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In-Work Poverty in the UK: The Stories of Working Women Using Food Banks

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In-Work Poverty in the UK: The Stories of Working Women Using Food Banks

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ABSTRACT

The aim of this thesis is to give voice to women who, despite being active in the labour market, continued to depend on charitable provisions from a food bank in Britain. Theoretically the thesis addresses this phenomenon as a matter of social injustice, and it does so by exposing and exploring the experiences of women who despite employment were still driven to need charity from a food bank. The thesis therefore engages with a gendered experience of in-work poverty and presents various lessons learning relating to social injustice in Britain. I adopt a feminist ethnographic study in two independent food banks, with the methodology comprising of both participant observation and in-depth interviews across multiple group sets. The feminist underpinning signals an innovative methodological advance in the field. The data collection was immersive to meet the objectives of the study, and intense due to the themes explored. I show how food bank usage has become a necessity for some women grappling with the precarious labour market and the in-work benefit system. This experience is degrading for women who are also workers, and this is deepened for those who are single mothers. Nevertheless, I demonstrate the honourable role of the food bank and its volunteers in a support that goes beyond the sole provision of food. The thesis explores both challenges and developments in accessing vulnerable populations, additional to the value of reflexivity in ethnography carried out in settings where the researcher and the researched are demographically diverse.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

DWP	Department for Work and Pensions
EHRC	Equality and Human Rights Commission
FEBA	European Food Banks Federation
GVA	Gross Value Added
IFAN	The Independent Food Aid Network
IFS	Institute of Fiscal Studies
IWP	In-Work Poverty
JRF	Joseph Rowntree Foundation
OBR	Office for Budget Responsibility
ONS	Office for National Statistics
SMCC	Social Mobility and Child Commission
TUC	Trades Union Congress
WRC	Woman's Research Centre

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CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

Food banks were a relatively unknown entity in Britain a decade or so ago, but in recent years the UK has witnessed a surge in their presence in high streets and amongst local communities. They now appear in church annexes, council buildings, community spaces, and even shopping centres across the country. Shockingly, as of 2019, food banks outnumbered the total number of McDonald's and Burger King outlets in the UK (Peat, 2019). Food banks face increasing pressure not only from rising demand but also from a perplexed nation asking, in one of the richest countries in the world – *why do we need food banks?* I started volunteering at a food bank in November 2017 and I soon realised that for working-class women the unfortunate answer to this question was complexly interwoven with the changing labour market. I had heard about nurses using food banks in London (Tiplady, 2017), but by the end of that year I had met many other women in low wage or unstable employment for example teaching assistants, social workers, hairdressers, cleaners, and flight attendants - all having been referred to a food bank in times of financial crisis. For the majority, the experience of using a food bank was an unpleasant one to say the least. Especially for those working, it was an act of desperation and a last resort.

The aim of my thesis is to gain a better understanding of the experiences of working women relying on food banks, and therefore to explore the gendered experience of in-work poverty (IWP). Taking a feminist perspective, I investigate which factors have contributed to these women needing a food bank through considering their situation of employment and other contextual factors. Parallel to this I explore UK food banks in more depth and the role that they play in supporting individuals in crisis. In doing all this the thesis provides a platform for the working women to make their own stories and struggles heard, often for the very first time.

IWP - working households experiencing poverty - is at an all-time high in Britain. To put this into context, of those living in poverty 70% of these people come from working households (Judge & Slaughter, 2020). Since cuts were made to government spending in 2010, day to day life in Britain has changed. This has been the most significant for households of lower socio-economic backgrounds. Those in the lower income percentiles have experienced disproportionate decreases in household income (Hood & Waters, 2017). These can be connected to various factors, such as the loss of public services, changes to the benefit system, and indeed a changing labour market where, especially in the low-wage sector, more and more of the work available is precarious, temporary, or unstable (Sharp, 2019).

The impacts of austerity have been controversially connected to the growing queues for food banks. The reality remains that in an environment where work can no longer provide stability, security, or guaranteed hours, food banks have had to adapt to now cater for working users to keep them from hunger. Using a food bank was not the act of 'scrounging' that some mainstream media sources depicted it as. Although it was a safety net, a food bank visit was extremely upsetting and unsettling (Garthwaite, 2016). Despite the rising numbers of those affected by IWP whilst also using food banks, the links between the two and the ways that they interrelate are under-researched. This gap in knowledge and silence within the discourse, is an injustice to the women who despite work, still need to use a food bank. Ignorance of the topic also fails to commend the honourable work of the food banks and the volunteers who extend empathy and compassion to some of the most vulnerable members of society.

Bridging the gap between IWP for women and food bank usage, I engage in the research at the location central to the themes - the food bank itself. Conducting an ethnographic study I worked as a volunteer at two UK food banks, observing and conversing with those who I met. Much like the themes and realities that I uncovered, researching IWP and food bank usage in this way was emotional, unpredictable, and exasperating. Throughout this intimate and intense research strategy I observed, empathised with, and at times comforted women facing one of the most degrading consequences of IWP - collecting from a food bank. I was also present during times of relief, hope, and solidarity.

I sought to capture the spectrum of experience beyond statistics and numbers and give women the opportunity to share stories and struggles in their own voice and manner. I was inspired by powerful and moving research into contemporary societal injustices carried out using qualitative techniques. These included: Cheetham et al. (2018)'s work on the impact of welfare reform; Jones et al. (2019)'s study into the effectiveness of in-work conditionality; and Heyes et al. (2018)'s exploration of uncertain work. In addition to the significant value of building on qualitative research in the field, the contributions of this research are threefold. Firstly, food banks (independent food banks in particular) are largely under-researched in terms of learning about the contextual factors that drive people to need to claim a food parcel in the first place. Secondly there has been no research linking IWP and food bank usage and exploring how the two phenomena are interrelated. Finally, through researching women who were both working and using a food bank, I conduct the first study using feminist methods to investigate food bank usage and the first to centre on women. This will be introduced in more detail in the section that follows.

Feminism and Food Banks

This research places women at the centre-stage of my study, those who were both working and using a food bank, adopting feminist methods to guide the research. My reasons for this go beyond the primary implication that feminist methods are an effective way to study women. Adopting a feminist method into studying food banks and food bank usage introduces an innovative theoretical perspective in the field of both food banks and IWP. The feminist methods that I use accommodate a reframing of the way that the themes are studied. This includes the individual experiences of the women involved with the research, perspectives and implications relating to the food bank as an organisation, and the way that research is conducted amongst hard-to-reach or vulnerable populations, those claiming from a food bank for example. The food bank is a crucial location for research, considering the dearth of literature about people using and even those running the food banks. A feminist method contributes to wider feminist and gender specific knowledge whilst also efficiently allowing the research to shine a light on two of the most pressing issues faced by women in austerity Britain - namely the hardships of both IWP and food bank usage.

I focus on women, recognising their historical struggle of marginalisation in employment and the workplace, particularly in low-wage work. Since 2010, it has been recognised that women experience a particular vulnerability to IWP, predominantly owing to common patterns of 'women's work' which is largely low wage and precarious (Tinson et al., 2016). Women face barriers to meaningful work when simultaneously managing caring responsibilities (Ben-Galim & Thompson, 2013). This is perpetuated when these women face IWP and must use a food bank. Whilst I accessed thorough accounts of women and their experience of precarious work such as Judge & Owens (2006), although this was relevant to the themes of my research what I continued to notice was the lack of stories and voices of women experiencing IWP. This would only be achievable through qualitative methods. The visibility of women using food banks was limited and caged within figures, statistics, and graphs. A key priority of my research was to change this, for the value of various beneficiaries including: the academic community; food banks; and activist networks.

Ethnography has often been favoured by feminist researchers for the way it allows a natural, intimate, and multi-sensory approach to research (Gill & Johnson, 2010). As both a volunteer and a researcher I carried out observations and interviews, all within the food bank. Welcomed as a member of the team, I also attended meetings and fund raisers, and had the chance to network with other food banks and partner organisations. I wanted my findings to be authentic and powerful, to give justice to the themes and the women I studied. I found that to do this, a feminist underpinning contributed to the

fluidity, adaptability, and resilience I embraced in reaction to the development of the ethnography. For example, I considered and adapted to the vulnerability not only of the women I met, but also of myself as a researcher. The feminist underpinnings of the research continuously allowed me to communicate emotion throughout the research, which develop a new way of disseminating knowledge about food banks, IWP, and women. This is progressive and necessary when facing such emotive phenomena - whereby I found that 'traditional' academic styles did not portray the real sense of injustice amongst the emergent themes. An approach to show the vulnerabilities of *everyone* involved was important in exposing the bleak reality of the experience of food bank usage for women, for those who may have never considered what it is truly like.

The Thesis: Aims and Arguments

In seeking to interweave the above factors, the wider motive and aim of my research is to raise awareness and reveal hidden injustices and inequalities faced by women using a food bank due to IWP. This is not only to extend academic understanding and knowledge of the discussed themes, but also to contribute to practical implications. One example of this could be implementing organisational strategies and developments within the food banks themselves to be more effective and proactive in helping vulnerable populations. To achieve these aims, the objectives of the research were as follows:

1. To explore the experiences of women visiting a food bank alongside the role of the food bank within this;
2. To consider the gendered experience of in-work poverty;
3. To examine the lessons learnt relating to social injustices in Britain in regards with working women visiting food banks.

In terms of the most prominent contributions made to the literature relating to the explored themes, first the food bank and the volunteers demonstrated that their support is more comprehensive and holistic than the mere provision of food. This includes emotional support; signposting to other support services; and even the in-house provision of advice relevant to their situation. This however was not without its deeper complexities and burdens on the food bank volunteers themselves. Regardless of the compassion and empathy of the food bank volunteers, my findings reveal that working women experience a unique marginalisation and guilt when claiming charity from within employment. Amongst the women working and using a food bank, the majority were single mothers. This had a unique impact on their experiences and circumstances. Reasons for a high proportion of single mothers falling within my research demographic included the type of work that was available for

them whilst being able to accommodate childcare; additional expenses from being a single parent; and the pressures of school holidays. My research explores the relationship between IWP and precarious work, finding that help from the food bank was crucial for those who found themselves without shifts or between contracts without a safety net. This was not unlike in-work welfare, which in the same way as precarious work was found to leave the women with gaps with no income and no food, at which point a parcel from the food bank was necessary.

With these findings considered, I direct this thesis at three main groups, these being: the academic community; food bank volunteers and trustees; and activist groups and networks. For the academic community, this thesis expands knowledge across various themes including food banks, IWP, gender, and methodologies in accessing hard-to-reach and vulnerable populations. For food banks and the people who both work there and manage the operations, this thesis provides practical contributions not only in how to maintain that the support provided to working users is constructive and compassionate but also that it avoids stigmatising users in any way possible. For activist networks and groups, for example amongst women and socio-economically deprived groups, the findings reveal newly surfaced injustices. In looking towards a future where food bank use declines rather than increases, it is vital to acknowledge and address these injustices.

Overview of the Structure

The thesis begins with *Chapter One* which introduces and conceptualises the UK labour market, inclusive of recent changes and impacts but also of emerging divisions and tensions. The chapter will also introduce the state of the labour market for women which will be a running theme throughout the thesis.

A more in-depth exploration of both in-work poverty and in-work welfare will be presented in *Chapter Two*. The chapter will engage with scholarly debate around the themes and the ways that they interconnect with each other, inclusive of an overview of studies into Universal Credit and the growing literature and critique that surrounds it.

Continuing to engage with the pressing themes of the thesis, *Chapter Three* will introduce the recently surfaced debates about the precarious labour market in the UK. Within this I will explore the challenges and concerns that purvey discussion around insecure work. The chapter also discusses the location of the research, the food bank. I will contextualise the food bank as a site of charity,

introducing the impact and experience of those claiming from a food bank, but also some of the more intellectual debates that surround its existence and growth in Britain.

Bringing the themes together in a conceptual framework, *Chapter Four* will introduce a discussion of social justice, and the way that the work of Nancy Fraser will support the thesis to present and understand the themes, but also to draw new conclusions and insight.

The methodology chapter is divided into two parts. *Chapter Five* introduces feminist theory as a key element to my study given the focus (women and the specific experience of women within the researched phenomenon). *Chapter Six* focuses on the design of the research and how the chosen approach addresses the objectives of the study. This includes sampling, gaining access, how the data was collected, and other vital considerations such as the ethics and reflexivity.

The first findings chapter critically introduces the research location - independent food banks in the UK. *Chapter Seven* explores undocumented intricacies and practicalities of a working food bank and how they intertwine with the lives of its users and in particularly those facing IWP. The chapter provides unique insight into independent food banks in the UK.

Chapter Eight moves the focus on to the individuals of whom the research investigates - women using the food bank whilst experiencing IWP. A unique gendered experience of IWP is presented through the specific experiences of the women claiming from a food bank, which is inclusive of the impact of needing charity and living off a food bank's provisions, as well as the institutional factors at play.

The final findings chapter is one that given my own research journey and my experience of exploring the highly emotional and difficult themes, felt important to include. In *Chapter Nine* I share both the emotions that I feel as a researcher as well as how I deal with the emotions of others that I come across during the ethnography. I critically evaluate how emotions and challenges can be framed to contribute to progressive, innovative, and more authentic methodologies and discussions.

Chapter Ten both returns to the aims and purpose of the thesis to consider the way the research objectives have been met, and how. Furthermore, I highlight the key contributions that the thesis offers, additional to addressing the limitations of the study.

Drawing together all the findings and implications of the thesis, the final chapter looks to the future and the ways that the thesis can have an impact. *Chapter Eleven* also comments on the potential for further research in continuation from the themes of this study.

CHAPTER ONE: A LABOUR MARKET SHAPED BY AUSTERITY

Chapter Outline

This first chapter presents the context and overview of the research environment, with an introduction to the UK labour market and recent changes which have been impactful within the current climate. First, I begin with the impact of austerity on both the economy and society, followed by a more detailed look at the UK labour market, both nationally and regionally (in the relative regions where I carried out my research). I introduce the gendered division of labour in Britain, forming an understanding of the labour market for women active in work, but also the barriers and challenges that moulded their experience. In this chapter themes of division begin to emerge, namely the differential impact of austerity on different populations but also between working men and women in current day Britain. The impact and intersections between gender and class will also be considered.

A Decade of Austerity

I will now outline the current economic policies and the context in the UK, which is the setting and background for my research project. These policies were particularly characterised by ongoing measures of austerity which were introduced in reaction to a global economic crisis. Beginning in 2008 and arguably continuing until the current day (Phillips, 2020), such policies had a significant impact on government budgets, specifically public spending and services funded within these budgets. The cuts have been at great detriment to the quality and circumstance of life and community for individuals - leading to a changing face of British life. I lead the introduction of the context of my thesis with a presentation of the changes that have occurred since 2010 and the impact that they had on the UK environment. What particularly stands out from reviewing varying sources is the way that nationwide cuts unevenly impact those already marginalised in deprived areas of UK society.

<u>Background</u>

Following a period of recession amongst global financial markets including the UK, the British government under a coalition of the Conservative and Liberal Democrat parties created the Office for Budget Responsibility (OBR) (Van Reenen, 2015). The OBR was initiated to make and assess fiscal judgements of the UK economic situation, and a period of austerity was adopted in 2010 with the intention to eliminate the UK budget deficit and to minimise national debt, through significant reduction in public spending (Chu, 2017). Although initially forecasted to last until 2015-16, despite a decrease in deficit and debt, it quickly became evident that this would not be the case, and that

austerity and public spending cuts could be applied for the foreseeable future (Kirkup, 2014), with their impact stretching even further.

Across the UK, austerity resulted in heavy cuts applied to public expenditure and welfare, as well as increases made to tax (Chu, 2017). As a result, funding cuts were made in local government, the building of schools, education maintenance allowance, the police service, legal aid, benefits, Sure Start services, libraries, social and health care, youth services, and road maintenance amongst others (Maguire & Chakelian, 2018). These cuts meant that a high number of vital community and public services such as children's clubs and services for the disabled and the elderly were reorganised, minimised, or completely eradicated (O'Hara, 2015). It was found that the cuts made were administrated disproportionately, particularly amongst local government and council budgets (O'Hara, 2015). This resulted in geographical disparity, with 'disproportionately harsh spending cuts to local public services in England's poorest areas' (Butler, 2018). Hastings et al. (2015) found that amongst the most deprived authorities the cuts were almost six times higher than those in more affluent areas. This has been felt heavily in disadvantaged communities, in particular cities in the north of the country and certain poorer suburbs of London (Butler, 2018). In 2018, Northamptonshire County Council was even driven to declare bankruptcy and voted for abolition in a losing battle to keep afloat (Maguire & Chakelian, 2018), with many others at risk across the country. Additionally, the public sector felt the impact of austerity, and two thirds of a million public sector jobs had been lost by the end of 2012, with an estimated total planned loss of jobs of 900,000 by the end of 2018 (IFS, 2013). The losses in employment in the public sector were felt the hardest in the North East of England where unemployment rates were already higher than national average, leaving communities 'starved of the public investment they need for modern infrastructure and services' (TUC, 2015). I expand on the regional and differential impact of austerity in the section that follows.

Impact

Austerity and budget cuts led to 'a monumental shift in British life. A wave of austerity has yielded a country that has grown accustomed with living with less…point[ing] to a deteriorating quality of life' (Goodman, 2018). Although austerity has been felt nationally, the measures across the country had differing impacts on the varying regions depending on their circumstance prior to the cuts, and how they were able to adapt to change. It is important to acknowledge both distributional geographic and demographic effects of the tax and welfare policies of austerity, and the impact that they had on those involved.

Cuts to public services had an impact on people's situations and in particular the quality of their day to day lives. One example is the Sure Start programme - dismantled as part of the cuts - which would provide pre-learning, health and childcare support within centres across the country. This was a huge loss to those families who used the centres as a source of development to support their children's upbringing (Maguire & Chakelian, 2018). The budget assigned to police forces dropped 17% between 2010 and 2018, with the number of police officers falling by 14% (Goodman, 2018). There were even cases that were published of officers assigned to investigations that they were under-qualified to be carrying out (Maguire & Chakelian, 2018). Since 2010, 478 libraries closed and a further 230,000 suffered from minimised opening hours. This affected those on low incomes who had relied on public library services for access to benefit applications, job applications, and other practical uses of the internet and technology (Maguire & Chakelian, 2018). Goodman (2018) stated that 'virtually every public agency now struggles to do more with less while attending to additional problems once handled by some other outfit whose budget is also in tatters'. In fragile structures, the implementation of austerity and tighter restrictions on public spending has been visible particularly amongst the vulnerable and those who relied or had a strong dependence on the public institutions. Those in this category were the primary victims of austerity.

Under austerity measures in Britain, unemployment increased, peaking at around 7.8% in 2013 (ONS, 2013). This figure however dropped to 4.0% in 2018, reaching its lowest figure since 1975 (BBC News, 2018). Across the period youth unemployment persisted in high figures (Aldrick, 2011; McGuinness, 2018) along with the figures of those in long term unemployment (ONS, 2013). Amongst those working, despite a fall in unemployment, following mid-2010 the average hourly wage began to fall (BBC News, 2013). The type of work that was available to people shifted to increasingly precarious positions, with elevated numbers of people turning involuntarily to temporary roles or zero-hours contracts (Sharp, 2019). Along with low pay, precarious work was commonly found amongst young workers leading them to a higher risk of poor career progression and job insecurity (Taylor, 2017). The number of self-employed workers also rose, causing complications as it became difficult to capture such figures within national statistics (Taylor, 2017). All things considered, whilst unemployment falls, a new complexity arises. This is the increasing prevalence of low-wage and insecure employment, as well as a rising stigma attached to worklessness (Taylor, 2017). This is paralleled with increased living costs and a lack of relative wage increase in comparison (ONS, 2013).

Changes to unemployment and disability benefits were introduced with the intention of deterring people claiming welfare and to encourage them into work (MacInnes et al., 2015). Sanctions were

introduced as a punitive approach to moving people from benefits into work. Whilst the change to welfare systems was associated with decreasing claimants of unemployment benefits (Loopstra et al., 2015), it has also been linked to increasing food bank use and demand (Butler, 2016). Suicide and mental health problems attributed to reassessments for individuals previously on disability benefits also rose (Barr et al., 2016).

To introduce the position of women, MacDonald (2018) highlighted the struggles that women face in terms of 'long-standing entrenched structural inequalities, coming up against obstacles to gaining independence, a job and a source of income'. The measures taken under austerity have had a particularly deep impact on women. Women have found it more difficult to enter the labour market, firstly due to more competition for stable and well-paid jobs, but also with losses to childcare facilities (MacDonald, 2018). Women tended to be more reliant than men on the public services that have been minimised or disintegrated under the cuts, as well as the changes that have been made to childcare benefit and support for single mothers (Oxfam, 2013). Within families, the new benefit system deposits payments in one lump sum, to the principal earner of a family - usually the male partner within relationships. Compared to previous welfare payments that paid individuals separately, arguably this renders women increasingly dependent on their male partners (MacDonald, 2018) in a move that regresses from advances made in gender equality. The context of women in the current UK climate, particularly within the labour market, will be discussed in more detail further in the chapter.

A report from Tucker (2017) found that the introduction of a new benefit system has and will continue to have the deepest impact on low-income earners; lone parents; large families; families with young children; and families with disabled children. The report also noticed the absence of an increase in benefits relative to inflation. Household incomes amongst families living with at least one disabled member fell by between £2,500 and £5,500. This is disproportionate to those without disabled members seeing a reduction of around £1,000 (Cohen, 2018). A similar disparity could be seen comparing households of ethnic origin, specifically African, Caribbean, and Black British citizens compared to white households (Portes & Reed, 2017). While these implications culminate in society, pre-existing gaps in society become wider and the injustices amongst marginalised sectors of society become somewhat exacerbated in times of financial hardship across the country. Portes & Reed (2017) state that based on tax and welfare models 'reforms will actually boost the incomes of the top two deciles, while reducing incomes substantially for the bottom half of the income distribution' (p. 30). A widening gap leads to further frustration and societal tension in existing hardship across the UK. I will later return to benefit reform (Universal Credit) and its impact.

Following a visit to the UK, A United Nations report was released in 2018 by Professor Philip Alston, the Special Rapporteur on extreme poverty and human rights. The report brought together many of the critical issues facing UK society, and particularly those that have emerged as a result of austerity. Alston (2018) iterated that 'the UK is the world's fifth largest economy, it contains many areas of immense wealth… […] …for almost one in every two children to be poor in twenty-first century Britain is not just a disgrace, but a social calamity and an economic disaster, all rolled into one' (p. 1). The release of the report caused a stir in the UK media, highlighting many of the issues previously discussed, but depicting a bleak reality of the situation for citizens of Britain, particularly those on the breadline and grappling with the impacts of austerity. Alston (2018) discussed his general outlook, stating that 'British compassion for those who are suffering has been replaced by a punitive, mean-spirited, and often callous approach apparently designed to instil discipline where it is least useful, to impose a rigid order on the lives of those least capable of coping with today's world' (p. 3). Alston (2018) summarised the most pressing impacts of austerity as the detrimental impact of the introduction of Universal Credit; the precarious and non-sustainable nature of the labour market and available employment; and most notably the disproportionate detriment falling on vulnerable groups of society - the poor, women, ethnic minorities, single parents, and people with disabilities. Alston (2018) was met with opposition as he described the UK situation of poverty as a 'political choice', however undoubtedly the release of the report summed up a tension in the UK as people witness social safety nets disappearing, work failing to provide stability, and the astounding rise of food banks all over the country.

Alston's conclusions lead into my own summary of this section. To pick out the key points, austerity has had the most notable impact on those who were the most socio-economically vulnerable. This has culminated geographically in less affluent regions or amongst marginalised demographics such as women. This impact is attributed to many factors such as the loss of public services, changes in the labour market, and the introduction of a new and harsher benefit system. The next section will turn a focus to the labour markets and welfare contexts of the UK, and more specifically the regions where I locate my study.

National and Regional Labour Markets

This section of the chapter introduces the two geographic regions where the research was carried out. The two regions are both in the North of the UK, one being the North East, the other being Yorkshire and the Humber. For both respective regions I introduce the general economic background, followed by a window into the situation of the labour market and of welfare and poverty, including some of

the critical changes and concerns for the areas. I therefore present a more targeted context of where the research took place which is crucial in understanding the findings collaborated as part of the data collection.

The United Kingdom

The United Kingdom comprising of England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland is considered one of the world's most globalised economies and is the fifth largest economy based on gross domestic product (GDP) (World Bank Group, 2021). The economy is particularly dominated by the service sector, contributing about 80% towards GDP. Furthermore, the UK's financial services industry is globally significant, with London as the world's second largest financial hub (Reid, 2019). Saying this however, the UK is considered highly centralised with a notable divide between the capital and the regions, for example in health, employment opportunities, disposable income, and productivity (Johns et al., 2020). As previously mentioned, these divides were emphasised and exacerbated under measures of austerity.

The Labour Market

Data and statistics in the UK in 2019 (the time when I conducted the data collection for this thesis) estimated the rate of employment at around 76.2%, a slight increase from the previous quarter and as previously mentioned, demonstrating a new record high (ONS, 2019). This figure demonstrated an upward trend from reaching a low of 70.1% in 2011 (ONS, 2019). Despite this, annual growth in average weekly earnings for employees appeared to be slowing, and additionally the number of vacancies in the UK was down by 59,000 compared to the earlier year and the initiation of a downward trend (ONS, 2019).

In a further positive trend, a report found that the number of low paid employees was falling for the first time in four decades, with 17.2% of the workforce in low paid work in 2018 - in this case defined as an hourly wage below two-thirds of the median pay (Cominetti et al., 2019). Additionally, the number of employees earning below the National Minimum Wage, or the National Living Wage decreased by 18,000 between 2018 and 2019 (ONS, 2019). Whilst these show notable successes, arguably there is still a long way to go. Furthermore, as suggested in the previous section, although low-wage work decreased between 2010 and 2019, precarious work increased. In the same period the percentage of workers on zero-hours contracts increased from 0.6% to 3% of all total employment (ONS, 2019) and with around 3.7 million workers in insecure work (including zero-hours contracts) (Sharp, 2019). Having already speculated over the relation between the implementation of austerity

measures and this shift in the structure of the labour market, I will return later to the more detailed impact of such precarious and insecure work in the UK.

Welfare

Returning to the reform of the welfare system in the UK, Universal Credit was proposed in 2012 and released the following year. The purpose was to combine six different benefits to both simplify the system and to encourage claimants of benefits into employment. It also aimed to support and maintain the employment of those working on a low income (DWP, 2012). It expected to be received by 7 million households once fully introduced (Kennedy & Keen, 2018), and with an estimated increase of 200,000 more claimants in employment compared to the old benefit system (DWP, 2018). To contextualise this further, by 2019, 2.3 million people were on Universal Credit, of which 760,000 were in employment, 930,000 were searching for work, and 490,000 were within the category of 'no work requirements'.

Universal Credit imposes sanctions for the infringement of procedures, which have been criticised as being inhuman, degrading, and responsible for creating a climate of fear amongst the process of claiming welfare (Adler, 2018). Universal Credit is established as a 'Digital by Default Service' meaning that all claims are processed online, making the application and claiming process much more difficult for vulnerable claimants, or those either without access to the Internet or without digital skills. In 2018, only 54% of Universal Credit claimants were able to successfully process and receive their claim online without any help (DWP, 2018). The reality of the impact of Universal Credit to date has found that the change in the benefit system has led to increased rent arrears (Northern Housing Consortium, 2017), rising personal debt (Drake, 2017), higher use and demand for food banks and other third sector organisations (Trussell Trust, 2018). Furthermore, Universal Credit is inextricably linked with elevated cases of mental health conditions from stress, anxiety, and depression (Cheetham et al., 2018). In terms of support and accession of claimants into work, incentives appear reduced to move people into work (Cheetham et al., 2018). Findings from Wright et al. (2018) found that despite both intense efforts and desires to work, employment outcomes have not been improving. Instead, conditions of Universal Credit require excessive hours of counterproductive job search activity, and with little support to find meaningful or sustainable work - the paid work is often experienced as elusive or transitory.

Introducing the North East

The North East is one of the nine official regions of England, with an estimated population of 2.7 million (NOMIS, 2019). The three cities of the region are Newcastle-upon-Tyne, Sunderland, and

Durham, with various large towns including Hartlepool, Gateshead, Middlesbrough, and Washington. Geographically the North East is characterised by its countryside as much as its urban areas, home to both Northumberland National Park and the northern region of The Pennines. The coastline stretches from Saltburn-by-the-Sea to Berwick-upon-Tweed, accommodating three ports - Teesport being the third largest port in the UK (World Port Source, 2019). The region has two international airports and five major universities, including two Russell Group institutions (Durham University and Newcastle University).

Historically the North East was characterised by both its mining and manufacturing industry, with a prominence of chemical and pharmaceutical production across the region. Founded in 1926, Imperial Chemical Industries (ICI) had its main operations in sites in the North East, and for the majority of its operational longevity was Britain's largest and most successful manufacturer (Kollewe & Wearden, 2007) and the pioneer for industry in the region. Although ICI was reorganised and ultimately sold, the chemical legacy of the North East remains - evident in the economic cluster (North East of England Process Industry Cluster - NEPIC) that was integrated. NEPIC is comprised of North East companies in the chemical industry. Together they represent over a third of the industry within the North East and export £12 billion annually, as well as providing employment for 190,000 people (NEPIC, 2019). The region boasts further localised industry successes for example within the automotive industry (Nissan Motor Manufacturing - based in Sunderland and Vertu Motors PLC - based in Gateshead) and within public transport (Arriva - based in Sunderland and The Go-Ahead Group PLC, based in Newcastle).

It is also important to mention Teesside's former booming steel and iron industry, which at its peak operated with 91 blast furnaces and 33,000 staff (Tighe, 2017). When the most recent owners, SSI UK, went into liquidation, the region suffered not only in employment but also in identity, with the steelworks having formed an integral part of the region's history (Smith, 2016). Following a similar decline in recent decades, ship building in the North East was not only a key industry for the region particularly Tyneside, Wearside, and Teesside, but also the largest shipbuilding area in the world at its peak (BBC, 2009), at one point producing two out of every five ships globally (Wardrop, 2009). In 1977 the industry was nationalised and the shipyards were subsequently closed down (BBC, 2009), leading to significant job losses and a loss to industry in the region.

All facts considered, the North East is England's most struggling economy, with the average Gross Value Added (GVA) per head £20,129 compared to the UK average of £28,096 in 2017 (Harari & Ward, 2019). The region was the only within the UK with an economy seen to have shrunk (Raikes,

2017). Tighe (2016) summarises that 'historical trends, the centralised nature of the UK economy, the welfare state, the decline of heavy manufacturing - all have been offered as explanations for the underperformance of the north compared with the UK overall'.

The Labour Market

In terms of the labour market situation, the North East currently faces huge challenges. Although all regions across England suffered during the recession, as of June 2018 the North East remained as the region with the lowest employment rate in England (70.4% compared to a UK average 74.9% at the time) and also the highest unemployment rate from across all of the UK (5.4% compared to the UK average 4.2%) (Powell, 2018). The region is somewhat over-represented in the manufacturing and engineering sectors; thus, employment was naturally affected by the decline of these traditional industries. The North East also has an above average representation of employment in the public sector (19.2%) (Harari & Ward, 2019), however much like the manufacturing industry this is a sector in decline in the region, along with a predicted total loss of 7,000 jobs before 2020 (UKCES, 2015). Other significant sectors in the region include health and social work services, and information technology (UKCES, 2015). In terms of employment rate by gender, despite the relatively low employment figures, the North East has the smallest difference in employment between men and women, with a difference of only 5.9% compared to a national average of 9.2% (Powell, 2018). Women however are outnumbered by men in terms of full-time positions, with 80% of male workers in full time work compared to 54% for women, and consistent with more national trends women are over-represented in clerical and caring roles (Gouk & Hill, 2017)

For those within employment, the median weekly earnings in the North East region as of 2018 were £512 (the median weekly earning) compared to a UK average of £569. This represents the lowest figure across all the UK regions (Harari & Ward, 2019). A report from the North East Local Enterprise Partnership (NE LEP) also found that the growth in wages in the region was below the average national wage growth, alongside a relatively high period of inflation (2018), offsetting the rise in wages against the cost of living. Furthermore, the NE LEP report found that the quality of employment opportunities in the North East gave rise for consideration, with the highest rate amongst all of the UK regions of jobs (9.9%) paid less than the relevant National Minimum Wage (NE LEP, 2018). The North East also had the highest rate of individuals employed on a zero-hours contract, accounting for 3.7% of the regions work force, and an above average rate of 5.2% of those employed in temporary employment (NE LEP, 2018). The Community Foundation (2019) also found that despite the levels of unemployment and the quality of employment available, out of all of the English

regions the highest proportion of people who would like to work but cannot was found in the North East.

Welfare and Poverty

Contextual to the economic situation, according to statistics 19% of individuals in the North East find themselves in a relative low income before housing costs, and a further 23% after housing costs (McGuinness, 2018). The future seems to provide little optimism, as Hood and Waters (2017) also project that in the North East and northern regions absolute poverty[1] is likely to rise.

Taking all of the labour market statistics into consideration, 30% of those living in poverty in the North East remain in poverty following an entrance into employment (Community Foundation, 2019). In 2017, amongst working-age families the average amount of income to come from earnings (as opposed to from benefits and welfare) was close to just a third, compared to regions such as the South East where on average working age families received over a half of their income from an earned salary (Hood & Waters, 2017). In terms of the benefits being issued in the region, as of 2018 the roll out of Universal Credit was 14% complete across the region, and with further roll out ongoing. Areas with the highest percentage of completed transitions within the region were Hartlepool (38%) and Newcastle upon Tyne (30-34%) (Kennedy & Keen, 2018). In the North East as of January 2019, 145,884 people were claiming Universal Credit, of which around 45,000 were working and claiming in-work benefits, and the remaining either searching, preparing, or planning for work or without work requirements (DWP, 2019). A report by Cheetham et al. (2018) into the impact of the roll out of Universal Credit in Gateshead and Newcastle found that the new system was hostile, punitive, and especially difficult to navigate for already vulnerable claimants. The report summarised that the change onto Universal Credit in the region risked further increasing poverty and inequality, and that 'individuals and families who are 'just about coping' are being pushed into hardship and crisis as a result of moving onto UC' (p. 37), causing mounting complexity for the North East and low-income residents of the area.

Much like the rest of the UK, food banks continue to increase in the North East. The Trussell Trust reported an 8.4% increase from 2017 to 2018 and 22,981 emergency food parcels issued between April and September of 2018 (ITV, 2018) however this figure does not include figures of independent food banks which operate across the region. Newcastle's West End Food Bank ran by the Trussell

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[1] The United Nations (1995) describe absolute poverty as 'a condition characterised by severe deprivation of basic human needs, including food, safe drinking water, sanitation facilities, health, shelter, education and information. It depends not only on income but also on access to social services'.

Trust is the busiest and largest in the country (Booth, 2018) helping more than 46,000 people a year on average (BBC, 2018). Food banks in the North East, in particular the West End Food Bank have experienced wide public coverage, largely as a marker of poverty and social tensions in the region. Some examples of this include: the film *I, Daniel Blake* (Loach, 2016) ; documentaries such as *Shy Bairns get Nowt: Inside Britain's Busiest Food Bank* (Vice, 2015); and the West End Food Bank was visited and discussed by Philip Alston (UN Rapporteur) as part of his investigation into poverty in the UK (Booth, 2018). The North East in general, in specific relation to poverty and deprivation has been recently depicted in various documentaries broadcasted on national television, such as: *Benefits Street* (Channel 4, 2014); *The Mighty Redcar* (BBC2, 2018); and *Skint Britain: Friends Without Benefits* (Channel 4, 2018). Such documentaries have been met with criticism for misrepresentations of life on low incomes and life in general in the region. Mike Hill, Hartlepool MP at the time, believed '...these documentaries claim to show the plight of working-class people in the modern day, but in actual fact are used to fuel the arguments that people on benefits are lazy and do not deserve help' (Hartlepool Mail, 2019).

Introducing Yorkshire and the Humber

Introducing another of the administrative regions, the Yorkshire and Humber region comprises mainly of the counties of Yorkshire, with some parts of North Lincolnshire. As a county, Yorkshire is the largest in the UK and known for its own distinct culture, traditions, and dialect. Yorkshire and the Humber is characterised by vast open spaces of countryside, including the Yorkshire Dales, the North York Moors and parts of the Pennines. The population of Yorkshire and the Humber is around 5.4 million, and amongst some of the largest urban settlements are Leeds, Sheffield, Bradford, Wakefield and York. In Kingston upon Hull where the river Humber meets the North Sea, there is a large passenger, freight, and fishing port. Yorkshire and the Humber has two international airports, one in Leeds and one in Sheffield and the region is well connected to the rest of the UK via. motorways and public transport such as trains.

A report by Deloitte (2018) described Yorkshire and the Humber as a 'transitioning economy' as the regional industry moves from a focus on traditional heavy industry to a more diverse economic landscape, with significant growth noted in sectors such as financial, transport and storage, and public administration. The economy historically relied on large-scale industry, manufacturing, and the textile industry, and although they are still important in the region they are slowly being replaced by alternative industries (European Commission, 2019). The manufacturing industry however still accounts for an above average percentage for economic output when comparing Yorkshire and the

Humber to the rest of the UK, with key manufacturing businesses operating from Yorkshire and the Humber, such as Tata Steel, Arla Foods, and Nestlé (Yorkshire Enterprise Network, 2018).

Although in terms of the other UK regions, Yorkshire and the Humber has a relatively low GVA - £21,426 per head (Harari & Ward, 2019), it is a region that is experiencing significant economic growth. This is particularly due to the expansion and success of Leeds, with the city alone accounting for 20% of the regions GVA (ONS, 2018). Leeds has a diverse economy, and recent growth has made the city the largest legal and financial centre in the UK after London and is forecast to grow and generate more GVA for the region (Leeds City Council, 2019). Tourism also accounts for £8 billion of the economy in Yorkshire and the Humber - a 14% increase from 2011 (Industry Yorkshire, 2018). Overall, the outlook for the region is positive and other cities such as Sheffield and Bradford continue to attract investment.

The Labour Market

Whilst the labour market in Yorkshire and the Humber is not without its challenges, once again growth and development in Leeds has helped to boost the region in terms of employment, especially notable that the city has experienced the fastest growth rate of private sector jobs of any UK city (Leeds City Council, 2019). The employment rate is 74.1%, below the UK average, and with a relatively high rate of unemployment also at 5% (Harari & Ward, 2019). This follows the trend of the northern regions facing more complications in terms of employment and the labour market compared to regions in the south of the UK. It is however important to note that unemployment, although high, has dropped at record levels from 10% in 2011 (Deloitte, 2018). Much like the North East, employment in the manufacturing sector maintain a high percentage above the UK average - 11.1% (Harari & Ward, 2019), however the transitioning economy means that the labour market is beginning to change and diversify and provide more jobs for varying skills sets across the region. The region and key businesses operating in the region also state the need to drive for '…better jobs, rather than simply more jobs, and these need to be targeted and focused on specific needs and opportunities' (Deloitte, 2019). The distribution of employment between men and women in the region was 9.2, which was a figure in the centre of the scale in relatively to the rest of the UK (Powell, 2018). The gender pay gap in the region however is amongst the highest comparative to the other UK regions - stated as 18.6% compared to the UK average of 17.9% (TUC, 2019). Also notable in the workforce for the region is that despite a relatively high percentage of Asian residents living in the area (7.3%) (ONS, 2019), Yorkshire and the Humber had some of the lowest regional employment rates for ethnic groups, especially for Asians (DWP, 2019).

Within work, the median weekly earnings for Yorkshire whilst higher than the North East are still low at an average of £512 (Harari & Ward, 2019). Additionally, 14.2% of employees in the region have experienced a wage stickiness (ONS, 2018) meaning that wages do not adjust to changes in labour market conditions. The number of people on zero-hours contracts in the region had risen by nearly a fifth in just a year, recorded in 2017. This was one of the biggest increases in the UK, and the demographics who found themselves most likely to work a zero-hours contract were young people and women (Scunthorpe Telegraph, 2017). The Yorkshire Evening Post (2018) raised concerns that despite jobs being attracted to the region, that these were largely at the high end of the sectors, and that in fact there were losses in low paid jobs for example in health care and hospitality. Yorkshire and the Humber has above average rates of both wholesale and retail trade (15.2%) and health and social care activities (13.2%) (European Commission, 2019) - both typically low paid jobs. The danger of this is an imbalance and mounting inequality in the labour market, especially given the precarious and insecure nature of low pay work in the region. In their inclusive growth strategy, Leeds City Council (2018) recognised that 'low pay is an increasing problem, with people caught in a trap of low pay and low skills, with limited opportunities for career progression' (p. 10).

Welfare and Poverty

In terms of deprivation, Yorkshire and the Humber has a varied landscape. Whilst several of the districts in the region remain in relative wealth such as Harrogate and Hambleton, on the other hand there is a high proportion of districts which are amongst the most deprived of the UK, such as Bradford, Wakefield, and Kirklees (Department for Communities and Local Government, 2015). Such pockets of both advantage and disadvantage create a big contrast in the region. The rates of individuals living in relative low income in Yorkshire and the Humber were high comparative to the other regions (19% before housing costs and 22% after housing costs) (McGuinness, 2018). Child poverty is a problem in the region, with Yorkshire and the Humber having the highest recorded amount in the country in 2015, with 23% of children raised in poverty (SMCC, 2015). Growing up in poverty has implications on a child's development and ultimately contributes to a vicious cycle of deprivation and barriers to opportunities and progression, symbolling a key issue for the region and its future and prosperity. Nevertheless Hood & Waters (2017) have predicted a fall in absolute poverty in the coming years. This prediction however is based on macroeconomic forecasts which hold significant uncertainty themselves.

As for welfare in the region, Yorkshire and the Humber is amongst one of the lowest percentiles in terms of the completion of the roll out of Universal Credit, with only 10% completed (Kennedy & Keen, 2018), though nevertheless with the process in motion. Before the transition the last recorded

benefit claimant count amongst the working-age client group was 426,500 (NOMIS, 2019), and the DWP (2019) latest figures recorded that at the end of January 2019 there were 140,038 households claiming Universal Credit. The largest demographic amongst these claimants were single people with no child dependents, congruent with trends across the UK (DWP, 2018). Of the claimants in the region, 47,938 were in employment, with the remaining 92,099 claiming out-of-work benefits, meaning that around 34% of the claimants are working (DWP, 2019). This represents a high number of people who despite working further rely on subsidies from Universal Credit. Additionally, low income is the most predominant reason for food bank usage in Yorkshire and the Humber, with food bank use increasing and the food banks often struggling to meet demand (Drysdale, 2018).

Women in the UK Labour Market

This section of the chapter introduces the conditions for women in the labour market, which will be a key theme throughout the thesis given both the feminist nature of the study and the focus on women afflicted by IWP. To contextualise general trends and challenges faced by women in their historical struggle with both the labour market and productive work, this chapter will discuss some of the statistics and data relating to women in the UK labour market, then further contextualise the topic through a focus on gendered segregations within the workforce and barriers faced by caregivers, of whom are predominantly women.

