

**CHARLES UNIVERSITY IN PRAGUE
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MASTER THESIS

**Are We What We Eat? A Study of Identity
Reconfiguration of Russian Immigrants in Prague
through the Prism of Food Practices.**

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DECLARATION:

I hereby declare that this thesis is my own work, based on the sources and literature listed in the appended bibliography. The thesis as submitted is 197 804 keystrokes long (including spaces), i.e. 110 manuscript pages.

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First and above all, I praise God the almighty, for providing me with this opportunity and granting me the capability to proceed with this work.

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Abstract

Identity research claimed a reputation of being both intriguing and complex. Such a complexity is due to the versatile nature and myriads of forms human identity can take. After perusing the literature on the identity forms and structures, it has been noticed that there is a lack of material covering the identity structures and processes within it. Aimed to correct this neglect, the current research is aspired to study the structure of the identity together the processes of its change on the example of immigrants' identity. Drawing on the premise that identity consist of the multiple forms and levels (Schwartz, Luyckx & Vignoles, 2011), the current research placed its study interest into investigating the relationships occurring between identity levels as well as into the nature of such relationships. Focusing on the collective and material levels of identity, the present research hopes to learn about the general structure of the identity by observing the interplay of these particular identity levels. Relocation to a new country was seen as perfect example of the outer force that would impact the identity's structure and cause its forging. Russian immigrants population was chosen as a research sample and twelve respondents were interviewed in to answer the research question. The results of these interviews were used to formulate three main typologies with different scenarios of Russian immigrant's identity reconfiguration in Prague. The nature and specifics of these typologies were found greatly influenced by the consumption, history and traditions in Russia and former Soviet Union. Nevertheless, the study result can also present an interest for the further research and serve a point of reference. `

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1. Introduction

The world is changing and so are its economies, political and social regimes, and inevitably the societies. It is of no wonder as the change has always been the driving force for development. Nevertheless, when looking at the society in general, we can see that it is going through a transformation on many different levels, which is rather unprecedented. As the world becomes increasingly global and diverse, people are reconsidering their places and roles in the society as well as their biographies in the history. Such a context put the traditional understanding of many social and cultural phenomena through the test of strength.

One of the freedoms brought by modern times, which is especially salient in the contemporary society, is the greater socio-economic mobility. Even though human mobility is a phenomenon as old as the history of the mankind, it has never been so widespread and voluntary in nature as in the contemporary centuries. Excluding forced migration, developed countries have been witnessing a growing influx of immigrant workers as a result of the increased freedom of mobility. Without any doubt, such an experience brings a multitude of impacts to the life of the immigrants on many levels and cannot pass unregistered by both the individual and the society that he or she is a part of. Relocation to a new country may and usually does entail adapting to new lifestyles and environments. Part of this process is also the re-adjusting conceptualizations of oneself, one's place and role in the society, and eventually one's identity. This phenomenon could not be left unnoticed in the academic world as it presents a perfect opportunity for studying identity's change and reconfigurations for the social and especially identity researchers.

Despite an abundance of prior research and theoretical approaches, identity structure is still a rather controversial matter. Nonetheless, besides a continuing discrepancy in the research and absence of a unitary theoretical framework, identity studies remain an important academic domain in globalized and ethnically diverse modern society. One of the most widespread points of disagreement in the identity studies is the identity change; especially its course and nature. Lack of a common dictionary and an overabundance of the theoretical perspectives and standpoints lead to a situation referred to as “definitional anarchy” in the field of identity research (Monrad, 2013), and made it particularly difficult to carry further investigations on the nature and structure of identity.

To come closer to understanding the nature and processes within the identity construct, the present work will concentrate on the specific branch of the identity research that is identity’s structure and will try to get an understanding of the process of identity change brought by the experience of immigration. In the pursuit of this aim, this research will consider two particular levels of identity, which are especially prone to the alteration in the during the event of migration. These identity levels are - ethnic identity of the individual, which is believed to be a part of the collective identity and consumer level of identity, which embodies the material identity level.

In order to explore the possible interplay of the identity levels as well as their possible impact on each other, the present study aims to conduct a qualitative research using a semi-structured interviews and vignettes to study possible modifications in immigrants’ identity. For the purpose of this research, the target population will be the Russian immigrants in the Czech Republic. Being the third largest ethnic group in the Czech Republic, the Russian community was concluded to be an appropriate research sample for the purposes of the present research. To enable the research to be conducted while employing many abstract concepts, the material identity was-delineated to one of its multiple forms,

which is food consumption. Being an inseparable part of both ethnic and consumer identity, food practices and dietary habits were seen as the signifiers of the possible changes within those components of immigrant's identity. By asking the respondents about their food and dietary practices as well as guiding them towards sharing the meanings they attach to ethnic identity, the research aims to get an insight into the connection between the change in consumer habits and ethnic affiliation. The findings will be analyzed and used to test and present the possible scenarios of identity reconfiguration in immigrants as well as shed the light on the relationships between chosen identity levels.

The following work will begin with introducing the main concepts in the identity research that are crucial for the understanding of the topic and for developing the subsequent research and discussion on identity's construct and change. An event of relocation and impacts brought to the ethnic identity of the immigrants will create a platform for the formulation of the research question as well as possible scenarios of immigrants' identity change. Next, characteristics of the Russian ethnic minority in the Czech Republic together with Russian consumption history and shopping behavior will be reviewed to create a more complete picture of the research sample. Once the possible scenarios of identity change and the reconfiguration specific for Russian immigrants are discussed, the research will continue with the interviewing process and data analysis. The following analysis section will present its findings in a manner that would enable creating typologies of the ethnic identity change in immigrants.

By carrying forward the aforementioned study, the current research aspires to broaden the knowledge of the identity reconfiguration process in immigrants and by the latter discuss the possible interrelations and mutual impact in the levels of identity which may create further basis for the identity structure research.

2. IDENTITY IN SOCIAL SCIENCES

2.1 Concept of Identity in Social Science

From a purely socio-historical point of view, it is fair to say the concept of an individual's understanding of oneself and one's place in society in present day society has gone through numerous transformations. In the premodern society, typically a person was 'assigned' their identity based on his or her social status and role in the society; this however is not the case to-day. With the dissolution of strict social hierarchies with respect to social classes and casts, people are now given more freedom and hence have more choices in forming their own identities. This idea is also supported by other social science disciplines who also agree you cannot disregard the 'history effect' on the individual's self-concepts and identity formation.

Although modern times provide people with more choices and opportunities, it has also brought about greater responsibilities for the outcome of their choices and actions. This effect is embodied in the uncertainty which individuals are facing during almost every chapter of their lives. Perhaps one of the broadest analyses of this phenomenon was carried out by Zygmunt Bauman in his multiple works on "liquid" modernity and "liquid" culture. Bauman argues that when more options and freedom are given to people (in an ultimate attempt to control them) this situation creates uncertainty, which in turn promotes a vicious circle of continuous consumption and the fear of losing one's social position/job/resources/freedom of choice.

People having more personal choices coupled with more freedom could also leave an imprint on their understanding about how they think about themselves, their perceived opportunities and roles when living in a different society. The afore-mentioned commentary demonstrates why there is such an abundance of research on the development, socio-?, cultural role of identity and its role in helping to understand other social phenomena. Difficulties with identity formation processes are so widespread they are now considered as being normal in many aspects of people's lives. In view of the prevalence

of this situation, social researchers no longer have the luxury of not being aware of the significance that the nature, formation and development of an individual's identity has in to-days society.

Interest in the identity construct has been growing more and more. The academic articles collection PsychINFO indicates the number of hits on the keyword "identity" has doubled within the last few decades, making the word "identity" one of the most studied phenomenon in the social studies (Levine, 2002). A similar situation to the above occurs when using the Google internet site. Googling the keyword "identity" brought over 431,000,000 hits which included movie suggestions, books, chats, forums and many other signifiers of the public interest in this topic.

This spike in the number of internet searches on identity is not surprising given the rise of modern social sciences in. This situation has subsequently resulted in an ever increasing number of employment opportunities in this field. Such a "multi-task" character of the identity as a construct can be explained by its powerful and versatile nature. Despite its apparent advantages as a universal and multilateral construct, the concept and definition of identity are rather troublesome for various reasons.

Since the term "identity" was coined it has been used in a different context by numerous disciplines, which include: psychology, sociology, anthropology, linguistics, political sciences, education, family sciences and public health. Such a widespread usage of this term subsequently gave birth to different theoretical approaches and also created a growing division within the literature on the subject.

Theoretical disagreements have increasingly grown amongst the academic disciplines with disagreements even being found internally within a single discipline. Examples of the large variety of academic perspectives can be found in the sociological tradition of identity research whose roots can

be traced back to philosophical works of Wittgenstein (1922) and the successive theories based on the ideas of Tajfel and Turner (1980,1986) which were later complemented with the cultural aspects and values models introduced by Berry (1980), Hofstede (1980) and Triandis (1995) and finally by post-structuralist social theorists such as Bauman(2000), Foucault (1972), and Wetherell (2010) (as discussed in Schwartz, Luyckx & Vignoles, 2011).

What sociology as well as other disciplines using the identity as a construct is currently facing on a large scale includes: disunited conceptions, approaches, levels of analyses and methods of studying the identity. However, each of these practices in spite of their differences can provide an important “particle” of information. Perhaps no other comparison can better describe this situation than the story about the elephant and men in this old East Indian parable. In this story in spite of disunity of opinions between the men about what they felt when they all touched the elephant in exactly the same place, all of their perspectives and approaches uncovered some truths. There is discrepancy in the existing literature as various streams of identity research are developing separately which is resulting in a growing gap between them. Schwartz, Luyckx and Vignoles (2011) summarize the most prominent points of divergence in metatheoretical and methodological assumptions as the following:

1. Is identity viewed primarily as personal, relational, or collective phenomenon?
2. Is identity viewed as relatively stable, or as fluid and constantly changing?
3. Is identity viewed as discovered, personally constructed, or socially constructed?
4. Should identity be researched using quantitative or qualitative methods?

Furthermore, due to the large number of differing perspectives, views and theoretical standpoints, the different streams of identity research have a different understanding of the identity as it relates to a particular subject.

The main domains of the identity research literature to be discussed are the following:

- 1) General Structures and Processes of Identity
- 2) Specific Identity Domains and Categories

It's important to note the main academic perspectives on identity research are derived from the theoretical frameworks chosen and research interests. One of the most extensive volumes of the identity research has concentrated on the psychosocial and interpersonal functions of the individual. The above mentioned identity research was then followed by research on the identity's level and forms, changes occurring throughout the lifespan, contextual changes and manifestations. The major theories that govern these studies are the Eriksonian identity development theory with its subsequent Neo-Eriksonian personal identity theory, identity change and identity status model (McLean & Syed, 2015). The extensive interest arising from the psychological domain is understandable since one's understanding of his or her identity is one of the crucial points of analysis across various schools of psychology. There isn't a rivalry between the different fields of research rather a simultaneous attempt to analyze the construct of identity by applying different methodological and theoretical means of research. This paradox of the identity domains miscommunication was recently criticized by James E. Côté, one of the leading identity researchers, claims that fields of identity research have to re-evaluated and potentially get rid of certain identity models that are of no use for current research in order to be able to adopt a new common taxonomy (as discussed in McLean, 2015).

Even though it may appear there is more discrepancy than unity within identity research and literature this can also signify the richness and complexity of this theoretical construct, which in turn can justify further investigations in this field.

2.2 Forms and expressions of identity (levels of identity)

Before building an operational definition of identity, it's necessary to understand the nature and the processes governing the construction of this concept. The following section will provide an overview of the forms and expressions identity may take and also introduce further concepts and phenomena within identity research.

When asking a person a simple identity-question "Who are you?" researchers are often likely to be the recipient of a lengthy list of self-described attributes as diverse as the respondents; ranging from their nationality and social background to the different political or religious affiliations. Despite the diversity of the possible answers given to this question, there are certain commonalities present in the contents and schemes driving them. As argued by the majority of psychological and sociological research, answers to these questions reflect both individual and social components of self-knowledge (Schwartz, Luyckx & Vignoles, 2011).

Despite the multi-faceted nature of the identity as a concept, the research indicates there is agreement on the main forms the identity can take. A large body of the research on identity concentrates on one or more of the four commonly recognized levels of the identity experience which include: *individual*, *relational*, *collective* and *material* identities (Brubaker & Cooper, 2000; Rathasi & Phoenix, 2005 as cited in Schwartz et. al., 2011). These identity expressions can also be understood in the context that different forms that the identity may take as well as the different processes triggering the formation and re-construction of identity over time. Based on the difference in concentrations or interest in the identity manifestations, the identity theories can be divided into three main groups: *individual or personal* identity theories, *relational* and *collective* identity theories and *material* identity theories. Individual or personal identity is understood as one's self-definition on a personal level, whereas relational identity refers to one's roles at the social level. Collective identity is reflecting the individual's knowledge of themselves as a part of the society/group he or she is a part of, while

material identity revolves around material possessions that are valued and internalized into the self-image of an individual. Some examples of these identities are an individual's values and beliefs, goals and self-esteem (personal identity), social roles assumed such as being a student, a son and tax payers (relational identity), identification with certain groups/communities (collective identity) and identification with certain material artifacts (material identity). The theoretical frameworks of these approaches are structured according to the chosen level of identity.

With reference to the "individualistic" identity approach, the scholars are still not in complete agreement in their assessment of whether a person has singular, unitary identity or multiple identities.

Even when taking a closer look at unitary identity, there isn't a strong argument, which would support the identity's monolithic structure. However, when discussing the identity and the forms it can take, it's important to consider the methods of inquiry and academic approaches as they will assist us to more fully understand identity. Perhaps when thinking of the identity and its various forms which is the perspective of the particular individual, we risk neglecting other representations of identity which occur in other paradigms. Veritably, we can also easily imagine the identity to be a way of thinking or talking that was exercised in particular social and historical contexts, independently of any one individual (Rattansi & Phoenix (2005) as cited in Schwartz et al., 2011). We can also think of the identity as individual opinion representations, sexual orientation, religious affiliation, economic and civic participation and cultural background according to scientific interest on these points.

2.3 Current issues in identity research: Identity Structure Controversy

Perhaps one of the most controversial parts of the identity research despite its theoretical disunity is the lack of agreement on the fundamental identity characteristics of development and structure. After perusing the identity literature with a special focus on the identity structure and change, it became readily apparent there is no uniform theory explaining the nature and components of the identity,

which would be employed across the various disciplines. Moreover, the identity structure as a concept was frequently confused with other identity characteristics and qualities, leaving no common ground for subsequent researchers. As James E. Côté has noted in his mass review of the identity studies for the past decade, “one way to visualize the map suggested by this typology [identity’s multidimensional typology] is to imagine the field as a jigsaw puzzle in which pieces can fit together” and further, “different researchers are studying different manifestations of identity development, and they are doing so because their assumptions have pointed them in that direction.”

The current research was driven by the inquiry about the basic structure of identity, its components and the possible interactions between them. Unfortunately, to date there is still no universal formula of the identity as well as a common dictionary and even equally treated definitions among social sciences (J. E. Côté, 2015). This factor makes it difficult for the new researchers to set the starting point of the investigation and choose operational definitions that would justify their findings and assumptions across the other areas of research. As James Côté has concluded after presenting a table of the identity development studies¹ “[Table 32.1 which is found in the appendix] shows how the field can be seen as having a varied subject matter; studying this subject matter thus requires different approaches, including different methodologies.”

In order to navigate the present research in its attempt to study identity’s structure and outline the main theoretical approaches and concepts that will help to build a theoretical framework for the present investigation, the available literature on the identity structure and roles needs to be disjoined. The upcoming sections will introduce and communicate theoretical frameworks that are important to understanding the processes taking place within identity in a situation of forced life changes. The present study will also look on the forms, expressions and levels of the identity as well as on the forces causing the changes within its architecture. Since the current paper is primarily

¹ “The subject matter of identity development research, based on underlying assumptions” by Côté (2015) can be found in the Appendix.

interested in the interplay of the material identity and more specifically, food shopping habits of immigrants and their ethnic/cultural identity, the theoretical discussion will be concentrated on the literature reviews of these particular aspects of individual's identity and their interaction. Lastly, the research explores the relationship between food behavior (as a part of the material/cultural identity) and the identity will be examined which is followed by the research question and hypothesis.

The present study is interested in the relations within the collective identity and is especially interested in ethnic, cultural and material identities. These forms of the identity will have particular attention paid to the process of change within them. In order to study the relationships amongst these identity roles and identity expressions, their nature and formation mechanisms need to be examined first. As present research believes there can be an interaction of the identity roles in a certain context such as a residence change and hopes to study the identity roles interplay, there is a need to consider the identity roles and levels that these changes could possibly encompass. Before moving towards building the changes interplay model, the identity forms in question will be presented.

