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“Tell me what you eat, and I’ll tell you who you are.”

- **Brillat-Savarin, 1825.**

Exploring the use of food in constructing and expressing identity among immigrants in Ireland, with a focus on the institutional nature of food within direct provision as a barrier to these processes.

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Abstract

Using semi-structured interviews with immigrants and refugees in Ireland, this research seeks to investigate the use of food as an expression of identity among migrant groups in the Irish context, exploring further to ask if institutional food such as that provided in direct provision impacts the use of food in identity work. Focusing on group membership, concepts of acculturation and socialisation, this research argues that immigrants in Ireland employ food to express identity in two key ways; fist to express their identity as a member of their ethnic and cultural group and second, to express identifications with Irish society as they integrate. The research also suggests that by making the asylum seekers in direct provision passive recipients of formally administered food, the opportunity for food based cultural identity expression is impeded during and after the stay in the system, but that asylum seekers use food resistance as an alternative form of identity work.

1. Introduction

In the context of a global society, migration is increasingly common, even in Ireland - a country historically characterised by mass emigration from times of famine to economic downturn (Schwartz et al. 2010, Bijl and Verweij 2012). The most recent census reported that there were 535,475 non-Irish immigrants living in Ireland (CSO 2016) and a report from 2019 showed Ireland had 4,696 applications for asylum that year (WorldData N.d). It is clear that immigrants now make up a sizeable proportion of Ireland's population. Despite being a relatively young country of immigration, some studies have been carried out on the population such as Maguire 2004, Mac Éinrí and White 2008 and Ugba 2009. However, the immigrant population in Ireland remains understudied in comparison to their counterparts in other countries, especially with regard to the food and eating habits.

The focus of this paper is expressions of identity that vary from the dominant culture, such as that of the immigrant or refugee, and is situated against the backdrop of Ireland's history of containment of the 'other'. Institutions in Ireland have long served to erase the identity of and silence the most vulnerable members of our society, from workhouses to mother and baby homes (Loyal and Quilley 2016). Furthermore, Irish society has "managed to ignore" (Lentin 2016:21) these process of exclusion and this research seeks to challenge the willingness of our society to 'ignore' the contemporary continuations of this culture. Groups concerned with the welfare of asylum seekers in Ireland indicate that this containment culture endures under the guise of direct provision, a system in which asylum seekers are housed in designated facilities while their applications are processed, isolated from Irish society and excluded from social participation through bans on work and curfews (Loyal and Quilley 2016).

This research aims to explore the extent to which immigrants generally in Ireland may give expression to their identity, and the challenges in doing so that may be faced, in particular, by asylum seekers. The study is operationalised through the medium of food. Specifically, I seek to investigate **(1) how immigrants in Ireland employ food as an expression of their identity** and **(2) how the institutional nature of reception faced by asylum seekers may create different outcomes for their expression of cultural identity and integration into Irish society.**

Food, as an essential requirement to live and thus a necessary practice, "induces interaction with the surrounding otherness" for migrants, especially in post-industrial society in which identities are increasingly expressed and defined through consumerism thus creating an essential bridge between the migrant and interaction with the receiving culture (Parasecoli 2014: 416-7). To do so, the research applies theories of identity retention, strategies of acculturation and the concept of the Total Institution and how it erodes the self through the process of mortification (Parasecoli 2014, Berry 1980, 2007, Weinreich 2009, Goffman 1991) to qualitative interview data gathered from immigrants and asylum seekers living in Ireland.

2. Literature Review

2.1 Introduction to the Literature

The following literature review is split in to four sections: becoming sociological: the study of food; conceptualising changes to behaviour and identity post-migration; the role of food in expressing and retaining cultural identity for migrants; and total institutions and the role of food. The first section looks at the study of food and its transition from medical based research to research that looks at the social meaning of food. The second discusses various concepts of acculturation from Gordon's (1964) unidimensional model to Berry's (1980) multidimensional strategy framework and Weinreich's (2009) agentic model of enculturation. The next section examines how immigrants utilise food to express and retain the identity of their heritage culture when living in a new society and how it can be a vehicle for formulating identifications with the receiving culture. The fourth and final section of the literature review looks at Goffman's (1991) concept of the total institution and how the institutional nature of food in these institutions, such as prison, is a tool of identity suppression and self-mortification.

2.2 Becoming Sociological: The Study of Food.

Food has always been central to human life, but what was once purely a source of sustenance and nourishment for our early ancestors has developed and transformed into a central aspect of modern life across the social, cultural and economic, culminating in a society which, according to Murcott (2019), is food obsessed. Concerns of health caused the study of food to fall within the domain of medicine and nutrition which focused more on "*what* food are eaten than *who* was eating it" (McMillan and Coveney 2010:282).

Eventually the social impacts of food related health problems became apparent and needed research. This led to landmark studies of food and eating such as Murcott's (1997) book *The Nation's Diet*, comprised of a collection of studies carried out over six years. Its core purpose was to examine the process of food choice and to answer the question "why do people eat what they do" (Murcott 1997:89).

The study employed a triangulation of methods, often combining surveys with interviews and ethnographic research methods to create a holistic understanding of food choice in varying settings like the home and school. This collection of studies is valuable because it explores the varying reasons people choose foods beyond their perceived health benefits. It marks a move towards a sociological discussion of food and its intersections with different connotative fields such as commodity and culture, and how these different fields allow food to be assigned different meanings. roles, interests and risks (Jacobsen 2004).

Using the work of sociologists such as Murcott, those who contributed on social norms and systems of provision such as Fine, Heasman and Wright (1997) and Caplan et al (1997) on food choice in its social and cultural context, I aim expand the discussion around food with an emphasis on the food experiences of immigrants in Ireland. Specifically, I aim to establish whether different contexts of arriving in Ireland, as asylum seeker or as immigrant, influences the food people eat and the meanings they assign to food and how this may be shaped by ethnicity, identity and acculturation processes.

2.3 Conceptualising Changes to Behaviour and Identity Post-migration

We live in a world characterized by globalisation and high levels of migration (Schwartz et al. 2010). The concept of acculturation to understand changes in behaviours and identifications of migrants has received increasing scholarly attention in recent years, including edited volumes from Berry et al. 2006; Chun et al, 2003; Berry and Sam 2006.

The understanding of acculturation has changed significantly following newer research. In 1964, Gordon explored a unidimensional understanding of acculturation in which keeping the heritage culture and acquiring the receiving culture were "cast as opposing ends of a single continuum" (Schwartz et al. 2010:238). This was later termed "straight-line assimilation" by Schildkraut (2007), a type of assimilation where immigrants are expected to discard their culture for the culture, values and norms of the receiving society.

Overtime it became clear that acculturation was neither straightforward nor one dimensional, as Berry (2007:70) noted "knowledge of these variations has increased substantially in recent years, challenging the wide-spread assumption that everyone would assimilate and become absorbed into the dominant group." A contemporary idea of acculturation is broadly understood as a process which "involves the cultural and behavioural changes that result from contact between groups ...who have different cultural backgrounds" (Berry 2007:69), and this definition is further refined and conceptualised by Schwartz et al. as a convergence of the heritage and receiving culture (2010:237).

The modern and multidimensional understanding of acculturation was put forward by Berry (1980), challenging the rigid definition of acculturation in social science and immigrant studies, and the expectations of assimilation placed on migrants. Berry's framework suggests that the adaptation of the receiving-culture is independent from heritage-culture relinquishment. He suggested four strategies for acculturation; assimilation occurs when an individual discards their heritage culture and fully adopts the receiving culture. When an individual retains the heritage culture while avoiding the interaction with others this is known as separation. When there is no interest in cultural retention and little interest in relating to the dominant culture, marginalisation is defined. Finally, when the individual shows interest in maintaining the heritage culture while also showing interest in membership in the dominant group, integration strategy occurs (Berry 1980, 2007). These categories of

acculturation strategy are the dominant framework in the field of cross-cultural study (Weinreich 2009), with research concluding that best strategy, especially among younger immigrants, is integration, because immigrants in this category tend to be better adjusted (Coatsworth et al. 2005; David et al. 2009). That is not to say these four categories have gone uncriticised. Rudmin (2003) found that the categories are not as defined as Berry suggests, many having overlapped sub-categories and often not presenting in populations – particularly the category of marginalisation.

As this area of research grows, alternative conceptualisations of post-migratory changes to behaviour and identification to Berry's categories have been proposed. They seek to explain changes not only in behaviour, but in identifications of ethnic groups following migration. One of the most prominent alternative theoretical frameworks is proposed by Weinreich (2009). He outlines a framework of 'enculturation' rather than acculturation. The term 'enculturation' is employed by Weinreich to "emphasise the agentic individual incorporating cultural elements during socialisation" (2009:125). Weinreich argues that to focus on acculturation is to diminish the significance of heritage culture and continue "acculturating toward the dominant culture" (2009:130) despite claims of progression away from this model. Weinreich's theory suggests that rather than 'choosing' the degree to which one accepts or rejects either culture, an individual's process of identification changes throughout life and changes dramatically following migration as one is influenced by institutions and peers in the receiving society. The context of the receiving society is also relevant to changing behaviours and identifications as a theory by Portes and Rumbaut (2001) explains. Their theory of 'reactive ethnicity' suggests that when the receiving society discriminates against the immigrant, they are more likely to "develop defensive or reactive identities and solidarities" which can arise as "rejection of host society

norms and values" and "increased identification with one's origin culture" (Herda 2018:374), thus impeding integration with the receiving culture.

Both frameworks are applicable to the changes in consumption and dietary behaviours of migrants following their arrival to the host society as Parasecoli (2014:417) notes that the domain of food and eating, as a necessary everyday practice, induces interaction with the "surrounding otherness" and the reaction to doing so can vary from "enthusiastic embrace to participative negotiation to active resistance, all the way to total refusal", a sentiment which bears parallels to the theories outlined above.

2.4 The Role of Food in Expressing and Retaining Cultural Identity for Migrants

Parasecoli states that food is as essential as language to culture, reiterating the points made by Lévi-Strauss(1978:471) "if there is no society without a language, nor is there any which does not cook in some manner at least some of its food." Caplan et al. (1997) argue that food is rarely just food, and that nutrition is rarely its defining motif but rather it is entwined with inclusion and exclusion that have their basis in culture. This means that the food one eats is often closely related to their culture, which is significant in the food choices of immigrants who must find the balance between their heritage culture and the receiving culture.

