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Life Without Choice: How Do Mothers with Children Living in Direct Provision in Ireland Feel About their Limited Role as Family Food Providers?

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Life Without Choice: How Do Mothers with Children Living in Direct Provision in Ireland Feel About their Limited Role as Family Food Providers?

A thesis submitted to Technological University Dublin for the award of Masters of Gastronomy & Food Studies.

Michele Moran

May 2019

Supervisor: Diarmuid Cawley

Declaration

I certify that this thesis which I now submit for examination for the award of Master of Gastronomy & Food Studies, is entirely my own work and has not been taken from the work of others, save and to the extent that such work has been cited and acknowledged within the text of my work.

This thesis was prepared according to the regulations for graduate study by research of TU Dublin and has not been submitted in whole or in part for another award in any other third level institution.

The work reported on in this thesis conforms to the principles and requirements of TU Dublin's guidelines for ethics in research.

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Candidate **Michele Moran**

Abstract

Direct Provision was introduced in Ireland during the year 2000. Latest figures show 5,848 asylum seekers are in Direct Provision (RIA, 2018). Physical and mental health research studies have highlighted the challenges within this system (Manandhar *et al.*, 2008). Food provision is one of these challenges. Food, culture, religion, income, and isolation are highlighted in this research study. The key objectives of this research were (1) to review the literature on aspects of food and identity, culture, tribalism, and ethnicity in relation to asylum seekers living in Direct Provision in Ireland. (2) To conduct qualitative semi-structured interviews with mothers living in different Direct Provision centres and (3) to assess the importance of their food culture, traditions, and customs.

A qualitative questionnaire was used to interview eleven mothers who were living in a variety of Direct Provision centres in both urban and rural Ireland. Each interview was recorded, and the duration was between 60-90 minutes. All interviewees, African (n=10) and Pakistani (n=1) came from a culture with rich food traditions and customs. Fresh natural foods were the staples in their homes. Culture, identity, and religion were found to be inextricably linked to food preparation, cooking, and eating. Food for all meals which is provided to the residents in these centres was found to be unfamiliar, poorly cooked, and unappetising. Many of the children of these mothers refused to eat this food which resulted in their consumption of a very limited number of cheap but affordable unhealthy foods e.g. chips which are energy dense and nutrient dilute. All interviewees expressed their feelings of powerlessness, isolation, and loneliness.

These findings suggest that the introduction of an independent living system in each Direct Provision centre would enable mothers to prepare and cook familiar foods for their families. In order to achieve this goal, the current low weekly allowance needs to be increased to allow the purchase of ethnic and local fresh nutritious foods. Community integration would contribute to the alleviation of social isolation and loneliness e.g. through the introduction of cookery classes that could demonstrate how local foods could be incorporated into healthy affordable meals.

In conclusion this small research study found that direct provision highlighted many problems that are encountered for these mothers with children.

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Appendix of Acronyms

CESCR	The International Covenant on Economic, Social, and Cultural Rights
ECRI	European Commission for Refugees in Ireland
FLAC	Free Legal Aid Centres
IRC	Irish Refugee Centre
NASC	The Irish Immigrant Support Centre
NGO	Non-Governmental Organisations
ORAC	Office of Refugee Commissioner
RIA	Reception and Integration Agency
UN	United Nations
UNHCR	United Nations High Commissioner for Refugee

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

1 – Introduction

Mothers in Direct Provision in Ireland have no choice on how they feed their children. Asylum seekers are an anonymous population who arrive on this island and become subject to regulations and practices which shape their lives. Direct Provision, introduced in 2000, was envisaged as a short-term solution to the growing number of people seeking asylum in Ireland (Loyal and Quilley, 2016). The power and resistance relationships based on Foucault's theories between institutions and individuals as described by Mills (2003), are played out in the media daily, with the Irish Government and refugee and asylum seekers support groups being the principal actors.

Aim:

The aim of this thesis is to investigate the emotional response of mothers who are not permitted to prepare, cook, and share meals with their children, while living in Direct Provision in Ireland.

Objectives:

- To document the history of asylum seeking and Direct Provision in Ireland.
- To examine the literature on aspects of food and identity, culture, tribalism, and ethnicity, with regards to its relevance for asylum seekers.
- Conduct qualitative primary research in the form of semi-structured interviews with 11 mothers within Direct Provision centres in Ireland.
- To assess the importance of food culture and thematically document commonalities in these food experiences in relation to the mother's cultural, religious, and ethnic origins. Investigate their responses to food in Direct Provision.
- Highlight the power dynamics between the food production management and the asylum seekers in Direct Provision.
- To appraise how mothers, navigate within the environment of Direct Provision.
- To make recommendations towards further research.

1.1 Justification

The plight of asylum seekers and refugees is regularly in the news and media at both an international and national level. In October 2018 statistics showed that one in five asylum seekers drowned crossing the Mediterranean from Libya (Hayden, 2018). War, conflict, and natural disasters in Africa, Syria, and Middle East countries have contributed to this present crisis. The United Nations (UN) states that “record-breaking numbers of refugees and migrants are moving across international borders, fleeing conflict, persecution, poverty and other life-threatening situations, or responding to labour and skill shortages, demographic changes, and seeking better opportunities” (UN News, 2019, p.1). Both the UN Secretary-General António Guterres and World Leaders have called for everyone to work together to help solve this crisis (Guterres, 2019). In 2015, Minister of State, David Stanton committed Ireland to take 4000 refugees. At the end of 2018 this has not been achieved (O’Halloran, 2018).

Ireland’s response to this international crisis has been to operate a system of Direct Provision for asylum seekers. According to Thornton “Claims of abuse of the welfare system by asylum seekers and establishing systems of surveillance to monitor the actions and activities of asylum seekers seems to be the core purpose of Direct Provision” (2014, p.11).

The system of Direct Provision provides accommodation on a full board basis, health care, primary, and post primary education. A weekly stipend of €21.60 for each person was increased in March 2019 to €38.80 per adult and €29.80 per child per week. This allowance is to cover other expenses such as travel, toiletries, school trips, and treats. Since June 2018 asylum seekers are allowed work under certain conditions. Following the 2004 referendum on citizenship, asylum seekers cannot receive social welfare as they are not habitual residents and cannot become habitual residents until they pass through the Direct Provision system which can take up to ten years. There are a small number of Direct Provision centres which allow self-catering, but the main thrust of Direct Provision is to provide all food for the asylum seekers (RIA, 2017).

The number of applications for asylum changes constantly as asylum seekers leave the country and more arrive, however, there has been an increase over the past two years according to the Reception and Integration Agency (RIA, 2018). At present the total capacity allows for accommodating 6,051 asylum seekers. The most recent figures produced by RIA are for October 2018, when there were 5,848 asylum seekers resident in the system. This number is

expected to continue increasing as stated by the Minister of Equality and Justice Mr. Charles Flanagan (Lally, 2018).

Basic needs are met in Direct Provision, but the consequences are unknown, for mothers not being allowed to cook for their children.

Eating is inherently a social behaviour and a meal shared with others, as in family, is regarded as a proper meal (Mact, 2008). The effect of the Direct Provision system on a mother's food culture, identity, and ethnicity has not been examined in any meaningful way. Asylum seekers are described as a vulnerable group who have left their homes and countries for a myriad of justifiable causes (Amnesty International, 2019). Mothers with children in Direct Provision are probably the most vulnerable of this group.

Previous research has been carried out in Ireland on the Direct Provision system. It has looked at the practicalities of the system in terms of the physical and mental health of the residents. Manandhar *et al.*, investigated the realities of the food and nutrition experience of asylum seekers in Direct Provision and the North West of Ireland (2006). They recommended increasing the weekly allowance of asylum seekers and that a range of healthy ethnic and fresh foods were included on the menus. *What's Food Got to Do With it?* Barry researched the lived reality and experience of asylum seekers living in Direct Provision in Cork City. Her results highlighted that poor food, which was culturally inappropriate, was bad for their health (2014). Amnesty International (2018) highlighted the poor conditions in Direct Provision (Holland, 2018). Despite these studies and recommendations, the system continues, however, how mothers with children living in Direct Provision feel about not cooking for their family, and not having control over what their children eat has not been investigated. This gap in the literature needs to be investigated to assess the emotions and feelings of mothers with children in Direct Provision when they are not permitted to prepare and cook food. Their coping mechanisms will be investigated. Food is a symbol of our identity and culture (Fischler, 1988) and sharing of food can be used to transfer culture and identity to children. How mothers manage to transfer their traditions and cultures will be explored.

1.2 Outline of the Thesis

This thesis will be set out in six chapters:

Chapter 1 – Introduction

This chapter provides an overview of the thesis and the research. It introduces the system of Direct Provision and previous research on the food provision aspects. The objectives of the research are outlined.

Chapter 2 - Literature review

The first part of this chapter reviews the role of the United Nations in defining and introducing legislations for EU members on the human rights of refugees and asylum seekers and the responsibilities the members have towards them. Ireland's response will be documented, and how the system of Direct Provision originated. The second part of the literature examines food in the context of culture, identity, religion, and traditions, and identifying the importance of food culture for displaced people. It offers insights on how immigrants and refugees contend with food problems in other host countries. Foucault's theory of power and resistance (Mills, 2003) will be examined in other situations, where prisoners are not given choice in the food they are given in prison.

Chapter 3 – Methodology

In order to hear and learn about the emotions that mothers have about not being permitted to prepare and cook food, open ended interviews took place with 11 mothers in five Direct Provision centres around Ireland. Five different centres will highlight if the experiences in the various Direct Provision centres are comparable.

In order to uncover how these mothers, feel about their food culture and identity, questions will be asked about food cultivation, preparation and eating habits in their home country. Cooking is a method of transferring culture and identity, so, ascertaining how these mothers learned to cook and if they enjoyed cooking is an important area to explore. The second part of these interviews refers to food in Direct Provision and reveal their first impressions of food within this system. Children may develop food neophobia in new surroundings (Fischler, 1986) and

this may be an outcome in Direct Provision. To investigate through narrative how the mothers transfer their ethnic, tribal and culture through food to their children is examined. The interviews will be recorded and transcribed.

Chapter 4 - Findings

Thematic analysis of the recordings and transcriptions will give a detailed narrative of the opinions and feelings of these mothers. By listening to their words and reading the texts, themes may emerge to offer an answer to the thesis proposal. The narrative from the interviewees will be used to illustrate their emotions throughout the findings. Through the analysis of the interviews it will be discovered if these mothers have food cultural capital when they arrive in Ireland, and how if it is lost, it can be regained (Bourdieu, 1986).

Chapter 5 – Discussion

This chapter will discuss the emotions of the mothers in Direct Provision and how they make meaning of the situation they are in. The findings will be addressed in relation to what the literature demonstrates. The words of the mothers will elucidate their emotions and offer an insight into how they make meaning of their situation. Limitations of the Direct Provision system will be highlighted, and recommendations offered.

Chapter 6 – Conclusions

Conclusions will be drawn from the research thesis findings and discussion. The semi structured interviews may provide an answer to how mothers feel who are unable to cook for their children in Direct Provision.

CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

2 - Literature Review

This review encompasses critical issues related to asylum-seeking mothers who are living in Direct Provision in Ireland. It looks at the causes of asylum seeking in Europe and Ireland, and the reasons for the introduction of Direct Provision. The literature demonstrates that preparation, cooking, and sharing of food are heavy with symbolism and the inherent meaning of identity, culture, motherhood, and religion.

2.1 Immigration: Causes and Effects

The movement of refugees is an international issue. Asylum is a significant policy issue at national, regional, and international level. Over the past three years, Europe has experienced the worst refugee and migration crisis since World War II. A little under 1% of the world's population is either an asylum seeker, internally displaced or a refugee (UNHCR, 2019). Long term situations such as the conflict in Afghanistan, Syria, and Somalia have added to the problem. Catastrophes such as migrants drowning as they try to reach Europe were reported over the last years, and 2015 was the worst year on record with the deaths of 3,771 people attempting to cross the Mediterranean to Italy and Greece according to World Migration Report (2018).

2.2 Role of the United Nations

According to Article 25 of The Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) 1948:

Everyone has the right to a standard of living adequate for the health and well-being of himself and of his family, including food, clothing, housing and medical care and necessary social services, and the right to security in the event of unemployment, sickness, disability, widowhood, old age, or other lack of livelihood in circumstances beyond his control.

All people have a legal right to seek refuge status as set out by the United Nations 1948 and everyone has the right "to seek and enjoy in other countries asylum from persecution" Article 1(14) Universal Declaration of Human Rights (United Nations, 1948). The EU Council Directive [2003/9/EC] also lays down minimum standards for the reception of asylum seekers, and the Directive [2013/33/EU] of the European Parliament and of the Council of 26 June 2013 lays down standards for the reception of applicants for international protection. Ireland, the

UK, and Denmark have not signed into these directives. Therefore, there is no compulsion on Ireland to adopt such measures which Ireland feels to be detrimental to its self-interest. The Reception Standards Directive seeks to ensure that asylum seekers within the EU will have a dignified standard of living for the duration of their asylum claim. The thrust of this directive is to ensure all EU countries adopted similar standards of reception, to prevent secondary asylum flows within the Union due to a perception of more generous reception conditions in other EU countries (Thornton, 2007). At the 70th anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights in Belfast, President of Ireland, Michael D Higgins stated that asylum seekers' rights are at risk from those openly denying human rights. The President continued by saying that, "We are now witnessing political forces who do not even attempt to wear the mask of human rights. There are those who now openly deny rights won through long and difficult struggles and who glory in discrimination, racism and a crude, xenophobic form of nationalism." (Higgins, 2018). The President is expressing his view that nations which have won political and economic freedom, may use preserving their nationalism as an excuse for not accepting asylum seekers.

2.2.1 The Right of Food

The right to food is covered by The International Covenant on Economic, Social, and Cultural Rights (CESCR) when it states "The right of everyone to an adequate standard of living.... including adequate food" (United Nations, 1974, Article 25.). The report by Free Legal Aid Centres (FLAC) (2009a) emphasised that there is a right to food being both culturally appropriate and nutritionally adequate.

2.3 Defining Asylum Seekers and Refuge

The displaced people who come to Ireland are categorised as asylum seekers or refugees, and these terms can be confusing. However, they have all fled from some form of injustice, terror, war or persecution (UNHCR, 2019).

2.3.1 An Asylum Seeker

An asylum seeker is a person who seeks to be recognised as a refugee under the terms of the 1956 Convention relating to the Status of Refugees as defined in Section 2 of the International Protection Act 2015 (Citizens Information, 2019).

2.3.2 A Refugee

A refugee is someone who has been forced to flee his or her country because of persecution, war or violence. Also, a refugee has a well-founded fear of persecution for reasons of race, religion, nationality, political opinion or membership in a particular social group. They cannot return home or are afraid to do so. War, ethnic, tribal and religious violence are leading causes of refugees fleeing their countries (UNHCR, 2019).

2.3.3 A Convention Refugee

A convention refugee is a person who fulfils the requirements under the terms of the Geneva Convention relating to the status of refugees as defined in the International Protection Act 2015 and who is granted refugee status (Citizens Information, 2019).

2.3.4 A Programme Refugee

A programme refugee is a person who has been invited to Ireland under a Government decision in response to a humanitarian request, usually from the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) either for temporary protection or resettlement. The Irish state committed to take up to 4000 per year but until 2017, only accepted approximately 200 resettled refugees each year under this scheme. It was a response to the unprecedented increase in asylum seekers trying to cross the Mediterranean for protection that Ireland first agreed to accept 4000 refugees (Department of Equality and Justice, 2017). In December 2018 Ireland accepted 202 Refugees from Syria and Lebanon under the UNHCR Refugee protection programme. The Minister for Justice and Equality Mr Charles Flanagan welcomed them and said on TV that “they should rest and recover and focus on their future in their new home” (2018). This statement is in stark contrast to the poor welcome that the asylum seekers received from media and press over the past twenty-five years (Barry, 2014). Sensational headlines such as refugees flooding Ireland, waves of immigrants and armies of the poor arriving in Ireland would have led one to believe

that Ireland was swamped, invaded and conned daily during the late 90s (Ní Chiosáin, 2018). There are a lot of unexamined attitudes and coming to terms with the new and unknown, among the Government and the Irish people, according to Manning (2003).