2.4. Building Theoretical Framework: Ethnic, Cultural and Material/Consumer Identities :

1. Ethnic Identity and its nature

When the identity levels are taken into consideration, individual's ethnic identity can be presented as one of the components of the human's psycho-social identity as well as the collective identity (Syed & Azmitia, 2008). The complex nature of ethnic identity and a tight connection to the other forms of an individual's identity are what make it an important subject for the current analysis in this research. Current research supports the emerging view that what has been understood by the individuals' ethnic identity is extendable and overlapping to the other constructs such as culture and

racial identity (Schwartz et. al, 2011). This section will introduce the research on ethnic identity and present the point of convergence with other identity forms and levels.

The ongoing research on the ethnic identity is as old as the identity research itself and is largely derived from the theoretical models of Erik Erikson and James Marcia. Erikson's (1950, 1968) view on the identity was mostly of the developmental character and based on the idea of certainty that life stages each contribute to the development of self-knowledge, or as argued by his successors, the identity. Erikson argued that every individual will inevitably progress throughout the eight *developmental stages* and the successful completion of each of the stages will result in the development of a certain personality trait. Eriksonian' s approach to the psychosocial development implicated the presence of both individual and collective factors strengthening the formation of the certain personality trait. If adopting a Eriksonian and later Neo-Eriksonian perspective on personality and identity development, the main stage of identification of the ethnic group would fall under the sixth stage which was called, "Intimacy versus Isolation". It is in this stage the young adolescent would be discovering their social and communal ties by means of associating or juxtaposing oneself with the ethnical, racial or cultural groups. Advocating the importance of successful completion of psychosocial developmental phases, Erikson did not claim that the identity becomes crystallized after their completion and acknowledges the identity development process is capable of subsequent modifications.²

Holding similar beliefs to Erikson in his conceptualizations of the identity was James Marcia. (1966) He saw identity development as the process of acquiring

self-knowledge through various stages and processes of a so-called Identity Status Interview, these being: *moratorium*, *achievement*, *foreclosure*, and *diffusion*. Marcia also regarded early adulthood as crucial stage in developing one's social connections and values towards membership in one's socio-ethnic group. Later research has elaborated on Erikson's and Marcia's theories suggesting an additional view of ethnic identity development. This view presents a multifaceted construct which is comprised of various components such as *exploration*, *resolution*, and *affirmation of ethnicity* (Schwartz et. al 2011). The concept of *exploration* is defined as an individual's growing interest about his ethnic group, with pronounced explorative and contract activities such as reading and inquiring about one's group which ultimately leads to the increased exposure to their ethnic group. *Resolution*, is the process of an individual's self-dialogue and the questioning of what their own ethnic group membership means to them. The last component of the ethics identity construct requires *affirmation* which is the knowledge largely adopted from the Social Identity Theory and Eriksonian ideas of psycho-social development. The process of affirmation is conceptualized as the individuals' continuous attempt to achieve and maintain a positive social identity in order to reach a positive self-concept. One of the means of achieving such a positive social identity can be achieved through adopting a positive outlook toward the social groups to which one belongs. Therefore, affirmation of one's ethnic identity reflects how positively or negatively an individual feels about their ethnic group membership.

However, when taking a sociological approach to the ethnic identity theory, the understanding of this construct is changing. Given the sociological tradition of viewing and studying ethnic identity as a phenomenon emerging from structural conditions and processes in society, it is not a surprise that sociology sees identity as mostly the product of the social contexts which individuals and groups are exposed to (Okamoto & Rude, 2007). Some examples of types of these social contexts are economic,

political, historical and the cultural milieus which people are born into. There is also a solid body of research literature and theories claiming that the ethnic identity is a fundamental and even “primordial” quality of the individual (Serpe, 1987, Yancey, Erickson, Juliani, 1976). Despite the theoretical clashes on the nature and origin of the ethnic identity what has also been a core assumption about the ethnic identity is its high liability to change as a reaction to ever changing social pressures and situations. Given this assumption has only a partial theoretical buy-in by academia it will not be used to lead the theoretical discussion any further. Unfortunately, there is still an absence of the common knowledge on the structure and socio-psychological mechanisms guiding the development of the ethnic identity in sociology and social sciences (Okamoto & Rude, 2007). Currently, the most enduring and commonly used sociological theories aimed at unraveling the formation and change of the ethnic identity and its structure are considered to be the assimilation theory, theory of internal colonialism/cultural division and the social constructionism theory.

Not surprisingly, all of these theories view ethnic identities and general identity’s formation and change within the various social processes. In the assimilation approach, which is considered the most frequently applied theoretical perspective, ethnic identity of minorities or immigrants is seen to represent an individual’s position in the social structure.

Furthermore, one’s ethnic identity can be adjusted to imitate the dominant group, this situation more frequently occurs to individuals who are less attached to their culture of origin (Okamoto & Rude, 2007). Factors such as socio-economic status, intermarriage, and the period of time spent in a host country may increase the amount of time spent with the members of a dominant group, which in turn can weaken the immigrant’s attachment to his ethnic group (Okamoto & Rude, 2007). As a result of the afore-mentioned, individuals may reconsider their attitude towards their ethnic community and move towards reconfiguring their identity. Assimilationists also promote the view there is a direct link between immigrants’ ethnic identity and their choice to behave in “ethnic” ways. This link is made

implicitly once ethnic identity is operationalized with variables such as the decision to speak or not to speak particular languages, live in certain neighborhoods, or associate with particular organizations. Contemporary sociological studies are predominantly using the assimilation theory to study how individual characteristics such as socioeconomic status are linked to the identification patterns among different immigrant groups (Okamoto & Rude, 2007). The assimilationist perspective is also largely used in studies of the relationship between social structure and individuals' commitment to particular ethnic identities.

Unlike the assimilation theory, internal colonialism places central importance on the niche occupied by the minority when predicting change of ethnic attachment in minority groups. The use of the term niche in this context refers to a socio-economic level as well as whether the group is disadvantaged and/or segregated in the given society. According to internal colonists, ethnic and racial identities will be especially salient in those societies where minority groups are disadvantaged or discriminated against. This situation in turn will increase group solidarity among the members of the minority group. Ethnic identity's expression and group solidarity becomes especially salient if the group is concentrated in a certain residential area. When applied on a micro level, the internal colonialism perspective also explains why immigrants and ethnic minorities might never fully assimilate in their new locale, even if they can perfectly speak the host country's language and come from a higher socio-economic class (Okamoto & Rude, 2007).

The last perspective on identity formation and change to be commented on is social constructionism. By nature, social constructionist's approach has a lot in common with the Chicago School or "processual" symbolic interactionist's scholarships. The social constructionist approach also draws greatly on the ideas of Goffman's symbolic and stigmatized identities, Straus's ideas of categorization and Mead's essays on the social origins of identity construct (Okamoto & Rude, 2007). The social

constructionist school sees ethnic identity and its forms as fluid and ever changing depending upon context and circumstances. In the social constructionist perspective core importance is placed on the interactive social processes that contribute to the identity formation, whereas racial and ethnic meanings are seen to be formed later and generally reproduced.³ Such interactive processes include interactions between the individual's self-concept and the perceived reaction of the society which also drives the individual's behavior towards reshaping his or her identity and behavior. Identity formation and conception are seen to be in a constant conversation with the perception of what other people communicate to us. Unfortunately, this perspective does not clearly differentiate between the concepts of identity and self-concept and refers to them as the same notion. Even though it's onerous to utilize this perspective to study the general architecture and processes within the identity, current research plans to incorporate its ideas and use this perspective as a point of reference for both the Methodological and Discussion sections.).

The current study acknowledges the importance of all the above theories, but deems the assimilationists and social-constructionists approaches to be the most appropriate theories for the purposes of this study. Therefore, in the following section explanations of ethnicity's expressions and changes will be done only with references to these two perspectives. As the theories of ethnic identity and ethnic identity change have been discussed, the next level of identity which is a part of the research interest can be discussed.

ii. Ethnic and Cultural Identities: Two parts of the bigger whole?

Interestingly, what has been commonly noticed and largely discussed by the identity researchers are their inevitable points of convergence. These points of convergence are found not only between Eriksonian and Marcelian points of view, but also amongst the concepts of race, ethnicity and culture that were often used as examples of social development in culture and identity literature. Increasingly,

³ see (Mead 1934; Blumer 1969; Strauss 1959) and Barth (1969), Cornell and Hartmann (1998), and Nagel (1994) whose works are regarded as the main contributions to the Chicago School Scholarship (Okamoto & Rude, 2007)

more research and meta-analyses of identity literature has supported the suggestion that the concepts of one's culture, racial and ethnic identity are largely interchangeable (Levine, 2002; McLean and Syed, 2015; Schwartz et. al 2011) and share relatively the same definitions. Moreover, contemporary identity research advocates the idea that culture, ethnicity and race are the major constructs of the social identity strand and does not disclaim the original ideas of Erikson and Marcia as well as neo-Eriksonian views of social identity.

The majority of identity research indicates individual's ethnic identity is often understood as a reflection of one's culture of origin and is always "associated with specific cultural values, attitudes, and behaviors" (Phinney, 1996 as cited in Schwartz et. al 2011). An individual's ethnic identity can also function as one's affiliation with a particular ethnic group. In comparison to the identity construct's architecture, ethnic identity also has a multi-faceted nature and can not be communicated with a single definition. As argued by McLean and Syed (2015) most of the variability within the concept of ethnic identity is conditioned by the individual's sense of attachment to the particular ethnic group as well as the degree to which the individual had explored their ethnic group affiliation. When solely looking at the definitions of ethnic identity, there are certain patterns of similarity which are shared with other concepts and definitions, such as: ethnicity, culture, race, cultural and racial identities. This peculiarity is viewed to be a result of the reciprocal similarity within all these constructs. With ethnic identity being defined as "the feeling of belonging to one's group", a clear understanding of the meaning of one's membership, positive attitudes towards the group, familiarity with its history and culture, and involvement with its practices" (Phinney, 1994, McLean & Syed, 2015, p.235) it is hard to differentiate it from the definitions of ethnicity or culture formulated as the following:

Ethnicity : “a sense of *peoplehood and commonality* derived from kinship patterns, a shared historical past, common experiences, religious affiliations, language or linguistic commonalities, *shared values, attitudes, perceptions, modes of expression*, and identity.” (King 2002, p. 33 as cited in McLean & Syed, 2015)

Culture: “ the *distinctive customs, values, beliefs*, knowledge, art and language of a society or community. 2. the *characteristic attitudes and behaviors* of a particular group within society, such as a profession, social class, or age group.” (Van den Bos (2007a, p. 250) as cited in McLean & Syed, 2015).

A similar condition is also observed when comparing the ethnic identity definition to the definitions of race and racial identity. Even though there are still disagreements regarding the integration of the above-mentioned concepts under one bigger entity, (such as culture) there is overwhelming support for organizing the concepts of ethnicity, ethnic identity and race under the same definition (culture) as all of them inevitably rest on the basic definition of culture (McLean and Syed, 2015). For the purpose of the present research, ethnic identity will be contrasted to the cultural identity of the individual and will be used interchangeably in the course of discussion and in the methodological sections.

iii. Material and Consumer Identity.

Another form of the identity that has to be introduced while pursuing the goals of the present research is the material or consumer identity. In light of globalization and increased human mobility, material possessions and the meaning ascribed to them could not be left unnoticed by the social scientists.

Being a rather modern term, this extension of the identity form has received a lot of attention from the scholars of identity research. One of the advantages brought by the identity research through the prism of consumer culture is the opportunity to study this extension of the identity in a form of “ideal self”.

Usually viewed as an extension of identity, material identity has also been studied in terms of materialistic value orientations and consumer behavior. In the world of mass production and consumer opportunities, virtually every individual is involved in the pursuit of consuming and shopping planning. As a result, material identity can be imagined as the identity extension brought about by the 'material world' context. More specifically, we can think of the material identity as the contextual representation of oneself through the material goods and services which serve as the symbolic statements of one's ideal self. The majority of the research on material identity sees it as the response to the outer material and media world feeding people with the images of how to attain the perfect self, as well as including identity instructions which are guiding people on how to live, behave, dress and eat (Dittmar, 2008 in Schwarts et. al). Consequently, the pursuit of material goods and recognition of one's affluence becomes "associated not only with success, control, and autonomy, but also with a positive identity, a satisfying personal life, happiness and rewarding intimate relationships" (Dittmar, 2008. pp 746). This behavior can be explained using the ideas of self-reflexivity, or viewing ones-self from the perspective of the other person (Dittmar, 2008). The symbolic meanings that are ascribed to the material objects also serve as imaginary points of view from which one views him or herself as well other people.

When talking about consumer practices driven by the consumer identity, such practices can be defined as "social actions in which consumers make sense of consumption objects in a variety of ways." (Holt (1995, p.1). Holt (1995) divides consumer practices into four main types, which are *experience*, *integration*, *categorization* and *play*. *Experience* is a metaphor which represents consumer's emotional reactions in the moment of consumption. It also refers to the ways consumers are making sense of their buying practices. The *integration* metaphor underlies the methods used by consumers to enhance the perception that a valued consumption object is a constitutive element of their identity. A practice of

categorization consists of processes in which consumers use objects to compare and assess one's place in relation to significant others. Lastly, *play* involves consumer interactions with other consumers with no particular meaning; interaction for interaction's sake.

Another implication identified through consumer research, suggests a growing impact of the consumer culture and material goods on people's lives and identities. Having an option to come closer to the ideal identity embodied in the perfect lifestyle and possessing socially desirable material goods is very much valued. As argued by Schwartz (2011), a particular liability is brought with the increasing psychological dependence on material goods and therefore achieving a certain identity is the formation of a so-called 'empty self'. Further research on material identity suggests that particular preoccupation with the acquisition of material goods may not only lead to the downgrading of the traditional means of identity construction, but also to the partial replacement of the stable identity-forming values and beliefs by the material orientations. These concerns can be demonstrated with the example of people's reaction to the loss of material possessions that are frequently described as "as a lessening of self" (Schwartz, Lyuckx and Vignoles, 2011).

Material and consumer forms of identity received special interest in the current research due to its fluctuating/versatile nature while keeping in mind these forms of identity can also be easily affected by contextual changes. Immigration and relocation both involve a change of environment and hence the reconsideration of one's identity due to various external factors. Consumer identity will be used as one of the analysis units in the present research's pursuit of studying the relationship within the levels of identity and more specifically between the ethnic/cultural identity and the material portrayal of self-idea.

3. IDENTITY STRUCTURE AND RESEARCH INTEREST

As mentioned previously, there is no universally agreed upon knowledge of identity structure. Instead, the majority of the identity research has been dealing with the various expressions and consequences of the identity which include: development (Erikson, 1968; Marcia 1980), change process, (Burke & Tully, 1977), content (Syed, & Azmitia, 2008) and statuses (Marcia, 1968, 1980). Unfortunately, as James Cote (2015) pointed out these terms were sometimes used interchangeably and employed differently by the various fields of identity studies. The theoretical construct that most of the identity related processes are turning to is Erikson's (1968) psychosocial theory of personality. Following this approach, identity was seen as the conceptual framework in which an individual's personal and social experiences were interpreted. The Eriksonian views were later elaborated on by other science disciplines which have brought a greater understanding about identity and its content. Drawing on Eriksonian ideas' (1968), Marcia (1966, 1980) introduced the identity status model which consisted of four identity statuses of identity development. This model was Marcia's attempt to demonstrate the process of identity formation. According to Marcia's model, identity formation goes through two main interrelated processes which include: exploring alternative possibilities and making a commitment. Marcia considers the key to understanding identity formation are through both the decisions and choices made by the individuals and their level of commitment to them, hence his model reflect these beliefs.

Having explained the forms identity can take, as well as discussing the forms of identity that are of particular interest in the present research, we can now move closer to formulating the basic operational definition of the identity as well as examining the laws governing the interplay of its constituents. An individual's "identity can be considered as a multidimensional construct that includes several elements which are both interrelated and equally defining and can cause changes to the overall structure if altered (McLean & Syed, 2015; Levine C., 2002)". More specifically, an individual's identity can be seen as consisting of or embodying a "*person's self-chosen or ascribed commitments,*

personal characteristics, and beliefs about herself; roles and positions in social groups and categories (including both her status within the group and the group's status within the larger context); as well as her identification with treasured material possessions and her sense of where she belongs in geographical space". (Schwartz et. al., 2011, p.4).

Another aspect of the identity structure that must be mentioned is the mechanism behind the stability and change of the identity. Thus far, the most studied and acknowledged changes that can occur to the individual's identity during their lifespan were found to be long-term developmental changes and short-term contextual fluctuations. Re-visiting the Eriksonian perspective on identity development, developmental identity research sees the identity change as a long-term process that occurs during specific periods during a person's lifespan (developmental stages). However, there continues to be a number of researchers promoting alternative views on identity change. These researchers claim that identity changes and deformations may occur at the other stages of individual's lifespan due to both developmental and socio-relational reasons (McLean & Syed, M, 2015; Schwartz et al, 2011). This approach to identity change has received growing interest from both social-psychological and discursive approaches and has a particular value for the present research. The identity stability is seen to be an outcome of the individual's continuing efforts with regards to identity maintenance or preservation. Furthermore, research suggests that contextual shifts in identity typically occur in "a predictable manner, based on features of the context in which individuals find themselves" (Schwartz et al, 2011. pp.4). Another important speculation on identity stability has been formulated by Chen (2007). Chen claims that people tend to occupy a relatively stable context in which they find themselves over a period of time. This situation would consequently lead to a low variety of identity changes and relatively stable range of the identity aspects instead. However, there is not much known

about the internal processes governing the changes or stability maintenance within the identity which indicates there is a need for further exploration in this subject area.

