic and policy-driven studies that the Fairtrade model of trade is the best way to tackle the problem of global poverty then it seems reasonable for these institutions to take the decision to stock only Fairtrade-items (as they are currently doing in certain commodity-lines). However, if the Fairtrade model is not the most effective, or indeed the only way, as it is increasingly being represented as, of tackling global poverty then the monopoly that the Fairtrade movement is carving for itself needs to be seriously questioned. It should not be forgotten that Fairtrade is only one of the consumer labels on the market with Rainforest Alliance and Utz Certified offering alternative approaches to sustainable development, as well as numerous other projects (like those led by the Speciality Coffee Association of Europe/America, and the 'Cup of Excellence') that are aimed to improve the prices that producers receive for their crop. All these initiatives are attempting to help farmers trade their way out of poverty – and yet these models have not received the government and institutional endorsement that the Fairtrade model has in the UK.

Academic and policy-driven studies looking at the effects of Fairtrade on producer groups have generally been divided about the merits of this model (Jaffee, 2007; Kruger & Toit, 2007; Lyon,

2006; Riedl, 2007; Renard & Perez-Grovas, 2007). For example, Lyon, in her study of a Fairtrade cooperative in Guatemala, points out that the earnings farmers receive from Fairtrade enable them to "maintain their families but not necessarily get ahead" (Lyon, 2006: 458). Kruger and Toit, meanwhile, raise questions about the levels of producer participation and the assumption that Fairtrade can operate a one-size fits all approach in the context of diverse political, social, cultural and economic climates. The issue of child labour represents an important sticking point because businesses in many countries have to rely on the labour of children which automatically bars them from entering into a Fairtrade scheme. Indeed, Baland and Duprez (2009) point out that those businesses that do obtain labels certifying the absence of child labour often end up producing a displacement effect whereby adult workers replace children in the export sector while children replace adults in the domestic sector. Jaffee suggests that the involvement of transnational corporations is threatening the principles of the Fairtrade model because these organisations, unlike those more dedicated to the movement aims (like Cafédirect and Divine), are not really committed to changing their practices but use Fairtrade in order to improve their public image. Renard and Perez-Grovas argue, moreover, that the involvement of transnational corporations in the Fairtrade scheme has generated changes in the approaches of the national initiatives (like the FTF and Max Havelaar) and FLO who are pursuing a more market-oriented approach to Fairtrade in order to meet the demand for an increasing volume of Fairtrade goods which is to the detriment of small producers. Even those within the Fairtrade movement sometimes feel that what they are doing does not go far enough:

"One of our biggest challenges is that fair trade... isn't particularly fair. It's much better, and it can be very powerful relative to what the alternative is – business as usual. But if I look at the way that I live, and the way a coffee farmer lives in Nicaragua, say – what's fair about their life compared to my life? How can you say this is *fair* trade, almost as if it's enough?" (Jonathan Rosenthal, Head of a Fairtrade fruit company, Oké, cited in Jaffee, 2007: 262)

If Fairtrade is not 'fair enough' then it seems that there will need to be a more radical approach to the pursuit of trade justice than is currently offered in the existing model of Fairtrade.

However, the attention placed upon encouraging individuals to use more Fairtrade and the switches to Fairtrade-only product lines seems to suggest that the incredibly complicated and difficult issues facing any attempt to improve the access of disadvantaged individuals to the means of survival through trade, are being tackled by the Fairtrade movement (with all of its inherent tensions) with no need to try any further. The public debate and exploration of what actions ought to be taken by consumers and governments in the developed world and whose responsibility this enormous task should fall to is being closed-off as citizen-consumers' 'votes' are being counted without them necessarily being aware that they were taking part in a ballot in the first place.

## APPENDICES

## **Appendix 1: Interviewees in Fairville**

### **Deriving the National Statistics Standard Economic Classification of respondents**

The National Statistics Standard Economic Classification (NS-SEC) adopts the 'Goldthorpe Schema' which "is conceptually clear, and has been reasonably validated both in criterion terms as a measure and in construct terms as a good predictor of health and educational outcomes" (ONS, 2004b: 2). The NS-SEC differentiates positions within labour markets and production units in terms of their typical 'employment relations' and also separately identifies categories for large employers, small employers and the self-employed in its analytical and operational versions (*ibid*: 2-3). It improves upon the Goldthorpe schema in terms of "more thorough validation" (*ibid*: 2). In order to derive an individual's NS-SEC, I have used the Standard Occupational Classification structure (SOC 2000) (see Table 1).

**Table 1: Standard Occupational Classification 2000 (SOC2000)**  
**Summary of Structure**

- 1 Managers and Senior Officials
- 2 Professional Occupations
- 3 Associate Professional and Technical Occupations
- 4 Administrative and Secretarial Occupations
- 5 Skilled Trades Occupations
- 6 Personal Service Occupations
- 7 Sales and Customer Service Occupations
- 8 Process, Plant and Machine Operatives
- 9 Elementary Occupations

Whilst the Full method of the derivation of NS-SEC usually requires 3 pieces of information (the SOC2000 unit group, employment status and the size of organisation), I was unable to accurately gather detailed information from each respondent on their employment status or size of the organisation they worked for. I therefore adopted the Simplified method of just the SOC 2000 unit

group in the majority of cases unless I had additional information. The Simplified method correctly allocates 83 per cent of cases compared to the Full method. (ONS, 2004a: 12)