2.3.5 A Migrant

Migrant is another term used in this scenario which is more difficult to define but who is generally accepted to be someone who has lived elsewhere for at least a year before coming to Ireland. It has been asserted by Non-Governmental Organisations (NGO's) involved with asylum seekers and refugees that Irish authorities view these people as temporary guests and not new communities that could become part of our nation (O'Mahony, 2003).

2.4 Ireland's Response to Asylum Seekers

During the 1990s Ireland experienced a change from being a country with a history of emigration to one of immigration, resulting in an increased population (Central Statistics Office, 2010). In the past, Ireland was not considered a target destination for asylum seekers, as it was seen to be isolated and had a weak economy compared with other European countries (Prutz Phiri, 2003). Ireland joined the EEC in 1973, when at that time it was stated on the European Commission website "even the most optimistic could not have foreseen the impact and development of our nation" (European Commission Ireland, 2019).

However, due to the expanding economy in the 1990s, the number of people seeking asylum in Ireland rose from 39 in 1992 to 11,634 in 2002 (RIA, 2011). "This rapid increase led to a moral panic about asylum, as the state struggled to cope with this rising number of asylum seekers" (Gilmartin, 2015, p.127). These numbers peaked in 2011 and had fallen yearly since until, there was an increase in 2018, as 2641 people were seeking asylum for the first nine months (RIA, 2018). When refugees first started to arrive in Ireland in the 1990s, they were given food, shelter and medical care and then relocated to small towns around the country. Housing, social welfare and English classes were provided, and they were treated on an equal footing as citizens in the country (Thornton, 2014). They had the choices to shop, prepare food, and cook for themselves.

2.5 A History of Seeking Asylum

Asylum seekers may be individuals who have had a visa for study or work in Ireland that expired, or they may be fleeing persecution or are economic migrants.

Most refugees in Ireland begin as asylum seekers where they individually pursue a claim to the Department of Justice and Equality for asylum under the 1951 Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees. If such a claim is not recognised in the first instance, they may then, under certain circumstances apply for subsidiary protection, or for leave to remain on humanitarian grounds, granted on Ministerial discretion. For this research thesis, asylum seekers are those who live in Direct Provision where they have no access to preparing and cooking food. The Refugee Act 1996 gives legal effect to Ireland's obligations under the 1951 convention. The Act was drafted when there were only 500 asylum seekers per annum, but by the year 2000 the State realised that it would need to be redrafted to cope with the more significant numbers arriving (Frazer, 2003). This 1996 Refugee Act is under constant consideration and is amended regularly.

2.6 Governmental Response

Ireland signed the Refugee Convention in 1956, and the Protocol was initiated in 1967. After signing this Convention, the country accepted various groups of refugees fleeing conflict: 539 Hungarian refugees in 1956, a small group of Chilean refugees between 1973 and 1974, and 212 Vietnamese refugees in 1979 (O'Mahony, 2003). These groups were for the most part taken care of by voluntary and religious or charitable groups and, as O'Mahony explains the State had little input into their care as it considered hosting refugees as short term until they could be resettled in a third country.

Ireland is not bound by the Reception Conditions Directive of the United Nation 1967, and so Ministerial decisions can be made about receiving asylum seekers. Thornton (2014) states that the reason Ireland did not sign up to these directives was because of the rights of asylum seekers to work. In other EU countries generally, refugees have a right to work after six months (Thornton, 2014).

The Irish Government sought to differentiate between asylum seekers and Irish nationals. A referendum in 2004 on the right to citizenship, changed the laws, thus removing the automatic right of citizenship to children born in Ireland to non-national parents. This referendum result

has been judged to be the most significant event in the politics of immigration in Ireland when “constitutional definitions of Irishness narrowed at a time when the composition of Irish society had broadened significantly through immigration” (Thornton, 2015).

2.7 Asylum Conditions in the UK and Europe

In the United Kingdom asylum seekers are entitled to a place to live i.e. a flat, house, hostel or bed and breakfast. Utilities are paid for by the government, as is access to National Health System (NHS), and primary and post-primary education. £37.50 per week is transferred onto an APSEN credit card [credit card for those with poor credit for each member of the family]. A significant number of politicians, policymakers and the public appear to believe that asylum seekers are economic migrants who make decisions about where to seek asylum based on information about asylum systems, opportunities for employment and access to welfare benefits (Crawley, 2010). They further state that the public believe that asylum seekers have a sufficiently detailed knowledge of these phenomena to make rational and informed choices about their destination, and that asylum seekers choose the country that they wish to settle in (Crawley, 2010). Research in the UK showed that two-thirds of the asylum seekers arriving had not planned their destination when they made the decision to leave but were dependent on the people smugglers transporting them to their destination. There is no reason to think Ireland is different in this respect. The EU Dublin III Regulation (ORAC, 2013) sets out the rules for deciding which EU country should decide an asylum application and is based on the principle that the first European Union country which the asylum seeker entered should decide their asylum claim. A system of identification by fingerprints (Eurodac) enables the identification of asylum applicants and illegal immigrants. The member states of the system are the 28 EU members, with Iceland, Norway, Liechtenstein, and Switzerland (Citizens Information, 2019).

The adverse effects of exclusion, uncertainty, and detention on the mental health and wellbeing of asylum seekers have been documented, mainly by scholars in medicine, psychiatry, and psychology (Steel and Silove, 2006). However, the everyday lived experiences, both negative and positive, of people who find themselves in such spaces for prolonged amounts of time have been less well explored. Barriers for asylum seekers include language, integration, education, health care, work, cooking, and family life. These barriers make it difficult for asylum seekers to make sense of their situation (Steel and Silove, 2006).

2.8 The Legal Status of Asylum Seekers in Ireland

Asylum seekers arrive in Ireland with no international backing, often with limited documentation due to the nature of departure from their country of origin. Their method of arrival in Ireland can be complicated and unofficial, often by boat, lorries, or aeroplanes (Kinlen, 2011). Asylum seekers have the legal right to apply for asylum and will not be removed from the country until the process is completed. They are entitled to a legal representative and interpreter to pursue their application. Medical care, primary, and post-primary education, along with accommodation and food are the extents of their rights (Citizens Information, 2019). The Irish Human Rights and Equality Commission (IHREC, 2014) notes with concern that residents of the Direct Provision centres have little control over their everyday life (cooking, caring, and celebrating important events), which in many cases impacts negatively on their family life.

2.9 Situation of Asylum Seeking in Ireland 2019

Asylum seekers residing in Direct Provision centres are arguably one of the most vulnerable groups in Ireland, living in a state of insecurity, anxiety, poverty and disempowerment (Barry, 2014). This vulnerability is as a result of a combination of displacement, family dislocation, war or natural disasters in their home country. They lack the ability to determine their own future and as Thornton (2014, p.1) states

The hallmark feature of the Irish reception system for asylum seekers has been the continual withdrawal and diminution of social rights on the grounds of preserving the integrity of immigration controls and protection of the welfare state from those who are viewed as not having the right to be within the country.

Some aspects have changed and improved since Thornton wrote this in 2014, such as the right to work from July 2018. However, the life of asylum seekers in Ireland continues to be covered in the media on practically a daily basis, with issues such as arson attacks on Direct Provision centres, and complex legal constraints in the courts for solicitors representing asylum seekers (Pollack, 2019). Direct Provision has been compared in some Non-Governmental Organisation (NGO) as a stain on Ireland's human rights records and has been compared to the Magdalene Laundries in Ireland where thousands of women were isolated and dehumanised (Barry, 2014; Loyal and Quilley, 2016).

2.10 Direct Provision in Ireland

The historical existence of a common travel area between Ireland and the UK with no border controls has led to Ireland having a similar migration policy with the UK. Loyal and Quilley state that the Minister for Justice John O'Donoghue did not want Ireland to have a more attractive package for asylum seekers than the UK (2016). This led to the introduction of Direct Provision in 2000. There is no legislative basis for this system, and it is based on a combination of administrative decisions and Ministerial Circulars (Thornton, 2014). Ireland does not currently operate a single procedure for the processing of applications for international protection, with implications for the length of stay of asylum seekers in Direct Provision (Quinn and Joyce, 2014). This has led the UN to criticise Ireland for this lack of a single procedure (Thornton, 2017), thus causing some asylum seekers to wait up to ten years to pass through the process (FLAC, 2009a).

The system of Direct Provision for asylum seekers in Ireland is now 19 years old. It was set up by the Department of Justice and Equality and is operated by the Reception and Integration Agency (RIA). Direct Provision is where asylum seekers are provided with accommodation, three meals per day plus tea, coffee and snacks along with a weekly allowance of €21.60 per adult and € 21.60 per child (RIA, 2018). The Government increased in March 2019 the weekly allowance to €38.80 per adult and €29 for children. Asylum seekers are not entitled to any other social welfare payments as they are not habitual residents, and only since June 2018 they can work under exceptional circumstances (Dept. Justice and Equality, 2018). Direct Provision policy was accompanied by a separate dispersal policy, whereby accommodation was obtained in different areas to ensure equal distribution of asylum seekers throughout the country (FLAC, 2009a, p.13).

2.11 Role of the Reception and Integration Agency (RIA)

The RIA operates under the auspices of the Department of Justice and Equality and its role is to plan and coordinate the services for asylum seekers and refugees. In Direct Provision according to the RIA house rules asylum seekers are prohibited from cooking or storing food in their bedrooms (RIA, 2019). The RIA itself do not operate the reception and Direct Provision centres but may contract out its responsibilities to commercial companies such as Aramark and Bridgestock (RIA, 2017, p.26). These companies are frequently portrayed in the media as uncaring. When a sick child was refused some bread during the night by a staff member, there

was a general outcry in the media and students in Irish Universities using Aramark Caterers called for a boycott (Tracey, 2018). Doras Luimní is an independent non-profit NGO which supports the rights of migrants living in Ireland. This NGO highlights many of these issues including unsuitability, overcrowding, lack of accountability, mediocre food, and risk of malnutrition in Direct Provision centres where there is no self-catering (Doras Luimní, 2019). After asylum seekers make their application for asylum in the Office of the Refugee Applications Commissioner (ORAC), they are accommodated in Baleskin in Dublin for a period of approximately two weeks before being dispersed to one of forty-six Direct Provision centres across the country, including the Dublin area. These centres consist of hotels, convents, former nursing homes, former army barracks, and holiday villages. Direct Provision centres have been called Ireland's 'hidden villages' with asylum seekers very often geographically distanced and excluded from mainstream society, socially, culturally, and economically (Holland, 2005). Investing in the integration asylum seekers is worthwhile because it establishes ties and relationships between Ireland and the countries where asylum seekers originate. Prutz Phiri (2003) considers that when there is a failure to integrate refugees at an early stage, problems of isolation and mental health occur that may take years to manifest themselves.

2.12 Statistics in Direct Provision

According to RIA Sept 2018 report, figures are continually changing depending on numbers requiring accommodation and places available. Africa accounts for 55% of the asylum seekers, 33% from Asia and the rest from The Americas and other countries (RIA, 2018). Asylum seekers have no choice in where they are sent and can be moved at the request of the RIA. Standards vary, and many have cramped accommodation and no self-catering services.

There is a two-tiered system in place where the treatment of asylum seekers and that of refugees is very different. The reporting by media and politicians of resettled refugees arriving in Ireland is generally sympathetic to their plight. For example, Mr Charles Flanagan, Minister for Justice and Equality when welcoming 200 Syrians in December 2018, stated that they should rest and relax and focus on settling into their new home (Flanagan, 2018). These refugees are considered deserving whereas asylum seekers are treated differently, even though they may be of the same nationality as settled refugees and be accommodated in the same towns. Asylum seekers arriving looking for protection are viewed with scepticism, and it is incumbent on them to prove their claims.

The former Minister of Foreign Affairs Frances Fitzgerald claimed that “changing Ireland’s Direct Provision System to allow rent allowance would cost twice as much and be a pull factor for asylum seekers to Ireland (Ó’Cionnaith, 2015). The term was used in many academic reports meaning that making Ireland an easy route to becoming a refugee will only encourage others to follow (Thornton, 2016; Kinlen, 2011). Ireland has a low acceptance rate of only 5% of asylum seekers being permitted to remain, compared with an overall average of 23% in other EU countries (Kinlen, 2011).

FLAC (2009b) criticises the scheme of Direct Provision for not being regulated by law for the most part, or even by secondary legislation, but rather by a series of directions, and regulations put into place by the executive which directs the scheme and places private companies to administer it.

2.13 Ireland’s Asylum Procedure

Those seeking asylum in Ireland do so at the point of entry of a ferry port, airport, or at the offices of the Refugee Applications Commissioner (Fraser, 2003). There is a fourteen-day period between applying for asylum and formally lodging their application at Internal Protection Office, Lower Mount St, Dublin. The Reception and Integration Agency (RIA) retains overall responsibility for the accommodation of applicants for international protection under the Direct Provision system. The United Nations and international human rights organisations have heavily criticised the Irish system (Thornton, 2007). Former Supreme Court Judge Catherine McGuinness has predicted that a future Government “will end up publicly apologising for harm done by the Direct Provision system” (O’Brien, 2014). Currently there are many restrictions on where asylum seekers can work, and permits must be purchased and renewed every six months until a decision confirms their status.

2.14 Issues with Direct Provision

While food is provided in Direct Provision, residents have no choice around what to eat and no flexibility around mealtimes, and children may grow up without ever seeing their parents cook or work. The adverse effects of living in Direct Provision for long periods on both physical and mental health have been highlighted in recent years. These effects include mental distress due to overcrowding, fear of deportation, medical issues such as heart conditions thought to be due

to a high-fat diet, and malnutrition because food was not eaten (Barry, 2014). In 2003, a report published by FLAC, entitled *Direct Discrimination* concluded that the Direct Provision system “is gravely detrimental to the human rights of a group of people lawfully present in the country and to whom the Government has moral and legal obligations under national and international law” (FLAC, 2003, p.41) and recommended that the scheme of Direct Provision be abandoned immediately. The key recommendations in NASC (2008) report is “the complete abandonment of the Direct Provision System and its replacement with a system which delivers a greater degree of dignity and autonomy” (Barry, 2014, p.38).

In 2013, the European Commission against Racism and Intolerance (ECRI) in its fourth report on Ireland states notes with concern that residents of the Direct Provision centres have little control over their everyday life (cooking, cleaning, and celebrating important events), which in many cases impacts negatively on their family life. Moreover, the ECRI considers that, whereas the centres can serve a beneficial role in providing necessary secure accommodation at short notice, they are unsuitable for lengthy periods of stay they risk causing harm to the mental health of the residents.

Despite all these reports and recommendations little appears to have changed as most direct provision centres do not allow self-catering.

2.15 Bourdieu Cultural Capital

Asylum seekers bring various assets, multicultural heritage and traditions with them to their new country. Embodied cultural capital, according to Bourdieu (1986), comprises the knowledge that is consciously acquired and passively inherited. Converting culture capital can be a process of adapting knowledge and customs, keeping together as a group or family, returning to religion, and taking pride in tradition (Weine *et al.*, 2004) This could describe the traditions and culture from ethnic cultures. It is not transmissible but is acquired over time, as it is may naturally become a person's way of thinking, which, in turn, becomes more receptive to similar cultural influences (Bourdieu,1986). It is embodied in their food heritage, ethnicity and identity. Bourdieu states that “culture capital can be developed” (1986, p.18) but also be diminished, perhaps by living in Direct Provision, where autonomy and expression of identity is limited. Asylum seekers have shown their culture by cooking community meals (*Our Table*,

2018) and developing some community gardens where they cultivate their traditional vegetables (Siggins, 2014).