Parasecoli suggests that as a strategy to deal with their new and unfamiliar circumstances, immigrants use food related practices to create a "sense of place" (Parasecoli 2014: 416). Furthermore, they often use "communal food practices" like the food preparation, food shopping and celebratory meals in the construction and maintenance of cultural identity within the receiving culture, but also to reinforce a sense of belonging within their own ethnic group, and to maintain a connection to their culture of origin (Manandhar 2006; Barry 2014; Fanning et al. 2001; Parasecoli 2014). Cultural meals

bring people together as a social activity, they "connect those who share them, confirm the eaters' identities as individuals or as part of a collective" (Parasecoli 2014:425).

Research indicates that following migration, food and food practices play an important role in socialisation of immigrant children and to pass on values, traditions, and role expectations of their culture (Fanning et al 2001:39, Parasecoli 2014). According to empirical evidence, immigrant children's initial identification process occurs with family members, and consequently, their cultural foods, which results in the development of ethnicity imbued with 'primordialist sentiment' (Weinreich and Saunderson 2003). This early identification with culture and ethnicity through foods remains a fundamental component of their identity into adulthood (Weinreich 2009, Schwartz et al. 2010), and is more crucial to cultural identification than the 'situationalist sentiment' which involves "selective amalgamations of both cultures" (Weinreich 2009). This is an important point because I will contend that the formally administered food provision within the Direct Provision System in Ireland stands as a barrier to this socialisation and process of forming identity within the heritage culture and ethnic group (Fanning et al. 2001). This is because most Asylum seekers in the Direct Provision system have no access to cooking facilities (Barry 2014), and no agency over the food their children consume (Manandhar et al. 2006).

While Parasecoli details how food is used to confirm group membership and identity among immigrants in the receiving culture, Gundelman et al. (2011) take an alternative point of view, investigating how food is to express identification with the dominant culture and cultivate a sense of belonging therein. This research found in order to feel a sense of belonging, immigrants in America feel pressure to consume "more prototypically American, and consequently less healthy, foods" (Gundelman et al. 2011:959). This shows that food acts as an arena for consolidating changes in identifications, as Levi-Strauss (1997)

comments “what people eat, however, is not only a matter of sustenance, but it also signals their identity to others.”

Not only do immigrants consciously choose to consume more foods associated with the dominant culture, but they are also reportedly more likely to “distance themselves from behaviours associated with their ethnic identities” in the presence of members of the dominant culture (Gundelman et al. 2011, Weinreich 2009, Berry 1980, 2007). In one survey, Asian-Americans reported feelings of embarrassment while consuming cultural food while their peers had stereotypical American lunches (Gundelman et al. 2011:960). The research illustrates that immigrants adjust the food they eat to reinforce their sense of identification with and belonging in the dominant culture. However, in Ireland, I contend that asylum seekers within the Direct Provision Centre don’t have this option. Rather they are served food from the dominant culture as the default which imposes the food of the receiving culture on them rather than it being an expression of personal agency, identification, integration or even fondness.

The cultural food practices of immigrants are not only influenced by the past, but often by “internal dynamics and the incorporation of external elements” (Parasecoli 2014:461). This idea is important when bringing together ideas of acculturation and the use of food to express identity and culture, as it suggests that the process of acculturation may extend to the food immigrants eat and the meanings they assign to it. As immigrants and asylum seekers face different ‘external’ influences in the context of their arrival and reception in Ireland, they may also hold different perceptions of the food as a result. The research presented in this project focuses on this idea, looking particularly at how these influences may impact on not only the foods that immigrants eat but the meanings they assign to the food and food practices in terms of identity and cultural expression. Looking particularly at the case of Asylum Seekers in Direct Provision Centres, as they are

transformed into passive recipients of food in Direct Provision, which removes the individual's identity and agency over their lives.

2.5 Total Institutions and the Role of Food

The 'Total Institution' was conceptualised by Erving Goffman in his work on Asylums in 1968. He describes them as "a place of residence and work where a large number of like-situated individuals, cut off from the wider society for an appreciable period of time, together lead an enclosed, formally administered round of life" (1991: 11). In these institutions, the individual's sense of self and identity is "mortified" as they are stripped of any conception of the self outside the institution in order to become an object which can be "worked on and regulated by the institutional logic of the centre" (Goffman 1991:24; Loyal and Quilley 2016:79). The removal and suppression of identity is central to the functionality of the Total Institution. It occurs in all aspects of their running
including what Goffman calls 'batch living', the inverse of individual living which removes personal choice and privacy (Jones and Fowles 2008:104). The idea of the Total Institution provides a framework to explore the role of food in Direct Provision
and the resultant suppression of cultural identity. As the food is institutionalised, Murcott (2019) notes that those within the institution lose all autonomy including choice of menu, of whom they eat with and when and where eating takes place.

This framework allows for comparisons between institutions which appear to have few similarities, such as prisons and Direct Provision centres. This is an important comparison because there is extensive research available on the role of food in suppressing identity in the prison setting which can be applied to the institution of direct provision in Ireland. Godderis (2006) argues that the symbolic importance of food in prison, and all Total Institutions, comes from the fact that the 'choice' of what we eat is "representative of our individual and collective identities" and that food becomes a point of contention because the

self and identity is suppressed (2006:61). Godderis argues in her study of identity in prison, that losing control over the process of eating and preparing food creates an incongruence between the self and the body (2006:62). Similar to prisoners subjected to "institutional rules and regulations about the personal experience of consumption" (Godderis 2006:62) so too are those in direct provision centres. Godderis also notes the distinct link between power and food in the prison system. Many inmates discussed the ways the officers employed displays of power over the consumption process as a way to exert power over them (2006:64).

A study carried out by Ugelvik (2011) took an alternative approach and looked at how inmates in a prison used 'mealtime resistance' as a form of identity work. Ugelvik draws on Foucault's idea of power as an ever-shifting relationship of forces (Ugelvik 2011, Elliot 2014) which creates a domain for identity work through resisting the formally administered food. It is also understood that the very act of resisting can become a way to express identity within a total institution, as the prisoner "reconstructs himself as someone able to make the best out of a difficult situation." (Ugelvik 2011:56). Food has been shown to be a central tool for identity construction and cultural self-expression for immigrants in the discussions above. However, I have also detailed how its institutional nature in direct provision, like that in Prison, impedes the ability of asylum seekers to maintain cultural food practices, form community, or formulate identification and belonging through food as described by Parasecoli (2014) and others. The lasting impact of this role stripping and "enforced dependency" (Barry 2014:46, Jones and Fowles 2008) on the sense of identity and ethnic group membership of refugees once outside of the institution are not well documented in the literature and is of particular interest in the context of this research project.

2.6 Conclusion of Literature

This literature provides a concise overview of the vast array of relevant to the use of food as an expression of cultural identity, and the use of food in the suppression of identity and removal of autonomy. This chapter began by outlining the sociological value of studying food and food practices. The second section then detailed the processes of adapting to a new society. The third section converges the two prior section by discussing the various roles food plays from retaining the heritage culture identity, consolidating ethnic group membership and expressing newly formulated identities within the receiving culture, showing that immigrants in other countries make effective use of food as a way to express identity. The final section discussed Goffman's concept of total institutions. At the core of a total institution is the process of stripping away individual self and identity, which stands in stark contrast to the freedoms of identity expression through food outlined in the section prior. With no available research on identity work of asylum seekers in total institutions, the example of Prisons as studied by Godderis (2006) and Ugelvik (2011) serves to make the argument that institutional food impedes the process of cultural identity retention and expression by the removing agency and autonomy of the inmates or residents.

3. Methodological Approach

3.1 Choosing the Research Method

This research question explores the role that food plays in how immigrants in Ireland, and the inverse, how food may remove or supress identity, particularly in the institution of Direct Provision. My main objective was to explore how both immigrants in Ireland experience food and food practices and their role in the expression of identity. However, in a country with a history of institutionalising the vulnerable (Lentin 2016, Loyal and Quilley 2016), and with considerable debate occurring about the continuation of this practice in new forms, I could not overlook Direct Provision. In this system the food is formally administered, rendering asylum seekers as passive recipients. This removes the opportunity for them to engage in the cultural practice of food preparation identity expression. Goffman describes institutions as a place where individual identity is stripped away in a process "by which a person's self is mortified" (1991:24). Thus, while investigating the role food plays in expressing immigrant identity, I also investigate how institutional food provision impedes this. To do this, I explored immigrants lived experience of food, their food associations and any changes to their food practices as they interact with Irish society. By adopting an exploratory research design, which "seeks to find out how people get along in a setting under question, what meanings they give to their actions and what issues concerns them" (Chambliss and Schutt 2013:8), this research examines two key questions **a) do immigrants in Ireland use food practices to create and express cultural identity**, and **b) does the institutional nature of food in Direct Provision prevent such construction and cultural expressions of identity.**

In order to answer questions based on personal experiences, my research takes on an interpretive and constructivist approach, a paradigm that suggests social reality is defined by

individual experience, making it multidimensional and subjective (Mackenzie and Knipe 2006). Qualitative methods were most suitable for my research question. Such methods involve "a focus on human subjectivity and the meanings participants attach to events and to their lives" and are "designed to capture social life as participants experience it" (Chambliss and Schutt 2016:200). More specifically for migration-based research, Morawska (2018:113) says that qualitative research "aims to reconstruct people's everyday experience".

Quantitative methods were briefly considered for this research to make the data more generalisable, but it became clear that food, identity and immigration are incredibly personal and individualistic experiences, so much so that anything less than detail rich, one-on-one interviews would miss out on crucial non-empirical data. For this reason, I chose to conduct in-depth, semi-structured interviews with immigrants living in Ireland between the ages of 20-35. The semi-structured nature of these interviews allowed me to provide general thematic questions, from which the participant could elaborate in more detail than would be possible to harvest from a survey or even a structured interview (Morawska 2018: 120), I believe the approach adapted was crucial to gaining a better understanding of the meaning immigrants ascribe to food, culture and identity. Furthermore, according to Morawska (2018), migrants feel more at ease when they are given the opportunity to talk freely and can prioritise what is of importance to them in the interview. Ergo, the use of qualitative interviews provides not only detailed rich information, but a more comfortable situation for immigrants to speak openly about their own lived experience and an opportunity for my research to uncover themes that I may not have considered by myself, enhancing data for analysis.

3.2 Selecting the Sample

For this research I utilised non-probability sampling methods. I purposefully chose a sample of participants due to their "unique position" (Chambliss & Schutt 2016:105). My

sample was made up of two populations: a) those with general immigrant status, and b) those with refugee status. I kept the criteria for selection otherwise quite broad – my participants had to be immigrants living in Ireland, between the ages of 20-35, having lived a portion of their childhood in the country of origin, that is to say, not born and raised in Ireland as I wanted to explore the transition from one culture to the next.