<u>Women in Work</u>

Undoubtedly there are more women active in the labour market than ever before, however the figure remains lower than men, with the employment rate at 71.4% in 2019 compared to 79.8% for men respectively (Powell, 2020). Despite increased labour market activity, various other statistics help to demonstrate the gendered division of the labour market even persisting to the current day. First, within the employment rate it is crucial to recognise that women continue to make up most of the part-time employment, around 38% compared to 13% of men. Additionally, of all the UK's small and medium-sized businesses with paid employees, only 17% were led by women in 2015 (Devine et al., 2020). The gender pay gap persists, experiencing little change among full-time employees (8.9% in 2019 with a fall from 2012 of a mere 0.6 percentage points) and a slight decline among all employees to 17.3% in 2019 (ONS, 2019). A report by the Young Women's Trust found that 19% of women claimed to be paid less than their male counterparts for the same employment (Young Women's Trust, 2018). The same report also shockingly revealed that as of 2018, 23% of females had experienced sexual harassment at work, and 31% reported sex discrimination either from within or whilst looking for work (Young Women's Trust, 2018). Furthermore, having previously touched on the impact of

austerity on women, what the Fawcett Society (2012) concluded on the matter was that women were facing a 'triple jeopardy' as a result of the economic changes. These are: the impact on work and wages; the cuts to services; and being left to 'fill the gaps' in the withdrawal of services. The following section will address in more detail the gendered segregation and divides in the labour market and the way they contribute to the preceding statistics.

'Women's work'

The UK labour market remains segregated in various ways, however these are complexly interrelated with each other, for example pay and work structures; industry or occupation; and skill. Having mentioned the increased likelihood of women to be in part-time employment, this is also the case in low wage employment. A study by Tinson et al. (2016) outlines that as of late 2016 the likelihood of low wage employment is significantly higher for women, with 62% of all low wage workers female. This had only slightly decreased to 60% (or 2.8 million out of 4.7m) by 2018 (Cominetti et al., 2019). Adding further to this, using zero-hour contracts as a quantifiable example of a type of precarious work, in the period between October and 2019, zero-hours contracts made up 2.4% of the total of contracts for men, but 3.6% for women. This had increased 0.8 percentage points for the male population but 1.3 comparatively for women (ONS, 2021). Continuing to dissect women's work, the labour market is evidently segmented with increasingly more women occupying low wage roles in areas in more caring and reproductive roles (McDowell, 2009). The sectors with the highest numbers of women in 2020 were health and social work (20% of all women's jobs) and the wholesale and retail trade (14% of all women's jobs) (Devine et al., 2020) whereas male employment was more heavily centred on manufacturing, professional services, and other private sector functions. Analysing employment by occupation, although men and women were somewhat equal in the likelihood of working in a professional occupation, most women in these roles were either in healthcare or educational roles. Furthermore, men were almost twice as likely to be in managerial roles (such as managers, directors, or senior officials) with women predominantly occupying more elementary and customer service positions (Devine et al., 2020). The lower wage and more reproductive positions are increasingly precarious and insecure (Booth, 2016). In terms of skills, women also found themselves more likely to work in jobs requiring lower skills, for example in 2013 18% were in upper-middle skilled roles compared to 37% of men (ONS, 2013). Of the graduate pool women of equal qualification were more likely to secure work in a slightly lower skilled occupation than their male counterparts (ONS, 2013), and in terms of low wage work women with low or no qualifications have generally much lower employment levels than men in the equivalent position (Tinson et al., 2016). The following section will now explore the role that both parental and caring responsibilities have on the labour market division that I have presented.

To begin the discussion, it is first important to say that the UK has made notable progress in terms of the accession of mothers into the labour market, with 75.1% of dependent mothers in work in 2019 compared to 67.1% in 2009 (ONS, 2019). This said, and although the gap between working mothers and fathers is closing, the figure for women remains lower than men. Additionally, it still appears to predominantly fall on women to adapt their working situation to accommodate childcare responsibilities - in 2019 56.2% of mothers said their work was disrupted for childcare reasons compared to 22.4% of fathers and moreover 28.5% of mothers had to reduce their working hours, again for childcare, compared to 4.8% of fathers (ONS, 2019). This relates to dual parent families, however when considering single parents (of which 90% are women (ONS, 2021)) not only did underemployment increase to 22% (from just 9.3% of the whole working population) but they also experience a pay gap (when comparing lone parents with a second earner in a couple) of £2.14 an hour. This is a radical increase from a gap of just 31p in 2001 (Gingerbread, 2020). A report by the TUC (2016) found that mothers face a 'motherhood pay penalty' of around 11% when comparing working mothers at the age of 42 to those without. Both pregnant women and new mothers also continue to face discrimination in the workplace such as: dismissal; bullying and harassment; inappropriate work assignments; denied from promotion or training; reduction of pay; and discrimination towards breastfeeding (TUC, 2014). Mirroring trends however this time for working adults with caring responsibilities, again women are the majority (58%) of those in unpaid caring roles, thus are again more likely to have to either give up work, reduce hours, or experience disruption to work. Equally they experience discrimination and setbacks such as the lack of access to progression, like that of mothers as discussed above (Carers UK, 2021). For women with caring responsibilities, whilst part-time work is a common path to take, most part time roles (especially for women) are in lower paid positions and sectors. Part time work is generally undervalued and therefore there is a lack of quality employment for those with responsibilities as carers (Bennet, 2018). Finally in terms of precarious work, McKay et al. (2012) found that whilst trying to balance care responsibilities and work, women find themselves in the trap of insecure work, and without the capability to challenge it.

All facts considered, the gendered division of labour is evident not only in terms of occupational and industry segregation, but women also continue to face workplace discrimination predominantly in terms of caring responsibilities. Women face real barriers to decent work that is not only sufficiently remunerating but also that accommodates their lives and responsibilities. Ultimately, owing to all the discussed factors, Palmer & Eveline (2012) found that women were not only one of the most

vulnerable groups to experiencing IWP but also those who would find it the most challenging to break free from.

Intersections of Gender and Class

The previous section addressed the position of women confronted with not only a complex labour market but also with the detrimental impact of austerity. I will also make explicit the differential impact amongst classed demographics across the country. The uneven impact on social class has been tacit throughout my discussion of the impacts of austerity but needs to be explored more directly. Workers in Britain have experienced a decline in their living standards, and those within low-income households have been faced with disproportionate economic uncertainty (The Equality Trust, 2019).

The definition of a 'working-class' is a contested one, although generally associated with households of a low socioeconomic context. With contributions made by readers and public figures, an opinion piece in the Guardian (2021) mulled over what it meant to be 'working-class'. Some interesting definitions included '*the working classes have only their labour to sell*' and '*it depends on how much control you have over your working life, not on how much you are paid, or whether you own your own home*' (The Guardian, 2021). Contemporary society contributes new and ever-changing complexities and nuances in segmenting workers in Britain by class in this way. To give an example, the impact of new challenges faced by the working-class such as rising precarity and insecure work (Savage et al., 2012; Standing, 2011). This will be a theme of significance throughout my thesis. For the purpose of this study however, the working-class will be referred to generally as those reliant on wage-laboured earnings for subsistence for themselves and their families. Some of the more 'hidden' injuries and impacts of classed experience have been presented by academic such as Skeggs (1997) who also considers the impact of gender, and Sennett & Cobb (1972). Both works will be returned to in greater detail alongside the empirical presentation of my own findings later in the thesis.

Having introduced class alongside gender, at this point it is therefore useful to briefly introduce the concept of intersectionality, although I will also reiterate that a more in-depth analysis of the feminist underpinnings of the thesis will be addressed later. Intersectionality introduces a new view to research concerning gender discrimination. It conceptualises the intersection of a sole identity of an individual, such as gender, and investigates the overlap of other identities such as race, social class, or ethnicity to wholly create constructs of discrimination or oppression (Crenshaw, 1989; 1994; Crenshaw & McCall, 2013) or in fact of privilege. Brah & Phoenix (2004) give importance to intersectionality as "signifying the complex, irreducible, varied, and variable effects which ensue when multiple axis of differentiation - economic, political, cultural, psychic, subjective and experiential - intersect in

historically specific contexts" (p. 76). Intersectionality thus sees both oppression and privilege as multi-layered dimensions pertaining to an individual's varying identities (Baca Zinn & Thornton Dill, 1996) and looks to investigate a way in which systems of discrimination occur and how they structure a relative position for individuals in question, in this case women. Intersectionality acknowledges inter-relating oppressions, and acts as a dynamic analysis in response to power hierarchies created within society and translated in social inequalities, putting gender in a key position of contextualising power relations in society (Collins, 1990; 2000). Intersectionality allows a study to investigate the impact of these converging identities on both their marginalisation and their access to institutional opportunities within society and how certain impacts or failings are inextricably linked to each other. An example of this can be gender and class in the way that has been introduced in the context of this research.

Various theorists have explored the ways in which intersectionality can contribute to organisational studies and management studies, recognising the importance of the study of gender and discrimination particularly in the labour market. Not only can the space of the workplace be used to investigate individual experiences of oppression and discrimination and the sociological impact (Browne & Misra, 2003; Holvino, 2010; Muzio & Tomlinson, 2012; Özbilgin et al., 2011; Tatli & Özbilgin, 2012; Corlett & Mavin, 2014; Rodriguez et al., 2016) but also the role that studies of intersectional gender structures can contribute to outputs of organisational performance (Zander et al., 2010). In the wider organisational field with the focus returned to individuals, theorists applying an intersectional lens look to analyse dimensions such as race, gender, ethnicity, class, nationality, and sexuality and how they interact in terms of institutional and social practices, with a view to more efficiently and effectively manage and address marginalisation. The literature sees a single-category approach to inequality as limiting and overly simple in the way that a reality is wrongly produced when blind to the interplay, interdependence and relationality of dimensions of difference leading to the continuous reproduction of certain systems of oppression (Holvino, 2010; Özbilgin et al., 2011; Tatli & Özbilgin, 2012).

I will now return to the themes of this research and in particular the intersection of class and gender. Earlier sections of this chapter highlight women as frequently the primary victims of austerity, but it is also valuable to consider intersecting social identities not only relating to gender but also social class and how they reproduce additional inequalities and social injustices. Given the themes of poverty and inequality the consideration of class is indeed crucial. To give an example of the intersection of class and gender, Warren (2000) considered the contexts of women in low-paid part-time work, determining that their experience could not be understood without scrutiny of social

context, and often the status of their employment was complexly related with their household. Zeitinoglu et al. (2000) further explore the experience of non-standard work amongst the dominant workers in non-standard work, being women, ethnic minorities and low economic class workers. The context is framed that the experience and impact of such work is differentiated between the intersectional characteristics of the workers, and again that the consideration of gender alone would be at the discredit of differing identities of workers and their realities. In summary, a zero-hour contract for example will be experienced differently by someone who depends on it compared to somebody who sees it as a supplementary income. Similar in MacLeavy's (2011) paper, when speaking of welfare claimants, the implications and concerns are directly intertwined with those who rely on the supplemental support as opposed to those for whom perhaps it is a help but not a necessity. This is a recurring theme throughout both the literature review and the thesis.

To conclude it is therefore vital to consider for this study in particular the role played by both class and gender in women's experience of the labour market in order to acknowledge and comprehend the multilevel complexities faced by the women. The intersection will be significant throughout this thesis and returned to at various points.

Chapter Summary

Having introduced the UK labour market in terms of key changes and impacts occurring in the decade leading up to the research being carried out, austerity measures have evidently had the most notable impact on those who were already the most socio-economically vulnerable. The most detrimental impacts have been amongst less affluent geographical regions and amongst marginalised demographics such as women and the working-class. The chapter has therefore introduced the concept of exploring intersectional identities and how this can affect individual's experiences. The two regions where this research study took place not only had less prosperous labour markets even prior to austerity measures but provide a complicated arena for workers and job seekers, for example in access to work and indeed meaningful and stable work. I have discussed the historical struggles that women face in accessing and engaging in work, and the way that this has also been disproportionately affected by austerity. The impact of the changes I have spoken of are attributed to many factors such as the loss of public services, changes in the labour market, and in the introduction of a new and harsher benefit system. The next chapter will further explore these themes using the work of other scholars in the field.

CHAPTER TWO: TENSIONS, IN-WORK POVERTY, AND IN-WORK WELFARE

Chapter Outline

The first part of the literature review will follow in this chapter. Having introduced the context of the economic and political implications in the UK alongside a presentation of issues facing working-class populations, I will now discuss the main theme, that being IWP. The chapter will define the phenomenon with reference to the situation in the UK, followed by discussing works which have interrogated and explored why IWP occurs and what the impact is for both society and for individuals. Having touched on the welfare reform, I will also provide more contextual information about Universal Credit but also review the current knowledge of the data of the impact of changes to welfare on IWP and those working in the low-wage labour market. The in-work welfare and conditionality processes of Universal Credit are highlighted as significant in understanding the lives of those experiencing IWP, and once again there were certain implications discussed which were specific to gender and class and in particular women with caring responsibilities.

What is In-Work Poverty?

Hick & Lanau (2017) define IWP as '…when a working household's total net income is insufficient to meet their needs' (p. 5). This remains as a vague description, lacking the detailed context of the circumstantial impact of low wages, unemployment, low hours, familial structure, or a combination of these or additional factors in IWP (Crettaz, 2011; Halleröd et al., 2015), but also of the impact of IWP on individuals. Proposing a complicated arena for social change, given variances and differing trends from region to region even within the UK, politicians remain reticent of the value of work within a national agenda with a view to alleviate poverty. The reality however is that some families with working adults are amongst those at the highest risk of poverty (Schmeucker, 2014). The phenomenon of IWP opens exploration to deepening labour market and sociological complexities with unique issues specific to the UK work force, economy, employment structure, and work culture.

The UK is currently experiencing record highs of IWP. Seven in ten British citizens living in poverty come from working households (Judge & Slaughter, 2020). Although IWP is not a new phenomenon within the UK, figures show that within the group the demographic is changing. Whilst the over 65s and pensioners were the most vulnerable to poverty in 1990, it is currently the under 25s who are not only facing poverty, but poverty within employment (Judge & Slaughter, 2020). As the UK reaches a situation where IWP outnumbers out-of-work poverty, investigations into both labour market

changes and structures reveal causes and catalysts in the face of increasing IWP. Revision into welfare and societal factors provide further insight.

Scholarly work interrogates the phenomenon of IWP and some of the complex contributory factors which have an impact on the increasing figures in the UK. Although evidently interwoven with low pay, the phenomenon of IWP needs to be understood in the context of the individuals afflicted by it. This is supporting of the claim by Bennett (2013) on working families living in poverty that "[it] does not always mean that the worker involved has a low hourly wage. Neither do all such low-paid workers live in households in poverty" (p. 141). To therefore contextualise IWP it is vital to understand not only the role of low pay, but also: demographic information (Brewer et al., 2009; Smith, 2012); and crucially the familial structure (Cooke & Lawton, 2008) which is of course tightly linked to matters relating to gender (Grover, 2005). Furthermore, emerging qualitative accounts of IWP are crucial in revealing the harrowing experiences of those affected. The following section will review the literature to date in the field.

In-Work Poverty and The Low Pay Trap

One of the key factors endangering low wage workers to the risks of IWP was that of the cyclical nature of low-wage work and recurrent poverty (Goulden, 2010; Shildrick et al, 2012) often located within contextual socio-economic marginalisation (Ben-Galim & Lanning, 2010; Byrne, 1999) with each factor exacerbated by the other. In a critical work in understanding the low-pay cycle, Shildrick et al. (2012) found that the outcome of recurrent poverty amongst low-wage work was reflective of the wider disadvantage faced by those living in deprived communities. The study found that some of the reasons amongst their participants included: the work available within an individuals' specific catchment and their inability to relocate or travel; lack of sufficient education or qualifications; and factors related to ill health and caring responsibilities (Shildrick et al., 2012). Crisp et al. (2019) further concur that the impact of the economic recession had a significant impact on the availability of higher quality employment, further complicating access to work for deprived communities. In some cases, individuals find themselves with multiple jobs, and in even more extreme cases with more than one earner in a household within multiple low-paid jobs, yet still vulnerable to IWP amongst other negative impacts (which will be discussed in more detail later) (McBride & Smith, 2018). Additionally, on finding work, Shildrick et al. (2012) found that private agencies driven by targets pushed applicants towards low wage and insecure roles, thus perpetuating the cycle.

For women in particular, Escott (2012) found that in poorer communities and amongst the working-class, women's levels of engagement in work are particularly low due to ill health and caring responsibilities, however their aspirations and intent remained high. Additionally, considering the gendered division of labour, which was discussed in the previous chapter, within the low wage labour market women commonly occupy roles such as those within catering, caring, and cleaning (McDowell, 2009). Once more this has been attributed to a lack of other opportunities rather than a desire to work in such roles (McDowell, 2014). Returning to the role of carers, McKay et al. (2012) highlighted women as significantly vulnerable to the trap of the low-pay cycle because balancing care responsibilities was a further challenge. Considering both the devaluation and lack of quality part-time employment, it is thus limited in the way that such work could accommodate to those with caring responsibilities (Barnard, 2018).

Once within work, the engagement in low-pay (and often insecure) work did little to relieve individuals of deprivation owing not only to the poor remuneration and insecurity itself, but also in terms of the lack of opportunities for progression and development (Goulden, 2010; Shildrick et al., 2012). Warren (2015) also demonstrates that underemployment is another key barrier and challenge for those engaged in low-wage work in terms of achieving financial stability. Also on underemployment, McBride & Smith (2018) found that some organisations in the adoption of the National Living Wage as opposed to the National Minimum Wage, compensated financially by minimising their staff hours. This posed a no-win scenario for the affected low-wage workers. Additional to these challenges, despite changing cultures and traditional gender roles, it is still disproportionately women who bear the responsibility of childcare and household work (WRC, 2016). Whilst this is strenuous and time-consuming there is also a growing pressure for women to simultaneously contribute to a household's financial situation (Ben-Galim & Thompson, 2013) leading to stress and over-working (Rabindrakumar, 2018). More of the individual impacts of IWP will be explored later in the chapter.

Assessing the role of employers in IWP, there are links that emerge between the strategies and decisions of organisations and managers and the way they impact vulnerable workers. For some employers, external organisational pressures to reduce costs and expenditures have an impact on their strategy regarding their employees, as found in a report by Devins et al. (2014). This can lead to 'low road' strategy whereby high staff turnover is accepted in the sacrifice for short-term and ad hoc working arrangements. This strategy model and the environment that is created for workers leads to low pay, but also limited training and a lack of opportunities or commitment to staff progression such as that discussed previously. Philpott (2014) denotes that this cycle was perpetuated amongst firms,

because there has always been ample supply of women and students looking for part-time employment.

Certain internal behaviours for example inductions; training structure; mentors; and a commitment to employee development and progression are all important contributions to positive practice which can in turn lead to more fruitful and sustainable employment (Schmuecker, 2017). A study by Findlay et al. (2019) finds that 'many employers in low-paying sectors and organisations demonstrate limited awareness of their employees' financial situation, broader issues around IWP or potential solutions' (p. 52). Richards & Sang (2019) also propose the term 'socially irresponsible human resource management' whereby the lack of support of support or respect amongst management towards employees can lead to lack of employee voice, disregard of employment laws and bullying amongst other practices. What they propose is that these practices are particularly damaging for vulnerable employees, such as those from the working-class who are struggling, and can exacerbate not only work-life interfaces such as stress, isolation, and cycles of IWP and poor employment conditions (p. 21). From the part of employers, while they may not be apathetic about their employees experiencing IWP, they may be uninformed or ignorant.

Having discussed some of the contextual and structural contributory factors in the discussion around IWP, there is an emerging body of literature exploring the qualitative impact of IWP and low wage work. Key findings from McBride & Smith (2018) highlighted some of the personal impact of low-paid work, inclusive of intense working schedules (particularly when working in multiple jobs); indignity at work such as a lack of autonomy and employee voice; and tensions in managing work-life balance when engaging in low paid work. Shildrick et al. (2012) also found that financial management and debt was often problematic for their participants, and in some cases, debts could be attributed to the transient nature of the low paid work or indeed the instability of work patterns for the individuals. It comes as no surprise that all the factors mentioned fed further into the inescapable cycle of the low pay trap for an already marginalised working-class.

For women, their experience of low-wage work remains largely influenced by both caring and family responsibilities, for example this having a significant impact on a woman's choice of employment, industry and structure, or indeed the lack of choice within this (Backett-Milburn et al., 2008). McKie et al. (2009) frame this as demonstrative of the continued 'limits of choice' of working-class women. This is where employment decisions that may seem like a choice, for example in service and retail positions, are the only choices available that can accommodate their lifestyles and in particular their caring responsibilities for those who cannot afford external child or elder care. In many of these

instances, although they allowed women an element of 'control', it was often at the trade-off of job progression and opportunities to advance. (McKie et al., 2009). Hyman et al. (2005) also found that women in the low-wage labour market found themselves having to negotiate informal working arrangements around caring, often facing discrimination in doing so or indeed making them vulnerable to discrimination. Again, it must be emphasised that formal childcare was rarely an option for women in low-paid employment for financial reasons, therefore were left with little option but to navigate the tensions of managing work and caring (Crisp et al., 2009). The impacts and complexities for women were therefore additional to the previously mentioned factors such as stress, psychological impact, and financial insecurity. The next section will introduce welfare and the extra dynamic that this introduces into the lives of those experiencing IWP.

Work and Welfare

As previously mentioned, the reform of the UK welfare system occurred in 2010 alongside implementations of austerity. This included changes to tax credits, and subsequently Universal Credit was proposed in 2012 (and released the following year). Both the welfare system and the in-work support provided in the UK is seen to be exemplary in comparison to that of similar economy countries (Kenworthy, 2015), existing as financial aid to assist the entrance and sustainability of employment for those who are able, or to subsidise those who are unable to work due to illness or disability (Hick & Lanau, 2017). The benefit and support system remains an integral part of British society, with the aim to 'make work pay' and to complement rather than replace the labour market.

UK welfare, or more specifically Universal Credit, has faced considerable criticism for the way that it works alongside traditional employment. Findings from Wright et al. (2018) concluded that despite both intense efforts and desires to work, employment outcomes have not been improving. A 'work-first' approach supports the quickest accession for claimants into the labour market, in theory to minimise the time that people are out of work for (Finn, 2012). The reality has been presented as somewhat different. On the conditional nature of the way that Universal Credit was implemented as punitive, Wright & Patrick (2019) comment that it "appeared to impede, rather than support, transitions into employment" (p. 1). This was largely because the process pressured claimants towards *any* employment rather than *meaningful* employment, so for example further into the cycle of low-wage and insecure work (Schmuecker, 2017; Wright & Patrick, 2019), and even for some into exploitative employment (Patrick, 2014). The public sector job agencies prioritised the most readily available work, which was often the most transient (Shildrick et al., 2012). The result of non-compliance with these conditions is sanctions, of which I will discuss the impact of later. Jones (2018)

also considers that the conditionality of welfare in this way failed to motivate and encourage organisations to provide better quality employment, for example with skills and training development, but instead consolidated the creation of temporary and low paid jobs in industry. Returning to the experience for claimants, the amount of job search required was described as 'often unrealistic' (Wright & Patrick, 2019) and established as a 'Digital by Default Service' meant that all claims were processed online, rendering the process difficult for those without either the Internet or technology skills, and generally disorientating and impersonal (Cheetham et al., 2019). Employment support and training has been cited as often inappropriate or unsuitable thus was experienced as both patronising and a waste of time for claimants (Jones, 2019; Wright & Patrick, 2019). All these factors considered, on an operational and practical sense the literature has highlighted concerns of the way that Universal Credit and welfare conditionality perpetuates the low pay trap, which was discussed in the previous chapter. On the contrary a study by Devins et al. (2011) has shown that more specific job and skills matching can be more effective in achieving the results of sustained and productive employment. I will now consider some of the more individual impact from studies on welfare to date.

What emerged from previous studies was the more emotional impact that in-work benefits and welfare conditionality within Universal Credit had on the low-pay trap. The punitive nature of Universal Credit coupled with the threat and implementation of sanctions was seen to be harsh and hostile, and contributory to increasing vulnerability and distress (Cheetham et al., 2019; Wright & Patrick, 2019). What Patrick (2014) also proposes as problematic is the culture of welfare conditionality that appears to treat claimants as workless, lacking work ethic, and that claiming benefits is a lifestyle choice. Such a culture does not encourage the pursuit of meaningful and lasting employment, once again pushing individuals to transient and insecure work and a vicious cycle to break free from. Both Wright & Patrick (2019) and Cheetham et al. (2019) also presented empirical evidence that the process of claiming Universal Credit and in particular the conditionality of welfare exacerbated deprivation as well as leading to increased anxiety and isolation, all having detrimental and demoralising impacts on claimant's quality of life. Jones (2019) demonstrated that labour market programmes lacked in the personalisation towards confronting different challenges that certain demographics faced, once again diminishing their efficacy in moving claimants into stable work. Conclusively, it was therefore surprising but optimistic that many welfare claimants were able to maintain enthusiastic and strongly orientated towards the benefits of paid work (Shildrick et al., 2012; Patrick, 2014).

It is important to consider some of the gendered implications of the changes to welfare, most significantly those affecting carers of which it has been established are predominantly women. A

work centric conditionality system has rendered unpaid domestic work both undervalued and increasingly restrictive to accommodate. An empirical study by Andersen (2020) found that "the work-related expectations place on mothers conflicted with their caring responsibilities, which resulted in time pressure, stress, and tiredness" (p. 443). Such conflicting expectations heavily contribute to the scope of work accessible to women, again framing part-time and low paid work not only as the most suitable but sometimes the only possible work to engage in for carers (Bennet & Daly, 2014). Although arguably attempts were made to ease these conflicts in the form of additional formal childcare and increased contribution to childcare costs for older children, the reality was that the support was impractical and inaccessible (Andersen, 2020). Williams (2012) challenges the concept of work in terms of conditionality procedures whereby domestic and caring work continues to be undervalued and de-prioritised and surmising that a more inclusive approach must incorporate ethics of care and work simultaneously. This is re-iterated by Patrick (2014) who suggests that the disregard of care as work, even in language, is counterproductive to creating a system that would foster respect and recognition. To emphasise again, although somewhat implicit, such matters as have been discussed are especially problematic for working-class women grappling with low pay work and the support of welfare.

Chapter Summary

What the literature presents, is a recurring theme of the danger of the low pay trap. The cycle is perpetuated by poor quality low-wage employment which not only fails to equip workers with the capability to either progress or escape, but also overflows to the point of having detrimental impacts in their lives, for example anxiety from instability and difficulty in maintaining a work life balance. For women, low pay and indeed the threat of this trap is common amongst typically female industries. Some women with caring responsibilities remain with limited alternatives in order to be able to accommodate their lifestyles or routines. What the literature has also presented is that welfare reform under Universal Credit has exacerbated the situation. Conditionality pushes those workers that depend on their labour towards the very jobs that trap them and appears even more punitive and problematic for women trying to simultaneously manage caring and domestic responsibilities.

CHAPTER THREE: THE DANGEROUS RISE OF PRECARIOUS WORK AND THE FOOD BANK

Chapter Outline

As a relatively new phenomenon in the UK, there is an emerging body of literature detailing the precarious labour market and the implications for workers. This chapter will explore this with an emphasis on the way that this type of work marginalises workers in many similar ways to that of low-wage work. At this point of the literature, I introduce the food bank by detailing its connection with the already discussed themes. I include its history and studies relating to philosophical debates of the ethics and position of the food bank, but also empirical studies involving users, volunteers, and shareholders at the food bank. Food bank need has become an affliction of the contemporary working-class struggling in the precarious labour market. I will discuss the two themes and the resulting phenomena and debates surrounding it in the sections that follow.

Precarious Work in the UK

The precarious labour market in the UK has become complexly intertwined with both IWP and low-wage work. What Newsome et al. (2018) include within the umbrella term of precarious or insecure work are: zero hours contracts; insecure agency work; and low paid self-employment. Sharp (2019) found that at the time of publication there were 3.7 million people in the UK engaging in precarious work, which totals to around one in nine within the labour force. Pennycook at al. (2013) furthermore, on zero-hours contracts, reported that on average those working on these contracts received a lower gross-weekly of almost half of that of those on more stable and permanent contracts. The shortfalls and dangers of precarious work for those who depend on it for an income draw parallels with those of perpetuating low wage employment which has been already discussed. Once again, the experiences of the working-class are pivotal, as those most deeply affected. These experiences include financial deprivation, a lack of progression, instability, poor treatment - all of which contribute to lower self-esteem and quality of life for those impacted (Standing, 2011; Heyes et al., 2018; Rubery et al., 2018).

As mentioned previously, many of the impacts of precarious work correlate with the term that Standing (2011) describes as the 'precariat'. In his jarring but eye-opening book, he conceptualises an emerging social class 'in a status that offers no sense of career, no sense of secure occupational identity and few, if any, entitlements to the state and enterprise benefits' (p. 24). Whilst this encompasses various social groups, the linking determinant is job insecurity. Standing (2011)

discusses workers in this situation that find themselves in a 'time squeeze' where they devote growing amounts of time to work-for-labour without it offering 'a reliable road to economic security or an occupational career worthy of the name' (p. 130). Precarious and non-standard work fails to provide workers with what is commonly accepted as a standard employment relationship (Bosch, 2004; Supiot, 2001) that would give individuals access to employment rights, social protections, additional to more intrinsic benefits such as security, opportunity, fair treatment, and a life beyond work (Rubery et al., 2018). From within employment, precarious workers have also been associated with organisational practices such as unfavourable performance management practice and intimidation (Alberti et al, 2018; Standing, 2011) and even the informal practice of workers being 'zero-ed down'. This is where there is a pressure to always accept hours or work is withdrawn or withheld, leading to workers finding themselves permanently 'on-call' waiting for shifts. The implications of this will be discussed in more detail in the following section. Fredman & Du Toit (2019) consider that the rise of precarious work can be attributed to a neoliberal agenda of increasing employee autonomy and incentivising businesses to hire more workers to facilitate flexibility and a changing market, however it appears that this is often at the detriment of the workers themselves. Again, this is most prominent in those that depend upon the income for a living, namely the working-class.

The experience of precarious work is not confined to the workplace for those implicated, and what Heyes et al. (2018) stress is that 'unpredictability in employment creates unpredictability in worker's lives' (p. 421). This unpredictability manifested in many guises, for example in terms of household finances; stability; managing childcare and family responsibilities; and personal and recreational time (Alberti et al., 2018; Standing, 2011). This in turn has shown to have negative impacts on mental health for those afflicted (Julià et al. 2017), additional to the anxiety which stems from uncertainty - most prominently that of financial uncertainty (Heyes et al., 2018). Precarious workers suffered from the pressure of the burden of constant job searches and changes to shifts and schedules, again having a negative impact on their health and wellbeing (Grimshaw et al., 2016).

Not dissimilar to that of low-wage work more generally, precarious employment is more common amongst elementary, caring, leisure and other service occupations (Booth, 2018) of which, as previously presented, comprise predominantly of women. Again, demonstrating further parallels with low-wage work more generally, women find themselves resorting to non-standard work in order to accommodate either parenting, care, or domestic responsibilities (Fredman, 2006). Fudge & Owens (2006) further comment that 'many women feel, and indeed are, trapped in non-standard work because it is constructed as socially, economically, and culturally appropriate for them' (p. 340). Considering the more tangible barriers, Escort (2012) in her own research conclusions found that

'most young women have strong work aspirations and appropriate qualifications, but considerable constraints limit their horizons, in turn affecting their health and well-being' (p. 425). On wellbeing, Fudge & Owens (2006) found that some mothers in precarious work felt a deep tension in trying to live up to expectations (both their own and of others) of what it meant to be a 'good mother', coupled with guilt and the feeling of inadequacy related to the pitfalls and instability related to precarious work. With all of this in mind, women therefore not only remain more vulnerable to the detrimental impact of precarious work given their increased likelihood of precarious contracts for lack of other viable options, but also face additional emotional and personal burdens most predominantly amongst those who are mothers.

Having discussed the institutional environment relating to both work and welfare and the impact had on those engaging in both low wage and precarious labour markets, the literature will now introduce the location of the food bank. The links that emerge will thus highlight why the food bank has become a growing but vital part of the conversation in connection with both IWP and precarious work.

Food Banks

The UK has witnessed significant rises in the emergence and use of food banks across the country. The rising presence and demand for food banks and food charity in the UK evokes a highly contentious debate in politics, policy, and society. As of mid 2020 2,000 food banks existed in the UK (Tyler, 2020). This figure would be significantly elevated if it included community services that also provided food in various forms, for example churches and charities. The Trussell Trust, which is Britain's largest food bank network, gave 1.6 million emergency food supplies to people in crisis in the financial year 2018 to 2019 (The Trussell Trust, 2019), and with additional independent food banks on the increase, this figure is far from representative of the whole situation.

There remains little doubt that those claiming from food banks have faced a demonisation from the UK media, attaching a damaging stigma to the claiming of food aid. Two historical and high-profile examples of this stand out. First was that of the Government Health Minister Edwina Currie who stated that '…they never learn to cook…the moment they've got a bit of spare cash they're off getting another tattoo' (Currie, 2014). In the same year Katie Hopkins (a renowned albeit controversial social commentator) publicly stated her opinion that 'food bank users are like terminal cancer patients. There may not be a tomorrow so spend like hell today' (Hopkins, 2014). With such comments circulating, it did not come as a surprise that those needing a food bank feel marginalised and self-conscious. Wells and Caraher (2014) found that the stories of food bank claimants themselves rarely were

exposed in the media, and although this has somewhat changed up to now there remains little in academic literature of the experiences of those using a food bank and their biographies.

The current situation of food banks and their respective users is complicated to say the least. Socially and politically, they pose a pressing dilemma concerning the current necessity for food banks and what their place will be in the future in the UK. The following literature details this and divulges the complexity of food aid for progressive politics. Whilst food aid in Britain is, in theory, a short-term solution, the bigger picture asks whether the environment of the food bank should more importantly be used as an alarm and a marker for change in policy or societal structure. In relevance to the context of this study however is not just the development and debate surrounding the dramatic increase of food banks, but additionally the changing demographic reflecting a new emergence of working populations needing the food bank.

History of the Food Bank

Food aid is not a recent phenomenon - the emergence of soup kitchens can be traced back to the 1790s under the initiative of Sir Benjamin Thompson. The need for food relief became apparent during the Industrial Revolution as conditions for the poor deteriorated (Rumble, 2009). Soup kitchens were criticised in their early stage, especially for encouraging dependency for users (Bramen, 2010). They were made illegal for a short spell when the workhouse came into force, then only to be reintroduced and once again reintegrated into society. They faced criticism in the public narrative albeit this time for long queues and the degrading and intrusive nature of questioning that was undertaken by staff towards the visitors (Vernon, 2007). Whilst soup kitchens generally provide a one-off meal for those in need, the introduction of the food bank model differs in that food provisions are provided to cover a certain number of days, and unfortunately often on more than one occasion.

According to the European Federation of Food Banks (FEBA) (2018), the first food bank was incorporated in Phoenix, Arizona in the USA in 1967, from which a trend spread, and more food banks began to open across the USA. Canada soon followed and then spreading to Europe in 1984. They were incorporated to aid victims of food poverty and hunger, and began to spread even amongst wealthy societies such as North America and Europe (FEBA, 2018). In the UK, The Trussell Trust was established in 1997 following an investigation of 'local indices of deprivation and 'hidden hunger' in the UK. The results were damning, showing that significant numbers of local people faced short term hunger as a result of a crisis (The Trussell Trust, 2018). The food bank network quickly grew in Britain, with statistics from The Trussell Trust (2018) showing that parcel distribution increased from around 25,000 parcels issued between 2008 and 2009, to the more recent figure of

over 1.6 million parcels handed out annually. Certain circumstances have become more prominent in reasons for food bank usage following increased visitor numbers since 2008. These include the impact of the introduction of Universal Credit, in particular delays and changes to payments, and the increase of people within employment needing the support of the food bank (The Trussell Trust, 2018).

Whilst the rise in food banks certainly coincides with policies of austerity implemented by the UK government (Goodman, 2018), the UK debate remains divided as to whether the rising food bank use can be attributed to backlash and consequences of austerity sanctions. An opposing view to this is that they represent a response to more readily available food aid (Fisher, 2014; Williams, 2013). British society has undoubtedly witnessed a trend of the normalisation of food banks, for example a labelling scheme that was launched in Sainsbury's supermarket whereby dedicated labels are attached to products which are particularly needed in local food banks (Smithers, 2018). Beck (2019) shares this view, commenting on this same normalisation of food banks but in this example within a children's book. Food banks do not stand alone as a charity making efforts to help those in poverty, with baby banks (Roberts, 2018), clothes banks (Ryan, 2016), and beauty banks (Hughes, 2018) all on the increase since 2010 also coinciding with the introduction of austerity cuts.

The All-Party Parliamentary Inquiry into Hunger and Food Poverty released in 2014 (Parliament, 2014) highlighted concerns that measures of austerity and sanctions imposed by the government could be contributing to a rise in food charity and the need for it, however nothing was conclusive. Much of the data that was presented in the report was submitted from food charities themselves, generating critique that it had been strategically selected (Butler, 2014), or even unrepresentative of the wider UK population (Perry et al., 2014). A report by Loopstra (2015) opined that 'greater central government welfare cuts, sanctioning, and unemployment rates were significantly associated with higher rates of food parcel distribution' (p. 2). The rise in food banks and the normalisation of a food banks position in society is open to further investigation to tackle increasing reliance on food charity. This is applicable also to other charity organisations providing donations of certain products to those who need it.

To contextualise the food bank environment in the UK, I will present some of the available statistics for 2019, given that this was the time that my own data collection took place. I will re-iterate that although I inform the context using statistics from The Trussell Trust, and IFAN, this does not encapsulate all the figures from food banks in the UK. This admission is cognisant of the fact that many food banks and food aid providers fall outside of the remit of those that collect statistics. At the (financial) year-end of 2019, The Trussell Trust (2020) recorded that 1,606,244, thus almost doubling

from five years previous (year-end of 2014). The primary reasons noted for these statistics of individuals using food bank use were low income (39%), benefit delays (17%), and benefit changes (15%) (The Trussell Trust, 2020). From The Trussell Trust there was no further detail either about the specific demographics using the charity, for example gender or age, nor any more detailed information about their reasons for claiming food aid. To draw a comparative figure an IFAN report noted that 226,605 parcels were provided by organisations within their network in 2019 - there was no historical data however to compare the figure. The reporting for why people were using the food bank was vague, however attributing many cases to: insufficient benefits; changes to benefits; recently becoming unemployed; and income from employment insufficient. Again, there was a lack of demographical information showing that many of the independent food banks largely were operating 'under-the-radar' (IFAN, 2020).

How a Food Bank Works in the UK

The finer operating details of food banks vary depending on each organisation; however, food banks are generally established within communities either in collaboration with churches or local councils. Most food banks work with a referral system which is put in place with local-service or care providers such as social workers, doctors' surgeries, schools, and job centres. It is the professionals within these organisations who have the responsibility to allocate the vouchers. Vouchers entitle users to an emergency food parcel which they collect from their local food bank (Lambie-Mumford, 2013**;** Livingstone, 2015). Some food banks rely on trust and choose not to use the voucher and referral system at all, deciding that they do not want to further humiliate those who require assistance (Caplan, 2016). Limits on how many referrals any certain individual can claim are in place to act as a marker of where further intervention is needed from support, care services, or other types of welfare (Lambie-Mumford, 2013; Caplan, 2016). The Trussell Trust (2013) however stated that rather than turning away anyone who was requesting help from a food bank, the system flags such cases with the intention of initiating signposting for help.

On the referral system and the interactions between organisations, Beck & Gwilym (2020) cite this as the 'moral maze of food bank use', stating that 'the actors involved in referrals must make a moral decision about who deserves to be referred […] and who does not, accepting a role within this moral maze (p. 395). May et al. (2019) refer to a similar concept but framing the position as a 'subcontracting of moral difficulty'. Coverage of the UK food bank environment, largely of food banks within The Trussell Trust network however demonstrate that many of these organisations can rely on external partners as the gatekeepers making the decisions over who has access to the food bank's aid, which May et al. (2019) refer to as 'moral distancing'. This said however, Cloke et al.

(2018) accept that a further scrutiny is required of the landscape, for example food banks from outside The Trussell Trust network who may encounter additional moral reasoning needed in terms of their own distinct referral system, or indeed a lack of it.

Food banks rely on the time and work contribution of volunteers, and a food and income supply from donations and collections. In some cases, food banks partner or collaborate with supermarkets whereby baskets are installed for food collections (Caplan, 2016), or they rely on local donations and some allocated funds from local and community services. The food that is supplied is non-perishable essentials and basics such as tinned food and staples such as pasta or rice, and basic toiletries rather than luxury items (Bull & Harries, 2013). Food banks are designed to be an *emergency service* rather than something that people should become reliant on in the long term, but the reality of this is contestable.

On food aid, Poppendieck (1998) claimed that '…one of the persistent dilemmas of the emergency food project [is] is the tension between pursuing more fundamental solutions to poverty and meeting immediate need' (p. 38). The situation in the UK raises a controversial debate concerning inextricable links between changes in the labour market structure (such as squeezed wages and zero-hour contracts), the state welfare system, and the rising use of food aid such as food banks (Livingstone, 2015). Wells & Caraher (2014) found that victims of food poverty are labelled by the media and politicians as 'work-shy'. A climate of blame delays a solution, and the presence and queues of food banks grow. This however is not an option for longevity in confronting both food poverty and IWP in the UK. As a wealthy and developed nation, the presence of food banks demands the prioritisation of equality in access to food, stable work, and sufficient social security, and '…these experiences need to be conceptualised and framed as an issue of social justice, and ultimately, human rights' (Lambie-Mumford, 2013).

Studies of Food Bank Users

Various studies across the globe have investigated increasing food bank usage in countries and communities. This is inclusive of why use is increasing and how it affects individuals as well as details of the wider contributory institutional environment. Findings from different countries identify common causes and impacts, such as the psychological and social impact of the need for a food bank for individuals, and the role that work factors are commonly playing in food bank need. Whilst the processes and systems of food banks differ not only from country to country but also from food bank to food bank (even within the same country), common factors help to construct a background and perspective of those claiming from food banks.

As mentioned above, a complex web of factors and possible factors often contribute to an individuals need for a food bank, and this is represented across various country environments (McPherson, 2006; Lightman et al., 2008; Horst et al., 2014; Garratt, 2017; Prayogo et al., 2017; Lawson & Kearns, 2018). Whilst welfare reforms and benefit systems contribute to a large proportion of food bank users (McPherson, 2006; Prayogo et al., 2017; Lawson & Kearns, 2018), other important characteristics play a significant role such as family structure and household compositions (Garratt, 2017), as well as individual circumstance and adverse life conditions and events (Prayogo et al., 2017). The demographics of food bank users are not only fluid but susceptible to change due to external environments, and as McNeill (2017) stated, '…there is no 'typical user' of a food bank. Anybody can need a food bank's help'. Statistics have shown that of the recorded visitors, the two largest categories amongst those referred to a food bank are low income and delays in benefits. Other contributory factors include debt; illness or disability; domestic violence or family issues; or homelessness (Caplan, 2016; Coughlan, 2017; McNeill, 2017; The Trussell Trust, 2017). For those using food banks whilst using welfare, '…a major reason for using a food bank has been cuts to benefits, which include: benefit caps, the 'bedroom 'tax, reassignment to a different and lower category of claimant, or being 'sanctioned' which means having benefits stopped altogether. This is one of the strategies currently being used to discourage the so-called 'dependency culture 'and 'make work pay'' (Caplan, 2016. p. 8).