Having discussed multiple levels of identity, as well as its co-existing components in a previous section, some questions have arisen as a result of this research. Questions such as: what are the relationships between these levels and components?, how are they structured within the identity?, are they interrelated and interdependent? As argued by Schwartz, Lyuckx and Vignoles (2011, p.11)

“identities are inescapably both personal and social not only in their content, but also in the processes by which they are formed, maintained and changed over time.” The authors also uncovered the possible relationships between the identity components and perceive them as being interrelated. Multiple aspects of identity do co-exist within the identity as the person can simultaneously identify oneself with multiple roles and therefore experience multiple identities simultaneously. We can imagine a French student, with African roots, from an upper-economic class, who lives in a big family to experience his identity on four main levels at once. However, it is still not clear whether these relationships have more of a hierarchical or horizontal connection; if the change at one level necessarily produces a change on another level or could even be on all levels.

This brings us to the ultimate question concerning how the organization of identity levels fits within the greater picture of the identity. Studying the relationship between the cohabiting identities of an individual could also bring important insights into the process of identity reconfiguration. What is generally understood by the concept of identity reconfiguration is a gradual switch from the main identity role to another one, which is usually brought by an outside event or stimulus. The crucial question here is the interplay of identity levels constituting identity. Current research is especially interested in the mutual relationship of the identity levels, especially on collective (ethnic identity) and material (food consumer identity) ones. To shed the light on this question and also study the general

process of identity reconfiguration, further research has to be considered. The current investigation intends to conduct research to come closer to the matter of identity's levels interplay and identity reconfiguration. The following study of Russian immigrant's identity reconfiguration aims to tackle this research interest.

After all, what constitutes the main premises for the present study of identity's reconfiguration and levels' interaction are: identity's versatile notion and mutual interchange/infiltration of the identity levels and forms, as well as identity's plasticity and forging when certain stimulus is presented. Furthermore, it has been well established that racial and ethnic identities are fluid and changing depending upon context and circumstance (Okamoto & Rude, 2007). Finally, despite academic discrepancy and division, the majority of social psychologists and sociologists agree that identity is both "a cause and effect of human interaction occurring at the individual and collective levels" (Okamoto & Rude, 2007, p.3). Taking these points into consideration, the following qualitative research hopes to deepen the understanding of the principles guiding identity change and reconfigurations.

3.2. Immigration as a stimulus of the identity change .

Having tackled the different levels and expressions of identity and also discussing the questionable relationship that may occur within its structure, it became apparent that there is still isn't agreement on the causality and interplay between the layers and expressions of identity. One of the ways to come closer to investigating this process is concentrating on a particular event that would trigger an identity change. Perhaps, relocation and/or emigration to a different country can act as the life-changing event. This event has the ability to stimulate the reconsideration of one's identity, the vision of one's culture and even giving affirmation to belonging to a certain ethnic group. Like a fish out of water, an immigrant tries to simultaneously get back in the water or recreate his habitat while continually trying

to adapt to their new environment. However, not only the personal experience of the new reality causes the immigrant to reconsider his biography and identity, so does the contact with the host culture and settings. That is the time when the immigrants get to have an experience of “otherness” and start their journey of identity reconfiguration. Not only should they actively try to familiarise themselves and adopt to new cultural patterns (Schütz ,1944) by learning its elements and conceiving new schemes of behaviour, but they should also designate a place for oneself in the new social group’s spatial boundaries⁴. The experience of ‘otherness’ and being a ‘stranger’ in a community has a profound theoretical basis and reflected in both sociology and psychology (Schütz ,1944) ; Simmel, 1950, Bourdieu, 1986). In the social constructivism tradition, both creating and becoming ‘the others’ can be seen a process of gaining self-definition/knowledge by comparing oneself or one’s ethnic group with the other major or minor groups (Okamoto & Rude, 2007). Furthermore, with the dissolving structures and narratives of the modern life, people feel less and less in control over their lives which makes the search for a self-knowledge even more zealous (Young, 2003).

When faced with a new environment, immigrants become aware of the two-folded nature of their identity; one part is constructed by an individual himself, and the other part embodies the views of him of the locals (Düttmann, 2000). This idea echoes with the previous idea of the sources of the self-knowledge appearing through the interrelation with both proximal and distant social group (i.e. family and ethnic group) (Okamoto & Rude, 2007; Brubaker & Cooper, 2000; Rathasi & Phoenix, 2005) as well as with the ideas cultural patterns (Schütz ,1944) and stranger’s objectivity (Simmel as discussed in Wolff, 1950).

When trying to unfold the experiences and the nature of the change experienced by immigrants in the process of adopting to a new culture, Pierre Bourdieu’s (1986) ideas of social and cultural capital as

⁴ as discussed by Georg Simmel in “ the Stranger” and reproduced in Kurt Wolff (Trans.) The Sociology of Georg Simmel.

well as 'habitus' can also not be left unmentioned. When entering a new country, immigrants bring different kinds of baggage including a cultural and social one (social and cultural capital) along with their material possessions. Another thing that will be taken unwittingly is their habitus that would have an affect on both understanding and adapting to new cultural environment.

Another reality and aspect of the cultural patterns that newcomers will inevitably face is the material or consumption side of their life as an immigrant. This will also become a separate channel through which a person can try forging and navigating his or her identity. Further chapters will uncover the interplay of the consumer behaviour of the immigrants especially his or her food consumption and its connection to the identity reconfiguration processes.

3.3 Food and Dietary Practices of Immigrants

Since the current work is primarily interested in the interplay of the material (consumer) and ethnic identities, one of the patent/evident points of their contiguity has to be chosen for the further analysis. Thanks to the fluctuating nature of the material identity and its facile alternations depending upon context and circumstance, consumer identity can be used as a 'wiring track'/ inside track to the identity's organisation of an immigrant. Taken that consumer identity can have a broad spectrum of expressions, it has to be "downgraded" to the certain form which would be of the most benefit to the purposes of the current study. One of the expressions of the material identity that is recurrently used in the immigrant identity studies is dietary habits or food behaviour. Both social sciences and consumer studies have been showing interest in the consumption and dietary practices of immigrants seeing their potential for investigating various issues. Integration strategies, assimilation and acceptance, shopping behaviour, ethnic marketing, symbolic consumption and immigrant's consumer identity are only a few examples of the immigrant identity studies. For the sake of the present research the relevant studies on the food behaviour of the immigrants and the impact of dietary changes on the ethnic identity will be

discussed. It's also important to point out the processes driving the changes within the "food identity" of immigrants and their impact on the ethnic identity. Also, given that the national cuisine is also a part of the cultural identity of immigrants offers another way around studying the connection between two identity levels.

"We are what we eat," says the proverb that exists in many languages and can be easily related to by people of different cultures. Traditional cuisine and dietary practices act as the markers of culture and community affiliation and are of the central importance for many cultures. As it will be discussed later, shopping for the certain ingredients and products can also be seen as the symbolic consumption, as well as family gatherings and festive foods (Cinotto,2014). Traditional cuisine is also one the most carefully preserved cultural artifact as it can be seen on the example of Italian food becoming recognised and even adopted by other cultures (especially in the USA with the profound number of Italian immigrants) (Cinotto, 2014). Encoded into every individual during the socialization process, food choices and meanings reflect cultural mores of the particular culture.

Once the immigrants find themselves in unfamiliar cultural environments, eating is an inevitable component of daily life that forces them to interact physically, emotionally, and cognitively with a different cultural environment. When leaving ones home, food recipes and traditions and, even, the certain ingredients, are among the few things that can be brought up from the home country. However, new socio-economic environment may present new foods to the immigrants and lead to the inclusion into their diet. Majority of the research studying immigrant's food behaviour and identity's transformation along the process of integration, shows that there is a cross-national tendency to preserve one's food habits and cook traditional food (Cinotto, 2014; Bardhi, Ostberg & Bengtsson, 2010; Romo, 2012; Vallianato & Raine, 2008). Such a phenomenon can be explained in terms of immigrants' attempt to maintain their ethnic identity through preserving traditional dietary practices as

a part of their cultural identity (Vallianatos,Raine, 2008; Cinotto, 2014) and therefore, resisting local cuisine and products(Bardhi, Ostberg & Bengtsson, 2010). Nevertheless, more and more research point on the different trends of the immigrants' food acculturation suggesting that while recreating one's tradition cuisine and food rituals, immigrants are also adopting them to the local ones and by that, developing hybrid ethnical identities (Rabikowska, 2010; Vallianato & Raine 2008) while also preserving their symbolic ethnicity (Herbert Gans, 1970 as cited in Cinotto, 2014). As suggested by Parasecoli (2014) immigrants' reactions to new food environment in terms of participation and accepting local foreign practices can be remarkably different, ranging from "enthusiastic embrace to participative negotiation to active resistance, all the way to total refusal"(p. 418). Also, drawing on the assimilationist perspective, immigrants which are more attached to their culture of origin tend to resist assimilation which can also be expressed in their dietary practices and food behavior.

One of the most extensive works on the immigrant's identity changes in the context of consumption and preservation of the food habits are collected in the book edited by Cinnotto (2014) and titled "Making Italian America: Consumer Culture and the Production of Ethnic Identities". In this collection of the essays, the reader can see how identities of the immigrants are thrived in new environment and what are the laws that guide immigrants in forging their identity and ethic culture. Bearing on the various sociological theories including social capital, social constructivism and symbolic consumption, authors discuss the reasons/causes which instigate Italian immigrants and later, Italian-American citizens to preserve their national food. Resting on both Bourdieu's (1986) theory of social capital and later ideas of symbolic identity and symbolic consumption, the authors demonstrate how the food consumption, food rituals and festive activities help immigrant to create a sense of security while being in a foreign environment. Also, keeping in mind Bourdieu's(1980) ideas of habitus which would also determine immigrant' s attitudes to food , it can be inferred that once immigrants are faced with the changes brought by relocation to a new country, they would feel an urge t restore the sense of

normality by repeating the same food-related practices. As a result they feel a need to transfer and reproduce their cultural, social and symbolic capitals. In the context of food consumption cultural capital can represent both traditional recipes, ingredients, festivities and holiday cooking.

Another important factor that has to be paid attention to while navigating the research on the immigrant's identity's modification through dietary practices is the strength of individual's affiliation to his or her ethnic group as well as his culture of origin (Romo, 2012; Okamoto & Rude, 2007). Recreating the so-called "ethnic heaven" serve as a form of resistance to an alienating public world of a foreign country (Cinotto, 2014). Coming back to the ideas of social constructivism and assimilation theory , when finding themselves in a new culture immigrants are going through a natural process of self-location through juxtaposing their home culture with the new one. Immigrants don't only feel different just because of being 'others', but also enhance these feeling with and external national or ethnic discourse, which is imposed on them according to the local understanding of what their group represent. As a result of these twofold realizations, immigrants are prone to build a collective response with the help of common nationality.

Taken that the food is an important marker of one's culture/ethnicity, it can be expected that a person with a strong affiliation with one's ethnic group would treasure and try to preserve one's traditional cuisine and more specifically, food and shopping rituals with more devotion. The same can be inferred about people with weak affiliation towards their ethnic group or having a mixed ethnic background. It can be imagined that a people with weaker ethnic affiliation strings would be more opened to a new culture and embrace its food environment more readily while easily giving up their old ways of cooking and food shopping. (Parasecoli 2014; *Bardhi, Ostberg & Bengtsson, 2010*).

Nevertheless, there should also be a mentioning of the symbolic consumption that can question our understanding of the food practices of the immigrants and their ethnic affiliation. The reality of post-

modern consumerism and late-capitalism are such that they allow people to adjust and recreate their cultural heritage to respond to contemporary preferences (Cinotto, 2014). If talking about the food heritage in terms of cultural capital charged with emotional and symbolic connotations, it can also be imagined as an asset of the symbolic consumption. When talking about immigrants and their symbolic consumption, it should also be noted that in their shopping practices immigrants pursue not only recreating their ethnic memory but a social class as well. In his article Van Hear (2014) argues immigrant's' social-class acts an important factor to consider when analyzing foremost immigrant's mobility as well as their social actions and migration outcomes. Using Bourdieu's ideas of class, which can be imagined in terms of accumulating certain forms of capital such as economic, cultural and social capitals etc., Van Hear argued that immigrants are unequal in their "pre-immigration" resources. Furthermore, drawing on Bourdieu's class and notion that different forms of capital shaping people's class position can be *acquired*, *transmitted*, and *converted*, Hear concluded that social class is an important factor to consider when tackling immigrant's experience including identity and social change.

Coming back to the idea of symbolic consumption, it can also be imagined that immigrants while transmitting or converting their economic and cultural capital, would in parallel preserve their social class and shopping behavior of that class. More specifically, the certain products would be purchased because of their symbolic meaning such as representing certain social class and lifestyle (i.e. red and black caviar in Russia, deluxe restaurants and bars). This consumption behavior and shopping trends can be referred as status consumption for the further use. Following research is looking forward to investigate this matter and choose Russian immigrants in the Czech Republic as a focus group.

4. PROPOSED RESEARCH: Identity Reconfiguration of the Russian Immigrants in Prague through the Food Practices

4.1. Russian Immigrants in the Czech Republic

Russian immigration to the Czech Republic has a long history and is currently going through another spike (OECD Report, 2015). Current composition of the Russian community can by convention be divided into three distinctive waves, each representing different motives behind their immigration to the Czech Republic. The first, and perhaps the largest wave of Russian immigrants from the Russian Empire happened soon after the World War I and had politically charged reasons. In the beginning of the 20th century with the help of the so-called Russian Support Action (“Ruská Akce”). Czech lands became home for many citizens of what was then still a part of the Russian Empire, this group was primarily comprised of young people and professionals whose numbers are estimated to be around 30,000 (Babka & Zolotarev, 2012). After Paris, Prague became the second most important center of the Russian post-revolution emigration. This wave of immigrants was followed by the second one and represented a different political reality. It was during this time that Soviet citizens were coming to the Czech Republic to enjoy personal and artistic freedoms. This influx culminated in the events of August 1968 with the invasion of Warsaw Pact whereby an army was sent to crush the “Prague Spring” event. After the end of communism brought about by “Prague Spring” under the leadership of Vaclav Havel, the troops comprised of 75,000 Russian soldiers left the country ((The Hutchinson Encyclopedia, 2000). New realities and the Czech Republic’s newly gained independence made this location an appealing country to Russian immigrants once again, this time for accessing new economic opportunities. Furthermore, as a result of the unstable economic and political situation in Russia this situation also increased the number of outflow citizens (Vavrečková & Dobiášová, 2013).

According to the provisional data from the Foreign Police there are currently 34,972 Russian citizens⁵ living in the Czech Republic, which makes Russian community the 4th largest ethnic minority group in the Czech Republic. The Russian community is mostly concentrated in the central regions of the

country (Hlavní město Praha, Středočeský Kraj, Karlovarský Kraj) and in the cities of Karlovy Vary, Prague, Brno and Pobebrady (Drbohlav D., et al, 2009). However, the Russians living in these regions do not occupy certain regions or particular parts of the city therefore not increasing the propensity for a ghetto to develop (Pipková & Salačová, 2009).

According to the Czech Statistical Office the number of Russian citizens is still growing. There are a number of explanations for this phenomenon. Firstly, the majority of the long-term visa seekers are students that are coming to the Czech Republic as it offers free education in the state universities (OECD, 2015). The next stratum of Russian immigrants coming to the Czech Republic are comprised of middle and upper class citizens and young professionals wishing to open their business here, which in turn will assist them to subsequently seek a long-term visa (Vavrečková & Dobiášová, 2013). Opportunities provided by the local Czech Universities to study for free in Czech also entice a large amount of Russian students (especially females) (Vavrečková & Dobiášová, 2013).

As previously mentioned, relocation to a new country brings various challenges to a person both internally and externally. One of the foremost difficulties that all of the immigrants are faced with is building an understanding of one's place in the new society. Living in a new locale which is an unknown environment requires that an immigrant forge his or her identity in their attempt to adapt and assimilate to this new local culture. This new environment forces the immigrants to give reconsideration of one's ethnic and national identities as they are unconsciously comparing their previous home and their new local cultures. One of the realities that an immigrant needs to adapt to is a new consumer culture which includes various subdivisions; the food culture being the central point of the current research interest. Russian immigrants in the Czech Republic are not an exception amongst the other immigrant groups and part of their integration experience is an everyday attempt of assimilating to a new food environment. However difficult this undertaking is for them can be

assessed by gaining a greater understanding of the consumer culture and traditions of food shopping and behavior in their homeland.

4. 2. Russian Food Behavior and Consumer Traditions.