For the refugee portion of the sample, I applied one further stipulation; they had to be bona fide refugees, no longer within the Direct Provision system. The latter criterion was based on ethical considerations as it would have been difficult if not impossible to access asylum seekers in Direct Provision and doing so may have jeopardized their already difficult situation.

Participants

Name	Gender	Age	Immigrant/ Refugee	Geographic origin	Years in Ireland
Olivia*	Female	21	Immigrant	Eastern Europe	17 years
Emma*	Female	21	Immigrant	Northern Europe	16 years
Ava*	Female	32	Immigrant	Eastern European	14 years
Sophie*	Female	20	Immigrant	South America	10 years
Amy*	Female	24	Immigrant	Middle East	11 years
Alanna*	Female	20	Refugee	West Africa	16 years
Rachel*	Female	21	Refugee	West Africa	14 years
Jane*	Female	23	Refugee	South Eastern Europe	20 years

*name changed for confidentiality.

3.3 Conducting the Research

As one of my closest friends is an immigrant who matched the criteria, I began my sample with her as I knew not only would her perspective be valuable but also that the friendship between us meant that she would be comfortable enough to talk in depth about her own experiences. Our relationship also put my nerves at ease for my first interview. I reached

out to people who were vocal on social media about their experience of being an immigrant in Ireland or experiencing the Direct Provision system in Ireland because I felt these people were more likely to be comfortable sharing their experiences. I reached out to 10 individuals, both male and female, on Instagram and Twitter. Less than a third responded and agreed to the interview, all of whom were female. I then used snowball sampling, a method where "sample elements are selected as successive informants or interviewees identify them" (Chambliss & Schutt 2016:105), putting me in contact with 4 more respondents. Finally, I contacted two members of my Special Topic Group who met the criteria and fortunately both agreed to an interview. I reached out an equal number of male immigrants as possible to include the male perspective, but they either did not reply or declined to take part, consistent with a growing literature on the gendered non-participance in research (Mohajer 2019; Markanday 2013)

Within this initial sample there was 4 immigrants and 5 refugees. However, due to the sensitive nature of the research, two refugees withdrew just before the interviews. Despite best efforts to rebalance the ratio of refugees to immigrants I was unable to locate another refugee willing to speak with me. With that, I reached out to one further immigrant to ensure I could gather sufficient data for analysis which resulted in a final sample made up of 5 immigrants and 3 refugees.

Due to the on-going COVID-19 pandemic at the time of this research, Level 5 restrictions meant that rather than traditional face-to-face interviews, my research was carried out remotely over MS Teams. This had the downside of making it harder to put the participant at ease and sometimes unreliable connectivity. However, I cannot overlook the upside of remote interviews which is that they allowed me to interview immigrants from all over Ireland, gathering a diverse group that I otherwise would not have had access to due to travel inconvenience. All questions I asked during the remote interviews were open-ended

and reviewed by my supervisor beforehand. During the interview, the open-ended nature of my questions meant I often asked follow-up questions based off the participants responses.

3.4 Ethical Considerations

Due to the nature of my research topic, which required discussing the experience of not only immigration, but in the case of three participants, the experience of seeking asylum, a number of ethical considerations were considered prior to beginning the research. I spoke in-depth with my supervisor about who exactly I could speak with, deciding that as a first-time researcher, I could not ethically interview asylum-seekers still within the system as they are a vulnerable group. This led to the stipulation that my sample would only contain bona fide refugees as referred to earlier.

Following recruitment, each participant was made aware of the nature of the research, which was reiterated on the morning of their interview. As my research was not face-to-face, I could not use the traditional consent forms. Instead, when the participant agreed to the interview being recorded, I taped their verbal consent to the interview - I explained that my intentions with the research were genuine, that they would be granted full confidentiality and anonymity, and I emphasised that their agreement to take part did not equate any obligation to do so, nor to answer any question they felt uncomfortable with.

The interviews were conducted via MS teams and the recordings were stored on my password protected laptop. I transcribed each interview, and the recordings were permanently deleted thereafter. For all interviews pseudonyms are used and identifiable details are omitted.

3.5 Data Analysis

To analyse the data, I printed out each transcript and cross examined them, colour-coding the themes and subthemes I identified within the literature and across the interviews. At first, it appeared that the subjective and individual nature of immigration hampered the formation of similarities or patterns but eventually, I identified three themes: immigrants in Ireland use food to express and consolidate membership in their cultural and ethnic group, Food is used as an expression of changing identifications post-migration, and institutional food as a barrier to this identity expression.

Despite conscious effort, there are limitations to this research. Most notably being the small sample size. For a more generalisable research on immigrant experiences of food and identity in the Irish context, I think the study requires a more diverse range of immigrant backgrounds. On a secondary note, I would have liked to have interviewed more refugees for this research as they have a unique perspective on institutional food but accessing a minority population as an outsider comes with challenges and as I am an undergraduate student, their hesitation to speak with me is understandable.

4. Discussion of Findings

4.1 Using Food to Express and Consolidate Cultural Identity

4.1.1 Recreating Cultural Food in Ireland

Every interviewee recreated the food from their country of origin to some extent and felt doing so was important. When I asked how often they consume food from their heritage culture, answers varied from "a regular staple most days" (Kate) to "an occasional occurrence, definitely more like a treat" (Emma). Participants insisted that at times of celebration such as Christmas, Easter and Birthdays "it's usually just our traditional food" (Sophie) and "food from home" (Olivia). At times of celebration, eating becomes a social activity and brings together family members and the wider immigrant community. From the interviews it emerged that the food consumed at times of cultural celebration is used to maintain traditions from the culture as well as fostering a sense of group membership. Ava, whose parents and siblings remain in her country of origin, commented that if she could not recreate the Christmas traditions from her culture while in Ireland that she would feel "lost and depressed over Christmas because it would be [a] huge chunk of me gone". She recreates the traditional meals on Christmas Eve with her aunt and cousins in Ireland: "having them here definitely helped to save that little part of my identity."

The use of traditional celebratory meals to express identity is investigated by Parasecoli (2014:416) who suggests that culinary traditions provide "parameters for defining behaviours and objects as acceptable or deviant and that can be interpreted as a form of culinary competence." This suggests that the ability to accurately recreate food from the heritage culture comes to symbolise group membership for an individual among fellow immigrants. This is certainly true in for Amy who commented:

> "I always feel so proud when my dad or like an uncle...would tell you 'oh, you know, this tastes just like how it was made in [country of origin]', you know? You just feel like connected with the people back home... closer to my mom and aunties because you know the women always did the cooking."

Kate perceived a connection to her culture stating:

> "It makes me feel a part of the culture in a way, even though you know, I might not know much about [country of origin] because I grew up here... when I eat the food and enjoy the food it's a connection"

For immigrants in Ireland, times of celebration that centre around food consumption as a social activity "connect those who share them, confirm the eaters' identities as individuals or as part of a collective" (Parasecoli 2014:425) Which is reiterated in the quotes which show the significance of recreating cultural food in process of fostering a sense of belonging and cultural group membership.

4.1.2 Preparing Food

While consuming cultural food was an important marker of identity for the interviewees, identity consolidation also occurred during the preparation of cultural food. Sophie felt the preparation process was as important as the meal itself saying she and her mother would "basically recreate her childhood Christmas dinner" and noting that the smells in the kitchen reminded her "of being small and being at home, you know, when we lived in [country of origin]." Ava mentions how food preparation can act as a link to traditions and the country of origin: "it feels like Christmas itself, the whole process, being stuck in the kitchen with my aunt...like I would with mom at home." Grosvenor (1998) suggests that preparing cultural meals is significant to reinforcing a feeling of identity and belonging because it can "instantly evoke a series of emotions and desires because food and food customs are carriers of identity, memory, and tradition" (Williams-Forson 2014:71)

Sutton (2001) suggests that the practice of preparing foods that are familiar can facilitate remembering. Similarly, Parasecoli (2014) believes that the act of preparing cultural meals opens a space for telling stories and sharing memories of the country and culture of

origin, ideas that were both echoed in the interviews. Interviewees perceived the ritualism of preparing cultural food as creating a space to talk and share stories about their heritage and traditions.

This is captured in the following quote from Kate: “you’re making your mom’s favourite food and she tells you how her mom used to make it and how her mom taught her and you learn about how they lived.” For Kate, preparing cultural meals was essential to learning the traditions of her heritage culture after leaving Direct Provision because it acted as a form of socialisation, adding that she intends to teach her children how the cultural foods were made for her and “passing it on.” The preparation of food is another way in which immigrants who live in Ireland are able to express their cultural identity and retain ties to their heritage culture through preparing food in the way they were accustomed to in their childhood.

4.1.3 Food Spaces

Moving from food in the private sphere to food in public, the interviewees I spoke to mentioned Specialist Food Stores and Ethnic Restaurants as important to their sense of identifying with their culture and wider community. The previous discussions emphasise the importance of consuming cultural foods and therefore, the importance of being able to obtain cultural foods of choice (Williams-Forson 2012: 74). Previous studies of the importance of public cultural foodscapes show that ethnic groups use “homeland artifacts and decorations” to signify identity to and attract co-ethnic peers (Chang 2002, Alfonso 2012). Chang (2002) suggests that these restaurants and specialist food stores not only provide a public arena for the expression of cultural identity and serve as a hub for socialising and community in which the identity is reinforced.

These sentiments are shared by immigrants in Ireland. Jane highlights her experience of cultural foodscapes and identity expression: “you can just start speaking your language with a stranger right in the middle of Dublin...its just nice like using your language and seeing your own foods around.” Olivia talked about her parent’s restaurant which specialised in their cultural food. She recalled how it was a social hub for immigrants in her locality, adding that the restaurant was often used as a venue for activities for the immigrant children “we would have little talent shows...mom always made a disco for Halloween.”

The social and community aspects of the specialist store were felt strongest by those with Refugee status. Kate, speaking about her mother, said: “I feel like she went to the African shop just to go make friends... and if she had a question, she would definitely go there and ask them”. Similarly, Jane commented “my parents, like even when we lived in Direct Provision, they used to just go to town to go to the [cultural] shop just to remind them of their country.” It is likely that those in Direct Provision rely on ethnic foodscapes like specialist stores to reinforce their existing cultural identity because they are otherwise isolated from the receiving culture and cannot access it through working or socialising.

Overall, suggests that public foodscapes play a role in how immigrants in Ireland express and consolidate their cultural identity, not only by purchasing food from their heritage culture or country of origin, but by creating a sense of place within these public domains for socialising, community and expression.

