

Food and Maintaining Identity for Migrants: Sierra Leone Migrants in Durban

Maheshvari Naidu¹ and Nokwanda Nzuza²

School of Social Sciences, University of Kwa-Zulu Natal, South Africa

E-mail: ¹<naiduu@ukzn.ac.za>, ²<yoliswanzuza@gmail.com>

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ABSTRACT Food can be considered a vital and dynamic part of people's 'culture' and identity, as people often identify and associate themselves with the particular foods they eat. This paper explores the importance of traditional or 'home food' in maintaining a sense of 'self', and an articulation of a particular identity for Sierra Leoneans. Away from a nutritionist paradigm and the subsistence discourse (around food) the study probes the role of 'home food'¹ as a vital resource and an identity marker. Findings reveal that for migrants, 'home food' is able to emotionally transport migrants back to the sending country. It also shows that, in an attempt to maintain their identity, migrants sometimes form (im)permeable boundaries that appear to aid in preserving and further enacting their 'cultures'.