2.16 Foodways

Seminal writers such as Mead (1943), Barthes (1961), Lévi Strauss (1966), and Douglas (1972), as cited by Joassart-Marcelli and Bosco (2018, p.16) were influential in showing that food is much more than a form of sustenance, especially, at a time during the last century when academics saw food as trivial (Joassart-Marcelli and Bosco, 2018, p.16). They understood that foodways nourish culture, religion, ethnicity, and taboos in a way that newer academics are now understanding. While asylum seekers and refugees have many pressing issues, food security may initially be the most crucial factor. Food security is defined as “when all people have physical and economic access to safe nutrition that meets their dietary need and food preferences of an active and healthy life” (FAO, 2008, p.1). This narrow definition of food security is provided under the RIA to asylum seekers Direct Provision. In his research with Syrian refugees in the Netherlands, Vandevoordt (2017) describes how important food was to refugees considering the other pressing issues of homelessness and lack of future security in their lives. His analysis was that for Syrians, food was not a trivial necessity but was packed with symbolism for culture and hospitality and was a source of comfort in hostile conditions. However, for asylum seekers in Direct Provision in Ireland for seven or eight years, the impact of this food desert in terms of identity, culture, health and religion has not been addressed in any meaningful way.

2.16.1 Food Culture and Identity

“Food is central to our sense of Identity” (Fischler, 1988, p.275). The human relationship with food is complex, regarding nutrition, biology, culture, identity and symbolism. Humans are omnivores and as such do not depend on any one food to survive. So, while they have choice. Fischler (1988) states in his *omnivore dilemma* that both neophobia and neophilia can occur in humans, which can limit food choice in a new food culture. Fischler states that food and cuisine are a central component of the sense of collective belonging and the symbolic value of food is central to our sense of identity, at both individual and group level (1988). When reading Fischler’s work, cuisine and cooking are understood to represent the most fundamental aspect of human life (Ichijo and Ranta, 2016). Humans mark out their culture by what they eat and

highlight the otherness of cultures that eat differently. For Iranian refugees the provision of food is a key signifier of acceptance, and hospitality (Harbottle, 1997). The consumer must know where their food stems from so that they can identify it as suitable, but asylum seekers in Direct Provision may not recognise the food offered or know how it is cooked or produced. Many refugees chose to eat vegetarian meals to avoid eating inappropriate food (Barry, 2014). Some of the findings highlighted in a report by NASC (2016, p.7) were that the food is inadequate, poor quality, monotonous and culturally inappropriate. When migrants arrive into a new culture, Parasecoli (2014, p.418) states “that eating makes them interact physically, emotionally and cognitively with otherness”. Others are anyone who is not family or close friend. In Direct Provision, asylum seekers meet other asylum seekers from diverse backgrounds, but not people of the host country. This liminal space does not allow the asylum seekers to participate in any meaningful way with the transition from ethnic and traditional food to the foreign culture which Parasecoli states “is necessary to move from global to local” (2014, p.431). Food in Direct Provision is not typical of any culture, and it gives very little clue to those eating it what is Irish culture. Each asylum seeker there, regardless of their ethnic culture, is in the same position.

Identity may only become an issue when it is disturbed (Fischler, 1988) as one may take their identity for granted until leaving home and country due to a crisis of war or terrorism and having to adapt to a new set of parameters in a new country. Migrants are frequently very resistant to dietary change and (Harbottle, 1997) found that keeping a native food culture in a potentially hostile environment can have a stabilising effect. It can be a means of defining self and other.

Culture identity takes place in a world of meanings and understandings of beliefs, values and customs used to make sense of a person’s world and the world of others (Spivey and Lewis, 2015). Foodways include the sociocultural meaning of food acquisition, gardening practices, food preparation, and mealtime (Bennett *et al.*, (1942), cited in Spivey and Lewis, 2015, p.63). Many refugees maintain cultural identity through foodways to preserve their heritage and maintain connections to their homelands (Spivey and Lewis, 2015). They found that native foods provide an experience by which families can share and pass down and maintain their cultural and family identity through foodways. To highlight the importance of food and identity the research of Vandevoordt (2017) demonstrates how Syrian refugees in Belgium went to great lengths to procure Syrian bread in their holding camp. However, Vandevoordt was intrigued by the lengths the refugees went to provide him as the guest interviewer with

hospitality by offering tea and sweets on each visit. The Syrian interviewees had virtually no possessions, but their tradition of hospitality was most important to them as an identity marker.

Karen people who are an ethnic race from Burma traditionally grow their food to serve multiple purposes, proper nutrition, culture transference, and community bonding. When relocated to Georgia, USA, Spivey and Lewis (2015) researched this group of refugees and found that resettlement was enhanced when they could grow familiar vegetables in garden plots to supplement rations provided by the state. Gardening not only improved their nutrition but allowed parents to teach their children how to continue traditional foodways. While their children ate American food at school, they were content to eat Karen food at home (Spivey and Lewis, 2015). Providing facilities for gardening may be beneficial to refugees of agrarian backgrounds.

When immigrants leave one culture and settle in another, they are faced with fundamental questions regarding who they are and whom they will become in their new country. Their ethnic identity is based on their sense of belonging to their country of origin, its cultural heritage and customs (Phinney and Ong, 2007). Identity can become a complex area to define and measure, but according to these researchers, it is crucial to understand how ethnic identity effects attitudes, health, and adaptation to a new culture. The family environment provides the foundation for the development of knowledge and understanding of one's ethnic background. Family is the most significant influence in connecting present to preceding and following generations (Phinney and Ong, 2007). Immigrant families go to great length to instil an ethnic pride by specific forms of socialisation and implicit forms such as ethnic forms and cooking in the home. Families that are confident in their own ethnicity are generally more tolerant of other ethnic groups. Immigrant families thrive when they can practice and express their culture in their lives (Phinney and Ong, 2007). For many nationalities, ethnic identity is directly related to cultural maintenance. Continuing food traditions and practices may be one way of maintaining ethnic identity in a new country and culture. A strong ethnic identity has been shown to have a positive mental and psychological effect on migrants. Identity is vital for women in Direct Provision to continue their ethnic food culture, as a report of poor mental status has been seen in studies undertaken in the North West Ireland (Manandhar *et al.*, 2006).

2.16.2 Food and Women

“Women’s food consumption behaviour can be particularly significant as it is, they who often most actively engage in creating home space for themselves and the family” (Kneafsey and Cox, 2002, p.7). The research took place in cities in the UK where Irish people emigrated to in the 1950s, mainly Coventry and Liverpool. The authors noted that Irish women maintain traditional family structures and take responsibility for shopping, preparing and cooking “proper” food (2007, p.7). Food consumption practices and patterns contribute to the construction of ethnic and gendered identities during the 1950s when Ireland had massive emigration to these cities. Most Irish were in unskilled employment and from their research Kneafsey and Cox highlighted evidence of food networks and links built up by Irish women in Coventry where foods associated with Irishness and culture arrived from relatives from Ireland seasonally, for Christmas and special occasions. Gifts of Irish foods marked them out as different and perhaps more fortunate in their community thus giving them cultural capital (Bourdieu, 1986) in their community. Kneafsey and Cox also noted that for Irish women, offering and cooking food were a sign of motherhood and womanhood. The women saw this as part of their Irish culture, and they were proud of it. Cooking and sharing food may also be true amongst women in other cultures such as asylum seekers mothers’ in Ireland. These researchers concluded that Irish women in Britain chose foods for their Irishness and connection with home. They wished to maintain this connection for cultural reasons and to pass it on to their children. de Certeau and Giard (2008) offer an opinion in *The Nourishing Arts*, that many women have a natural feeling for cooking and nourishing that becomes ingrained from being in the kitchen with their mothers and grandmothers, watching them prepare and cook. The subtleties of their family’s traditional culinary culture give women both power and pleasure.

For many people, food is a powerful voice, especially for women, who are often heavily involved with food acquisition, preparation, provisioning, and clean-up (Counihan, 2004). Counihan describes Italian women, whom she interviewed, as taking great pleasure in food. Eating brought deep feelings of pleasure and consolation. Even when food was scarce as during WW11 food consumption was highly valued.

In other studies, women talk about their love of food and how they suffer when they go to a country with a reduced food culture (Counihan, 2014).

Women, according to Parasecoli (2014), generally take on the role of cultural reproduction through food, and they endeavour to construct meals similar to pre-existing customs. Mothers have the power to make decisions on how much or little the family will take on a new culture. Ellie Kisyombe, a mother of twins, originally from Malawi, has been living in Direct Provision for almost ten years. In an interview with Jennifer O’Connell (Irish Times, 2019) she says that one of the toughest aspects of Direct Provision is not being able to cook for yourself and eat together as a family “there is no way to cook for yourself, kids were not able to sit at the table with their parents together”(Kisyombe, 2019).

Many people tend to think of Africans as a monolithic group, and even though they may use similar ingredients for cooking, their combination of foods often mark them out as being from an ethnic group. Deviating from this trend may be seen as a rebuff to the community (Williams-Forsen, 2014).

2.17 Defining Emotions

According to Scherer (2005) defining emotion is a notorious problem and he considers emotions and feelings as being similar. Assessing emotions can be done from language, facial expressions, and physiological responses to a situation. He describes the difficulty in assessing emotions, which can be positive or negative, and some that a person has high or low control over. For this thesis, emotions may be those as described by the mothers in conversations and by facial expressions observed during the interviews. Scherer describes sixteen common feelings and emotions (2005).

2.17.1 Food and Emotions

Research studies on food and emotions demonstrate that “young adults make use of emotional-relational food memories related to ‘significant others’ during childhood when trying to build resilience and solve developmental tasks in this period of life” (Mårtensson and Von Essen, 2017). Positive memories around food offers a sense of security and this secure base provides a greater resilience towards challenges faced in later life. Negative emotional food memories can be associated with either being emotionally preoccupied with food or dismissing food. These emotions may be relevant to asylum seeker in Direct Provision.

2.18 Food and Agency

It has been previously discussed in this literature review of food, culture, and identity; how important it is to acknowledge that asylum seekers bring with them these traditions to Ireland. Caroline Reid (2018), who works for the children's ombudsman office in Dublin, recalls on *YouTube food matters*, a mother in Direct Provision recounting how her daughter did not know what she would find in a kitchen. This is just a small example of how traditions can be lost.

Evening meals are important regular events in the lives of many people. It is often the only time a family sit and have time together, to talk about the day's events or discuss topical agendas. While not every family may choose to sit and eat together, Blake *et al.* (2008) discuss the way different families shop together, choose what to eat to suit individual preferences, the distribution of labour around the preparation and to clean up afterwards. The participants of the study saw the evening meal as a special part of the day. There was an emphasis on relaxing and withdrawing from the business of the day, work and school. It was a time to reconnect with friends and family (Blake *et al.*, 2008). Mealtimes were regular within a household but varied between study groups and children's food preferences were taken into consideration to reduce the incidence of 'food battles' or meal refusal. Women played a significant role in shopping and choosing what was for dinner. Conversation and communication rated highly in most homes during the evening meal. Contrast the results of this study by (Blake *et al.*, 2008) with families in Direct Provision where management dictates meals, the asylees only choice is to eat the food or not. They have no input into shopping, preparing or choosing what to eat.

Large scale catered food tends to use more food technology and processing (Fischler, 1988). International catering companies are contracted by the RIA to provide food in Direct Provision centres. The lack of personal contact between a multinational company and asylum-seekers can mean that knowledge of the food is difficult to determine and so more difficult for the asylum seekers to know what is in the food on offer.

Cooking and other food-related practices play a crucial role in post-industrial societies, where individuals and groups define their identities around lifestyles and consumer goods. The exploration of personal, communal, collective, and institutional experiences will highlight the dynamics that underlie the development of culinary traditions amongst immigrants, and the role they play in the formation of the sense of community. Parents spoke of their disempowerment as their parental authority had been eroded due to long periods in Direct

Provision. It was unsatisfactory for parents and family, never seeing parents in traditional family roles or cooking meals (Barry, 2014, p.8).

2.18.1 Food, Power and Resistance

Food acts as a daily reminder of the situation that asylum seekers find themselves when in Direct Provision. They are away from their home and separated from close family. In some ways this could be compared with prison life and the loss of access to family and home. In his work in Norwegian prisons, Ugelvik (2011) describes how prisoners determine prison food to be an attack on their identity. The food is nutritionally adequate and considered culturally Norwegian, however, it is hugely unpopular with the prisoners. They resist this disempowerment by preparing food in their cells, and the author argues that food-related resistance may be “a significant instrument in their performance identity work” (Ugelvik, 2011, p.48). In order to cope with the situation various legal and forbidden methods of cooking in cells were devised by prisoners. Women in Direct Provision were reported to use similar tactics (Manandhar *et al.*, 2006). The State, RIA, and the companies managing Direct Provision all exert power over the residents. Autonomy is diminished; they must eat what they are given when they are given it. Dependency on the system is inevitable. Power, resistance, and taking control is the essence of Foucault’s (1988) *Practices of Freedom* theories according to (Mills, 2003). By finding ways around food choices, the prisoners resist the institutional power of the prison authorities.

2.19 Food and Religion

Religion seeks its expression in diet, and for many individuals’ dietary practices reflect religious persuasion, and most religions have food rules and instructions (Sabaté, 2004). Food in most religions is one of the most important parts of the religious ceremony (Sibal, 2017), the breaking and sharing of bread being an early Christian symbol. The connection between diet and religion remains present in both the developed and developing world. The role of food is an important part of communities showing respect. Food is prepared in different ways for those who follow their religion. Sabaté discusses the prevalence of fasting and abstinence in most religions. Fasting was practiced in Ireland amongst Roman Catholics (Catholic Organisation, 2019). Other restrictions, depending on religion can make the diet very different to that of the general population. Muslims practice diurnal fasting abstaining from all food and drink, during

daylight hours in the month of Ramadan. Greek Orthodox Christians have three sessions of abstaining from meat, dairy and eggs, leaving almost half the year restricted to vegetarian food (Sabaté, 2004; Parasecoli, 2014). Mintz and Du Bois (2002) proposes that eating in rituals binds people to their faith; it performs critical social functions, and can reinforce ethnic boundaries, even if the group are not all of one faith. Asylum seekers in Direct Provision, arguably, would have difficulty in adhering to their religious food laws when depending on catering companies to provide their food.

Religious identity is one source of persecution that has caused people to flee their homes and countries, notably Syria. Religion and food practices associated with them, can also bind people together, and offer identity. As seen from RIA annual reports, asylum seekers in Ireland are not a homogenous group, and have many religions, some whom have strict food laws which are essential (RIA, 2018). Some immigrants may wish to hide their religion and ethnicity in case of racist remarks, so they do not eat their traditional food in public places (Harbottle, 1997). Sephardic Jews in Spain during the Inquisition were reported to have cooked pork but did not eat it, to disguise their Judaic religion (Civitello, 2008, p.100).

Food does not represent the culture and multi-faith spiritual needs of asylum seekers in Direct Provision (Barry, 2014, p.8). They reported that the food system in place did not allow religious asylum seekers to freely practice their various religious food tradition and religious food laws. This resulted in further anxiety on top of hunger during the night-time, religious holidays and feast days. Perhaps our identity with regards food and religion is more about what we don't eat (Bourdieu, 1986). African Americans of varying religions link their African celebratory feasts to American national holidays e.g. Christmas, Easter and 4th July. Ramadan traditionally was held in December with day fasting but now is usually held in Autumn (Mitchell, 2009). The food at Christmas is made to include something for every taste and religion.