4.1.4 The Role of The Mother

As all my interviewees were female, it was interesting to see their perspective on the gendered aspect of domestic labour such as grocery shopping and preparing meals. Some research suggests that the receiving culture may permit for identity expressions which were against the norms and values of the heritage culture, such as the gendered divide in domestic

labour. To investigate this, I asked interviewees who did the cooking and prepared the meals. The answer was always the interviewee's mother. Similarly, when I asked the participant who taught them to cook the food from their culture, again the answer was always the mother. Most participants commented that the gender divide is "how it always was" (Sophie) and "just the way things are done" (Amy). It arose from the interviews that the gender divide in the domain of food and food preparation is almost synonymous with the culture and is consciously adhered to by immigrant women, in particular mothers. I suggest that in the case of these interviewees, maintaining the gender divide was, in itself, an expression of cultural identity and an attempt to retain the traditions the experienced in the country of origin.

The immigrant mother plays a significant role in teaching the younger immigrant women the food traditions of their culture. The mother acts as what I have termed a 'cultural custodian' which directly influences the ability of their daughters to recreate cultural meals. The interviews revealed two outcomes for young immigrant women. (1) they are very interested in their cultural food AND know how to cook it or (2) they are very interested in their cultural food but do NOT know how to recreate it. At first this seemed like an individualistic trait, but a clear trend emerged. Immigrant women whose mother instilled a primordial sentiment of ethnic identity as suggested by Weinreich (2009) retained this view of their identity and used food as a vehicle of expression and identity work in adulthood. Contrastingly, immigrant women whose mother instilled a situationalist sentiment toward ethnic identity, tended to view cultural food as "a lot of effort" (Sophie) and "really complicated" (Emma), and often couldn't independently recreate dishes. The latter women were also more likely to say they were less attached to traditional celebratory foods and cultural flavours, while the former held tradition highly. Olivia provides a pertinent example of the role her mother played in her own perception of her identity:

> "She would always encourage is to eat [cultural] food... this was important to her and now when I do cook it I feel like a connection to my mom and to [country of origin] ... because she took the time to you know, show me."

Some interviewees said their mothers were unable to recreate cultural dishes because they had never been taught by their own mother which demonstrates impact of the mother's role over generations. In these cases, the interviewees expressed the desire to be able to recreate cultural meals but were unconfident in their abilities. Emma explained that her mother worked a lot so she ate a lot of convenience foods, leaving her with limited knowledge of her cultural food: "my mom was also not a great cook and she would be working a lot so she would just throw in veggies and like potatoes" later in the interview she added "I think now that I am older I would like to learn but I also don't want to put a lot of effort in". Other mother's role as a cultural custodian was impeded by a time spent in Direct Provision where the financial situation and enforced dependency prevented the mother from having the agency to choose what to feed her child. Jane, speaking about direct provision said, "You wouldn't be able to do things like learning how to cook traditional meals... wouldn't have the money."

Ava who is a mother herself provided an interesting perspective as she undertakes the role of 'cultural custodian'. In this case, Ava holds situationalist sentiment. She comments that her child "only eats Irish food." She perceives this as her fault, "that's probably my own fault...not cooking from day one you know, [child] would probably acquire that taste and eat those food if I was" she also said "I would probably like to be more like my mom and give some sort of tradition to my [child]. Whereas like because I don't do these things I think it will stop with me. [Child] won't know what the tradition even is."

From these points we can see that the gendered divide in immigrant food practices is more than passive adherence to tradition, it is in itself a deliberate recreation of a gender based tradition in which the mother shoulders the burden of socialising the children with food

practices and traditions with her attitude and skill level having influence on the meaning that the next generation attach to cultural food and what role it will play in how they express their cultural identity.

4.2 Food as an Expression of Changing Identifications Post-Migration

4.2.1 Food Symbolising Acculturation Strategy

Despite all interviewees continuing to recreate cultural food and holding a generally positive attitude toward eating cultural food, when asked if they would regularly consume 'Irish' food, that is food typically eaten in Ireland in lieu of a significant food culture, most responded that they ate Irish food as often or more often than food from their heritage culture. Ava said, "It's kind of a mixed and match now. Like I just eat whatever I like." Likewise, Sophie said "nowadays, yeah I would eat Irish types of food, like every day." These quotes suggest that the process of acculturation in a new society extends to the food practices of immigrants and involves changes to the food practice and preferences of immigrants.

Change in preference and taste is illustrated by Ava who added: "I thought [sausage rolls] was disgusting for me when I first tried it and now, I eat them like you get used to the taste" showing that she had adapted to certain 'Irish' foods. Similarly, Olivia talked about how she adapted to Irish foods said: "we would order different food that we haven't tasted before and just experience it like that just gradually." As acculturation is understood as a "multidimensional process consisting of the confluence among heritage-cultural and receiving-cultural practices, values, and identifications" (Schwartz et al. 2010:237), I suggest that changes to the food practices of immigrants in Ireland can be seen as a symbol of this 'confluence'.

I used Berry's (1980) framework of acculturation to investigate if the changing food practices of immigrants represent an expression of acculturation and therefore changing

behaviours and identifications with the receiving culture. From his four categories of acculturation; assimilation, integration, separation and marginalisation, only the first two showed up in my sample. Emma displayed an assimilatory strategy of acculturation. She distanced herself from her heritage culture food and adopted the receiving culture food. Emma explained that she identifies more as Irish, "I feel like I've practically grown up in Ireland and I am quite accustomed... Irish culture." Emma's food preference is a direct expression of her identification as Irish and not as her heritage-culture. Other interviewees, such as Ava, Sophie and Olivia quoted above, showed strong evidence of Berry's integration category. They have adapted to the receiving culture food through exposure and interaction with it but still retain their heritage culture food. The food practices of immigrants can be viewed as an expression of their changing identifications as they are exposed to the receiving culture's food, however, Berry's categories of separation and marginalisation did not present themselves in my sample which is in line with criticism about their validity but may also be due to the limited sample size.

4.2.2 Changing our Understanding of Acculturation: Enculturation and Biculturality

While the two aforementioned categories were well represented in the sample, it became clear that Berry's framework refers to behavioural change towards the 'receiving culture', diminishing the significance of the heritage culture. However, interviewees made it clear that they do not wish to diminish their heritage culture identity to 'acculturate'. Kate perceives her cultural food as intrinsically related to her identity, "at the end of the day, I can't deny the fact that I am [ethnicity], so [cultural food] … it is who I am."

Furthermore, Berry's framework and categories do not account for the agency that immigrants have over what elements of the receiving culture, in this case the food, they adopt. This agency is reflected in the following quotes from Kate and Olivia. When I asked would they independently cook cultural meals regularly, they responded with, "I wouldn't

cook exactly [cultural] food, I kind of incorporate Irish food but I'd use [cultural] seasoning" (Kate), or as Olivia put it:

> "What I would cook isn't really traditional [cultural] food, like it's definitely a lot more Irish because that's the food in the shops, but I think I still use like [cultural] flavours."

Both Olivia and Kate are consciously retaining the flavours they associate with their heritage culture while combining them with Irish produce. This shows agency in the parts of their heritage culture identity they retain and what parts of the receiving Irish identity they adopt, which suggests that immigrants in Ireland employ Weinreich's (2009:125) concept of 'enculturation', a concept that "emphasises the agentic individual incorporating cultural elements during socialisation." This allows for an understanding of how immigrants in Ireland use food to not only express their cultural and ethnic identity but can also display their identifications with the receiving culture through food.

The concept of enculturation and the process of "selectively acquiring or retaining elements of one's heritage culture while also selectively acquiring some elements from the receiving cultural context" (Schwartz et al. 2010) can also create a sense of dual identity in the immigrant or biculturalism (Benet-Martínez and Haritatos 2005), resulting in an identity which is a unique blend of both cultures. Amy expressed a sense of biculturality in her identity, "definitely a mixture of both because I'm not 100% [ethnicity] and I'm not 100% how Irish people are. I'm a mix of the two." Similarly, Olivia alluded to the fact that because her identity is a unique combination of two cultures, she feels slightly outside both:

> "That's the thing about growing up in Ireland and living here for so long, when you go back to [country of origin] I also feel like an immigrant there because I have so many mannerisms I picked up from being, you know, Irish, if I could say that? So, no matter where I am I always feel different... There's just never a time where you feel like, yeah, this is where I belong because I feel like I belong in both places."

Similarly, Emma, who identifies more with Irish culture than her heritage culture had this to say: "I've lost a lot of my [Language] and I don't feel comfortable in [country of

origin] but I'm always aware that I'm not fully Irish either." These quotes illustrate immigrants who 'choose' to consciously retain their heritage culture and the Irish identity, as in Berry's integration strategy, and those who reject the heritage culture in order to almost fully adopt the Irish identity, as in Berry's assimilation strategy. However, these categories overlook the significance of what Weinreich (2009) calls the biographical identifications of the immigrant in how they experience and therefore express their identity.

In both cases the interviewee is unable to erase what can be understood as "their biographical history role of successively made identifications with individuals throughout childhood and beyond." (Weinreich 2009:130), thus it can be said that heritage culture cannot be diminished as required by the conceptualisation of 'acculturation' which considers adopting the receiving culture at odds with retaining the heritage culture, but rather, that the enculturation process allows the immigrant to access the full spectrum of identifications amalgamations such as biculturality as described by Olivia and Emma above. Thus I suggest that Immigrants in Ireland tend to 'enculturate' their food practices to express new identifications with the receiving culture while retaining important aspects of their heritage culture, rather than 'acculturate' their food and eating, which suggests that they lose their heritage culture in the process.

4.2.3 Learning Begins in the Lunchbox

Research found that non-White immigrant groups felt they had to consume more stereotypically 'American' foods to foster a sense of belonging (Gundelman et al. 2011:959). A similar feeling was reiterated by interviewees who arrived in Ireland at school age conveyed a similar sense of pressure to eat a "normal lunch" (Amy) in order to be perceived to be "the same as the other kids" (Olivia). Emma recalls times where she deliberately didn't bring a lunch to school in order to avoid bringing cultural food:

> "there was definitely a few times where I would intentionally leave my lunch at home because I didn't want anyone to see what my mom made me for my lunch that day....kids would say 'what's in your lunchbox? That's weird!' and so the more Irish food we kind of got... like the less attention it brought to us."

Even at a young age, Emma, like many immigrant children, was acutely aware that as an immigrant, she stood out from the class and to foster a sense of belonging she felt it necessary to distance herself from her heritage culture food, utilising her lunchbox to adhere to the food 'norms' of the receiving culture.