Amongst those visiting the food bank alongside employment often the work is insecure, low-paid, or unreliable (Butler, 2017; Coughlan, 2017; McNeill, 2017). Whilst Coughlan (2017) summarised that '…the best inoculation against needing a food bank seems to be a full-time permanent job', Tiplady (2017) highlighted an NHS in crisis where plummeting nurse's salaries - 14% decrease in six years, was even driving full time nurses to food banks, especially in London where rent prices have increased. Workers on zero-hour contracts live amongst instability and fluctuations. Their working conditions can quickly change, escalating them to crisis and the need for emergency food aid (Caplan, 2017). Lightman et al. (2008) conducted a study amongst food bank users in Canada relating food bank usage with the changing labour market situation which had emerged as a result of globalisation. Results show increasing numbers of food bank users who were in low quality employment, which is mirrored in countries such as the UK (The Trussell Trust, 2018). Increases amongst the unemployed were noted amongst those in precarious work, low-wage work, and part time positions (Lightman et al., 2008). On comparison between employed and unemployed food bank users, Lightman et al. (2008) note that 'what is remarkable is the degree of continuing deprivation among the working food bank users…such precarious employment does little to change their lives and provides little stability

for future progression' (pp. 23-24). A gap in the literature however remains of the situation for working food bank users in other country environments, for example in Britain.

Studies into the social and psychological impact of food bank usage for individuals first have shown that a sense of gratitude is shown towards the food bank and the staff for the help that has been made available to them (Douglas et al., 2015; Hicks-Stratton, 2004; Horst et al., 2014; McNeill, 2011; McPherson, 2006; Nikou, 2002). This is unfortunately overshadowed by the negative emotions which accompany an individual's visit to a food bank such as shame, embarrassment, degradation, humiliation, failure, powerlessness and frustration (Douglas et al., 2015; Garthwaite et al., 2015; Hicks-Stratton, 2004; Kratzmann, 2003; McPherson, 2006; Nikou, 2002; Nugent, 2000; Perry et al., 2014). On a study in Canada, Hicks-Stratton (2004) found that food bank users feel that the experience has had a negative impact on their reputation and identity. In the social context, common themes occurred in the literature such as fears of stigma and the worry of being seen or related with a food bank (Hicks-Stratton, 2004; Horst et al., 2014; Kratzmann, 2003; McNeill, 2011; Nugent, 2000) which could sometimes even lead to secrecy about their food bank use, or even prevent them from accepting the charity (Kicks-Stratton, 2004; Horst et al., 2014; Lambie-Mumford, 2013). For some users, based on their own perceptions of those who qualified or needed the assistance of food banks, they do not see themselves as applicable in this category (Nugent, 2000) and sometimes thus made it difficult or uncomfortable for them to accept the help (Garthwaite et al., 2015; Lambie-Mumford, 2013; Perry et al., 2014). All in all, the receipt of food aid for people is psychologically complex, respective of their individual circumstances.

Researching Food Banks and Users

The food bank as per what is presented is undoubtably controversial (Beck & Gwilym, 2020; Cloke et al., 2017; Williams et al., 2016) and consequently there is an emerging body of research being carried out both within and about the food bank. Having discussed some of the philosophical and societal debates raised about the presence and increasing queues at UK food banks, various works have engaged with some of the discussions at the heart of the field. Furthermore, empirical data collection has also been carried out exploring the operations, governance, and the people involved. The experiences of other researchers and the data collected gives insight into methodologies and strategies to gaining insight.

Contextual to the country context that has been discussed, namely the proliferation of food banks in the UK, qualitative study in academia has complemented quantitative and statistical information, for

example that provided by both The Trussell Trust and The Independent Food Network (IFAN). Focusing on seven recent qualitative empirical studies into food banks and food bank use, whilst all of them include input from scholars and from academic methods, three of them have been produced by the networks themselves - two from The Trussell Trust (Loopstra & Lalor, 2017; Sosenko et al., 2019) and one from IFAN (Loopstra et al., 2019) - and three in a more academic-style presentation (Beck & Gwilym, 2020; Garthwaite et al., 2015; Lambie-Mumford, 2013; Williams et al., 2016). What these studies have in common is that they favour a qualitative style in other to achieve a richer snapshot of the lives and roles of both volunteers and users of food banks, but also of others involved for example referral partners. This method means that data collected not only produces multiple insights and perspectives, but also is triangulated amongst the different group sets.

For many of these works, there is a clear collaboration with the networks (predominantly The Trussell Trust) of which it is supposed that in this way access has been facilitated to the participants involved. Little however has been anticipated of the bias that this may carry in terms of The Trussell Trust and its own strategic motivations for collaboration in the projects, nor are there acknowledgements of challenges that arose in terms of either access or formal or informal ethics. Two of the papers use ethnographic methods (Garthwaite el al., 2015; Williams et al., 2016), incorporating not only interviews but also observations made at the relative food bank, contributing to both the embodiment of experience and sensory and relational data. Garthwaite (2016) further reflected not just on conducting ethnography but taking on a dual role of researching whilst volunteering at a UK food bank. She engages with some of the practical and moral challenges of carrying out research in this way, presenting many reflections which went on to shape the design of my own study, which will be discussed in more detail in the methodology chapter. All in all, as a relatively new research location, there is space for development in the methodology of accessing data from the food bank, both in terms of maximising the authenticity of data and of commitment to ethics and in particular an ethic of care. Furthermore, there remains significant gaps in the literatures of the qualitative experiences of the food bank users themselves, most notably the impact of their biographies on the demand for food provision and the impact and experience of using a food bank.

Chapter Summary

The culminating themes interrelate amongst the various factors relating to work and welfare in the UK are resulting in the increase of individuals needing the support of UK food banks. What is most concerning is the number who are doing so from within work, based on the factors already discussed. What this chapter has highlighted first is that with the rise of precarious work emerges a new

challenge for many workers who find themselves limited to both precarious and low wage work, of which many are women. As a lifeline for those in crisis, perhaps between work or due to the shortfalls of the low-quality work I have introduced, the food bank has become a hub of societal anxieties. What the literature has shown is that whilst workers globally have found themselves having to rely on food aid, both the food banks and the food bank users themselves have faced both stigma and criticism for their contributions to a culture of dependency, and not without an individual impact for those afflicted. What appear as gaps in the literature, however, are the more detailed accounts of the connections for female workers specifically amongst a climate of low wage, precarious work, workfare, and the unfortunate need to use a food bank within these.

CHAPTER FOUR: SOCIAL JUSTICE - ADDRESSING RECOGNITION AND REDISTRIBUTION

Chapter Outline

Significant themes such as IWP and food bank usage have highlighted alarming injustices and inequalities faced by working-class women in a country facing measures of austerity. The injustice that they face, whilst undeniably complex, is bleak as they find themselves turning to food banks to feed themselves and their families. To frame this as a matter of injustice, whilst contextualising and understanding what is occurring in a theoretical sense, this chapter will introduce the work of Nancy Fraser as a framework to be applied. What stands out as pertinent in Fraser's work is the addressing of both distributive and recognitive matters. In order to apply the framework to my own presentation of data and conclusions, I will now contextualise both justice and Fraser's work within this, inclusive of how to apply the framework to academic equality research. This chapter will therefore inform the basis of the conceptual framework of my thesis.

Introducing Social Justice

An important and much debated question arises, what is social justice and why does it matter? Social justice provides the basis for a fair relationship between individuals and societies and communities globally. Plato and other ancient Western philosophers discussed the significance of justice and what it meant to be fair and just. Plato defined justice as rights, efficiency and harmony for a whole community and not just those in positions of power or strength (Allen, 2006). As a development of ideas of justice, the term 'social justice' arose around the time of the 18th century in Europe (Pérez Garzón, 2018) and became increasingly more prevalent in society for example with the rise of the industrial revolution whereby consumption started to increase. With the civil rights movement also, civil liberties and freedoms began to be challenged (Bankston, 2010).

Various theories have been presented in a response to questions of how social justice can be approached and contextualised. Theories such as that of Marxism (1867) began to interrogate the institutions of society, how resources are distributed, and the ways that this can impact equality. A Marxist ethic perceived injustice in that of exploitative class divides and the proposal of communism saw justice as the abolition of social and economic distinctions which created hierarchies and ultimately inequality (Rosenthal & Yudin, 1967). The theory of Marxism remains inspiring for social justice theorists, meriting its stance on humanism and equality. Sharing similar intellectual concerns

of fairness and justice, John Rawls published *A Theory of Justice* (1971) which centralises social institutions in the pursuit of just society. Rawls (1971) frames societal structures as the subject of fairness and equality, therefore identifying two principles that outline that 'each person should have equal rights to the most extensive liberties consistent with other people's enjoying the same liberties and that inequalities should be arranged so that they will be to everyone's advantage and so that no one will be blocked from occupying any position' (Bankston, 2010: p. 173). Economist Amartya Sen (2009) who also published theories of social justice (1999) commented that Rawls' theory of justice somewhat adopted a 'veil of ignorance' (Sen, 2009), and Bankston (2010) summarises that this 'presents an overly abstract approach to the just society... […] ... judgements need to be based on comparisons of social arrangements to make decisions about what is more-or-less just' (p.174). Bankston (2010) further interrogates that a Rawlsian framework to justice lacks the mention of social distinctions, for example categories such as race, glass and gender, and that *A Theory of Justice* makes 'relative advantage or disadvantage purely a matter of structural positions. Seeing people as positions rather than as individuals implicitly reduces them to categories' (p. 175). What this suggests is that a perspective of justice needs to further take into consideration cultural and societal structures in order to fully understand the concept of fairness and justice, and to avoid defining categories of society as victims by an emphasis on relative advantage. Deeper understandings of the categories as mentioned such as race, class, and gender mean that these identities can be situated more deeply in the notion of what is just and fair, sometimes beyond a basic distributive justice. This becomes more important in increasingly multi-cultural and diverse communities and environments.

Shifting the focus from Identity Politics: Justice as both Material and Symbolic

Nancy Fraser (1995; 1997; 1998) proposes a framework for social justice that interrelates both recognition and distribution. Whilst both are commonly cited as critical factors in justice and equality, what Fraser proposes is that to conceptualise justice, neither factor alone is sufficient. On contemporary discourses of social justice, Fraser (1998) comments that 'the discourse […] once centred on distribution, is now increasingly divided between claims for redistribution, on the one hand, and claims for recognition, on the other. In this new constellation, the two kinds of justice claims are often dissociated from one another. The result is a widespread decoupling of the cultural politics of difference from the social politics of equality. In some cases, moreover, this dissociation has become a polarisation.' (p. 1).

The crux of this statement introduces the pivotal principle of Fraser's theory, in that recent movements for justice have placed increasing emphasis on perspectives of recognition whilst de-

prioritising those of distribution. Fraser's critique of identity politics therefore is that it endangers efforts for justice with either/or junctures, where progressive equality in fact would benefit from the consideration of both distribution and recognition. Fraser acknowledges gender as a category with two evident sides - encompassing both economic and cultural dimensions (1998), whilst the reiteration of the significance of economic issues is crucial in remaining cognizant and responsive to class inequality. I will now discuss these two factors, in response to Fraser's acknowledgement of the essential nature of both.

The concept of redistribution has long been tied up with notions of social justice and the nature of certain socioeconomic injustices, for example: the theory of capitalist exploitation by Marx (1867); ideas of the fair distribution of 'primary goods' by Rawls (1971); and justice in terms of access to capabilities proposed by Sen (1985). As Fraser (1995) describes, such injustice is '…rooted in the political-economic structure of society… […] …examples include exploitation (having the fruits of one's labour appropriated for the benefit of others); economic marginalisation (being confined to undesirable or poorly paid work or being denied access to income-generating labour altogether; and deprivation (being denied an adequate material standard of living).' (p. 70-71). Many social justice theorists generally concern their work with ideas that notice inequalities amongst both income and wealth, and that equality can be established through a fair participation in the economic and material sections of capitalist society. In this way, basic needs can be met when people integrate with the labour force within society, and this was further developed with the introduction of welfare states designed to complement the model and support those disadvantaged in this way. Redistribution amongst societies looks to solution inequalities or injustices of material or income within communities, or nations respectively. The differential impact of austerity across classes in Britain is a primary example of the need for this.

The second type of social justice according to Fraser (1995) is that of the politics of recognition, which is an injustice that is '…cultural or symbolic [and] is rooted in social patterns of representation, interpretation, and communication' (p. 71). The struggle for recognition is longstanding and can be seen in historical anti-slavery movements and in movements for voting rights and other rights for citizens in society. Explicit examples of such injustice come in the forms of: 'cultural domination (being subjected to patterns of interpretation and communication that are associated with another culture and are alien and/or hostile to one's own); nonrecognition (being rendered invisible via the authoritative representational, communicative, and interpretative practices of one's culture); and disrespect (being routinely maligned or disparaged in stereotypic public cultural representations and/or in everyday life interactions).' (p. 71). Taylor (1992) conceptualised the importance of such

cultural injustices, for example 'nonrecognition or misrecognition…can be a form of oppression, imprisoning someone in a false, distorted, reduced mode of being. Beyond simple lack of respect, it can inflict a grievous wound, saddling people with crippling self-hatred. Due recognition is not just a courtesy but a vital human need' (p. 4). This can be seen in movements for equal rights such as those of feminism, racial and ethnic minority groups, and sexual minorities such as homosexuals for example. Saying this however, Fraser denotes the importance of recognition in social justice using the example of sexuality whereby there is a 'division in the status order of society, as institutionalised patterns of cultural value construct heterosexuality as natural and normative, homosexuality as perverse and despised' (Fraser & Honneth, 2003: p.18). This is translated across negative valuations and injustices against sectors of certain societies leading to unequal treatment and an unequal status compared to others, in a more culturally or symbolic sense than that of material injustice.

Fraser contributes to debates through her thesis that both types of injustice - recognition and distribution, are in fact intertwined and that a disassociation of the two would lead to inefficiencies in a social justice framework. Fraser (1995) states that 'even the most material economic institutions have a constitutive, irreducible cultural dimension; they are shot through with significations and norms. Conversely, even the most discursive cultural practices have a constitutive, irreducible political-economic dimension; they are underpinned by material supports' (p. 72). Ray and Sayer (1999) support the concept of such an integration within theory, claiming 'the paradox of a turn away from economy to culture at a time of continuing if not growing economic problems is becoming increasingly apparent. The silence on these matters cannot continue much longer, and a fresh examination of the relationship between culture and economy is required' (p. 21). Fraser recognises that a dilemma and tension arose in the addressing of both types of injustice, where a claim for recognition was often in the form of calling for attention and for value to be given to specificity, whereas a claim for redistribution often prompted calls to undermine economic systems that highlighted specificity. The framework therefore is strategically developed for groups facing injustice that is both cultural and economic and where the two are conceptually interrelated. An approach will need to simultaneously remedy the complex discriminatory systems in place in order to consider the whole picture of the social injustice at play. Fraser achieves this through proposing an integrated approach - which she refers to as participatory parity.

Theorising Justice through Participatory Parity

With the challenge presented, to therefore equally and appropriately address the two forms of injustice, in a way that not only acknowledges but also be able to alleviates oppression, Fraser (1995)

proposes the following theoretical solution. She affirms that the dilemma of the two concepts of injustice should be resolved through the integration of recognition and redistribution - however without subordinating one to the other. In Fraser's work she looks to conceptually separate those who are claimants of injustice via recognition, and those of distribution, but as mentioned previously, she finds that these collectives are often interwoven between culture and economy. What follows is what she calls a 'bivalent collectivity' where aspects from both types of injustice can be identified, and thus what she proposes is a parity of participation which acknowledges both a class and status order in society and its effect on injustice.

Fraser (1995) notes that at both ends of the spectrum (recognition and distribution) there are collectives of which injustice is rooted in distinct forms. For example, in terms of a Marxian working-class, injustice comes from a socioeconomic arrangement whereby material wealth and income is unjustly distributed amongst separated classes. Claimants sell their labour between distinct social classes, and ideologies of class inferiority and superiority are tied up with economic and political matters, and therefore 'overcoming class exploitation requires restructuring the political economy to alter the class distribution of social burdens and social benefits' (p. 76). On the other end of the spectrum, a collectivity that witnesses an injustice rooted in culture for example can trace those justices back to cultural and valuational societal structure. Although economic injustice may be derived from a cultural recognition, the root of the injustice is in that of recognition rather than distribution. A collectivity to which this may be applicable as previously mentioned, is that of sexuality, as Fraser (1995) argues - '…gays and lesbians also suffer serious economic injustices; they can be summarily dismissed from work and are denied family-based social-welfare benefits. But far from being rooted directly in the economic structure, these derive instead from an unjust cultural-valuational structure. The remedy for the injustice, consequently, is recognition, not redistribution' (p. 77). Where a complication arises however is where it is not so obvious where a collectivity is placed on a conceptual spectrum, whereby exploitation or disadvantage could be traced to both political-economic factors as well as cultural.

In the cases where the injustice can be defined as a product of both maldistribution and misrecognition, Fraser sees that 'neither redistributive remedies alone nor recognition remedies alone will suffice' (p. 78) and refers to such groups as a 'bivalent collectivity'. Firstly to take the case of gender, Fraser (1995) summarises that gender as a collective faces elements of both political-economic injustice as well as cultural and symbolic, claiming that the two systems 'intertwine to reinforce one another dialectically, as sexist and androcentric cultural norms are institutionalised in the state and the economy, while women's economic disadvantage restricts women's 'voice',

impeding equal participation in the making of culture, in public spheres, and in everyday life.' (p. 79). Gender roles largely divide the workforce in terms of productive and reproductive labour, but also in occupational variation often leading to economic marginalisation, exclusion or deprivation. Meanwhile androcentric norms dominate modes of gender often leading to subordination of women including devaluation and discrimination in the symbolic sphere. Both systems demand almost opposing remedies however without an approach considering both matters of inequality; forms of injustice will be maintained. Evidently the dilemma here amongst the gender struggle for a remedy for the injustices faced by women all over the world, is that feminists concerned with economic injustice may undermine the struggle for change against cultural injustice or exploitation and vice versa.

In overcoming the redistribution-recognition dilemma, Fraser conceptualises the idea of parity of participation, which although is separated into two dimensions to incorporate both recognition and distribution, it should be treated as a single model in systematic application. Fraser (2003) describes that 'the normative core of [the] conception is the notion of parity of participation. According to this norm, justice requires social arrangements that permit all (adult) members of society to interact with one another as peers. For participatory parity to be possible, I claim, at least two conditions must be satisfied... [an] objective condition [which] precludes forms and levels of economic dependence and inequality that impede parity of participation… [and an] intersubjective condition [which] precludes institutionalised norms that systematically depreciate some categories of people and the qualities associated with them' (p. 36). Through the existence of both conditions parity of participation would therefore address both class and status structures that provoke injustice. In attainment of the two conditions proposed by Fraser, social justice would thus be achieved, and institutional arrangements would allow for equal participation with other members of society in social, political, and professional life. Fraser argues that subordination in whichever form impedes the ability to participate in an equal and just way, thus such collectives as mentioned above are conceptualised in their access and availability to the conditions of the framework of participatory parity.

Various distinct values arise from Fraser's framework, which is a two-pronged approach. Fraser (2003) argues that the two-dimensional theory of parity of participation is nonsectarian when analysing the status model (p. 30). This means that that it can be applied to a diverse society and there is no preconception of what determines a good life, but it is more based on justice and what is fair rather than a biased or fixed perception of good. Secondly, Fraser's framework emphasises the impact of institutions and changing institutions rather than on individual or interpersonal relationships and psychology (p. 31). Fraser (2003) sees the root of injustice in norms and patterns embedded within

formal and informal institutions in society, therefore that a remedy can be found in institutional analysis and ultimately change. Even in terms of the status model, to overcome cultural or symbolic subordination Fraser claims that the solution within institutional order lies in 'deinstitutionalising patters of cultural values that impede parity of participation and replacing them with patterns that foster it' (p. 31). Whilst Fraser's framework remains politicised as it pressures an outlook for change within the role of institutions, it also explores the capability for change through institutional change. Institutional practices and a commitment to change behaviours and attitudes with the application of parity of participation therefore proposes a progressive solution to social injustice.

A Conceptual Framework for Researching Injustice

Having proposed a theoretical solution to the interplay between redistributive and recognitive injustice, I will next explore the way that participatory parity can be applied more practically, including ways that previous scholars have applied Fraser's framework to their own research. The approach suggested by Fraser (1995) in achieving participatory parity is that of 'perspectival dualism' (p. 42). With this approach, Fraser (1995) claims that 'we can assess the justice of any social practice, regardless of where it is institutionally located, from either or both of two analytically distinct normative vantage points, asking: Does the practice in question work to undermine or to ensure both the objective and intersubjective conditions of participatory parity?' (p. 42-43). This approach is advantageous in the way that it does not subordinate either recognition or redistribution to each other, and furthermore strives to both overcome any dissociation between the two whilst maintaining the ability to interrogate any tensions or relations between the two forms of injustice.

Perspectival dualism must be dialogical and discursive in style to avoid a populist or authoritarian view (Fraser, 2003). If a method is too intertwined with identity politics this may undermine the dualistic nature of what is trying to be achieved methodologically. Perspectival dualism must additionally be historically and contextually dynamic because flexibility may be fundamental to change systems that have become embedded practices and therefore resistant to change. Fraser (2003) stresses the importance of pragmatism in achieving participatory parity, given the diversity not only of certain collectives and the injustice that is individual to them, but also of the institutional environment and the tensions and relationships affecting the groups in question. A flexible and pragmatic approach therefore allows leeway for unique group circumstance - especially recognition and the necessity for acknowledgement of distinctiveness or sameness. As mentioned earlier, the recognition-redistribution dilemma sometimes raises opposing arguments concerning the value of specificity therefore participatory parity will vary in the outcomes depending on the systems of

oppression or injustice. For example, where ethnic minorities, particularly during the civil rights movement, called for the common acceptance of citizenship rights regardless of ethnic difference, in the case of sexuality and gay rights, activists struggle for the recognition of difference in sexual orientation and ideology (p. 45). In a perspectival dualistic approach to the achievement of participatory parity in both cases however, the necessary remedy for injustice is viewed without jeopardising either collectives need for either distinctiveness or sameness.

Finally, in allowing for flexibility in the approach to injustice, strategies for reform must be able to adopt a corresponding flexibility and leniency especially within political strategy and policy. Fraser (2003) outlines two approaches to institutional reform considering the frameworks developed. Firstly, an affirmative strategy would correct inequitable outcomes of particular social arrangements but without the disturbance or disruption of underlying structures and would target ultimate outcomes of injustice - perhaps an example being that of the welfare state if analysed as a solution to material inequality. On the other hand, a transformative strategy looks at the restructuring of underlying frameworks in approaching injustice and unjust outcomes in society (p. 73-78). A transformative strategy is more concerned with the root causes of social inequality and looks to foster long term change rather than a short-term fix. In line with Fraser's approach, a strategy must be contextual to the complexities of systems of oppression and must be lenient to the interconnectedness of issues of both recognition and redistribution. Fraser calls for a keener focus on integration to diffuse tensions between the impacts of distribution on matters of recognition and vice versa.

Scholars have applied the theoretical concept of participatory parity in research both of inequalities and institutional interventions designed to reduce said inequalities (Dahl, 2004; Leppänen, 2012; Mackie & Tett, 2013; Morrison, 2015). In these papers, the authors have used participatory parity as a critically normative framework of claims of injustice and their attendant remedies. Dahl (2004) for example on the Danish welfare state concluded that whilst institutional changes demonstrate changes for example in terms of pay for home-helpers, this has been at the sacrifice of justices such as advances away from androcentric perceptions of work. A similar theorising is discussed by Leppänen (2012), however within the context of hypothesising on the successful implementation of an unconditional basic income. Both examples demonstrate the value of the concept of participatory parity in interrogating the role of institutions and the part they play in contributions to progressive and sustainable justice in societies. The two-dimensional aspect of participatory justice proposed by Fraser, also shows value in its ability to theorise inequality for specific demographic groups, for example women (Morrison, 2015). Using a theoretical lens attentive to distribution, recognition, and the links between them, conclusions drawn were cognisant and reflective of the distinct challenges

and barriers faced by different groups within society without divergence from material injustices. In concluding on the key strength of this theoretical approach based on these examples, I concur with Dahl that 'Fraser's framework is a powerful analytical tool for a redirection without losing the insights of former struggles' (p. 334) which relates to historical and ongoing class inequalities.

Chapter Summary

This chapter has presented a theoretical framework of participatory parity which has explored a way of understanding and remedying injustice through a two-dimensional lens, acknowledging both distribution and recognition and indeed their interconnectedness. Fraser's work challenges modern day identity politics, refocusing justice not only back to historical and ongoing struggles for redistribution, but also simultaneously presenting a flexible and pragmatic framework relevant not only to diverse demographics but also to the diverse injustices faced by groups and individuals alike and most prominently the economic struggles of class inequality. Optimistically, participatory parity poses the potential for confronting institutional practices and policies in a way that acknowledges the nuances of those affected and the potential longevity of reform.

CHAPTER FIVE: THEORETICAL UNDERPINNINGS - FEMINIST THEORISING

Chapter Outline

Across the multiple social sciences including management and organisation studies, feminist theorising seeks to enable new insights into working practices and politics through the lens of gender. Calás & Smircich (2009) refer to this as 'questioning the ways in which a gendered world affects the nature of knowledge production' (p. 246) and whilst the theoretical approaches within feminism are diverse and wide ranging, scholars and works are commonly united with a concern for transformative research and social change. This goes much deeper than just the study of women and gender. Gherardi (2016), on organisation studies for example, calls for the 'redefining of 'organisational categories' so that they explicitly accommodate the experiences of men and women and reveal the ideological consequences of representing an abstract 'labour force' and a de-sexualised and dis-embodied worker in language' (p. 212). Guided by this notion I engage with feminism using it as what Bell et al. (2020) describe as a 'disruptive lens through which to understand and address sexist oppression and exclusion and gender-based inequalities' (p. 19) in the context of study of IWP. The feminist underpinning in my thesis comes prior to the presentation of my methodology, signifying why and how it was so significant in the production of a research method studying women claiming from the food bank.

An Introduction to Feminist Theory

Beginning on a personal level, I initiated my PhD eager to engage in a feminist study, having prior experience, albeit limited, producing feminist academic writing. As I began to read not only about the history of feminism but also about feminist methodologies and practices, I started to develop my perspective of what it meant to be a feminist and to conduct study in a feminist way. As Hesse-Biber (2007) states, 'it is our acknowledgment and appreciation of difference that sustains our ability to navigate unchartered terrain toward meaningful social change' (p. 3), and it was the notion of differences which became pivotal when considering the implications of my own research and its relationship with feminist study. Learning more about the second, third, and fourth waves of feminism, and from reading classic literatures such as: The Second Sex (de Beauvoir, 1952); Ain't I A Woman: Black Women and Feminism (hooks, 1981); Women, Race and Class (Davis, 1981); Sister Outsider (Lorde, 1984); Gender Trouble (Butler, 1990); Bad Feminist (Gay, 2014); and We Should All Be Feminists (Adichie, 2014), it struck me that there was in fact no universal definition of feminism or indeed what it meant to be a woman. On this multiplicity of gender, feminism, and women (particularly in terms of theory) Calás & Smircich (2009) state that 'feminist theorizing is […]

plural in that it recognises the difficulty of placing the singular term 'woman' at the centre of its representations. Actual women, and their experiences, are multiple, according to their social and cultural locations.' (p. 247). From this I realised that embracing difference would play a big part in how I would interpret and perceive theory, and ultimately in the approach I wished to engage in during my own research.

On difference, it also notable to mention here that the consideration of intersectional experience, as discussed in Chapter Two and in reference to class alongside gender, responds to the rise of what Rottenberg (2018) refers to as 'neoliberal feminism'. Neoliberal feminism has been proposed as the feminism of the white middle-class, which accepts systemic inequality but is criticised for being largely exclusionary of less-privileged demographics unable to 'have-it-all' (Rottenberg, 2018). Through the crucial element of class consideration in this context, the thesis is sensitive and aware of the different challenges faced by women which relate to their class status, this is of course instrumental given the themes of work, welfare, and inequality. A conversation of gender amongst these themes therefore must be inclusive of classed considerations throughout to honour the women's nuanced experience compared to other populations in the same geographic and gendered context.

Feminist theory in research adopts an activist approach to gendered experiences, therefore 'signals an emancipatory politics on behalf of women. It contends that the prevailing unjust conditions under which women live must be changed' (McCann & Kim, 2017: p.1). Feminist research investigates the exclusion of women that has been 'from the making of ideology, of knowledge, and of culture [which] means that our experience, our interests, our ways of knowing the world have not been represented in the organisation of our ruling nor in the systematically developed knowledge that has entered into it […] which in the ordinary settings of our lives gives weight and influence to men and re-creates the circles in which men attend to what men have to say and carry forward the interests and perspectives of men.' (Smith, 1987: pp.17-18). Such exclusion and silence of a female voice has thus contributed to institutionalised practices in society which construct and reproduce a predominant male perspective, which often ideologically locates women in homemaker or oppressed roles (Smith, 1987). This concept reinforces the basis that a prevailing masculine dominance shapes and perpetuates societies - socially, culturally, organisationally, and politically, thus contributing to the silence of women, their perspective, and their voice.

Feminist activism and theorising has mobilised to interrogate women's exclusion and marginalisation. Informed by a female struggle against multiple forms of oppression and patriarchal institutions, research across all variations of feminist movements agrees on a commitment to new

knowledge relating to women's experience and matters of gender, and furthermore to the production and development of social change (Ollivier & Tremblay, 2000). The social change specifically relates to a shift of focus away from male and masculine orientated norms of society and organisation, in a way that incorporates aspects of female perspective, inclusion and voice. Additionally, feminist scholars conceptualise gendered power using diverse ways of thinking and application of theory, but consistently tend to 'the exercise and effects of power, and what can be done to change specific power relations and practices' (Ramazonoglu & Holland, 2002: p. 6). Feminist thought tackles power and specifically gendered power which produces and reinforces female subordination in civil society and institutions. Smith (1987) states that 'we should work by identifying the male bias in established approaches. These must be examined from the perspective of women, and the implications for the field of incorporating the perspectives and interests of women must be followed through' (p. 62). For my research this perspective is of a particular population - that being female working food bank users. This is a field where the gendered experience is generally unexplored. Feminist theory and intention can therefore be applied to both an ethic and methodology of carrying out research, to benefit these women being studied and the knowledge to be acquired.

I was always keen to conduct my study based on women and their experiences, although when talking about my research and ideas at an early stage I was often asked why I chose to focus on women in this context, given that women weren't noticeably in the majority amongst food bank users (from my own experience as well as from statistics). I want to introduce feminism into the study of food bank users, particularly interrelating the themes of work and the labour market, based on a long history of women's oppression when it comes to matters of employment. In 1952, de Beauvoir spoke of a female struggle in the productive sphere: 'Woman cannot be emancipated unless she takes part in production on a large scale and is only incidentally bound to domestic work' (p. 89) and although working opportunities have developed for women since then, women continue to face institutional barriers and complexities to this day. In the current climate women continue to experience sexism in the workplace, such as unrecognised and unregulated labour (Acker, 1990); barriers to career advancement (Biggs et al., 2018); fear and intimidation (McLaughlin et al. 2017); and unequal treatment. As mentioned above, I place the women using a food bank's particular work experiences at the forefront of research, making their voice and stories part of a larger ongoing move to demonstrate the shortcomings of management and organisation studies contexts whilst furthering women's agendas.

A Feminist Research Ethic

Proposing a feminist research ethic, Ackerley & True (2010) state 'research that is feminist-informed takes as its point of departure feminist normative concerns combined with knowledge of the diverse and complex theoretical interplays at work in any social science research project. Feminist informed research is consequently self-reflective, critical, political, and versed in multiple theoretical frameworks in order to enable the researcher to 'see' those people and processes lost in gaps, silences, margins, and peripheries' (p. 22). Such a research ethic acts as a structure of consideration and care to be applied to research investigating women and women's experience, guided by a feminist principle. More than providing specifications for research to be classified as feminist, ethics provide a guide to carrying out research that maintains attentiveness to ethical thought of the feminist movement and practice. This ethic is 'about how to deal with conflict, disagreement and ambivalence rather than attempting to eliminate it' (Edwards & Mauthner, 2002: p.25) and to be applied across all aspects of the research being carried out. Sevenhuijsen (1998) determines that a feminist ethic can aid researchers to consider and be reflexive of their own methodological process and thought by 'illuminating more fully the sources of moral dilemmas and formulating meaningful epistemological strategies in order to deal with these dilemmas' (p. 16). Ackerley & True (2010) further specify that an ethic and commitment to feminist inquiry should pay particular attention to: 'the power of knowledge […]; boundaries, marginalisation, silences, and intersections; relationship and their power differentials; and your own sociopolitical location' (pp.22-23) In this way, female empowerment can be achieved through research. Whilst no universal ethical code for feminist research exists, a broader ethic considers all the points mentioned above.

Epistemology

Harding & Norberg (2005) note that 'research processes themselves [re]produce power differences' (p. 2012) and this is applicable to the epistemology of the researcher undertaking feminist research. A researcher's epistemology defines the way that they derive truth, knowledge, and legitimacy, and this positioning can play an authoritative role in the research being carried out. Harding (1986) on feminist methodology states that 'for feminists it is moral and political rather than scientific discussion that has served as the paradigm - though a problematic one - of rational discourse' (p. 12) therefore situating a researcher's epistemology and its relationship with the research as a feature of the distinctiveness and validity of the research. Again, whilst there is no specific epistemological methodology that highlights itself as feminist (Ramazanoglu & Holland, 2002), what defines a strong feminist research position in terms of epistemology is 'a commitment to continually reviewing and challenging notions of what are appropriate and reliable ways of knowing and understanding the

world - by reflecting on the different ways they appear from the different individuals and social groups' (Ackerly & True, 2010: p.25). Feminist theory therefore pays attention to power that is innate to differing epistemologies applied in social research and attends to these for the benefit of knowledge to be obtained through a dynamic approach and reflection. Through essential reflection and contextualisation of a researcher's own epistemology, both the researcher and the research can be empowered through questioning power relationships, changes, interrelatedness and dynamic context. Epistemology can then act as a tool for enabling more validated research (Ackerley, 2008). Uniting epistemological principles in feminist methodology however include: a focus of women and gender in analysis; the importance of raising consciousness; and the empowerment of women in the researched context (Cook & Fonow, 1986) in line with ethics explored by the feminist movement. Such principles retain the capacity for dynamic and thoughtful ways of approaching research.

Reviewing my own epistemology as a feminist, I find myself drawn back to notions of difference. It is important to consider the idea of differences closely throughout, particularly as the women that I research are not only different in many ways to myself, but also diverse amongst each other and the experiences they have had. My epistemological basis throughout the study thus embraces difference amongst the women in varying forms and seeks truth and knowledge not only from a diverse collection of stories and experiences but also from a rich multiplicity of women themselves. Through the adoption of this epistemology, throughout my research process I give necessary importance to difference and to giving a voice to the women's stories through the variances that made everyone's story different. This epistemology allows me to maintain the feminist position I desire whilst simultaneously carrying out study with a population somewhat different not only to myself but also to my family and peers. Ultimately this is with one predominant motivation - to empower and give importance to each of the women's stories and circumstances as a result of the research being carried out.

Design and Development

Designing my study, I lead with the priority to 'consider the importance of research questions whose answers have the potential to make visible the invisible, to give voice to the voiceless, to make central analyses that are marginalised or neglected by mainstream lines of inquiry, and to bring to our attention processes and institutions that have been absent in the mainstream of our disciples' (Ackerly & True, 2010). Decisions I make in the design and development of the research thus are a journey guided by my knowledge and experience of feminism. Such a journey includes the choices that I make throughout the research and amendments that I make to the study in the face of unexpected (or expected!) junctures. Whilst the specifics of the thought process may not necessarily be documented

in the presentation of the final research, my commitment to a feminist ethic maintains that critical analysis of decisions is made from start to finish. Mason (2002) sets out that a researcher should be able to defend questions such as: 'Are my methods appropriate? Have I designed and carried out the research carefully [and] accurately?' (p. 40). These are the kind of questions I ask myself in order to evaluate my decisions and the application of my methodology as I go along. Questioning my own choices in this way allows me to adapt the methodology as appropriate and to learn from the changes that were made.

For example, on feminist ethnography Pillow and Mayo (2007) state that 'finding a balance as an observer and a participant - when to wear the researcher hat and when to become involved by giving your opinion, providing help […] - is difficult and specific to each research context' (p. 163). In line with the work of Wax (1971) I am prepared for the unexpected but also to be able to make ethical and appropriate decisions. As part of my volunteering experience for example, I took on the identity of two roles: a researcher and a volunteer. As I explore in Chapter Six, it was not always realistic or practical to inform visitors to the food bank about my research project. I had to apply a rational judgment, as I sometimes did not see certain conversations or observations as appropriate to contain in my own field notes or in any form of physical data. Whilst this was a judgement of morals as well as the ethics of feminism, I felt strongly about the avoidance of exploiting any of the women who I came across who perhaps engaged with me in a certain way due to a lack of knowledge of my position as a researcher. I mention this example because I find that women are often in a particularly vulnerable state when they use a food bank, thus it is largely judgements based on the inclusion or exclusion of certain observations regarding the female visitors which lead me to sacrifice the recording of data for the privacy, protection, and well-being of the individuals in question. This said however, these inferences can be brought out in more subtle and less intrusive ways through broader reflections on the ethnographic study.

Qualitative or Quantitative?

As feminist theorising has become more established within management and organisation studies, researchers looked for the most efficient and adequate way to capture women's experiences to contribute to bodies of knowledge in their subject areas. Quantitative methods were criticised by feminist researchers for the exclusion or ignorance of women (Oakley, 1974) or furthermore for just adding female data to male data (Stanley & Wise, 1993). Graham (1983) questioned whether positivist frameworks and quantitative approaches would be able to successfully capture and liberate women's experience. There was a tendency in early studies that drew on feminist theorising to adopt the dominant research method of qualitative interviews (Kelly et al., 1992), claiming that they were

able to 'convey a deeper feeling for more emotional closeness to the persons studied' (Jayaratne, 1983: p. 145). This however came to be seen as a restriction and a further oppression to women and the study of women, and feminists moved away from the privilege of certain methodologies (Doucet & Mauthner, 2008). Through further dialogue, feminist researchers such as Kelley et al. (1992) argued that 'what makes feminist research feminist is less the method used, and more how it is used and what it is used for' (p. 150). This eliminated a preference of either specification for quantitative or qualitative study in the research of women. Westmarland (2001) for example 'demonstrated the usefulness of quantitative methods in the *naming* of women's oppression and the usefulness of qualitative methods for delving further and using feminist research for change within the women's liberation movement. Although a survey may be the best to discover the *prevalence* of problems, interviews are needed to fully understand women's experiences and theorise these *experiences* with a view towards social change' (p. 27). For my own research however there seemed no question but to engage in qualitative research. The very motivations of my research are to illuminate a silenced voice of women using a food bank whilst working. This is something that can only be achieved through engaging with their stories and gathering rich and in-depth data through qualitative research.

A Feminist Approach to Ethnography

As a strategy, ethnography came to be praised by feminist researchers 'for its potential to create interpretive and intersubjective understandings of social lives' (Buch & Staller, 2014: p. 111). Differing from traditional approaches to ethnography, a feminist ethnography encompassed 'a deep commitment to understanding the issues and concerns of women from their perspective and being especially attentive to the activities and the 'goings on' of women in the research setting' (Hesse-Biber & Leavy, 2006: p. 237). It thus distinguished itself by focusing on women's lives and experiences. Feminist ethnography not only centres around women, but its methods, styles, and analysis are informed by the theories and ethics of feminism (Buch & Staller, 2014).

Furthermore, as the interview emerged as a useful tool for feminist research, it became evident that traditional interview practices had been often predetermined by a masculine approach, specifically applied to the collection of data from male participants. Oakley (1981) critiques the masculine approach to interviewing participants, and sought to propose an alternative, using her own experiences of interviewing women. For example, she argued that 'the goal of finding out about people through interviewing was best achieved when the relationship of interviewer and interviews is non-hierarchical and when the interviewer is prepared to invest his or her own personal identity in the relationship' (p. 41). Particularly within feminist research, Oakley (1981) and feminist scholars look to limit participant oppression by a heavier involvement of the participant within the research

process. Westmarland (2001) proposes that this not only increased research validity but also contributed to wider feminist aims of female liberation through research. A sensitivity to relationships and power dynamics between researcher and researched thus took prevalence in feminist work, incorporating matters of empathy and rapport (Doucet & Mauthner, 2008). Applying a feminist ethic and attention to relationships present in an interview setting, the use of interviews as a tool for research can thus be efficient and even collaborative in liberating a woman's voice and story. Doucet & Mauthner (2008) conclude that 'feminist reflections on the inevitability of hierarchy and power differences in interview settings and relationships do not suggest or imply abandonment of this method but rather invite researchers to be reflexive about their research practices by recognising, debating, and working with these power differentials' (p. 333). Judgement and context play an important part in decisions made depending on topics and the relationship and power dynamics mentioned (Ackerly & True, 2010). Through familiarity with their research and participants, a feminist researcher strives to adopt empathy and rapport in the process of data collection and further and adapts the interview technique to create the most suitable and comfortable environment, for the benefit of both the data and the participants involved. The wider scene of the interview process can contribute to conclusions drawn later in the data analysis. Ackerly & True (2010) divulge that 'feminist informed researchers' analysis is not merely the talk that can be easily converted to textual data, but the whole context of our subject-participants' talk including body language' (p.181) thus attentiveness to the whole process is vital. This is reflected in a recent special issue of *Human Relations* whereby Bell et al. (2019) speculate on the future of feminist theory. They call for the need in contemporary feminist work for a move away from a hegemonic, masculinised form of producing academic knowledge, as well as the encouragement of 'embodied, sensuous, emotional, social and identity-related aspects of writing' (p. 14). All of these I keep in close consideration throughout my PhD.

My own interview style as a feminist researcher is largely inspired firstly by the writings of Oakley (1981) who was loyal to the avoidance of an interview style that would 'objectify your sister'. The second and most profound inspiration for my interview and conversational style is that of my colleagues in the food bank. In both food banks those for whom it was their role to be the first point of contact to discuss the incoming referral, were women. I noticed particularly their style and approach of communication that they adopted with fellow women who visited the food bank. Although this style was fair and non-preferential with both male and female visitors, I found myself especially touched by the way that they dealt with female visitors, who often arrived in a state of distress or upset. I observed the way in which they converse with women when they come in - which was a relational and intersubjective interaction where they show empathy to the women using the

food bank. From this I took inspiration from the way in which they made the women feel comfortable and supported and foster an environment whereby they can listen to the women's stories and sometimes their predicaments or struggles. Although it is unclear and irrelevant if either of my food bank colleagues were declared feminists, or even support the ethics of feminism, many of their mannerisms and conversational strategies lend themselves suitably to the feminist ethics and approaches which I have studied and discussed. Also, with their experiences of working in food banks for much longer than I personally had, I was able to learn a lot from their abilities to make visitors calm and comfortable, for the benefit of all parties. Many lessons I learnt from witnessing these interactions are incorporated to my own feminist style of interviewing participants when speaking to the female users.

Feminist Analysis and Presentation

Following the final data collection, as a feminist researcher I continue to pursue the ethics already applied during both the analysis and presentation of the findings of the study. Ackerly & True (2010) state that 'a feminist research ethic prompts us to notice *how* we analyse…[and] can guide you to recognise the unintended epistemological bias that may inhere in the ways you privilege certain kinds of information or data in your analysis' (p. 179). As with the data collection, an analysis of the findings requires a continuous reflexivity of the data being studied and the conclusions to be drawn from it. DeVault (1990) calls for a particular attention to the 'unsaid' and possible ambiguities which arise throughout the data analysis. A feminist analysis must allow freedom to the data to tell its own story and to let conclusions emerge, guided by the researcher and their analytic techniques and research ethic, whilst simultaneously attending to any potential bias and dilemmas of validity and authenticity. DeVault (1990) recommends certain techniques when transcribing and contextualising data from interviews in order to remain attentive and aware of the voice of the participant. These include giving preference to interview form as well as context, and identifying features of the conversation that reveal 'the scaffolding of social structure' (p. 110). The stage of analysis will arguably always be a deliberative moment for a feminist researcher as it is the point that conclusions are drawn that must be accountable not just to the other participants but also to the wider academic community and audience.