2.20 Food, Ethnicity, and Place

For immigrants and oppressed minorities, home and its remembrance are a perennial motif. Food is a centrepiece of home (Chen, 2014). He discusses how during the early decades of the twentieth century, Chinese Americans, especially Chinese American women, used cookbook writing as a vehicle to search for and create a place that they could call home. Immigrants cope with the dislocation and disorientation they experience in their new environment by re-creating a sense of place in their domestic environment around food production, preparation, and

consumption according to Parasecoli (2014). Many asylum seekers in Ireland have been dislocated and disorientated as a result of war, famine, and persecution (Scriver and Mears, 2014). There are significant anxieties of constant and invasive exposure to others (Parasecoli, 2014). This anxiety can be relieved by communal practices such as food preparation, shopping and celebratory meals and there is a sense of belonging through preparing familiar dishes and practices from a place of origin. Asylum seekers cannot practice any food culture as they are prohibited from cooking or preparing food. NGO agents and some asylum seekers have been helped to set up communal kitchens to come together to cook traditional food. According to Ellie Kisyombi (Our Table, 2019) everyone deserves a seat at their own table. After living in Direct Provision for nine years she got the opportunity to cook with other asylum seekers in a kitchen provided by a generous businesswoman and, this Kisyombi said gave her freedom. *Cooking for Freedom* is another initiative by women in Direct Provision who want to provide their children “with their culturally appropriate food” (Irish Times, 2017). They have access to kitchens on an ad hoc basis (Cooking for Freedom, 2019). These initiatives demonstrate that food is core to culture and identity and become even more critical during displacement as stated by Fischler (1988).

2.21 Conclusion

This literature review covers many reasons why the current refugee crisis is occurring in Europe and Ireland's response to it. From a country of little experience of asylum seekers or refugee protection, Ireland is gradually accepting more significant numbers. Our record around processing asylum seekers is poor, with long delays of up to ten years before decisions to permit them to remain or be deported. Within Ireland, asylum seekers exist as a unique category of immigrant where they have no statutory right to social supports. Support is provided based on Ministerial circulars, but parliamentary scrutiny for the whole system of reception for asylum seekers is absent (Thornton, 2014). Ireland's response has been the introduction of Direct Provision in 2000 with accommodation and food provided and a small allowance (RIA, 2019). The focus of this review is to investigate how mothers in Direct Provision feel and cope in a situation where they are not permitted to prepare, cook, and share meals for their families for periods of up to ten years.

The literature shows that humans use food as markers for national identity to make sense of their world in new countries. Cooking and sharing familiar foods with family and friends can

bring comfort and homeliness in an otherwise hostile environment (Spivey and Lewis 2015). Religion and its inherent food regulations may be different for asylum seekers to the predominant Christian beliefs in Ireland. The anxiety that may occur for asylum seekers of other faiths depending on catering companies to ensure these food rules are adhered to often result in keeping to a vegetarian type diet (Barry, 2014). The RIA (2019) according to their handbook has strict rules about mealtimes and not allowing food to be brought to the bedrooms, or any cooking in the bedroom takes away a person's agency. Asylum seekers may often be absent at mealtimes for legal or medical appointments, or to collect children from school. The meagre allowance provided does not make provision for eating out, and not having a choice of when and what to eat, has also been shown to have a deleterious effect on mental health (Silove and Steel, 2006). Overall the literature demonstrates that refugees who are dislocated thrive better when they are allowed practice their own culture

The two-tiered system that Ireland uses for programme refugees and asylum seekers causes extra stress and anxiety on the asylum seekers in Direct Provision. Their inability as mothers to shop, prepare, cook, and share food with their families may interfere with their ability to transfer ethnic, cultural and religious identity.

In 2013, the European Commission against Racism and Intolerance (ECRI) in its fourth report on Ireland (p. 26. Item 115) stated:

ECRI's also notes with concern that residents of the Direct Provision centres have little control over their everyday life (cooking, cleaning, celebrating important events), which in many cases impacts negatively on their family life. Moreover, very few activities are organised in the centres (although it must be noted that the inhabitants, who have freedom of movement can participate in activities outside the centres). ECRI considers that, whereas the centres can serve a beneficial role in providing necessary secure accommodation at short notice, they are unsuitable for lengthy periods of stay; they risk causing harm to the mental health of the residents.

This research will seek to find answers through open-ended interviews with mothers living in Direct Provision in Ireland. To ask them to reflect on the food issues regarding culture, religion, identity and agency and transfer of this culture to their children. To determine their culture capital and ascertain how they plan to maintain it.

CHAPTER 3: METHODOLOGY

3 Methodology

3.1 Introduction

Mothers in Direct Provision in Ireland, until recently, have not been allowed to cook for themselves or their children. How do they express their roles as mothers and transfer their food identity and culture to their children? In order to obtain this information, eleven mothers in Direct Provision in Ireland were interviewed, using a set of open-ended semi structured questions. Chapter 2 identifies several research issues, and this chapter describes the methodology used to investigate and provide the findings.

3.2 Methodology

This chapter outlines the qualitative data methodologies used in this research study. Semi structure interviews were considered the most appropriate method for this cohort of women living in Direct Provision. According to Ryen (2003), semi structured interviews generate data that gives an authentic insight into other people's experiences. Interviews or oral histories "take away the voices of authority and gives back the truth of testimony, the power to the people" (Clear, 2019) at the launch of the Tuam home oral history project in Galway. Women in Direct Provision are disempowered by the nature of their displacement. Culture and identity can be difficult to describe due to the abstract nature of beliefs, values and traditions, therefore, phenomenological research is a method where the researcher can identify the essence of human experiences about a phenomenon that only the participants can describe (Sloan and Bowe, 2014).

This phenomenological research, using qualitative study, involved interviews with eleven mothers living in different Direct Provision centres in Ireland. The decision to use different centres helped identify various practices within Direct Provisions centres as described in the McMahon report (2015). Participants were invited to take part in this research through different contact methods outlined below. Snowballing sampling as described by Atkinson and Flint (2001) was used, as it is a useful technique offering an established method for identifying and contacting hidden populations. To commence an interview study, an initial contact is made and then this contact is requested to provide other leads (Ruane, 2016). At a community supper in a midland's town, catered by asylum seekers, a mother living in Direct Provision agreed to be interviewed for this thesis. She then suggested three other mothers who also agreed to participate in the study. Religious sisters who visited Direct Provision centres in the south of

the country were contacted. They introduced some mothers who were residents and who were willing to be interviewed. A volunteer buddy system for refugees and asylum seekers operates in the North West of Ireland, a contact was established, and the organiser suggested the final participants who agreed to be interviewed. Open ended semi structured interviews took place within two Direct Provision centres, a local community centre, a private car, and a private house belonging to a volunteer.

3.3 Research Framework

The choice of qualitative methods to conduct this research was influenced by the desire to gain an understanding of the experiences, thoughts, and feelings of asylum seekers in Direct Provision in Ireland. Clear (2019) also stated that each person will have a different or personal interpretation of the experience they are being interviewed about, and so perceptions are the key to unlock the information. Attention must be given to the subjective nature of meaning making and Hua argues that intercultural differences and cultural memberships are socially constructed (Hua, 2015). With the qualitative approach, participants express their feelings and opinions in their own words as opposed to the pre-chosen response categories used in quantitative research. The use of questionnaires in quantitative research might have proven difficult due to the level of English comprehension among asylum seekers.

Qualitative research allows for exploration of social or human issue, and qualitative research according to (Berg, 2009; Creswell, 2009) seeks to find the answers to questions by examining social settings and the individuals who inhabit them. Qualitative researchers are interested in how humans cope with the settings they are placed in and “how they make sense of their surroundings through symbols, rituals, social structures and social roles” (Berg, 2009, p. 8). As this research is specifically interested in looking at how mothers in Direct Provision make sense of the food that they and their families are offered in a canteen setting, a qualitative approach was considered to be the most effective means of research.

In qualitative interviews the researcher is looking for facts, and interpretations of facts and recollections, considering perceptions, ambiguities, feelings and judgements (Bryson and Mc Conville, 2014). Its aim is to access data that can add to the body of knowledge of how asylum seeking mothers feel and cope with not being allowed to cook in Direct Provision in Ireland.

Flick (2014) suggests using joint narratives. The first part of the interviews established the country of origin of the interviewees to ascertain aspects of their food culture and traditions

before coming to Ireland. It unearthed their foodways, food habits, methods of cooking, and sharing of food and, without the interviewer directing the conversation, the interviewees shaped the dialogue themselves. On the subject of their arrival to Ireland, specific questions were asked with regard to their initial impression of food in Direct Provision and how they coped with not being permitted to prepare and cook food for themselves and their children. They were asked about how they felt about the food they were offered and about their children being exposed to this type of food.

3.3.1 Bracketing

Descriptive phenomenology with an emic or interviewee's perspective is recommended in qualitative research as it helps to mitigate against a bias by the researcher bracketing is recommended (Tufford and Newman, 2010). Bracketing, they state, is to be aware of one's preconceived ideas when interviewing a culture or ethnic group, and to endeavour to be as impartial as possible. They argue that it is especially useful to protect the researcher from the cumulative effects of emotionally charged interviews. Research was carried out on interviewees' countries of origin in order to become familiar with their foodways, as well as general information on political and current affairs. This initially helped conversation, with the idea of making the participants more at ease.

3.3.2 Target Population and Inclusion Criteria

The target group for this research was mothers in Direct Provision in Ireland. From the outset it was decided not to include fathers, as advice had been given by an experienced aid worker (personal communication) that fathers may not always be with their families because they were either fighting in wars, deceased or had sent their families to safety in another country, and may join them later. Mothers were deliberately chosen for this research study as they traditionally take on the role of carer and nurturer of children and families (de Certeau and Giard, 2008). Many asylum seekers come from countries where women's principal role is to take care of the home. Giving a voice to mothers in Direct Provision to tell their story will answer the research question, which is to investigate the emotional response of mothers who are not permitted to prepare, cook and share these meals with their children while living in Direct Provision in Ireland.

This group in general is not out in the community, and approaches to these women had to be made through intermediaries. Not all intermediaries welcomed this research study. Some intermediaries were protecting the vulnerable, others were exerting power over the vulnerable and in certain situations it was unclear to the researcher the motives for such barriers. Gatekeepers are people who can help or limit a researcher's access to the field (Ruane, 2016). Gatekeepers therefore were necessary to gain access to the mothers in Direct Provision. Voluntary workers, religious sisters and two people in organisations that support asylum seekers were the gatekeepers for this research.

3.3.3 Field Research

To maximise the understanding of some social phenomenon, field research is useful. "Field research is essentially about watching and talking to people" (Ruane, 2016, p.210). Permission to visit Direct Provision centres was dependant on the manager of each centre and not always easily obtained. One alternative was to talk to asylum seekers at some of the public food venues organised by asylees and refugees in Ireland. These included a pop-up restaurant called Our Table (2018) which was organised by Ellie Kisyombe, an activist and asylum seeker living in Direct Provision, during the summer of 2018 to coincide with the launch of World Refugee Week at Christ Church Cathedral in Dublin. The theme was *Food is Culture*. Women in Direct Provision cooked and served a diversity of cultural food in the Cathedral courtyard. This restaurant continued for some time after the week of culture ended. This researcher visited Our Table on a few occasions and observed the women cooking, talking, laughing, and explaining to the customers what the different foods were. Each day there was a different array of foods on offer.

Ellie Kisyombe had spoken publicly about her distress at not being able to prepare and cook meals for her family (RTE, 2017). She was also interviewed by Irish Times journalist Jennifer O'Connell (2019) on this subject. She was approached with regards to this research thesis, and she appeared to be interested. She promised to introduce other mothers in Direct Provision with a view to them being interviewed. However, no such interviews were received through this contact.

Cooking for Freedom won the Dublin Bus Spirit award (Dublin Bus, 2018). This is a group of female asylum seekers who have been offered access to kitchens owned by religious and community groups. The women can prepare food which is eaten later in Direct Provision – this

is an alternative to eating food provided in the canteen. One of the organisers agreed to be interviewed for this research and volunteered to help recruit other participants. Follow up contact was maintained for a short while, but no further interviews came from this source. She did say that there were many barriers within this the asylum seeker community which I understood was fear of authorities.

A group supporting people seeking asylum held a supper in early January 2019 in a community centre in the Irish midlands. This collaboration between community and asylum seekers was to enhance community integration. The food was made by asylum seekers living a local Direct Provision centre and they had been allowed to use the catering kitchen for the event. The fact that asylum seekers come from different countries and ethnic backgrounds (Manandhar *et al.*, 2006) may mean they need to get to know each other as well as the local community. The community organiser confirmed this, as residents can be moved to other centres and new residents arrive. This was an opportunity to talk to asylum-seeking women and taste their food. Some of the mothers talked about the issues that they had with not being permitted to prepare food for their children. On explaining the purpose of this research, some gave their contact details to be included in the interviews. No pressure was exerted on them to be interviewed and exchanging phone numbers was to give the potential interviewees a chance to consider whether to agree to continue. Without the assistance of the organiser, finding a suitable venue would have been difficult as the public is generally not allowed into Direct Provision centres. The organiser offered her sitting room as a venue. The women were familiar with her home and felt comfortable there. The mothers looked after each other's children in the centre whilst the interviews took place which made the women more relaxed.

Religious sisters in the south of Ireland visit Direct Provision centres in a voluntary capacity and act as a conduit between asylum seekers and the community. These nuns have spent time on mission work overseas and have an understanding of some issues facing asylum-seeking mothers. They have a good relationship with the women and arranged some interviews. Some women agreed to be interviewed only if they could do so unobserved, and the interviews were held in a private car. Fear of been seen by the manager of the centres appeared to be the reason.

Consent forms providing the purpose of the research and details of the college and researcher were given to each participant. These were signed by both researcher and interviewee and a copy given to each interviewee. A letter from TU Dublin confirming the research study along with a student ID was shown to each participant and their gatekeepers.

Asylum seekers are moved from one centre to another, depending on availability of accommodation within the system. When a participant agreed to be interviewed, a date was confirmed as soon as was practically possible. The interviews took place wherever mothers were prepared to be interviewed. Asylum seekers are a very vulnerable group of people and it's important to cause no harm to the interviewees, and to be aware that there may be consequences for them. It was essential that the participants trusted that their names would not be disclosed, in case of recriminations by staff in Direct Provision. Some mothers were less concerned to be identified than others. Reports in the daily papers give accounts of asylum seekers being moved to a different centre if they complained about their conditions (McCarthaigh, 2018). In the interests of anonymity interviewees are referred to by numbers 1-11. The aim of this research was to get individual stories from mothers in Direct Provision. They were permitted to express their feelings and emotions about their food situation. The interview was on a one to one basis with open ended questions, and emerging approaches. An interpreter was used for one interview, and one interviewee did not agree to the interview being recorded.

3.4 Interview Questions

It was established how long each mother had spent in Direct Provision, and how they felt about not being allowed to provide, cook, and share food with their family, and how they coped. The research literature demonstrated the importance of food in culture, identity and tradition. Interviewees were asked about their ethnicity, food, culture, and traditions, and their importance in their home countries. This was to gain knowledge of the typical food eaten, methods of cooking, and eating styles before coming to Ireland.

Food culture and identity in the practice of their religions was prominent in the research literature, particularly when the person is displaced. Some asylum seekers may have had to flee due to religious persecution. Questions included in the interviews covered religious food laws and how these could be adhered to in Direct Provision. They were asked how they felt if inappropriate food was offered.

In order to gain insight into how mothers felt about transferring their culture on to their children it was important to find out how the mothers had learned about their food culture. They were asked how they learned to cook and who taught them.

The issues of lack choice on what and when people in Direct Provision eat has been highlighted in many reports (Manandhar *et al.* 2006; Barry, 2014; McMahon Report, 2015). Questions were asked about how the participants felt and coped.

3.4.1 Interviews

The style of interviewing where the interviewer builds trust, works best in qualitative interviewing (Flick, 2016). He emphasises that the tone should be friendly, gentle with no confrontation, and the pattern of questions flexible, as the aim of the interviews was to get as much of a picture of the interviewee's point of view as possible. Probing for more detail and depth can come from prepared follow up questions or to be spontaneous (Flick, 2016). This researcher followed this advice and used both prepared and spontaneous questions. Interviews commenced on the 30th January 2019 and were completed on 27th February 2019. Two interviews a day was the maximum and each interview took about ninety minutes. This allowed the interviewer to actively listen during the interviews and to keep field notes up to date. Some interviews required up to seven hours travel by car.