When trying to understand how food behavior affects the subsequent ethnic and consumer identity that Russian immigrants may forge in their new environment, it's important to have an understanding of the shopping and consumption traditions and practices in Russia. Setting aside traditional cuisine, products and classical recipes, it's important to consider the cultural history of consumption in Russia within a historical context. Today with consumption and the material culture becoming an inseparable part of human life, they can also be viewed as another construction site of identity. What also plays an important role here is the influence of time, or, more specifically post-capitalism, which solely creates a fluctuating context for consumer identity and symbolic consumption. Nevertheless, what can be generally understood by symbolic consumption is the purchase of products that carry a certain signature or a statement corresponding to the person's ideal identity. Therefore, consumption becomes another form of production, production of meanings and values one is aspired to acquire⁶ (Cinotto, 2014). Another important aspect to consider when talking about these changes is the immigrants' identity within the cultural history of consumption, which reflects “ how ethnic and racial groups have shaped their collective identities and negotiated their place in the consumers' emporium and marketplace” (Cinotto, 2014, p. 1) through the time.

When specifically talking about the Russian cultural history of consumption, it needs to be stressed that this country has gone through major historical changes in their consumption culture over the past two centuries. The October Revolution of 1917, establishment of the Soviet Union and the subsequent

⁶ as discussed in Cinotto's (2014) introductory chapter “ All Things Italian: Italian American Consumers, Traditional Formation of Taste, and Commodification of difference

establishment of socialistic and communistic regimes has definitely had an effect on consumer culture, food behavior and the symbolic identities of Russian citizens. In her research, Olga Savchenko (2002), is tackling consumption strategies and their connection to the post-socialist identities as well as looking at modern households in the post-soviet Russia. In her inquiry, material objects and goods are seen as bearing a symbolic meaning and playing multiple roles in contemporary Muscovite households. One of the central reference points revolves around different time frames in Russian history, or more specifically the challenges encountered by the people and later their consumer reality after the collapse of the Soviet Union. Various socio-economic problems (economic instability, inflation, and increasing social divergence) that Russia was facing brought certain dilemmas which impacted every citizen on a personal basis. There was on-going threats to the people's economic security when the country was going through a really difficult time as a result of the significant number of companies that were going out of business, large price increases on almost all products and massive layoffs in the workforces. As a result of this very unfavorable state of affairs, the citizens had to search for better options and reconsider the prestige and benefits of their current occupations and lifestyle. The overall perception of these changes was predominantly critical and described as 'complete disintegration' and 'uniform impoverishment' (Golovakha, 1996; Ries, 1997). At the time of the economic and social decline people not only have to reconfigure their identity on multiple levels, but also look for an alternative source of the identity information. Material objects and continual shopping for goods became an alternative method for constructing a new, post-socialistic identity for the Russian people.

Being used to the distributive economy and all types of shortages, post-Soviet Russians had to reconfigure their mental model of shopping and the values they attached to various food products. During the socialism era, grocery shopping could be easily compared to the concept of "survival of the fittest", with the people hunting for the rare products (so-called "deficit" in Russian) and spending

hours in food lines. In terms of the amount of time spent and degree of effort expended by female household members, grocery shopping could be effectively compared with having a second job (Schevchenko, 2002). Some of the food products were purchased exclusively for future use. There wasn't any variety, choice of delicacies and there were not any foreign products available which understandably created no divergence or freedom of taste for the people. The same can be said about the traditional cuisine, which more appropriately should be referred to as "the national cuisine" as this was a rather standardized diet. The food ingredients shortage could not allow much experimentation, so people had to stick to the recipes that could be cooked with the products available to them or listed on their ration cards. Thus, it can be easily imagined with the fall of the Iron Curtain and subsequent openings of the first large international supermarkets, people could finally quench their "gastronomical thirst".

The beginning of the 1990's with its accompanying heavy inflation was another difficult time which was memorable for Russians as it resulted in empty supermarkets' shelves. People were desperately purchasing any food and goods they could get their hands on or afford. The 21st century has finally brought the Russian people some relief due to the gradual stabilization of the economy. This decade was called "the fat 2000s" ("sytyje dvuhtisyachnije") as a result of the boom in new grocery shops, large supplies of international products and exquisite restaurants opening their doors to the now solvent citizens. A capitalistic epoch had now overtaken the governance in modern Russia thus re-tailoring people's perception and understanding of consumption and food-shopping. Russia's biggest cities were flooded with modern "super" and even "hyper" markets that offered a wide choice of the commodities and foods that would satisfy the most discriminating shopper. This was the start of a new era of 'food' opportunities due to the arrival of these gigantic supermarkets which later became the norm for the "belly-pinched" citizens to shop. Nevertheless, food markets and fairs ('rynki') are still

of strong importance for the Russian consumers as they were seen as a healthy alternative to the “artificial” products (especially fruits and vegetables) that could be bought in the super-markets.



“Rynok”. Fruits sold in food markets/agriculture markets are thought to be of superior quality



An example of a Russian hyper-market chain

In spite of the now greatly increased freedom of food shopping choices and the abundance of products available, these situations did not miraculously change people's perception of the food shopping experience and consumption in general. Instead, people had to adapt their old consumption practices and traditions while trying to build new ones. According to analysis of the narratives by Muscovite consumers collected by Olga Shevchenko (2002) in her research, "the narratives of deceit, decline

and infrastructural collapse play an integral part in this story and enable, rather than obstruct, the formation of identities based on the continuous negotiation and provision of autonomy from the state.” (p. 862). The afore-mentioned commentary gives a general idea of the predominately uncertain nature of Russian consumer strategies and schemes, with no particular vector of development. This idea could also be supported with the research by Ganskau, Minina & Voltchkova⁷ which showed the Russian population has a distinctly low level of consumer trust in food and food products when compared to the neighboring countries (Norway and Denmark). These findings also reflect the economic state of the countries with predominantly middle class countries showing higher levels of consumer trust compared to the countries with bigger social differences and a small middle class (Berg, Kjaernes, Ganskau, Minina, Voltchkova, Halkier & Holm, 2005.) Low consumer distrust in food is also connected to the general distrust in formal institutions, and to high levels of food neophobia as shown in the research by Dolgoplova, Teuber & Bruschi (2015). Lack of trust in the Russian government has also pushed consumers towards developing informal networks to ensure food safety whereby they primarily rely on their trusted age old food traditions to ensure healthy food and safe food provision.

The afore-mentioned evidence is a strong testimonial of Russia’s weak national food identity. Russia is not a good example of a country with strong food traditions and is not found to be supportive of their national products. Russia’s historically problematic food situation is the reason why this research was given impetus to further investigate the Russian identity construction and the role of consumption in this process in today’s society.

4.3 Expected Shopping and Food Behavior Changes in Russian Immigrants

Due to both historical and personal reasons, there are various scenarios of how Russian immigrants' have adapted to Czech food and commodities as well as the change in their shopping practices. Having inherited a rather controversial consumption culture and a rather unfortunate history with consumer culture, Russians embraced the options and food variety in the shops abroad with great pleasure. Foreign goods of any kind have also received a reputation of having a superior quality and taste and were always preferred to the local products. Thus, another advantage of relocating to a new country (especially European and Western European countries) is to enjoy a very favorable consumer reality; there was now the provision of greater choices, variety and quality of products available. Being a Central European country, the Czech Republic also had a reputation of a country that was financially stable with a lot on offer for the modern Russian consumer. Nevertheless, it should also be pointed out that the Czech consumption culture and history in the second half of 20th century has strong similarities to the Russian history with respect to economic shortages and under consumption. The afore-mentioned situation in turn leads us to the assumption that Russian immigrants would be receptive to the Czech products. They would also be willing to discover and enjoy the "food opportunities" offered by Czech supermarkets due to their historically inherited notion that foreign products are better. Furthermore, the historical connection between two countries and an arguable resemblance of cultures and cuisines has created fertile soil for the Russian immigrants to adapt and tailor their consumer and specifically "food identity" to fit in the local culture.

The previous survey with Russian immigrants showed the majority of respondents showed they were pro-integration, even though they reported encountering certain barriers such as a perceived discrimination (Vavrečková & Dobiášová K, 2013). At the same time the research has recognized there are certain risk groups that would have a more difficult time integrating themselves into the new society, these being: the children of immigrants who attend Russian schools and stay at home housewives and pensioners who have a tendency to recreate a Russian environment around them.

Employees employed in the so- called "ethnic economy" were also identified as a vulnerable group.

However, with a help of quantitative data it was also demonstrated that the majority of Russian immigrants in the Czech Republic are from a middle income social class and above. These immigrants are employed in the Czech Republic, which may also suggest that the Russian immigrants tend to transfer and recreate their social class with the means of preserving their economic and social capitals (Bourdieu, 1984; Van Hear,2014). One of the ways to do this would be recreating one's consumer behavior, food practices and certain lifestyles, which are achieved by purchasing the products that formed their standard "consumer basket" in Russia. Perhaps, the same can also be inferred about the tastes for the particular dishes, cuisines, restaurants and branches of the supermarkets.

Nevertheless, with a generally low consumer trust inherited from their experience of living in Russia, it can also be expected that Russian immigrants could show a decreased trust in local Czech products and prefer relying on advice about food from the other Russian immigrants; at least in the beginning of their journey. Still, with a long history of preferring foreign products to their native Russian products, the immigrants may potentially even be more open to trying local food and products than their native products. When talking about diet in particular, Russian cuisine like Czech cuisine is very much meat-orientated in its focus. However, a big part of a "Russian" diet is also comprised of dairy products, bread, vegetables and fruits with a significant emphasis on the quality and freshness of the dairy products and vegetables.

Another assumption emerging from low consumer trust exhibited by the Russian immigrants is an increased concern over the freshness of the food and its quality. Given the immigrants from the Russian Federation will be predominantly from a higher socio-economic class, it could also be presumed that they will have the means to afford shopping for the fine quality products they like in the

local premium class stores and supermarkets. The following interviews will try to uncover if any of these scenarios are true in real life settings, as well as testing the research hypothesis.

4.4: Research Question.

With the following research investigating the role of food consumption in the reconfiguration of Russian immigrants identity, the author also aims to shed light/broaden the knowledge base of identity reconstruction with special attention paid to the changes occurring within the identity. A more concrete question that could be asked in conducting this research would be whether or not a change on one level of identity produces a change on another level of identity, which in turn impacts the overall identity structure. To investigate the role of food consumption and food shopping on the immigrants' identity, two focus levels of identity were chosen - ethnic/cultural identity (collective identity level) and the consumer identity (material identity level). Due to the current research's interest in the interplay between the identity levels brought about by the external stimulus (immigration) it is necessary to choose a certain "active function" in both of the identity forms, this serves as a reference point for studying the changes within their architecture. We can think of the food traditions and behaviors as the inseparable parts of the ethnic identities. This concept can be expanded to include a cultural identity and material identity (food and grocery shopping is one of the dimensions of the material objects) also forming a "food identity".

The current research presumes that changes occurring within the material identity (as a result of the changes in immigrants' food consumption behavior and practices) during relocation experience would create a fertile situation for the immigrants to reconsider their ethnic and cultural identity. This new "food" environment is likely to force a reconsideration of dietary practices by immigrants. As a result

of living in this new “food” culture, immigrants are now pushed into adopting this new type of food (Czech) or preserving traditional food habits which would require alternative food shopping.

Reconsideration of food practices and food behavior would also be reflected in changing consumer identities since the immigrants can no longer associate themselves with the products they had previously consumed and identified with. Therefore, the meanings immigrants generally associate with their national foods and cuisine will have to be negotiated through food-related practices such as; consumer practices (food shopping and consumption), discourse (talking about food and shopping) and representation (cooking traditional food when celebrating some life events) (Parasecoli, 2014).

Coming back to the theory, we see that consuming (in this case food consumption) can be imagined as a social action which consists of the particular practices directed towards a particular object. Holt (1995) sees consuming as foremost an act which “is a varied and effortful accomplishment underdetermined by the characteristics of the object” (p. 1). Following the logic of Holt’s (1995) typology and the subsequent researches adopting his ideas (Szmigin&Carrigan, 2006) it can be imagined that in immigrants consumer practices and meanings ascribed towards buying of finding a particular product can correspond to the maintenance of immigrant’s ethnic identity as well as creating/supporting their symbolic identity.

As a consequence, depending on the afore-mentioned chosen pathways of immigrants food behavior (either eating local food or resisting eating Czech food) this practice contributes to shaping the immigrants cultural identity and can also impact the degree of positive or negative group affiliation they are experiencing in their new locale. The attitudes of the immigrants towards their new country of abode in conjunction with their existing attitudes brought from their homeland will determine how successfully they integrate into the new society. There are several different outcomes that can arise

based on immigrants' food-related practices which are driven by ethnic identity reconsiderations. The following list identifies some of these potential outcomes:

- 1) Increased purchases of Russian food products by immigrants in an attempt to resist adapting to their new locale and the negotiation of their ethnicity
- 2) Increased consumption of native food and cooking Russian meals as a reaction to their failed attempts to integrate successfully
- 3) Increased purchase of the local foods and acceptance of the local foods as an attempt to integrate and openness to ethnicity reconsiderations
- 4) Increased purchase of the foods and products (which were available in Russia) that would support symbolic identity in immigrants (high quality products) while ignoring both local and national traditional food
- 5) Decreased purchase and consumption of Russian food and products in immigrants with a higher desire to assimilate while presenting weak affiliation to their ethnic group
- 6) Premises to develop hybrid ethnic identity in immigrants with higher occurrence of cooking local cuisine and negative affirmation of their ethnic group

The following research is guided by the presumption that changes in one level of identity are likely to provoke the changes on the other levels of identity and as a result, trigger the immigrants to reflect on their substantial /overall identity and possibly reconsider it. More specifically, with the event of relocation, which presents a conflict situation to the immigrants, their consumer identity is altered that is expected to as well impact immigrants' ethnic identity. Nonetheless, there are various scenarios of how this process can be happening which also constitutes the main hypothesis. In particular, immigrants that present more pro-active food adaptation behavior and consumption in their discourse are seen as more prone to negotiate their ethnic identity whereas resisting food behavior of the

immigrants can signalize/indicate reluctance to reconsider one's ethnic identity and preserve their cultural capital. Nevertheless, there can also be a middle ground of this tendency - immigrants who report a neutral or absent affiliation to their homeland can presumably stick to neither of the ethnic identities and potentially develop a new form of identity such as hybrid and/or a cosmopolitan one.

Nevertheless, the current research is of the exploratory nature and seeks to discover the alternative ways of assimilation with the example of the patterns/systems of the Russian immigrants' assimilation to the Czech culture and identity in the context of food consumption and shopping. Current research also acknowledges the possibility that there could be other scenarios of immigrants' consumer behavior and identity reconfiguration processes in place and hopes to discover them as well.

5. METHODS AND METHODOLOGY:

5.1 Current issues in Identity Research Methodology:

The various research methods and measures used in identity research have frequently been controversial. One of the main reasons for this situation is the lack of common terminology shared amongst different research domains. There is also a low degree of consensus about theories for various manifestations in this area of study. With the absence of a common base and typology of identity knowledge, scholars have a tendency of choosing smaller units of analysis as McAdams and Zapata-Gietl (2015) attested to when they indicated that identity researchers find it easier to break the concept of identity into components and study them separately. As a result of this lack of consensus, identity researchers are studying different manifestations of identity and its organization using different assumptions and theories as well as using different research methods. This situation is not necessarily an impediment to conducting research on this subject as the multidimensional nature of the identity construct requires both in-depth and diversified

means of investigation which includes: various levels of analysis, multiple approaches and multiple methods of data collection (Côté, 2015).

Depending on the chosen theoretical approach and the point of views, both quantitative and qualitative research methods are justified and widely applied in the identity studies (Monrad, 2013). One of the most recently promoted methods of identity research is referred to as the narrative identity approach which involves the use of open-ended interviews. This approach was developed as a consequence of the Neo-Eriksonian Narrative Identity research which is based on the theory that human's reflexive self-knowledge, biography, personal judgment of their life events and ability to integrate their life story into a bigger social picture are the crucial sources of identity information. Furthermore, an individual's ability to extract meaning and expression out of one's biography and view it on the broader scale was seen as a sign of a person's identity maturity, which is one of the requisites for the majority of identity change and development studies. The model proposed by the Narrative Identity theory has been the mostly frequently utilized model in identity development research. When it comes to the specific domains of identity research there are however standardized tools used, these being interviews and questionnaires. Structured interviews called Identity Status Interviews (originally used in Marcia, 1966; revised by Marcia & Archer, 1993) were the first identity measures used. Examples of questionnaires used in identity research include the Ego Identity Process Questionnaire (Balistreri, Busch-Rossnagel, & 1986) and Extended Objective Measure of Ego Identity Status (Bennion & Adams, 1986).