## **Focus Group Participants**

### **Non-Fairtrade Focus Group 1**

Chocolate discussion, conducted 27<sup>th</sup> February 2008 at 7pm

Pre-existing friendship group

- **Karen:** White British Female,<sup>43</sup> aged 33, Degree in Business Science, Works full-time as Business Modeller (Business professional; SOC2000 unit group 3), no children, Mainly shops at Tesco's.
- **Hazel:** White British Female, aged 30, Educated to A-level, Works full-time as Business Analyst (Business professional; SOC2000 unit group 3), no children, Mainly shops at Sainsbury's.
- **Linda:** White British Female, aged 27, Roman Catholic, Educated to NVQ level 3, Works full-time as Hairdresser and Salon Manager (Manager in service Industry; SOC2000 unit group 1), no children, Mainly shops at Tesco (Married to Mark).
- **Mark:** White British Male, aged 29, Educated to GCSE-level, Works full-time as Production Control Manager (Warehouse Manager, SOC2000 unit group 1), no children, Mainly shops at Tesco (Married to Linda).
- **Jenny:** White British Female, aged 27, Educated to A-level, Works full-time as an Operations Manager (Business Professional, SOC2000 unit group 3), no children, Mainly shops at Sainsbury's (co-habiting with Paul)

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<sup>43</sup> All Focus group participants were given a short questionnaire to fill out at the beginning of the session. Ethnic group was self-defined from the following options - White British, Any other White background, Mixed - White and Black Caribbean, Mixed - White and Black African, Mixed - White and Asian, Any other Mixed background, Asian or Asian British – Indian, Asian or Asian British – Pakistani, Asian or Asian British – Bangladeshi, Asian or Asian British - Any other Asian background, Black or Black British - Black Caribbean, Black or Black British - Black African, Black or Black British - Any other Black background, Chinese, Any other (please define).

- **Paul:** White British Male, aged 32, Educated to A-level, Works full-time as IT Systems Analyst (IT Professional, SOC2000 unit group 3), no children, Mainly shops at M&S (co-habiting with Jenny)
- **Lisa:** White British Female, aged 27, Educated to A-level, works part-time as a Freelance Secretary (Secretarial Occupation, SOC2000 unit group 4), 1 dependent child under 5 years, Mainly Shops at Tesco and Sainsbury's.

### **Non-Fairtrade Focus Group 2**

Coffee discussion, conducted 29<sup>th</sup> February 2008 at 10am

Pre-existing friendship group

- **Lindsay:** White British Female, aged 45, Educated to A-Level, Full-time mum, used to work as a Secretary (Secretarial Occupation, SOC2000 unit group 4), 2 dependent children, Mainly shops at Asda.
- **Kelly:** White British Female, aged 35, Educated to NVQ-level 2, Full-time mum, used to work as a chef (Skilled trade, SOC2000 unit group 5), 3 dependent children, Mainly shops at Asda and Tesco.
- **Fran:** White British Female, aged 45, Educated to A-Level, Full-time mum, used to work as a chef (Skilled trade, SOC2000 unit group 5), 5 dependent children, Mainly shops at Asda and Morrison's.
- **Danielle:** White British Female, aged 33, Educated to NVQ-level 2 in Care, Full-time mum, used to work as a carer (Personal Service Occupation, SOC2000 unit group 6), 2 dependent children, Mainly shops at Asda.
- **Ling:** Chinese Female, aged 36, Educated to NVQ-level, Full-time mum, Used to work in Catering (Skilled trade, SOC2000 unit group 5), 3 dependent children, Mainly shops at Tesco.

- **Amanda:** White British Female, aged 33, no formal educational qualifications, Full-time mum, used to work as a Sales assistant (Sales Occupation, SOC2000 unit group 7), 1 dependent child, Mainly shops at Asda.

### **Non-Fairtrade Focus Group 3**

Coffee discussion, conducted 6<sup>th</sup> March 2008 at 7pm

Group composed of strangers and pre-existing friendship groups

- **Kim:** South African Female, aged 40, Pentecostal Christian, Educated to Degree-level, Works full-time as a Social Worker (Public Service Professional, SOC2000 unit group 2), Mainly shops at Asda.
- **Jesse:** White British Female, aged 64, no formal educational qualifications, Retired but used to be a deputy Warden (Elementary Service Occupation, SOC2000 unit group 9), Mainly Shops at Tesco.
- **Betty:** White British Female, aged 67, C of E Religion, no formal educational qualifications, Retired but used to be a school cook (Skilled trade, SOC2000 unit group 5), Mainly Shops at Asda and Tesco.
- **Grace:** White British Female, aged 69, C of E Religion, no formal educational qualifications, Retired but used to work as a Shop assistant (Sales Occupation, SOC2000 unit group 7), Mainly shops at Asda and Tesco.
- **Beattie:** White British Female, aged 74, C of E Religion, no formal educational qualifications, Retired but used to work as a Shop assistant (Sales Occupation, SOC2000 unit group 7), Mainly shops at Asda and Tesco.
- **Joe:** Black or Black British – any other Black Background, Male , aged 39, Educated to A-level, Works full-time as a gas Engineer (Skilled Trade Occupation, SOC2000 unit group 5), 3 dependent children, Mainly shops at Tesco.