Finally, when it comes to the point of writing and presenting the data, 'the writing process is often a thinking process that suggests new categories and ways of structuring your analysis' (Ackerly & True, 2010: p. 197) and the method of approaching it holds key significance. Sword (2009) highlights a few key recommendations for writing engaging pieces across disciplines, such as clear prose and a unique voice, and Joeres (1992) more specifically perceives that feminist writing should be both

accessible and efficient and able to clearly convey difficult concepts. Feminist work should be seen as a story told on behalf of, and for all women. Being able to address an audience beyond the academic community therefore is useful and can be progressive for the field (Ehrenreich, 2001). When speaking of social justice and change, projects also often draw attention from audiences beyond academia. Accessibility within feminist work is therefore appropriate to the transformative ethics of feminist theory and strengthens and increases the potential of the research in both the field and in society.

As I started to draft my chapters, first my supervisors commented, and then I realised myself on later reflection that I adopted a somewhat detached and passive writing style that did not necessarily reflect accurately the emotion or connection that I felt with the work that I was carrying out. Drawing on work from Charmaz (2007) and Weatherall (2018) and from a deeper familiarisation of feminist theory and style, I revisited my style of writing and my own identity as a writer and specifically within this piece of study. Accepting that my previous style was somewhat 'masculine', I reflect on the way that 'writing in a masculine way excludes, among other things, emotions, fluidity, violence and messiness. Through the exclusion of feminine writing certain identities - such as women - become marginalised in academia' (Weatherall, 2018). I develop my writing to include not only my own style of writing and voice, but also my identity and a deeper sense of a connection with the motivations of carrying out the study. I feel strongly about the message that I am trying to convey on behalf of the women who participated in the study, and this must be done by communicating in a way which is true to both them and to myself as a feminist.

As I wrote more, I lost the fear that a sense of feeling and emotion within the writing would be classed as too personal for an academic study. Weatherall (2018) also prompted me to ask who it was I was writing for. As mentioned above I began to realise that I not only wanted my writing to be accessible by a wider audience, but also inclusive of the participants who had bravely shared their stories with me, and the volunteers of the food bank who had supported my research journey. I remind myself that I am carrying out the study *for* them as well as *about* them. Charmaz (2007) on feminist writing describes that 'an artful weaving of participants' words in the research narrative shows the rhythm, grace, and expressiveness of their voices and the passion in their words. They speak for themselves; the writer creates the stage and focuses the spotlight' (p. 454). Furthermore, I am inspired by recent development and emphasis in management journals to 'write differently' (Gilmore et al., 2019), firstly in the work of Saija (2018) who presents an auto-ethnography of motherhood across public and private settings but through evoking multi-sensory experiences. Additionally, works such as that of Sinclair (2019) demonstrate the value of the embodiment of feminism in theory through our own experiences as well as others and the way these can be incorporated into academic work. In this way

I develop a way of presenting my study that reads more of a collaboration of my words as an academic, an activist, and an individual, together with those of my participants. This renders it more accessible not only to an academic audience but also to anybody involved, interested, or even affected by the study.

Chapter Summary

To conclude this discussion of feminist epistemology and research, there are several areas that are centred in my research including: power; boundaries; relationships; and the researchers own relative position (see also Ackerley & True, 2010). Reflection and reflexivity at every stage and decision throughout a research project such as my own means that as a feminist researcher I remain loyal to the ethics and purpose of a feminist study. Feminist work should not be restrictive to either the researcher or the researched and must remain adaptable and dynamic to expected or unexpected outcomes. Thus, to conclude the chapter, what makes research writings feminist is the devotion to the quest for knowledge of women's experience in order to put their perspective at the forefront of research and social change. Diversity and innovation can be embraced in a parallel partnership, if initiatives continue to give voice to often silenced but persisting inequality. The ethics of feminism thus significantly contribute to the final methodological practice and pursuit of my research.

CHAPTER SIX: METHODOLOGY

Chapter Outline

In this chapter I detail the methodology that I apply to my research in order to pursue the aims and objectives. This includes the design and strategy of the study whilst continuously relating the decisions to the wider feminist theoretical underpinning. I structure this chapter in a way to reflect the methodological journey that I went on during the three years of my PhD - covering the ethnography that I engaged in, and techniques within this that I carried out to acquire material for the research. I also discuss the preliminary fieldwork that I carried out and the impact that this had on my methodology and the choices that it inspired. Throughout the chapter I emphasise the value that this methodology brought to the research, and the reasons for selecting it in comparison to other alternatives.

Research Objective and Purpose

My research aims to add to a growing body of knowledge of IWP in the UK, for the first time framing the study with a feminist perspective to focus on how women are affected. This is achieved by exploring the location and role of an independent food bank and those using it, in relation to the main themes. I carried out an ethnographic study in two food banks, allowing the exploration of rich data from the observations I made over a significant period. Interviews that I carried out further supplement this data. Observations give me valuable insight into the women's lives, whilst conversations that took place gave working women the opportunity to share and vocalise their own stories based on the shared experience of needing a food bank, despite current or recent employment. The need for the visit arguably signifies that such individuals are facing an adversity whereby they cannot put food on the table for themselves and their families, despite either working or having recently worked. Studying women, I identify the ways that gender contributes to these situations, ultimately informing conclusions around the wider gender equality debate. Summarising this, the study reveals first-hand experiences of IWP from working women using a food bank. Using the collected data, I discuss the situation of social justice and equality in the UK, and all the above is achieved by addressing the following primary research questions:

1. What is the experience of visiting a food bank for working women and what is the role of the food bank itself within this?

2. What is the gendered experience of in-work poverty?

3. What can be learnt about injustice in Britain from working women visiting food banks?

I adopt an exploratory design and feminist methodology, given that the objectives look to explore an under-documented relationship between IWP, gender and food banks. Robson (2002) affirms that exploratory research looks to derive events, situations, and what is happening, particularly in those where the relationship between cause and effect has not been widely investigated. The notions and necessity for such types of research are described by Yin (2009) as '…to develop pertinent hypotheses and propositions for further inquiry' (p.5). Using the food bank and its users as a relevant case study given the topic, exploratory research approach allows me to carry out a preliminary analysis of the phenomenon (Jupp, 2006), in this case of IWP and women's experience of using food banks.

Research Design

Research Philosophy: Interpretivist Paradigm

In terms of a philosophical underpinning to the research design, a paradigm is described by Schwandt (2001) as a representation of the 'commitments, beliefs, values, methods, outlooks and so forth shared across a discipline' (pp. 183-4) and it is these assumptions that guide the research to answer the questions or hypotheses proposed and to suggest solutions where necessary. A selected paradigm thus acts as 'the matrix that shapes the reality to be studied and legitimates the methodology and methods whereby it can be studied' (Crotty, 2009: p. 35).

An interpretivist approach to research is often employed to understand a situation in relation to social constructions, as an interpretivist sees the nature of reality as subjective and socially constructed. It is therefore a concept of understanding the world and phenomena via the experiences of participants, and that these accounts are sources of knowledge and construction. In this way, the ontological stance of interpretivists is that reality is socially constructed (Mertens, 2009) therefore is contextual and can legitimise constructions of reality from varying cultures, individuals, and shared realities from groups also. Moreover, the epistemological perspective relative to the paradigm focuses on knowledge as subjective therefore is concerned with situational details, the reality forming the situations, and subjective meanings for what motivates certain actions. Realities are therefore dependent on notions of culture, historical implications, and general contextualisation, but truth and knowledge can be extracted from experiences and social constructions of phenomena. In terms of ethics and values,

these form an integral part of the social constructions being researched, but also the approach of the researcher. An interpretivist methodology takes all the previous into consideration to construct research to deepen knowledge of experience. This is considered in the approach to data collection, but also in the management and attitude to the multiplicities of the realities discovered.

Using this approach is especially important in relation to the feminist underpinning of my research, in agreement with Kiguwa (2019) that 'the emphasis on how women experience and interpret their everyday lived realities is at the heart of the interpretive social scientific paradigmatic approach' (p. 228). She further notes that this type of research is 'critical in orientation in seeking to engage processes of social change' (p. 230), drawing on her own experience of researching women's accounts of circumcision and abusive relationships. Methodologically speaking, this is entirely relatable to my own experience and the drivers behind my own decisions. Within management and organisation studies, thus closer to my own field of research, whilst numerous examples of this type of study exist, I was particularly influenced by empirical work such as: O'Keefe & Courtois (2019)'s paper on the role of gender with precarious work in a university; Wing-Fai et al. (2015)'s research into women's work in the television industry; and Baker & Kelan (2018)'s exploratory study of female executives. Spanning diverse populations of women, what these empirical studies have in common is the privileging of women's voices through open dialogical processes. This allows the women's narratives and experiences to contribute to the production of knowledge through their accounts of how they make sense of their worlds and experiences, applying the fundamentals of an interpretivist approach as detailed above.

With the three proposed research questions at the forefront of my mind as I construct a methodology for the study, an interpretivist philosophy naturally lends itself to address the objectives and aims of my PhD. This paradigm embraces the subjective realities of the women involved in the study, and by learning about their specific experiences, a perspective of the current situation is constructed with the focus on an interpretation of their lived experiences. Epistemologically speaking, narratives and stories from the participants of the study will form the knowledge of the researched phenomenon. The exploration of the women's narratives includes perceptions, values, purpose, motivations, and ways of acting enabling elements for analysis. This leads into the second and third research questions whereby unique insight from the selected participants will form an analysis of phenomena, the macro environment and wider matters such as social injustice.

<u>Research Strategy: A Feminist Ethnography</u>

Considering both the feminist theoretical underpinnings of my research along with the interpretivist paradigmatic position that I adopt to achieve the aims of my study, my own methodology is a qualitative feminist ethnography. Parallel to the advantages of qualitative research in feminist study already mentioned, more generally Creswell (2013) supports the adoption of a qualitative method in the study not only of people's individual experiences but also in the inquiry of meaning that people take from these experiences. Supported by studies by Bryman and Bell (2007), this qualitative approach also allows me to explore topics and themes without restrictions that may have arisen with surveys or other types of quantitative methods.

Speaking of the general research theme, quantitative reports exist detailing the statistics surrounding poverty and work in the UK, such as that of both Maitre et al. (2012) and Bourquin et al. (2019). These are valuable in providing a wider view of the phenomenon of IWP and identifying trends in why it is increasing. They are however problematic in their inability to represent the individuals and the more specific and individual ways that they are affected. More recent qualitative studies into IWP (McBride et al., 2018; Richards & Sang, 2018) and food bank users (Garthwaite, 2016) have demonstrated the potential of more detailed qualitative accounts in attaining richer data from more natural settings. My own strategy of researching the theme using a feminist qualitative study is inspired by a motivation to make women using a food bank more than just a statistic of poverty. Quantitative studies such as those mentioned above begin to differentiate the experiences for different demographics, for example women. The real hardships, struggles, and deprivation faced by populations in this way however are both generalised and minimised within statistics. They were unable to portray what it was *really* like to experience IWP, or perhaps what it was *really* like and felt like to still need to use a food bank after a partial or even full day of work.

In order to answer these questions amongst others, a feminist ethnography has key values which enable such themes to be explored and answered. Ethnography in research for example occurs in a natural setting, allowing for an immersive yet progressive approach. As the researcher carries out the data collection 'live' in an ethnographic study, this makes it very much a work in progress. I was able to make decisions on the spot to maximise the data collection and seek depth of study from the research location itself, rather than from a book, computer screen, or spreadsheet. The development of my methodology is driven by experiences that occurred during the ethnography and meeting the women at the food bank, which gives the study great value in catering the research to the needs and complexities of the individuals I study. This is discussed further in later chapters. Immersing myself in the fieldwork in this way allowed my own identity to interact with the research environment and

participants also. This focus on experience of both researcher and researched is a further strategy often explored by feminists (Scott, 1992), in order to evoke a critical approach to research in the hope for more innovative data collection and representative results.

With all the above considered, it is therefore the combination of feminism and ethnography (heavily influenced by Garthwaite (2016)'s experiences at a food bank) that enables the voices of women experiencing IWP to be heard. Having been largely unnoticed and therefore marginalised in the study of both IWP and food banks, this is a notion of high political and ethical importance to me in designing and implementing my study.

Reflexivity in Qualitative Study

Throughout the research process, especially with the large amount of data generated from a qualitative approach, it is important for me to continuously consider reflexivity and the awareness and management of power relations and the impact they can have at different stages of research (Karnieli-Miller et al., 2009). Furthermore, the turn to reflexivity has been a pivotal move for feminist study, much of which I have touched upon in the previous chapter.

Haynes (2012) describes reflexivity as '…an awareness of the researcher's role in the practice of research and the way this is influenced by the object of the research, enabling the researcher to acknowledge the way in which he or she affects both the research processes and outcomes' (p. 72). This includes the reflection on multiple layers of the research process. The manner of reflexivity is significantly influenced by the position of the researcher and the relationship that is fostered between a researcher and participants. Theorists have stated the change in relationships that can be witnessed based on the researcher's personality, ethnic or social background, gender, and many other factors (Clifford & Marcos, 1986; Woods, 1986). McCabe & Holmes (2009) support the engagement with reflexivity as a 'technology of the self' (p. 1524) to be applied with an emancipatory power throughout the research process. This is to say that given any relationship that is created as part of the research, reflexivity should not only be applied during the process, but it should also be used to engage with participants. In this way, participants are allowed to use their own position within the relationship to give themselves a voice, and to explore themselves and explore the knowledge being shared in order to 'bypass the traditional roles in research, and to approach the research process and relationships within the research in a new way' (McCabe & Holmes, 2009: p. 1524). In this context a researcher can exercise reflexivity through openness to questions, a willingness to adjust an agenda based on participant feedback, and an awareness of larger social and political contexts of the environment being studied.

In terms of reflexivity within my ethnographic research at the food bank, I remain aware of the effects of my specific characteristics within my role as a researcher. The most profound of this is that I have never directly experienced the phenomena that I am researching - that being IWP and food bank usage. In this context, reflexivity is 'the active acknowledgement by the researcher that her/his own actions and decisions will inevitably impact upon the meaning and context of the experience under investigation' (Horsburgh, 2003: p. 309). Given both the nature of 'otherness' and the sensitive reality of the data collection at a food bank, Berger (2013) states that '…reflexivity in the absence of researcher's personal experience must focus on the researcher avoiding a patronising stance and maximising the opportunity for participants to impact the process and outcome of research' (p. 230). Working as a volunteer allowed me access to my participants as well as the ability to sympathise with and understand my participants more, in concordance with Krayer (2003) that this type of engagement can increase both participation and the richness of the data accumulated. Both research diaries and logs (Berger, 2013) and the exploration of the emotions which were displayed and witnessed (by both myself and by participants) (Coffey, 1999) also became useful tools for reflexive analysis throughout my research, both which will be reflected on in further detail later in the thesis.

Collecting Empirical Material: Ethnography at the Food Bank

I began volunteering at a food bank nearing the end of 2017. What began as just something to do with my spare time and to meet new people, in fact became not only the inspiration and a key driver in the pursuit of my research, but also became the location of the ethnography and the data collection. My first volunteering period therefore was from January to August of 2018 at an independent food bank, *Lindley Food Bank*[2], in a small town in (West) Yorkshire. The second period from October of 2018 through to December 2019, was also at an independent food bank, *The People's Project*, in the Tyne and Wear district of England. Hammersley and Atkinson (2007) describe ethnography as an approach to social research that 'usually involves the researcher participating, overtly or covertly, in people's daily lives for an extended period of time, watching what happens, listening to what is said, and/or asking questions through informal and formal interviews, collecting documents and artefacts - in fact, gathering whatever data is available to throw light on the issues that are the emerging focus of inquiry' (p. 3). This is exactly what I did, embracing my position as a volunteer to engage with those using the food bank, and absorbing all the information which related to this usage.

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[2] Pseudonyms are used for the food banks to protect their identity.

With the research objective to centralise the experience of British women facing IWP in mind, I chose to use my role as a volunteer at the food banks as my site for the ethnography, using this as the primary location for collecting data to gain insight into the lives of visitors. I took particular interest in the women's visit to the food bank and the wider contributory reasons and experiences. Engagement and participation with both the food bank users and the volunteers contributes to my insight of the social context which has led to the need for food aid for certain people. During the fieldwork I immersed myself within the food bank and with the people involved not only to establish trust and relationships but to authenticate any conclusions that would be drawn from my research from direct interactions with the women. Drawing on recent work by Garthwaite (2016) who also took part in an ethnographic study at a food bank, it is necessary to 'appreciate the complex and 'politicized' discourse surrounding food bank use in order to report how the food bank operates in an objective yet truly reflective way' (p. 69). I consider this closely throughout the whole research, relating not only to the food bank but also to its participants and their stories.

As a volunteer at the food bank, both organisations allow volunteers to make the role their own where practical and appropriate. I was completely transparent with other volunteers and trustees about my research, who allowed me to adopt a variety of tasks within the organisation in order to get a rounded picture of how the food bank worked. Throughout my extended time spent with the food banks, I was involved in the welcoming of visitors at the food bank and the process of discussing and distributing referrals, as well as other organisational tasks. At both food banks, I was welcomed as 'one of the team' and I thoroughly enjoyed and gained value from not only my role as a volunteer and the participant observation that took place, but also the experience of spending time and getting to know the other volunteers both inside and outside of the food bank.

To describe a typical day at the food bank would be a challenge, with variety and change common from week to week. At *Lindley Food Bank* everything occurred under one roof as the food bank operated from just one site. On a regular day, there would be around four or five volunteers working and we would rotate between dealing with visitors, sorting and dating the incoming donations, and putting together the food parcels. I was the most familiar of the volunteers with using the computer and the spreadsheet where we stored the data, therefore I also spent time in-putting the data into a file from the food bank's office. At the end of every shift, myself and the volunteers would sit together having tea or coffee - often reflecting on the day we had had and the people we had met or catching up on organisational politics and gossip. I volunteered for one day a week here, with the opening hours from 10am till 3pm.

As I moved house and started volunteering at *The People's Project*, the food bank was in a period of transition. I moved around a lot between different sites and different roles depending on the different demands for assistance in different areas. Similarly, I rotated between dealing more directly with the visitors of the food bank and more 'back room' tasks such as stock room management and logistics, as well as collecting donations from allocated donation points in supermarkets and local businesses. As an organisation the food bank became more settled and stable, my role was largely to welcome and talk with the visitors about their referrals, but also about their situations and any preferences for food or anything else they might need that could be provided. This was generally referred to as being 'Front of House' staff. I got involved with additional responsibilities for the food bank - this time helping with social media and communication through online platforms. The time that I spent volunteering each week differed as the food bank moved around and changed, however generally I would volunteer here for either two half days during the week, or one full day. Whilst adhering to ethical procedures and anonymity (which will be detailed later in this chapter), all the above experiences contributed to the wider ethnography that formed the primary collection of material for my research.

Participant Observation

As an ethnographic study, I carried out participant observation during my fieldwork at the food banks. Gill & Johnson (2010) describe participant observation as a technique whereby 'the researcher attempts to participate fully in the lives and activities of members and thus becomes a member of their group, organisation or community. This enables the researcher to share their experiences by not merely observing what is happening but also feeling it' (p. 161). This method of conducting research, especially in a sensitive and controversial site such as a food bank, was intimate and interactive, although also at times tense and emotional. Carrying out observations in this way however meant that I was able to embrace the exploration of not just words and conversations, but also behaviours, language, movements, sounds, smells, and reactions amongst other sensory markers. Together these formed a rich and unique insight into the researched phenomena and population. As I specifically research working women using the food bank, my observations prioritise these women, inclusive not just of them as individuals but also how they reacted with other people in the food bank, or with family members or friends who may have been with them. Saying this however, I paid attention to most activities which were taking place at the food bank whilst I was there and was within my reasonable ability to do so. I made a personal judgement of when it was appropriate or not for me to be present. The ethics of this will be discussed later in the chapter, along with how I was able to gain access to observations at the food bank in this way.

Ethnographic Field Notes

Throughout the period where I conducted participant observation for the purpose of the study, I took detailed field notes. Atkinson et al. (2007) describe field notes as '...a form of representation, that is, a way of reducing just observed events, persons and places to written accounts. And in reducing the welter and confusion of the social world to written words, field notes (re)constitute that world in preserved forms that can be reviewed, studied and through about time and time again.' (p. 353). I adopted what Wolfinger (2002) refers to as a comprehensive note-taking strategy, whereby a description of the interactions and happenings is recorded, accounting for general concerns such as what is happening and why (Lofland & Lofland, 1984). I produced my notes using a word processor once I had got home from each shift at the food bank, in a journal format where I noted the date of the entries. I initially aimed to write between 1000-2000 words following each shift, however in reality the entries varied from being much shorter in some cases and much longer in others. I tried to avoid describing menial tasks and repetitive practical ongoings which I may have been involved in, as I wanted to focus on the women using the food bank or indeed on the interactions they had within the food bank.[3] What I did however do when writing my journal entries was to capture my own observations and experiences as vividly as I could - for example how I felt, how I perceived others around me and situations that happened, and also trying to verbalise the atmosphere as I felt it at the time either as an onlooker or an involved party.

The field notes which I produced are the window into my own experience of volunteering at the food bank and the way in which I communicated onto paper what I witnessed and observed. Field notes are the primary material to which my research is based on. Reading back on the notes, the descriptions are thorough, vivid, and varied - providing a wide spectrum of material and information with vast potential for wider implications. The way that I use these field notes would later be tailored in order to answer the specific research questions. Furthermore, the field notes allow me to reflect on my volunteering experience as I go along, as well as return to certain experiences or interactions afterwards. This helps me to understand and interpret not only my own experiences, emotions and thoughts more thoroughly but also those of others.

Secondary Material and Information

I use secondary documents throughout the research, particularly alongside the presentation of the primary material that was collected. Ghauri (2004) stated that secondary documents '…tend to be rich and have a lot to offer to the research…' (p. 116) and in my case this type of material both emerged

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[3] Appendix A includes a list of all the named participants who appear in the thesis and what their role was.

throughout the ethnography and was collected and collated afterwards. Using secondary documents that are available provides advantages such as the ability to review them at any point in the research stage to support or challenge primary findings. Secondary data aids the broadening and understanding of the phenomena being researched and is used as a tool to scrutinise both the research and the data (Ghauri, 2004). The secondary data in some instances also helps to contextualise and understand observations or occurrences which were recorded within my field notes.

As an integrated volunteer I was able to access various materials which aided my research. Amongst these, some were publicly available such as annual reports and social media updates and publications which provided general background information and contextualisation for the respective food banks. Additionally, as a volunteer I also had visibility of emails, meeting minutes, internal notices and communications, volunteer handbooks and similar resources. I was a part of email threads and discussions and WhatsApp groups that we used to keep in touch amongst the volunteers. I had open access to the social media accounts of *The People's Project*, which visitors and other associated parties would sometimes use to contact the food bank. Whilst again remaining committed to ethics and anonymity (discussed later in the chapter), all these resources are useful in contributing to the outputs of the ethnography carried out. Additionally, throughout the time I spent at the food bank I was able to continuously make observations of the physical settings - forming another type of secondary material. As well as relevant observations that were documented within my field notes, I took pictures and was able to record certain posters, leaflets, and notices to enrich the presentation of the study. In this way, the use of ethnography brought my research themes to life and elevated them from being words on a page. This feels particularly poignant in relation to the driving motivation of my research to bring voice and life to the stories of the women I research and making my own study unique within the field of IWP research.

Prior to data collection, I also collected geographical and statistical documentation to give the research a broad overview of context and data of the regional and national context. Wide statistical data is retrievable for public use, for example employment data and demographics, particularly in a comparative nature across the UK. I use these statistics to inform the research of regional attributes and trends which could be considered alongside the experiences of individuals. As secondary data however, it is important to be reflexive of the purpose to which the data was collected as an alternative motive to that of the study being carried out.

Additional Empirical Material: Interviews

As discussed in the previous chapter, a strategy of ethnography efficiently allows a process of collecting material which can accommodate a feminist theoretical underpinning of the research. Nevertheless, I also gave the women the opportunity to express themselves and to vocalise their own experiences in a more structured setting - to be able to inform the women what I was researching and why, and to then give them a chance to respond in their own way. I arranged interviews with women at the food bank during my time spent volunteering, acquiring more detailed accounts of the personal experiences of the women. These interviews allowed the women's personal stories to be the centre and focus of the material, as well as how they expressed and communicated their experiences. An in-depth interview is described by Guion et al. (2011) as 'a discovery-orientated method, which allows the interviewer to deeply explore the respondents feeling and perspective on a subject' (p. 1). This method fits with the paradigm and the design of the research, allowing the women more flexibility, freedom, and opportunity to tell their stories and for this to enrich the other ethnographic material. Once again considering the feminist theoretical approach introduced in the previous chapter, this chapter details the way in which I organised and carried out the interviews with the women.

The Ethnographic Interview

I consulted the literature surrounding interviews in qualitative research, however I remained mindful and aware that for my own study the interviews would not be the principal form of data being gathered. However, reading around the literature of carrying out interviews within qualitative study, it became evident that no universal standard exists regarding an amount of interviews to be carried out (Dworkin, 2012), and that a more significant marker is the time spent with individual participants, as this often leads to the creation of deep analysis and interpretation (Blaikie, 2009). Most advice from the research literature highlights the importance of achieving data saturation whereby enough data has been collected so that themes can begin to reoccur (O'Reilly & Parker, 2012) and where additional coding is no longer practical (Guest et al., 2006). Dworkin (2012) suggests that any range of five to fifty in-depth participant interviews can be sufficient depending on the data that is gathered, and that with the correct method and process of data collection, smaller amounts of interviews can be adequate.

Due to the nature of my own study, I initiated the research with a mindset to acknowledge value in individual participants and the contribution that they can make to the study (Yin, 2009). In principle however I set out to interview at least twenty participants (including all group sets) given accessibility and time restraints. I aimed to achieve an in-depth interview with each participant lasting

approximately forty-five minutes to an hour, however this time limit was just a guideline, and the interviews were to be more influenced by participants, for example their own comfort and availability. The number of participants I came to learn in my case was optimistic, which is something I discuss in more detail in the upcoming chapters. In some cases, the desired time was not achieved whereas in some others the interviews significantly ran over. Appendix B shows the list of participants who took part in the interviews, with some brief demographic and situational detail.

Selecting Individuals to Interview

The selection of individuals to interview was largely driven by the early ethnography and my time spent volunteering at the food bank and learning about the different people involved and using the charity. This includes the different value that each would bring to my study in terms of having more focused and driven conversations. The selection of people to interview was important in terms of the impact that the interviews would have on the final quality and relevance of the findings used to address the research questions. The research questions of my study require the evocation of narratives and stories where possible and appropriate. A purposive sampling approach therefore was the most productive way to achieve this (Marshall, 1996). Etikan et al. (2015) describe purposive sampling as '…the deliberate choice of a participant due to the qualities the participant possesses…the researcher decides what needs to be known and sets out to find people who can and are willing to provide the information by virtue of knowledge or experience' (p. 2). In simplistic terms, as a researcher I specifically chose my interview participants based on what I already knew about them and how I felt their position and experience would add valueto the research. In contrast with the method of convenience sampling whereby subjects are selected through convenience to inform a more generalised scope of data (Etikan et al., 2015) a purposive sampling method aims for a more specific recruitment of participants with the motivation to attain certain information, perspectives, or stories. As an ethnographer and a volunteer, I was strategically placed to do just this.

With all considered, the focus and the main sample of my data collection was women using the food bank, those with current or recent work experience. I also chose to include two other group sets including volunteers working at the food bank, and representatives from the referring organisations who work in tandem with the food bank team and provided the referrals for users. I identified participants on both their willingness and accessibility to participate in the study, and their appropriateness to the research eligibility outlined by the methodology. Having a pre-existing relationship with some of the people that I would ultimately interview, meant that I was able to gauge if they would be comfortable in taking part in the research.

First and foremost, I selected food bank visitors to participate in the study based on two criteria which framed their relevance to the study. The first criterion was that the visitors were women, and the second criteria was thus their context within the labour market. In order to contextualise the women's experience to the nature of the study, it was necessary for each participant to have had experience in the labour market in the past six months relevant to the time of using the food bank. The details of such work experience were flexible, and I saw diversity as advantageous in terms of depth of the data. Both differences and details of this experience ultimately provide a significant element of the data to be analysed.

In line with the research questions, it was important that this group remained homogenous in that I wanted to speak to women who had been or were working. The purpose of such a sampling method is to '…focus on this precise similarity and how it relates to the topic being researched.' (Etikan et al., 2015: p. 3). Holguin-Cuádraz & Uttal (1999) determine that such a sampling method '…bases inclusion in the sample on the shared common experience or shared group status that is being studied…to understand experience and process as it is socially constructed from the prospect of the persons being studied' (p. 162). Although the sampling technique does not obtain a statistical representativeness following collection and analysis, answers achieved through the method are analytical rather than statistical.

The second chosen group set based on my own experience of volunteering at the food bank was my colleagues - the other food bank volunteers. As a first point of contact in the food bank, the volunteers have frequent interaction with the users, as well as full access to referral and background information. Due to longevity and long-term commitments to the food bank, many had yielded ongoing relationships with users of the food bank. Their knowledge of the administration and politics of the wider food bank context added a further dimension to their contribution to the study.

Lastly, having learnt about how the process of the food bank worked, I included individuals from referring organisations within my data collection, of whom are the 'middle-man 'between visitors to the food bank. These partners had an added perspective to contribute to the data as they act as the decision makers in the process of an individual acquiring a referral to receive aid from the food bank.

Recruiting participants

Having worked as a volunteer at the food banks over an extended period, I was easily able to identify and recruit other volunteers as participants. I had created working relationships and friendships therefore I could easily explain my research aims over time to them and comfortably request an

interview. Some had experience with higher education or research so were more familiar with the format of research I was doing, thus were comfortable to get involved. Similarly, as the food bank was in regular contact with the referring organisations, through liaising with the other staff at the food bank I was able to contact those who directly refer visitors to the food bank in order to explain my research and request an interview.

In terms of the food bank users, owing to their vulnerability and precarious situations, it was somewhat more difficult to find people to take part. The food bank visitors can be defined as what Shaghaghi et al. (2011) define as a 'hard to reach' population, with their difficulty to access related to discrimination or stigma that they may face due to their circumstance (Liamputtong, 2007; Stone, 2003). Ellard-Gray et al. (2015) discuss potential barriers that may arise with hard-to-reach populations which I considered whilst developing ways to recruit participants. Amongst those that I anticipated would be relevant to the food bank users were: a mistrust of both a researcher and the research process (Bonevski et al., 2014); general concerns that the research would either be useless or harmful to the community (Ellard-Gray et al., 2015); a fear of psychological distress from participation in the research (WHO, 2001); and also more physical constraints such as finding availability amongst busy schedules and childcare (Bonevski et al., 2014), and accessing transport to participate in an interview (Dibartolo & McCrone, 2003).

First and foremost, overcoming the barrier of mistrust or discomfort was a priority in my recruitment of the food bank users. In many cases I found that the women who fitted the criteria for the study were often embarrassed, apprehensive, or suspicious of speaking to me. I approached this barrier firstly by seeing my colleagues at the food bank as 'community partners […] that become gatekeepers who help inform and protect the vulnerable population' (Ellard-Gray et al., 2015: p. 4). As the primary point of contact with the food bank, my colleagues who I liaised with knew the visitors better than anyone and had spent the most time talking to them and getting to know more about their situation. I explained the research to the other volunteers, and who I wanted to talk to and why, to which they agreed to help me. I noted that at this stage it was highly beneficial that I had already volunteered at the food banks. Although the users did not know me as closely as they knew some of the other volunteers, having seen me present at the food bank during their visits meant that I wasn't always a stranger to them. This was like studies by Shedlin et al. (2011) who also used networks to help recruit participants and accommodate trust.

Additionally, there were other factors that helped create a more comfortable relationship between me and the women at the food bank. My attitude and way of communication was relaxed and informal,

and I dressed casually in a similar way to the other volunteers. I also believe that being young, female, and with a neutral accent like many of the women who participated in the study helped to create relatability and to minimise alienation.

In practical terms, to avoid any difficulty in recruitment in terms of transport and schedules, interviews were arranged at the food bank, as Dibartlo & McCrone (2003) state that barriers are removed by choosing a location in which participants already congregate. This eradicates the barriers of either transport arrangements or matters such as childcare. Participants were able to arrange an interview for a time when they would be coming to the food bank anyway, and it would not disrupt their day or any other commitments that they had. Conducting the interviews in the food bank also provided an additional element of safety, security, and familiarity for both myself and for the participants. Whilst these were some of the advantages of carrying out the interviews at the food bank, I was also aware that visiting the food bank was not always a wholly comfortable and enjoyable experience for the women. These considerations were particularly critical in remaining aware of objectifying or making the women uncomfortable or inconvenienced.

Structuring an Interview

I chose to use semi-structured interviews for the more informal style, and as discussed in the previous chapter this lent itself to the feminist ethics I pursued. It was however still important to carefully construct prompts to guide the engagement and the conversation between myself and the participants. Poggenpoel & Myburgh (2003) in fact signify the researcher and their methodological approach as the key instrument through which the data is generated. I therefore focused on constructing an unambiguous interview in order to make the most of the time available (McNamara, 2009). Sofaer (2002) reiterates that '…instrumentation is as critical in qualitative as in quantitative research. It takes training and practice to write open-ended questions, the hallmark of a qualitative interview, and then to keep from transforming them into closed-ended questions, especially with a resistant subject, when actually conducting the interview' (p. 334). Flexibility was also important as a participant's responses could have been unpredictable or irrelevant, therefore efficient follow-up questions played a key role in keeping participants focused on the topic. In line with feminist methods, I also wanted to give the women the most comfortable environment to be open and to express themselves. Christensen and Jensen (2012) propose the notion of 'everyday life as a point of departure' (p. 117) which focuses on a discussion on day-to-day lives and experiences, instead of a demographic led conversation.

I created general guides depending on the group set (see Appendix C), in which I established a set of questions that could be used as prompts to assist me to focus the interview to the desired themes and

topics if necessary. Before beginning the interview, I always ensured that my counterpart was informed of both myself and my research, giving them a chance to answer any questions or express any doubts. I provided an information sheet prior to meeting for the interview, (see Appendix D). I also explained how the information would be used, who would have access to it, and ensured them of anonymity (Gray, 2009). Following this I would ask the participants to sign a consent form (see Appendix E) before continuing. Beginning the interview, the conversation would be loosely divided into sections, which differed slightly for each different group set to cater to their different position relating to the food bank. This provided enough scope as a basis to cover the necessary topics within the interview, and within each section the I pre-prepared sub-questions to prompt the participant if necessary. The questions in line with McNamara (2009) were open-ended and neutral in nature and designed to evoke certain topics and conversations rather than strive for specific answers. The interview format also allowed for the women to contribute to the dialogue anything else that they wanted to say. It was often the case that the questions however were not needed, and the conversations flowed naturally. The participants were given the opportunity to express their opinions on the topics being discussed in a non-judgmental environment, but also the flexibility to divulge as much or as little as they felt comfortable with. The prompt questions were designed to suggest no previous disposition or bias to the topic to encourage a natural and authentic conversational style interview. Throughout the whole process I remained mindful of the feminist techniques and considerations which I have discussed in the earlier chapter.

Conducting the Interviews

Taking all the discussed literature into consideration, the research interviews were thus divided into three different approaches. With both the volunteers and the partners of the food bank, vulnerability and protection were not so sensitive. These interviews were carried out either at the food bank, or in the case of the partners, in their offices. There were still procedures to be adhered to however, and I followed a semi-structured list of questions and ensured that the environment was discreet enough that participants could express themselves without fear or judgement or implications of others listening. Being familiar and friendly with all these individuals from these group sets, the conversation was very informal and flowed naturally. Having a friendly relationship however did mean that I had to keep the conversation focused or it quite easily went off topic.

Interviewing the food bank users, a lot more care and caution had to be exercised as I did not know the women very well, and they were often shy or apprehensive. As discussed, the interviews took place at the food bank. The other volunteers helped to allocate a private space so that the interviews could not be overheard by people coming in and out of the food bank and to give the women privacy.

Even so, I knew that the women were not always completely at ease - it was after all a place that they were not proud to go nor a place that they really wanted to hang around at for too long. I tried to make the women feel as comfortable as possible with this in mind, offering them drinks and snacks and having an informal 'chat' before starting. I gave the women plenty of time to ask questions, and I also ensured that the time did not drag on. I did not want to make them feel like they had to stay any longer at the food bank than necessary. My experience of the interview, including the journey from approaching the women to the interview taking place will be covered in further depth in the findings section along with the meaning behind the experience I had.

Preliminary Research and Impact

Beginning to volunteer at such an early stage in my doctorate meant that I was able to use early interactions as a learning curve to develop my methodology. Such a process and stage of the research can be seen as a 'small scale version[s], or trial run[s], done in preparation for the major study' (Polit et al, 2001: p. 467) or the testing or trying of a specific research instrument or method (Baker, 1999). All in all, preliminary study aims to offer insight for the researcher prior to executing the main data collection and can be used as a tool to identify at an early stage any problems or issues that could arise when applying the methodological instrumentation to the desired sample (Van Teijlingen & Hundley, 2001). By already being involved with a food bank as I began to construct my methodology, the experience was able to inform how I would continue to carry out my fieldwork and gave me the opportunity to carry out preliminary collections which in turn would help me to learn about and improve the strategy throughout the process. Furthermore, as a novice interviewer, it was an important and useful activity to practice the technique of interviewing participants and collecting information (Holloway, 1997).

The preliminary study was carried out at *Lindley Food Bank* which was my first experience of a food bank and what happened inside and how it operated. I collected material from the beginning in the form of both ethnographic field notes and interview tests which were undertaken in July, nearing the end of my time volunteering at this food bank. The seven months I spent volunteering at *Lindley Food Bank* gave me an introduction to the location of the food bank, including insights into the type of visitors that used the charity, but also about the processes and workings of the food bank including the referral systems and the acquisition and outward supply of stock. Such first-hand information was invaluable in informing not only the proposed methodology but also in evaluating and forming the literature review for the study. A 'hands-on' experience within a food bank helped me learn about current trends and issues which were culminating on location. Conversations and interactions with

directly involved parties gave relevance and authenticity to an informed overview which was to be created as part of the prior research to the study. As a volunteer at the food bank, the team leaders allowed me to adopt a flexible role which incorporated various aspects of what was covered within the responsibilities of being a volunteer at the food bank. This included assistance with operations, but also the administration and up-keep of data and the relevant interaction with both clients and partners.

As I started to take notes in the field, I felt this skill developing as I was able to reflect on what observations were useful to include, and how to write about my own feelings in the face of things that I witnessed. I soon realised that the best way to record my field notes was immediately after my shift when recollections were fresh. It was inappropriate and impractical to take notes whilst trying to be useful as a volunteer. Witnessing interactions between food bank staff and the visitors who used the food bank, it became more and more clear that taking notes whilst working alongside the other staff also could have created discomfort or unease with not only users of the food banks, but with other members of staff and partners who visited the food bank. For specific things I wanted to remember, I would quickly make notes in my phone and write them up in more detail later. If others had seen me with a notepad, this could have compromised data coming from a natural setting - this could have affected behaviours or attitudes at the time of data being recorded.

In July 2018 I carried out my first interview at *Lindley Food Bank* nearing the end of my time spent volunteering. Due to time restraints for personal reasons, the interview was conducted using just one of the proposed group-sets, which in this case was the volunteers working at the food bank, including a team leader. The volunteers themselves had their own time constraints and additional commitments which had an impact on accessibility, and for this reason a group interview was carried out with three volunteers who felt comfortable and content to take part in the interview. The interview was carried out at the food bank itself after a working shift and gave me the opportunity to test out the interview prompts in a comfortable environment without the pressure of the main data to be collected at this point. The preliminary data collection was carried out in the form of a group interview, and I found that this method of interviewing participants often led to the distractions within the conversation and encouraged the discussion unrelated topics in terms of my own research theme and key topics stimulated by myself. Although in this instance it was an appropriate method due to time and access restraints, it furthered informed a preference for individual interviews in the final data collection, particularly with the food bank users. Where stories are more intimate and personal, especially in the case of food bank users, I felt that a group interview setting may exclude or discomfort participants, based on reflection and experience of the group interview.

My initial volunteering experience at the food bank, and the initial interview, most importantly made me aware of the sensitive nature of the location of the food bank, its users, and its role in society today. My experience opened my eyes to the truly precarious and delicate situation of food bank users, and the commitment and heartfelt dedication of the volunteers and partners. This helped me to connect and engage with my own research plans and approach, and a real reminder to approach the data and the process with both sensitivity, care, and continuous reflection. It helped me to see clearly the motivations and intentions of my research and the potential for the knowledge produced looking further ahead from completing my studies.

Ethical Implications

In research, particularly feminist research involving other people, it is important to consider ethical matters from the outset, and the implications that they entail. Gray (2009) emphasises the importance of such practice thus to 'conduct research in a responsible and morally defensible way' (p. 69). Sudman (1998) further acknowledges that harm to participants must be considered and avoided, and that risks that are posed to a participant which can include embarrassment, ridicule, belittling, or implications on mental health including distress or anxiety. Such implications must be balanced and averted by precautions or alterations in the methodology to avoid such risks. Whilst I follow procedures approved by the code of ethical guidelines of The University of Durham, I adhere to further procedures considering both the ethnographic fieldwork which took place, and the interviews which were carried out.

Dual Identity and Informed Consent

As part of the ethnographic element of the data collection, as a researcher I spent time collecting data in the field which constituted of me assuming a dual identity taking on the role of both volunteer and researcher. My commitment and dedication to both the work and to the users of the service was consistent with that of similar volunteers within the charities. Although I mentally took notes which were later written out, my role within the food banks was non-invasive or intrusive to either visitors, staff, or other relevant parties. Whilst Loflland (2004) argues that often within qualitative research if notes are not taken immediately at the time of occurrence they may lose an important essence of meaning, I chose to not visibly take notes within the food bank so as not to objectify visitors at perhaps at a difficult time, with the visibility of observation. This however raised implications of 'disguised observation' (Erikson, 1967) which did not allow for those visiting the food bank to have the option to opt-out of the observations that I would be making and later using to form an aspect of my research. I fully informed all figures of authority, and other members of staff of both my role and my research

and provided complete transparency and disclosure of my research motivation and methodology. They accepted my role within the food bank as both a volunteer and a researcher, based on an informal agreement of respect and correctness towards all parties. Furthermore, I made regular food donations to the food bank based on need. This was never expected of me, but I was grateful of the warmth and support which the volunteers and users had welcomed me with.

Speaking of users coming in and out of the food bank, as well as other professionals such as care workers, it was impractical to get signed consent from every person, particularly as I was often busy and wrapped up with other tasks as a volunteer trying to keep operations running as normal. Saying this, I had little or no interaction with many of the visitors to the food bank either as a researcher or as a volunteer, however they would still sometimes feature within my written observations, given that even when busy I tried to be aware of what was going on around me.

I adopt a pragmatic approach in relation to the ethnographic study and the field notes that were collated at the food bank in terms of the addressing of ethical implications. My role as a researcher was in no way hidden from any individual within the food bank. As relationships were developed with regular visitors to the food bank I began to talk about my research. The regularity of my contribution and presence within the food bank helped to remove any barriers of having the status of an onlooker (Punch, 1993) and made interactions both natural and pleasant for myself and others. With such pragmatism and as the research was to be wholly undertaken in a public place, I can consider the ethical implications of the field notes and observations that were taking place. Finally, due to this nature I adopt a rigorous approach to confidentiality when reporting the findings of the study to protect the identity of those who had been included in the field note collection.