Given the disunited theoretical approaches and study domains in identity research it is not surprising the research measures and tools are also comprised of different orientations and structures. Identity Status Interviews have incorporated a semi structured protocol in which participants were asked about their identity according to Erikson, (Eriksonian Narrative Identity

model) identifying three domains to be explored which included: religion, career and politics. The Ego Identity Process Questionnaire and Extended Objective Measure of Ego Identity Status revolved around psychometric properties. When it comes to the interests and purposes of the current research, there is again no obvious choice of the research tool and general methodological path. Similar research conducted on the food habits and behavior of immigrants in combination with the previous research methodologies used indicates the majority of the analogous studies have mostly relied on qualitative measures. These measures have included semi-structured interviews, participant observations, visual ethnography and vignettes. The afore-mentioned methods of data collection are not mutually exclusive and can be easily combined according to research purposes. To examine immigrants' consumer practices as well as the processes of identity reconfiguration that is happening in parallel, the methodological approach as well as the most applicable qualitative research instruments will be discussed and justified below.

5.2 Methodological Approach and Measures.

To navigate the current research's choice of methodological approaches and establish a common ground for understanding and measuring identity, different theoretical assumptions regarding identity that have been made in the common approaches will be clarified. Perhaps no other approach better unites different methodological means and theoretical assumptions than symbolic interactionism. According to Monrad (2013) the fundamental assumption of the symbolic interactionist approach is their assumption that people can reflect on their identities, hence self-reporting is a valid approach to studying an individual's identity. A discursive presentation of oneself by the immigrants as part of the research group will serve as the main focus of analysis in this research. Additional methodological presumptions of this research are identity's versatile nature (Erikson, 1967; Schwartz et. al, 2011; Côté, 2015), identity's complex organization which includes various forms and levels (Schwartz et al., 2011), identity's plasticity (Burke & Stets, 2009; Erikson, 1968) and identity being both self-ascribed

and socially ascribed knowledge that individuals gather through engaging in social contact (Burke, 1980: 19; Jenkins, 2004: 4). Furthermore, it should also be acknowledged that identity in many instances both reflects the society you are living in and that people have multiple identities that are defined by their relations to other members of the society and their positions in the social structures (Burke and Stets, 2009: 10; James, 1983: 281 f.; Mead, 1967: 144). Lastly, the current research also acknowledges that there are various external factors that are present in the environment that can potentially influence the immigrants identity as well. The present research has various theoretical preconditions and recognizes the multiple levels of identity, their interplay and the processes of identity reconfiguration, in addition to the potential effects of external factors on identity. The following section will discuss the qualitative research measures used, these include: interviews, observations, content analysis and vignettes.

Interview questions.

The interviews conducted in this research were semi-structured in format and guided by the researcher. Particular attention was paid to the respondents comments when they were asked to narrate a story specifically referring to their feelings about relocating to the Czech Republic. At a later time in the interview the interviewees were also asked to provide an account of their most recent local food shopping experience, i.e. (what they bought, did they encounter any difficulties when buying their purchases).

When conducting the interviews the researcher was aware that special attention to is the use of narrative interviews to tackle the ethnicity of the respondent as well as his national feelings. Seen as a type of the social group identity, ethnicity contains certain formal properties. The most basic of those properties are self-categorization and self-schematization combined with social-interaction form “an

intersubjective agreement that (almost) every person can be placed into one of the categories” (Abdelal, 2011, pp. 34). The above mentioned categories describe the social/ethnic/cultural classifications that every person ascribes to oneself. In the case of Russian immigrants living in the Czech Republic, it should be noted there is a two-way judgment of their placement in a certain ethnic group. As a result when inquiring about individual’s ethnic or cultural identity, the immigrants needed to be subtly steered in the direction when answering the question of whether or not they think they have made a permanent resident in the Czech Republic and whether or not it’s recognizable to the host group (ethnic majority). This is also a task of the vignettes (which functioning will be discussed later) as a secondary research instrument. More specifically, the presented case stories (vignettes) are hoped to elicit the discussion with the respondents with the consequential discussion of which kinds of immigrant’s behavior are not tolerated, disregarded, or supported. Furthermore, following the assimilationists’ perspective. respondents will also be asked various questions aimed to elicit responses on such topics as assimilation, attitudes towards the dominant group and its culture.

Once respondents’ ethnic identity has been tackled the focus of the interviews will shift to questions aimed at studying the immigrant’s food consumption choices and their grocery shopping habits. Meanings that immigrants attribute to food and dishes are never effectively defined, but are negotiated and expressed /articulated through practices, discourse and representation (Parasecoli, 2014). As discussed suggested by Parasecoli (2014) consumption (in this case food consumption) can be imagined as a social action, which consists of the particular practices directed towards a particular object. Furthermore, an act of consuming can also be imagined as having various levels and aims (experience, play, integration and categorization) each bringing the individual a sense of accomplishment (Holt,1995). Following the logic of Holt’s (1995) typology and the subsequent research adopting his ideas (Szmigin & Carrigan, 2006) it could be inferred that immigrants consumer practices when buying a particular product corresponds to the maintenance of an immigrant’s ethnic identity as well as creating/supporting their symbolic identity. To explore how the respondents felt

about their food shopping experience the interviewees would be asked a series of questions about their feelings when they shop for food in Prague and whether or not they have recently experienced particular positive or negative feelings about their food shopping experience. They would also be asked to tell their story about when and why they decided to buy a particular product (specifically Russian specialty products). The respondents will also be asked about the types of products they used to purchase when living in Russia and whether or not their food habits had changed as a result of living in Prague. Another interview question asked would be regarding how often they cook their native national food and if they cook any Czech dishes. The interview will be followed by the direct questions why (if at all) people continued cooking their national cuisine, whether or not they cook and eat more traditional food. Examples of sample questions are the following;

- Do you remember the last time you went grocery shopping? Do you remember what you bought?
- Did you have any difficulties finding/buying a certain item(s)/product(s) while doing your most recent grocery shopping?
- Have you ever been left disappointed after going shopping here? What has made you disappointed?
- Are there any products you require/would like that require extra effort to be found? What are they and how do you deal with that?
- Last time you were hungry, did you have any particular food in mind that you would love to eat?
- Have you ever been in the situation when you had to visit more than one shop to complete your grocery shopping? If this happened, how did it make you feel?

5.3 Research Tools

Interviews and vignettes were identified as the most appropriate research tools for the purposes of the current research. The proposed interview consisted of questions which can be grouped under three main themes, these being: personal relocation story, food shopping practices and strategies and importance of the national food (see Appendix for a copy of the interview questions). The first section of the interview also had an additional purpose of evoking sentiments and feelings related to retelling a story of relocation. To elicit emotionally charged responses, personify interviews, ease up the process

of projection for the informants and in that way, gather more in-depth information vignettes were decided to be added along the way. Being a part of the elicitation technique, vignettes are used to stimulate respondent's decision-making process after he or she is presented with the events and situations which they could have potentially found themselves in their personal or professional lives. They usually constitute the response stimuli in the form of short realistic stories or recapitulations of the concrete events that the respondent could previously experience (if not experienced yet). The vignettes could also take a form of other people's stories in the similar circumstances, which the respondents are presumed to have previously experienced. Since vignettes are aimed at eliciting respondents, every vignette narrative is followed by a series of questions focused on interviewee's reaction (along with actions and emotions) according to the vignette' case characteristics (Barberis, 2013). In the present research, the responders were presented with three case stories which featured three different food behavior assimilation strategies - rejecting (poor-assimilation), accepting (pro-assimilation) and staying neutral (inactive assimilation) to the local food, cuisine and products and were aimed to trigger different reactions in respondents (see Appendix for the copies of vignettes). Furthermore, the characters in vignette were also designed in such way to represent certain degrees of the ethnic identity affirmation, which would also help to assess respondents' ethnic affiliation later on.

5.4 Sample and methods of data collection

Being one of the largest ethnic minorities in the Czech Republic, Russian immigrants in the Czech Republic have advantages as a research sample as well as the few limitations (to be discussed in the limitations section). Nevertheless, having a distinct consumption history and food traditions from the Czech ones, it makes the present sample acceptable for the purposes of the research.

Current research has primarily relied on two sampling methods - random sampling and snowball sampling. The majority of respondents was met and recruited randomly at the local "Russian Stores" around Prague. A total of 12 immigrants (f= 6, m=6) from the Russian Federation were interviewed.

Respondents' age, city of origin, occupations, and reasons for relocation varied greatly. However, there was still a predominance of the Muscovites in a sample (N=5) over the other townsmen⁸. The longest time spend in Prague was 17 years (49 years old male resident) while the shortest one being just less than a year of 29 years old male respondent (see Table 2 for more details). Perhaps, the most common shared characteristic was education with the majority of respondents having university education and 7 of them earned Master degree. All of the respondents were employed in the Czech Republic, however in the foreign or international companies. 2 of them had Czech citizenship and the remaining 10 owned permanent residency card. Another common experience that half of the respondents of the younger age shared was getting their Bachelor (and for some even Master) degrees in the Czech Republic.

To qualify as an informant, a potential respondent was asked about their country of origin. Researcher made sure that the potential interviewees were coming from Russian Federation by asking people of their country of origin directly. Once the respondents agreed to cooperate and took part in an in-depth interview they were asked if they know and wish to introduce further respondents that would be suitable for the research. One of the female respondents was particularly active and responsive to this call/appeal and introduced 3 of her acquaintances of hers she found suitable for this research. Besides that a number of observation sessions in "Russian Specialities" shops was also carried while recruiting the informants. Prior to interview, all the respondents were asked to sign an informed consent and agreed to have their answers recorder. Majority of the interviews took place in the restaurants, coffee places or places of respondents' choice and convenience.

Current research has primarily relied on guided interviews as means of data collection. All the interviews were recorder and saved as the audio files to be later transcribed for analysis purposes. The obtained data included researcher's field notes and observations from various Russian Shops and

⁸ All of the respondents came from bigger cities with 5 people (f=3, m=2) coming from Moscow, 1 from Saint-Petersburg, 3 from Chelyabinsk, 1 from Grozny and the remaining ones from Yekaterinburg and Kemerovo

mainly interview transcripts. For the further analysis, respondents names were changed to make sure that the privacy and anonymity are preserved.

6. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

6.1 Analysis and Findings

Once the interviews were completed, they were subsequently transcribed and combined with the notes and observation interviews; an analysis was conducted on the findings. Since the primary interest of the present research is focused on immigrant's ethnic identity and the changes happening to it during the alterations of their consumer behavior, the focal point of the analysis will be concentrated on ethnic identity and its modifications as presented by the immigrants' commentaries. The meanings and values attributed by immigrants to their national foods and familiar products were the immigrants' connection to their ethnic identity. As Parasecoli (2014) points out in his research on Italian immigrants in the United States, meanings that are associated with food and national cuisine are negotiated and articulated through practices, discourse and representation. Thus, the search for these meanings to immigrants will be found in the immigrants' discourses on their shopping and consumption behavior. Therefore, the present research will mainly rely on immigrants' discursive representations of their ethnic identity. Changes and possible reconfigurations of immigrants' ethnic identity were seen to be reflected in immigrants' commentaries on their assimilation success, adaptation and acceptance of the local culture. Furthermore, negotiations of ethnic identity and affiliation to one's ethnic group were also seen to be stemming from the attitudes held about their homeland, one's ethnic group, adaptation to a host country, relationship with the dominant group, frequency of travelling back home as well as general feelings of nostalgia and home-sickness.

For the purpose of building a further discussion, meanings attributed to food practices and experience with the local food are identified as another dimension of the research analysis. Therefore, when

connecting it to the first and primary dimension, which is immigrants' ethnic identity's and affiliation's reconfiguration reflected in discourse, we can create a matrix that would represent immigrant's consumer behavior in relation to their adaptation goals. Such a matrix would also help in formulating the typologies of the identity modifications in immigrants. The major themes, which were traceable in the respondents' comments regarding their food practices and food habits, would constitute the basis for typology organization. The main topics in relation to food behavior change in immigrants observed in the interviews were: resistance of the new food environment, adopting/accepting local foods and products and lastly, preserving and integrating both homeland and new foods and cuisines in their lives. When inquiring about ethnic identification directly and with the help of vignettes, immigrants have presented rather diverse assessments. Nevertheless, before coming to any conclusion, general trends of the discursive representations of immigrants' ethnicity and identity as well as reconsideration of

Changes in immigrants' food practices and consumer behavior

In order to investigate a possible connection and interplay between the two chosen levels of immigrants' identity, food practices and consumer behavior as it constitutes a material identity level needs to be discussed. The observed commonalities and variability of food practices and consumer behavior of the immigrants will further assist with finding possible trends and also present points of convergence between the two dimensions of identity these being: ethnic and material ones.

Revisiting the theory, we recall that material objects and symbolic meanings ascribed to them can serve as points of reference which one can use to check on his or hers as well as other people's position in the society (Dittmar, 2008). Thus, another property of the products, supermarket chains and cuisines which can also bear certain symbolic value that would correspond to immigrants' ideas of

themselves and their place in the society. Nevertheless, the other symbolic connotation of food and national cuisine together with its nutritive properties would be the transmission of the culture and history embedded in recipes and traditional dishes (Parasecoli, 2014; Cinotti, 2014; Rabikowska, 2010). Furthermore, according to the assimilationists' perspective, immigrants' decision to accept local foods and habits might be affected by their general desire to assimilate and imitate local cooking.

To help uncovering changes in immigrants' food practices and consumer behavior, as well as studying the attitudes and strategies towards preserving their existing habits, respondents were asked various semi-structured questions. The immigrants were asked questions about their shopping practices, products they buy in the Czech Republic and satisfaction with the products and super-markets chains. First of all, when considering general food preferences and consumer behavior, there is no linear tendency with immigrants' reporting liking different cuisines, which is a matter of taste. However, when asked about Czech cuisine in particular, together with the products they discovered in the Czech Republic respondents gave different answers:

“ I like Vietnamese cuisine here! What about Czech one.... I don't think so however I have recently discovered 'Olomoucké tvarůžky' after my friend recommended them to me (smiling). (Olga,24).

“ What I discovered here were French and Italian cuisine. Hm I don't think I have any favorite Czech dishes or products...I stopped eating Japanese here, because it's problematic to find a good quality fish in here...one of the favorite dishes was ' Beef Burgundy' which recipe I mastered recently! (Eugeniya, 29).

“Certainly, it's nakládaný hermelín, I like it from time to time, it's not that I eat it every day....then it's some variations of potato salad, which reminded me of olivije, but has its own 'nuances'. (Feodor, 35).

“ Favorite food here? No...nothing ...I guess I'm not the best informant for you, because I'm indifferent to food. I buy it mechanically...you take some sour cream for salad... you take this you take that...it's already a habit.” (Boris, 55).

“ I can certainly say it's a Czech duck, the way they cook it is really amazing! I even had to try cooking it myself.” (Leonid, 26).

When a Russian cuisine is considered, it's rarely reported as being missed by respondents. However, what are missed are usually some particular products which were mentioned by almost all twelve interviewees. The most frequently missed products included dairy products, (especially 'kefir', 'ryazhenka' and 'tvorog'), fresh fruits and vegetables, good quality meat, fresh fish, grains and buckwheat. Furthermore, these products were also reported to be the most difficult to find and buy in the Czech Republic.

When asked about their satisfaction with the local products and supermarkets, the answers also diverged:

“ I'm very much satisfied with the local shops and food here! The meat is definitely of much better quality than back in Russia” (Leonid, 26).

“ Hm basically the products here are cheaper... I guess I'm a bit indifferent about food and its variety. I guess I would be concerned if there was no choice at all, like with the cucumbers in Italy where I lived for half a year, they only had those huge, aubergine-sized cucumbers” (Galina, 42).

“ These [Czech supermarkets] are typical CEE supermarkets which have good products, but they lack something...something “live” in there.” ((Boris, 46).

“ I thing on average products and their quality are better here...but there are not enough agricultural food markets, which are better in Russia – generally speaking you don't have your Azeri guys you buys your herbs from... but those are only my speculations, I haven't lived in Russian for a long time.” (Mikhail, 49).

It was also observed that the motives behind shopping for a particular food or a product did not carry any cultural loading, meaning that respondents did not shop for something specific to prepare their national dishes. Only one respondent reported shopping for the ingredients for cooking Russian soup recently, while the rest of the informants mentioned cooking international dishes or something 'regular' (which was rarely Russian food) on a daily basis. When asked what they think of eating when being hungry last time, only two of the respondents mentioned Russian dishes, while the rest have named mostly Vietnamese, French and Italian cuisines, restaurants and dishes.

Perhaps, one of the key aspects to consider when analyzing immigrants assimilation attempts, would be taking over cooking Czech national cuisine and eating it more often by minorities. Coming back to vignettes, which also reflected character's food assimilation endeavors, most of the respondents supported Aleksand's (Vignette #2) attempt to adopting to Czech food, sharing that:

“ I guess he is inclined to something like that.... Because there are similar moments, I mean cuisine-wise – in both Russia and the Czech Republic people eat a lot of meat. I think all Russians like Czech cuisine.” (Mikhail, 49).

“ That was an easy “entry point” for him through drinking beer with his friends (laughing) and also, it's [Czech food] is rather cheap...he is young and is more tolerable, with a more “flexible” brain which can be shaped. He wants to integrate, that's why food was an important part for him”. (Feodor, 35).