- **Michael:** White British Male, aged 37, Educated to NVQ level, Works full-time as a Carpenter (Skilled Trade Occupation, SOC2000 unit group 5), 2 dependent children, Mainly shops at Tesco.
- **Ediz:** Turkish Male, aged 34, Educated to NVQ level, Works full-time as a Builder (Skilled Trade Occupation, SOC2000 unit group 5), 1 dependent child, Mainly shops at Tesco.
- **Steven:** White British Male, aged 33, Educated to Degree-level, Works full time as Local Council Officer (Public Service professional, SOC2000 unit group 2), Mainly shops at Sainsbury's.

#### **Non-Fairtrade Focus Group 4**

Chocolate discussion, conducted 8<sup>th</sup> March at 10am

Group composed of strangers

- **Vadiraj:** Asian or Asian British - Indian Male, aged 39, Educated to A-level, Works full-time as a Managing Director (Manager, SOC2000 unit group 1), Mainly shops at Sainsbury's.
- **Nicole:** White British Female, aged 42, Anglican Christian, Educated to A-level, Full-time mum used to work as an Administrative Assistant (Administrative Occupation, SOC2000 unit group 4), 5 dependent children, Mainly shops at Sainsbury's and Asda.
- **Reshma:** Asian or Asian British - Indian Female, aged 45, Educated to A-level, Works part-time in a clerical position at the local council (Administrative Occupation, SOC2000 unit group 4), Mainly shops at Sainsbury's.
- **Emma:** White British Female, aged 37, C of E Religion, Educated to A-levels, currently not working, used to be an Insurance Underwriter (Business professional, SOC2000 unit group 3), Mainly shops at Sainsbury's and Asda.
- **Dave:** White British Male, aged 21, Educated to NVQ Level 1, currently unemployed, used to work in a Fish & Chip Shop (Sales Occupation, SOC2000 unit group 7), Mainly shops at Tesco's and Sainsbury's.

- **Karl:** White British Male, aged 26, Educated to Degree-level, Works full-time as an IT systems professional (Information Professional, SOC2000 unit group 2), Mainly shops in Sainsbury's.
- **Diane:** White British Female, aged 25, Educated to Degree-level, Works full as an Academic Officer (Business Professional, SOC2000 unit group 3), Mainly shops in Sainsbury's.
- **Derek:** White British Male, aged 27, Educated to Degree-level, Works full-time a marketing professional (Professional occupation, SOC2000 unit group 2), Mainly shops in Sainsbury's and Tesco.

### **Fairtrade Focus Group 1**

Conducted January 17<sup>th</sup> 2008 at 4pm

Group composed of Co-operative members

- **Mark:** White British Male, aged 63, C of E Religion, Holds an Institute of Bankers Certificate, Works part-time as a Member Relations Officer (Business Professional, SOC2000 unit group 3).
- **Fay:** White British Female, aged 58, Educated to Degree-level, Works full-time as an Administrator (Administrative Occupation, SOC2000 unit group 4).
- **Joan:** White British Female, aged 61, Educated to GCSE-level, Retired but used to work as an Ambulance Technician (Healthcare Service Occupation, SOC2000 unit group 6).
- **Matt:** White British Male, aged 67, Educated to Degree-level, Works part-time as an Education Consultant (Teaching Professional, SOC2000 unit group 2).
- **Oliver:** White British Male, aged 65, Educated to Higher Degree-level, Retired used to work as a Senior Local Civil Servant (Senior Official, SOC2000 unit group 1).
- **Carol:** White British Female, aged 58, Educated to Degree-level, Works part-time as an Administrator for a charity (Administrative Occupation, SOC2000 unit group 4).

### **Fairtrade Focus Group 2**

Conducted 26<sup>th</sup> March 2008 at 10am

Group composed of members of Fairtrade group at the university in Fairville

- **Jane:** White British Female, aged 36, Educated to Degree-level, Works full-time as an Administrator (Administrative Occupation, SOC2000 unit group 4), Mainly shops at Tesco.
- **Monica:** White British Female, aged 32, Educated to Degree-level, Works full-time as an Environmental Sustainability Officer (Administrative Occupation, SOC2000 unit group 4), Mainly shops at Tesco or Asda.
- **Keith:** White British Male, aged 50, C of E Religion, Educated to Degree-level, Works full-time as a University Chaplain (Public Service Professional, SOC2000 unit group 2), Mainly shops at Sainsbury's or Tesco.
- **Jackie:** White British Female, aged 51, Educated to Degree-level, Works full-time as Student Welfare Officer (Administrative Occupation, SOC2000 unit group 4), Mainly shops at Tesco and local farmer's market.

### **Fairtrade Focus Group 3**

Conducted April 24<sup>th</sup> 2008 at 7pm

Group composed on non-active members of the FFAG

- **Sandra:** White British Female, aged 61, Quaker, Educated to BTEC-level, Retired but used to be Ward Clerk at Psychiatric Hospital (Administrative Occupation, SOC2000 unit group 4), Avoids supermarkets, shops at Co-op and Suma Cooperative.
- **Tim:** White British Male, aged 35, Educated to Degree-level, Works full-time as a Resources Officer in the Library (Administrative Occupation, SOC2000 unit group 4), Mainly shops at Tesco or the local market.