3. 5 Ethics

“With this diversity of people, care had to be taken to ensure that at minimum no harm was done to the participants and that respect and confidentiality was afforded to them.” (Bryson and McConville, 2014, p.12). They outline common feelings that an interviewee may have about an interviewer, such as fear, suspicion, and distrust, and this was valid for this study. Trust and respect were essential, and the researcher endeavoured to alleviate fear and suspicion.

Protecting confidences when requested was predicted by the researcher (Bryson and McConville, 2014). However, only two of the participants requested anonymity. On reflection however, it was decided for ethical reasons to remove all names.

Qualitative data was analysed using thematic content analysis. In preparation three women did mock interviews and role play, for practice techniques and recordings. A Sony IC recording device, and an app on an iPad were used. The iPad was much easier to use, less intrusive and the sound quality was good.

All interviews were recorded on the iPad, transferred onto an external hard drive, transcribed and stored. Each transcribed interview was accompanied by field notes and observations.

Interviews were anonymised, audio-recorded, transcribed, coded and analysed. Following this, conclusions and recommendations were drawn up. In order to connect the phenomenologist methodology and the various objectives of this research an emic perspective was taken during the interviews and during the transcription and analysis stages. Emic research is accomplished by studying behaviour from inside the system (Pike, 1967, p.37) procuring insider or native perspectives. It is a more objective approach in which the researcher will try to make sense of customs and practices by observing or interviewing members of that culture (Pike, 1967). The use of the emic approach gives agency to this group.

Even though some of the interviews took place with participants from the same centre, their reported experiences were different. Clear (2019) suggests being open to the unknown, and as this is part of the ordinary life of the participants at this time, it is important to take care not to upset interviewees.

Active listening requires the researcher to be very attentive to what is being said by the interviewee. Being a good active listener entails attending to “self-evaluative statements...reflective statements...and the consistency of the participants statements” (Ruane, 2016, p.218). Field notes taken immediately after the interviews helped add a further layer towards the completeness of the interviews.

The appeal of an interview is the focus on the individual and its reliance on plain talk. According to Ruane (2016), people like to tell their story, it can be empowering. The interview, in her opinion, is a purposeful conversation where the researcher has a set agenda. In this case a structured list of open-ended questions was used. Not all questions prepared were asked during each interview, as on occasion the interviewee pre-empted the next question.

3.6 Conclusion

Throughout the research process, attention was paid to ensure that the research was conducted in an ethical manner. Confidentiality was of utmost importance. All the interviewees were in Direct Provision which is a system that has been the focus of much criticism since it was established in 2000. Fear of deportation to their country of origin due to speaking out against Direct Provision and the uncertainty of their personal safety there caused anxiety amongst the women. This may have contributed to why some women were afraid to be interviewed. Gatekeepers reported observing journalists posing as bona fide well-wishers talking to asylum seekers and using the information for news articles

CHAPTER 4: FINDINGS

Chapter 4 – Findings

4.1 Introduction

Presented in this chapter are the findings from eleven interviews with asylum seeking mothers in Direct Provision in Ireland. These findings are established by a thematic analysis of the qualitative interview transcripts. This qualitative study looks at the emotions, anxieties, and feelings of mothers living with their children in Direct Provision, where they are not permitted to prepare, cook and share food with their children. Probing throughout the interviews reveal how these mothers cope with the situation they find themselves.

4.2 Interviewees

The first impression I had of the women I interviewed in Direct Provision was how imposing, well-dressed, and groomed they were. A few were a little nervous at the start, but as they began to talk about their lives and homes, they became more relaxed. Having command of the English language helped the interviews to flow, but some names of food were found to be confusing.

Eleven mothers were interviewed, originating from South Africa, Nigeria, Ghana, DR Congo, Zimbabwe, and Pakistan (Table 1). Their duration in Direct Provision varied from one to eight years and all had children living with them. One mother gave birth to both her children in Ireland, while another mother came to Ireland with a young child and subsequently had her second baby here. A third mother had her only child since coming to Ireland. English was spoken by all those interviewed. One mother, although she spoke English, was not confident in being interviewed without the assistance of her 19-year-old daughter. The mothers agreed that being able to speak English made life easier initially when dealing with the bureaucracy of asylum seeking. One participant did not wish to have her interview recorded, so contemporaneous notes were taken instead.

The interviews took place in Dublin, Kildare, Waterford, Tipperary, and Sligo.

Table 1 Demographics of Interviewees

Interviewee No.	Country of Origin	No. of Children	Years in Direct Provision	Religion
1	South Africa	3	2	Muslim
2	Pakistan	2	3.5	Muslim
3	South Africa	1	2.5	Muslim
4	Nigeria	2	5	Christian
5	DR Congo	5	1	Christian Adventist
6	Nigeria	2	3	Christian
7	South Africa	3	1	7-day Adventist
8	DR Congo	2	1	Christian
9	Ghana	2	1	Christian
10	Zimbabwe	1	1.5	Christian
11	Nigeria	2	8	Christian

4.3 Provision of Food in Direct Provision

The RIA (2019) handbook states that all food and accommodation is provided for those in Direct Provision. Judge Bryan McMahon in his report (2017, p.7) recommends self-catering for families in Direct Provision where practicable. The RIA handbook does not state which centres, if any, have self-catering facilities. Each of the Direct Provision centres has an ad hoc system for providing and acquiring food. Baleskin reception centre, where all asylum seekers are accommodated when they first arrive in Ireland has no self-catering facilities. The mothers stayed in Baleskin for up to four months before being relocated.

4.3.1 Self Catering Availability in Interviewee's Direct Provision Centres

The Direct Provision centre in Dublin provides all meals to residents but has no self-catering facilities. The Direct Provision centre in Kildare is a former hotel with self-catering apartments for families. The cookers in these units can be booked by asylum seekers in this centre, thus allowing anyone who wishes to cook for themselves to do so. The other three centres are ex-convents with large scale catering facilities. These former convents are four stories high and the interviewees stated that there were no lifts. In Waterford, the kitchen has a corner allocated for residents to use to prepare their food. In Sligo, the centre has converted a room into a kitchen

which can be booked for use by residents. The third centre in Tipperary has dismantled its large-scale kitchen within the last year and installed ten cookers and preparation areas for residents to use. In this centre, there were no canteen facilities and the residents have independent control over their food choices. In this study, only 20% of the mother interviewed had independent living available to them. Figures for the number of mothers in Direct Provision are difficult to access but in October 2018 there were eight single mothers and thirty-five couples with children living within the system (RIA, 2018).

4.4 Interview findings

Thematic analysis was used to analyse the data due to its flexibility and usefulness in phenomenological research (Braun and Clarke, 2006). The interviews were analysed, and the following themes identified:

- Food culture and traditions of the mothers from their home country.
- Conveyance of food culture and traditions to these mothers in their home country.
- The emotions and anxieties stated by the mothers on their first Irish food experience at the reception centre in Baleskin, Dublin.
- The feelings experienced by the mothers when they were relocated to Direct Provision centres throughout Ireland.
- The impact of being prohibited from preparing food and cooking for their children on the mothers.
- Coping mechanisms of the mothers in Direct Provision.
- Resistance by the mothers to rules laid down regarding food, cooking and storage by management.

4.4.1 Food Culture and Traditions of the Mothers

All but one mother interviewed originated from the African continent (Table 1) and most grew up with a mixture of tribal and Western food culture. The tribal food was vital as a way of bonding with their families and identifying themselves with their tribal roots. Western food experience was generally fast food i.e. McDonalds for children's parties and take away convenience food at weekends. Most lived in cities but returned to their parents' villages regularly for weddings, family celebrations, and festive occasions. In the villages the only food offered was tribal. It was essential that the interviewees and their siblings were able to cook in

this fashion in order to continue these tribal traditions. As childhood memories of food influence who we are and what we ate as children is ingrained in our minds, so, to get insight into this phenomena question were asked about their childhood food. Two mothers had experience of tribal foods only. Mealtimes, both celebratory and day to day, were an important time for families to be together and enjoy each other's company.

Interviewee 3 remembers "Dinner time was precious; we could connect with our mother and siblings. Even when married we used the time to bond and get to know what is happening around us".

Interviewee 6 said, "We normally eat together, at least once a day, everyone knows their pot, even if it is the same". Her mother made the meals and put them in pots for later in the day. Everyone knew their own pot even if they were all similar.

When considering food preparation, **Interviewee 2** commented "we do properly [sic] cooking. We provide the proper food, different kind of foods.... That is why according to our culture it is very important to us", continuing "if the food is not good our day is ruined". Food preparation was time consuming as yams had to be pounded before cooking.

Types of food eaten

The mothers talked about their native foods, emphasising their importance and their perceived health properties (e.g. *pap*, *fufu*, *plantain*, *pounded yam*, *swallow*, *banku*, and *egusi soup*). *Egusi soup* and *swallow* (another name for *pap* which is made from cornmeal) was mentioned frequently as a celebration meal, and as a dish to be prepared after childbirth or illness. When describing their food habits, the mothers frequently demonstrated with hands how to hold and roll *pap* and eat it with soup or stew. *Plantain* was eaten frequently and considered to be a healthy food particularly for people with diabetes. Vegetables were at the core of the midday and evening meals. *Yam*, *cassava* and *sweet potato* were eaten at most meals. Green leafy vegetables, root vegetable, *okra* and the leaves of *cassava* and *bitter leaf* were used in soups and to wrap food. The sweetness of fresh vegetables was prominent and mentioned by a few women. Homegrown vegetables were vital for families on a low income. Seeing African vegetables for sale in ethnic markets in Ireland gave three of the women a feeling of great joy. Tears were shed during the interviews as some women were single mothers and felt sad, alone

and isolated. Recalling family traditions from their home made some of them nostalgic. After a break and some general conversation, the interviews continued.

The overall food culture, methods of cooking and eating were quite similar amongst all the mothers interviewed, but the names of the dishes were different within each tribe or country.

Identity

The evidence of cultural pride and identification is exemplified by *Interviewee 6* when she explained where she originated from;

I am from Delta state in Nigeria, the southern part of Nigeria, Delta state, I'm Igbo by tribe. We are very close to the Niger, the eastern part of Nigeria, but I am from the southern part Ara. Igbo is different from across the Niger, so we are closer to the Deltan's like the Ijaws, the Itsekiris, and the Yoruba. I know you don't know what I am talking about, but that's where I'm from.

Later this mother described how another resident recognised that she was from Delta by the way she was making Banku soup in the kitchen, "oh my God, my daughter, you know that I am from Delta" - *Interviewee 6*.

Food and Emotions

All the mothers emphasised the importance of food in their cultures. The tone of voice and emphasis on the wording can be heard in the recordings of the interviews, and the animation on their faces was visible, saying that food was pleasurable and can make one happy. Many referred to their mothers and the pleasure that they had providing food for them as children. *Interviewee 1* stated that food was central in her family because her Mum was happy in her heart when the children ate the food - "she was happy that we were happy, and she was happy that we were full".

Interviewee 6 said, "My mom loves cooking for us, we sit around the table even if we are not eating just chatting and being happy".

Vegetables and starch-based foods such as pap and yam featured as part of every meal in most of the interviews. All but one mother had grown vegetables or had access to their parent's

vegetable gardens in their home country. Growing and cultivating food was an integral part of their food culture.

Learning to Cook

Each of the interviewees had learned to cook from watching their mother or grandmother in their kitchen. They mostly started learning when they were eight to ten years old. They helped to peel and pound vegetables. Pounded yam is a common ingredient mentioned for making pap, and it takes a considerable amount of time and effort to prepare. All the pounding is done by hand with a pestle and mortar. They fetched vegetables from the garden, watched as their mothers demonstrated how to add each ingredient for specific meals. Involvement in cooking gave the interviewees pleasure, to be considered mature enough to help cook was something to brag about at school.

“I helped my mom make egusi soup” *Interviewee 11* recalls, “I was so excited and happy”.

Many of the families lived in a communal house with different generations and relations, meaning many family members acted as cooks and teachers. So, it was natural for them to pass on their tribal food culture.

Most mothers mentioned that they wanted their children to know how to cook their own native food in the future. They wished their children to carry on their food culture and cook ethnic food for their own families. The mothers felt it was necessary for a daughter to know how to cook her own tribal food when she married and went to live with her husband’s family house.

Interviewee 10 believes that “you have to know where you are coming from and know your roots”.

Two of the mothers had lived through wars in their home countries and had moved from village to village, and even country to country within Africa. They brought their own food culture with each move, but also learned some of the food cultures of their new environment. Their children ate ethnic food in friends’ houses in these new places and helped bring a new food culture to their homes. This assimilation of new food cultures helped them integrate into new communities.

"We adapted to the culture very quickly", *Interviewee 8* observed.

Food after Childbirth

A new subject emerged in the interview with the mother from Pakistan. She had a very strong food culture background. She had her first baby in Lahore. During the interview, she brought up the difference between having a baby in Pakistan, and in Direct Provision in Ireland. She recounted being cared in Pakistan by five family members for up to six months after the birth. The tradition there is to cook foods suitable for the new mother including nuts and semolina cooked in ghee. Everything cooked for the new mother was to make her strong, so as she would produce good milk for her baby. The new mother's only role is to breastfeed the baby, as the women wash and care for its other needs. In contrast she had her second baby by caesarean section in Ireland and returned to a room on the third floor of the centre. Her husband and other son had only eaten chips while she was in hospital. They could not cook for her and she would not eat canteen food. She described this as a very distressful period as she was hungry but had nothing she could eat. They were a very private family who ate all their meals in their bedroom and so had little communication with the other residents.

Subsequent to this interview I asked other mothers about the care they received by family postpartum. The mother who had her two children in Ireland cried as she described the loneliness of not having her mother and family to care for her.

4.4.2 Emotions and Anxieties Experienced by the Mothers on their First Irish Food Experience at the Reception Centre in Baleskin, Dublin.

Initially, all asylum seekers are accommodated in the Baleskin reception centre in Dublin. There is no facility to cook food there. The mothers are new to the country at this stage. They do not know how to shop or where to go for ethnic foods. Bus fares are expensive, and they have such a small amount of disposable income of €21.60 per week to spend. The anxiety of having no control over when and what to eat, caused tremendous hardship and distress for these mothers.

For the first few days, the new asylum seekers are distracted by the new surroundings and all the official procedures they must address. Soon it becomes apparent that the food is a problem for most because they do not like the style of cooking, or the taste of the food as they referred to it as “English cuisine”.

“Most of the time the food was not well prepared, it was not good at all... I had to force myself to eat..., I had no choice”, complained *Interviewee 3*.

“I was very, very shattered about the food and I used to panic and have anxiety” recalls *Interviewee 1*. For her, the food was so different “it was totally way out of my food”. *Interviewee 4* added, “I could not eat anything, I wasn't in our land, I don't know how to eat lots of these foods”.

When speaking about Baleskin, *Interviewee 2* thought “it was the hardest time, or maybe the worst time of my life I can never forget that. The chicken was halal, but the way they were cooking it was not bearable to me. I was not eating at all. So, I was hungry all that time”. *Interviewee 6* “I don't like to remember it: it was a very, very sad place, it was horrible”.

Breakfast in Baleskin consists of cereal, fruit juice, boiled eggs, and bread. For some mothers and their children, this, as well as tea and bread, was all they ate during the day because they either did not recognise or like the food at the other meals.

Asylum seekers from many different countries and cultures are all living together while making their application for refugee status. From the interviews it appears that panic and anxieties are at a high level during this transition period. Stories of asylum seekers being deported if they complained about food were common within the centre and the media reports heightened the stress (Ní Chiosáin, 2018.)