“ I guess he didn't try hard to start liking local food ,because it's very simple and understandable/familiar to most of the people...you don't have to try hard. For him, the food was a social element, because he drank beer with his Czech classmates. So he wanted to get some ideas of local's life together with their food.” (Eugenia, 29).

At the same time Anton Ivanovitch (Vignette #1) was the most criticized one for recreating his “Russian ways” and Russian environment in the new country.

“Unfortunately, this is a quite common type of the immigrant from our⁹ countries and this is exactly the type of immigrants based on which we got evaluated... I don't want to be rated as such a narrow-minded person”.
(Eugenia, 29).

The afore-mentioned observations suggest a general openness and readiness of the respondents to adapt to Czech food, shop in Czech supermarkets as well as their lack of refusing local food. However, there were some comments in which Czech food and Czech supermarkets were not presented in a good light.

“There was no minced meat in the shop, I'm not talking about organic one... there was only pork and nothing else! And we are talking about the shop in the city center!” (Dariya,28).

⁹ Respondent probably refers to the post-Soviet countries

Summing up, one of the most observable tendencies of Russian immigrants was their openness as well as general acceptance of local food, followed by general feeling of satisfaction about what is available in the Czech market. That suggests a rather positive and affirmative desire to assimilate to the local food culture. However, what is missed the most which was indicated by all the respondents, are certain products which are only sold and manufactured in Russia. Some of the respondents did mention that it was not too difficult to substitute with the Czech alternatives. This behavior also suggests positive shifts among the respondents towards accepting local products and food and tuning up on their food and consumer behavior to fit in their new locale. Nevertheless, certain variations in the level of adaptation to a local food environment are still present which also suggest checking on the ethnic identity's level reconfiguration in immigrant's discursive representation of their identity.

Changes to ethnic identity and affiliation to ethnic group in immigrants' discourses.

Drawing on the social constructionist perspective of ethnicity, which emphasizes interactive processes through which racial and ethnic meanings are formed and reproduced (Okamoto & Rude, 2007), we can imagine that immigrants will try to reproduce their ethnic attitudes and affiliation towards their ethnic group in their discourses. Drawing on a previously chosen definition of ethnicity as a “a sense of *peoplehood and commonality* derived from kinship patterns, a shared historical past, common experiences, religious affiliations, language or linguistic commonalities, *shared values, attitudes, perceptions, modes of expression*, and identity.”(King 2002, p. 33 as cited in McLean & Syed, 2015) we can track immigrants' negations of their ethnicity in the certain comments/attitudes regarding their home country, ethnic group, perception of the current situation at home as well as attitudes towards the hosting country and group. Furthermore, the vignettes carrying a certain semantic content on the adaptation strategies and preferences of immigrants, will also help to uncover general attitudes towards integration and ethnic affiliation in the participants.

Despite certain variations in their answers, the majority of the respondents reported not having strong feelings of nostalgia and homesickness at all. This observation was also supported by the minimal number of visits to their home-country, with an average frequency of visits amongst all 12 respondents being once in a year¹⁰. The nature of the homeland visits were also such that it would usually be to take care of business or of a general purpose nature, i.e. to check on their older relatives.

“ How often do you come back home? I try to visit home as rare as possible... recently just to do some business back there.... Maybe once in a year and a half” (Leonid, 26).

When asked about what’s being missed the most from home, people’s answers had a broad range of responses, such as:

“ What I miss the most is connected to my study interests, language studies. I miss the language, interesting events, lectures...what else do I miss? Oh, yeah and the book shops (laughing)!. (Olga, 24).

“ The first thing.... hm I guess my friends may be... or just the people I used to know and be in touch” (Andrej, 29).

“I miss my parents... and Baskin Robins, the ice-cream brand! (laughing). That’s it!” (Irina, 25).

“I don’ miss anything! I’m so happy here – I have everything I want! (Galina, 42).

“ What I miss? Well, actually I miss those cool people...! I mean those people who are goal-driven, show a healthy competition in relation to some matters here... may be I just haven’t met interesting people yet! I love that feeling when I come back home - I can visit any place/bar and have no problem starting a conversation with a stranger, I really enjoy it. And food also! You come to the shop and see all those yummy things!” (Feodor, 35).

“What I miss? I guess it does not exist anymore, it’s all in the past already. However, I miss something – being a part of culture, of a bigger whole/entity”. (Dariya, 28).

“ I guess my parents, which have been deceased for a long time. Generally, there is nothing else that draws me home.” (Mikhajil , 49).

¹⁰ 9 out of 12 respondents reported coming back to Russia once or more times within a year

“ I have nothing to miss actually, but what I miss are some phantom memory gusts which are connected to something good from the first 10 years of my life.” (Leonid, 26).

“ I don’t miss Russia, but I miss a concept of Russia... a concept of motherland, I miss Motherland. However, knowing what’s happening in Russia right now I don’t want to go there. Even more, I feel (understand) all those writers, which left their country back then and became patriots outside of it. So I’m a patriot of a concept... I sympathise to Russian nation, but everything that is happening with the regime and how power manipulating the masses....but at the same time, there are young and energetic people that I like in Russia, which I guess I’m missing here. ”

From these responses it’s evident that there are three main themes of the nostalgia; symbolic and vivid concepts, such as childhood, culture and motherland, followed by missing being a part of country/culture and lastly, missing people and a certain lifestyle. At the same time, there were respondents who in their discourse presented a lack of nostalgia and did not miss anything home related at all. It’s also interesting to track how respondents talked about their success in adaptation and integration to a local country. Similar to the survey’s results of (Vavrečková & Dobiášová , 2013), most of the respondents reported a positive desire to integrate and communicate with the locals. However, their stories reported a differencing levels of success in both adaptation and integration.

“I feel like home here, but it’s not quite my home. I’m not integrated into the Czech society. I have almost no Czech friends. Those who I call call friends are few and we speak English to each other.” (Dariya, 29).

“ If I adapted here? I guess I will never adopt ... Look, I can say I didn’t adopt to the life here, but I accepted certain moments, I understand local quirks and whims....where they come from. “ (Feodor, 35).

“ I feel comfortable here. I don’t feel like a part of the local society. I exist inside of it , but without it”. (Irina, 25).

“ I think yes, I adopted here....I don’t learn Czech though, because I don’t communicate with So locals and don’t work here.” (Boris, 55).

So were the stories of belonging to the local society.

“ I feel like I’m a “beginning” part of this society”. (Leonid, 26).

The majority of respondents also mentioned that they speak Czech fluently and/or are in the process of improving their Czech language skills. Perhaps, part of the integration's success can also be seen in terms of the efforts put into the socialization and acceptance of the local community. Again, the respondents had different attitudes towards the Czech population, Czech language and culture in general.

“Speaking frankly, I don't like [Czech] language, I simply don't like how it sounds. I refused to study it at first, partially because my [Czech] husband promised me that we will not live here permanently....” (Eugeniya, 29).

“I feel comfortable here, I started to accept Czechs as individuals, also nation-wise they have a “cool” culture, which I like. However, I can't say that I.... I don't have Czech friends here.....” (Irina, 25).

“What I think of people who share this country with me.?.....a person needs to try to understand their culture, their communication manners their manners in business, which is important for me... They do everything differently, and sometimes it feels like they are very relaxed and don't have this Russian “thirst for money”, but there is no objective truth here though.”
“ I like Czech language, it's very logical, once you understand how it works you can start understanding and speaking it without attending language classes”. (Leonid, 26).

“I feel comfortable here, but there are many things I don't likeThere was one article recently, titled “Czech Republic doesn't care about you¹¹”. And actually, that really pisses me off that people don't caremay be I'm communicating in the wrong circles.... In Russia, the United States, there are constantly different currents, someone is inventing something here or there...but here you can only go dancing roughly speaking.” (Feodor, 35).

“ I am comfortable here, I even think that this is my country. I mean I have such feelings...
...If I feel like a part of this society? I've never thought about that, it's just so comfortable here- I'm all by myself, I don't need ties with the society.”
..... I understand that communication is important to feel like being a part of Czech society. I can live anywhere, I don't care, I'm good – my job is not tied to a certain country, living conditions are great...what else? I'm learning Czech...there are also some other languages that help me in Europe” (Galina, 42).

Quite surprisingly, respondents rarely presented positive affirmations/attitudes towards the Russian population. They also rarely compared the Czech and Russian nations and cultures in other aspects besides the focal topic of the interview, (food behavior and habits). This observation was the most apparent from the vignettes based on three case stories presenting different kinds of immigrants'

¹¹ The original words were of foul language, referring to the following article : <http://www.no-yolo.com/czech-rep-where-no-one-gives-fuck/>

assimilation stories. As it was previously explained in the methodology section, these stories were examples of different levels of assimilations with (Vignette #1 Anton Ivanovitch), pro-assimilation (Case #2 Alexander) and neutral/open to discussion (Case #3, Inna).

There were various evaluations of the cases with the following thoughts shared about Vignette #1 (Anton Ivanovitch):

“ I don’t understand people who care way too much about their motherland while living here....in my opinion, they live somebody else’s life, because they are here and their motherland is there and thus they live in a “torn-apart” state between two countries with their head being there (homeland) and physical body here. This is not a life, this is just existing.” (Feodor, 35).

“May be he does not want to lose touch with his country and does that through food so he keeps....again this is personal again, in person’s head if he keeps the traditions this way we can consider this case the lowest step in Maslow’s hierarchy, because this is how he gets the feeling of security – by eating Russian food in a foreign country”. (Galina, 42).

“Anton Ivanovitch is older than other characters and I assume that the older the person the more he holds on to his old ways...Why? Because it’s harder to change, the older the person the harder it is to change...”(Dariya, 28).

“Unfortunately, this is a quite common type of the immigrant from our¹² countries and this is exactly the type of immigrants that we can be negatively evaluated... I don’t want to be rated as such a narrow-minded person”. (Eugenia, 29).

“ Good that he loves Russian food, but I guess he is a bit crazy as well. It looks like some form of fetish.” (Mikhail, 49).

None of the twelve respondents mentioned they felt solidarity with Anton Ivanovitch’s perspective and rated his story either negatively or indifferently when asked directly and indirectly about his feedback.

The remaining characters, Inna and Alexander received more support and comprehension:

“ I liked Inna the most...she is an open-minded person...I sympathize to such people who prefer more diverse food, I like them more than Anton Ivanovitch.

“ There is a motive for self-fulfillmentwhat kind of opportunities are waiting for him in Volgograd? Simply none! I see him as an ambitious person who want to say to himself later “ yes, I achieved my

¹² Respondent probably refers to the post-Soviet countries

goals I became a “real man” I live in a good country. This is simply a respectable behavior of a normal man... “ (Boris, 55)

“May be he is some kind of a man of a “new formation” which can live wherever he wants. ” (Boris, 55).

“This is a very familiar story [talking about Alexander], I guess me and all of the people I know who moved here acted like this young man.” (Dariya, 28).

When applying vignettes as a projective instrument, it can be noted that the majority of the respondents associated with pro and neutral/new-formation styles of assimilation. They criticized the stubbornness of the immigrants who preferred to stick to their own original food behavior. Judging on the above-mentioned responses, there is quite a prevalent tendency of repressing one’s ethnic identity as well as maintaining a cautious relationship with the host group and new cultural environment. Nevertheless, there are still attempts to preserve one’s ethnic identity, but not as a whole, just cultural and symbolic components of it mostly (cultural capital). What is of particular importance for the current research is that the majority discursively presented negotiations of their home country and identity. For some of them home was already in Prague, not only because of their relatives living here, but for the other reasons such as conscious desire to assimilate and become a part of this society.

After presenting the commonalities in the interviews, the researcher became aware of certain patterns and connections within these two dimensions which allowed the respondents to be grouped according to the logic of their discursive representations.

Types of ethnic identity reconfiguration in connection to the food practices.

1. Resisting local food environment while conserving ethnic identity

The following category was formed by an intersection of certain food behaviors and food practices with ethnic identity representations of the certain respondents. The common ground for this type of

identity reconfiguration rested upon the discursive representations of immigrants about their success in adapting to local cuisine and integrating into this foreign environment. The respondents of this cluster have openly discussed their failure in integrating to the local community as well as their desire to stop trying at a later date. In terms of representing ethnic identity, changes/modifications and an overall state of assimilating to the local culture the respondents said the following:

“At first I was very motivated to integrate, speak Czech, make Czech friends, learn their culture, because when you live in the country for a long time you want to become part of it.... but after sometimes I felt a strong resistance... quite frankly, my efforts were unsuccessful so after some time I stopped wanting to integrate at all and I become comfortable with the idea that I can't integrate.” (Dariya, 28).

“ I don't think I ever become Czech and this is normal, I guess. I was born Russian and I will die Russian. Despite having my Czech husband's family and friends, I still mostly communicate with expats.” (Eugenia, 29)

Another female respondent shared the following when asked which language she speaks with her Czech husband: “ for a long time we used a mix of English and German, then just English....he started learning Russian even before I moved to Prague for him, but me I refused to speak Czech for a long time”. When asked for the reasons, Eugenia, 29 explained: “ To be fair, I don't like the language, I just don't like how it sounds and I refused to learn it for a long time and also because my husband promised me, that we will not stay here..... I also had an intention at the beginning; my intention was not to stay here.

There were also many references of missing Russian culture, traditions, cultural events and being part of something bigger. Perhaps what this type of identity reconfiguration entails is concentration of preserving one's cultural identity, and not necessarily certain ethnic ties. The reason to believe this was participant's acknowledgment of missing Russian language, cultural events (ballet, theater) as well as certain life styles (more high-class shops, travelling to the neighboring countries such as Finland for leisure and shopping) .

The feeling of Otherness was a predominant theme among the respondents of this category. When asked about their relocation and overall immigrant experience in the Czech Republic they had the following comments:

“ I don’t think I ever become Czech and this is normal, I guess. I was born Russian and I will die Russian. Despite having my Czech husband’s family and friends, I still mostly communicate with expats.” (Eugenia, 29)

“At first I really wanted to integrate, I watched Czech movies, read in Czech, had a job where I spoke Czech, I even had a couple of Czech friends, but I always felt that attitude from them“ you are still a foreigner to us”. (Dariya, 28)

“ ... quite lately I at least got Czech acquaintances. I guess, with starting at the new faculty I finally got normal Czech friends. What I mean by normal? I mean that we also see each other outside our university. (Olga, 24)

“I think I will never adopt...“I feel comfortable here, but there are many things I don’t likeThere was one article recently, titled “Czech Republic doesn’t care about you”. And actually, that really pisses me off that people don’t caremay be I’m communicating in the wrong circles.... In Russia, the United States there in Russia, the US, there are constantly different currents, someone is inventing something here or there...but here you can only go dancing roughly speaking.” (Feodor, 35).

When asked to explain why adaptation and integration were particularly complicated, their responses were threefold; they listed lacking friends, lacking cultural experiences as well as having difficulties finding a job. One of the respondents described her general experience as an immigrant in the Czech Republic as a “struggle, but a comfortable struggle” and saying that she felt like “she is home, while not being at home” (implying a negative connotation i.e. “not being welcomed”).

Perhaps, what make this group of particular interest for the current research are the practices, which this group of immigrants used for conserving their ethnic integrity. Among such practices were visiting more than one shop to finish their shopping sessions, refusing to cook Czech food as well as giving preference to the high-quality shops. When asked about their food practices and shopping routines in Prague, the answers varied, but reflected a general dissatisfaction with choice, quality and variety of the products and supermarkets in general. As Eugenia, 29 from Moscow pointed out when asked to tell her relocation story “...the food here was one of the major issues for me and it really annoyed me

at first because I was used to much better quality of food....”. Other respondents said the following on this topic:

“ When me and my sister just moved here, everything [in regards to food] left us unhappy , because, fairly, 10 years ago everything was really “sad” in the shops especially in comparison to Moscow at that time... but now you see, it’s quite opposite, now the situation with products is worse at home! “ (Olga, 24).

“ The supermarkets here even lack some basic products, such as herbs and fresh vegetables. I don’t understand why it is this way here. ”(Dariya ,29).

Despite quite negative evaluation of the local food and supermarkets, the respondents of this cluster did not mention missing Russian products or visiting Russian specialty shops very often. Quite the contrary, they presented in their feedback what they missed the most was good quality products available in a premium-class Russian supermarket. Alternatives to these high quality shops in the Czech Republic were seen to be Marks and Spencer and MAKRO shops. Russian products and delicacies were reported to be bought rarely and only when they had a feeling/taste for it. If Russian traditional dishes were to be cooked, respondents commented that they modified the original Russian recipes so the dish would be healthier and/or tastier.

Even though amongst the most missed products were those which were also listed by the other respondents, the respondents classified under this category were the ones who extended the general list of the missed products. Black rice, rare kind of buckwheat, sepia spaghetti, coriander, particular French and Finnish products (French: pearl onions, basil, red onions, Finnish bread and specialties) were among the products reported by the respondents they missed.

“ ... everything that differs/falls away from the norm... even a little bit ...requires an extra effort to be found.” (Nikolaj, 28).