- **Peter:** White British Male, aged 59, Educated to Degree-level, Retired but used to work as a Supervisor at a car manufacturers (Managerial Occupation, SOC2000 unit group 1), Mainly shops at Sainsbury's (Married to Joan).
- **Joan:** White British Female, aged 69, Educated to Degree-level, Works part-time as a teacher (Teaching professional, SOC2000 unit group 2), Mainly shops at Sainsbury's (Married to Peter).
- **Kathy:** White British Female, aged 46, Educated to NVQ level, Works full-time as a Sales assistant (Sales Occupation, SOC2000 unit group 7), 1 dependent child, Mainly shops at Tesco or Sainsbury's.
- **Milena:** Mexican Female, aged 31, Educated to Degree-level, Full-time mum, used to work as an Interpreter (Professional Occupation, SOC2000 unit group 2), 1 dependent child, Mainly shops at Tesco.
- **Linda:** White British Female, aged 66, Educated to NVQ level, Retired but used to work as a Sales assistant (Sales Occupation, SOC2000 unit group 7), Volunteers at a Day Centre, Mainly shops at Tesco or the local market.

#### **Fairtrade Focus Group 4**

Conducted 29<sup>th</sup> April 2008 at 7pm

Group composed of active members of the FFAG

- **Marcus:** White British Male, aged 53, Educated to Degree-level, Works full-time as Arts manager for the Council and Freelance writer (Artistic Occupation, SOC2000 unit group 3), Mainly shops at Waitrose.
- **Val:** White British Female, aged 57, Christian, Educated to Degree-level, Not working at present but used to be an Executive Officer in the Civil Service (Senior manager, SOC2000 unit group 1), Mainly shops at Tesco or Sainsbury's or the Co-op (Married to Patrick).

- **Alfred:** White British Male, aged 70, No formal Educational Qualifications, Retired but used to be a Catering Manager (Managerial role, SOC2000 unit group 1), Mainly shops at local Co-op.
- **Paul:** White British Male, aged 54, Educated to Degree-level, Works full-time as a Science Teacher (Teaching professional, SOC2000 unit group 2), Mainly shops at Asda or Sainsbury's.
- **Joanne:** White British Female, aged 41, Christian, Educated to Degree-level, Works full-time as a Librarian (Professional Occupation, SOC2000 unit group 1), Mainly shops at Sainsbury's.
- **Nick:** White British Male, aged 45, Roman Catholic, Educated to Degree-level, Works full-time as a Manager of a drink Company (Managerial professional, SOC2000 unit group 1), Mainly shops at Co-op or Tesco.
- **Patrick:** White British Male, aged 64, Christian, Educated to PhD-level, Works part-time as a University Lecturer (Teaching professional, SOC2000 unit group 2), Mainly shops at Tesco or Sainsbury's or the Co-op (Married to Val).

### **Key Community Representatives Focus Group**

Conducted 16<sup>th</sup> April 2008 at 10am

- **Elaine:** Local Conservative Party Chairperson
- **Lyn:** Representative from the Women's Institute
- **Michelle:** Representative from the Cathedral attending on behalf of the Bishop
- **Ben:** Local Liberal Democrat Candidate
- **Peter:** Local Labour and Co-op Party Political Advisor
- **Beth:** Local Green Party Candidate

## **Individual/Household Interviewees**

### **Fairtrade Supporters**

✿ **Alfred** is a retired 70- year old man who does his shopping at the Co-op 'as a matter of principle'. For most of his working life, he worked as a Chef on ocean cruise liners, and he became a Catering manager for the NHS for several years before he retired (Skilled trade, SOC2000 unit group 4; Managerial role, SOC2000 unit group 1). He has been a key driver of the Fairville Fairtrade campaign; he organised the first meeting of the FFAG and has been the secretary for the group ever since. He is an active member of the TUC and the Co-op and he learnt about Fairtrade at a TUC event. Buying Fairtrade is understood by him as a 'continuation and extension' of his already-existing strong principles of using the Co-op for all of his goods. His wife, **June** says he sometimes buys Fairtrade even if he doesn't like it, whereas she will not. June is a 76-year old retired school teacher (Teaching professional, SOC2000 unit group 2). June learnt about Fairtrade through Alfred and from a friend who had given her a jar of Fairtrade coffee. She is a member of the FFAG and is proud that Fairville is a Fairtrade town. She is also an active member of the local UNICEF group which she says is about 'thinking of others' and thinks her support of Fairtrade is about a similar thing. (Interviews conducted separately on 6<sup>th</sup> June 2008)

✿ **Claire** and **John** are married, in their mid-30s, and have two dependent children (a girl aged four and a boy aged seven). Claire is a full-time mum but used to work as a teacher (Teaching professional, SOC2000 unit group 2) and John works full-time as an IT professional (Professional occupation, SOC2000 unit group 2) and they are both educated to degree-level. Claire and John are not members of the FFAG but have been Fairtrade supporters for at least nine years. They learnt about Fairtrade through John's involvement with the local Oxfam group. John is also a member of the World Development Movement and regularly sends campaign postcards to MPs. Claire has mainly been involved with

Fairtrade through her local Church. Whilst Claire thinks of Fairtrade as her 'weekly giving to charity', John equates Fairtrade consumption with fairness not charity. The couple are vegetarians and try to support local farmers as well as choosing Organic foods when they can. Claire has the main responsibility for the household shopping and uses Asda, the Co-op and the local market. Whilst Claire sometimes does not buy Fairtrade because it is too expensive, John thinks he would buy Fairtrade regardless of the price. (Interview conducted on 5<sup>th</sup> June 2008)