4.4.3 Feelings Experienced by the Mothers When They were Relocated to Direct Provision Centres Throughout Ireland

The food in Direct Provision was most unsatisfactory according to all the participants. The quality of food used generally was not the problem, it was the method of cooking employed by the caterers. They considered there are too many fried foods and chips. The taste of tinned tomatoes, tomato puree and the readymade sauces added to meat was offered as a reason that

the food tasted so awful. Some of the centres had weekly menus posted outside the canteen, but according to some women these were not adhered to, and the food was repetitive and bland. See (Appendix A).

All mothers stated that the meals were cooked incorrectly, were unappetising, had an unpleasant smell and were often inedible. The amount of food wasted shocked the women. They concluded that the kitchen staff would prefer to throw out food than give it to residents to eat later.

Interviewee 8 describes feeling sick and vomiting after eating meals in the canteen, and her children also vomited “for me, my belly is making a lot of noise, maybe because of the food, that's why they are all vomiting”.

Food and Culture

Each mother was asked if they thought the food in Direct Provision was of Irish food culture. Three had been to homes of Irish people they met through Christian churches and adamantly stated that they knew Irish people ate different delicious food. Many of the mothers had not met the Irish community and had no idea what they ate but considered that it was not typically Irish food that they were being offered.

Interviewee 1 “so I wouldn’t really say that its Irish people food specifically, or I wouldn’t say it’s anybody’s food for that matter”, this theme that the food offered to them in Direct Provision was not associated with any culture was typical in all interviews.

4.4.4 Impact of Being Prohibited from Preparing Food and Cooking for their Children on the Mothers.

Children in Direct Provision struggled with the food - some only liked the food from their country of origin and refused to eat the food provided. Many mothers reported that their children only ate cereal and toast for every meal.

Some mothers reported just having to be resolute with their children. It made them feel powerless as they had no option but to tell their children that they had to eat the food provided.

Interviewee 7 said “I call it survival of the fittest. You don't have a choice. You have to survive and, just for you to keep on, to be sane”. Some mothers tried to make light of their situation.

Interviewee 1 told her children “we came all this way on an aeroplane to another country, this country has to give us this food, and we have to eat this food for a while....and when time passes then I'll cook for you back our food”.

When one mother realised that they had been in Direct Provision for over six months and her son was only eating cereal and chips she went and bought some food in the African shop. When she cooked it, he refused to eat it and said he would prefer chips. She felt disappointed, “as if he is going to grow up into being something that he is not. Then I tell him, I am cooking this for you so that you know where you come from, this is what you eat, that you're going to pass it on to your children as well” **Interviewee 2**.

Interviewee 6 worried and scolded her children when they would not eat the food in the canteen- “it's a worry, yeah so I scream, and I scold, and I shout”.

Not one of the mothers and their children had an easy relationship with food. It appeared to be a daily struggle to either make them eat the food provided, or else buy something in the takeaway or buy ethnic foods and cook either in their rooms or book a cooker. None of the mothers had paid work so their day revolved around their children.

The overarching belief was that they would not be here forever - “When we get out, we can cook all the foods we like to eat at home” promised **Interviewee 7** to her children. In the centres with self-catering facilities, the mothers frequently asked the chefs to give them some of the meat and vegetables that came into the kitchen and let them cook it themselves. Catering staff usually refused, but on occasions, the women could assist the chefs to prepare meals for the centre; they enjoyed this. In one centre the chef occasionally allowed the asylum seekers to cook ethnic food for evening meal. They could put in their food order a week in advance. Listening to the mothers this was a huge event in the centres. Whether it was because they could showcase their ethnicity, or it was a focus and distraction for a week was not clear.

Some mothers felt anxious about the pressure their children put them under to provide food that they liked. The excuse of “it won't be long wore off” and as the children of **Interviewee 1** put it “ that's a long time now Mummy.....I want to have chicken curry, you should prepare us a chicken curry”, and she would go and buy an Indian curry at the takeaway. “it used to build

up in my heart, and I used to bottle it up". The Mothers felt guilty about not preparing food for their children.

Food and preparation were a constant struggle for the mothers. The children born in Ireland did not want to eat tribal or traditional food when their mothers cooked it. This disturbed their mothers as they wished their children to accept ethnic foods particularly if they were to return home. Some of the older children rejected ethnic food and when I asked the mothers how they felt; they were sad but determined to keep on trying. Mothers described children crying and shouting when they were forced to eat in the canteen. Some children declined to eat with their hands in public, even if their mothers did.

There were twenty-five children amongst the eleven mothers interviewed. Sixteen were attending pre and post primary schools. One school provided school lunches, but the remaining children brought lunches provided by the Direct Provision centre. The lunches consisted of sandwiches, fruit and a drink. However, the children would not eat them at school as other school children identified the lunch bags and brands as coming from the centres. The mothers either made the children eat them when they came home from school or kept food from the midday meal and reheated it in the room later. One mother bought established branded crisps and drinks for her child to bring to school. Anxiety around coaxing children to eat was common.

4.4.5 Coping Mechanisms of the Mothers in Direct Provision.

Mothers in Direct Provision had to be inventive in order to cope with their loss of autonomy over the choice of food for themselves and their children. They bought small electric or gas rings to use in their bedrooms to cook or reheat food, which was against the RIA rules. Some also bought small fridges and freezers. Mothers would take elements of the meals provided e.g. meat and rice and bring it back to their rooms. There, they would wash the food to remove the sauces and spices that they disliked. They could then add ingredients bought in the supermarket or African shop to suit each person's taste. Many referred to their rooms as home. One mother shared her room with her five children. Food was enjoyed when eaten in the rooms as they said they could shut out the rest of the world and feel safe. Many sat on the floor and shared out the food, as described by *Interviewee 2* - "we prefer to sit on the floor, we spread the mat, and we serve the kids first...then we start eating. We pray first before we eat. We teach our child as well to thank God, whatever you have it".

Interviewee 3 took control of some aspects of not having a choice of what or when to eat in Direct Provision. She approached Christian communities to find kitchens where she and some other women could cook. There are at present three kitchens available to them, and **Interviewee 3** organises a rota for the women from her Direct Provision centre to cook. They get some financial help and donations to fund the purchase of ingredients from local businesses. **Interviewee 3** brings the cooked food back to the centre where “I eat it at home, basically in the room, which I call home, we have the meals at a time that we choose”. The project, called Cooking for Freedom, supports twenty-five families per week.

In rural areas, mothers took turns to go to town by public transport to purchase ingredients in the African or ethnic shops. Occasionally they may get a lift in a private car to go to a discount store where prices were cheaper than local stores.

Two women in Tipperary were cooking independently for the last six months. This is called independent living. One mother said they had to fight very hard for this privilege. When **Interviewee 1** compared life before being permitted to cook, she said, “personally for myself, it has brought much change and stress out for the cooking”. They have a shop on site where each resident is given a certain amount of weekly credit to buy what they need. This credit is supplemented by their weekly allowance that can be spent autonomously. **Interviewee 10** had commenced cookery classes to learn how to use Western ingredients. Some mothers were open to the idea of introducing Western type food or what they called Irish food to their children.

Interviewee 1 hopes that her children will grow up in Ireland, and said “They can eat Irish, they can learn how to prepare an Irish dish.... I will want to learn myself what is the Irish food, what do Irish people cook. I will teach them what I need to teach them from the cultural way or the religious food”. She will blend the Irish and her own culture.

Table 2 Summary of Themes that Posed Problematic Issues for Mothers Living in Direct Provision (DP)

Food culture and traditions of the mothers from their home country	Mixture of tribal food and Western food culture	9
	Tribal Food only	2
	Homegrown vegetables formed basis of family meals	11
	Importance of food in their home country	11
Conveyance of food culture and traditions to these mothers in their home country	Similarity of cooking methods in countries origin using foods native to their country	11
	Cooking central to day to day living	11
	Learning how to cook from their mothers	10
Emotions & anxieties experienced by the mothers on their first Irish food experience	Methods of cooking unacceptable e.g. excessive fried foods	7
	Availability of Halal foods & kitchens kept open during Ramadan for Muslim Mothers (n=3)	3
	Number of mothers whose children refused to eat the food provided	11
Feelings experienced by the mothers when they were relocated to centres throughout Ireland.	Feelings of powerlessness at unacceptable foods being served e.g. Tinned tomatoes/tomato puree/fried foods	11
	Upset at regularity of unappetising and often inedible food being served	11
	Distress at observing large volumes of food wasted & thrown out	11
	Anxiety experienced in coaxing children to eat at meals	9
Impact of being prohibited from preparing & cooking food for their children	Sense of guilt about not preparing food for their children.	11
	Number of mothers whose children refused to eat the packed lunches at school provided by the DP centre	10
Coping mechanisms of the mothers in DP	Purchase of electric/gas rings/small fridges	11
	Washing off sauces from food provided	5
	Enjoyment of food/meals consumed in own room	11

4.5 Food and Religion

Muslim women interviewed had varying levels of adherence to their religious food laws. One woman was rigorous; she and her children only ate halal food. She was happy that the management in the centre had a certificate that all meat was slaughter according to Islamic rules. If she had any doubt, she chose vegetarian food.

Interviewee 3 endeavoured to follow the Muslim food laws but stated that she would not go hungry and said the Bismillah prayer to God if she had to eat haram food - "Fine God you know my situation, there is never a way in which the food you don't prepare yourself complies with your spiritual needs. Compromise".

The mothers described how management in the centres kept the kitchens open at night during Ramadan in order to facilitate Muslim families breaking their fast, and recognition of their religious food laws by the staff pleased them. they still complained about the way the food was cooked even if it was halal. When it comes to food and culture, religion came second in importance to nationality "every Pakistan person, regardless of their religion will have the same culture and identity". *Interviewee 2*

4.6 Resistance

The theme of resistance was evident throughout the interviews. Most mothers bought gas or electric burners to cook in their rooms. They are not allowed electric equipment, but fridges, freezers, kettles, hot plates and blenders are amongst some items mentioned during the interviews as being used by them. When asked about the rules on having electric devices in their rooms *Interviewee 7* replied "we are not allowed, but a lot of people do so why not?" meaning that everyone does, and they cannot stop it. There appeared to be a lot of hostility between management and the residents in some centre, but in others there was a sense of mutual respect.

In Waterford, the residents requested to be allowed to cook, but the management refused. *Interviewee 11* complained, "The manager said no we are not allowed to cook, we might burn down the hostel, or we might eat like food poisoning". It was only when the mothers protested "we were fighting.... we did a protesting, a protestation. So, some of us we can allow the residents to cook by themselves" that resulted in an area being cordoned off to allow some cooking by residents. In the Midlands, only families used cooking facilities provided there and single men and women chose only to cook occasionally, if there is something special to celebrate.

4.7 Conclusion

Eleven mothers in Direct Provision were interviewed. These mothers came from a culture with rich food traditions and customs before arriving in Ireland. Fresh natural food was emphasised as being the staple in their homes. Culture, identity, and religion were found to be inextricably linked through food preparation, cooking and eating. Joy and family bonding were the feelings described.

Each Direct Provision centre has applied the RIA rules individually. One had independent living. All mothers resisted against the rule of the centre which forbids cooking and storing food in the bedroom. They managed to cook in kitchens outside of the auspices of the Direct Provision centres. The children caused the mothers a significant stress as food appeared to be used as a lever by the children to get their own way.

Unanimously the mothers felt that the food was poorly cooked. Their children rejected the food provided in the canteen, leaving the mothers feeling powerless. They take control over what and when their children ate by cooking in the kitchens outside of the centres and brought it back to their room. A short stay in Direct Provision they stated would have been manageable, but the indefinite waiting for an answer to their application for asylum status makes the food provision system a major hardship.

As *Interviewee 1* explained in her interview that initially the food was not her main concern, as she was recovering from trauma

food at the time was not a concern for me, it was more of the anxiousness of having to be here, and all I faced to be here. However, slowly and gradually after that, it did become an issue. Like when are we going to get an opportunity to cook for ourselves?

There was a sadness in the women, and they appeared dependant and vulnerable. There appears to be exploitation of their vulnerability, and some gatekeepers exercised their powers by controlling stories coming out of Direct Provision centres. Individual centres allowed different levels of autonomy. Interpersonal relationships with management controlled the narrative. This may be explained by Foucault's theory of local, not governmental power over the powerless (Mills, 2003)

CHAPTER 5: DISCUSSION

5.1 Introduction

This research study examined the legislations of the United Nations for the treatment of asylum seekers and refugees, and the role Ireland plays in the current world crisis. The literature examines the role of food in culture, identity, tradition, and religion. Eleven mothers living in Direct Provision in Ireland were interviewed to understand the food culture in their home countries and ascertain their impressions of food in Direct Provision and reveal how they feel about not being allowed to prepare and cook for themselves and their children. How will these mothers transfer their culture to their children?

The data collected and now discussed provides the narratives of the mothers, and their opinions compared with the results of other research in this area.

There are three sections:

1. The first section (5.2) discusses the food and culture of the women in their country of origin.
2. The second section (5.3) discusses the arrival of the mothers into Direct Provision through Baleskin reception centre in North Dublin, examining their feelings about the food provided and the challenges they face by not being allowed to cook for themselves and their children.
3. Section three (5.4) explores their feelings and coping strategies when relocated to Direct Provisions around Ireland where there are no self-catering facilities. This section will discuss how the mothers will transfer their culture and identity.

5.2 Food and Culture in their Country of Origin, and Childhood Recollections

It may be a coincidence or the result of snowball recruitment that ten out of the eleven interviewees were from the African continent. Their sense of identity and tribal traditions were very strong. Each described her region and tribe, as one mother gives details of her Yoruba tribe, explaining where she originated from:

“I am from Delta State in Nigeria, the southern part of Nigeria, Delta State, I'm Igbo by tribe. We are very close to the Niger, the eastern part of Nigeria, but I am from the southern part Ara. Igbo is different from across the Niger, so we are closer to the Delta's like the Ijaws, the Itsekiris, and the Yoruba. I know you don't know what I am talking about, but that's where I'm from” – *Interviewee 6*.

Traditions and styles of eating

In African and Pakistani culture, eating by hand is the custom. According to these mothers, eating food with hands gives an extra dimension to taste and feeling food, and they described pleasure as food tastes better this way, rather than eaten with a spoon. *Pap, fufu, banku, and chapattis* were used with soups and stews. Vegetable leaves were stuffed with meat and vegetables and eaten by hand. Vegetables were rated highly in their culture but there was very little mention of fruit. All the food was placed on the table or on the floor in dishes and people helped themselves.

Plates and bowls are shared between two or three members of a family. *Interviewee 10* recounted how her father sat on a chair and ate from his plate. The children sat on the floor and shared one plate between them, and older women shared a plate between two and sat on the floor. A child would never eat from a mother's plate as it would show disrespect. This hierarchy of food distribution corresponds with Sibal description of different food cultures when he states men eat differently to women (2017).

Overall the mothers had a very positive emotions about their food in their homes as children. They were strong resilient women and Mårtensson and Von Essen (2018) found this connection between positive childhood food memories and a positive identity marker for emotional resilience for later life.

One mother from South Africa said that she thought that we as Irish or Western people take food too seriously. Counting out pieces of chicken or meat and having one piece of fruit handed out each day contrasted to the generosity of spirit in the African food culture.

Communality was evident as *Interviewee 2* described, the Muslim religious food rituals around death and burial. The bereaved must not light a fire or cook in the house where a body is laid out, and they must not eat meat or fish for fourteen days. The local community supply all the food to the bereaved during this time. This communal coming together to reinforce religious food laws is described by Sibal (2017) and he claims it strengthen bonds between people and communities.

One mother who was Christian said that non-Christian families in her village had very specific food traditions and food offerings were made to native gods. She emphasised she left these traditions behind when she became a Christian. Most of the families including Muslims, celebrated Christian holidays as festive events over three-days with food, music and dancing.

They ate food similar to everyday food, but with different varieties of meats. Lamb and mutton were meats of high cultural value and they are more expensive than chicken and beef. *Jollof rice and egusi soup* were regularly talked about as being special. It was essential from a hospitality aspect that there was food that each person enjoyed and could eat, and that there was an abundance of this food. Hospitality is highly regarded in immigrant groups (Vandevoordt, 2017). This hospitality was contrasted by the women to the meagre quantity and lack of variety of food in Direct Provision.

