



From Oliver Twist to Jamie Oliver.



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Food and Residential Care for Young People Ireland: An exploration of care and control within residential centres for young people with particular reference to food and eating practices. By Deirdre Byrne, Dr Perry Share and Jackie O'Toole.

Past



Letterfrack



A typical dormitory



The dining room in Artane this school was certified for 820 boys

The standard diet described by most witnesses in the Ryan Report 2009 was:

Breakfast: bread and dripping and porridge.



Dinner: mainly potatoes, some vegetables and occasionally some meat.



Tea: bread and jam



The regulations for the schools in 1933 state:

"The children shall be supplied with plain wholesome food, according to a Scale of Dietary to be drawn up by the Medical Officer of the school and approved by the Inspector. Such food shall be suitable in every respect for growing children actively employed and supplemented in the case of delicate or physically underdeveloped children with special food as individual needs require. No substantial alterations in the Dietary shall be made without previous notice to the Inspector" (source CICA Vol.1 2009:59).

Key Points:

There is considerable interest in young people's diets in Ireland yet there is minimal sociological understanding of young people's food practices particularly in residential care centres.

The regulators of institutional care specify a balanced and nutritional diet



but are largely silent about the social aspects of food in young peoples lives. Yet the social aspects of eating are central: it is where people develop their own practices and attitudes related to food.

Exploring care and control with particular reference to food and eating practices this study will examine the relations of power and resistance that according to McIntosh et al 2010 "are routinely played out through food".

Building on Coveney's (2008) theory of "the government of the table" that uses the Foucauldian perspective of governmentality to examine nutritional expertise. This study will attempt to answer the questions:

- Do young people in residential care eat a balanced and nutritious diet ?
- How young peoples diets are cared for and controlled?
- And ultimately determine who governs the dining table in residential care centres.

This research can make a significant contribution at a number of levels:

To the sociology of food and eating in Ireland, which is still underdeveloped, with very few published studies of everyday eating practices.

To the understanding of the everyday lives of young people in residential care settings.

To the study of institutional food practices in Ireland, where published research is almost absent.

To an understanding of the attitudes and practices of social care practitioners in relation to food and eating.

Second Stage :

This stage of fieldwork is a questionnaire for the workers in residential care that will explore:

- The workers opinions of the food and eating practices
- How food choices are managed
- How food is used to express feelings and emotions
- How power and resistance is played out through food and eating practices
- How regulations impact on workers and young peoples experience of food in residential care
- The workers own experience of food and eating at work

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Present

This project will identify - what young people in residential care eat?

Breakfast: is it cereal if it is eaten? Studies show that 14% of young people do not eat breakfast.



Lunch: is it packed, provided by the school or purchased in a nearby shop or café?



Dinner:

Nutritious home cooked meals are offered but will they be eaten? Do the workers feel that cooking is a chore? How much choice do young people have in meal planning?



The National Standards for Children's Residential Care Centres 1995 state:

- Young people have adequate quantities of nutritious and appetising food and their preferences are taken into account in planning menus. Young people who are vegetarian or who have special dietary requirements are offered a range of suitable and nutritious food.
- Young people have easy access to food, and are gradually encouraged to develop healthy eating habits.
- Staff and young people eat meals together and these are regarded as a positive social event.
- There is currently a consultation document on draft national quality standards for residential and foster care. This document has even less to say about food than the 1995 Standards.



Today:

Residential care centres for young people are situated in 'normal houses' and are more 'homely'.



Single bedrooms



Could the regulation to eat together at the dining table add to the institutionalization of the centres?