Amy, who continued to bring cultural food until secondary school rather than adapting to the typical Irish lunch foods as quickly as Emma tried to, recalled being singled out:

> "[the other children] wouldn't shy away from telling me what was wrong with me...they'd just be like 'oh God what are you eating! why would you do that?' it was really tough... I just didn't really get why they had such a problem with me or my lunch. But as I got older, it did kind of click because I started like eating more, like, normal foods like when I started in [secondary school]"

A clear theme emerged among the interviewees showing that immigrants who attended school in Ireland, at primary or secondary level, consciously adjusted their lunchbox contents to foster a sense of belonging within the classroom and ultimately to demonstrate their identification with the broader receiving culture. This echoes Gidden's theory of reflexive modernity as the interviewees allude to reflecting on their own identity and adjusting it based off new incoming information in the school setting to curate a narrative of self that is congruent with both their heritage culture and the receiving culture (Giddens 1991).

Interestingly, many interviewees referenced a school initiatives like "multicultural day" (Kate) or "world cultures day" (Olivia), in which the students were encouraged to bring in food from their heritage culture to share with the class. Olivia looked back fondly, recalling how the other children would "finally taste what I had been eating and they were like 'oh this is actually good' and like... I just felt really proud to be [from country of origin]" Likewise, Kate mentioned "even the teachers were trying it."

The school environment can provide the young immigrants first encounter with the idea that they are identified as being part of a minority group which can influence a change in their expression of identity through food in order to fit in or create a sense of belonging as in the case of their lunch boxes, but conversely, school initiatives such as cultural days effectively allow immigrants to embrace their cultural identity and allow a space for their cultures to be accessed by the dominant group rather than the immigrant always seeking access to the receiving culture, effectively shifting the relationship between the two, furthermore it highlights food as an important bridge between cultures as Sophie reflects "food is the easiest form of culture to recreate and share with like other people".

4.3 Institutional Food: A Barrier to Identity Expression

4.3.1 Direct Provision as a Total Institution

While the Direct Provision System has been likened to Goffman's Total Institutions many times (Manandhar et al. 2006, Barry 2014, Loyal and Quilley 2016), this research focuses on institutionalised food and its effects on cultural self-expression for individuals who have spent a portion of their childhoods within the centres. Three of the interviewees, Rachel, Jane and Kate lived in Direct Provision for 7, 11 and 12 years respectively. From the interviews, three characteristics of a total institution were identified as obstructing the ability to express cultural identity through food in the centre.

1) The process of self-mortification.

Loyal and Quilley (2016:79) argue that direct provision centres "progressively strip them of any vestige of autonomy and self-determination." The interviewees with refugee status reiterated this idea with regard to the formally administered food within Direct Provision. Rachel perceived it as a method of control: "They control your whole life, even what you eat and you just eat the same thing with the same people every single day." The

food in Direct Provision is a factor in the process of self-mortification because it removes any individuality and choice which are essential to cultural expression. Jane said: “whether you liked the food or not it wasn’t your choice. You had to eat what you were given.” In Direct Provision food becomes a tool of mortification as all agency is removed.

2) Batch Living

Batch living is another characteristic of a Total Institution that prevented the use of food as an expression of culture. Rachel commented that residents were seen as a homogenous group, echoing Goffman’s concept of the ‘inmate’. She was assumed to be Nigerian within the centre: “people think I am [Nigerian] because I’m black. The Irish people in that institution just assume that we’re all Nigerian.” Again, Jane, who originates from southeast Europe had a similar experience which has left a lasting impact on her diet: “even now I eat Nigerian food but that’s because of the influence [Direct Provision Centre].”

Because the largest ethnic group in the Direct Provision centre is Nigerians, the interviewees commented that they would occasionally be provided with Nigerian cultural food. Thus, it can be argued that the forced homogeneity of the group diminished food as an expression of culture within the system as the other cultural identities were funnelled in to one, or as Rachel said, “it forced you to become Nigerian in a way.”

Furthermore, the regimented mealtimes in direct provision were also flagged as an impediment to expressing identifications with the receiving culture. Kate recalls having to quit playing GAA: “the training was at the same time as dinner hours, so I had to quit.” This shows that formally administered batch living not only supresses the use of food to express cultural identity but also acts as a barrier to forming identifications with the receiving culture.

3) Binary Management

Binary management refers to the two groups within a Total Institution, the inmates made up of asylum seekers in this case, and the staff. From the interviews, staff also asserted power over the consumptive process, according to Jane this was often arbitrary: "Some staff were mean, and they didn't want to give [extra provisions]." The interviewees felt that the staff utilised food to supress individuality and expression of identity within the centres, which is reflected in this quote from Rachel about the staff in the dining hall "they treat you so degrading. Just throw the food at you sometimes. They look at you like you're a piece of sh*t and you feel like that's all you actually are." This quote exemplifies how Staff in total institutions such as Direct Provision can use their power over the consumptive process to supress any expression of identity.

4.3.2 Enforced Dependency and Disrupted Socialisation

I asked the interviewees with refugee status if they felt it was possible to learn about the food traditions from their heritage culture and to therefore maintain a sense of identity. Their answer was simply no. This indicates a significant disruption in the socialisation process based on food and food traditions, in Kate's case, a disruption of over 12 years. Research shows that the socialisation process is crucial for forming identity (Weinreich 2009, Parasecoli 2014). Kate acknowledged the impact of this disruption in the interview saying: "we only started eating African food a bit late and [mom] would have liked us to adapt to our flavours, because sometimes she makes it and I'm like 'Oh my God that's too spicy'." Her extended stay in Direct Provision left lasting impacts on Kate's ability to enjoy authentic cultural food.

The primary cause of this disruption, according to the interviewees, was the enforced dependency within Direct Provision. Loyal and Quilley (2016: 78) argue that denying Asylum Seekers the right to work not only prevents their integration to the community but leaves them financially dependent on the state, causing "food poverty" (Barry 2014:46).

Talking about learning cultural recipes, Jane vocalises this point: “If you have the money to go out and buy the ingredients then it might be possible but if not then no, and in most people’s cases they don’t have enough money.” Kate also commented on the financial strain on her mother: “my mom...just had to cope, because you know, you don’t get that much money.”

Outside of financial reasons, the socialisation process was also impeded by batch living as described above, in the sense that cultural traditions were not catered to by the centre, they received the same type of food, generally processed food from the receiving culture, regardless of whether it was a period of cultural celebration or otherwise. Kate said: “on special occasions we got hot dogs. Us kids looked forward to it, but my mom would never understand it.”

Consequently, the institutional nature of Direct Provision impacts on the ability of immigrants who have been through the system to use food as an expression of their identity and culture because it disrupts the socialisation process by enforcing dependency and therefore food poverty on the residents and by providing food from the receiving culture even on “special occasions”.

4.3.3 Resisting as a Form of Identity Expression

The interviewees compared living in Direct Provision to a prison sentence, for example, Rachel said: “It’s all limited, the food, the life...It’s prison without a sentence date because at least prisoners know when they’re getting out.” Considering this comparison, it was interesting to find that much like the prisoners studied by Godderis (2006) and Ugelvik (2011), the residents in Direct Provision used resisting the formally administered food as a form of identity expression.

Ugelvik (2011:48) notes that prisoners "counter the threats to self and reinstate themselves as agents with the capacity for autonomy", a process reflected in the lived experience of the interviewees. Kate described consistent fighting in the dining hall as adults tried to reassert their autonomy over their body. Similarly, all three interviewees shared how, like prisoners, they carried out a degree of "modifying and transforming the official food" (Ugelvik 2011:51) using sauces and seasonings they could buy cheaply.

Hunger strike is regarded as the ultimate resistance to the institution (Conlon 2013, Ugelvik 2011), however as children, the interviewees resisted in more age-appropriate ways. Rachel spoke about her own resistance to the institutional food: "I fought with so many [staff] because I couldn't have two plates...I grinded their gears because I was that one kid who knew their rights." By fighting with staff in order to assert herself as 'the child who knows her rights', Rachel uses the act of resisting the bureaucratic and institutional rule of "one person, one plate" (Rachel) as a form of identity expression.

Jane described how the residents resisted the formally administered food: "they would gather up the provisions and then they'd sell them like secretly? And then they might use you know the profits to buy like food they actually want." Godderis (2006:62) suggests that losing control over the food one eats is related to a sense of "estrangement between one's self and one's body" so by countering the administered food through hidden food practices like reselling and profiting off provisions, the asylum seekers are able to not only regain a sense of agency over their situation and the consumptive process, but benefit financially from doing so, allowing them the purchasing power to express their cultural identities.

By resisting and countering the formal food provisions in the Direct Provision, the residents are able to regain agency and assert a sense of identity perhaps as an individual who can resist the institution rather than their cultural identity, but that is not to downplay the

importance of this type of identity work as it is through this that the confined asylum seeker, much like the prisoner, can reconstruct themselves as “Someone able to make the best out of a difficult situation” (Ugelvik 2011: 56)

5. Conclusion

This research explored how immigrants in Ireland experience food and food practices and how they use food to express their identity. I also investigated the consequences of institutionalised food on the process of expressing identity and integrating into society by focusing on the institutional reception of asylum seekers within the direct provision system. Ireland's history of containment and erasure of vulnerable identities makes institutionalisation and consequent exclusion of asylum seekers a salient topic in contemporary Ireland, one which cannot go ignored as previous institutions were allowed to.

Consistent with research in other countries, this research shows the immigrants in Ireland effectively employ food as a vehicle for the expression of their cultural identity in the receiving society. The interviewees spoke fondly of the food from their heritage culture, and the feelings of nostalgia that it evoked. Interestingly, consuming the food was only one element in this form of identity expression. Many interviewees found identity consolidation began before the food reached the table, first in the act of purchasing cultural food in specialist stores and then later in the of preparing cultural food. Therefore, it is more correct to suggest that immigrants express cultural identity through 'food practices' rather than simply 'food' to encompass the entirety of the process.

Moreover, this research demonstrates that immigrants also utilise food in the process of integration in order to display new affiliation and identification with the receiving society. The interviewees displayed conscious adoption of typically Irish foods, exhibiting enculturation. This allowed them to use food to express a twofold identity, that of their heritage culture and that of the receiving culture without diminishing the former in favour of the latter.

Focusing on the institutional nature of food in direct provision, the research revealed that it is not only the lack of agency over what asylum seekers eat that limits their ability to express cultural identity through food. Rather, it is the institutional nature of the entire consumptive process, from the canteen style diner (batch living) to the bureaucratic power of the staff over the food (binary management). The interviewees also spoke about the lasting impact of the system due to prolonged disruption of the socialisation process, echoing Goffman's idea of "disculturation" (Goffman 1991:23) which rendered the refugees unable to fully connect with their identity through food once outside the system.