Judging on the respondents’ discussions on assimilating to the local food environment, we can conclude that the actual motive behind refusing local products and food was only partially used to preserve cultural or ethnic identity, whereas the actual reason could have been of a different nature.

Conceivably, preserving a certain socio-economic status and lifestyle as well as replicating ones economic capital was a motive behind refusing foreign foods and failing to assimilate/understand the locals while doing that. Perhaps, part of the strategy was recreating a consumer experience in Russia by attending high-quality Czech supermarkets and spending more time searching for exquisite products. Furthermore, it can be also inferred from respondents' stories that conserving their cultural and ethnic identities help them to also conserve their socio-economic status and capital. As a result, food behavior and shopping are configured in such way to reflect a social status in the home country. These kinds of identity navigation can be seen to be two-fold as food behavior and practices are used to conserve both ethnic and material identities. Perhaps ethnic identity is being seen as equal to the social status (material identity), thus it's tried to be replicated through the means of conserving one's socio-economic status. Thus material and ethnic identity are being amended in parallel in the process of trying to adapt to the local environment which is done by recreating the identities built at home (rebuilding habitus). Such striving to resist local food and culture can also be seen in terms of these respondents' immigration stories, none of them have willingly desired to move into the Czech Republic, so amending one's food and ethnic identity was of particularly difficult.

Citing Eugenia again we can see that logic in between the lines:

“...the food here was one of the major issues for me and it really annoyed me at first because I was used too much better quality of food”

2. Adopting to the local food environment and adjusting ethnic identity

The following category of respondents is characterized by their shared positive attitude towards accepting host country's food environment and rituals, while also practicing and enjoying certain products from home. The majority of informants who, by convention, can be placed into this group, reported a general satisfaction with Czech products and supermarkets as well as holding “pro-

assimilation” opinions and attitudes despite expressing some concern with the local food and missing certain products. Their general attitude and food behavior can be characterized as a conscious acceptance of the local food market thereby initiating a gastronomical exchange and then continuing to repeat it. For some people in this conventional group, Czech products and supermarkets have already become the norm and as Mikhail, 49 stated, “ If I want some marinated herring for example, I can get it in the Czech shops. It’s not different from a Russian one, it’s just cooked differently”.

Perhaps the best quote to summarize the readiness and satisfaction with the local food would be:

“ I can find anything I need in here.... especially after finding out about Sapa [Vietnamese Market in Prague] and getting my own car I can even get the rarest ingredients in here.” (Leonid, 26).

In terms of evaluating their place and integration success in the society, as well as their attitudes towards the host population, respondents shared the following:

“ If I adopted to living here ? I think yes. I don’t know if I’m a part of this society, but I think I am.” (Mikhail, 49).

“ I feel like a “beginning” part of this society. I try to understand people, their culture with whom I communicate in Czech....for now it’s mostly business partners slash friends – they are older than me, but I can always call them and ask any question like ‘Why it works here like that?’” and they explain it to me. I go like ‘yeah, there is the logic behind that’, so I try, I assimilate, I have this desire to assimilate.” (Leonid, 26).

“I feel comfortable here, I started to accept Czechs as individuals, and also nation-wise they have a “cool” culture, which I like. However, I can’t say that I.... I don’t have Czech friends here.....” (Irina, 25).

There was rarely a mention of feeling uncomfortable or a sharp feeling of otherness. All of the respondents of this subtype spoke Czech and have reported no feelings of discrimination or rejection from the host culture. Respondents reported feeling comfortable, relaxed and just right. One of them even mentioned:

“I’m “chased” by the feeling of an absolute, childish happiness here, because I left the country with domineering grey color, where people don’t smile and don’t say “Hello” or “Thank you”. (Leonid, 26).

It was also common that the respondents would add some negative remarks about their life and feelings while living in Russia and also when commenting on their integration process. Xeniya (47) mentioned “back in Russia, you were always in an alert state(feeling alert), no matter where you are – on a street, in public transport, even at home. It took me and my husband around 2 years to finally get rid of that feeling and ‘relax’.”

This is also the sub-population of the respondents that was the most open to the Czech population and also adopted certain traditions and recipes from the local cuisine. They reported celebrating Czech Christmas with Czech festive food (karp, bramborový salát recept), enjoying traditional Czech food and products as well as cooking Czech dishes from time to time. However, there were still reports of having no close Czech friends, just the colleagues and classmates.

As for their assimilation patterns, the vignette analysis indicates that most of the respondents grouped in this section have especially sympathized with the third vignette story (Inna). They saw the character as being open to her new food environment and could easily relate to her attitudes. Although, they assumed that the character would soon reconsider her attitudes towards Czech supermarkets, once she has more time, friends and learns Czech. These projective opinions suggest that the respondents themselves felt like succeeding in adapting to local food and supermarkets, so they felt empowered to give advice to the newcomers. From the responses of this sup-population of immigrants, it can be also sensed that integration has a certain importance for these people while navigating their identity. Perhaps, they chose to amend their ethnic identity in parallel to their food habits and rituals, in their attempt to assimilate and fit into the local culture. They don't regret losing their Russian perspective as for them relocation was a conscious and desired decision. So by changing their ethnic identity together with their material one (in terms of food practices) they could be well justified in their decision to immigrate.

3. Staying neutral - developing inclusive/cosmopolitan views and behavior.

This is the least widespread [in the research population] and expected category which includes informants who have presented a combination of rather indifferent yet still positive attitudes towards local food and culture while also ignoring their ethnical affiliation or identification with a certain ethnic group. One of the most frequent references from these respondents was “ I can live anywhere and eat anything” which presented a rather cosmopolitan mindset. Another distinguishable feature of the following sub-type of the respondents was the complete lack of importance they attached to finding Russian products, their quality and availability in the supermarkets.

“If there are no products or special ingredients available in the shop, we will just buy something else or eat what we have in the back of our fridge” (Galina, 42).

For these immigrants food does not act as a part of their ethnic identity. However, as one of them confided, it is “simply cultural code” which is installed into people.

In the discussion of Vignettes, respondents did not express any particular criticism towards any of the characters and they also were seen to provide non-judgmental explanations of the character’s behavior. Nevertheless, Alexander with his pro-adaptation story (Vignette #2) has received slightly more approval for his behavior. As one of the participants explained:

“ I can associate with him, because he is more opened. I like people who are striving to broaden their horizons, improving themselves and trying to break and change their old habits. People need to change their habits and ways, change, change and only change, because this is how you improve your life and destiny” (Galina, 52).

Another respondent said the following:

“ I guess Alexander will definitely succeed in his life... may be he is a man of a new formation, which can live anywhere” (Boris, 55).

Perhaps, what explains the case of the behavior of immigrants identified in the following commentary is a missing connection/link between ethnic identity and national cuisine. This is a result of refusing to see themselves in terms of the cultural mores and norms. It could be that informants have already (and previously) navigated their identity in such way that they did not see their culture or ethnicity as being a main component or part that defined them (focal part of their identity). That's why the change on one level of their identity (material one) did not provoke any response from the ethnic level of their identity, as they have been ignoring/denying this part of their self-definition. The following discussion section will come back to these suggestions and expand on them.

6.2 Discussion

Taking into consideration similar researches on the impact of food rituals and dietary changes on immigrants' identity reconfiguration and change, we can see that the findings of the present research are rather divergent from the previous studies. Possibly, the main reason for that lays in a controversial consumer and food history of Russia as well as value attached to the national cuisine there. This becomes more apparent when considering comparable researches on Italian, Arabic and Polish immigrants and their consumer behavior (Rabikowska 2007; Parasecoli, 2014; Vallianatos & Raine K, 2008). If in those research food was one of the focal points of recreating home and one's sense of ethnic identity, this was not quiet a case with Russian immigrant population in Prague. Another distinction was the mostly absent feeling of 'otherness' and absent negative connotation of 'them' when immigrants referred to the majority group in their discourses. Moreover, when the host group was mentioned there was no strong division between 'us' and "them" in immigrants' representations of their ethnic identity. From the assimilationists' perspective, Russian immigrants presented a rather strong desire to assimilate and understand a local culture as shown by the analysis. Furthermore, interview analysis suggested that food and consumer practices adopted by Russian immigrants in

Prague were either used to recreate socio-economic status and lifestyles acquired in the country of origin or used as a gate to understanding local culture and consequently, assimilate to the host culture. As a result, three typologies of ethnic reconfiguration within the dietary practices were created when contrasting dimensions of consumer behavior change and ethnic identity expressions. The nature and specifics of these typologies are based on the consumption history and traditions in Russia and former Soviet Union. Nevertheless, they also present point of reference for the further researches on immigrants' identity. As for the other interest of the research, which is inquiring of identity's structure, the results of the current study suggest a possibility of a rather independent nature of identity levels. Despite their undeniable connection of the chosen identity levels they appeared to exist in parallel and not in the intertwined state.

Drawing on general identity reconfiguration principles as presented by assimilation theory and social constructivism, we can say that Russian immigrants as well [as other immigrant groups] go through two crucial stages of identity negotiation when faced with a new culture – re-evaluating their home food culture and consumption practices and consequentially, forming a different picture of the national culture. As the current research showed there are various scenarios this process can be streaming in relation to adjustments in immigrants' ethnic identity. The following were the identified typologies of identity negotiations of Russian immigrants in Prague: conserving national identity, adjusting ethnic identity and forming transnational identity. As suggested by its title the first strategy revolved around food consumption behavior and was targeted at preserving immigrants' ethnic identity. However, as it was acknowledged later, what was seen as preserving ethnical identity in immigrants discourses was a masked desire to re-establish one's socio-economic status and lifestyles in the new country, which was still within immigrants' material identity. Nevertheless such food behavior can still be explained in terms of conserving one ethnic identity and ethnic identity meanings. Recreating shopping and culinary practices by purchasing habitual/known products of a finer quality and hence, creating a sense

of home and stability can serve as the way of preserving ethnical identity among immigrants (Rabikowska, 2010; Parasecoli, 2014). In case of Russian immigrants it was not the traditional food and products that were desired to be replicated, but their fine quality, variety and symbolic status that was assigned to them back in Russia.

Unlike the first form of identity reconfiguration, the second type of this process is characterized by immigrants' conscious desire to adjust their culinary practices and consumer behavior and accept local food scene. Seen as rather rare type of identity negotiation in similar researches (Rabikowska, 2010), it implies immigrants' interest and desire to adopt to local culture while being ready to adjust one's attachment to the home culture and cultural mores. As concluded from the analysis of interviews, immigrants who discursively demonstrated such kind of identity reconfiguration also expressed positive attitude towards a host population as well as a desire to assimilate. Possibly, a desire to assimilate together with acceptance of the new culture implies subsequent formation of a negotiated ethnic identity. Seeing food consumption and shopping as inevitable components of daily life that includes physical, emotional, and cognitive interaction with the surrounding 'otherness', conscious desire to amend ones habits may represents change on the ethnic identity level as well. In agreement with assimilation theory, a decreasing attachment to one's ethnic group and culture through assimilating to a different cultural informant would forge the further reconsiderations of one's ethnic identity. Thus, by accepting, discovering and imitating new foreign dietary practices immigrants create a reference point for the subsequent comparison of host and home cultures with the possible amendment of their ethnic identity to fit into a new situation better.

The last and the most compelling type of identity reconfiguration that derived from the analysis revolved around constructing a transnational identity in immigrants. Lack of importance and meanings attached to the food, shops and traditions in parallel with a complete satisfaction with the host culture and its members marks this group of respondents as cosmopolitans. For these immigrants food and

dietary practices did not serve as cultural signifiers nor carried symbolic meanings in them. Cooking and eating was a matter of survival and/or pleasure, while the respondents also presented their vision of consumption in terms of cultural code and collective memory, which ‘programmed’ them to like certain products and dishes while talking about their food and consumer behavior. Such an awareness together with presented tolerance towards anything foreign was a primary reasons for assigning transnational identity to these respondents. Perhaps, absence of the old food traditions and culinary practices in Russia may, to some extent, explain the specifics of Russian consumption and some immigrants’ tendency to develop cosmopolitan views on food. Perhaps, same as Rabikowska’s (2010) dominating types of immigrants’ attitudes, the identified typologies can as well overlap or undergo inversion in certain environments and socio- personal situations. Furthermore, the choice of the certain identity reconfiguration model in immigrants can as well depend on the social determinants as gender, age, education, period since relocation and the stage of assimilation.

Another observation that distinguished present research’s finding was a diminished tendency of the respondents to think in clear-cut categories “us” and “them” as well as rarely reported feeling of ‘otherness’ in their discourses. Perhaps Russian multicultural background together with predominant tendency to seclude from the dominant ethnic group can account for this trend. Furthermore, Czech food and products were seen as satisfactory, acceptable and for some respondents, even better than those in Russia what also suggest acceptance of the local food scene and behavior, which is rare in the comparable researchers (Rabikowska, 2010; Parasecoli, 2014). Perhaps, an arguable closeness of culinary practices and traditions of Czech and Russian cuisines as well as shared historical contexts can as well account for this phenomenon.

One of the ways to understand the presented results and typologies to look at the complex and controversial history of Russian national cuisine which throughout years (especially during communist time) have accumulated various culinary traditions and rituals of other ethnicities and cultures

(Kapkan, 2013). This has subsequently created what *Caldwell (2002)* called it “*transnational commodity market*.” Russian national cuisine reflected history as well as the historical distinction between ‘folk’ food and ‘white collar’ food, which was purposively erased during communistic rule. Another point of reference is the difference and interchangeability between traditional and national cuisines in Russia, together with the sequentially constructed ‘soviet’ cuisine in form of “culinary international”(Kapkan, 2013). As previously mentioned, soviet citizens were not active consumers due to the poor participations in the consumption process (Caldwell, 2002), which have also influenced diminishing an importance of food and national cuisine as a signifier of culture.

Nevertheless, gradual entry of the foreign products and commodities at the beginning of the 90s has once again changed the structure of the national cuisine. Taking into consideration historical and political aspects of Russia, we can say that the formation of the cuisine ‘construct’ (both national and traditional) was largely a result of multi-ethnic composition/structure of the state (Kapkan, 2013). Such a multi-ethnic cuisine ‘construct’ was once again diluted with the imported western foods and commodities. Thus Russian immigrants’ food and consumer practices have a tendency to reproduce the general ‘bidirectionality’ of the national cuisine in Russia which reflects both traditional cuisine and food’s actuality in terms of the modern culture (Kapkan, 2013).

When transferring this knowledge on the research results, we can surmise that in case of the immigrants falling under first typology, food’s actuality and symbolic meaning assigned to it was the primary meaning assigned to it which was later recreated in the new country. Unable to fit their expectations and standards, local food was believed to be of a worse quality which could have possible impact an overall perception of the culture and reluctance to assimilate and thus, reconfigure their ethnic identity. Kapkan’s (2013) idea of bidirectionality of Russian national cuisine also fits the second typology. Immigrants under this category did as well valued the actuality of Czech food and supermarkets in terms of the modern culture, while also acknowledging having certain favorite

products in Russia. Nevertheless, in their discourse immigrants falling under this group have also demonstrated a lack of reliance on national food practices in reconstructing one's ethnic identity or preserving it in the Russian immigrants'. Increasing globalization is another factors accounting for an absence of 'exclusive ethnic consumption' in our sample.

Research findings and their interpretations bring us to the primary research question, which deals with an interplay of the identity levels on the example of immigrant. The observed patterns of consumption and assimilation and subsequently created typologies suggest that while there is an impact of food practices on ethnic identity reconfiguration (as demonstrated by first and second typology), their cause and effect relations are questionable. It appears that identity levels exist in parallel, but they are not intertwined or dependent on each other. Thus a change on the one level of identity does not necessarily causes a change on the other and vice versa. In case of Russian immigrants identity it can be said that relocation as a stimulus affects all identity levels simultaneously and even though there is still a communication and negotiation between identity levels (collective and material) there are no traceable cause-effect relations. This assumption is also supported by the appearance of the third typology in which the connection between material and ethnic identity levels was virtually absent. Possibly, there is no hierarchy within identity's level organization – levels act as the components of an overall structure. They overlap, but don't affect one another.

Perhaps the ambiguity of the results cant also be explained by the choice of a sample. Coming from a culture with controversial consumer history and a low fixation on the national cuisine, Russian immigrants may not be the best choice for the current research's purposes. However, as the world is becoming increasingly globalize what also produces cultural exchange which matches general attitudes of the chosen sample it can also be seen as a reasonable choice of sample. Further research limitations will be discussed in the details in the coming chapter.

7. LIMITATIONS AND SUGGESTIONS FOR FURTHER STUDIES

As the results of the analysis showed rather ambiguous findings, it's important to consider limitations to this study, which can clear up the picture. Three main limitations were identified as crucial when assessing findings of the current research, they are: research sample and its choice, certain methodological omissions and theoretical framework.