Voluntary Participation

Throughout the process of collecting data from interviews, I exercised voluntary participation, meaning that I put no pressure on respondents to take part in the research interview which formed part of the data collection (Ritchie et al., 2013). During the process across all group sets, I explained the aims and intentions of the research and the interview informally during conversations which took part during the time spent volunteering at the food bank. I also provided both information sheets and consent forms which were distributed and rigorously completed before any formal data collection took place. I either sent or gave the information sheet in advance, in order to give participants time to fully consider their participation. In some cases, I provided the information sheet speculatively in order to give time and space to participants in order to consider their consent and willingness to participate. If I sensed any discomfort or opposition, I stopped pursuing or asking women to be

involved, and instead tried to respect and understand their reasons for this. I not only was fearful of making people feel uncomfortable, but also did not want to compromise my own role as a volunteer at the food bank or the position I had been entrusted with. I reminded participants that they were welcome to ask any questions they may have in terms of participation, and I endeavoured to always maintain a comfortable and open environment to do so, sometimes in private if necessary.

Written, Informed Consent (Interviews)

As mentioned above, it was important to establish formal informed consent prior to the interviews, in order to allow participants or potential participants to understand key matters concerning the data collection that was taking place (Baker, 1999; Crow et al., 2006). I communicated important aspects such as: the aims and purpose of the study; the methods which were being used and why they had been selected; how the information would be used; and the identity and position of the researcher. De Vaus (2002) confirms that an efficient way to secure and solidify informed consent is in the form of a written informed consent form. Thus, for each interviewee, as mentioned above I would verbally inform but then also provide them with an information sheet and an additional consent form. The consent form had to be digested and signed by participants before any formal data collection took place. I would address any doubts or questions before any formal data collection took place, and furthermore my contact details were provided and it was detailed that the participant should feel comfortable to make contact post-interview if they had anything they wanted to discuss, or if they wanted to request more information. Whilst such administration added an element of formality to the process of data collection, it was necessary to protect the participants and create an environment of trust and authenticity. For each respondent, I provided two consent forms of which one was kept by them, and one was returned to myself.

Anonymity and Confidentiality

I adopted anonymity and confidentiality throughout the data collection and the analysis to protect the participants and the information that they were providing as part of the study. Cohen et al. (2007) distinguish that whilst anonymity means that information provided by participants should never reveal or compromise their individual identity, a commitment to confidentiality ensures that the researcher handles data with caution to not reveal such identities through the process of the research. Rossman & Rallis (2003) further stress that 'if the researcher promises confidentiality to the participants, she must be sure that she can deliver confidentiality' (p. 73). As a researcher it is therefore important for me to accept and respect the responsibility of confidentiality of participants and the information that is shared, and this is something that I carefully and reflexively consider across all stages of the research.

With this said, I iterated an emphasis in the consent form that confidentiality and anonymity would be adhered to throughout the research process. No respondents were obliged or expected to provide any personal data throughout the data collection. In presenting the data, all participants are given unidentifiable pseudonyms and any information which could compromise anonymity was carefully handled and managed accordingly. Furthermore, any data which was collected naming institutions or even places which could trace data back to a certain individual was also anonymised for the protection of the individual. I stored any collected data carefully, and it was only accessible by myself in respect of the confidentiality agreement that was made.

Data Processing

As the data was collected, the next step was to 'recall the the extra-ordinary complex range of stimuli with which you have been bombarded' (Lofland & Lofland, 1984: p. 46). Throughout the process of collecting the information I transcribed and collated all the interviews together with the field notes that had been collected throughout my ethnographic fieldwork. With each piece of material in front of me I initiated a process of familiarisation, which in essence was reading through the transcribed interviews and the field notes so that I was comfortable with and aware of everything that had been collected. I both transcribed and analysed the material as I went along in order to be analysing the data while it was fresh in my mind. On incorporating feminist methods into data analysis, Maynard (2004) supports this claim, stating that 'it should be an ongoing aspect of research and not something reserved for the end' (p. 132). Following this, my challenge was to draw conclusions and make sense of the large amount of information I had obtained. This process had to be logical and systematic in order to lead to 'credible interpretations of data and also [help] to convince readers that the conclusions are plausible and defensible' (Gioia et al., 2013: p. 15). Reducing the information however allowed me to simplify and summarise the vast range of material so that I could make sense of the material to be able to draw conclusions relating to the aims of the study.

My own approach of processing the data is based on the principles of thematic analysis and consisted of an open-coding process with continuous comparison and theorisation from start to finish until I was able to draw out new theories and analysis from the information. In this way an understanding of the world is presented using an interpretation of human interactions and socially shared meanings (Aldiabat & Navenec, 2011). The concept of an inductive, dynamic, and flexible strategy was important in analysing the data, because it allows new categories and theories to be associated as naturally as possible with the data to ultimately contribute to new knowledge.

In relation to the feminist underpinning of the research, what Maynard (2004) concluded from her own reflections was that 'when feminist discuss issues of analysis, they do so as part of more general methodological debates' (p. 143). Therefore, without guidance from the literature I reflected on the same considerations which I had been implementing all throughout the research. For my own information set for example, this included taking time and care to handle the stories and observations that had unfolded throughout my fieldwork, and sometimes where necessary I had to pay particular attention to think about and understand stories or reflections. I found this to be necessary when working with sensitive and emotive recollections - to give them the consideration that they deserved. It was in this way that I feel I value the observations of the women that I made, as well as the stories they agreed to share with me. In a chapter on feminism and qualitative research, Travers (2001) opined that the 'the best work often results from spending a lot of time thinking about the data and experimenting with different ways of representing the world on the printed page' (p. 146) and this sentiment felt relevant in fairly and deservedly representing the women I was studying.

As a way of confronting and approaching my raw information, Gioia et al. (2013) propose a first and second order analysis whereby the first order is centric to the informant's terms and then followed by a second-order analysis which develops concepts, themes, and dimensions this time derived from the researcher. I achieve this for my data using systematic data coding as further detailed below.

Coding the Data

The concept of coding presents vast literature and many different approaches to the process of coding a data set. Urquhart (2013) however summarises that 'coding is the term used for attaching conceptual labels to data. When we attach a particular label to a particular chunk of data, we start to analyse that data. If we start to link together these codes in relationships, we can start to theorise about the data' (p. 55). Saldaña (2016) describes a code in qualitative analysis as 'most often a word or short phrase that symbolically assigns a summative, salient, essence-capturing, and/or evocative attribute for a portion of language-based or visual data' (p. 4). Codes allow data to be then translated and given meaning, and in this way a large amount of data can be dissected to identify patterns, categories, and theories. I carried out my coding by inputting the information from both field notes and interview transcripts into a spreadsheet format in which I was able to make the information more accessible to be able to start highlighting codes and themes, as well as being able to record memos as I analysed the data.

To process the data, as mentioned I chose to use a spreadsheet in which I reformulated the data by inputting it in this way in either lines or clusters to be able to then code it. Once again with no distinct method particularly associated with feminist research, although a manual strategy was arguably more time consuming than favouring a digital coding software such as NVivo (Saldaña, 2016), I felt that it allowed me to remain more connected and involved with my data at a point where it was critical to be reflexive. This was particularly important in being able to correctly portray the women of my study. Furthermore, what Brown et al. (1990) suggested on the use of data analysis software was that 'the existence of multiple synonyms would lead to partial retrieval of information' (p. 136), in their case multiple searches had not entirely retrieved the information that they had desired, where participants had used different terms to express things, and this was only realised through a manual search. Approaching my own analysis, I was mindful that many of my participants used regional slang and language, which I tried to replicate as closely as possible when transcribing the interviews but could have led to difficulties when trying to code and retrieve information. Welsh (2002) also noted that where manageable a manual process could in fact be more thorough and rigorous than a digital technique. In my own situation, keeping on top of the transcription, coding, and analysis at an early stage meant that a manual process was achievable. Doing it this way I feel closer to the data and ultimately with the women I am representing. I furthermore felt more in control of the information at a critical stage where I needed to revisit feminist literature and consider how it was relevant to my own processes and decisions.

During the first cycle of coding, I applied a structural coding process (Saldaña, 2016), with the cases being both the interview transcripts and my own field notes. Structural coding involves the representation of content or concepts which relate to the research question and themes of the research collection (MacQueen et al., 2008). This method initially categorises the data into different themed segments to enable an intra and inter-categorical overview of commonalities, differences, and relationships that emerge from the cases. From my own familiarisation with the data set I was able to establish the relevant themes myself, and therefore using a spreadsheet I highlighted sections of the data and categorised them to a few different themes. Appendices F and G show examples of how I coded both interview transcripts and my field notes. Some differences can be seen from the different data sets, for example, given the large amount of data that I had within the field notes, I not only highlighted the data in terms of the applied codes, but for my own reference I drew further attention to where the data contained information specifically about working women using a food bank. This was particularly important within the field notes, given the wide variance of information, particularly of the many different people that I came across at the food bank.

This first cycle of coding primarily enabled me to establish a rich familiarity with each case via a within-case analysis. This was important to establish and authenticate the themes that had been chosen, and with a more grounded knowledge and understanding of each case on its own, this then helped the progression to an inter-case analysis later (Eisenhardt, 1989). Furthermore, using this method of first cycle coding, as proposed by Namey et al. (2008), I was able to establish the code frequencies which enabled the identification of themes and ideas as well as the frequency of their appearance or absence across the various cases. This first process of data analysis allowed me to acquire a solid overview of the data and introduced me to key recurring or non-recurring themes that emerged. As the first stage of analysis for the research, this process however required revision and recoding as necessary whilst working through all the cases. This was to ensure that the coding was consistent and corroborated, and that the information provided by participants was accurately interpreted and represented within the corresponding codes that were generated. The practice of writing memos whilst coding the data also facilitated the process. Clarke (2005) describes memos as 'sites of conversation with ourselves about our data' (p. 202). Getting in the habit of creating memos alongside codes within the data analysis meant that I was able to critically engage with the coding system, and when revisiting the data, I was able to revise and use my own critical reflections of the ongoing analysis. Additionally, as I analysed and coded the data, I collected quotes from the transcript which stood out to me as important or interesting. I saved these quotes together along with the details of where they had been extracted from and compiled them in a separate document in loose categories to be able to revisit later when writing the thesis.

The second cycle of coding aimed to further engage with the collected data in a way to more tightly organise and analyse the data to allow for research conclusions to be later drawn from the wider data set. Saldaña (2016) describes that 'the primary goal during second cycle coding is to develop a sense of categorical, thematic, conceptual and/or theoretical organisation from your array of first cycle codes' (p. 234). Combining a manual approach with the further use of spreadsheets, I adopted the method of pattern coding to the second cycle, which is a method that Miles et al. (2014) deem appropriate for shrinking large data sets into a smaller number of units for analysis; development and exploration of key themes within the data; and the identification of causes, consequences, and explanations within the data. With a more intimate analysis of the data, Saldaña (2016) describes pattern codes as 'explanatory or inferential codes, ones that identify an emergent theme, configuration, or explanation. They pull together a lot of material from first cycle coding into more meaningful and parsimonious units of analysis' (p. 236). The progression from first cycle to second cycle coding is thus able to further identify and explore themes for analysis and scrutinisation which can allow for clearer and more specific reflection on the data set and what it means in terms of being able to draw

research conclusions from the proposed data. The key benefit of the pattern coding method is to identify actions and their consequences from my data set in order to capture reason and description of the explored phenomenon.

Using the various sources that comprised of my data set, for the second cycle of coding I gathered all the codes that had been generated within the first cycle and corroborated them. Many codes emerged from the data, especially as the inclusion of both field notes and interview transcripts meant that the data had a wide range of themes - from operational and functional to more intimate and personal accounts and findings. During the process of second order coding, with an overview of all the codes that had been generated, I was able to collect them together to visualise themes so that the codes could be categorised together. Putting together codes into categoric groups, I was able to simplify the data from a large group of codes into more manageable sub-themes, and to repeat the process to further refine the data analysis. The second coding process allowed me to develop a smaller number of categories, whilst still capturing the wider data set. I carried out this process manually, which was made more practical and efficient by the familiarity with the data that I had gained throughout each stage of coding.

As with the first round of coding, I used spreadsheets to handle the data as it made it quicker and more effective to change around and test out different strategies of organisation and analysis. Appendix H shows how I developed a wide set of first order codes into thematic categories which would form the basis of a narrative to outline the findings of the study. Here I demonstrate how micro-level findings were used to develop aggregate themes and overarching macro-level categories from the data through the chosen analysis technique. This strategy and the categorisation that was developed aided the creation of a structure for presenting my findings and making sense and deriving meaning and theory from my raw data.

Theorizing and Drawing Research Conclusions

Once the data was fully categorised and coded, following several applications of coding cycles, I was able to then reflect on what the data was communicating, and what the generated categories said and revealed in terms of the research questions offered by the study. On the process of writing feminist research up, Buch (2010) refers to this process of making decisions on concluding and choosing how to represent the data as figuring out 'which thread she will pull'. With the categories that I identified from the data, I thus experimented with mapping out these categories into 'meta categories' (Saldaña, 2016) which began to set out a narrative for how the conclusions from the data would be presented. By setting out key headings, and subsequent sub-headings the data was used to construct an analysis

of the stories that had been shared, and how they created stories which looked to address the research aims. During this process I continually revisited my original field notes and transcripts, because although the coding which I had applied helped me to structure and organise the data to be accessible for analysis, I also wanted to remain loyal to the emotions, feel, and essence of the primary data which was collected from my participants, and from my own field notes. Concurring with Reinharz (1992), I also felt that keeping the original material close would help to construct an efficient way of 'not omitting any person's voice while still having a manuscript of manageable length' (p. 71), given that of course it was still important to have a digestible final piece.

Reflections on Ethnography

In both qualitative and quantitative research, it is important to assess the appropriateness of the methods and the choices which are made. This can contribute to a quality method which is both valid and reliable in producing data which is relevant to the research questions posed and the topic of research. Whilst this is relevant for my study, what is also important is an evaluation of the method in terms of the feminist nature of the research. The complication in doing this however is that, as I have commented on in previous discussions, there remains no specific 'rules' of what a feminist methodology is and to restrict study with certain criteria would be counterproductive to the very philosophy of feminist research - that being that it should be able adaptable and fluid to accommodate both the researcher and indeed the researched. Pioneer in feminist methods Reinharz (1992) also supported the notion that it is 'ethnography in the hands of feminists that renders it feminist' (p. 48).

Therefore, to reflect on my chosen research method - ethnography - I relate to a paper by Wheatley (1994) who challenges the notion of whether ethnography can or cannot be feminist by suggesting that ethnography can indeed be engendered by a 'feminist imagination'. What Wheatley (1994) proposes is that within this type of method, it is important to 'draw attention to the significance of ethnographic *writing* and *reading* as central features of both the ethnographic *process* and *product*' (p. 409). It is in this way that a feminist sensitivity is applied to the ethics and politics of the research being carried out. Wheatley (1994) concludes that considering this enables us to 'invest our practices with diversely feminist sensibilities, theories, and politics.' (p. 413). What this entails from my own perspective is therefore that a focus must be less on what the methodology is, but to instead prioritise how it is carried out, developed, and applied considering the literature and context of feminism. This is a constructive thought process in 'evaluating' feminist methods given the diversity of ethnography in general.

Reflecting upon this in terms of my own methodology, I therefore return to the key driver of my research which is to give voice to the women of the food bank experiencing IWP. Spending time with the women in a natural environment gave validity to the chosen method in this way, and supplementary interviews which took place gave the women the option and opportunity to express their stories in their own words. What gives relevance to this way of gathering information, is that visiting a food bank is indeed an unfortunate outcome of women experiencing IWP, therefore important to explore and use as a location for research. The significant period and the deep involvement that I engaged in at the food bank gives further value and validity to ethnography as a research method. Furthermore, by doing this I feel that I can give a heightened sensitivity to the issues and themes being explored. I personally feel that the chosen way to process and analyse the material was a decision made reflecting my own interpretation of a feminist sensitivity when dealing with personal and intimate stories.

Methodology Limitations

Whilst evaluating the research method, I also remained aware of the limitations that the methodology presented. No research method is perfect, and all suffer from both weaknesses and limitations, thus it was important for me be aware of them and understand them in order to be aware of the scope of the research findings.

Primarily, the study is exploratory of nature which in its essence lends itself to the lack of definitive conclusions of the causes or impacts of the phenomenon being explored, in this case IWP. Instead, the study looks to explore and learn about an under-studied specificity of a research area in order to widen the knowledge and contribute to perspectives and theory, but without proposing finite and established truths. The research was also conducted across two regions in England - those being West Yorkshire and Tyne and Wear, which means that while the study begins to interrogate the situation for this involved, the results are in no way representative of a wider population, for example women across the whole of the UK. Due to a large variance between the regions in England, it cannot be presumed that findings from these two specific regions can be generalisable across the country.

Another limitation is that of potential participant influence. During the interview process, what cannot be avoided is the possibility that respondents may speak with a certain influence or stance based on what they think that I, as a researcher, would want to hear, or in the case of the sensitive topics being discussed within my study, due to shame or embarrassment. In this sense, influences from participants may hinder the representation of realities which emerge from the data. This however may be

unavoidable, but as a researcher I remained committed to identifying any influence which may occur for whatever reason, in order to understand it and to critically analyse and manage any impact that it may have on the research and the derived conclusions.

Chapter Summary

To summarise, this chapter has presented the methodology which I chose to carry out my research based on my motivations for the study, and the feasibility of how I could collect data relevant to the research theme. Within the chosen paradigm, and design of the research incorporating both ethnography and interviews, I engage with certain implications which had to be carefully managed during the research. some key strategies to be upheld for the sake of my chosen methodology included: a careful and sensitive approach to the recruitment of potentially vulnerable participants; rigorous reflexivity to be considered when perceiving and situating my own position within the location of the data collection and of the research itself; and strict ethical procedures to be maintained, which would be vital in protecting the participants who were involved in the study. I have presented a clear and concise methodology, one that allowed me to create valid and appropriate data which formed the basis for the presentation of my thesis, and the analysis and discussion that follows.

CHAPTER SEVEN: FOOD BANKS AND THEIR RELATIONSHIP WITH IN-WORK POVERTY

'….it is not just handing out food parcels…'

Chapter Outline

This chapter will explore the food bank within its role in the alleviation of food insecurity using the ethnographic information collected during the fieldwork. This information revealed new insight into the workings of an independent food bank. Information surfaced that would have been inaccessible without having spent significant time at the food banks and at critical times of their operations. The chapter interrogates the ability and impact of independent food banks in providing an emergency intervention to those facing injustice. This includes the awareness and advocacy of the food bank and its volunteers to the gendered and classed sensitivities of those in need of the charity, in line with the motivations of the study. I critically evaluate the role of the food bank as a charity for social justice addressing and tackling inequalities in the region, in reference to Fraser (1995)'s concept of participatory parity whereby justice is achieved in both material and symbolic forms. In doing this the data revealed that both the food bank and the volunteers also faced complex challenges both practically and emotionally, notably intertwined with the independent nature of the food banks as well as with their implicit aims to justly support their respective communities within their capabilities.

Introducing the Voluntary Sector and Independent Food Banks

This research is embedded with the UK third sector, and it is relevant to introduce the sector by acknowledging that around the same time as the introduction of measures of austerity was Prime Minster David Cameron's push for a 'Big Society'. This was an agenda to 'redistribute power from the central state to individuals, families, and local communities' (Cameron, 2010) through the support and encouragement of co-ops, charities, and social enterprises, as well as the promotion of more power for local governments (Cameron, 2010). Within this, the government saw food banks as a positive ideological translation of the 'Big Society 'agenda as a means of social solidarity and libertarian paternalism (Ellison & Fenger, 2013), in line with the pursuit of charity and philanthropy in local communities.

As more research around food banks emerged however, links became apparent between increased food bank usage and insufficient social security resources (Lambie-Mumford et al., 2014; Perry et

al., 2014) as well as wider structural inequality (Garthwaite et al. 2015). Slocock et al. (2015) found that a 'Big Society gap' has emerged whereby funding and collaboration with voluntary sector organisations is inadequate to fill voids which are apparent in the areas where funding has been cut to public services in measures of austerity. With this, the potential for positive impact of the third sector has been threatened rather than strengthened. Caplan (2016) in response to a food banks position within 'Big Society' also described the growing food bank phenomenon as a 'sticking plaster' of deeper entrenched inequalities in the UK, and their existence simply 'allows the state to evade its obligations' (p. 9).

Both food banks where I volunteered were independent, therefore they operated separately from The Trussell Trust - which is the largest network of food banks in the UK, supporting around 430 food banks in the country (The Trussell Trust, 2020). Independent food banks are aligned by their own regulations, at times coordinated (albeit rarely) with guidance from external authorities. Without the wider support of The Trussell Trust these independent food banks were responsible for their own marketing, funding, and gathering of stock to provide to those using the food bank. Appendix I shows an example of how *The People's Project* called to the local community for the donations that they needed. Working independently meant that the food banks had more autonomy and more freedom in organisational decisions and practice and were able to adapt this to nuances of their respective communities, regions, and visitors. This however was not without its deeper complexities which will be detailed in this chapter. Speaking to the volunteers at the food banks, although they had been approached to join The Trussell Trust network, they were nervous about the constraints that it would bring and were also wary of paying the annual £500 service charge[4], as both were financially insecure. Both also expressed that they felt morally obliged to spend surplus cash on stock and direct operating costs within their own initiative.

As with many of the other independent food banks across the country, both food banks were part of an alternative network - The Independent Food Aid Network (IFAN). IFAN represents its members through the sharing of best practice, the collection of data, and promoting advocacy (IFAN, 2019). The main advantage of membership with IFAN is gaining exposure in the media, and a source of accountability for the records and statistics which are collected at the food banks. Even this was still more of a voluntary practice than something enforced. Records, inputs, and analysis were all done individually by each member at their own discretion.

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[4] This was just an estimate from the volunteers I spoke to.

The two food banks were deeply embedded within their local community, working directly with other local support services and providers, civil authorities, schools, and religious institutions. Both were wholly run by a team of volunteers with no paid staff. At *Lindley Food Bank* the premises of the food bank had been provided by the council, on the proviso that the food bank would be open every week for at least four days out of five. *The People's Project* did not benefit from such an arrangement, and the lack of a more permanent location led to considerable disruption. This will be explained in further detail later.

Management and Governance of an Independent Food Bank

I will first outline the management and governance of independent food banks that I experienced and observed whilst working as a volunteer. I will frame the narrative in particular reference to what made the operations of an independently ran food bank unique, but also the moral challenges and decisions which were faced by the volunteers daily. This section will detail some of the more practical aspects of the day-to-day running of the food banks and how they relate to the conceptual framework.

Management Structure

Additional to operational volunteers, the food banks were organised by a team of Trustees of whom, much like the operational staff, were all volunteers. At both food banks the Trustees were responsible for the strategic decisions made. At *The People's Project* there was a significant cross over between those acting as front-line volunteers and Trustees. Despite the central community role of the food bank in both regions, there was not always interest or involvement from local stakeholders in the vision and development of the charity. During my period volunteering at *The People's Project* an Annual General Meeting (AGM) was held. Although the AGM was advertised and sent to many local stakeholders such as politicians, the local council, referral partners, business owners and various other organisations in the community, the AGM was poorly attended - in fact only attended by the volunteers of the food bank, myself included. I was informed that this was often the case. Due process and diligence were exercised by the Trustees, but all decisions were made internally in the absence of any other attendees to the AGM. This did not seem to correlate with the increasing pressure of rising demand for the food bank and the growing number of stakeholders in the food bank networks, namely organisations relying on the food banks for referrals and support to their clients.

Although, as I have mentioned, all major strategic decisions were made under a majority ruling of the Trustees, on a more day-to-day operational basis the volunteers were largely left to make decisions based on their best judgement. Although some of the volunteers had experience in caring services or

social care, it was not a prerequisite. Most of the volunteers had little-to-no experience of working with vulnerable people. Furthermore, at both food banks decisions were not always unilateral and there were instances of conflict, of which ultimately the Chair of the respective charity would have the final say. Without the unifying regulation or process, for example of The Trussell Trust, independent food banks were thus vulnerable to the potential for inconsistency amongst those using the service, for example on different days or when dealing with different volunteers, and vulnerable to the conflicts that arose when making such decisions amongst differing personal ethics and priorities.

Food Bank Data

Operations of the food bank meant that the charities and their respective teams gained valuable data about the local communities and the people living in them concerning poverty, deprivation, work, welfare and various other factors impacting people's lives. For both food banks, a referral form (see Appendix J) contained basic information such as demographic data, but also information about where the referral had come from and brief reasons for the referral being made. Unfortunately, neither of the food banks had sufficient staff or resources available to be able to efficiently and consistently input and track the data, and there is minimal accountability for the statistics as no government or local councils monitored or even required the collection of food bank data. At *Lindley Food Bank*, I personally helped with the data input as many of the other volunteers were often busy dealing with visitors or were either unfamiliar or lacking in confidence when working with a computer. Tasks on the computer never took priority over practical tasks such as speaking to people and putting together the parcels, often leading to large back logs of referrals to be worked through. This sometimes led to the input being rushed or incomplete. The data that had been collected included important information not only about the referral mentioned above, but also of the frequency of visits, demographic distribution, and the busiest periods for the food banks - however unfortunately this data never went much further than the food bank computer.

Some months into volunteering at *The People's Project* there was a controversial bureaucratic change to the format of referral that the food bank would receive. Whereas in the past, food banks would receive some background details on those individuals' incoming referrals, the Job Centre reduced this to just a name. As also discussed by Parker (2018), the DWP directed that 'instead of offering referrals or vouchers to claimants, Job Centre staff must only offer 'signposting slips''. Whilst this made the volunteers job more difficult, without more information of those coming in, it also controversially raised the debate that the DWP made the change to minimise the accountability between their claimants and food banks. By categorising the referrals as signposting, no official data or statistics

were recorded. In the bigger picture, the information and awareness of the situations of these individuals was thus excluded from government data. This was a great devaluation, felt perhaps particularly acutely by those also in paid work, considering the intricacies of the barriers that they faced.

Local Partnerships

Operating as charities, the food banks relied on donations of stock and cash to be able to keep running and to cover operating costs. Local partnerships with businesses and organisations were vital in maintaining a steady influx of donations to keep the shelves stocked. *The People's Project* was in an advantageous position that they were in partnership with local supermarkets that placed collection bins within the stores that the food bank staff can collect on a weekly basis. Similar collection points were positioned in community buildings such as libraries, schools, and churches. The food bank also had links with local businesses such as Marks and Spencer, KFC, and Greggs who regularly donated stock that was nearing its sell by date (see Appendix L). *The People's Project* received a steady and enough donations through these partnerships alone. *Lindley Food Bank* was however at a large disadvantage. Although there were similar collection bins in community spaces, it had been unable to secure a collection point at the local supermarkets. The two largest local supermarkets were ASDA and Tesco, with the Tesco supermarket located within metres of the food bank, however both had a pre-existing partnership with The Trussell Trust. This meant that the collection bins in the two closest supermarkets were collected by food banks in neighbouring communities which were within The Trussell Trust network. Additionally, it was not clearly communicated on the collection bins that any donations would not be distributed to the nearest community food bank. This was not only felt personally, but *Lindley Food Bank* suffered logistically for this. Stock would regularly leave the shelves as quickly as it arrived, often without accumulated stock in reserve.

The fresh food that was provided to be handed out was all either past it's sell-by date or unwanted by the retail outlets or supermarkets either due to being broken, damaged, or unsuitable for re-sale. The collections were both coordinated and carried out by the food bank volunteers at their own expense, arguably in a beneficial arrangement for the retailers in terms of waste management but less of a milestone for distribution as individuals were left with what wasn't suitable for the paying public.

> *Much to everybody's annoyance, Aldi had given us a huge donation - but only of out-of-date carrots that were rotten and smelling. Not only had they leaked all over Caroline's car, but having tried to reject them the staff had got annoyed and threatened to stop providing us with*

stock. We spent over an hour trying to see if any were salvageable and hauling all the rest to the outside bins. **(Field Notes)**

The volunteers often spoke positively when there was plenty of fresh food to hand out, but little of the quality of what was being distributed and who the arrangement was really designed to benefit. In instances where the food bank had insufficient stock to provide a variety, both individuals and families were left with whatever remained, often failing to provide them with a sufficiently varied diet. Whilst the food banks were evidently performing some sort of distributive *service*, to call it justice felt like an overshot.

A Food Bank's Referral System

As discussed in Chapter Three, the process of a food bank referral system is controversial and complex. This is even more prevalent amongst independent food banks that lack the organisational order and process of those within The Trussell Trust (Cloke et al., 2018). Before I started volunteering, I was naïvely unaware that food banks used referrals, as were many of my peers when I discussed food banks with them. Alas, within both food banks the referral system worked in a similar way. Appendix J shows an example of a referral form that was used, allowing an individual to collect a parcel. The food banks had a relationship with support services of which individuals received a referral form in order to visit and collect food, and communications are exchanged between these organisations and the food bank. A wide range of organisations sent referrals through to the food bank, and amongst others these were: the Job Centre; housing associations; social workers; other charities such as Age Concern, Christians Against Poverty and Shelter; youth services; probation services; the Police; mental health workers; drug addiction and rehabilitation centres; and refuges and hostels, for example for women fleeing domestic violence. In both food banks I noticed a significant increase in referrals coming in from schools, doctors, and churches. With reference to referrals, as independent charities there was space and possibility for leniency, depending on the case.

> *Marjorie told me visitors should not turn up without a referral and should not be eligible for food without a referral from a partner organisation. This said however, the volunteers all mentioned that it was very difficult to turn people away if they were starving, so in extreme cases they would give people enough to tie them over until they were able to speak to a help organisation who would be able to give them assistance or at least a formal referral.* **(Field Notes)**

The volunteers at the food banks used their own initiative and common sense when dealing with visitors. In the absence of a referral however, the food bank volunteers did reiterate to visitors that a one-off food parcel could be provided but that they would have to seek further support and a conversation with an appropriate support service before they could return. The volunteers were pragmatic and often gave visitors the benefit of the doubt, whilst emphasising that self-referrals were not a long-term option. This of course was a difficult balance to strike, for fear of avoiding word to spread that a parcel would be provided without a referral.

In theory, the use of the referral system itself meant that professional and trained care providers were those assigning the support of the food bank to visitors, and in a way that could be catered to them - for example how long the support would be necessary and what other steps could be taken to avoid dependence. This was so that trained professionals, often more informed of individuals circumstance, made the decision of those who would be able to access the food bank's support and those who were denied. Thus, the decision of the 'deserving and undeserving' was detached from the food bank volunteers' role. As displayed above however, without a strict organisational protocol, many of the volunteers I worked with would often struggle to turn away people who were hungry, thus the responsibility of the decision of who could access to food fell back to them.

> *Mary was welcoming visitors and sorting their referrals whilst I was filling up the toiletries box. There had been a bit of tension in the morning over a visitor who was due later in the day. She had had plenty of parcels from us and still hadn't arranged a meeting with our debt advisor. Mary had consulted Carl (the Chair) about making one more exception, to which he had said no. When the woman came in, I overheard Mary explaining that we were unable to give her another parcel until she spoke to someone about her finances. She was given a few bits of bread and spare sandwiches and left. Mary stayed quiet but I saw her sat with her head in her hands.* **(Field Notes)**

Many of the volunteers therefore were left with the difficult job of having to say yes or no, carefully having to manage the charitable distribution that was available and who it was accessible to. This decision was not always an easy one, or one without an emotional toll or sometimes conflict from differing opinions. To have to fall on the unpaid and untrained frontline food bank worker seemed like a step backwards in confronting the roots of the tensions that were driving people to food banks in the first place.

To clarify what is meant by a 'food parcel', at both sites there was a prescribed list of food types that are put together to be distributed (see <u>Appendix M</u>). The fixed list includes a variety of products such as: cereal; milk; tea/coffee; soup; beans; vegetables; meat; fish, dry pasta and rice; fruit; and dessert such as rice pudding and custard. Much of the food was tinned due to the lack of storage and circulation possible to be able to distribute fresh produce. Saying this however, occasional donations of fresh fruit and vegetables did come in and the volunteers added them as additions to any parcel where it is possible. Parcels differed in size depending on the size of the family that had been referred. Whilst the food parcels try to provide the biggest variety of nutrients possible to allow for an adequate standard of nutrition, this was limited due to parcels being restricted to tinned and packet food. Also at *Lindley Food Bank*, due to shortages of stock, substitutes had to be made in order to make up the parcels. For example, as an expensive product, meat was often in short supply and the food bank volunteers would have to instead provide additional amounts of something that was in abundance - usually tinned soup or baked beans.

With a vast array of what was received from donations and what was replenished as essential stock, parcels were often able to include toiletries, sanitary products, and cleaning products when available. If visitors had babies or small children then the food bank was able to provide nappies and baby food, stock allowing. Toiletries proved important for reasons such as basic hygiene when looking for jobs or attending interviews (as many of the food bank visitors were). Both food banks provided any available products that they thought would be useful, for example razors, washing powder, baby wipes, and nappies for families with small children.

> *'We give them toiletries, so that if someone is going to an interview…we give them something to wash their clothes. If they are going for appointments or things at least they can feel clean and more confident…and more human…'* **(Laura, Volunteer)**

Aside from practical additions to the food parcels, the volunteers at the food bank tried to supplement the parcels in any way that they could in order to bring a bit of joy or at least normality into the lives of those that the parcels were going to. For example, over Christmas mince pies were put in parcels, and at Easter there were always chocolate eggs to give to families with children. This was particularly important when visitors had young children. They did not want their children to suffer, for example if they saw their peers at school with certain luxuries or treats that their own parents were unable to provide.

A young couple came in and were over the moon with their KFC… their faces lit up. They proceeded to tell us that they used to always go to KFC as their treat and as a meal out to go together with their young children. They said it had been a while since they had been able to afford to go as all their spare money had had to be put into other expenses such as bills and transport costs. It was nice to see them happy and to hear them say that they couldn't wait to take the food back to their young children and treat them to KFC like they used to be able to do a few years ago. **(Field Notes)**

The example above shows how the food banks tried to provide variety and a 'treat' in the parcel that is handed out. A report in The Guardian raised this, criticising a backlash against food banks that 'the new normal was that food had to be extremely basic, otherwise food bank users were somehow in breach of their 'contract'' (Williams, 2020). My own experience showed that whilst very few of the food bank visitors were expectant of the extras they received, they were both grateful and appreciative.

In the instance above, myself and the other food bank volunteers too were happy to be able to provide visitors with extras, in particular things that would improve their quality of life and minimise financial strain or pressure. This however was not without the burden of the guilt and emotional impact when these extras were not available. This was particularly pertinent when mothers requested nappies where they had previously been able to access them from the food bank. Once again, the volunteers were the front facing decision makers, facilitating either appreciation or disappointment, albeit out of their control and at the mercy of what had or had not been donated.

Practicalities

The food banks sent out their parcels in regular supermarket carrier bags, for practical reasons and to help people *fit in* as they are carrying the supplies home. Despite their best intentions however, this was not always avoidable. To give one example, in order to more efficiently maintain stock rotation, all donations and stock at the food bank would be visibly dated in black marker pen as it came in. This meant that the volunteers could easily sort stock in order to store the longer dated items and distribute those with shorter dates. Gaby spoke of the impact of this once she had got her food home.

'I feel very conscious of the numbers on the items. Because everyone goes…why has your stuff got numbers written all over it? And I think…shit…what am I going to say? And that is really hard to have to explain to people why your food has got numbers on…when people come round, I think…I don't want to open the cupboard…I don't want to open the fridge… It is

like...you can't get one item out without it having a number on it...Even a pint of semi-skimmed milk that comes in a carton, even that has a number on it... it stereotypes you...and it instantly puts you in a category of...why has your food got writing on it? Nobody else's does...' **(Gaby, Food Bank Visitor)**

Gaby's recollection is a clear example of the restraints that the food bank faces in providing a non-impactful service to its visitors, especially in consideration of Fraser's conceptualisation of justice in that both distributive and recognitive matters need to be met. Whilst Gaby was grateful for the food, she suffered an emotional injury with the marked food visible to visitors of her home. From Gaby's experience amongst others, the food bank was fortunately able to change its process, so it was no longer necessary to mark the food in this way. This change was made some months after the interview with Gaby of which the quote above is taken. This was a positive move in removing the stigma from food bank usage, which was something that many of the volunteers felt strongly about and were strict in maintaining for the benefits of the visitors (see Appendix N). This is evidence of the empathy that volunteers felt towards the visitors and their commitment to minimising injustices face, of which will be discussed in more detail later.

Many of the outgoing parcels that the food banks distributed would be collected by the visitors from the food banks themselves for convenience (for the food bank volunteers) and safety. In some cases, although rare, the volunteers would make home deliveries. This only happened when those collecting parcels were unable to travel to the food bank either for disability, illness, or injury. Social workers or care workers would sometimes collect a food parcel for individuals within their care. *The People's Project* worked in partnership with a local women's refuge whereby the referral system works in the same way, but rather than individuals collecting their parcels personally, staff at the food bank deliver the parcels to the women's refuge. Support workers at the refuge commented not only of the advantages of this set up for the women that they housed, but also of their positive working relationship and experience of partnering with the food bank.

'I know that I have seen in my other job, people used to have to come to the food bank in the normal way, and people used to say then that 'people know the times of this food bank and know what I am coming in here for', so I think the way that they bring the stuff to us sort of saves a little bit of the extra humiliation of having to go access it.' **(Imogen, Support Worker at a Women's Refuge)**

'…We are really appreciative that we do have such a good working relationship with the food bank. I know that I was very surprised when I started working here how good the relationship is, and how a-tuned they are to what we need.' **(Anna, Support Worker at a Women's Refuge)**

The benefits and the positive testimonials received from the Women's Refuge demonstrated the value created through the development of a fruitful working relationship, and largely a team of women supporting other women. As an independent food bank, *The People's Project* had the autonomy and flexibility to do this under their own initiative. What was recognised here was the acute vulnerability of women when using the food bank having escaped from domestic violence therefore a personalised arrangement was able to prevent further emotional damage or stigmatisation. With many of the volunteering team women in this case, and to my knowledge with more than one having experienced domestic violence themselves, being able to accommodate and support the women's vulnerabilities in this way was a crucial part of the food banks operations - and evidently an advantage of the food bank's flexibility within their independent status. The role of the volunteers will be discussed later in the chapter.

Power Behind the Parcels

Summarising this section, what I have demonstrated is that food banks, specifically independent food banks, played a complex role in the power dynamics at play. In theory the referral system in place was designed to put the decision of who is entitled to food in the hands of professional support organisations, however within the more lenient management of independent food banks this was not always the case. My own experience showed that at times this leniency was positive in being able to acknowledge the specific challenges of food bank visitors, for example Gaby's shame of markings on her milk and being able to hand deliver parcels to victims of domestic violence. On the contrary however the food bank volunteers were at times faced with having to turn people away or having some days where there was no fresh food or toiletries available.

Furthermore, my time spent volunteering showed the food banks as institutionally isolated in terms of governance. Wider organisations played a minimal role in inputs to the food bank despite the opportunity, where in fact the charities could have benefited from advice based on wider knowledge and experience with vulnerable populations. Ironically this was at a time when more and more organisations - including other charities, government departments, and public institutions - were leaning on the food bank for support, to support their own clients. I have challenged the ability of food banks to contribute to a just distribution of resources give that their business model as a charity

is limited to the constraints of distribution at the mercy of others, for example what the supermarkets decide they are happy to dispose of. Saying this, the flexibility of independent food banks within their practices has shown the malleability to adapt to the complex needs of those using the service, in particularly the vulnerability demonstrated by women using the service.

Individual and Institutional Challenges

The section that follows will present some of the challenges that were faced by the independent food banks where I volunteered, both as charities and more directly concerning those who volunteered and ran the food banks. Once again this will be specifically framed both to the notion of participatory parity in interventions of justice and with an emphasis on women facing IWP where relevant. What is presented reveals that, similarly to the previous section, despite honourable intentions the reality of independent food banks presented many intricate challenges in the way that they were able to provide both symbolic and material relief to the visitors of the service.

Operational Instability

As functional charities, the food banks faced practical and logistical struggles, often without the finances available to quickly remedy them. *The People's Project* most prominently faced various disruptions during my time spent volunteering. To set the scene, accommodating to a wider and growing catchment area and to minimise travel for those attending, the food bank had several different distribution points operating at specific times of the week. As I began volunteering in October of 2018, the main hub of the food bank operated from a local church (although a separate operating entity to the church itself), which was used as an operational site to receive, sort, and store donations as well as being an additional distribution point. In 2018 however, decision makers at the church asked the food bank to leave their premises, and although they allowed the food bank to keep operating until a new site was secured, tensions increased between the church and the food bank. The atmosphere felt icy, and the awkwardness was felt by both volunteers and food bank visitors. The Chair of the food bank decided to promptly leave after Christmas - despite the lack of a permanent premise to relocate to. The local council secured a temporary location for storage (Appendix R), however with the first whisper of a new site the council was quick to pull back from any involvement with the process. The food bank was able to secure a location storage unit with a local shopping outlet, however following this it was still a couple of months until a permanent base could be established first for storage and then even longer for distribution within the shopping centre. The temporary unit was cold, difficult to access, and as a former vehicle maintenance unit it was hazardous. The whole process left the food bank not only feeling unsupported and isolated by local authorities and local

institutions such as the church, but also led to great disruption to operations as well as stress, sleepless nights, and additional hassle for the Trustees and volunteers.

Marjorie was back and seemingly frustrated at the lack of order. I asked about the status of the new premises to which she said we were still struggling to secure it, and that the solicitor that they had approached to help them with the contract and the signing of the deeds, had given them an estimate of £900 for the work. This was not something that the food bank could afford and there seemed to be no budging on price. We were therefore left with a couple of weeks left at Hanley School but with nowhere to move on to. Tensions were high with a huge elephant in the room - what happens next? **(Field Notes)**

Everyone was a bit fed up as there was still no clarity about the move and the shopping centre had been messing us about. They had told us that we would be able to have a storage space when we got kicked out of Hanley, however when an inventory was sent over to them with all of our stock they realised that there would not be enough room in the space that they had thought of. It was back to the drawing board, and the shopping centre were still having a think about how the move could go ahead. The council were unwilling to extend the time that we could stay in Hanley. Carl was in despair. We had crates of stock and nowhere to go with them. The latest was that we had been allocated a different storage unit that we would be able to start moving stock into next week, however it was currently being tidied up and the electricity being sorted. Carl said that he had been to see it and it was far from ideal, that it was awkward to get to and us volunteers would have to traipse up and down stairs with crates to get things in and out. He was not only worrying about the food bank but now about the volunteers too. **(Field Notes)**

My field notes present a first-hand experience of the move. My own recollection demonstrates the operational and financial instability, the responsibility of the food banks working independently as a charity, and the pressure placed on the volunteers to maintain an operating organisation, especially in times of change and uncertainty. The words alone however do not do justice to the tensions, anxiety, and concern experienced profoundly by the Trustees of the food bank. Appendix S shows the final opening of the new premises after nearly a year of uncertainty.

Whilst logistically and practically the disturbances to the food bank premises evidently caused distress to the volunteers, they also impacted the way that the volunteers carried out their role when facing those collecting parcels. Processes of the food bank had been developed over years, developing

the fairest and most sensitive treatment that they could to visitors, but with limited resources this became quickly compromised.