- ✿ **Harriet and James** are married and are both retired. Both spent their working lives in the banking and investment industry (Financial professionals, SOC2000 unit group 3). Harriet is a member of the Conservative party and the local Soroptimist group (an organisation that supports women in managerial or professional occupations in order to improve the status of women across the world), whilst James is a member of the Labour and the Co-op Party and is a Rotarian. They enjoy debating political issues together but are both very supportive of the Fairtrade movement and are active members of the FFAG. They think that they have always been interested in issues of fairness and they became involved with Fairtrade in Fairville after they had been invited to the first meeting of the FFAG because of their involvement in the Co-op Party and Soroptimist group. They shop at Sainsbury's, Waitrose, the Co-op and the local Organic butchers. They are particularly interested in Organic and Harriet says that if she had to make the choice between Organic and Fairtrade she'd choose Organic because 'whilst I want to help the farmers I don't want chemicals in my body and I'm first'. They will not use Tesco as they do not agree with their business practices and would like to support local growers wherever they can. They think that the price of Fairtrade goods might prevent some people from buying Fairtrade although those who have a 'social conscience' are likely to find the money for Fairtrade regardless. (Interview conducted 10<sup>th</sup> June 2008)

⊕ **Jenny** is a divorced woman in her 40s with a teenage daughter. She works full time for a charity that helps young people with substance misuse problems (Social Welfare Professional, SOC2000 unit group 3). She believes her parents brought her up to be a socially aware person and that's why she was drawn to Fairtrade. She grew up in London and attended church there and says she remembers how her congregation used to be quite ethnically-mixed. She also remembers how they often had people from developing countries staying with her family because of their connection to the Church. Her mother used to live in apartheid South Africa and as a result made an effort to make Jenny aware of social justice issues. Her father was also an economist who worked for development-based charities so she became aware of issues in the Third World through him. She visited South Africa when her sister got married and she saw how happy and positive people there were and thought she would like to support them further through buying Fairtrade back home. She also thinks that buying Fairtrade fits with the work she does because that is also about getting people back on their feet. She became involved with Fairtrade in an organised way through her daughter who had decided to run a Traidcraft stall at her local church. When her daughter no longer wanted to do the stall, she took over and has been a Traidcraft seller ever since. She is a member of the FFAG but thinks the group is a bit 'type-like' and she hopes that Fairtrade has broken out of this niche. She gets most of her Fairtrade products from Traidcraft and does the rest of her shopping at Tesco or at the farmers market. She is a vegetarian, and likes to buy Organic. She also buys environmentally friendly cosmetics. She says as a one-income family she has to be careful about how she shops and that she is unable to buy Fairtrade clothing because they are so much more expensive than Primark. (Interview conducted 12<sup>th</sup> May 2008)

✿ **Leon** is a 34-year old musician (Artistic Occupation, SOC2000 unit group 3) who lives with his wife and their 18-month old son. He used to work as a coordinator for a youth volunteering organisation. He learnt about Fairtrade at the Oxfam shop where he used to work. He became involved with the Fairtrade group in Fairville through his connection to Oxfam, an environmental charity and the youth volunteering organisation. As a musician he tries to do awareness-raising gigs in order to promote Fairtrade. He is a keen environmental campaigner and after doing an OU course he realised how connected environmental and development issues were. As a result, he buys Fairtrade primarily for environmental reasons. From his experiences in the youth volunteering organisation, he believes that young people are passionate about Fairtrade and he hopes that the next generation will demand more Fairtrade. He does most of his shopping at Tesco, although he prefers Sainsbury's because they stock more Fairtrade and Organic produce. He is a strict vegetarian, buys eco-friendly produce as well as local and Organic food and tends to go for food that has not been packaged too heavily. He is concerned that his son should eat well and he chooses Organic foods for him which has meant that there is less money to spend on Organic and Fairtrade food for himself and his wife. After deciding to pursue a musical career, he has found that they have less disposable income than when he was working full-time. He often chooses to buy Fairtrade at the supermarket rather than the Oxfam shop because he wants to send a message to the supermarkets to stock more Fairtrade goods. (Interview conducted 12<sup>th</sup> June 2008)

✿ **May** and **Fred** are a married couple in their 70s. May spent most of her life as a housewife and Fred is an Optometrist (Health Professional, SOC2000 unit group 2). They are both Christians and they learnt about Fairtrade through their membership with the charity Christian Aid which distributed a number of leaflets about the ways producers had turned their lives around through using Fairtrade. They have been using Fairtrade ever since it came

out and remember drinking the poor quality 'Campaign Coffee' despite admitting that it tasted awful. May is heavily involved in her local church and has been part of the campaign to make it a Fairtrade church. Fred and May have spent a lot of time overseas in developing countries as part of Fred's work for a vision charity. They had a number of stories about their experiences in Africa and told of how they had witnessed poverty and inequality first-hand. These experiences have made them acutely aware that we live on 'exploited labour' and has motivated them to choose Fairtrade. Interestingly they are very aware that Fairtrade is unlikely to help to alleviate poverty in the developing world, but they still feel that they must do something rather than sitting back and doing nothing. They do most of their shopping at Sainsbury's and the local butcher. May describes herself as a utilitarian shopper and has used the magazine *Which?* in the past in order to make best consumer buys. May admits that the price of Fairtrade goods sometimes prevents them from buying them all the time. (Interview conducted 26<sup>th</sup> June 2008)