Growing their own food

All the mothers were asked about growing their own food. The literature review describes how migrants cope well in a new country and culture when they can supplement their income by growing vegetables and fruit (Spivey and Lewis, 2015). As well as improving nutrition, it allowed the migrants to continue cultural transference and teach children about their native foods. A community spirit around gardening and sharing of the produce gave feeling of family support. All but one mother had grown up where much of their food was cultivated and produced by their parents or grandparents. They put a great emphasis on fresh vegetables and spices and did not consider supermarket produce to be fresh. They had been involved with cultivating these gardens. One mother described that, as children, the girls cooked, cleaned and did the vegetable garden while the boys did heavy farming duties. Many of the Direct Provision centres outside of Dublin have land available that could be made into community gardens for growing fruit, herbs, and vegetables. These could be maintained even if current residents moved elsewhere and were replaced by new residents. Evidence suggests, according to Harris *et al.*, that many migrants are healthier than the natives of the host nation also called the “healthy migrant” paradox (2014, p.1). The paradox is that barriers of food poverty, insecurity and cultural differences may erode health and nutrition. “Community gardening generates connectedness with a new culture, is a purposeful and familiar activity, allows access to culturally appropriate foods, and builds social and cultural assets” (Harris *et al.*, 2014, p.8).

5.3 On Arrival into Ireland and Baleskin, North Dublin

Without doubt the mothers suffered a food culture shock when they arrived in Baleskin Reception Centre. This centre has the capacity to accommodate 310 asylum seekers (RIA, 2017). They could be any nationality, age, sex and marital status. It is designed as a short stay

centre where asylum seekers are medically assessed and offered legal assistance (Loyal and Quilley, 2016). Most stay about two to three weeks, but one of the mothers who was pregnant stayed four months. Baleskin has no facility for self-catering. The mothers and children found the food unfamiliar, poorly cooked and contained too much oil and powdered spices. Listening to their narratives, they appear to have survived on tea, bread, cereal and boiled eggs. If they or their children ate anything at the main meals it was boiled rice, but this rice was also unfamiliar to them. A few said it was the worst time of their lives, and they worried about their children's health.

Interviewee 11 “when we came, they told us that this is where you will be living until the Minister [for Justice and Equality] decides our case. So many things I have never seen before in my life...you will be feeling so bad and the food is not nice, the taste is not good, and you have not seen it before”

Despite previous calls for changes to the food provision system in Direct Provision (Manandhar, 2006; Barry, 2014; McMahon 2015) as well as NGO agencies, the same complaints about food are still being repeated the mothers in this research. It may not be the first concern when they arrive in Ireland, but it has caused them a lot of distress. Listening to their narratives highlights how appropriate food, such as self-prepared food would assist their transition into this host country.

5.4 Relocation to Direct Provision Centres

Food Security, as defined by the FAO (2008) is “when all people, have physical and economic access to safe nutrition that meets their dietary need and food preferences of an active and healthy life”. Direct Provision provides adequate food, but the contention is that it is not always culturally appropriate and the choice of the residents. Nutritionally adequate food with consideration of different ethnicity and religions is provided by the catering companies. Four-week menu plans are published for each Direct Provision centre and on inspection appears suitable (Appendix A). The problem reported by the interviewees related to the quality and variety of the food, the strict timing of meals, the lack of any flexibility so allowing them some control. These same complaints were cited by the McMahon report (2015). When I asked the interviewees what they thought was the problem with the food was, one mother said when referring to the cooks:

“they are not Irish. I think they don't really, really know how to prepare that food, just like me. I cannot be able to prepare Polish food or Irish food very well, but I can prepare my country food very well. So, if you ask an Irish person or Polish person to prepare my Nigerian food, maybe the person will not even prepare it very well”-*Interviewee 11*

The mothers felt that the catering staff would prefer to waste the food rather than give it to them. A conflicting view held by some of the mothers was that it was not the chef's choice of food either, as he may have just been given a menu from the back room. Overall the mothers felt that nobody was interested in the food provision, either because they had no training, or did not like the people they were cooking for, or management was not concerned. A comment that they did not really think it was anyone's cultural food perhaps describes the feelings about the catering.

There was a feeling that the cooks were not properly trained, and this may be a barrier to cooking food for asylum seekers. Cooks may not like people from different cultures if traditionally certain tribes or countries are not on friendly terms with each other. All are run by companies which have no experience of dealing with vulnerable adults and children, from such varied and often traumatic backgrounds. Ní Chiosáin, (2018) describes their inexperience and lack of training in her research of Direct Provisions.

Power Struggles

Mothers sometimes asked for raw ingredients from the kitchen when they had booked a cooker to cook their own food. They were usually refused, and the mothers felt that the management would prefer to waste food than give it for self-cooking. A power struggle seemed to be at play where sometimes the mothers were facilitated and not at other times. Rows broke out in two centres visited over the rota for booking cookers. During the booked cooking times in the kitchenette's management supervised the sessions. This did not please the mothers who would have preferred to cook and chat among themselves but felt scrutinised by the supervisor. They never felt that they were trusted which caused bad feelings. One mother recounted how she hid the key to the kitchenette and got up very early to cook when no staff were around. The next time she went to book a cooking time she was refused. In his research in Norwegian prisons (Ugelvik, 2011), found that any of the prisoners who flouted the rules on making food in the cells were punished but if they were subtle and otherwise not troublesome the wardens ignored the transgressions. It appears the similar power struggles take place in the Direct Provision

centres, when the asylum seekers are voluble in their demands to cook, they were more likely to be refused permission by the management.

Food and Religion

The literature demonstrates that food and religion can be a focus for migrants to come together, even if they are not from the same countries or religion (Sibal 2017; Sabaté, 2004). The mothers involved with ‘Cooking for Freedom’ and ‘Meals without Boundaries’ were facilitated by various Christian churches to use their cookers in community centres, even though they were from a different faith. Two of the Muslim mothers were very strict in adhering to the Islamic food laws and were happy with the supply of halal food even if it was poorly cooked. The third Muslim said a prayer Bismillah to Mohammad if halal food was not available to eat. The end of the daily fast in Ramadan was hosted by local Muslim families in the mosque in Waterford. This mother used it as an example of the Islamic culture of hospitality. There was not a sense from the Christian mothers that they had any food culture associated with their religion. Apart from one Christian church lending their community kitchen for cooking, other aid towards promoting cooking programmes in the community came from businesspeople.

There was very little evidence of food and religion being important for the Christian women and their children. Christian churches made overtures to families in Direct Provision but more as pastoral care. Religion practice itself may become more important. One mother with five children living in a rural area paid bus fares to attend church on Sunday.

Integrating Tribal or Traditional Food with Western or Local Food

Overall, in this research there was a sense that these women’s cultures and traditions are accepting of new influences. Many of the women had changed religion when they married. They combined their own food cultures with that of their husband’s family. One mother from South Africa ate mostly Asian food and this was because her father had been a Tamil Tiger from South Asia. Three mothers from Democratic Republic Congo had been displaced many times before arriving in Ireland. One of these had been reared by an aunt in South Africa. In the beginning they cooked only Congolese food in the home. She wished her aunt to try cooking some South African food that she had seen in school friends’ homes, this resulted in a mixed food culture being introduced which made her feel more integrated. This mixture is important

as described by Parasecoli (2014) it helps migrants move from global to local and integrate. Most of the mothers did not know much about Irish food but were definite in their opinion that they would try it when they were permitted to live outside of Direct Provision. The feeling was that until then, they would only cook their own cultural food whenever they had an opportunity to cook. They gave the impression that they were not prepared to waste precious cooking time experimenting with new recipes. Their children may exert pressure on the mothers to try European food and to buy school lunches like what other children bring to school. On a very limited weekly allowance of €39.10 this puts another burden on the mothers.

The mothers in Tipperary living with self-catering had taken cookery classes on European cooking and had made some Italian dishes in the Direct Provision centre. There was a different attitude to food from these two mothers. They had lived within the system when they were not allowed to cook and now had the experience of self-catering. The level of anxiety around food was greatly reduced. They now had other issues to address such as finding work.

Making a Home in a Hostile Environment

Showing identity by place language and food is even more important when identity is disturbed (Fischler, 1988). The food identity of mothers in this study in Direct Provision was very disturbed, as they did not recognise the food offered. Traditionally they had different methods of cooking and rituals around eating. Dining as a family together in their room rather than mixing in the canteen gave a sense of this tradition, as they sat on the floor and ate the food with their hands as they would have in their home country. “Home is not just a place but a situation where people feel warm and safe with familiar tastes and smells” (Vandevoordt, 2017, p.610). Food was brought to the rooms for the family to be together using their own cultural ways of eating and sharing food. The mothers felt comforted to be in this space of their own. As Fischler notes, “Food not only nourishes but also signifies” (1988, p.276).

5.5 Food and Emotion

When discussing childhood food memories with the mothers, the researcher considered them to be strong and resolute women. Their children may not have the same advantage. Every mother worried about what their children were and were not eating. The children refused to eat what the mothers called proper food. There were anxieties at mealtimes when the children cried

and refused to eat. They demanded that their mothers cook for them foods that they were familiar with. One mother described her children vomiting after meals in the canteen due to her insistence that they ate the food provided.

Another mother said her child had become “very fussy” about food. However, food cooked by the mother or bought in McDonald’s were well accepted. The children may have a fear of eating food prepared in the canteen, as there was a lot of negativity by adults, due to neophobia as described by Fischler (1998). These children may not have positive emotions around food in Direct Provision and the longer they are left in a system where choice is so limited, there is greater chances of them developing emotional dependence on food or food dismissal (Mårtensson and Van Essen, 2017). Some children refused to eat by hand in their traditional way, and others demanded chips in place of dinner.

An unusual feature was that some children who had been introduced to canteen food when they were very young rejected the traditional foods when the mothers got access to cookers and could buy and cook ethnic food for them. The mothers were distressed by this as it seemed to be rejection of their traditions. Also, some were under pressure to introduce traditional foods, as each mother spoke about returning home to family when they were given leave to remain in Ireland. They wanted their children to know “their food”.

Many of those interviewed wished to return home after enduring so long in Direct Provision. A gatekeeper explained that they would not have been allowed to leave Ireland during the process of applying for refugee status, and so may not have seen their families for a long time.

5.6 Transference of Identity and Culture through Food to their Children

All the mothers had learned to cook from their mothers and grandmothers and wished to teach their children in the same way. This would only take place when they received permission to remain and were cooking for themselves or if they lived in a centre with self-catering. The longer that they were dependent on the state for their needs the less they demonstrate their culture capital as describes by Bourdieu (1986) The two mothers in independent living were taking cookery lessons provided by the local community centre. They were prepared to incorporate some local cuisine into their own ethnic cuisine. When the mothers described the excitement within a centre when the chef allowed them to host an evening meal from their country, this was a chance to showcase their culture capital to other nationalities.

Unfortunately, the children were not allowed to participate in the preparations due to health and safety concerns.

Integrating into the Community

The literature reports that asylum seekers become isolated (Barry, 2014). The liminal space of living an isolated life does not allow the asylum seekers to participate in any meaningful way with the transition from ethnic and traditional food to the foreign culture which Parasecoli states is necessary to move from global to local (2014). Communal practices such as shopping, food preparation, and celebratory meals provide a sense of belonging, especially when preparing familiar dishes and practices from a place of origin. It can also bring asylum seekers into contact with the local community. Many of the mothers reached out to local community through cooking and this is how I met my first asylum seekers at our table in Christchurch and Cooking without Boundaries in the Irish Midlands. Other mothers organised through the financial aid of businesspeople organise Sligo Global Kitchen which brings food festival events to regional towns. These mothers want to cook, they want to show their rich culture. This was their chance to cook for their children and keep the memories of their tribal food alive.

Mothers Stated That They Wished to Meet Irish People

Interviewee 10 explained to me when asked did she not meet up with other people through the community cooking “lot of people, yeah. I used to cook for them and I see a lot of people, but sometimes they don’t know how to get close to you, I don’t know but I really wish to have that, Irish friend, like let me just feed them or even more, learn about more of their culture, the food”. This mother had a great feeling of loneliness and felt that food could be a good connector to the outside community. Many of the women described feeling alone. They had mostly come from large close family communities. They were looked after within their community. This feeling of loss of support became very evident when *Interviewee 2* recalled how when she had her first baby in Pakistan, when she came home from hospital there were four or five ladies, all family, to cook for her, make special soups, semolina and a variety of nuts all made with ghee oil. She referred to these as being special foods. As a new mother she did not have to care for the baby except breast feed. After this interview the remaining mothers were questioned about this experience and they confirmed that this was common practice in African countries. The

contrast when four of the mothers had babies since arriving in Ireland was stark. *Interviewee 2* came home to a room on the third floor of the centre. Her husband and son had not eaten much from the canteen except cereal, bread and tea. As she had had a Caesarean section, she had difficulty going down to the canteen, she was unable to cook in the room and the family became ill. Mothers stated that they stopped breast feeding much earlier than they would have expected, due to not eating the food in the centres and not having their community support.

Mothers, Children, and Food

The dynamics around food for children in Direct Provision were fraught with emotion and anxiety. The literature describes Fischler's views on neophobia and neophilia amongst young children, so food refusal may be expected (1998). Parasecoli (2014) stated that mothers are the prime influencers for a family taking on the food culture in a new country. Each mother interviewed complained about the food, its smell, the taste, and not being able to identify what they were eating. According to them a constant topic of conversation in the centres. This surely influenced the children's perception of the meals provided. The mothers coaxed their children to eat by saying this is a temporary situation, buying food in the local takeaway, or in some cases scolding the children. They described a very stressful situation in the canteens as the children refused to eat what was on offer. Listening to the mothers it emerged that they felt very guilty about how their children were being nourished.

Asylum seekers are frequently described as being made dependent upon their hosts, but little is said about the role of food and dependency (Vandevoordt, 2017). When asylum seekers are not permitted to cook, they are automatically made dependant on their Irish hosts. The kitchen is usually the mother's domain and de Certeau and Giard (2008) confirm that many women have an inherent feeling for cooking and nourishing that becomes ingrained from an early age from their mother and grandmother. This was borne out in the interviews as most of the mothers had learned to cook from an early age and they appeared to get pleasure from receiving and hoping to pass on this tradition. How exactly they were going to be able to do this was put to each interviewee.

She must never lose her identity because she is in a foreign country. Oh my god it is the most important thing for me. Being in Direct Provision actually made me realise that I cannot do that for my daughter because I do not have my own kitchen. If I get the opportunity to teach her it's like giving identity for her to hold onto *Interviewee 3*

Food may acquire a central importance to people who are forced for whatever reason to flee their home country. Their symbols of security were left behind against their will, their homes, families, foods, utensils, and traditions. Cooking, eating, and sharing food can travel and bring with it a sense of familiarity and comfort, that is, if they can prepare and cook at their destination.

All the mothers wanted to transfer their traditions and culture to their children. One mother had bought two children's cookery books. The mothers who made chapattis allowed the children help to make the dough in the bedroom, they also helped with marinades for meats. They assisted with serving of food in the bedrooms and ate in the traditional way. However, children were not allowed into the area reserved for individual cooking for health and safety reasons so never had the opportunity to observe or help cook traditional food. This was the case in independent living in Tipperary also. There was no sense in any meaningful way that culture transference through food could take place in Direct Provision.

5.7 Limitations of the Research

This study was undertaken on a small cross section of mothers (n=11) living in Direct Provision in both urban and rural Ireland. Whilst the number interviewed was a small representative sample it has however, highlighted the many problems encountered in the day to day living of these mothers.