> '…*there are just so many people waiting, and it is not an ideal place because everybody is sitting around near each other…there is nowhere to separate people and talk in privacy. I mean hopefully when we do move to the shopping centre, they will have it set out so that there is an area to talk to people when they are coming in, and a separate area for people to sit…so they can't hear…to give people some dignity. It is really hard. This move is absolutely dreadful*' **(Mary, Volunteer)**

In the example above, the distribution of food remained the food bank's priority, however considering the circumstances this was somewhat at the expense of the privacy and dignity of the visitors. For women, some needed to speak about personal matters such as domestic violence or the need for sanitary products, again which could be embarrassing to have to speak about in an open space. Once again this was very much out of the control of the food bank volunteers, yet clearly against the morals and ethics they had developed over time in dealing with vulnerable visitors.

<u>Tackling Exploitation</u>

As I have touched upon in the previous section, the food banks were all too aware of their own vulnerability to exploitation, given that even though there was a referral system in place it did not have the authoritative implementation of a higher-level regulation. The volunteers therefore were tasked with the additional duty of the awareness and the avoidance of those taking advantage of the system, both for the integrity of the food bank as well as in the best interest of all individuals using and supporting the food bank.

> *Linda was a regular, we had seen her before and she had had several parcels from us in the previous months, some already without a referral. What's more - already that day she had been flagged on a local Facebook page having been seen shoplifting in a small shop. Sarah was firm with her - she couldn't have any more parcels without help and a referral. We gave her a spare loaf of bread and some Greggs sandwiches, but she continued to protest. We all felt quite uncomfortable, it was difficult turning people away. Other people were waiting and seemed uneasy that things may kick off, or that Linda was drawing attention to everyone. People were also waiting to donate food and were watching what was going on. We told Linda she had to leave, or we would have to call security, and she skulked out.* **(Field Notes)**

Whilst examples such as the one above were rare, they were not unheard of. Much like decisions over referrals and control over the contents of a parcel, once again it was the volunteers at the food bank who were left with the difficult job of having to say no. I will reiterate that many felt a guilt and an emotional burden in these circumstances, even reflected in my own evocation. It was of course important to manage with care, as suggested above the reputation of the service was crucial in maintaining incoming donations and to symbolically protect all the honest and genuine visitors that the food bank supported. The volunteers, in particular the Trustees and more experienced volunteers, were vigilant to those taking advantage, whilst still being careful to give people the benefit of the doubt where necessary. This was not a simple balance to achieve. The injustice I realise here is that it was the food bank volunteers who had to deal with denying people of food and bear the brunt of their reaction. Meanwhile the frustrations and reasons for the individuals needing the food bank in the first place, were often structural therefore distant enough for those figures of authority to avoid the consequences.

Uncertainty amongst the Volunteers

Without having a fixed preconception of what the other volunteers at the food bank would be like, my presumptions beforehand were more in line with findings from the NCVO (McGarvey et al., 2019) that volunteers generally tended to be middle-class, retired women. Whilst some of the volunteers were indeed retired women, almost all of the team were working-class. Somewhat unexpectedly but consistent over the two food banks however was that several of the volunteers were experiencing instability themselves in terms of their work and financial situation. For two of the volunteers in particular, experience working at the food bank was somewhat strategic in the hope that the experience and the skills acquired would lead them to a more permanent and paid job.

At *Lindley Food Bank*, Rosie had been volunteering at the food bank for over a year when I joined the team, she was 24 and lived locally. Rosie was quiet but a hard-worker and with a clear commitment to anything that she did.

> *Rosie told me that as well as enjoying the work at the food bank, that it had given her some experience to put on her CV when applying for jobs. She had experienced difficulty finding other ways into employment, especially as many required a maths qualification which she didn't have, and had always struggled with maths at school. The team let Rosie organise stock and also to create reports and work with statistics to help her practice her maths skills in a real life setting* **(Field Notes)**

Rosie was simultaneously working as a cleaner at a local pub with variable shifts that were often unpredictable and last minute. Rosie took any opportunity to cover her colleagues shifts for some extra income, despite having a problem with her back which she mentioned got worse when she took on long shifts cleaning. Rosie often voiced her frustrations of the process of applying for jobs and being either rejected or just not acknowledged - however she was consistent in coming in for her shift at the food bank, although sometimes she looked exhausted. All the above mirrored the experiences of those claiming from the food bank but also engaging in precarious work, which will be detailed later in the thesis. Staff at the food bank gave Rosie a strong reference, and from the time she had spent volunteering at the food bank she had acquired practical skills that could be transferrable to the jobs she was applying for, not to mention the ability to work in a team and with members of the public. When Rosie finally found a permanent job at a local high street shop, Laura (Shift Manager at *Lindley Food Bank*) was elated. *'If anyone deserves a proper job it would be Rosie…she works so hard!'*. Having settled into her new job Rosie sometimes called in to the food bank to say hello. She was always excited to tell us about how the job was going, and she seemed so much happier and proud that she was in full time paid employment. This was like many of the women claiming from the food bank who I interviewed who were both proud and enthusiastic about their work, which will be discussed in the next chapter.

In a somewhat similar situation at *The People's Project*, Kristen was 28 and had been volunteering at the food bank since it started almost four years previously. Kristen was claiming job seekers benefits and had experience working as a cleaner but in the past year had struggled to find work. Kristen struggled with both physical problems - including back problems and issues with her joints, as well as psychological problems - she mentioned that she battled with depression and had been on and off medication for the past few years.

> *'To be honest I love the work of the food bank and the people here keep me sane. Keeping busy keeps me motivated to look for work and…well I guess it reminds me that I like doing stuff and being active! Finding work cleaning isn't what it used to be in this area…it is all agencies now…but at least working here keeps me active in the community…people around here know of the food bank so I think that connection makes people more likely to trust me…'*
> **(Kristen, Volunteer)**

For Kristen, the work at the food bank was also carried out at the same time as looking for paid work, however compared to Rosie the value that it provided to the search for employment was more psychological than practical. For Kristen the work at the food bank meant that she was still able to

access a team working environment and the interactions and company that it brought, and this was motivating and encouraging to her simultaneous job hunt. Kristen spoke of struggles with not only finding work, but also with the procedures of the job centre. She completed various courses, but she often commented that she found them useless for the type of work she was looking for and took up a lot of her time that she felt she could be using productively elsewhere. Kristen also told us that towards the end of 2018 the Job Centre had begun to try and dissuade her from the volunteer work that she did and said that priority should be given to searching for paid work and that it could have an impact on her benefit payment. This felt deeply ironic, given that the Job Centre themselves were, at both sites, the biggest referrer of individuals to the food bank.

Matthew from the *Lindley Food Bank* stated, '*most of the volunteers here at the moment are here because they know exactly what it feels like to be on the other end*' and this was certainly the case for the two volunteers discussed above. Speaking to the other volunteers I found that many were too experiencing or had experienced deprivation, or even had used or were using the food bank. At times I even felt like an outsider for being middle-class. This is something I reflect on in much more detail in a later chapter of the thesis. Within this notion are implications of the classed and gendered struggle in work that was faced by many in the area, before having even been introduced to the women claiming from the food bank. To contextualise this, the fact that the women were using unpaid voluntary work to gain experience demonstrated the barriers to entry to work and the women's precarity was mirrored in those that they were supporting through the food bank. From having first-hand experience of this gendered and classed struggle the volunteers had a deeper sense of empathy and relatability to those claiming from the food bank, which will be discussed later in this chapter.

The young women were vulnerable in comparable ways to those using the food bank, but the food banks had welcomed them as individuals and given them a chance. This ultimately helped them with their struggles and to move on to better circumstances. Both female volunteers (although this was the case for a few others) were pursuing the type of unskilled labour that was common for women in the area, and their roles at the food banks had helped them to develop these skills and personally develop both practically and emotionally. This was undoubtedly one of the undocumented values that the food bank brings outside of the obvious provision of food and is another demonstration of the characteristics and natures of the individuals who find themselves volunteering at a food bank. What is shocking from this implication however is that it is some of the most vulnerable members of society themselves who are carrying the responsibility to feed other vulnerable people. With this I will now arrive at the conclusion for this section.

From a personal level, the instability that both the food banks and some of the volunteers faced was disheartening, although their resilience and dedication was honourable. As organisations, being independent from a wider administrative network meant that both logistical and operational challenges fell on the volunteering team, not only having an impact on their wellbeing but also affecting the way that they wanted to carry out the work that they did. The way that the food banks managed and combatted exploitation was critical both in being able to maintain the provision of food for other visitors, but also in protecting the image of the food bank and thus the image of those using it too. The efforts of the food bank and their volunteers has a clear resonance with a justice that reconciles with participatory parity. Food was provided for those without access to it, but also in a way to minimise the emotional injuries that were inflicted - given that many of the volunteers had their own experiences of the symbolic injustices related with a working-class struggle. These efforts however were vulnerable to threats faced, namely the instability of the food banks and of those few who tried to exploit the available charity. Finally, there seemed to be a strange irony that vulnerable working-class women were also turning to the food bank for a different kind of support in terms of skills development for CV building and for boosting and maintaining their momentum to work.

Advocates of Justice

The final part of this chapter will focus on the volunteers at the food bank, outlining the responsibilities and initiatives that they carried out that frequently extend beyond their more obvious roles. I also reflect on the significance not only of the tasks undertaken but also the way they relate to the ways that the volunteers tried to provide relief as *fairly* as possible. The section concludes with a consideration of the way that the volunteers verbally address injustices whilst they are presented at the food bank.

A Volunteer's Role

The food bank volunteers carried out a vast array of tasks, including collecting donations; emptying collection bins; dating and sorting incoming donations; stock rotation; social media and communications; transport and logistics of both stock and parcels; putting parcels together; data input; dealing with enquiries via telephone and email; welcoming and helping visitors; and many other duties that arose. Many of the volunteers went over and above the minimum commitment expected of their role - often coming in on extra days and driving around to collect donations without any expectation or demand of reimbursement.

At *The People's Project*, roles were loosely assigned for example either front of house or with stock, however more generally people tended to pitch in and generally use their initiative, working only loosely under instruction of the more longstanding or knowledgeable volunteers. At *Lindley Food Bank* there were no assigned roles and again volunteers just got on with whatever needed doing. Overall, this system worked, and the volunteers willingly helped each other out and accommodated absences or different skill sets and physical abilities.

During my time spent at both food banks, I was frequently overwhelmed and inspired by the commitment, dedication, and empathy of the volunteers who worked to keep the food banks running. The food bank organisers ensured that their volunteers were committed to these values, for example in the handbook for volunteers the core values include '[being] supportive and non-judgmental at all times to those accessing our services' (see Appendix O). More than this though, I found that all the volunteers who I worked alongside had a deep connection and compassion not only for the work of the food bank but also for the people who used the food bank. This sentiment was shared by my colleagues at both sites.

> *'I think one of the big positive about it is that all of the volunteers are all committed, friendly, and down to earth, and show empathy towards everybody who walks through the door.'*
> **(Mary, Volunteer)**

I came to learn that their role of volunteering was more than just giving up a couple of hours a week and in fact reflected the intrinsic motivations of the volunteers to give something back to the community and to help those in difficult circumstances. Despite the somewhat sobering nature of the work as well as operational complications and frustrations, both teams were always optimistic and high-spirited, making a fun and cooperative environment in which to work. The volunteers consistently showed compassion and courage for the benefit of individuals visiting the food bank. The mention of empathy also connects back to what was mentioned in the previous chapter, that many of the volunteers were themselves working-class and had experienced their own struggles or insecurity.

Volunteers with community involvement, social work experience, or care work experience tended to be those who speak to visitors about their referrals.[5] In my experience most of these volunteers who assumed this role were women. They used their own knowledge and experiences to support the

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[5] It was these volunteers who I interviewed as part of my data collection.

visitors and to help them in any way that they can, especially given the fact that many of the visitors come in either distressed, desperate, embarrassed, or in despair with their circumstance.

> M: 'I think… part of our job is to make them feel like it's ok..,.reassure them and I think that we do that.'
> L : 'It sounds odd, but yeah, try and make it like a pleasant experience.'
> M : 'Smile, and so and so-forth…don't make them feel like they have done something wrong or that they are second-class citizens.' **(Matthew and Laura, Volunteers)**

> 'We had a man in the other day he must have sat, well we didn't have anybody else in, he must have sat for half an hour and had a cup of coffee. That was lovely…I would love to be able to do that with everybody. And just have a chat…you know…about his situation and where he saw things going…they just need you to be a listener…you know…' **(Sarah, Volunteer)**

Many of the volunteers at the food bank took on a role of a *friend* and sometimes a *mentor* for those that they met. They dedicated time to making visitors feel comfortable in what often was a difficult time. The caring and nurturing nature of the women at the food bank who assumed these roles was fundamental to the ongoing *success* of the food bank - that is indeed if success is to be measured in relieving the food bank visitors of some sort of distress or deprivation. The deprivation went beyond material, for example consequences such as feeling isolated, ashamed, and in despair. I will once again re-iterate that to be *good* in the role of volunteering at the food bank - measuring ability subjectively on the reception they received from the food bank visitors - the soft skills typically associated with female traits and observed amongst the female volunteers were crucial. Noticing the turnover of volunteers during the time I have spent with both food banks, those without such attributes tended to either occupy more practical roles or move on quickly.

Ongoing Support and Signposting from the Food Bank

Alongside the emotional support that volunteers provide to the visitors of the food bank, practical advice and signposting based on the knowledge of local community and institutions was provided, based on individual's and unique circumstances.

> ' …we signpost them for help with finances. We also, I have even sign posted people into the church, if there has been church members here, people who are in real distress about a loss or a family loss, they have been able to go and speak to people of the church. Erm, also, the council...for help with their…because they can get a voucher for their heating.

Erm...housing...I have had homeless people in and we try and give them information on where to go to look for temporary accommodation. Lots and lots of different things, we talk to people about...women's refuge. And also about the...I was talking to someone the other day who had an injury so we talked about criminal injuries. I think to be effective in this job, it is not just handing out food parcels, you need to have a broad knowledge, and luckily I do have a broad knowledge from my background.' **(Sarah, Volunteer)**

In many cases the visitors to the food bank were not only vulnerable, but often uninformed or unaware of the ways that other local organisations, charities, or public services could help them out of difficulty. As the example above showed, the food bank volunteers stepped in to connect visitors with other bodies that could help them, across a wide spectrum of solutions to certain problems they are facing. In my experience sometimes it was the push and the support that people needed to act to better their situation or help themselves practically or emotionally. Additionally, in the food banks there was readable information available such as leaflets about local support services, for example employment advisers (see Appendix P).

With one case that stands out at *Lindley Food Bank*, one of the volunteers, Laura, took on a somewhat maternal role with a young mother who was a regular visitor to the food bank. The visitor, Cathy, was 16 and a single mother with a baby - struggling to come to terms with the benefit procedure and trying to get the best start in life for her and her son. Through their interactions at the food bank Laura and Cathy developed a bond and using her own experience and expertise Laura assisted Cathy with her claims for benefit in order to get the correct amount that she was entitled to. She also took time to establish a budget with her to help her manage her finances. On one day when the food bank was quiet, Laura helped Cathy to put together a CV and a personal statement so that Cathy could apply for a college course that she was interested in. This gave her confidence and motivation to apply. The relationship that developed between Laura and Cathy demonstrates not only the vulnerability of young single mothers using the food bank, but also of the value of the more emotional and soft support that some of the food bank visitors were able to access.

In more extreme cases the food bank has had to take more direct action to protect visitors, where other authorities had not responded, or perhaps had not had the opportunity to intervene.

'...we have had 2 occasions...no 3 now...where we have had to refer to the police for what we suspected was slave labour. And that is just within the last year' **(Penny, Volunteer)**

In a similar situation, a visitor to *The People's Project* was seemingly being exploited by his landlord, who was charging him and his partner £50 each per week to cover the bills. As a young couple it was their first time renting a property, so they did not realise that this was excessive. Upon hearing about this the food bank volunteers, with the visitor's permission, chose to speak to local authorities to investigate the situation. The exploitation was leaving the young couple without food and ultimately reliant on the food bank. The food bank in these examples acts as a support mechanism but with the ability to intervene and act where necessary to prevent unlawful exploitation of vulnerable people. The food bank staff carried out actions and interventions that in other circumstances may have been the responsibility of family, friends, and community network, but in these cases the networks were not present or had not been able to help.

What this section shows it that the food bank volunteers took proactive awareness and action in the prevention of dependence on food banks long term for visitors. This is reflective of the reality, that claiming aid from food banks was not a substitution to individuals being able to achieve financial independence, therefore if the food bank itself was able to support people in not having to use a food bank again, then this is indeed what they did. Once again, this section has shown how the empathy and compassion of the female volunteers especially contributed to the food bank being able to offer more than just food.

Awareness

During my time spent volunteering more local schools forged relationships with the food banks as more of their pupils and parents were being referred for help. More reciprocal links developed, take for example local schools who took part in an art project for the children to visualise what the food bank meant to them (see Appendix Q) which produced artwork to then be displayed in the food bank. Schools who had a relationship with the food bank either from donating to the food bank, or from referrals, also organised for their pupils to visit the food banks to understand how they worked and to see them in real life.

> *Towards the end of the shift Anna arrived with a group of children from a local school who had come to look around the food bank and to see how it worked and what went on 'behind the scenes'. The kids were all very curious and interested, there were some collections that happened at their school from parents etc. so their teachers were explaining to them that the collections ended up here. They were probably too young to understand, they were told about people who needed to come to the food bank and why.* **(Field Notes)**

A school had planned a visit to come in and have a look around the food bank at the same time as dropping off a donation. The children were from an school for autistic children, and had helped to collect the donations and get them together, either from their parents or people supporting the school. The teachers had wanted to bring the children in to have a look at how things worked, Caroline gave a quick talk about what was done with the food when it came in, how it was distributed and what kind of people would need to collect food from a food bank. The kids seemed interested and one of them even said that he had heard of a food bank because his Grandmother had visited one. As with many aspects of the food bank, whilst it was nice to see that awareness was being raised and that people including children were learning about the role of the food bank, it also felt quite worrying that it was becoming such a normalised aspect of society, and especially of poor communities. (Field Notes)

As my own reflections in my field notes suggest, the increase of exposure of food banks to the general public, to children, evoked conflicting sentiments. Whilst awareness could contribute to both increased donations for the food bank and heightened sensitivity and empathy for people needing the food bank, at the same time witnessing the children visiting the food bank it struck me that the presence of food banks was becoming a normal commodity of British towns, especially amongst working-class or socioeconomically marginalised communities. The normalisation of food aid being claimed, for example the young child being aware and thus vocally declaring that his grandmother had used a food bank, made me uncomfortable to witness, for concern that she may have preferred to keep it private. Loyal to their working styles and natures, the food bank volunteers remained neutral and non-judgmental, extending their empathetic treatment to speaking *about* the food bank visitors rather than just *to* or *around* them, continuously protecting the identity and integrity of those using the service. This will be expanded upon in the following section.

Speaking of Injustice…

Based on the above and on my own experience at the food bank, in actions it was clear that the volunteers, especially the female volunteers, advocated for justice for the people that they met. They acted as much as they could within their capability to provide justice to the food bank visitors. Those using the food bank were always referred to as visitors or clients rather than users both in public and private. This is something I have tried to replicate in the presentation of my own findings to replicate this sensitivity. Having spoken to a few of the team, some suggested that 'users' felt impersonal or too closely connected with the negative connotations of drug or alcohol users. On a day-to-day basis however, the volunteers rarely vocalised either the anger, or sometimes frustration, that I myself

experienced. In the citation below Mary suggest that this is both an emotional coping strategy and in protection of the visitors.

> *"It wasn't always easy. My first few weeks I didn't think I would be able to stick around. Too sad y'know… But I stayed. And I suppose you detach a bit, the same way a social worker would […]. I think it helps that we talk about other stuff… we chat about Bake Off and our own lives but not too much about the visitors other than practical stuff. I think we would just get up getting down in the dumps and we wouldn't be able to do our job. It isn't that I don't care. They just need our understanding not our sympathy."* **(Mary, Food Bank Volunteer)**

Mary's evocation was consistent with many of the other behaviours of the food bank volunteers with what I interpreted as humanising the visitors rather than victimising. It was perhaps being able to silence or hush the injustices that we all observed and heard of from the food bank users that enabled volunteers to remain matter of fact, objective, and suitably detached from the food bank visitors and their stories. It was also important in maintaining the privacy and thus dignity of those accessing the food bank. On the contrary however, somewhat similarly to the visits of the children to the food bank, the silence contributed to the normalising of food bank usage, arguably detrimental to a wider struggle against the proliferation of food banks. Whilst the injustices exposed to the food bank volunteers remained silenced, as was a commotion about the structural causes that drove people to food banks in the first place.

Parcels and Participatory Parity

As the concluding section of this chapter, I will bring together all the themes and reflections that have been presented but in the wider consideration as to what extent independent food banks provide a service of interventional justice to their visitors. This is in respect of justice conceptualised as participatory parity. For this to be applicable both the distributive and recognitive aspects of food bank aid must be evaluated and in respect of each other. In this case it must also consider both the motives and intent of the volunteers and the circumstances and experiences of the food bank visitors.

Primarily, a food banks' role in material justice involves the redistribution of resources both through the channel of charitable donations and the re-purposing of food waste. This is available to those in crisis where access to the just distribution of resources through work or welfare has failed individuals. Volunteer led and yielding positive outcomes for volunteers as well as visitors, on one hand could render independent food banks a success story of Cameron's 'Big Society'. With no higher

accountability to enforce the strictness of the referral system, the decision alone left in the hands of food bank volunteers as to who a parcel can be accessed by, not only contributes to a lack of consistency (at no fault of the volunteers) but also the unfair guilt that the volunteers are burdened with making such decisions. Furthermore, relying on donations and scraps from supermarkets, the content and consistency of what was distributed again is variable - once more the food bank volunteers are at the forefront of the complex emotions produced in such exchanges.

All too aware of the emotional and psychological impact of claiming food charity on top of the dire circumstances of those visiting a food bank, I witnessed predominantly female food bank volunteers, perhaps unconsciously, demonstrating action in trying to remedy recognitive injustices faced by those collecting from the food bank. There also seemed to be a working-class relatability amongst many of the volunteers, most prominently those who were facing insecurity themselves or who had in the past. The food bank volunteers not only treated visitors neutrally and without pre-judgement, but also took the time to understand the individuals' circumstances in the way to support or help them in any way they could. Operational aspects were both implemented and reviewed where necessary to avoid causing further marginalisation or discomfort amongst anyone visiting. This was particularly notable amongst vulnerable women for example the struggles of young mothers and of women escaping domestic violence. An under-rated feature of the food bank offer was the ability of the volunteers to indeed treat people as visitors calling in when needed, as opposed to users *using* something, for example drugs or alcohol. The caring nature of women and their role in this is undeniable.

For participatory parity to be achieved, both conditions may be met, and in the case of food banks, I concur with Caplan (2016) that food banks are a cover-up in addressing societies real failures in distributive justice. As charities, independent food banks lack the infrastructure or wider support to be able to support a service that provides a fair or sufficient redistribution. Even with noble contributions and involvement of the volunteers at food banks, whilst their intentions, morals, and micro-level inputs in individuals' lives show the potential for impact, the symbolic justice hoped for in these interactions also remains fragile and as vulnerable as the visitors themselves.

Chapter Summary

To conclude this chapter, I have built on the academic literature on food banks by detailing some of the more nuanced complexities of food banks operating independently. The data has shone the light on some key discussions concerning food banks - for example the contribution and impact of volunteers working with both a referral system and with different variables of donations to be

distributed, and the difficult decisions involved with both. At no fault of the volunteers, the food bank system was deeply flawed in the pursuit of providing justice to visitors, although it undoubtedly provided a short-term relief both materially and emotionally for those visiting. This chapter has also shown the fragility of independent food banks as charities, therefore the very real threat that they faced even in being able to provide the short-term relief for surrounding communities. The lack of wider institutional support, for example from local councils or government bodies or any institutional authority, meant that the food banks were severely limited in their abilities to contribute to real difference beyond the micro-level. Regardless, their actions and initiatives particularly in the way that they were empathetic and understanding of individuals' struggles should not be minimised, and the translation of such skills could be pivotal within more authoritative institutions.

CHAPTER EIGHT: WOMEN AT THE FOOD BANK - A GENDERED EXPERIENCE OF IN-WORK POVERTY

'…there is no word to describe what you feel like. It is just desperation…'

Chapter Outline

The findings chapter that follows turns the focus of the thesis on to the women themselves, those claiming food from the food bank whilst active in the labour market. The chapter will approach IWP from a feminist perspective to divulge new insight into the experience of IWP and of food bank usage for women struggling in austerity Britain. The chapter is divided into three main sections, these being the experience of work: the experience of welfare, and finally the experience of claiming from a food bank. By doing this, the chapter can take a wider perspective of the factors contributing to the women needing the food bank, but also the more personal impact of such circumstances. The feminist perspective is perceptive of the factors which are specifically unique to women, whilst also considering the classed implications of the findings that are presented.

A Feminist Approach to In-Work Poverty

Once again applying the feminist underpinnings that run through the thesis, I will now take a unique view of IWP by theorising the experiences of the women visiting the food bank. With these women as the protagonists of my study, I will focus on the observations, interviews, interactions I had with them whilst spending time at the food bank. This chapter will remain consistent with the previous in that it will approach inequality as grounded in two principal elements - distribution and recognition. This chapter will differ however in the way that instead of assessing the potential remedies to injustices it will instead focus on the root factors contributory to the injustices that the women using the food bank face. This approach will thus derive insight into the structures and institutions impacting and contributing to women being afflicted by IWP, and ultimately the barriers that are presented for the women in accessing justice in the form of a decent and acceptable quality of life both materially and symbolically. It achieves this through a focus on the experiences that the women had of both experiencing IWP and using a food bank.

In a theoretical sense Fraser's framework continues to highlight how both dimensions are intrinsically linked and crucial to achieving a decent quality of life. The reversal of the application of the theoretical framework not only will show an innovative use of Fraser's work in the studies of injustice

but also is fundamental to discovering a relatively understudied phenomenon - that of the rising interrelatedness of IWP and food banks. In an aim to address the intersections between class and gender as discussed in Chapter One, I will also draw from the work of both Sennet & Cobb (1972) and Skeggs (1997) in order to more comprehensively understand the experience of the women I met, which is particularly useful in shining a light on what Sennet & Cobb (1972) refer to as the hidden injuries of the working class. In my own findings this is particularly relevant to injustice of recognition theorized by Fraser.

PART I: Navigating the Low Wage and Precarious Labour Market

This first part of the chapter will explore the women's experience of work. The women worked in low wage and insecure employment, or in most cases both. The findings will be presented tracing the employment journey, from entry to the workplace through to the departure from it. Women faced barriers and challenges at every stage, and amongst the examples below were the reasons why they visited the food bank and how they related to the women's employment journey for each different individual.

Entering work

The women faced challenges in securing work or entering work. This was not always for the first time and the frequency changed depending on the women's type of work, circumstances, and the contracts available to them. I will explore this below.

Work availability

I will begin at the start - that being the process of looking for work and sourcing opportunities and employers who were hiring. As mentioned earlier in the thesis, both regions where I carried out my research were struggling economies, and this was reflected in the availability of work amongst the women I interviewed. I first introduce Jazzy who speaks of her own experience.

> 'It is very very tough round here. Very VERY tough. And the hours that are going…I mean I
> was at the bowling alley yesterday and I was talking to the manager there…because he knows
> us and my friends very well, like because during the summer we went there. And he said that
> they were taking on...and I said yeah, I know. I have applied and you guys said no. And I
> thought yeah well, it is what it is, and I'm not too bothered. And then he told me that over
> 2000 people in less than a week had applied. And then the first interview that I got last year

was at [a hotel] and they said a similar thing…they said that over 1000 people in [the area] had applied for one job in just a few days. And it is like…so many people here are unemployed and desperate for work…I feel useless. I genuinely feel useless. I feel like what is the point…but at the same time I can't feel like that because I know that there is too much to ride on. I can't feel like that. I need work.' **(Jazzy, Food Bank User)**

Jazzy's recollection of a conversation with a local employer gives a window not only into the ratio of jobs available compared to jobseekers and people applying for the positions, but also the demeaning nature of the process. Shortages of jobs lead to many people fighting for few positions and explains why many applicants might never receive any feedback for their applications, causing an understandable demotivation and despair. It is not surprising that people living in the area often must compromise on the employment they take up, such as less hours or precarious contracts. Whilst such experiences for Jazzy left her feeling that continuing to job search was pointless when up against so many other applicants, she also emphasised that she knew she had no choice but to keep persevering if she was to re-enter work. This resonates with Sennet & Cobb's (1972) findings whereby 'the working men of Boston almost never voiced resignation in face of the injuries of class. The people we encountered had a powerful, though complicated, sense of mission in their lives' (p. 120). Jazzy's mission was connected to both self-determination and to support her family, which she later confirms. Jazzy informally cared for her elder mother and her two brothers. In this situation she used the food bank whilst in-between and searching for work, but knowing of such demand this was a bleak situation that many of my participants found themselves in.

<u>Types of Work</u>
The work carried out by the women at the food bank was low-paid, unskilled, and/or on variable or temporary contracts. Amongst the women working or in-between work, the most common type of work that they engaged in was cleaning, but other types of work included administration, retail, hospitality, and care. It is all too well known that these industries, dominated by women, are renowned for insecure and non-standard provision of work. Both zero-hour contracts and agency work caused a wealth of complications in the lives of the women I met during my study.

'[I] work for a lot of different ones…it depends who has got work. [I] have been on the at the agency for the next job but obviously…well we got an email today but we have to wait for another email back from them….It is a bit hard…especially if…it is like last month they only give us enough work to make £278 in August. Obviously that isn't enough even to cover my

rent…and then with all of the stress of the not knowing when the next job is coming…obviously we had to go to the food bank.' **(Perry, Food Bank User)**

Agency work provided Perry with no stability or consistency. Her story shows the transient and unpredictable nature of working for an agency and the impact that it had on her life, for example waiting for emails for confirmation of future employment. This was similar for those working on zero-hour contracts. Even as I spoke with them, the women were waiting for phone-calls and emails - some constantly checking their phones or refreshing their email inboxes as we spoke. They were unable to make plans, for example time off or holidays, or able to manage finances productively, due to changing hours and shifts. This is a common theme that is returned to at various points in my thesis, and consistent with findings from Heyes et al. (2018) who found that within precarious work, an uncertain income meant 'an inability to predict the amount of work that would be offered caused workers' substantial difficulties in financial planning, which in turn caused them anxiety' (p. 453).

Finding and Applying for Work

As discussed above, the nature of the type of work which many of the women were engaging in, meant that not only were they often waiting for communication and confirmation about working shifts, but they found themselves repeatedly looking for work as short term or temporary contracts began and ended. For many of the women this had become normal, but the participants spoke proudly of their resilience and determination in the process, especially when their drive paid off. Cate demonstrates an example of this.

'I have been applying…for the last 2 month…for about 7 or 8 jobs a week. And sometimes I get an email saying you have been unsuccessful but the majority of time you won't hear anything…[…]…This has been my third interview and this is obviously the one that I have got on the 3rd time. But it doesn't faze me or scare me. I have just carried on applying. And they have said 'Can you come in for an interview? 'So I said yep! I asked about a job on Wednesday, and she asked if I could go in for an interview the next day…so I said oh yeah! And then she told me on Saturday that I had it. I mean if I am available straight away I am not going to say I can't come in. You have got to try and make yourself available, which looks better, and I am assuming you might have more chance…' **(Cate, Food Bank User)**

Cate, not unlike Jazzy, was aware that each post was likely to have many applicants, therefore that the key to success was to be the first to get there. Although clearly a successful strategy, Cate like many of the other women had young children, so may not always have been able to drop everything

to attend an interview. It was common for these women to be applying for multiple jobs per week, even when working - either for additional income or to ensure that they had multiple options. Grimshaw et al. (2016) also commented on the heavy burden of job searching placed on social protection claimants, clearly felt by the women I spoke to, of which I will explore in further detail later.

The experience of interviewing itself was varied - with some participants confident in the process due to regular experience of attending interviews. On the other hand, for some the interview process was daunting and anxiety inducing. Unlike those in more privileged positions, for the working-class a job interview could determine if an individual would be able to feed their family for the coming month, so the women were naturally affected by this pressure. Most of the women I met at the food bank lacked confidence and were subdued. As they shied away from any questions, I wondered how they would fare in an interview context.

Qualifications, Skills, and Experience

The frustrating process of securing employment continued in relation to the qualifications that the women did not or indeed did have. This frustration was far from uniform however, as we will now see two very different challenges faced by Perry and Cate.

> *'I have been applying for jobs but because it is heavy lifting they have said it is only for a man. They don't even give me a chance. They said they won't even consider me even though I have experience. This has happened so many times…..I really want to work…but every time they keep saying it is for a man…not suitable for a woman. It is terrible. It is 2019. They don't even give me a chance.'* **(Perry, Food Bank Visitor)**

Perry quite evidently felt discriminated against because of her gender despite feeling that she had the appropriate experience for the jobs that she was applying for. Perry's mirrored findings from a study by Escott (2012) who in her own experience found that 'most young women have strong work aspirations and appropriate qualifications but considerable constraints limit their horizons, in turn affecting their health and well-being' (p. 425). In Perry's case this was the perceived ability or suitability for a woman working in manual labour - which as she quite rightly comments to be happening in 2019 is shocking.

On the contrary for Cate, she was accepting that she may not have all the relevant experience and qualifications, therefore her frustration arose from not being given the chance to gain this experience.

'…a lot of jobs want you to already have experience or qualifications, but a lot of people aren't gonna have that…and how are they going to get something if nobody gives them a chance. It is like oh well you need this experience or this qualification, but if nobody is going to give them a chance, how are they going to get it? And these are qualifications we can't really afford, so what do you do?' **(Cate, Food Bank User)**

As many job seekers will know, this is an infuriating cycle which can be difficult to break, especially as Cate mentions with the rising prices of qualifications coupled with living on a low income. At the time of the interview, Cate was enrolled on a night course of which she spoke of with pride and enthusiasm, speaking of 'bettering herself' and personal development. Cate had proactively identified the steps she needed to take, that were feasible with her income, in order to be more successful in applying for jobs, and for ones more suited to her skillset and interests. Cate subtly suggested during our interview however that her decision to do the course had meant she had to cut back on other expenses - therefore reading between the lines perhaps contributory to her need for a food bank.

Other women spoke enthusiastically of taking advantage of any professional development opportunities that were presented to them within their current organisations. An example of this included one of the women who worked in hospitality – she had taken a pastry making class which had been provided by her employer. Although she did not mention that this specifically had opened any immediate opportunities or promotions, it seemed to contribute to a positive outlook and may have given her the confidence and skills to apply for other roles in the future. The motivation and drive of my own participants will be discussed in the following section.

Motivation to Work

The women's stories so far have presented an uphill struggle into decent and sustainable work, so it may come as a surprise that many of the women's stories and expressions showed an excitement and enthusiasm towards paid work, whether they were currently working or looking for work. Women spoke of the value that work provided in their lives, such as: the prospect of a career; independence; friendships; to set an example for their children; and just generally to keep active and busy. This supported findings from Léné (2019) who found that even in low wage and precarious employment, workers 'interpret their work conditions more positively than would be expected' although they also considered that this was only in the absence of other opportunities. I found that the women were determined, hard-working, and open minded to different varieties of work - in fact anything to remain busy and active in work. For Cate, part of this was to maintain an image in front of her two young

children. Cate was a single mother and associated maintaining a good work ethic with being a good role model for her sons.

> '…as I say, I don't want them thinking…oh it is alright to just do nothing and not even try to do anything, even if things are a bit shit. I want them to see that you can do things and you can do new things it doesn't matter what age you are, or if you are on your own. I mean I am not getting any younger…and I obviously still want to train to do things. I am 39! But that is important to me yeah.' **(Cate, Food Bank User)**

In Cate's case she was therefore able to stay motivated for the benefit of her children, or rather she accepted poor working conditions so that her sons would develop a good work ethic too. Like the working-class men interviewed by Sennet & Cobb (1972) Cate fought for the legitimization and recognition of her worth both as an individual and as a mother through the sacrifices that she made, for example going through a time, described by her as 'a bit shit'.

This was not always the case. For some of the women, the instability, uncertainty and frustration had taken its toll on their sentiments towards the value of work. This was the case for Kristen who already was battling with her own mental health matters.

> 'I have always believed that it should be…9-5…here are your hours…here is your wage…then you can work with it. It is concrete…it is stable…but everything else is just wishy washy and I can't trust it in the slightest. Don't get me wrong I still want work and I am still looking for work…but going through the whole…it is going to either be zero-hour contract or it won't be enough hours…so in a way I want a job but I fear getting a job. I fear the disruption that it would cause in my life. Which is a bit ironic really…' **(Kristen, Food Bank User)**

Kristen's description of the work that was available to her, having spoken to others too, seemed to correctly summarise the landscape of cleaning work in the region - either insufficient hours, a precarious contract, or both. This was the case for a lot of the female dominated work in both regions, and for many women just like Kirsten must seem to be more effort than they are worth, especially considerate of those either with other responsibilities to work around or also personal challenges such as health and wellbeing. The motivation and momentum to continue pursuing work in the somewhat less than favourable conditions were often impacted by the women's personal circumstances. Whilst Cate maintained a positive outlook, this was due to intrinsic reasons external to the workplace rather than having mentioned any such value from the work itself.

Within Work

I will now introduce some of the complex reasons that were shared with me as to why some of the women were working and active within work, however still finding that they needed the food bank. Some of the fundamentals of these testimonials were pivotal to the reasons behind growing IWP and the links between IWP and food bank use amongst people working.

The Price of 'Fitting in'

Having secured work, women at times faced additional expenses necessary to begin earning - this ranged from transport, security clearances to appropriate attire or equipment. Often transitioning either from worklessness and/or welfare, the women were sometimes caught with unexpected expenses.

> *The first woman in was Carla, it was her first time and she looked sheepish, so I made her a cup of tea and explained how things worked. She told us that she had been on Universal Credit for a while but that she had been offered a job working as a receptionist at a private doctor's surgery. She told us that it was a little embarrassing, but that when they had offered her the job, they had told her that she would have to wear different clothes - she said that her new employers had been quite specific that they had to be high quality and 'sophisticated' clothes as it catered to a wealthy clientele and that she would be the front face of the practice. She said she felt humiliated, feeling that she had been dressed nicely for the interview - but nevertheless that she needed the job and would have to swallow her pride. She told us she had been out to buy a few new clothes but that they had depleted her savings and she would not be paid till the end of the month, leaving her and her son with nothing. She told us she would be mortified if her son ever knew she was there, and also that she couldn't have faced starting the job in her old clothes…that people would have laughed at her and looked down on her.*
> **(Field Notes)**

This was a humiliating experience for Carla, which can surely be empathised with by anybody who has ever started a new job and wanted to 'look the part'. Skeggs (1995) discusses clothes as a means for women to both enable identification and act respectably, perhaps intended by Carla who felt that she had dressed nicely and *respectably*. However, similarly to the participants of Pemberton et al. (2014)'s participants, 'not being able to afford to present themselves in new clothes and maintain a level of appearance that they were comfortable with, served to erode their confidence in social situations' (p. 25). For her to keep the job she had little choice than to make the decision within her

budgeting to prioritise a new set of clothes for work. Purdam et al. (2016) also found this to be the case for food bank users, where using the food bank would be a budgeting strategy in order to pay for other necessities, using the food bank as a top up. This example highlights the hidden costs of starting a new job, and unfortunately in Carla's case the negative implications of not being able to meet these costs. The matter of work clothing arose, in another example below.

> *…we made a bit of small talk about how cold it was outside…laughing she looked at my footwear and told me that at least I had trainers. She said to me 'These are the only shoes I've had for a year. They are OK in summer but not so much in the winter. And I wear them all day in the classroom stood up too!' The shoes were open and exposing all of her feet. Her feet looked cold and sore.* **(Field Notes)**

This woman's experience was a clear marker of deprivation, also likely to be tied up with the fragility of her own image in work perhaps like Carla's. Also, like Carla's situation, given the fact the woman was using a food bank it was unlikely or inconvenient for her to be able to buy a new pair of more comfortable shoes. Here we have an example of the physical toll of IWP, of which there will be more to emerge throughout the thesis.

Getting to Work

Naturally the women had to get to their place of work, and particularly when this place of work was regularly changing, transport to get there could be troublesome. For Cate this was a challenge when the public transport in her locality had been impacted by regional cuts, especially coupled with working across multiple jobs.

> *'…they have took a few buses off here over the last year. You used to be able to get three buses over the marina and into town, and all three have been took off. So, I just concentrate on the one bus, but where I need to be to go to my other job doesn't go that way. So, I get that bus so far, wait for another bus, and that bus takes me there. It adds another 45 minutes or so on to my commute I'd say. And it is so annoying! They are different companies, so I have to pay twice. But never mind…'* **(Cate, Food Bank User)**

The availability and the value for money of public transport near where Cate lived had deteriorated, of which other people at the food bank had also commented on. Additionally, while working more than one job, this would mean she had multiple commutes and not only did this add more time pressure to her routines but also could limit her accessibility to the jobs that were available, for

example if they were further away or more inaccessible. Sometimes Cate would receive notification of shifts at short notice, and her availability was therefore dependent on the availability of transport. Cate also had to pay additional costs because of the changing ownership of public transport services if a ticket for one service could not be redeemed on another service. The increasing barriers in getting around on public transport had both a personal and financial toll.

Wages and Income

The topic of hourly payment rarely came up - for many women due to engaging in low-skilled work it was presumed they were working on minimum wage - nevertheless hourly wage rates were not discussed. It was more common for the women to mention the challenges of the costs of living relative to living on a low and unstable wage, for example like Kristen earlier in the chapter.

For Gaby who we have previously met, she was working on a permanent and salaried wage. Whilst admittedly this was rare amongst those who both worked and used the food bank - Gaby is evidence that it can and did happen. If it has not yet come across, Gaby was a confident woman - professionally and well presented. Working in customer service at a regional utility provider, she spoke of her job with pride and was grateful for its permanence. She however commented on living on her salary and her feelings towards the remuneration it provided.

> *'I think the job I do, genuinely I would probably think was worth another £4,000 to what I get paid. But arguing that case in a big professional company is not straight forward because they have a lot of justifications for why they don't believe that. But fair, I think it is a fair wage yeah. I think £24,000 is a good wage…I think I probably feel more stuck because I am on my own. I think my wage would be fair if I was a two-parent family. I think I am struggling to do what I would expect a two-person family to do, but on one wage.'* **(Gaby, Food Bank User)**

As a single parent with two teenagers, Gaby's statement speaks for itself and demonstrates claims of Dyer et al. (2011) that 'the male breadwinner model has instead been replaced by an 'adult worker model 'to the detriment of the 'adult carer'' (p. 686). Measured on salary alone, Gaby also added that she was ineligible for additional financial support from her children's colleges for travel costs or subsidised meals. Her salary therefore had to be cover all expenses for her and two older children which clearly was a struggle. Although not ungrateful, Gaby was struggling, and this was a truly difficult situation that many single mothers found themselves in.

School Meals and Holiday Hunger

The school holidays, over the six weeks of Summer and Christmas holidays, were the busiest periods for the food banks. For families with children who were already struggling financially, either on benefits or in work, school holidays posed various challenges. Many of these frustrations were frequently vocalised in high tempers or through exasperated outbursts in the food bank, either with myself, other volunteers or other food bank visitors. First, children whose parents were using the food bank were generally entitled to free school meals, alleviating parents of the cost of at least one meal a day for five days a week - and ensuring them that their children would have access to a varied diet during the weekdays. This was obviously not accessible during the school holidays and often left parents struggling to manage with the extra expense.

Additional to increasing food bills over the holidays, many parents found that other general expenses increased during the school holidays. The pressure of this was a particular concern for single mothers, of which the following exert from my field notes demonstrates.