✿ **Oliver** and **Erica** are a married couple in their 60s. They are both retired; Oliver used to be a Senior official in the local council (Managerial Occupation, SOC2000 unit group 1) and Erica used to be a Registrar for Marriages (Administrative Occupation, SOC2000 unit group 4). Although he is retired, Oliver is a member of the Co-op Party, a Director of the local Co-operative group, sits of various committees for the Environment Agency and is part of a consumer movement campaigning for better prices for rail travel. They are both supporters of Fairtrade, but Oliver is more actively involved in the campaign in Fairville. Oliver points out that he has 'always subjected his shopping to a series of questions' and remembers taking a TUC list which named all the American Multinationals that were exploiting workers to the supermarket with him in the 1980s. They do most of their shopping at Sainsbury's, Waitrose and the Co-op but they will not use Tesco because they do not like their politics and think that it is run by 'right wing money'. When they used to live in the Midlands, they saw the

decline of manufacturing and they became aware of the need to support local producers wherever they can. Despite being supporters of Fairtrade, Oliver says he's "a far greater supporter of buying local". Erica thinks that she has always supported buying locally but when there is not a local option she will choose Fairtrade because she wants to help producers who want to help themselves. (Interview conducted 9<sup>th</sup> June 2008)

❸ **Phillipa** is a 60-year old Christian Charity worker (Administrative Occupation, SOC2000 unit group 4) who lives with her husband who is a Vicar. She is not an active member of the FFAG but occasionally attends meetings and pays subscriptions. She learnt about Fairtrade when her local church asked her to run a Traidcraft stall when her children were young. Her concern for social justice stems back to the 1960s when she was involved in various protest groups. Her church has connections in Kenya and a group of tea producers came to stay with her which made her more aware of the issues that producers face. She is very aware that alleviating poverty is 'not a straightforward thing' because of the corruption in these countries. However she feels she must try to be fair and responsible where she can. She understands her support of Fairtrade as closely linked to her faith and describes it as a 'pain free way of doing one's bit'. She does her shopping online because she is concerned about fuel emissions. She uses Waitrose because she doesn't like Tesco's aggressive policies, and she tries to support local, Organic and Fairtrade. (Interview conducted 10<sup>th</sup> June 2008)

❹ **Sue** is a 46 year-old university librarian (SOC2000 unit group 2) who has been involved with the Fairtrade town campaign in Fairville from its inception. Sue sat on Fairville's first steering committee and has recently become the chair of the FFAG. She is also the chair of a Fairtrade group on a university campus in Fairville, and is campaigning for the university to have FT status. Sue runs a Traidcraft stall at her local church and has done so for past 6 years. She learnt about Fairtrade through her father who was a Minister and through her

membership and support of Christian Aid. She buys Fairtrade as a 'practical extension of my religious faith', and understands her involvement with Traidcraft to bring the message of Fairtrade to other-interested people. She shops at Asda, Lidl and the local market. Whilst she tries to buy Fairtrade in her own shopping she admits that cost is very important to her and she will not buy Fairtrade if it is more expensive than other products. She is not proud of the fact that she doesn't always buy Fairtrade but for her there are always 3 major considerations – the cost, the quality and the ethics of the product. (Interview conducted 14<sup>th</sup> May 2008)

❖ **Syd** and **Grace** are a married couple in their late 70s. They are both Quakers and they learnt about Fairtrade through Syd's Quaker group. Grace spent most of her working life looking after their 4 children, whilst Syd worked as a Probation Officer (Public Service Professional, SOC2000 unit group 2). Grace is a vegetarian and supports the Vegetarian Society and Syd is an Oxfam supporter. They make regular donation to their chosen causes. They are both members of the FFAG but Syd is more likely to get involved than Grace. They do most of their weekly shopping in Aldi but visit Sainsbury's for their Fairtrade products. They also get products from the Suma Cooperative. Like the majority of Fairtrade supporters they will not use Tesco. They do admit that they are not too dedicated to either Organic, Fairtrade or Local food and that it really will depend on what's available and what they fancy at the time. Syd is very concerned that there needs to be a greater political role from International Governments if Fairtrade is really going to take-off beyond a 'person to person concern'. (Interview conducted 27<sup>th</sup> May 2008)

❖ **Tony** is 30-years old, holds a PhD in Engineering, works full-time as an Engineer (Engineering professional, SOC2000 unit group 2) and describes himself as 'middle, middle-class'. He is a Christian who has connections with two local churches – both of which are

Fairtrade churches. He learnt about Fairtrade through his involvement with the student Christian group whilst he was studying at university in Cambridge. He is a member of the FFAG but has not been very actively involved in this group and has been more involved with his local church groups. He likes Fairtrade because it engages people in an equal partnership and he would rather do this than give to charity because charity implies more of a power relationship between the 'haves and the have-nots'. He does not have a car and he therefore does most of his shopping online at Tesco or Sainsbury's. He is concerned about a range of issues in addition to Fairtrade such as local and Organic food and plastic-bag usage. He is concerned that Fairtrade does not go far enough to alleviate poverty but he does not know how else to raise awareness and visibility of issues in the developing world.