There are limitations to the usefulness of open ended or semi structured interviews. Miller and Glassner (2011) discuss how language, age, class, and race can affect how an interviewee may respond to questions. If there are barriers, the response to questions may be tailored in a fashion that they believe will please the interviewer. In this study barriers were mentioned by many mothers. These included the difficulties that they encountered with their language, culture, beliefs and practices. Correct interpretation of the information imparted by the interviewees to the researcher was also identified as being a limitation. For many of the interviews conducted it was very challenging for the researcher to fully comprehend the multifactorial issues that are being experienced by those living in Direct Provision. Questions were formulated and tailored as appropriate to each mother as the interview progressed. Particular attention was given to avoiding patronising questions or questions that related to personal issues that could cause additional distress. This may have resulted in key information from the interviewee not being extrapolated.

5.8 Recommendations

This was a small study of mothers with children living in Direct Provision. Further research in this area is necessary. The research should focus on identifying a greater understanding of the issues that are paramount for both mothers and children that have been cited in this study especially if these asylum seekers are to be residents in Ireland. Integration into the Irish population and consequently their local communities would appear to be of paramount importance.

Direct Provision is fraught with several obstacles for mothers with children. The inability of mothers to have control over the dietary habits of their children precipitates major anxieties for both parties that may result in nutritional and food behavioural issues for the children. This area should be addressed in further studies.

Introduction of an independent living system in each Direct Provision centre should be explored. Giving back this fundamental need would enable these mothers to prepare and cook for their families. This in turn would promote a positive effect of reducing their current levels of stress and anxiety being experienced by them.

Food poverty is of concern in this vulnerable group. The current weekly allowance is inadequate for the purchase of ethnic and local fresh nutritious foods. For those living in rural areas where these foods are not available a travel allowance should be made available.

Cookery classes and/or courses which incorporate local foods into nutritious and acceptable meals should be introduced. These classes would also help to promote social inclusion as isolation and loneliness were also identified as areas of major stress and anxiety.

This study found that the companies who currently control the administration of the Direct Provision centres had no prior training in providing the food and accommodation to vulnerable mothers and children, who arrived in Ireland from a very different culture many of whom had experienced major trauma in their lives. The overall management of these centres needs to be addressed, by researching the causes and solutions to the racial tensions within the system. The women described the power play as described by Foucault (Mills, 2003) as being prevalent in many of the centres.

CHAPTER 6: CONCLUSIONS

6. Conclusions

This research gives an account of the United Nations decrees on Human Rights for refugees and asylum seekers. It outlines the reasons why the Irish Government introduced Direct Provision in 2000. The literature shows the connections between, food, culture, identity and how important it is for maintaining traditions and ethnic values. Physical and mental health research studies have highlighted the challenges within this system. Food provision is one of these challenges. Food, culture, religion, income and isolation are highlighted in this research study.

The results of this research using a qualitative questionnaire highlighted how the food provided in Direct Provision causes mothers and their children extreme distress and anxiety. The right to food is a basic right, and the right to culturally appropriate food is most important NASC (2016). For the mothers interviewed, it was the provision of what they called food of no culture that had the biggest impact. They questioned the attitude of the chefs, or if the chefs were under constraints from management. These mothers expressed their experience of attempting to cope with unfamiliar food and cooking practices. Most of the women had come from a tradition of growing their own vegetables and preparing fresh food.

Many of the children of these mothers refused to eat this food which resulted in their consumption of a very limited number of cheap but affordable unhealthy foods e.g. chips which are energy dense and nutrient dilute. All interviewees expressed their feelings of powerlessness, isolation, and loneliness.

The coping strategies of the women ranged from buying hot plates and microwaves for their bedrooms to reheat or cook meals, to cooking in community kitchens and bringing food back to the centres. The mothers endeavoured to create a home space in their bedrooms where they could serve and eat foods as a family according to their traditions.

These findings suggest that the introduction of an independent living system in each direct provision centre would enable mothers to prepare and cook familiar foods for their families. In order to achieve this goal, the current low weekly allowance needs to be increased to allow the purchase of ethnic and local fresh nutritious foods. Community integration would contribute to the alleviation of social isolation and loneliness e.g. through the introduction of cookery classes that could demonstrate how local foods could be incorporated into healthy affordable meals.

In conclusion this small research study found that direct provision highlighted many problems that are encountered for these mothers with children.

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Appendix A – Direct Provision Menus

BREAKFAST							
Juices Sugar free Orange, Apple & Blackcurrant.	Boiled eggs/baked beans and Porridge	Boiled eggs/baked beans and Porridge	Boiled eggs/baked beans and Porridge	Boiled eggs/baked beans and Porridge	Boiled eggs/baked beans and Porridge	Boiled eggs/baked beans and Porridge	Boiled eggs/baked beans and Porridge
	Cornflakes / rice krispies/ Muesli	Cornflakes / rice krispies/ Muesli	Cornflakes / rice krispies/ Muesli	Cornflakes / rice krispies/ Muesli	Cornflakes / rice krispies/ Muesli	Cornflakes / rice krispies/ Muesli	Cornflakes / rice krispies/ Muesli
	Weetabix	Weetabix	Weetabix	Weetabix	Weetabix	Weetabix	Weetabix
	Jam/Butter	Jam/Butter	Jam/Butter	Jam/Butter	Jam/Butter	Jam/Butter	Jam/Butter
	Hot Milk	Hot Milk	Hot Milk	Hot Milk	Hot Milk	Hot Milk	Hot Milk
Coffee and tea							
At all meals	Bread/Toast	Bread/Toast	Bread/Toast	Bread/Toast	Bread/Toast	Bread/Toast	Bread/Toast
LUNCH							
LUNCH	Cream of mushroom Soup	Cream of mushroom Soup	Vegetable Soup	Broccoli Soup	Broccoli Soup	Cauliflower Soup	Cauliflower Soup
Assorted salads and soup of the day	Lamb Casserole	Penne pasta and chicken in creamy mushroom sauce	Beef burger and bun	Grilled Cajun Spiced Pangasius with roasted onion and pepper	Beef lasagne	Beef or chicken burger and bun + chips	Chicken madras curry
	Chicken tandoori Murghi	Malabar Beef curry	Chicken curry	Beef stew	Turkey hot dogs	Fried cod	Beef pie
	Vegetarian	Vegetarian	Vegetarian Burger	Vegetarian samosa	Vegetarian	Vegetarian burger	Vegetarian
	Potato/ Rice	potato/ rice	Potato/ Rice/Pasta	Potato/ Rice	Potato/ Rice	Potato/ Rice/Pasta	Potato/ Rice
	Veg of the day	Veg of the day	Veg of the day	Veg of the day	Veg of the day	Veg of the day	Veg of the day
	Fruit	Fruit	Fruit	Fruit	Fruit	Fruit	Fruit
DINNER							
DINNER	Beef chilli con carne	Roasted Pin Pin chicken	Battered crispy cod	Cajun breaded Chicken goujons	Mexican chicken	Roasted Cajun chicken	Sweet chilli chicken
Daal- spicy lentil soup	Battered chicken goujons	Italian Beef Meatballs	Beef casserole	Bolognese sauce and pasta	Beef goulash	Tender wexford lamb casserole	Bolognese sauce and pasta
	Vegetarian	Vegetarian	Vegetarian	Vegetarian	Vegetarian	Vegetarian	Vegetarian
	Potato/ Rice	Potato/ Rice/	Potato/ Rice	Potato/ Rice/Pasta	Potato/ Rice	Potato/ Rice	Potato/ Rice/Pasta
	Salad bar	Salad bar	Salad bar	Salad bar	Salad bar	Salad bar	Salad bar
	Veg of the day	Veg of the day	Veg of the day	Veg of the day	Veg of the day	Veg of the day	Veg of the day
	Dessert	Dessert	Dessert	Dessert	Dessert	Dessert	Dessert

WEEK 2						
BREAKFAST						
Juices Sugar free Orange, Apple & Blackcurrent, Coffee and tea At all meals	Boiled eggs/baked beans and Porridge	Boiled eggs/baked beans and Porridge	Boiled eggs/baked beans and Porridge	Boiled eggs/baked beans and Porridge	Boiled eggs/baked beans and Porridge	Boiled eggs/baked beans and Porridge
	Cornflakes / rice krispies/ Muesli	Cornflakes / rice krispies/ Muesli	Cornflakes / rice krispies/ Muesli	Cornflakes / rice krispies/ Muesli	Cornflakes / rice krispies/ Muesli	Cornflakes / rice krispies/ Muesli
	Weetabix	Weetabix	Weetabix	Weetabix	Weetabix	Weetabix
	Jam/Butter	Jam/Butter	Jam/Butter	Jam/Butter	Jam/Butter	Jam/Butter
	Hot Milk	Hot Milk	Hot Milk	Hot Milk	Hot Milk	Hot Milk
	Grapefruit	Grapefruit	Grapefruit	Grapefruit	Grapefruit	Grapefruit
	Bread/Toast	Bread/Toast	Bread/Toast	Bread/Toast	Bread/Toast	Bread/Toast
LUNCH						
LUNCH Assorted salads and soup of the day	Vegetable Soup	Vegetable soup	Mushroom soup	Mushroom Soup	Cauliflower soup	Cauliflower Soup
	Chicken with Thai Green curry and noodles	Irish lamb stew(Wexford lamb cooked in gravy with vegetables)	Garlic and lime marinated chicken breast	Fish cooked in creamy sauce with tagliatelle pasta	Braised beef with vegetables	Beef Burger w/Buns & Chips
	Fried cod	Chicken burger	Beef burger and bun	Turkey hot dogs	Smoked coley	Fried Cod
	Vegetarian	Vegetarian	Vegetarian Burger	Vegetarian samosa	Vegetarian	Vegetarian
	Potato/ Rice	potato/rice	Potato/ Rice/Pasta	Potato/ Rice	Potato/ Rice	Potato/ Rice/Pasta
	Veg of the day	Veg of the day	Veg of the day	Veg of the day	Veg of the day	Veg of the day
	Fruit	Fruit	Fruit	Fruit	Fruit	Fruit
DINNER						
DINNER Daal- spicy lentil soup	Mexican wrap	Indian beef Rogan josh	Savory mince beef	Chicken tikka masala	Thai red chicken curry	Chicken Curry
	Roasted chicken tikka	Cajun chicken legs	Tandoori chicken legs	Chili con carne	Beef meatballs	Beef Pie
	Vegetarian	Vegetarian	Vegetarian	Vegetarian	Vegetarian	Vegetarian
	Potato/ Rice	Potato/ Rice/	Potato/ Rice	Potato/ Rice/Pasta	Potato/ Rice	Potato/ Rice
	Salad bar	Salad bar	Salad bar	Salad bar	Salad bar	Salad bar
	Veg of the day	Veg of the day	Veg of the day	Veg of the day	Veg of the day	Veg of the day
	Marble chocolate cake	Marble chocolate cake	Dessert	Dessert	Dessert	Dessert

[illegible]

WEEK 4						
BREAKFAST						
Juices Sugar free Orange, Apple & Blackcurrant, ml,	Boiled eggs/baked beans and Porridge	Boiled eggs/baked beans and Porridge	Boiled eggs/baked beans and Porridge	Boiled eggs/baked beans and Porridge	Boiled eggs/baked beans and Porridge	Boiled eggs/baked beans and Porridge
	Cornflakes / rice krispies/ Muesli	Cornflakes / rice krispies/ Muesli	Cornflakes / rice krispies/ Muesli	Cornflakes / rice krispies/ Muesli	Cornflakes / rice krispies/ Muesli	Cornflakes / rice krispies/ Muesli
	Weetabix	Weetabix	Weetabix	Weetabix	Weetabix	Weetabix
	Jam/Butter	Jam/Butter	Jam/Butter	Jam/Butter	Jam/Butter	Jam/Butter
	Hot Milk	Hot Milk	Hot Milk	Hot Milk	Hot Milk	Hot Milk
Coffee and tea At all meals	Grapefruit	Grapefruit	Grapefruit	Grapefruit	Grapefruit	Grapefruit
	Bread/Toast	Bread/Toast	Bread/Toast	Bread/Toast	Bread/Toast	Bread/Toast
LUNCH						
LUNCH Assorted salads	Mushroom soup	Cauliflower Soup	mushroom soup	Vegetable Soup	Mushroom Soup	Leek and potato soup
	Cajun Chicken	Lamb casserole	Roasted beef	Poached Fish	Chicken curry	Fried fish
	Fish with Capsicum Sauce	Spaghetti Bolognese	Chicken pie	Nigerian Beef casserole	Cocktail Sausage	Lasagne beef
	Vegetarian Samosa	Vegetarian	Vegetarian	Vegetarian	Vegetarian	Vegetarian
	Potato/ Rice	potato/rice	Potato/ Rice/Pasta	Potato/ Rice	Potato/ Rice	Potato/ Rice
	Veg of the day	Veg of the day	Veg of the day	Veg of the day	Veg of the day	Veg of the day
	Fruit	Fruit	Fruit	Fruit	Fruit	Fruit
DINNER						
DINNER Soup of the day	Spaghetti Bolognese	beef tortilla wrap	Beef Meatballs, Tomato Herb Sauce	Spicy chicken legs	Chicken korma	Beef Casserole
	Chicken Goujans	Tandoori chicken	Bun Burger	Roast Pork	Spaghetti Bolognese	Poached pangasius
	Vegetarian spring roll	Vegetarian	Vegetarian	Vegetarian	Vegetarian	Vegetarian
	Potato/ Rice	Potato/ Rice/Pasta	Potato/ Rice	Potato/ Rice	Potato/ Rice	Potato/ Rice
	Salad bar	Salad bar	Salad bar	Salad bar	Salad bar	Salad bar
	Veg of the day	Veg of the day	Veg of the day	Veg of the day	Veg of the day	Veg of the day
	Dessert	Dessert	Dessert	Dessert	Dessert	Dessert

Appendix B – Questionnaire

Introduction.

Tell me a little about yourself and your family. Have you any children? What age are they and are they boys or girls?

Can you tell me where you came from before coming to Ireland?

How long have you been living in Ireland in Direct Provision?

Did you speak English before you came here?

Culture and Food in your Country of Origin

Can you tell me something about the type of foods that you ate in your country?

How important are food and your traditions to you? Can you explain this?

Who did the preparations and cooking in your home?

Can you cook and how did you learn?

Tell me about your meals, the names, what time of the day they were eaten, what you ate and where.

Did you grow vegetable and have farm animals?

Did you shop for food? Did you eat takeaway foods?

How important is food to you? How do you feel about passing on your food culture to your children?

Are you religious? Can you tell me what religion you have?

Do you have any foods that you can't eat for religious reasons and would you tell me about them?

Direct Provision.

What was your first impressions about the food you were offered in Ireland, did it taste different?

What do you think about the food and meals in Direct Provision?

Would it make a difference if you were in your own home and had to eat the same food as in Direct Provision?

What changes or adjustments did you have to make in the early days?

Have you been able to find any ways to enjoy your traditional foods since you came to Ireland?

Do you think that the food in Direct Provision is the same as all Irish people eat?

Do you buy food for yourself and your children or eat outside Direct Provision?

Tell me a little about the foods you do like and don't like here in Ireland.

In Direct Provision do you sit with your family group or mix with other residents?

Do your children eat the food provided and if they don't what do you give them instead?

How important is food to you and your family compared to everything else going on in your life?

Is it easy to keep to your religious food laws? If no what do you eat instead?

What are the issues about food in Direct Provision?

Do you go to the food shops here do you go alone or bring someone with you?

What shops do you go to? How do you get to the shops? Walk, bus?

If you buy food in the shops where do you store it when in Direct Provision.

When you want to have a celebration meal e.g. special events like birthdays what do you do?

Tell me what you know about Irish food and how to prepare it.

Do you eat more or less than before you came here? Do you know why?

Are you or your children ever left hungry at the end of the day?

What is the biggest change between Irish food and your traditional food?

What do your children think about the food here?

What do they bring to school for lunch?

Do you feel you have control over what your children eat?

Is it important to you to transfer your traditions and culture onto your children?

How do you wish to do this?