> *…she spoke to me about the impact of Christmas and how her life changed when her son wasn't at school. She got a bit upset saying that she felt guilty for wishing her son to go back to school - she said she loved the time she spent with him but she said the anxiety it induced was at times unbearable. She told us that her expenses had gone through the roof - and on top of her not being paid for the holidays, she worried of the increase in her utility bills. She told us she liked to take her son out so he wasn't cooped inside all the time - which obviously was all further money being spent.* **(Field Notes)**

For parents in precarious or insecure work, this predicament was not uncommon, and was felt strongly by single mothers finding that precious time spent with their children was tainted by financial anxiety. Sennet & Cobb (1972) highlight this predicament as another injury of the working class – the difficult dilemma of sacrifice between time spent with one's family and earning a living. For this woman she was a teaching assistant and her contract only covered term-time, presenting a deeply ironic injustice that an educational institution failed in supporting its employees to support their own children, in turn leading to a mother deprived of enjoying spending time with her child, and suffering a guilt for the emotions that came with her circumstance

Leaving Work

Some women found themselves using a food bank following the recent loss of employment, therefore were back to the start of the cycle of searching for employment or securing hours or income elsewhere. I will now explore some of the accounts of how the women came to lose their jobs and some of the complex implications surrounding this as well as how it drove them to the food bank.

Loss of Employment

In perhaps one of the most harrowing accounts to be shared with me, Lily spoke of how she came to lose her job and had to depend on a parcel from the food bank.

> '…*I worked in retail…but I worked…how many years…about seven or eight years at that same place I worked. I was a single parent but then I married Mo…and then I was working all the way up to when David and Catriona died⁶…and two weeks after they died I went back to work. Can you believe it? But I wasn't really up for it and my doctor gave me a sick note. My boss…it was one of the stalls in the shopping centre…it was a make-up stall…they said they weren't prepared to pay my sick pay, or even to hold me' job for a bit…so they sacked us. So that was about three weeks after my two children had died…they sacked me…so that was lovely. That was the first time I used the food bank…I had to…I was a mess…What would you have done?'* **(Lily, Food Bank User)**

It was extremely upsetting to learn about the sequence of events that led to Lily using the food bank. The concept of a standard employment relationship (SER), as explored by Bosch (2004) and Supiot (2001) in theory should extend further than just full-time permanent work but should in fact provide protection and security for workers in relation to their own personal circumstances. Lily's circumstance was not only a violation of the SER but a complete lack of compassion and humanity. Although no doubt unlawful, women such as Lily were not always aware of their own rights or confident enough to challenge the injustice, especially when often dealing with their own personal situations. Furthermore, none of the women I either spoke to or observed either mentioned or seemed aware of the benefits of union representation, or if so, had not used their support in times of unfair action.

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⁶ Lily lost her two young children in a car accident that she was also involved in. This was discussed off-microphone.

On the theme of discrimination in the dismissal of the women from their positions, a few more examples emerged. Although for separate reasons, the first which Perry discusses shows that she had a suspicion as to the reason why she was treated in such a way.

> '[The Company] got rid of us because we were doing too much…so we had a target to hit…160 in an hour we had to pick. And me and Matt were doing about 400 an hour…so they said oh you can take it as holiday if you want…and then they went a bit quiet. So, for 2 weeks they were saying take it as holiday take it as holiday…so we were like OK…but then when we went back to work, they said that we had been classed as AWOL…and I said but you'd told us to take it as holiday…but then they just didn't want us back after that…because we were doing too much. We were picking like 4/500 items in an hour, but they only wanted about 160…because if you do more they…well there was a bonus scheme…but I think that maybe they just didn't want to pay our bonus.' **(Perry, Food Bank User)**

During the interview, Perry often spoke of her and her partner as 'grafters' and as she stated above, she felt like their hard work was not only unappreciated but also used against them perhaps in a way to deny access for them to a financial bonus and continuing employment. Once again, these women were excluded from the supposed benefits of employment - in this case bonuses and financial incentives. Discriminatory behaviour on behalf of the firm was perhaps strategic and financial but other examples arose which were perhaps more personal and complex, as exemplified in the quote below.

> 'I didn't leave…it was a change of contract. Basically…what I ended up finding out is that they went from having one morning staff and five evening staff to just two all day. So…I guess that is how they wanted it. I was one of the ones that had been there for the shortest amount of time so I got dropped first. They said something about making the customers uncomfortable if I was cleaning the bathrooms too. That upset me. It's a shame…yeah...I liked that job too.' **(Kristen, Food Bank User)**

Similarly in Kristen's case whilst the reason for her dismissal seemed to be masked by managerial imperative, Kristen interpreted the situation as something more personal. Kristen was in the process of a gender reassignment, so as a transgender woman she felt that discomfort surrounding her gender transition had been a factor in the businesses decision to terminate her contract before other members of staff. This had not only left Kristen without work, but also had repercussions on her confidence

and her sense of worth moving forwards and in the ongoing pursuit for a job where she felt comfortable and accepted. This was no doubt a factor in her expression of her fear of the return to work which she voiced earlier in the thesis.

Reflecting on these examples, they have demonstrated the considerable mistreatment experienced by women in unstable work as well as using a food bank. I concur with Rubery et al. (2018) who commented that 'what is striking is that it is the workers who are regarded as abusing social benefits, not the employers for their short-term hiring and firing' (p. 511). It appeared as if discriminatory behaviour from the organisations towards the women and relating to their termination of employment resulted in the women being marginalised, disadvantaged, and forced to turn to food aid whereas the employers would continue with no consequence. This also reinforces Richards & Sang (2019)'s framework supporting the theory that minimal or non-compliance with employment laws as well as discriminatory and unethical practice put employees in significantly increase danger of IWP.

Long-Term Illness
Upon meeting Marianne at the food bank, she had recently found herself out of work, for which the reasons will be explained by her below. To further put Marianne's story into context, she had previously been a heroin addict with the negative impacts that addiction can bring. She also suffered with chronic epilepsy.

> 'I was making beds in a B&B, that was my last job. After I had cleaned myself up. I mean I was already struggling. I didn't make much and I couldn't get any more hours as it was. I owed loads of people money so I barely even saw my wages. Luckily around then I knew about soup kitchens and food banks. But on top of all this I kept having seizures[7], and I seemed to be letting them down more because I was not always able to go into work. So they took me off one of my epilepsy tablets and started me on another one, so things took a while to settle, which caused a problem. I was having seizures so much as just crossing the road. I had one at work, and I had a seizure in the middle of the road just outside the leisure centre. So it was dangerous for me and anyone around me really. So I ended up, well they said I was costing them more, and I was. They said they couldn't afford the insurance…or something to do with the insurance. I don't know, I don't really understand that bit of it, but that is basically what they said. I was really gutted…..I loved that job.' **(Marianne, Food Bank User)**

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[7] Marianne suffers from both COPD and severe epilepsy

Although she admits that the work she had been involved in had not helped her significantly in a financial sense, there were clear intrinsic benefits. Her health complications however had ultimately become a barrier to her continuing the work she was doing and meant a heavier dependence on food charity was necessary as her employer could no longer support her. Having got to know Marianne, she missed the independence and the social aspect that work had given her. She was an active woman despite her medical conditions, but she carried heavy self-blame for the actions of her past and longed to improve her situation for herself and her family. After this incident however she had not pursued any further work. When I asked her if she would ever work again, she laughed and exclaimed '*Who would employ me now?!*'. The experience, it seemed, had downtrodden her.

Marianne's story showed that in the absence of a job that was accommodating to individuals' complex health needs, people quite understandably gave up. Like findings from Garthwaite et al. (2015), political and media discourse often tends to neglect reasons such as Marianne's for why they may be using food banks, contributing further to a climate of blame, which had even unfortunately seemed to manifest in Marianne herself following this experience. This had deterred her from seeking future employment and perpetuated a vicious cycle of poverty.

Precarious Work or No Work

This section clearly shows the barriers faced by the women of achieving freedom and independence through work. Their visit to a food bank is intricately interwoven with both. Man of the women remained committed to the pursuit and value of work, despite the desperate circumstances many found themselves in. Moreover, the struggles they faced had become all too normalized amongst what Standing (2011) refers to as the *precariat*.

The distributive, or indeed structural struggle that the women faced demonstrates what Fraser (2013) theorises as a 'dangerous liaison' whereby the influx of women into the labour market under neoliberal capitalism has resulted in women engaging in work that in fact deprives them of the economic benefits and stability that it *should* provide. This is predominantly so amongst the working-class of whom are more likely to take any work that is available to them. The increasingly precarious and insecure nature of the work available in many female-dominated industries such as cleaning, administration, and retail meant that for women from low-income households if they wanted to work, they *had* to accept a certain level of insecurity. The impact of this was financial instability, inability to save, and of course looming food insecurity and dependence on food aid. As suggested by Kristen in her interview, the dilemma that the women faced was precarious work or no work. This was such a demeaning

predicament when for these women even the option to work did not guarantee to provide them with food.

Much like participants of Sennet & Cobb's (1972) study, as working-class women, the participants were familiar with the reality that the actions taken would not necessarily yield the promised rewards. Like Skeggs' (1997) participants however, the way the women still spoke positively and enthusiastically about work could be seen as the way that they 'cloaked themselves within respectability and responsibility' (p. 160). The women were clearly proud of and strived to be committed and hard workers.

Due to both the inequality and failings of the labour available, the consequence of their struggle had a powerful emotional toll on the women. Within the precarious work or no work predicament, the women were subjected to the arduous and degrading process of searching and applying for work that often would neither come to anything or even be useful or progressive in securing another role, for example through feedback. Women faced both a pressure of having to be constantly available, and the frustration and burnout of the cycle repeating over and over, as well as the burden for mothers of managing the balance of time work and time spent with their children. Once again within the work accessible to them, women faced humiliation, for example in outright discrimination and unforgiving dismissals. The women tolerated both the practical and emotional impact as the price to pay to be able to remain active in work and pursue independence in a dignified way.

PART II: Universal Credit and Workfare

The part of the chapter that follows introduces the relationships and connections between the women that were visiting the food bank from work and the welfare system in the UK, especially in reference to the changes that had been made following measures of austerity, and the introduction of Universal Credit.

Universal Credit

Moving into this section, given the findings I have covered so far in this chapter it is unsurprising that those engaging in precarious work were also often depending on the in-work benefits provided by Universal Credit or equivalent. Despite their personal contexts or indeed their working situations, the women spoke of being treated liked 'second-class' citizens, marginalised, or bullied. The women felt neither supported in finding further work nor even of receiving the consideration as to why they were

either choosing or needing to combine work and welfare. As highlighted by Van der Linden's (2016) research, in-work benefits are often complex and largely misunderstood by those claiming them, thus reducing their potential efficiency. To date there is little qualitative literature exploring the experience of women claiming in-work benefits within Universal Credit. I will explore this in the testimonials that follow.

<u>Claiming Welfare</u>

A high proportion of those using the food bank had 'experience' with Universal Credit. As volunteers, we were all too aware of the negative affects it could have in people's lives. It was not uncommon to hear strongly worded exclamations about individuals' experiences of Universal Credit. Claimants spoke negatively of the pressure that they felt during the process of claiming, and the impact of this. For many of the women who came into the food bank following meetings at the Job Centre, they were often downtrodden and pessimistic. In her interview, Cate spoke of the hostility that she felt. I could feel the exasperation, emotion, and frustration as she spoke.

> *'Me personally…I don't like it. I have been on Universal Credit for a while…it has been here for a while now…I have been on it for 2 years. I was not on anything before, but obviously my circumstances have changed and I have been on it since. But, I don't know…I just feel pressure from them. It is like you go on and they say you need to do this and that…you try and do the best you can but it is still not good enough…no matter what you seem to be doing…you are always made to feel like a second class citizen…[…]…I have walked in yeah and I am on the benefit…but that doesn't mean that I am like that other person who has come in that can't be bothered to work. Or can't be bothered to go and do a course. Do you know what I mean? They shouldn't be looking at everybody in the same way.'* **(Cate, Food Bank User)**

Whilst the introduction of Universal Credit was designed to encourage claimants to remain in or search for work if able, many like Cate felt bullied, pressured, and stereotyped. Instead of speaking of feeling supported, motivated, or benefited by the steps which were required to claim Universal Credit, many of the working claimants felt that they were type-cast as lazy or work shy from the outset. They also spoke of feeling villainised by advisors either in person or over the phone. Comparable to the participants of Sennet & Cobb's (1972) study, Cate seemed 'tantalized by the thought of people on welfare' (p. 135) – or specifically on out-of-work welfare. She resented being assimilated in such away when she was working and would have preferred a full-time position where she would not need the support of welfare.

My findings were also consistent with a study by Cheetham et al. (2019) whereby participants described 'their perception of a hostile, dysfunctional, uncaring system, which was difficult to navigate. Some felt they were not trusted or believed when they tried to explain their circumstances' (p. 5). This also accords with Patrick's (2016) study of claiming general benefits which found that the experience left claimants feeling demarcated as members of an undesirable and problematic population, much like the stigma discussed in the previous chapter. There seemed to be no differentiation between those working and those out of work. This made claimants feel demotivated, therefore contrary to the desired effect, that being to encourage claimants to pursue paid employment.

In-Work Benefits

Part of the new Universal Credit was the replacement of working tax credits with in-work benefits provided to working claimants. These were designed to 'top-up' claimants' wages in order to keep them in work whilst supporting them to either retain employment or seek further work to bring them to the equivalent of a full-time wage. Although promising in theory, the reality for the women I met was somewhat different. Drawing on the interviews, two cases stood out, highlighting the experience of the in-work benefits as disruptive and complicated. First, for Perry - whom we met in the previous chapter, she and her partner were both in and out of work intermittently due to the nature of their work - both working on agency contracts. They had a dual claim for their benefits therefore the amount they were entitled to was dependent on what their joint earnings were each month. This amount obviously changed from month to month depending on the availability of work.

> *'Well…they closed one claim down because we earned an extra £6…so we had to reopen it because obviously we were out of work again. And this is what we have had to do this last month. They closed it down because we earned six or seven pound more than we were actually 'allowed' to earn. I looked online, and if you have earned £2500 and then find yourself out of work, they won't give you nowt until that money is all gone. Then they want people to work. It is stupid! My partner and myself think…well what is the point of working…even though we are grafters…we graft our arses off! But…is it worth it in the end? Because of Universal Credit. Agency work could be like a week here, a week there…but we are only allowed to earn £769…anything over that and it messes up the benefit…I don't know how they expect you to…say if we earn in one month…probably 1000 odd quid…they expect that to last you then for 2 months…even if you are out of work after.'* **(Perry, Food Bank User)**

Universal Credit was inefficient in providing a support mechanism for the times that Perry found herself out of work, due to the complex system for claiming. Perry found the system messy, demotivating, and punitive as opposed to accommodating for her working pattern. With her income unpredictable and interchanging month by month, by the time supplementary benefits were provided it was often too late and she had experienced periods with no income. It was these times during which she had used the food bank. There was a specific cut off for how much could be earned between her and her partner in relation to the accessibility of additional benefits, but even Perry seemed unlcear of it herself. There was still a financial struggle for the couple, given that they were in and out of work, and with a sporadic income.

In a similar situation for Cate, working multiple jobs and on variable contracts meant that the benefits she was entitled to were constantly changing, as with the requirements of job searching commitments. Once more however the process was both awkward and demanding for her, and utterly un-accommodating to the work shifts she was doing.

> 'It seems like the system can't really cope with things like zero-hour contracts. I spend my life changing things. I mean it is a job at the end of the day although your income is up and down…but at least I am trying and I am in the work environment. I am not sat around…I am trying…and they should be praising me for that. But they don't seem to really even accept it…they just say oh you need to work more…you need to do more. I mean how much more do you want people to do? It is like they don't take into account the fact that I have got a life as well. It's like when I went in the other day…I said…Oh I have got some good news…I have got a job! It is only 13 hours a week and I am going to stay in my other job that is zero hour…and they said yeah but you still need to apply for jobs…because I am still under that limit of hours. I need to be over a certain limit. Like 16 or way more for them to stop…it is like…I know it is only 13 hours which doesn't seem a lot to some people…but…it is a lot to me at the minute because I haven't had that permanently for a long time. But…they say you still need to apply for so many jobs. I have got 10 hours a week job search from The Job Centre…and it is like I have just got a job and one that I actually want to do…but I have still got to apply for jobs and do 10 hours a week…even though I have still got 2 jobs…and my course[8] …and children to look after…and a house…washing…cooking…cleaning…and I need some time to myself …' **(Cate, Food Bank User)**

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[8] Cate was enrolled in a night course, pursuing a qualification in beauty. This was her own initiative, in which she hoped would help her to find more permanent work.

In both examples, in-work benefits were difficult to manage and keep on top of, even though both women were driven and active in work and the search for additional work. The support that was available in the inter-rim periods between work was too late, which is why the women were using the food bank. The support was therefore not timely to financially support the job searching period. Cate also felt that the demands placed on her were unreasonable and unfair as a single mother with a house to maintain and children to raise. Whilst the women in this situation remained positive and perseverant, it was obvious that processes caused friction and unproductive uses of their time in trying to navigate the system. There was also a resentment that they received this same treatment even whilst they were working and actively job seeking.

Training and Work Preparation

Job coaching, training, and preparation for work was provided for Universal Credit claimants to assist them into employment, arranged through the Job Centre. Many of the courses and initiatives would be compulsory for those out of work or working less than a certain number of hours, and failure to attend meetings, workshops or courses resulted in sanctions and ultimately a delay in benefits - this was to encourage claimants to participate. This was the conditional element of the provision of Universal Credit. Training included CV workshops and interview skills, as well as more vocational training. Some of the women I came across found the courses useful, confidence building, and an opportunity to learn new skills, for example I spoke to one woman collecting a parcel who was especially excited about an introductory course to woodwork and plumbing. The woman never returned to ask her how she found this - I was hopeful that her situation had improved.

Due to the compulsory nature of some of the courses in line with the claiming of job-seeking benefits however, some of the women found the courses unsuitable and thus a waste of their time and resources in critical times to be pursuing other opportunities. An example of an encounter at the food bank demonstrates this below.

> 'Kelly was qualified as a nurse and looking for work but she was unable to progress anywhere with applications or jobs because each one asked for a DBS (Disclosure and Barring Service) check - which she didn't have up to date - costing around £200 which she couldn't afford whilst out of work. She told us that the DWP wouldn't help her to cover the costs, but instead kept sending her to other interviews and courses for different kinds of work, which she had to attend or her benefits would have been sanctioned. She seemed confused by these decisions and wasn't having any luck with the interviews anyway. What she really wanted to do was go

back to nursing with children, but she felt like they were discouraging her from doing so. She told us she had never wanted to do anything else.' **(Field Notes)**

In Kelly's situation, the role of the DWP was a deterrent to work rather than aiding access. It was contradictory to what was the obvious targeted support for a guaranteed job in a profession she both enjoyed and was good at, not least was appropriately qualified to undertake. This supported findings from a report by the Welfare Conditionality Project (2018) which found that 'intensified welfare conditionality […] encouraged a culture of counterproductive compliance and futile behaviour that got in the way of more effective attempts to secure employment' (p. 18). It was very difficult to see a reason morally, financially, or practically for Kelly to continue with courses and further interviews.

In another case, for Marianne, she had to attend work preparation courses despite conflicting health complications. This was another example where personal context had not been considered in the allocation of certain compulsory training initiatives.

> *'They basically wanted me to find a job that I would be able to do with my condition…they weren't really clear what they meant by this. I don't think they really understood either. They recommended care work, but they never really took any time to understand my condition and how it affected me…but anyway…it wasn't till I took a seizure whilst doing a course did they actually listen and consider that I wasn't fit enough not only for the course but what they were proposing. I was thankful in a way for that seizure because they did require you to come down and look at the computer every single day or do this or do that. And for me, too much screen time, like television or anything like that sets off seizures. I told them this. And people that don't have it or haven't come across it, don't understand that I can't sit in front of a computer on a daily basis. Especially when your medication is not right. So, it took me having a seizure…[…]…and for the Job Centre to see that was like a blessing in my eyes. It shouldn't have had to come to that though. But unless it is on paper or they can actually see it they won't believe it and you are an automatic liar. And you do feel like a second class citizen, you really really do.'* **(Marianne, Food Bank User)**

In Marianne's situation, it got to the point of her having a seizure during one of the Job Centre courses for them to accept that she was not fit to either be engaging in the courses, or in fact pursuing work in the way prescribed by the Job Centre. This occurred before she had the chance to present a doctor's note. For a seizure to be a 'blessing', it is clear there is something inherently wrong with the system in place. This resonated so closely with the experiences characterised in the film *I, Daniel Blake*

(2016) where an old gentleman is deemed fit for work despite health complications, and who whilst challenging this legally, ultimately dies from a heart attack. Stewart (2018) referred to this treatment as 'psychological tyranny' where the conditionality in place seemed to be nothing more than punishment.

Workfare and Conditionality

For claimants of Universal Credit who found themselves with minimised hours or between contracts, welfare was, in theory, in place to support them until they returned to sufficient hours. The branch of workfare within Universal Credit was inefficient when claimants were working on non-standard contracts, of which many of the women were - the support they received was complicated and tricky to access, and then often too late to top them up in the times when it was needed the most. Furthermore, my findings have shown that conditionality aspects of Universal Credit were more preventative than accommodating, again with the food banks supporting those left hungry in the process.

The women disassociated themselves with the image of benefit claimants particularly as they were working and given the choice most would choose full-time work. Akin to the participants on Sennet & Cobb's (1972) those working class and working alienated themselves from those claiming welfare from worklessness, seeing them as haven given up a fight for respectability. Again, comparable to the working-class women interviewed by Skeggs (1997), the women of my own study resented being categorised in the same way as those claiming welfare from out of work, wanting more respect and recognition for their efforts. They ultimately treated like 'second-class citizens' rather than the hard workers that they were. Coupled with the reality that the shortfalls of Universal Credit meant that the women had to rely on food banks for the short term, this was another hit to the women's morale and self-esteem. This is again demonstrative of the multi-layered experience of injustice that the women faced incorporating both economic and symbolic elements. With this, the following section will continue to explore the women's experiences of visiting a food bank and the additional factors tied up with it.

PART III: Women's Experience of Visiting a Food Bank

This final part of the chapter will now focus specifically on the experience of visiting a food bank for the women that I met as part of my study. Although many aspects have already been touched upon,

it is important to focus on both the experience and the impact of food bank need within the women's situations.

A Last Resort

For the women that I met, visiting a food bank was a last resort and not one that was taken lightly. As already highlighted, this was not a decision that was taken without a detrimental impact for the women, as is reiterated in the stories below.

> *'I was referred over from the Job Centre when I was working as a cleaner and struggling so they sent me for a parcel. I had bills to pay for, I had travel to pay for. My wages changed a lot and it made it really difficult to budget so some months I found I just had nothing, so yeah...I used the food bank...I had to.'* **(Kristen, Food Bank User)**

Concurrent to findings in a study by Purdam et al. (2016) 'the decision to visit a food bank was only taken reluctantly and involved overcoming considerable embarrassment about being seen as not being able to provide for themselves and their family' (p. 1083). Kristen's quote above was undoubtedly an admission of defeat but also highlights her perspective that it was indeed a necessity rather than a choice. This was also the case for Perry who quite explicitly communicated to me that she had been left with no choice.

> *'...sometimes we are left with next to nothing or some months we have been left without anything and they expect us to live off that for 2 months because that is how long it takes for our wages to catch up with us and it's impossible to sort out benefits in this time too. If you've got weekly bills, then you can't really. We have had no choice but to use the food bank and I hate that...'* **(Perry, Food Bank User)**

Perry again demonstrates the incompatibility of workfare and non-standard work and the way that this begrudgingly drove her to the food bank. For both Kristen and Perry this experience was an unpleasant one - this was also reflected in many other users I observed who would be tearful at the food bank, or even anxious to the point of not being able to speak.

Shame

The emotions and shame that the women experienced were unfortunately interwoven with negative media portrayals of food bank users and expectations of individuals living in a neoliberal society. Pemberton et al. (2014) discuss the emotional injuries faced by people living on a low income whereby individuals expressed shame 'as a result of not being able to fulfil the social expectations that attach to particular roles' (p. 36). Building further on this finding, the women I spoke to were not only providers - sometimes as mothers, partners, carers, but were also workers and felt the shame of this not being able to keep them from the need to use a food bank, as suggested in some of their quotes below.

> '…there is no word to describe what you feel like. It is just desperation really. So I found the food bank, and it was all…just dizzy really. I went in and she asked me if I wanted something to eat and I just broke down…I dunno…I felt like scum. So I got the food and came home, but then I borrowed some money off someone so I didn't have to go back.' **(Angie, Food Bank User)**

Angie's upsetting recount of her first trip to a food bank gives an insight into the self-blame she experienced, to the point that she felt overwhelmed and preferred to then borrow money off a friend than use the food bank again. This appeared to be more of an internal manifestation rather than something specific to have happened at the food bank to make her feel this way. Lily and Gaby also spoke of the emotional impact they experienced, however more specific to their concerns of others judgement based on her circumstance and of their relative context.

> '…I was a bit nervous and I was thinking what is going to happen here…I wondered if they would be like 'What are you doing?'…especially as I had been working before both times and they knew that…I thought they might judge me that I hadn't got anything saved from that…' **(Lily, Food Bank User)**

> 'I feel like I shouldn't be there. I feel like I don't belong there…and that somehow I should have managed this situation so that it didn't get to this…when you go to these places you don't get the chance to tell your story, and partly you don't want to…but you have got this kind of self-conscious guilt, as if there is somebody else more worthy or more needy than you are.' **(Gaby, Food Bank User)**

Both Lily and Gaby felt the fear of judgement, and for Gaby the guilt that there were others more deserving of aid than her. Gaby also mentioned that she felt uncomfortable arriving to collect her food in a car and wearing professional clothes, therefore disassociating herself with what she perceived as the image of a 'food bank user'. Guilt was not uncommon amongst the women, Jazzy also speaks of her mother's guilt.

> *'My mum didn't feel too happy about it…she felt bad…she felt like…guilty. She personally felt like other people deserved it more than we did. But at the same time I was feeling like we need to use those services because if we don't…like my brother is diabetic…he needs to eat. He is extremely thin and has a high metabolism.'* (**Jazzy, Food Bank User**)

These accounts struck me as an ironic contrast between these women feeling unfairly treated for the lack of recognition of their working circumstance when claiming Universal Credit, to those now fearing judgement for the same situation when claiming from the food bank. This shows the sensitive and fragile nature of the women's emotional states but also the dark ironies at play in their situations.

Additional to their identities as workers, their relationship and perception of the role of being a mother also moulded the women's experience of collecting from a food bank. Angie recollects her own sentiments and how it made her reflect on her own role as a mother, and especially as a single mother.

> *'…the shame…the indignity…it is just…the blame…I felt like such a bad parent not being able to feed my kids…when they asked me at school what you wanted to be when you were older…and I said a mother…that was it. I just wanted to be a mother. Because to me there is no other valuable job in the world than being a mother. It is not about going to work and making money for your boss and running yourself ragged…but I did…at that time…as if I could hold my head up high and blend in…but I still now feel like a drain on society if you like…a bad mother.'* (**Angie, Food Bank User**)

The guilt and shame that the women both spoke about and that I observed as they collected their parcels was uncomfortable to witness whilst their own recognition of their efforts and struggles in work were overshadowed by self-deprecation. Angie had a deep connection with motherhood and unfortunately her circumstances were pushing her to reflect on her role in a situation where she had been pushed towards desperate measures to feed her children.

Health and Wellbeing

Although the impact of both IWP and food bank usage has been implicit throughout the presentation of the findings, most prominently the psychological wellbeing of those I met, some of the women spoke directly of the way that their health and psychological state was negatively impacted by their circumstance.

Mental Health

Both socioeconomic marginalisation and the stigma of poverty have long been associated with mental health problems as well as other personal impact such as detrimental feelings, self-devaluation, and lowered self-esteem (Inglis et al., 2019; Wilkinson & Pickett, 2009). The nuanced experience of both IWP and food bank usage for the women of my study showed similar findings specific to their own personal lives.

> '…from being made redundant and…well twice…it was a bad experience…I think about it all the time. I dream about it. Even now when I am working I am just thinking…please don't let that happen to me again. But here I am using the food bank with this new job anyway. It really fucks you up, you know…your head…the worry…it haunts me….[long pause]…and I don't think I have ever said that out loud till now' **(Perry, Food Bank User)**

> '…it has me chewed! I have lost sleep, I am agitated, actually I am totally consumed. I am stressed out and snappy with the children. Sometimes I can't even sit with them when I am home, I just need to be alone. And they ask me what is the matter? Every day at tea time I feel this real stress come over me, because I am thinking they are not going to like what I am going to give them…they want something different. It builds up this daily dread at tea time.' **(Gaby, Food Bank User)**

Both Perry and Gaby were clearly battling with anxiety, stress, and frustration from living in precarious and financially difficult circumstances. Gaby had the added responsibility and worry of having children to care for and their wellbeing to consider. Both, amongst many of the other women, were troubled and unsettled from having to depend on food charity. What was common amongst the women, not only Gaby and Perry, was that they bottled up their worries and anxieties. This was likely to be associated with the emotions that women experienced using the food bank such as shame and humiliation, but also additional factors in a depleted quality of life and a deeper isolation.

<u>Food and Nutrition</u>

As mentioned in the previous chapter, the food provided was basic and the amount provided was dependent on the claimant's family size and the approved length of their referral would determine for how long they would be supported. Several of the visitors to the food bank were visibly malnourished and/or hungry, and there were even occasions when we (as volunteers) could smell on peoples' breath that they had not eaten for a while. Some of the women spoke about the food that they were provided with.

> *'I was cleaning, a couple of hours a day. I was literally living off a pasta 'n' sauce packet, one a day. I went to work everyday starving and lightheaded, and I was on my feet all day. I never fainted though. A few times I had to sit down and put my head between my legs…everyone thought I was anorexic or sumat'… I don't know. I nicked some of the sugar packets from the coffee machine sometimes and that got me to tea time. To be honest it isn't a surprise I didn't stick at that job long'* (**Kristen, Food Bank User)**

Whilst Kristen's story is a prime example of the impact of poor nutrition and malnourishment on health, it introduces other factors related to living off the items provided by a food bank. Kristen's diet was clearly having an impact on her ability to function productively, and she suggests that this may have contributed to her not lasting very long within that role. Picking apart her words, she was conscious of the way that her colleagues thought of her and was thus detrimental on her work identity. Kristen was already vulnerable, suffering from prior mental health problems and going through a gender reassignment.

Studies have connected poverty and low income with a declining quality in food provision, for example Drewnowski & Eichelsdoerfer (2009) who commented that 'as income drops and food budgets shrink food choices shift towards cheaper refined grains, added sugars and vegetable fats' (p. 1) and this even further restricted when individuals are surviving on what they receive in a food parcel (Lloyd et al., 2011). Additional to the impact that this had on the general health of food bank users (Garthwaite et al., 2015; Vozoris & Tarasuk, 2003), my own research showed that this spilled over into the women's experience of work and also their general wellbeing. Other women spoke of the emotional impact of surviving on the food that they claimed, such as Angie who comments on her own situation.

> *'…the food you get…it…it is not…well for me…food is a massive thing…because I have come out of residential care and I lived on the streets…food is a big thing for me. If I don't have*

food…I have panic attacks. And the food you get…you can't really make anything with it. It is like…you are literally eating a tin…of rice pudding…it isn't like a meal.' (**Angie, Food Bank User**)

Angie was clearly battling a unique struggle with food insecurity based on her past and how that was affecting her present. Purdam et al. (2016) concluded from their own research that 'the importance of food goes beyond nutrition and is related to aspects of identity…visiting a food bank is likely to have a significant impact on a person's sense of self-worth' (p. 1083). This was mirrored amongst the women that I met. It was clearly psychologically distressing and isolating for people who were already vulnerable and navigating both health and work difficulties.

Period Poverty

Conversations around menstrual products and the diminishing of taboos have proliferated in the past years. Scotland became the first country in 2018 to provide free menstrual products (Zipp et al., 2018), but despite this menstruation remains a source of embarrassment, with significant consequences on the lives of women, for example relating to health and wellbeing (such as self-esteem) (Johnston-Robledo & Chrisler, 2020). It was discovered that this was another uncomfortable experience for those using food bank, as the example below demonstrates.

A young woman came in, and asked to speak to a member of staff in private so I sat and spoke with her in the office. She told us that her sister had had to call in sick because she had come on her period and hadn't got the money for sanitary products. She worked as a waitress in a local cafe so said she was too conscious to 'make do' given that she was walking around and with the public all day. The sister told us that she was waiting to get paid. We provided her with enough sanitary products to get her through the next few days and told the woman that her sister would be welcome to come in a get some more if she needed. The woman laughed and admitted that she would not tell her sister she had got them from the food bank, stating that she would be horrified. She told us both of them were really struggling at the moment, and we encouraged them to get a referral to help them through the next few weeks for food too. She was overly thankful and asked us if we had a Tesco bag to carry them in and give them to her sister. She made a very quick exit. (**Field Notes**)

The young woman experienced two levels of shame. First, there is taboo of periods and period products that the women experienced, and that of accepting help from a food bank. Studies found that women experiencing period poverty found themselves in some instances excluded from both social

and economic activity (Mohamed et al., 2018; Tull, 2019) and without the support provided from the food bank in the example above, this would have seemingly been the case. Much like the women above however, it was common that even though the food bank offered menstruation products to all food bank users, a high proportion were still hesitant to take them, perhaps for embarrassment or the stigma that still surrounded them. The staff at the food bank tried their hardest to be discrete to avoid embarrassment or a public discussion about periods, and yet I still noticed that it persisted. Although a solution here was available for the alleviation of period poverty, the reasons for its lack of take up were perhaps more firmly rooted in societal perceptions and ingrained stigmas and taboos.

The Price of a Food Bank Visit

What this final section of the chapter has highlighted is the physical and psychological price that the women paid to claim a parcel from the food bank to support them. This not only shows the dire but often undocumented consequences of IWP but also strongly challenges media depictions that *all* people using food banks are doing so either out of idleness or just the availability of 'free food'. For the women I met, I repeat that it was by no means an easy decision or one without consequence.

Earlier in the chapter I spoke of the concept of freedom through work to understand the women's drive and commitment in the pursuit of work through arduous conditions. Where Sennet & Cobb (1972) understand the experiences of their participants as the price they paid for 'freedom' (p. 48) considering this final section of the chapter, I have arguably shown the price that the women pay for the mere *pursuit* of freedom. By this I mean that their struggles in securing work had both physical and emotional impact especially considering the women's experience of using a food bank in times where work was insufficient, and even so, the fact that they still were needing the food bank demonstrated that work was not providing them with freedom nor independence. Much like the women of Skeggs' study (1997), one of the central components of working-class life for women as a lack of alternatives, and perhaps in this way the women remained resilient despite clearly subdued.

Having already discussed the challenges to women's access to economic resources through both work and welfare, what this section has demonstrated is that accessing food in times of crisis came at the detriment of the women who need it. This is felt acutely by those accessing the charity from within work thus afflicted by IWP. The experience was damaging to the women's self-esteem, confidence, and their own perceptions of their ability to be a 'good mother'. The emotional burden of claiming from the food bank and of the work circumstances which had driven them there had a psychological impact on the women, inducing anxiety and elements of trauma, for example from being plunged into

destitution through repeated redundancy. The nature of the food provided also had both physical and emotional implications. To no fault of their own having been either unlucky or unsuccessful in accessing stable work or suitable welfare, the women then suffered further in accessing food for themselves and their families. This final section of the chapter is a powerful exposé to the depictions of all food bank visitors doing so out of choice.

Understanding the Injustices Faced by Women

The women we have met had honourable drive, motivation, and commitment to work, despite the reality that the employment they were engaging in brought neither the financial stability or intrinsic benefits that they deserved or desired for their efforts. Faced with the complex task of living with such work, the women were additionally burdened with having to claim from a food bank when the struggle became unliveable. The women's attitude and ability to 'get on with it' was not unlike the way Sennet & Cobb (1972) theorize the injuries of the working-class as having to legitimize their value and worth through the sacrifices they made to pursue a more free and independent life.

As both women and working class, the women's journeys to economic stability or independence were wrought with hurdles. In many of the sectors or types of worked that they engaged in, such as hospitality and cleaning, non-standard work was all that was available and thus produced a multitude of challenges including instability, unpredictability, and a changing income. In-work benefits were inefficient in providing support at the time when the women needed it, for example when facing the immediate loss of employment or unexpected changes in circumstances. All the above were primary factors in the women's need for a food bank. The very fact that working women were turning to food banks meant that both work and a welfare system that was designed to help claimants into work, were failing for working-class women. Low paid women's work failed to respect and remunerate workers with the stability that they needed. Within this my findings uniquely show is the experience of food insecurity amongst these failings, and that the women were left with no choice but to turn to food charity. All these factors evoked more vulnerability and concern for the women, some who were single mothers and raising children alone.

The emotional and psychological impact of both IWP and food bank usage was prominent yet complex. Claiming from a food bank and particularly from within work was degrading, frustrating, and made the women question not just their capability as mothers but also of their value as workers. The insecurity of work and the inefficiency of welfare led to the need for the food bank, with each stage inflicting further injury on the women's confidence, comfort, and quality of life.

Revising what the findings have shown in context to Fraser's framework once more, at the centre of the injustice faced by the women is the inability to access fair distribution in terms of adequate work. The claiming of charity, even in short-term in-between periods is not a suitable substitution for good work, for the reasons both that were discussed in the chapter and the impact of claiming charity which has been presented in this chapter. Saying this however, to fully understand the impact and injustice at play is to also consider the symbolic impact and the justice of misrecognition. Both remain intricately interwoven with the women's identity not just as women, but also as working-class women.

Chapter Summary

This chapter has focused on the experiences of the women and informed the context not only as to why they were claiming food aid from within work but also what this whole experience was like for them. Three levels of injustice have emerged. First, the women faced damning barriers to adequate and stable work in sectors such as cleaning, and second to this was the inefficiency of in-work welfare within Universal Credit to be able to support those working on precarious and changing contracts. Finally, when left with no choice but to use a food bank, the women were often downtrodden and ashamed to have gotten to such a point despite both wanting to and putting efforts into securing employment. This chapter shows that the complex injustices displayed here can neither be understood as simply distributive or recognitive and to do so would be at the discredit of the women and the complex hardships that they face.

CHAPTER NINE: MY EXPERIENCE OF RESEARCHING WOMEN AT THE FOOD BANK: REFLECTING ON MY CHOSEN METHODOLOGY

'…I immediately felt a sadness come over me…I felt helpless…'

Chapter Outline

This chapter provides a critical reflection on my experience as an ethnographer at a food bank with a focus on the emotions I faced and methodological and ethical challenges and barriers that occurred throughout my journey. This also includes how I tried to make sense of them in the bigger picture of the research. By doing this I challenge my own privilege as I position myself within the research and explore the implications of this. This is with the aim of empowering not only the women I am investigating but also the research itself. Additionally, in revisiting some of the challenges I faced in gathering data, I was able to understand them more within their context and relation to the circumstances of the women. In some cases, I was able to consider improvements to methodology, and how to gather additional data and insight from other activities, still relevant to the food bank, to complement the data set.

A Critical Feminist Insight into Emotions and Challenges

During the data collection stage, the emotional and sensitive nature of the themes being explored became increasingly apparent in both the participant observation and the interviews that I conducted with the women. Additionally, my own emotions as a researcher were prominent. These emotions were not only an ongoing personal battle, but both managing and understanding them began to form a separate branch of investigation from which to extract insight and develop a deeper engagement with my research context and participants. In brief, I learnt that I could learn from my own experiences alongside learning from the experiences of those I was researching. I deliberated over including this chapter, for fear that it would not be 'academic 'enough. From further exploring both the literature and revisiting my own field notes however, I agree with Campbell (2002) who on researching sensitive topics amongst women found that 'we could learn more about our phenomenon of interest by examining how we emotionally respond to our research. How we feel about what we witness and what we do in the process of research could tell us something about that which we have studied.' (p. 28). I include this chapter as my own personal account of emotions, ethics and conflicts that arose throughout my journey.

On emotion, Blackman (2007) through his own experience determined that 'powerful feelings of emotion from love to hate grip both the researcher and the researched' (p. 711) but that a strategy of awareness, analysis, and reflexivity could present the opportunity for a recognition of more complex challenges faced in research. It could also create a space for previously silenced stories to be liberated as a result. Reflexivity, as discussed in earlier chapters, brings a focus to openness and understanding to certain aspects of research, such as a researcher's position in the study, reception by the participants, the analysis process, and decisions made about representation (Geertz, 1973). In feminist research in particular this process of reflexivity becomes valuable in the wider aim of the development of empowering and non-exploitative methods of the study and production of data about women (Oakley, 1981; Pillow, 2003). All the above factors meant that a fine balance had to be achieved in terms of my own research - whilst visceral emotions and feelings I had experienced felt important to be acknowledged and dissected, this was not to be at the sacrifice of the stories of the women at the food bank as the focus of enquiry. A similar challenge of the process of reflexivity was described by Finlay (2002) who described the way that 'researchers have to negotiate the 'swamp' of interminable self-analysis and self-disclosure' and from other scholars who recognised the danger of reflexivity as self-indulgent and narcissistic (Kemmis, 1995; Patai, 1993). All these characteristics could threaten the emancipatory nature of research and for feminist research this would be detrimental to the motivation of study.

With all of this in consideration and having sought advice from my supervisors and from fellow researchers of whom had also dealt with complex and fragile emotions in the field and in their research, the following chapter will try to make sense of some of the emotions and ethical dilemmas that I encountered. To do this I will identify some of the key conjunctures that I faced in terms of my own experiences and feelings and try to situate them in terms of not only the themes being studied but also in terms of the women I was researching. I draw on work by Gilmore & Kenny (2014) by paying particular attention to persisting 'blind spots' in self-reflexive work such as the silences around ethnographers' emotions and addressing challenges of power and authority. I was particularly careful to be aware of and apply the feminist values and aims of the research also, and in this was guided by Young (1997)'s concept of 'asymmetrical reciprocity' whereby it is accepted than an individual's position may never be fully understood but implies an openness to enquiry to further the understanding of relative difference.

This chapter will interrogate my own position as a researcher with a focus on the relationships that I formed with the women that I was studying, and with the research location and theme. The process

of reflecting on the insights that came to produce this chapter personally helped me to understand my own data on a deeper level, therefore by including this chapter in the final thesis I help the reader do the same through my experiences. In a different way to the previous chapters, I explicitly place myself within the research as an active participant as well as a researcher. As a feminist study and given my immersive role in the ethnography, as the project developed, I wanted to celebrate and explore my own emotions as I had done with those of my participants. Furthermore, through doing this, certain aspects problematised the authority that I wanted and hoped my research would have. This is something I critically explore in the chapter that follows, and through understanding I strived to strengthen the validity of the research. Acknowledging and exploring these issues was important not only for this research but also for my own future research projects, whilst also contributing to methodological debates particularly concerning the role of ethics, emotions, and challenges. Lastly, I direct these findings and discussions at other researchers studying vulnerable populations, especially within qualitative and ethnographic feminist research, or that with a social justice agenda.

This reflexive account will be produced through demonstrating and discussing my own journal entries which were produced throughout the time I spent volunteering, under the sub-headings of key questions and themes I identified during the process. The three subheadings which I deemed the most important for the body of this chapter were: the realisations that I dealt with as a result of certain emotions and experiences; the impact of my chosen methodology and how I adapted it; and finally, the opposition I personally experienced as both as researcher and a volunteer at the food bank.