My research of Irish immigrants keeps in line with global literature from the field of immigrant and culture studies, showing that food is a universally employed technique of cultural identity expression and retention, but also for integration and formulating new unique blends of identity within the receiving culture. The latter point provides significant evidence in support of Weinreich's (2009) argument that acculturation as a concept is outdated, and that the discussion should be reframed through the lens of agentic enculturation. Finally, in terms of further study, I believe this research serves as impetus for further investigations of the long-term impacts of direct provision that occur when the asylum seek leaves the system. My study found that in the domain of food alone, direct provision leaves lasting negative impact on the asylum seekers ability to express their culture and take part in cultural food practices far beyond their time within the system, yet the lasting effects of direct provision in any area of the asylum seekers life remain understudied, despite the value that this research would have toward refugee and migrant health in Ireland.

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7. Appendices

7.1 Interview Guide (General)

1. Basic info:
    a. Age
    b. Years in Ireland
    c. Refugee or Immigrant (if refugee – how long was the stay in direct provision)
2. Tell me a bit about food from your country of origin?
3. When you think of food from [the heritage culture] what comes to mind?
4. Who does/ did the cooking at home?
    a. Does food bring your family together?
5. In your home, do you consume food from your culture regularly?
6. Does cultural food feature at times of celebration?
7. How did you learn about your cultural food?
    a. Do you think it is important for children with immigrant backgrounds to learn about the food from their heritage culture?
8. Tell me about your experience of food in Ireland.
    a. For Refugee interviewees: Tell me about your experience of food outside of direct provision.
    b. What was it like to have so many unfamiliar foods around you?
9. Do you buy cultural food often?
    a. **OR** Do you have any experience with specialist food stores?
10. Do you ever have to substitute ingredients in traditional or cultural dishes?
11. Do you think passing on food traditions is something you would like to do?
12. Is it difficult to maintain cultural traditions and practices in Ireland?

13. [if they attended school in Ireland]
    a. Did you bring cultural food to school?
    b. Was there ever any comments about your cultural food?
    c. Do you bring cultural food to school/work now?
14. How did you find the process of settling into Irish society and Irish culture?
15. Do you think your tastes have changed since arriving in Ireland?

7.2 Interview Guide (with Direct Provision)

1. Can you describe a mealtime in direct provision?
2. What were the staff like? (specifically mealtime staff).
    a. Do you feel like the opinions/complaints of residents were taken in to account?
3. Do you feel like an effort was made to provide you with food that was familiar to you?
4. What is your opinion on the type of food you were served (health, variety, freshness)
5. Do you think it is possible to learn about cultural food and food traditions in direct provision?
6. Did you start to eat cultural food more when you left direct provision?
    a. **If yes:** What did it feel like to be able to eat your cultural food when you left direct provision?
    b. How do mealtimes in direct provision compare to meal times now?
7. If you could change anything about the provision of food in Direct Provision, what would it be?

7.3 Interview Invitation

Dear [name]

My name is Danielle Keane and I am a final year sociology student in Maynooth University. As part of my final year studies, I am conducting a research project into the food habits and food experiences of immigrants in Ireland, and the significance food plays in everyday migrant life. As someone who is vocal about your experiences with [direct provision/ asylum seeking process/ race issues/ etc.] I wanted to reach out to you and invite you to take part in my research as I believe that you have valuable insights in this area which will enrich my research. I am trying to capture personal experiences of integration in Ireland through the lens of food and culture.

I am respectfully asking if you would agree to one interview with me which will last no longer than 60 minutes and which will be conducted at a time convenient to you, over teams or zoom in order to comply with covid-19 guidelines.

Your responses and your identity will be kept completely confidential – I will transcribe the interviews and delete them and anonymise all respondents in the write up.

In return for your help with the project, I would be happy to share with you a copy of the final project once it has been reviewed by my supervisor, Professor Mary Corcoran.

7.4 Interview Transcript

[OK, so just before we begin, I want to get verbal consent that you understand that this interview is being recorded with the understanding that once I have transcribed it on my project has been submitted, the interview will be deleted. To ensure your confidentiality, I will change any identifiable details such as your name. You don't have to answer any questions you don't want to and we can stop the interview at any time.]

KATE: OK, that's all fine by me.

[OK, great. So, I just want to begin with some very basic background information, more for statistics than anything else. So, if you can tell me your age. And how old you were when you come to Ireland, please?]

KATE: Um, I am 20 years old now and I was about 3 turning 4 when I came to Ireland and I was in direct provision from that age till I was like 17 I'd say so. I was in direct provision for like a couple of years like 10 years just moving up and down the country. So, 10/12 years yeah.

[And what is your country of origin?]

KATE: Um, I am from Nigeria so yeah that's home.

[So, you were quite young coming to Ireland, so you may not remember, but could you tell me a little bit about the type of food you ate in Nigeria?]

KATE: I really wouldn't have any memory of that because I was really young. But growing up, your parents would teach, you know this is a food that, like your cultural food kind of stuff. So, I wouldn't have experience, but I would know like cultural foods if you get me?

[Yeah, of course. And when you were living at home, who would have done the cooking in your house?}

KATE: My mom does the majority of the cooking.

[And would you ever have helped her out or helped her in the kitchen?]

KATE: So yeah, I definitely help her out in the kitchen and because of that I'm able to cook and survive in college and from helping her I just learned a lot of stuff, because I didn't grow up back home, so like I learned, a lot of stuff about like African food, Nigerian and food and everything like that.

[So do you feel like it was important for your mom to make sure that you knew all about your cultural food?]

KATE: Yeah, definitely, definitely, because in direct provision we really weren't given like cultural food like you were kind of like... for me, it wasn't a huge thing because like it was all I knew. But for my mom she didn't like the food that they were giving.

[Yeah, of course I yeah, that must have been hard, especially as an adult coming in.]

KATE: Exactly

[So, when you think of Nigerian food, what kind of food comes to mind?]

KATE: I'd say Rice and like spicy food and just loads - you know when you just think of like colourful food, like different flavours, different smells, kind of stuff, it's kind of just like it's kind of warming. So, I'd say that, like spicy for definite, though, and colourful.

[OK, that's a good description, and then I want to ask about times of celebration. So, say if you were celebrate... I don't know if you celebrate Christmas, do you?

KATE: Yeah, I do I do. I do

[OK. So, if you're celebrating Christmas or birthdays even, would you eat more would Nigerian food feature on those days?]

KATE: Literally just Nigerian food like that's why we look forward to those times because my mom gets into the kitchen... we're all in the kitchen we're kind of cooking cultural foods. But like we have a Turkey. I don't know if that's Irish or whatever but like we do have majority Nigerian food for those events.

[and you just said there that you look forward to those days. So, is Nigerian food more of a treat in your household for special occasions or would it be like a very regular occurrence?]

KATE: It's a regular staple most days. But like you know, when you kind of have the whole Nigerian feast, or like a buffet of all your favourite... because my mom doesn't always cook your favourite foods you know, just like the easy ones to make during the week. But like during Christmas you're just like 'Oh mom, I've been craving this so can you make this' or something like you get me? Stuff like that and the snacks - So like that's why it's kind of special too yeah.

[Um so OK. So, I want to just turn to your experiences of food in Ireland - now I know you were in direct provision until you were 17 so, maybe we'll talk about your experiences being outside of direct provision first.

So, when you buy your ingredients for say, Christmas or something, can you buy Nigerian food in like supermarkets like Tesco or Super Value? Or do you have to go to specialist stories?]

KATE: I don't think you can buy them in Tesco like you can buy like seasoning and some stuff you need flour and rice and stuff like that. But if you're looking for specific stuff there are like now there's loads of African shops open so you kind of go there or let's say if you're looking for Nigerian meat because - I don't know why but like the chicken is kind of just different so they just order it from Nigerian suppliers or people who go from Nigeria and import the stuff, so you just go to them kind of people.

[So, you said that there's loads of African shops now, but when you first started buying your own food from these shops, they weren't that many. Is that what you mean?]

KATE: Yeah, there wasn't as many as they are now.

And do you think it's more expensive to buy food from the Nigerian shops? Or is it kind of in line with the supermarket?

KATE: No, it’s so much more expensive, so like that's why... Like even sometimes when we do want a lot of Nigerian food, my mom just like you guys don't understand how expensive it was or it is. I think that's why it was really hard in direct provision. So, my mom kind of had to just cope because you know you don't get that much money. So, she kind of just had to make do with what we had. So yeah, it was really expensive to actually get that whole Nigerian food kind of stuff because they are really expensive.

[Yeah, I understand what you mean. So, I just want to circle back to what you were saying about Christmas - you said that it's something you look forward to and enjoy it and I just wondered if you could kind of describe to me how it feels to eat Nigerian food even though you live in Ireland?]

KATE: for me, because I don't have much experience in Nigeria. So, because like I grew up in Ireland, I kind of sometimes say I'm Irish because I kind of like have the Irish accent? All I know is Ireland but then like I know I was born in Nigeria, so like it's kind of just gives me kind of like a sense of identity. It makes me feel a part of the culture in a way, even though you know, I might not know much about Nigeria because I grew up here it's just nice to have that little kind of like “home” kind of thing, like do you get me when I eat the food and enjoy the food it’s a connection. yeah...that's kind of how it makes me feel.

[Do you feel like it's a link to Nigeria?]

KATE: That's it, that's the thing it's like a link like, even though I'm not there, I feel like I'm kind of like still connected because even though when you're not at home, you're able to have your Mom's favourite food and she tells you how her mom used to make it and how her mom taught her. So, you kind of hear the stories and everything like that. So, it's really cute.

[OK, so you think that the food is kind of a way to share more than just the food culture it brings in stories?]

KATE: Yeah, exactly.

[Great, that's really that's actually lovely to hear. So, in your opinion, is it important to maintain a link to Nigeria even though you've been here so long?]

KATE: Yeah, it is. Because like at the end of the day, I can't deny the fact that I am naturally I am Nigerian. So, it kind of does give me like... it is who I am. So, like getting to know or getting to learn about the country is really important to me because you do hear a lot of the time people saying, “go back to your own country”. So, like. It's nice to actually know what your own country is. You get me?

Yeah, and to have a positive aspect of your culture too and do think if you have kids that you would pass on Nigerian food to them?

KATE: Definitely! I’d get my mom to come over and like cook and everything like that because I know I probably wouldn't do it as good of a justice as she would for passing it on, but definitely I would feed my kids Nigerian food as well.