(Interview conducted 13<sup>th</sup> June 2008)

### Non-Fairtrade Supporters

❸ **Helen** is a 43-year old planning officer for the council and **Mark** is a 37-year old Waste and Recycling Officer (Administrative Occupations, SOC2000 unit group 4). Helen also works as a sports massage therapist in order to earn a little extra cash. They are Yogi-Vegetarians which means they organise their consumption around practices which promote positive self-being. They do not eat meat because they do not want to introduce negative energy into their bodies and they try to buy food that has been touched as little as possible by human hands. They use plant-based toiletries because they do not like chemicals going into their body. They meditate every morning for 20 minutes and they enjoy walking in the countryside. They do their shopping online at Sainsbury's in order to save time at the weekends. They are on a very tight-budget with high mortgage repayments on their property. This means they have to compromise on the food stuffs they buy. Ideally they'd like to be able to buy everything Organic but at present they cannot afford to. They are not particularly interested in Fairtrade, they may have bought it once or twice, but Mark is

suspicious of all ethical consumer labels (indeed anything he exchanges for money) and suspects they are a marketing ploy to make more money for capitalist share-holders. They were unaware that Fairville was a Fairtrade town or that Sainsbury's offered only Fairtrade bananas (Interview conducted 17<sup>th</sup> June 2008).

❸ **Henry** is an 80-year old retired Building Surveyor (SOC Unit group 2). He lives with his wife and their 16 cats. He does the shopping for the household and a lot of their shopping is concerned with feeding and caring for their cats, many of which they have adopted from animal rescue centres. Henry's wife is a Vegetarian and he always buys free-range goods when he buys meat for himself. Henry shops in Sainsbury's because he thinks the food is fresh and of good quality. Although he was aware that all of the bananas he bought were Fairtrade he knew very little about Fairtrade. He said he'd seen an advert with "a picture of a coloured bloke with a white panama hat" and therefore thought it must be about helping people in Jamaica. He was unaware that Fairville was a Fairtrade town and thinks that committed Fairtrade consumers are likely to be people who are "fanatical about that sort of thing" (Interview conducted 30<sup>th</sup> July 2008)

❹ **Julie** and **Steve** are a married couple with a young son. Julie is 29-years old, has a Masters degree in Business Enterprise, and used to work as Business manager at the local council before she took a break to raise her son (SOC2000 unit group 1). Steve is 35-years old, has a degree in law and works full-time as a social researcher for the local council (Professional Occupation, SOC2000 unit group 2). They both enjoy the theatre and try to see plays when they can find the time. Julie is a member of the local amateur dramatics group and Steve volunteers as a Special Constable for the local Police force. They are keen value-for-money shoppers and they regularly use money-saving websites in order to get the best deals on products that they need. Steve checks these websites every-day and lets Julie know where

there are deals on for nappies for example. They explain that if they save money this way they have more available to buy better quality products for their son – for example Steve found a good quality child car seat through a money-saving website. They do not like to be wasteful and they are keen recyclers. Where they do their shopping tends to vary depending upon what deals are available but Asda is the closest store to them so they often use this. They had not bought any Fairtrade goods and they said that they did not think there was much Fairtrade produce available at Asda. Julie says she is more likely to be influenced by local produce in the same way as she'd rather support a local charity rather than one overseas. Steve, on the other hand, thought that Fairtrade was a good idea and that consumers ought to take some responsibility for working conditions, but having said this he admitted that he rarely bought Fairtrade produce. He was aware that Fairville was a Fairtrade town and said he found out about this through his work at the council. (Interview conducted 4<sup>th</sup> July 2008).

✿ **Karen** and **Alex** are new home-owners and are in their late 20's. Karen is a Beauty Therapist and owns her own salon (Managerial Occupation, SOC2000 unit group 1) and Alex is a car Engineer (SOC2000 unit group 2). They like to spend their free time socialising with friends and going to the gym. Alex had recently run the marathon raising money for a local children's hospice. They admit that they hate supermarket shopping and try to do it as quickly as possible every week often buying the same thing every week out of habit. They use Asda because it is convenient for them and cheap. Price is a major concern and they tend to go for the value ranges. They do not look for Fairtrade but they will try to buy local food if it is affordable and they also re-use plastic bags. They are sceptical about whether the extra cost of Fairtrade gets back to the producers and would rather support local causes (like Alex did with the marathon) so that they know their money gets back to the people who need it. They think that Fairtrade is a good idea but they do not feel they can afford it or

would think of it as they are rushing to get their shopping done as quickly as possible.

(Interview conducted 30<sup>th</sup> June 2008)

- ✿ **Leanne** is a full-time mum in her early 30s with 3 dependent children, one of whom has kidney problems. She used to work in a factory (Process Operative, SOC2000 unit group 8) and her husband is an Office Manager. Most of her free-time is taken up caring for her children and organising activities for them. She does most of her shopping online at Asda and Sainsbury's because she finds it difficult to go shopping at the supermarket with her 3 children. She mainly buys basic ranges; however she does choose Organic food for her children. She also visits the local butchers because she feels it is better quality and she likes to support local producers. She gets her milk delivered both because she wants to support the local business and because she knows her elderly neighbours rely on the milk round so she wouldn't want to see it stopped. She is aware of buying Fairtrade bananas when she uses Sainsbury's and she thinks she has bought Fairtrade coffee in the past but it was not on the list we looked at. She thought that Fairtrade must cover local producers and when she found out this was not the case she said she would rather support local farmers than those in the developing world. However, she likes Body Shop cosmetics and thinks that this company is concerned about producers in the developing world. She says she might consider buying more Fairtrade if she could be given more evidence that the profits do go back to the farmers and if the prices came down a bit. (Interview conducted 2<sup>nd</sup> June 2008).