The first and most important limitation is the research sample. Not just an insufficient sample size, but also certain characteristics of the sample create a barrier for accepting research results and conclusions. Taken that the Russian population in the Czech Republic is the 3rd largest minority group, 12 respondents in the research sample is not sufficient for covering the entire spectrum/range of variations and characteristics within the original population. Furthermore, even though, the majority of interviewees were of a higher socio-economic class, which meets the profile of the general population, inclusion of other socio-economic classes as well as an unemployed fraction of respondents would benefit the overall representativeness of the population. Next, including a larger number of female respondents would improve the quality of the research sample, as the majority of Russian immigrants living in the Czech Republic are female (Czech Statistical Office, 2015 ; Vavrečková. & Dobiášová, 2013).

Another issue associated with the research sample is the choice of Russian immigrants in particular. Sharing some parts of the history as well as certain similarities in both national cuisines and shopping patterns with the host culture, the Russian immigrant population in the Czech Republic specifically presents certain shortcomings as a research sample. Controversial history consumption, ever-changing composition and content of the national cuisine together with the fading importance of the national cuisine for the population in Russia (Kapkan, 2013) entail certain pitfalls when studying ethnic and material identities of immigrants. Being an important component of both levels of identity, food and

dietary practices are hard to assess and use as a variable once they are of the diminishing importance in the culture of the chosen population. Perhaps, the history of consumption and general importance of national cuisine in the culture should be assessed prior to choosing the research sample. In terms of research of Russian immigrants in the Czech Republic, immigrants' general gastronomical culture and traditions bore crucial importance when identity reconfiguration was considered. Thus, for further research with similar focus, ethnic minorities and immigrants with more pronounced national cuisine and food traditions are advised to be considered.

There are also certain methodological omissions, which can also account for the general validity of research findings. First of all, an ancestral descent of the interviewer poses certain threats to the obtained data. Given that the interview was carried out in Russian with the interviewer who appeared Russian to the interviewees, a situation could have been created where respondents felt more comfortable to share the opinions they would not otherwise share with perceived Czech interviewer. Nevertheless, perception of the interviewer as "one of their kind" by the informants also allowed for getting more information from the interviewees as well as presumably more direct responses. This comment applies to both the interviews and vignettes. Current research invites further discourse of such kind, and to include interviewers who would belong to both the studied minority group as well as the host country to control for the possible response biases.

Putting methodology aside, what should also be considered as a limitation to the current study is the choice of theoretical framework. Drawing mostly on social constructivist and assimilation theories, the current study could have omitted important implications that could be brought by other identity theories. Perhaps, creating a more inclusive theoretical framework as well as consulting the latest studies on identity reconfiguration will help to improve the generalizability and application of the findings. Furthermore, when another aim of the research, which is studying identity's structure and

especially interplay of its levels, is taken into account, a broader theoretical framework would also allow deeper investigation of that matter and testing of hypotheses.

As for the recommendations for further research in the field, the current research observes the greatest improvement in combining different research methods in one study to allow more in-depth examination of the identity change itself. Consulting Monrad's (2013) article "On a scale of one to five, who are you? Mixed methods in identity research", on identity research methods, is advised. Possibly, more attention should be given to assessing ethnic identity change; namely what can be achieved by including more vignette scenarios of ethnic expressions and immigrants' consumer behavior. Furthermore, when identity reconfiguration is taken into account in immigrants and Russian immigrants in particular, other levels of identity should also be consulted to introduce the pathways for further discussion and investigation.

8. CONCLUSION

As a result of globalization, when human mobility has never been greater, many traditional social and cultural phenomena are increasingly coming under closer scrutiny. The concept of identity in past centuries was largely based on a socially assigned construct; this is no longer the case in today's society. One of the current phenomena's that has captured both the academic world and general public's attention with unprecedented interest is the concept of identity.

References to identity and identity's change become especially relevant when the increase in human mobility is taken into consideration. As a result, new identity studies and revisions of identity theories are emerging at high speeds. However, the most controversial part of identity research and theory revolves around identity structure and change. As a result of the lack of theoretical agreement and common language within the social and psychological academic fields, the nature and processes within the identity structure remain poorly studied and have therefore called for further investigation.

The concept of identity structure is rather abstract, in so far that what has been understood and studied with reference to the identity has been its development, forms, levels, expressions, fluidity and characteristics.

However, the academic discourse on the identity structure's architecture and the processes that form it is still rather limited. The present research took the afore-mentioned as a point of reference in its attempts to build clarity around these processes and relations that in turn form the identity structure. Drawing on the premise that identity consists of the multiple forms and levels (Schwartz, Luyckx & Vignoles, 2011), the current research placed its focus on investigating the relationships occurring between identity levels, as well as the nature of such relationships. Focusing on the collective and material levels of identity, the present research hopes to learn more about the general structure of the identity by observing the interplay of these particular identity levels.

Moving from the abstract terms to the more practical ones, the chosen levels of identity were downgraded to two operational forms which were ethnic (collective level of identity) and consumer (material level of identity) identities. In order to analyze their interplay a certain additional factor causing possible identity change had to be present. Relocation to a new country was seen as a perfect example of the external factor that would impact the identity's structure and cause it to forge a new identity. Thus, the current study saw a perfect opportunity to realize its academic interest by studying immigrant populations and the processes of identity's reconfiguration brought about by their relocation to another country.

Assimilationist and social constructivist theories were chosen to form a framework for predicting immigrants' forging a change in their ethnic identity, in response to a new consumer and food environment. The imagined scenarios of identity reconfiguration in immigrants included: resisting the local food environment in an attempt to conserve one's ethnic identity and increased assimilation into the local food scene as a consequence of a weakening attachment to one's ethnic group. To test these

predictions, the qualitative research which utilized semi-structured interviews and vignettes was designed to open up the discussion on the immigrants' consumer experiences. At the same time, these interviews were also designed to elicit immigrants' reactions towards one's ethnic identity's forging, assimilation and ethnic attachment. The Russian immigrant population in the Czech Republic, and specifically in Prague, was chosen to serve as a sample group. Given the size of the community, average length of stay by its members and researcher's opportunities in locating the participants, Russian immigrants were seen as an appropriate sample for the current research.

In the course of the data collection and interview analysis, some general trends in immigrants' reactions to the new consumer and food environment have been observed. First of all, there were generally positive attitudes towards the host population, the respondents had an active desire to assimilate, understand the culture and become a part of the dominant group. In their discourses, immigrants rarely used "us" and "them" to point on the differences between their own and host culture. As expected, when using food behavior as a signifier of the ethnic identity reconsideration, the immigrants frequently compared their domestic and host country's consumption practices and dietary habits. Based on the main themes repeated in the immigrants' comments on their food practices in Prague, three main identity reconfiguration classifications (later referred to as 'typologies') were constructed. These typologies were also classified according to the salience of ethnic identity reconfiguration in the immigrants. These being the following: *resisting local food environment*, *adopting local food environment* and *staying neutral to local food environment*. The degree of ethnic identity forging and assimilation as presented by these typologies showed that there are various forces behind ethnic identity configurations as well as the various scenarios of this process. For an instance, the motive behind ethnic identity conservation as presented by the immigrants from the first typology was not only preserving one's ethnic identity, but also seemed to be aimed at replicating one's socio-economic status and economic capital through their consumption practices. The second typology was seen to be comprised of the majority of immigrants whom were willingly adapting their consumer and

dietary practices to the local food scene. By conducting themselves in this manner this also seemed to represent a decreasing attachment to one's ethnic group (signalized by rare visits to home country, low degree of homesickness and low consumption and taste for Russian cuisine). The third and the most ambivalent typology included the smallest proportion of the respondents. These respondents shared rather indifferent comments towards their assimilation behavior as well as their cooking preferences in their commentaries. Their reaction to both immigration and adapting to the local food scene was rather neutral as they did not see particular barriers or pitfalls in any of these occasions. Food was a matter of survival and taste, whereas life abroad living amongst different cultures was a normal and even natural state of affairs for these respondents.

Findings from the research conducted appear to be more divergent than expected from the other comparable immigrants' studies; this could be explained by the research's limitations. The choice of the sample itself was rather controversial because of the complex history and nature of Russian consumption and national cuisine. Not being overly attached to their national cuisine due to its ever-changing nature, Russian citizens have a predisposition to adjust and assimilate to other cuisines and dietary practices easily; this putting the current research's findings under debate. Nevertheless, in times of late capitalism and the growing globalization culture which encompasses modern societies, the choice of the population, is felt to be well justified.

Drawing on the presented results, the current research believes that there is a rather faint mutual connection between the identity levels. As one may infer, the identity's levels of namely ethnic and material identities, when experiencing a forced change appear to react separately and in parallel. This also suggests the neighborly kind of co-existence of the identity levels within its general structure and denies an occasion of identity levels' hierarchical organization.

Be that as it may, current research findings and limitations calls for researchers in these fields to further investigate both the architecture of the identity structure as well as the general processes of

ethnic reconfiguration in immigrants. Studies of the immigrants' identity change and assimilation may also want to consider using less diverse cultures than was suggested by the discovered typologies of the present study.

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10. Appendix.

Table 32.1 The subject matter of identity development research, based on underlying assumptions

	Individual/subjective focus		Social/interactional focus	
	Normative	Non-normative	Normative	Non-normative
(Developmental) Processes leading to ...	Variations in psychosocial resolutions leading to integration, opportunity, fulfillment	Alternative psychosocial resolutions or barriers to normative resolutions	Contexts conducive to various adaptive identity configurations and social integrations	Contexts hindering normative resolutions, requiring alternative resolutions
(Developmental) Experiences	Events leading to a personal sense	Events producing or reinforcing a	Events producing a shared sense	Events producing or reinforcing a

Table 1. Cote's Table of the identity development research

	Alphabetic ally Assigned Names	Age	Education	Length of Stay in the CR	Type of Residence	Employment Status
1	Andrej	29	Master Degree (in Russia)	1 year	Long-Term Residence	Employed in the international company outside CR
2	Boris	55	Master Degree (in Russia)	3 years	Long –term residency, Russian and Norwegian passports	Employed in Russia, works long-distantly
3	Darja	28	Master Degree (earned in the CR)	10 years	Permanent Residency	Employed in the international company in the CR
4	Eugenia	29	Master Degree (earned in the CR)	7 years	Permanent Residency	Employed in the international company outside CR/ currently in the maternity leave
5	Feodor	35	Master Degree (Earned in the USA)	14 years	Russian and Czech passports	Employed in the international company in the CR
6	Galina	44	Bachelor earned in Russia	7 years	Permanent Residency	Self-employed
7	Mikhail	49	Doctor title earned in Russia	19 years	Permanent Residency	Self-employed
8	Irina	25	Bachelor Degree (getting her Master) in the CR	9 years	Long-term Residency	Student, unemployed
9	Nicolay	24	Bachelor Degree in the CR	9 years	Permanent Residency	Student, unemployed
10	Xeniya	47	Master Degree (earned in Russia)	10 years	Permanent Residency	Self-employed in family agency
11	Leonid	26	Bachelor Degree earned in the CR	10 years	Long-term Residency	Self-employed in his own bar

12	Olga	24	Bachelor Degree earned in the CR	10 years	Long-term Residency	Part-time employed in the international company in the CR
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Table 2. Characteristics of the research sample.

Interview Questions:

Part 1:

- 1) Please describe the moment in your life when you moved to the Czech Republic?
- 2) How would you characterize your stay here from the moment of your arrival? Could you isolate a couple of key moments since your arrival? Could you choose a few instances that precisely reflect or characterize living in the Czech Republic as an immigrant for you?
- 3) Have you adapted to living in the Czech Republic?
- 4) Do you miss home? If yes, how often do you experience homesickness?
 - a) What do you miss the most?
 - b) What do you like about your new country of living; what drastically separates it from Russia?
- 5) How often do you return home?

Thank you.

Part 2:

1) Do you remember your last visit to the grocery store, here in the Czech Republic? Could you describe what you have bought and why? What were you planning to cook/prepare? (If the respondent does not remember: “can you remember the previous meal, or any prior?”). Have you encountered any difficulties when searching/buying specific nutritional products/ingredients?

(If yes): Can you remember what served as reasons for difficulties in searching/buying specific nutritional products/ingredients, and whether these events produced certain feelings/emotions?

2) Has the journey to the grocery store in the Czech Republic ever left you disappointed? If yes, what specifically happened during these events?

3) Are there products, which are especially difficult to search/buy? Could you kindly name and describe the product and the process of searching/buying that product?

4) The last time when you felt hungry, have you thought about a specific meal, which you would have liked to consume?

5) Have you ever required visiting more than one store to complete your grocery shopping for a week because a specific nutritional product/ingredient was missing/difficult to find? What did you feel in this situation?

Thank you.

Part 3:

1) Taking your background and experiences into account, how would you assess the abundance, diversity and quality of nutritional products/ingredients in the Czech Republic?

2) Specifically as a citizen of (City Name), are you satisfied with the assortment of nutritional products/ingredients?

3) Are there specific nutritional products/ingredients missing on the Czech market? If yes, which ones and please provide a reason.

4) Have you found any favourite nutritional products/ingredients and meals here?

Thank you.

Vignettes.

Vignette # 1:

Mr. Anton Ivanovich is a middle aged immigrant from Russian Federation who have recently moved to the Czech Republic from a provincial Russian city with his family. Back in Russia he was not really satisfied with economic situation and quality of life and searched for the opportunity to move to a different country. Despite Mr. Anton's relocation to a new country and starting his business there, he still considers himself Russian and seeks mainly Russian- speaking friends with whom he enjoys spending time as well as cooking and sharing national Russian dishes. This is not an easy task as the local food market does not offer certain products which are necessary to cook the food Anton Ivanovitch and his family are used to cook and eat. That's why Anton Ivanovitch is very often ordering the food from the online shops and visits local Russian restaurants in the city in the city even if it is sometimes costly and he needs to economize elsewhere. In fact, he himself would like to open a small restaurant to cook/sell traditional Russian specialities.



Questions:

1. Why do you think Anton Ivanovich treasures his his national food/cuisine so much? Can you think of any reason(s) to explain that?
2. Do you think he also likes the local cuisine?
 - a) If Yes, why do you think so?
 - b) If No, please explain your answer?
2. Would Anton Ivanovich be more inclined to adopt to new food cuisine if he has a weaker affiliation to his country/political order?
3. What would be Anton Ivanovich's food behaviour if he spent most of his time with the locals/other immigrants of different nationalities?
4. How Russian/European do you think Anton Ivanovich feels after living abroad (year/5 years/10 years)?

Variations:

1. What would be Mr Ivanov reaction to a new cuisine and food behaviour if he is not married/ had no children?
2. How Mr Ivanov's social status/education would impact his food assimilation behaviour?
3. What would be the outcome if Mr Ivanov would be a Missis?

Vignette # 2:

Alexander is a young professional from Volgograd who has recently moved to Prague after finishing university in Russia. Alexander is aspired to get a second degree and find a job in the Czech Republic and is opened to everything this country has to offer. Alexander likes local beer and enjoys going for a beer or two with his classmates. While drinking a beer and enjoying traditional food served with a beer,

Alexander likes to talk to his new acquaintances about their and his own culture. Alexander soon finds himself enjoying Czech cuisine and thanks to its affordability finds himself eating it almost every day. Nevertheless he consider himself a Russian patriot and is a passionate fan of Russian football and ice hockey teams.



Questions:

1. Why do you think it was easy for Alexander to like a local cuisine and start eating it on a daily basis?
2. Do you think it was important to Alexander to try and like the local food?
3. Do you think he misses Russian traditional cuisine and thinks it's the tastiest/ best food in the world?
4. Do you think that Alexander cooks/ buys himself something of a traditional cuisine from time to time? Or brings his local food when travels back home?
5. Do you think one can be a patriot without keeping national/traditional food related practices?

Variations:

1. What do you think would happen in Alexander was older and came to the Czech Republic to work? Would he still be opened to a new culture this much?

Vignette # 3:

Inna is a young woman who moved to Prague from Saint-Petersburg with her husband and their child after her husband was offered a job in Prague. Inna does not have either local or Russian-speaking friends yet and spends most of her time home taking care of their child and house. Back in Russian Inna did not have strong gastronomic preferences and felt adventurous discovering new tastes in the newly opened cafes and restaurants. Inna is satisfied the offer of food in the local supermarkets, but also have certain complaints regarding the food quality and selection. She has been especially unsatisfied with the selection and quality of the vegetables sold in the supermarkets. As a result she started shopping more at the French/Italian/Greek family shops in the city centre to buy more quality food and groceries. Unfortunately, Inna had food poisoning recently after shopping at at the local shop(as she supposes it). Since that accident, Inna has tried to minimise shopping there and shop more at the “expats” shops which she believes to be better.



Questions:

1. Do you think Inna will continue/renew shopping at the local stores after this incidence? How soon do you think this will happen?
2. Do you think Inna would be as critical about this situation if she was not an immigrant?
3. Do you think there are distinguishable differences between products' quality/variety in Prague and Inna's home city?

Variations:

1. Do you think Inna would reconsider her decision to avoid shopping at the local supermarkets should she have more friends (especially local acquaintances here).
2. If Inna was shopping for herself only (not just for the family), how do you think her experience/attitudes would vary?