[Why do you think that would be important to do?]

KATE: Just so that they kind of know or like they have that heritage as well and even just with my way that my mom raised me and just telling the stories that my mom told me or just telling them about how my mom used to make that for me I just passing it on. Yeah, and I feel like I am going to marry a Nigerian person so it would be good to know how to make Nigerian food at the same time.

[Well, maybe he should know how to make it for you!]

KATE: Exactly.

[OK, so focusing on how you eat now and especially as a college student this is interesting - so I'm wondering do you regularly cook Nigerian food for yourself? Or is that just something you would eat when you go home to your mom?]

KATE: I don't... see the thing is. Yeah, I wouldn't cook exactly Nigerian food, I kind of incorporate like Irish food and Nigerian food but I'd use Nigerian seasoning and just stuff that I've learned from my mom. I just add it to the Irish food because I probably cannot cook Nigerian food that well. And I like when I go back home my mom is just like, oh I've made this for you, I made this for you like and then it makes me excited.

[Ok so you would say that you've kind of merged together Irish food with Nigerian food?]

KATE: Yeah exactly.

[OK, so the next one I was just going to ask you by substitute ingredients, but that's basically what you've just said there that's fine. So, I just want to ask you if you feel like living in Ireland makes it difficult to retain a lot of your other cultural practices outside of food because I know you said that's already important, but I just wondering about other types of practices?

KATE: like living in Ireland... I don't know, like I kind of did realize it, especially like because, like my mom brought me up with like proper like Nigerian Mannerism and stuff like that. So, like one thing we have, like have in Nigeria, is when you see like someone older than you or someone's mom or something like that, you have to kneel down and greet them and be like 'oh good afternoon' kind of thing. And when I used to meet my friends Mom or something like that - I just.. I greeted her in that way and then she was just like 'Oh my God you're such a good child' but my friend was

just like ‘why are you doing that?’ because they were born in Ireland, so they didn't like grow up knowing the same thing that I learned so it was just kind of like.... should I be embarrassed that I know this or should I like the proud kind of thing? But like it is kind, it is hard because it's kind of like two different environments. You get me?

[So do you find that the cultures are kind of at odds with each other?]

KATE: Yeah, at odds – it's just hard to practice. You get me? because like what could be good in Nigeria, could be very embarrassing to do in Ireland.

[Yes, I get you. You said you were 17 so you would have experienced so you would experience all of secondary school in Ireland?]

KATE: Yeah. all of it.

[OK, so I just want to turn to your lunch box specifically. I just wondering what type of food you would have brought to school with you when you're in secondary school.]

KATE: When I was in secondary school, I would just bring normal food because like growing up in direct provision, we were kind of just given like normal food. So, I just had like bread, sandwiches, yogurt, and yeah it was just basic stuff, nothing special. Oh, I completely forgot - like sometimes my mom would make like little Nigerian snacks and some of my friends, some of their parents are really good at making Nigerian snacks. So, they go to school, and they sold it because a lot of people enjoyed it. So yeah, that was going on as well.

[It’s so funny what kids get up to like looking back]

KATE: I know, they were so cool at the time too.

[Ok so now you're in college do you bring Nigerian food for lunch to work or to school with you now?]

KATE: I do bring like a little bit of Nigerian food, but like I have to make it a little bit healthy because Nigerian food is kind of like very not unhealthy... like it's very like high oil, a lot of rice. So, instead of using rice I use like couscous or something like that. I make little stuff like that and I really enjoy it like so. it's completely different, like more nutritious and filling, but yeah, it does the job. Maybe because I'm older as well and I'm bigger so. Yeah.

[So, do you mean that you find out hearing food doesn't fit in with your lifestyle now? So, you kind of change it to work for you?]

KATE: Yeah, exactly yeah.

OK, that's good. That's good. So, continuing with like lunches, what is your experiences eating Nigerian food around Irish people like in the classroom for example?]

KATE: I used to get like comments, it's not that it smells but like they just be like ‘oh what is that’ kind of stuff, it's not a bad comment but like some people sometimes you won't like the food, or they say like “oh that looks funny” - just that kind of stuff even though it's like normal for any other Nigerian person. But one of the good things we had in secondary school was Multicultural Day. So especially because there was a good few Nigerian or like African people in my secondary school, we’d bring loads of food and it would be nice because the Irish people will try it, even the teachers were trying it and they were like ‘Oh my God, this is actually nice... like it doesn't look nice but it's actually nice’ do you get me? So yeah, I enjoyed that, that's actually one of my best memories.

[And were you able to partake in that in secondary school?]

KATE: Not really, but like I was able to eat the food! but just like my mum wouldn't be able to like....Like you know when you're making food you have to kind of make like a good few, so my mom wasn’t able to get that much stuff to make it and if she was going to make it she would make it for us to have at home rather than like feeding the school.

[Yeah, and that makes complete sense as well. OK, so I just want to ask you a couple of questions about direct provision if you don't know if there's anything you don't want to answer just say. It's completely fine. So, the first question I just kind of want to start very broad and ask if you could describe a typical mealtime in direct provision to me?]

KATE: I remember it being like three times... I don't know if it was two mealtimes or three mealtimes. But basically, there was like a dining area like a huge kitchen. So like you kinda just go there, collect your food and like I say like oh gosh, I think there was 12:00 o'clock... I'm really unsure about the breakfast one because I kept on moving from centre to centre, some centres did breakfast, some centres didn't - but there would be lunch like 12 o'clock till like 2 o'clock. And then would be dinner for my 5 o'clock till 6/ 7 o'clock so like, let's see you had those time frames to like go get your food. But like, the hard thing about it was some days like you're hungrier or you want more food. So, like let's say you ask for more food and they'll be like "no you can't have anymore. You can't." - like that kind of stuff and because some people did have big families so having to share the food. Kind of distributing it, um, and what else... just like sometimes the food just wasn't ...you just kind of have to take what you are given to be honest. And if it wasn't to your taste, or if you didn't like what was on the menu, just kind of had to like, not eat or like he just had to like it. You get me?

[Yeah, I do.]

KATE: You didn't get a say in what they cooked for you.

[thinking specifically about the dining area where you have your food. What was the atmosphere like when you were eating like when it will come to like say dinner time?]

KATE: it was just pretty loud like it was. Just loads of people. I feel like sometimes it was good because you'd like... after school we'd literally all run to the dining and get our food before it closes or something like and we'd all just sit down and have our food together, talk about school. but then sometimes it be really like kind of scary because there would be adults fighting with the people who work there trying to get

them to listen to them about the food they wanted and like trying to ask for more food saying like ‘oh how can you give me this’ or ‘I don't want this all this stuff’ so it was kind of like... sometimes there were good days, sometimes there are bad days in the place to get me?

[So, the adults would sometimes fight with the staff members and I just wondering, did the staff often interact with you during mealtimes?]

KATE: Yeah, it was very much like we're just the staff kind of stuff like just ‘what do you want’, that kind of stuff. But some staff were...majority of staff were like that but some staff you kind of did get to know and like they would be ok. I just need to get my laptop charger...That was a close one it was on one percent!

[No worries! So, you mentioned earlier about the food you ate in direct provision wouldn't really be cultural - and I'm just wondering, was there ever ...do you feel like there was an effort made to provide food that was familiar to you or familiar to the other groups like on say special days?]

KATE: there really wasn't. I think it would have even been hard because I don't think they had anybody who could cook cultural foods like that for us. So it was just like, yeah, it was kind of like on special occasions we got hot dogs. Us kids we would look forward to it, but like my mom would never understand it. Like I think it was Saturdays we got pizza or hot dogs and all the kids would go cray, but the adults were just like ‘what the heck is this?’

[It’s crazy what you look forward to when your little! So, what was your opinion on the type of food they gave you then? Do you think it was healthy?]

KATE: Yeah, like. I did not care about it at that age, but like when I do look back, I realized like the food that we were getting was not …. I feel like the people who were cooking the food. We're just cooking to cook. They weren't like they didn't really care or like let's say someone get food on like let's say the meat in it was undone... they wouldn't care there just like “OK?” like you know it's not a restaurant, you can't get a refund or anything like that, you take what I give you so. Yeah, like there was like

salad and stuff like that but like I feel like there wasn't really much. ...Like they didn't really care about your health, like they didn't really try like healthy foods. There wasn't like many healthy food options. And then at the same time they really weren't like.... How can I say? I don't know how to say it, but like there was just a lot of processed food we like... I just feel like they didn't really care about the like well-being of the people they were cooking for. They were just looking to like cook.

[It's like they just were just trying to tick the box that they fed you?]

KATE: Yeah that's what I was trying to say!

[Do you think that affected your relationship with food today?]

KATE: Definitely, I feel like the way that I ate before it was just not good. Because of like the way that the thing worked like. Like your family just gets like a few plates of food and like sometimes like you're able to take some home. So, like your family got a few plates of food.
So, like, let's say if you're hungry like you know the late like munchies or whatever - there's no more food like there's no more food so you kind of just have to like... I feel like I have more freedom when I eat like I can eat when I want what I want kind of stuff it would like that's the kind of relationship I mean with food. It's not like 'oh I have to just eat what they give me or when like when the food is like given' you get me? so it's nice to like cook at your own time make what you want kind of stuff so yeah.

[And when you would say if you got hungry and it was night time and you couldn't eat anymore, like how did that feel for you?]

KATE: like thinking about it was just so sad because like you kind of just like I feel like. It's just kind of something that I kind of had to learn to cope with, like and it's so bad, but like you kind of did have to learn to cope with the odd few times, I'd be lucky to just like eat a bowl of cereal during the night or something like that. But like you kind of just had to like suppress that hunger and be like OK tomorrow I'm gonna have like try get a Big Breakfast to try get like as much food as possible you get me?

[So, you felt like you had to overeat at the mealtimes to make up for it?]

KATE: exactly, exactly.

[So the other question I have is earlier on you were saying that you feel like it's important to your mom that you know how to cook Nigerian food and it's important for you that you could pass it on as well. So from your experience of direct provision, do you think it's possible for food, culture and food traditions to be passed on while in the centres?]

KATE: Not when I was there but I think if they changed things it would be. I feel like it's possible like even like I feel like my mom or like even like other parents would be more than happy to like even just do like little cooking classes or like even just like help out in the kitchen. Do you get me? My mom said that like, a lot of the time she was just at home not doing anything, so she would have even like being excited to do stuff like that like she would happily cook and just like just give people more of an option, you get me? And like I think it would have been just so much nicer. But no not the way it is now, we had no way to do that.