- ✿ **Maria** and **Dave** are a married couple in their 30s with a 18-month old son. They both work full-time; Maria is an Economic Researcher and Dave is a Corporate Finance Lawyer (Professional Occupations, SOC2000 unit group 2). They spend most of their free-time with their son. They both said that they came from families where they were taught to value the quality of food – Maria is Italian and she said that her family always cooked things from

scratch with high quality ingredients, Dave's parents also tried to use high-quality food when he was growing up and they are now very interested in Organic food. Dave is a Vegetarian and is interested principally in Organic food, but he would also like to support local and Fairtrade. He says there is a 'matrix' of issues and he wishes he could support all three. Maria is unconvinced of the benefits of Organic food and says they have compromised by buying Organic meat rather than vegetables. For Maria, the main issue is the quality of the food rather than a consumer-label and she will always buy whatever looks the best. They are concerned that their son should have a wide variety of food-stuffs and shop accordingly. They do their shopping at Sainsbury's because they think they provide a wide range of good-quality food and they will often buy their 'Taste the Difference' range. They have bought Fairtrade in the past partly because Dave wants to support Fairtrade and partly because that is often all that is available at Sainsbury's. However, both Maria and Dave think that Fairtrade is an ineffective way of alleviating poverty. Maria says "I think there's a point where these consumer choices are so distorted by so many different issues like you know, the carbon footprint or the packaging, or this and that you know; they're not going to work". Instead, they would like to see availability of GM-food on the supermarket shelves and a reduction in the CAP. They were unaware that Fairville was a Fairtrade town and Maria said she did not like the fact that Sainsbury's had taken away her choice by making all their bananas Fairtrade (Interview conducted 7<sup>th</sup> June 2008).

- ✿ **Sarah** is a 29-year old student who is studying for a degree in social work. She works part-time as a care-worker in order to fund her studies (Personal Service Occupation, SOC2000 unit group 6). She spent 8 years working as a tour guide in South America and said that this made her aware of some of the main issues facing people in the developing world. In particular, she spoke about a trip to Guatemala where she witnessed the conditions that banana producers have to work under. She does not get an awful lot of spare time but the

time she does get she likes to spend with friends or in her garden where she and her partner are growing their own vegetables. She is on a very tight budget so she buys a lot of freezable food so she can save money. She does buy Fairtrade bananas because of her experiences in Guatemala (and also because she shops in Sainsbury's) and she used Fairtrade tea. However she was not involved in any groups that support Fairtrade and she was not 100 per cent convinced that the money actually got back to the producers. Having worked in tourism she thought this might be an effective way of alleviating poverty. Despite the fact that she attends the university in Fairville (which was awarded Fairtrade status), she says she has never seen any publicity about Fairtrade at the university. (Interview conducted 4<sup>th</sup> June 2008)

❸ **Terry** is a 31-year old social researcher (Professional Occupation, SOC2000 unit group 2) who works full-time for the local council. He lives alone in a rented flat and spends his free-time socialising with friends and using the gym. He does his food shopping on the way home from work each day either at Marks & Spencer's, Tesco or Spar. He thinks that he is an unorganised shopper because he does not put a lot of thought into what he buys. He had not bought any Fairtrade products that day but had deliberately chosen free-range eggs and had picked up Organic tomatoes without realising it. He thought that re-using plastic bags was a good idea, however he had had to buy one when he went to M&S because he'd forgotten to take his own. He did not think that Fairtrade products were really available in the places where he shopped and he thinks there is a lack of publicity and visibility of this consumer choice. He thinks buying Fairtrade is probably the right thing to do but he also feels he has a lack of understanding of the issues. (Interview conducted 4<sup>th</sup> June 2008)

## **Appendix 2: National Omnibus Survey Questions Module 236**

(Source: Office for National Statistics, 2005 (Technical Report: 105))

- Which item on this card best describes how you feel about levels of poverty in developing countries?
  1. Very concerned
  2. Fairly concerned
  3. No strong feelings one way or another
  4. Not very concerned
  5. Not at all concerned
  6. Don't Know (Spontaneous only)
  
- On this card is a list of ways in which the UK Government could contribute to reducing poverty in developing countries. In which three ways, if any, you think they should be contributing to reducing poverty, starting with the most important and then the next most important and so on. (I have used their first answer which is the one they thought was most important)
  1. Providing financial support and other types of aid such as training and/or expertise
  2. Working for a fairer world trading system
  3. Encouraging increased private sector investment
  4. Reducing conflict and war
  5. Working to improve the effectiveness of international organisations like the World Bank, the UN and the European Union
  6. Working to cancel the debts owed by developing countries

7. Other (please specify)

8. None of these

- In which ways, if any, do you think you as an individual can most effectively contribute to reducing poverty in developing countries? Please choose up to three ways. Starting with the most important and then the next most important and so on.

1. Paying taxes - a proportion of which is spent on International Aid by the Government

2. Donating to charities or other appeals on behalf of developing countries

3. Supporting socially responsible business and investment

4. Buying Fair trade goods

5. Working in a developing country to promote development

6. Being involved in church or campaign groups working on behalf of developing countries

7. Putting pressure on politicians to increase the assistance which the Government gives to developing countries

8. Travelling to a developing country as a tourist

9. Other (please specify)

10. Do not think can contribute effectively as an individual to reducing poverty in developing countries (Spontaneous only)

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