[A lot of people would have benefited from that, like even just to have something different to eat would have been a great thing. Yeah, you're definitely right. That should be taken into account. Thank you for answering those questions about your experience in direct provision.]

KATE: no problem.

[So I'm wondering how when you got here first and you were trying to find your feet and trying to find your community here, how was that for you, could you talk a little about settling in?]

KATE: Secondary school played a huge role in that like outside of the direct provision - I think you kind of got to mingle like with other kids in direct provision. But like school paid a huge role in that because you didn't get to meet people like

other Irish people and get to talk to them and learn stuff from them. Even just like changing the way you speak like I feel like you know when you put on an Irish accent, but it just becomes natural now. So, like, just like learning from other kids and just even making friends like Irish friends and then getting to go to their house and be like 'Oh my God, this is what a house should look like this is like this, this is like that' and then sports as well because like I feel like when like you're from different places or like people just have different upbringings and stuff like that - when you play a sport like the sport is detained that just stays constant like even getting to play Gaelic and learning about it and just playing with other kids were just like... that was one of the biggest things that helped me like integrate into society the most.

[When did you start playing Gaelic?]

KATE: I played Gaelic in primary school like I say around third class is that third class in primary school. We started playing Gaelic and then our team got really good and then we got into the seniors and then we were just we really did well we did well. Then I started playing basketball though. I moved on to basketball, but yeah. I love basketball more. like my coach was American so like it was just so cool to meet an American person. I was like "Oh my God" and he just really encouraged you like one thing he actually he did is - basically when you live in direct provision centres...my mom did not drive. So, like basically you can only get the bus back home at a certain time, because they pick up all the school kids at a certain at the same time. So, like it made it hard to do sport, but my basketball coach - That's why I kind of stopped playing Gaelic because I couldn't attend the training sessions and sometimes the training was at the same time as dinner hours, so I had to quit but my basketball coach would always.... like he kind of found out that we lived in Direct Provision. I didn't really tell teachers or anything like that, but he found out we lived there and like he said me and my sister were really good at basketball. So, like he'd actually drive us back to the centre. And like you know.... he just kind of encouraged me. I was like I gotta get better at basketball because of him, because like he's putting so much effort to take us to training pick us back up and that was just so lovely.

[Yeah, some people are just so kind, that's so nice to hear too. So, school and sports were important to integrating, do you think food was ever important?]

KATE: Yeah, like that's the same thing with the intercultural days. Like you get to learn about other cultures, not just like Nigerian food like you get to see the way that Asian people eat um, just like - even Irish food like I actually learn to love a lot of Irish foods that I never thought I'd enjoy like even the Irish stew. I actually love Irish stew so much; my mom doesn't understand why but like no Irish stew. So, like it was just really nice like taste different foods because a food actually like teaches you like. 'Oh, this country lies there potatoes. This country likes their rice. This country likes their spices' it is very interesting like is very interesting.

[So we're going to socialisation as a topic, so when I talk about socialisation, I mean sort of like what influences in your childhood and upbringing made you who you are today and especially in the area of food. So, you mentioned earlier that you on special occasions like Christmas that you would eat Nigerian food and sometimes you cook Nigerian food and I was just wondering, can you describe to me like the process of how you would learn about Nigerian food?]

KATE: Oh yeah, always like. My mum would constantly just tell me like, 'oh next time I'm cooking in the kitchen you should come. You should come down and just learn' because when she cooks I'll be like 'Oh my God this taste so nice' my mom would be like 'yeah and it taste even nicer if you helped make it' because you know like when you make something you kind of just enjoy more because you made it. But yeah, like and then it just kind of encouraged me more like being the kitchen because I kind of wanted to know how did she make it? How did she make it taste so good? Like that kind of stuff. So how does she do without burning it? Like those kind of things. So yeah, I definitely - she kind of encouraged me to be in the kitchen for that so like I have all sisters, so she was like when you go to your husband's house you need to be able to cook this kind of stuff so we're kind of like well trying here.

Great! So, we briefly mentioned specialist shops, like for Nigerian food or African shops as you said, but I just wondering if you could talk to me about your experience with these shops?]

KATE: My friend is Lithuanian and she we go to them shops as well. She does say it feels like home and then like she'd be reading out the ingredients in her language. So like, that's really cool. But um, yeah, the African shops. Like I don't know because I've never been back home. But I feel like it's what home should feel like or what Nigeria should feel like. It's kind of just like they just be speaking Yoruba and just like chatting in it. It really is good vibes, it really is. Like the way like everybody would - you know like when you go to the shop like the cash assistance doesn't really... they ask you how is your day yeah? But like they're proper like interested in you and they want to like get to know you. Sometimes it's weird but like... well we call them uncles but let's say just a man is just at the till like you called him uncle and it's kind of like just a bond like kind of thing. I don't know how to explain it. It's just how it is and like they were like ask you oh, this that and the other and you just start chatting to them and it's just really nice, I like it anyway.

[Do you feel like those shops are kind of like almost like a glimpse of Nigeria for you?]

KATE: Yeah, and it's more like I feel like it's more informal. When you go to shop like that compared to Tesco. It's more informal. Like you kind of just feel like you know the people already just because they're like from the same cultural background as you are.

[And what about when you first arrived, do you think your mom would have went to African shops a lot?]

KATE: yeah my mom was like I feel like she went like she would probably go to African shop just to like make friends and just so I get to know people in the area and like let say if she had a question, she would definitely go there and ask them like "oh where do I go to this, that and the other" like my mom spoke English well, yeah, but like you know sometimes you just... see me and my sisters all speak English really well. So, like sometimes she just needs someone to like speak her language with her. So, like she enjoyed just going there and just even just seeing like. Because it feels like for me it feels like home for her, it really feels like home. She got me. So like, yeah, she goes there and she just like sees the store. You know it's just nice.

[Yeah, of course. You said there that your mom might go there to make friends. Um, was there ever any other type of community-based thing where she might go and meet people who were also from Africa, also from Nigeria? Or was it just the shops and direct provision?]

KATE: just Direct provision like just like even just in the place that we live she kind of would just bump into like other Nigerian people, but like there was never really anything that she's going to the shups and just like out on the streets you get me yeah?

[Of course, OK so I'm now at the last few questions. I'm very aware of the time, so these ones don't take too long anyway so these questions are specifically about the ability to decide for yourself what, when and where you're going to eat, which we've kind of covered but I just want to ask these last few. So, when you first arrived in Ireland, you were placed straight into direct provision and I'm just wondering, did you ever have the choice to eat foods that were culturally appropriate to you in the early years? Or was there just what you were given?]

KATE: Yeah, it was just what we were given.

[OK, and when you came to Ireland, first how did it, feel to be surrounded by like unfamiliar foods, and to have to eat foods that you wouldn't be used to?]

KATE: For me it wasn't that bad because I was still young, so like. Kind of like just growing up it was just like OK but like for my mom - I feel like she really struggled because like she wasn't used to all the flavours and all the like just the different stuff like she kind of just wanted a freedom to like make what she wanted to eat but she couldn't. So yeah, that was kind of bad for her.

Do you think it was difficult for the older people in direct provision, or even like parents not being able to feed their children food that was from their culture?]

KATE: I think so like I think that’s exactly how [mom] felt as well. She'd want us to eat like the food that she at grown up like. Obviously, we only started eating African

food a bit late and she would have liked us to adapt to our flavours, because sometimes she makes it and I'm like 'Oh my God, it's too spicy'.

{What was that like when you finally did get to choose what you were eating or? Like when you started to eat more African food?]

KATE: I felt like it was so nice because like it was just something different. You get me? like I feel like it's nice just to have the option be like 'oh today I want to have African food' or 'tomorrow I want to have like chips' or something like that kind of stuff. It's just nice having the option and just I feel like... I felt more like I actually felt more ...how do I say this? I felt more like you know I felt more African because like growing up and I just had that whole identity crisis like I just didn't know who I was or stuff like that. But like I was just like yeah, I like African food so I'm definitely like Nigerian kind of thing. So yeah.

[Do you mean that eating African food or Nigerian food confirm who you are to yourself?]

KATE: Yeah. That's really what it meant like I really felt more African.

Yeah food is so important and I guess we don't think about it enough! Yeah, so this is another broad enough question but if you could change anything about the way that food is provided and direct provision, what would you do?]

KATE: I would definitely think like... People should get what they like need rather than like I feel like people don't really. They don't really care what the people like. I feel like people should even like be able to give suggestions for the food like or like 'oh we didn't like this food, can you try make this one' kind of stuff like it's not really like 'oh give us all like African food' or 'give us food from my culture' but like there was some Irish food that I like but then there was just some stuff that I just like don't even bother making it because nobody likes it. Yeah, being able to like have that conversation with the managers or something like that and say like oh "we don't like this. We don't like this" or like being able to like let's say if you ask for more like you know like sometimes there is problems with people wasting food yeah? But like

generally speaking, when someone asks for more food, they not asking because they want to waste it. They're asking because there are hungry. So, like just being able to like have the option to ask for more and get more. So yeah, those would be the biggest things that I change. And just like even just like making the times longer especially for people who come back from school because like I remember just legging it to the Dining one day and then it was closed and I was just like damn it.

[Yeah. Yeah, I know that wouldn't be good for the mood after school! The last question I have is could describe to me the relationship between the managerial staff and the residents?]

KATE: I think there is a huge power imbalance. I've met the manager like you see the managers and you get so scared like you get so scared, like there was just security cars and you see the security. Like I don't even know why. Maybe it was just us kids but like we just ran. I don't know if you've ever like watch them movies were like the scary character comes out and you just have to run so like it was kind of like just you had … To me I feel like we feared them in a sense? like he just knew oh I don't want to get in trouble you don't just that kind of stuff but there was definitely that whole like hierarchy like we don't speak to them unless like if you're speaking to them, you're either in trouble or you want trouble, so you didn't really have that kind of communication kind of stuff. You just kind of like. I don't want this. I don't want to speak to the manager unless I'm in trouble. If you got me?

[yeah of course, and so with that power hierarchy that you mentioned, did you feel like if you complained about the food, it wouldn't be heard anyway?]

KATE: No, you wouldn't even want to complain about anything because like I feel like maybe me as a child as well like I was just like oh, “if I do anything better bad or say anything bad, I'm going to get deported”. I just had that fear. So, like you wouldn't even say anything bad. You wouldn't do anything but you just kind of just like take what...That's what I say a lot... you just take what you're given. Just take what you're given because just the whole fear thing was get very big.

OK, well that's all my questions I have wrote down to ask. Thank you so much for your time, I’m going to stop the recording.