Uncomfortable Realisations

To carry out this project I was both a researcher and volunteer over an extended time at the food banks. I selected this methodology because it was practical and appropriate to gather data about the themes that I was researching. Despite my prior awareness of any challenges that may have occurred based on the experiences of others, the reality was that this strategy evoked many conflicts, reflections and revelations within myself. Meeting the women at the food bank forced me to confront some of my own strengths, weaknesses, vulnerabilities, insecurities, and perhaps most uncomfortably, my own relative privilege - all which upon reflection had varying impacts on the research. Many of these feelings emerged from researching an environment which prior to the research I was relatively unfamiliar and naïve about.

In contrast with many of the experiences I read about feminist researchers studying other women, I had little in common with the women I was studying, other than of course gender. DeVault & Gross

(2007) nevertheless assert that 'feminist researchers have not wanted to be limited to 'cozy' interviews with participants who are comfortably similar; some have wanted to conduct research on and with […] women who have had very different experiences and points of view' (p. 180). What emerged from my reflection is that the most profound contrast was that of privilege - the reality was that, luckily, I had never been in a situation where I needed to use a food bank. I contemplated considerably the notion put forward by Young (1997) who comments that 'when people obey the injection to put themselves in the position of others, they too often put themselves, with their own particular experiences and privileges, in the positions they see the others. When privileged people put themselves in the position of those who are less privileged, the assumptions derived from their privilege often allow them unknowingly to misrepresent the others situation' (p. 48). My own experience and what I learnt from this will follow.

Emotional Vulnerability

> *As my first real experience of meeting someone using a food bank, I immediately felt a sadness come over me, even though having spoken to the other volunteers, this was my no means an unusual or extreme case. I felt helplessness seeing the old gentleman physically struggling - making me think of my own elderly relatives and how I would feel knowing that they were in that situation. I went home thinking about the old man. I thought what more I could have done to help? Should I have offered him a lift home? I knew that this wasn't appropriate or safe. I felt a slight relief that at least he would have food in the cupboards to prepare himself something to eat, but I couldn't help but wonder what would happen to him in the future.*
> **(Field Notes)**

The quote above gave insight into my first experience of the emotional impact of my ethnographic research at the food bank. Having never been in the situation of needing a food bank myself, the stark reality of some of the visitors' lives in contrast to my own situation was at times upsetting and difficult to accept. Sitting in my car on the way back to a cupboard of food, I felt confused by my own emotions, and on reflection both the sadness and perception of the situation was relative to my own circumstance. The gentleman hadn't displayed the sadness that I myself seemed to feel. Whilst I realised it was important to manage, understand, and contextualise my own emotions in the wider perspective of what I witnessed at the food bank this was not to be confused by a whole understanding of what others may be experiencing or feeling as an isolated incident without further conversation or context.

In another example, I was forced to acknowledge the danger of not only my own emotional fragility but also my inexperience and the inappropriateness of dealing with the fragility of others.

> *…he told me that he had no close family or friends around him and that he was having suicidal thoughts with nobody to speak to about it. He told us that his debts were getting more and more unmanageable, and he didn't know what to do about it. He was crying and getting more and more upset. He kept asking me what he should do and how he was going to get out of 'this nightmare' - as he described it. Sarah had been organising some of the parcels in the back cupboard, and I suddenly felt like this was a conversation which it was not appropriate for me to continue. I really wanted to say something to calm and comfort the gentleman but he was just getting more and more worked up and was even struggling to get his words out. I called Sarah to come and have a word with him and take over.* **(Field Notes)**

In this case above I not only lacked the experiences which could have helped me to empathise and support the gentleman, but in such a severe case I also lacked the professional experience and qualifications to even continue a conversation. A deeper engagement could have jeopardised the individuals and my own wellbeing, thus highlighting my own limitations due to the involvement of emotions and understanding. This was detrimental to the research in terms of the incorporating of some of the most severe cases I encountered, but nevertheless I deemed as an appropriate delegation.

Resonating with work by Davison (2004) regarding dilemmas in research acting within a dual identity of both a social worker and a researcher, such emotions as reflected on above made me aware of the vulnerability not only of my research participants but also of myself as a researcher. Davison (2004), on her own research, stated 'on occasions, the emotions I felt because of the quality of empathy which was achieved, were uncomfortable and distressing to me. Yet without the benefit of this emotional resonance, I believe my research analysis would have been incomplete and fractured' (p. 382). Mirroring this sentiment, many interactions I experienced at the food bank were emotional for both myself and the participants, however as demonstrated these emotions and sensitivities were recorded within the field notes I recorded and given value in the analysis and presentation of my data and the wider context of the themes being explored. Emerald & Carpenter (2007) claimed 'emotional vulnerability can be confronting and uncomfortable to write and to read. Nonetheless, it can be integral to exploring an issue and one more resource that can be used in the method of inquiry'. What my own experience revealed is that these emotions had to be treated as potentially coming from different backgrounds and perspectives. At times coupled with my lack of experience with vulnerable

participants, barriers could emerge in both accessing and engaging with certain stories or interactions, at times rendering some of the more extreme cases inaccessible.

Insider/Outsider?

In a related consideration, my position as an insider/outsider played a complex role in the research, and the interplay led to realisations concerning the methodology and the outputs produced from the research. This journey and the reflections that occurred helped me however to challenge my own fluid position in relation to the stories of the women using the food bank.

From volunteering at the food bank over an extended period, becoming an insider amongst the other volunteers happened quite quickly as I made efforts to build relationships and trust between them and myself. Amongst the visitors to the food bank however, although I was able to get to know certain individuals during the few weeks whilst they were collecting food parcels, this was never for longer than six weeks at a time. Given many of their situations, as a middle-class PhD student having never experienced IWP, I was an outsider to the main demographic that I was studying. This had certain implications for the relationships that I built with the women and the way that I approached more in-depth conversations with them, of which I will reflect upon below.

> *The last person in was a young woman who had been referred from [a housing organisation]. She looked healthy, happy, and well presented, in her early 30's I would guess. She was self-employed and working as a mobile hairdresser. She said things had been slow recently, so she was struggling to keep up with bills and expenses. We chatted for a while, and she told me about a recent break up with a partner. We seemed to have a good rapport - possibly because of the similarity in age and we were laughing and joking. I asked her if she would be interested in taking part in an interview and I explained to her what I was doing and why. She seemed very hesitant, and the mood very quickly changed. It was obvious that I had made her uncomfortable by revealing that I was doing research at the same time as volunteering. As much as I tried to reassure her that the motivation of my research was to help women in the local community who were struggling, it was obvious she was not interested in participating and the atmosphere changed. She especially spoke of the matter of anonymity despite my reassurance of complete anonymity and that there was no pressure to share anything she wouldn't feel comfortable with. I felt a disappointment but mainly a guilt for having made her feel uncomfortable, embarrassed, or put on the spot.* **(Field Notes)**

As the quote from my field notes shows, approaching the food bank visitors as a researcher could cause discomfort, alienation or intimidation despite any efforts to bridge the gap between us. I drew on work by Faria & Mollett (2016) who at first reacted defensively to moments of what they saw as '(mis)reading' in the field (p. 87) but with time 'moved away from anxious efforts of correction, instead reflecting on our shared but differently rooted anxieties' (p. 87). For cases such as above I had to understand that the mistrust and discomfort towards me as a researcher was much more complex than a personal matter against me. This however was not always the case.

> *A woman came in next, with her son who had come to help her with her the bags…she began to tell us about her situation - she had been working as a carer but she had split with her husband and in the circumstance she had had to give up her job due to personal stress and psychological problems, as well as the logistics and practicalities of leaving home and trying to find somewhere to live. She told us that her employers had been somewhat less than sympathetic. As her first time at the food bank, we spoke a bit about how we worked and how we helped people. She told us she had been embarrassed to come in but we reiterated that it could happen to anyone and that we were here to try and help in any way she could. I told her a bit about myself and I introduced my research ideas and aims - she seemed really interested and expressed how important she thought it was to inform people about the struggles that women in this area faced. She told me that she would be really keen to help me with my research as she believed that it could be positive for change and an important area for research, based on her own struggles and experience. We exchanged contact details to speak further in the future.* **(Field Notes)**

Whilst arguably it was my position as an insider at the food bank which allowed me access to all of my successful interview participants, these two contrasting examples demonstrate differing reactions from the women to me as a researcher. What can be summarised from these experiences was that it was impractical to make assumptions on how other individuals would react to outsiders Additionally, in reference to the first example, my frustrations were related to the feeling of a misunderstanding of my aims or motivation from others. Relating again to Young (1997) this was from an assumption that others would share the same perception as myself regarding the significance and relevance of the research being carried out - which on reflection was not always realistic. What was more progressive in terms of a methodology was to not only build resilience to the disappointment of barriers to access, but to appreciate the perceptions and concerns interwoven with these interactions.

Whilst on the surface it may seem that both my emotions and my position as an outsider caused considerable limitations to the research, relating the literature to my own findings what can be concluded is that the reflection of my position and how this made me feel provided a potential for further depth of insight. In confronting not only the emotions that I felt but also the role of my own privileged position in this, I was able to critically identify why I felt the emotions that I did, and why others reacted to me in the way they did - but in the context of both the research participants and the food bank environment. Although these were not always specifically referred to, the experiences and reflections helped to shape the way I analysed and wrote my conclusions and to appropriately manage these emotions and consider and rationalise the way that they emerged within my writing, rather than decontextualised emotion from my behalf.

Accessing Participants

Although I have touched on some of the barriers to access, I faced above, this does not fully represent the mountain of challenges that I encountered, not only when trying to access participants but also in the period between agreeing to meet for a more in-depth conversation and it taking place. Whilst the literature vastly covered accessing vulnerable participants and hard to reach populations, I was somewhat unprepared for changes of hearts from participants who had agreed to an interview, and what this meant in terms of my research themes. Whilst I completed the data collection with less interviews with the women using the food bank than I initially expected, some of the reasons for failed or nearly missed interviews produced insightful reflections following the data collection and the potential for recommendations for future methodologies involving vulnerable populations, as well as the ethics involved.

<u>Requesting an Interview</u>

As discussed in the previous section, having identified participants suitable for an interview, I would explain to them the motivations and reasons for my research. It however was not uncommon for participants to be apprehensive and withdrawn. Given the context of the individuals visiting a food bank it did not come as a surprise that they would be embarrassed and hesitant to discuss their personal situations and details in an outlet that they perhaps did not know much about - that being academic research. In some cases, as the example below will show, whilst some of the women did initially agree, this did not always materialise.

> *As we were about to close there was a last woman who came in, who had not been sent with*
> *a referral and her English was poor. From her surname and accent I guessed she may have*

been Eastern European. Laura and I had a speak with her. Emilia had been working as a cleaner but had lost her job due to an injury so had been out of work for a couple of weeks. I began to explain that I was a student and to tell her about my research although I was not sure if she really understood me. She was grateful for the food that we were able to provide her and she was happy to give me her contact details so that I could get in touch to arrange a time to speak to her again at the food bank. I was still unsure if she could comprehend what I was saying. She was chatty and kept saying that she was trying to look for work but that she was finding it difficult. As I tried to make conversation about her work she persisted in telling me that she was currently looking for work and had been applying for jobs. I told her I would look forward to seeing her next week and she departed saying she would be back next week and seemed positive about returning as I helped her with her bags out of the food bank. **(Field Notes)**

[…a week later…]

I had gone back to the food bank to talk to Emelia who I had met the week before. After concerns that there had been a bit of a language barrier, I had explained over text in simple speak the basis of my research. I had rang her on Monday and she had agreed to meet me at the food bank, when it seemed like she was not going to turn up I gave her another call. She said that she would not be coming to the food bank today so I did not probe any further. Emelia seemed suspicious of me and I got the impression that she had not understood fully my reasons for wanting to speak to her. Laura and I discussed that she may have been worried that I was investigating something, possibly either benefits or work. **(Field Notes)**

There of course could have been many reasons for Emelia's no-show - for example misunderstanding, mistrust, inconvenience, embarrassment, or as Laura and I suspected - anxiety of revealing personal information for fear of judgement or to protect a personal situation. This could have been related to work or benefits. This was not a standalone case, and on other occasions visitors to the food bank would insist on justifying their work situation to legitimise their claiming of the food bank for fear that the food bank staff would confront the topic. Once again, I felt disappointed and concerned that I had made Emelia uneasy. Speziale & Carpenter (1999) state the importance of creating a comfortable environment for participants and reflecting on this instance this could have been further facilitated for Emelia by providing a handout to read at home in simple language, or more of an opportunity to ask questions about the interview. Regardless, the interaction was a poignant example of the fragility of demographic I was studying, and the important ethics to be considered when approaching vulnerable participants.

<u>Busy Schedules</u>

Endeavouring to accommodate interviews not only to the schedule of myself and the participants, but also in line with the opening hours and access times of the food bank[9] presented not only a challenge to the research but specific ethical considerations relative to my chosen demographic. With the research focused on women who were working and using a food bank, it was to be expected that they would have busy schedules.

> *…she was willing to participate however told me that she had already had to re-arrange two mornings at work to be able to come and pick up the parcels and that moving forwards things would be a bit more complicated. Gaby currently had a vehicle but she told me she was selling it so could be without any time soon. As soon as she got a good offer for it she said that she was looking to sell it. Gaby worked full time and had two children so was occupied after work - she was even unsure if and when she would be able to collect the rest of the parcels that she was legible to with her referral. Gaby tried to be accommodating but we kept hitting a wall and it became obvious how hectic her schedule was. I felt guilty being too demanding or pushy when she was trying to suggest options for when we could meet. Sarah overheard our struggle and kindly agreed to open up the food bank early the following week - that way we would be able to have the interview and it also meant that she could pick up another parcel for another week without stress.* **(Field Notes)**

First, Gaby's story was a window not only into an extremely busy lifestyle but also of the anxieties she faced as a single mother with a full-time job, mounting debt, and a referral to the food bank. As with some of the other women, although Gaby had agreed to meet with me, I was very careful to not create extra pressures in her life - and I felt burdened with trying to minimise the disruption. In this instance however, as discussed in the methodology, my colleague Sarah not only acted as a facilitator in terms of yielding trust, but also of convenience. This confirms a study by Emmel et al. (2006) who found that 'researchers can… […] …increase the likelihood of access through trusted comprehensive gatekeepers who have spent considerable time addressing the day-to-day needs of socially excluded individuals and groups they wish to access'. This was certainly true in my case where Sarah was able to accommodate not only myself, but for Gaby too for her comfort. Furthermore, this was paramount, in agreement with Elmir et al. (2011) that 'the more comfortable participants are, the more likely they are to disclose information and reveal the nature of their lived experiences'

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[9] In line with the methodology the interviews would be carried out within the food bank for ease of access for the participants as well as for safety reasons.

<u>Beyond 'Do no Harm'</u>

Generally, qualitative research ethics abide by the 'do no harm' principle, or at least to minimise the risks of doing harm to either participants or the researcher (Wiles, 2012). Once again this is something which I reflected on in the context of my field notes - not just during the interview but in the buildup as in previous similar cases.

> *Since meeting Maria a few weeks ago, we had exchanged a few messages and although we had agreed to meet she had cancelled on the day - her message had read 'Not up for it today - sorry'. I had replied reassuring her that it wasn't a problem and that I wished her well, and told her that if there was anything the food bank could do to help her she was always welcome to come in and talk to us. To this I had received no response. I also followed up a week later to see if she was up to rearranging to which I received no response even though she had received and read the message, so I did not pursue it any further. It had been a few weeks and I nor any of the other staff had seen her at the food bank even though she still had five parcels which she could still claim as part of her initial referral. A few things crossed my mind, those being concern for her welfare and also the worry that she felt pressured from the interaction with myself that she did not feel comfortable coming back. I hoped that in fact her situation had changed and that she no longer needed the parcels remaining of her referral, however there was no real way to no without further communication which seemed inappropriate and invasive.* **(Field Notes)**

As suggested in the exert, it was impossible to know Maria's real reasons for changing her mind. Not only was I again sensitive of making Maria feel uncomfortable - but this time considered that it may have contributed to her comfort in accessing the support of the food bank.

I consulted literature on the ethics of minimising harm and oppression in social work (Clifford & Burke, 2009) given its relevance in my relation to being a volunteer at the food bank as well as a researcher. Furthermore, the role of feminism seemed poignant in the feelings that I experienced in cases such as those above. Gilligan (1982) regarded moral thinking as distinctive from a traditional male thinking, in that this would come from a justice perspective whereas a feminist rationale would incorporate more of a care perspective. Porter (1999) further claimed on women's approach to moral reasoning that '…women, typically relying on a narrative mode of reflection, have an immediacy of moral response that is person - and situation specific, men typically deliberate according to universal principles and abstract from concrete details about particular persons' (p. 4). On relaying the

experience above to certain colleagues within the university, some advised me to 'be more assertive'. This felt uncomfortable to me and the ethics of my research. From my own experience of the fragility of the women I was working amongst at the food bank, and in occurrences such as that above it was my own judgment and decision to evoke no pressure or discomfort towards the participants or potential participants. Once again from this interaction, moving forwards and trying to implement a strategy to do no harm not only within direct interactions but also in the bigger picture of the concerned individuals, reassurance and explanations had to be very carefully and sensitively targeted.

From these experiences, I can summarise my learnings and the development of my methodology by acknowledging that consideration of my research participants needed to be applied not only during an interview but also in the wider experience the ethnography. Reflecting and understanding the situations of vulnerable populations meant that participants would not always understand the purpose of academic research which could lead to apprehension or discomfort. Although strategies could be adopted to minimise the negative impact on participants of which I have spoken, this was not always possible, and it was thus important to understand these interactions instead of push them further.

Opposition and Challenges during the Ethnography

The stigma experienced and felt by the users of the food bank has been discussed in previous chapters of the thesis and was revealed in data from both the interviews and the field notes. What also was notable however was the opposition I experienced in relation to my role as a volunteer and my association with the food bank. Admittedly, experiencing opposition and hostility was rare, and the example I will use below was targeted at the food bank rather than at my research - but nevertheless I want to highlight that my own experience of the whole project was not always met with open acceptance and agreement.

The reception that I personally received whilst either working with the food bank or speaking of my work with the food bank to friends and family was overall positive and people were both interested and supportive of my own and the food banks pursuits. The highly politicised nature of the food bank context however, particularly with depictions that were portrayed in the media, meant that opposition to food banks did exist on both a personal and an institutional level. The extract below details a situation that occurred first-hand for me whilst working on an awareness day at a local supermarket for the food bank.

There was one lady however who did not show the same support. She initially came over because her son had ran over to take some of the sweets from the bowl. She was well dressed and well-groomed, and looked to be in her 40s, she had a local accent. She sounded like she was from the area. She stood reading the banner behind us to try and suss out what the stand was for, perhaps as it didn't explicitly say 'food bank' it was not immediately to obviously to somebody who hadn't heard of the project. We offered her a leaflet and asked her if she had heard of us or how we worked to help in the community - this was the general approach we adopted for everyone. It was myself and Mary manning the stand at the time… she quickly interjected if we were a food bank to which we replied yes. With that the woman seemed quite quickly annoyed, and asked us if we thought it was appropriate to be 'advertising an easy way out of working just like everybody else '(as she put it) to which we calmly explained that a lot of our users were either working, looking for work, or had lost their jobs due to unforeseen circumstances. The woman was rude and abrupt and made her thoughts on food banks and their users very apparent. She told us that 'lazy people did not deserve a penny from her 'and preceded to tell us how hard she worked to make her own money and that she had no interest in donating. She told us that we weren't helping anybody and she dragged her son away who was quite happily helping himself to boiled sweets. Mary and I took it on the chin…we looked at each other and shrugged. Various people around had witnessed the interaction and awkwardly walked on by continuing their shopping. **(Field Notes)**

I was shocked at what had happened, despite having acted calmly at the time as anything else would have been inappropriate. Speaking to my colleagues however this reaction was not uncommon. My colleagues shared stories with me of similar situations, which were the most common at public events, such as awareness days and fundraising events (Appendix T shows me attending a yearly fundraiser for *The People's Project*). This pushed me to critically reflect on the food bank as an institution and why other members of the public would have such strong opinions to voice it in this way. Even as a volunteer and representative of the food bank I felt attacked by the woman in the supermarket, however the reality was that it was just a counter-perspective. This experience not only allowed me to consider why such public opinion existed and what is represented, but also gave me a brief insight into why the food bank users felt some of the shame and stigma that they did when faced with the public or with strangers. This contributed not only to a deeper empathy towards my participants regarding certain aspects of their experience at the food bank, but it also helped me to contextualise my own research in a way to defend opposition.

From these experiences I learnt that exploring the research environment further than just participant observation could reveal hidden intricacies which could then be related back to the lives of the participants I was studying. This not only contributed to a more thorough understanding of some of the experiences of my own participants which both guided and strengthened the analysis and written findings of the research but also opened my mind as a researcher in the given context. Methodologically this helped me to both place and deal with certain emotions and feelings. Looking to the future, such experiences could also lead to further research relevant to the themes being explored, and a more profound resilience when carrying out field work.

Chapter Summary

To summarise this chapter, from being able to reflect on my own experience of ethnography, two key findings emerged which had a significant impact both on my research and on my own methodological outlook to be applied in future research projects. Firstly, I brought value and diversity to the study through exploring and embracing my own emotions and experiences both good and bad. This agreed with Roesser (2020) who stated that 'emotions are not just inconvenient facts that need to be bracketed or controlled. They are not obstacles so much as sources of generative insight when it comes to thinking about risk…[…]…Compassion, and feelings of responsibility and care, can help us to reflect on the ethical implications of the many hard choices we face. They also help us to foster solidarity and elicit the courage that the present moment demands'. Maintaining this but adopting a critical view, I had to accept the uncomfortable truth that many of the emotions that I personally experienced were complexly interconnected with my own relative privilege. Whilst it was important to reflect and understand these emotions which at times was difficult and upsetting, in the bigger picture of the research project it was also vital to be able to identify the role that privilege played in this and not allow it to taint the data or to redirect the focus from the research participants themselves. This reflection not only had a significant personal impact on my own perspective of the themes I was researching by highlighting the differences between myself and those I was studying, but also validity to the conclusions drawn through being able to locate and understand my own position as I was analysing and writing up my study. As I had never personally experienced some of the hardships that the women were facing, this acknowledgement felt extremely important in order to fairly represent the women that my research was trying to empower.

The feminist theoretical underpinning of the research was a guide throughout my reflection on the discussed methodological and ethical elements of the study involved in the ethnography. This way my own experience forced me to manage and contextualise what I initially viewed as failures or

disappointments in the field. Developing my methodology meant replacing frustration with reflection of why certain barriers emerged and what the ethics of this were - which in fact revealed different insights about the women I was researching and their vulnerability and circumstance. Furthermore, I realised that I could gather different but still useful data from getting involved as much as I could in the wider activities and context of the environment I was researching - that being the food bank. By understanding this environment on a deeper level and engaging with its position in society, I felt in a better position to empathise with the women I was studying. This, I felt, added a depth to my conclusions that could only have been achieved from this immersion.

I chose to carry out this research for various reasons, one being that in many ways it took me out of my comfort zone. I hope that this chapter portrays that my own journey was not without its awkward and uncomfortable encounters, as well as setbacks along the way. This however, along with some of the stories which I share which were uncomfortable and awkward to hear and write, were the driving force behind my study. From others and my own relative position of privilege, it felt important to seek and communicate stories and realities that were perhaps uncomfortable to hear and problematic to retrieve for the reality of others to surface. It is in this way that, coming from different backgrounds, as researchers we can develop fair and flexible methods in order to justly research, represent, and reveal the narratives of marginalised and silenced populations. Furthermore, the experience of carrying out this research taught me that feminist study was more than just the study of women. I learnt that feminist study formed the backbone of studies such as this that considered the differences, vulnerabilities, and complexities of studying diverse populations and that these were considered and understood not just in designing and carrying out methodologies but also in the whole research process.

CHAPTER TEN: DISCUSSION AND CONTRIBUTIONS

Chapter Outline

Through the accounts, observations and my own experience volunteering with two UK food banks, my findings are a platform for the awareness of the abhorrent, yet complex conditions faced by working-class women experiencing IWP. Early aspirations of the study were to benefit both the academic pursuit of knowledge in the field whilst providing an outlet for the voices and stories of the women to be heard. The unique contributions I offer find that the women I met were undoubtedly vulnerable - not only financially and mentally, but also nutritionally – employment could not guarantee the provision of food in their households. The emotional injuries of food bank usage were not diminished for workers, instead burdening them with a particular guilt that they were undeserving of the charity relative to others. Alongside the many tribulations of low-wage and precarious work discussed in the thesis, the shortcomings of such employment were a driving factor in women needing the food bank, again demonstrating the women's vulnerability even when active in the labour market. This was demoralising and demotivating in terms of retaining and pursuing employment.

The food bank brought a certain optimism to the study and the themes in the way that they not only provide short term distributive relief for users, but also kindness, compassion, and empathy in the way the volunteers interact with users. This unfortunately was not sufficient in counteracting the negative impact that users spoke of in terms of their damaged identity and self-esteem following a visit to a food bank. Provision from the food bank was also not an adequate long-term substitute for an income that allowed individuals to provide for themselves. Engaging in an immersive and emotionally intense ethnography, all the above factors pushed me to confront my own socio-economic privilege and situate it within the research and the findings that would be communicated. All that is discussed above is now explored in greater depth in the chapter that follows.

Addressing the Aims and Purpose of the Thesis

My motivation to pursue this thesis came from witnessing, first-hand, an alarming amount of working women using food banks and the reality of the embarrassment, vulnerability and even bewilderment that I observed amongst those in this situation. The study was designed to offer a comprehensive and intimate exploration of working-class women who were afflicted by IWP – those claiming from food banks as a result. A feminist research strategy approaches the phenomena with a unique theoretical view in this field – focusing on food bank usage and IWP but guided by the ethics of feminism in

order to broaden knowledge through the nuanced experiences of women. This was also complemented by a consideration of class within their experience, arguably crucial given the context of work, poverty and inequality. I provide breadth and depth to the contentious debates surrounding both IWP and food banks, as well as the reality of poverty for women trying to 'make work pay 'in austerity Britain. This is achieved through an ethnography within two UK food banks whereby such an immersive strategy highlights hidden inequalities and a window into an under-researched consequence of IWP – the need for a food bank.

The presented thesis is valuable for multiple audiences. For academic audiences, whilst contributing to empirical knowledge, the thesis also provides insight into the progressive use of ethnography for hard-to-reach populations. The reflexivity I adopted also develops the way data and stories are managed, analysed, and presented. I anticipate that my own challenges and reflections will provoke thought amongst other researchers either in similar or diverse fields. This is especially useful for feminist research and researchers from any discipline who look to diversify and innovate methodologies of studying both women and gendered issues in progressive and developmental social science.

The thesis and the themes and stories that are revealed will additionally be useful in a more practical setting. This includes the benefit to any professional, practitioner or organisation are involved with low-wage or precarious workers, for example welfare administrators or employers. Education and awareness of how the treatment and practice of institutions impact some of the most deprived and vulnerable workers in society is crucial and could contribute to more empathetic organisational practice and policy. This is paramount in getting the best out of workers here in the UK across all sectors and working arrangements, and for a more equitable and fair society. I discuss the practicality and feasibility of this in more depth in <u>Chapter Eleven</u>. In a wider sense I challenge the negative stereotype of food bank users as workless and idle and highlight the danger of such stereotypes in aggravating stigmas that individuals face when simply accessing help in times of crisis.

In summarising the key findings and contributions of the thesis, I now return to the initial research questions that guided the study. I comment on how each of the points have been addressed within the findings of the study. Each of the research questions are addressed within the feminist agenda, using both micro-and macro level findings all relating to the women of the study and their experiences. I reiterate that the feminist underpinning of addressing the research questions was a key resource in using women and their unique experiences and perspectives to create knowledge amongst the proposed themes and pursue meaningful progress in social change.

Study findings have shown that for many working-class women, visiting a food bank was a necessity rather than a choice. This was either when facing personal crisis, or more commonly when the women were engaging in precarious work that provided them with no security and a life that was unpredictable and difficult to manage in many ways. The experience was humiliating and degrading, especially as the women were working and thus felt that they *should not* be there. This manifested not just as they collected their parcel but spilled over into other aspects of their life, for example their home lives and relationships and dynamics with their children.

The food bank volunteers of whom were predominantly women, were aware and respectful of the female visitors' vulnerabilities and circumstances, often with increased sensitivity due to their own class-related empathy. The volunteers were empathetic, understanding, and withheld judgement – this treatment was often as positively impactful to the women as the food itself. As an independent food bank, the charities were able to deal with cases individually which sometimes meant they could provide additional support to the women to improve their quality of life. With this autonomy however the food banks, specifically the volunteers, also found themselves making difficult decisions about the allocation of food which was not without an emotional impact on the volunteers too.

What is the gendered experience of in-work poverty?

For the women of my study, IWP and the need for a food bank because of IWP had become all too normalised due to the availability and quality of work in the area. Again I emphasise that most of the low-wage work commonly engaged in by women, for example cleaning and retail, could only be accessed in a precarious nature which had detrimental consequences practically and emotionally. For single mothers they had to make difficult concessions, for example balancing working and home time, using the food bank as budgeting strategy when facing the unexpected, and the emotional burden that came with feeding their children with charitable food.

The inability to access fair and decent work, coupled with both inefficiencies of in-work benefits and the toll of food bank usage, whilst evidently an affliction of the contemporary working class – through a gendered lens exposes both the inequalities and the impact of the low wage labour market for women. What was commonly linked to the women's need for the food bank however was not the matter of pay, but instead the precarious and insecure nature of work. Visiting a food bank on a short-term or infrequent basis however was not a sustainable or appropriate solution or alternative to better quality work, particularly considering both the physical and psychological effect that it had on the

women. The gendered experience of IWP therefore for many women was that if they wanted to work, they had to accept their vulnerability to the unexpected, such as the times that they used the food bank.

<u>What can be learnt about injustice in Britain from working women visiting food banks?</u>
Real structural and institutional barriers exist in the UK labour market, and first and foremost they must be understood in the way that they impact different demographics, in this instance through the intersection of class and gender. Ultimately the experience of precarious work would differ between a middle income and a low-income household, as it would between a man and a woman. What my research has shown is that insecure work amongst low-income households is a driver behind both IWP and food bank need, and additionally that women find themselves particularly vulnerable both because of the barriers faced and of the emotional impact.

Women's experiences need to be voiced and acknowledged in the public narrative amongst the themes discussed, such as poverty and accessible work. Somewhat activist in its essence, my research therefore presents women's experiences as a necessary contribution to the conversation. Firstly, this is vital in movements for justice in considering the experience of diverse populations and how they are impacted in different ways by inequality. This movement for change could be in various initiatives, for example in institutional practice or activist agendas, which will be discussed in <u>Chapter Eleven</u>. On behalf of the vulnerable populations that my thesis investigates, real and meaningful change therefore must consider and incorporate women, those who are single mothers and those who continue to face barriers and discrimination in work. Furthermore, my research has highlighted the value of research carried out at a food bank in understanding and raising awareness of deprivation occurring in Britain.

Contributions to Knowledge

The section that follows outlines the unique contributions that my thesis offers. Firstly, the empirical contributions include knowledge relating to women's food bank and IWP. I note here that although the literature to date has highlighted some of the issues spanning the research themes (notably women, IWP, and food bank usage), these issues and especially the inference of all three have not been studied at the contextual and local levels that enable the voices of the disadvantaged to be heard. Additionally, my thesis presents the first feminist study of food bank users and namely the exploration of food bank use for women. My theoretical contributions follow, detailing what I add to the literature surrounding

social justice and the food bank. Lastly, I present my methodological contributions developed from my own fieldwork and ethnography.

Women and Food Bank Use

Drawing firstly on my fieldwork and experience of ethnography as a volunteer at the food banks, my findings highlight the way that the food bank and its volunteers provided much more than just a basic food parcel, for example additional practical and emotional support. On the practical side this includes signposting and in-house support for example debt and welfare evaluation and advice. In terms of emotional and wellbeing the food bank extends empathy, compassion, and a sense of community and solidarity to its users. Holistic support was valuable in helping the women to improve their circumstances and quality of life and being able to prevent the need for repeating need to use a food bank. Acting as independent charities however, the food banks (and indeed some of the volunteers) were unstable in their own circumstances. They faced operational challenges and barriers, which threatened both the material and emotional welfare that they provide. Although food banks receive referrals from both local councils and government departments, neither of these institutions have been able to provide a safety net to ensure operational continuity for the charities.

Through observing and interviewing those who were working or had recently worked but were using a food bank, the difficulty and sometimes trauma that women experienced was clear. The emotional impact that they felt was particularly heightened in the way that they felt they *should not* have had to use a food bank if they were working. They remained conscious of judgement of this from volunteers and their peers. Those using the food bank and working were frustrated that their work income was not sufficient to provide for them and their families, but also from the uncertainty and stability that often manifested from such circumstances. The basic nature of the food that was provided by the food bank could have a psychological impact on those consuming it, and physical repercussions for some, especially those who were getting by on basic provisions but working long shifts in active jobs such as cleaning. Although the food bank users expressed gratitude and were often thankful that support had been available when they had little choice but to accept it, needing a food bank still had a negative impact on them. The experience left them with their confidence depleted and a stark reminder of their vulnerability, both which were damaging to their work ethic and overall quality of life. All in all, those who I met at the food bank were there as a last resort. They would not have walked through the doors of the food bank unless they felt that they had no other option. This is a stark contrast to many of the media sources which have been cited throughout the thesis.

With no existing academic literature detailing the specific experiences of women using a food bank, my research revealed unique insights in the field. Firstly, women who were using the food bank as single mothers were some of the most self-deprecating amongst the general population of food bank users. They carried a particular burden in that they had become unable to feed their children and thus felt like a 'bad mother '- as if they had failed in their role. As single parents they carried this guilt alone therefore it was intensified. With children dependent on them and relying on what they were provided with in a parcel, this manifests in feelings of disappointment that they could not feed their children their favourite foods or preferred meals. On the contrary to this however, there were instances where single mothers used their own experiences of food bank usage to motivate themselves to achieve a better quality of life in order to be a role model for their children to ensure that they were never in such an unfortunate position. Lastly, my own experience found that additional to the stigma faced for using a food bank for food provisions, women faced something comparable when struggling to afford menstruation products. Whilst food banks provided products such as tampons and sanitary towels, there remained a taboo. For women however, the lack of access to menstruation products could mean having to turn down a shift and any other negative consequences which could come from this. Thus, for the women claiming from a food bank whilst this was a vital source of aid, they faced symbolic and personal barriers to access.

In-Work Poverty

My research provides a window into one of the unfortunate common shared experiences of experiencing IWP - that being using a food bank. By doing this it also highlights some of the lived experiences of those affected by IWP. What stands out the most for the women visiting a food bank and who were working, was that their lives were unstable, unpredictable, and stressful. The women had constantly changing incomes, changing hours, and changing jobs. This led to anxiety and unrest, and they were never able to budget or steady their finances. The consequence of this was having to depend on food banks in times of crisis or when facing the unexpected. The participants of the study, due to their financial instability, had to make difficult decisions. Amongst these were: whether it was worth taking on extra hours or jobs once transport costs were factored in; if they could afford to take off time for illness or caring responsibilities; and having to make trade-offs such as choosing to pay domestic bills but knowing that this means having to use a food bank that week or month. For anyone to have to face these decisions in modern Britain is shameful. Facing these choices and living with such uncertainty was both demeaning and difficult. Individuals who were indeed both willing and determined to work struggled to reap the benefits of employment.

The complications of IWP manifested in this way predominantly because most of those who were using the food bank alongside working were engaging in precarious work. Precarious work was problematic because it was impossible to find stability, security, or even guaranteed access to food when working in this way with no fixed income or hours. My research both built on and affirmed the existing literature about precarious and unstable work. The food bank users who were engaging in this type of work were doing so because it was all that was available to them - a fixed contract was idealised but unattainable either because of the type of work, regional economy, or general successes for the women in securing work. The women lived in a constant unknown - always having to either apply for new roles or pick up shifts or contracts. They had to make themselves available around the clock in order to be prioritised for shifts or jobs which had a detrimental impact on their domestic and personal life for example the time they could spend with their children or even to take time for themselves. The nature of the work and the contracts available made employers prone to dismiss them at any time and for any reason. Unfortunately, many women lacked the confidence or knowledge to challenge even what they suspected as misconduct. When applying for jobs, often individuals knew that for every position there would be thousands of applicants and that it was unlikely they would ever get any feedback or even notification of their success or failure. This was dispiriting. The women began to question whether it was even worth working at all.

Whilst in-work benefits were available for those working less than full time hours, the conditionality aspect of their implementation and administration was complex and, in many ways, counterproductive. Sanctions also left applicants feeling anxious, punished, and downtrodden - especially when it forced them to rely on food banks. My research findings show that the in-work benefits within Universal Credit are often incompatible with anything outside of regular employment patterns - precarious work for example. For those whose hours and jobs changed regularly, the payment of in-work benefits could not keep up, often leaving claimants with gaps in income between their wages and their benefits. It is within these gaps that individuals had to use a food bank. Throughout the process of applying for in-work benefits, claimants felt bullied and treated no different to those who were not working. These individuals lacked the respect and acknowledgement that they were active in the labour market and conscientious and busy in their job search. Mistreatment had a negative impact on their motivation to work and on their self-esteem.

Social Justice

The findings of my study reveal important implications relating to social justice, most profoundly relating to low-wage and precarious workers and to women. In the low wage and precarious job market, almost all the women I spoke to engaged in this work out of necessity rather than choice.

They found that it did not provide them stability or security and forced them to food banks to be able to feed themselves. They were indeed deprived of fair and consistent financial remuneration. Furthermore, temporary and zero-hour contracts excluded them from other benefits of work that permanent workers enjoy such as: holiday pay; fixed hours; and sickness pay for example. The current in-work benefits were inefficient and inadequate in compensating for the changing wages for these workers. Both deny them of access to distributive justice - work is clearly not enough to achieve this, nor even with the support of welfare. In terms of the symbolic injustice that these people faced, it remained complexly interwoven with that of economic injustice. Applying Fraser's (1995) theory of redistribution and recognition within critical institutional analysis, Dahl (2004) asserted that within such a framework 'recognition becomes a question of institutionalised value patterns and politics rather than an individual, ethical question' (p. 334). This was relatable to the injustices that surfaced from my own findings. It would be difficult and deconstructive to pinpoint individual employers or individuals marginalising the participants of my research. The reality was that challenges arose from the wider cultural devaluation of low-wage sectors - of which were often occupied by working-class women. Food bank need amongst those working was a resounding example of this.

Continuing with the dual theory or recognition and distribution, I contribute to the knowledge on food banks and social justice using 'perspective dualism '(discussed in Chapter Two) as a tool to analyse the practice and position of food banks in terms of their ability to exercise and promote justice. Food banks on a basic level fairly distribute resources amongst those who need it, and as I learnt this is more than just food but also toiletries and even 'luxury' items on occasion such as cakes and pastries. The volunteers themselves exercise both acceptance and empathy for anyone using the service, often treating individuals with a humanity and compassion that they had lacked in other interactions with institutions. Despite their concerted efforts however, using a food bank remained a 'taboo' and had both psychological and physical negative effects for those using it. This led to the undesired and damaging effects of misrecognition within the wider population. Users faced stigma and the injustice of emotional hardship that accompanies this. Ultimately although the food bank was able to assist its users with a safety net, they suffered a negative impact on their identity both within themselves and the way they think others may perceive them.

I conclude here therefore saying that the distributive effort of the food bank was insufficient while the support is convoluted by stigma and other recognitive and symbolic barriers in achieving justice. This challenges wider structural and macro-level institutions both formal and informal in the UK. Finally viewing the food bank from a wider perspective, despite the careful considerations and sign-posting efforts of the food bank volunteers, the very existence of the food bank alleviates pressure on

more dominant institutions such as work and welfare to push for beneficial reform. Food banks could therefore pose a potential barrier to more concerted progression in long term sustainable moves towards distributive justice.

Contributions to Methodology

As my own experience volunteering at the food bank developed, I came to terms with various emotions and ethical dilemmas that I experienced as a result of the location of the ethnography and the themes I was researching. Both adding to and building on feminist theory my own experience progressed the methodological practice of challenging ethics and incorporating emotions in qualitative research. In certain instances, the feelings I had were uncomfortable - sadness, helplessness, and frustration for example. The discomfort urged me to reflect on why I felt certain ways, or reacted the way that I did, and what it meant for the study. Adopting a reflexivity to research this way, firstly when researching vulnerable and marginalised populations but also when the positions of the researcher and the researched were somewhat different, allowed the methodology to acknowledge the privilege from which conclusions are drawn. In my own case this was my relative socio-economic privilege, and through understanding and acknowledging this amongst the emotions that I personally experienced I validated my own position, and I was able to represent the voices of my participants without my personal privilege or viewpoint clouding or de-prioritising their stories.

I chose to present the recollections of my own emotions as well as the methodological and ethical challenges that I faced to communicate to the reader that the reality of my participants 'lives were fragile and vulnerable, much like both my research and me as a researcher. Amongst these uncomfortable experiences were untold stories and truths, which were important to expose to both myself as a researcher and to a reader of the presented findings. What this feminist methodology thus contributes to methodological theory is the idea that by discussing and being vocal about uncomfortable, emotional, or awkward conjunctures in research we can learn more about the populations we are researching as well as about ourselves, most importantly such as in my own case where the researcher may be characteristically different to the researched population. These conversations could also help a reader to understand populations which are discussed in academic writing. In many ways I learnt why a 'hard-to-reach 'population was in fact hard to reach, and this is valuable knowledge for accessing populations with similar vulnerabilities in future research.

As a feminist researcher, these implications for methodology disturb the traditional narrative of an invisible and emotionally neutral researcher within academic work. This is to contribute to the overall motivation of empowering the women of the research and the research itself. When stories and voices

are presented with their raw discomfort and vulnerability, it is more difficult for a reader or any wider audience to dismiss the injustices embedded within them. For vulnerable populations such as food bank users, the symbolic, for example the perspectives and attitudes of others, are significant within their own experiences of injustice. When confronting injustice, academia should therefore take a lead in challenging negative stereotypes and depictions where possible, including through the methodologies that are adopted.

Limitations of the Study

Whilst I highlight the contributions and value provided by the thesis in relation to the aims of the research, it is however important to address the limitations. Whilst the ethnography was carried out over two sites which were in different geographic regions, this was insufficient to provide generalisable outputs for example amongst the themes of women, IWP, and food banks. Due to both time and financial constraints, it was impractical to engage in fieldwork for example in other regions across the UK, therefore findings from the study were predominantly the most applicable to the north of the UK. I strengthened the generalisability of the research within the north by taking time to visit and spend a short time volunteering with additional food aid providers in the northern regions, separate to the main sites of ethnography. This included a soup kitchen/food bank in County Durham where I volunteered for a couple of weeks, and an independent food bank in its very early stages of operation in Redcar and Cleveland where I visited the founders on several occasions. I however chose to keep these experiences as both informal and short term, as I did not want to be distracted or take away focus from the main fieldwork sites. These experiences did however strengthen what would ultimately become my findings and contributions.

Chapter Summary

The preceding chapter has drawn out the significant contributions that I have made within my thesis in relation to the aims, motivations, and research questions. I provide unique insight in the field of precarious work, food banks, welfare, and IWP. My contributions unlock hidden injustices that occur in modern Britain, and although they paint a dull picture of a truly difficult and unforgiving environment for women from a low socio-economic background, I also found positivity and hope in the potential outputs of the research. First, despite the dilemma posed by food banks in society, they brought optimism to the themes of the research in their ability to uplift those that they supported and demonstrated the merit that volunteering in a food bank can bring, based on my experience. Furthermore, through the chosen methodology and the way I engage with my own data collection

process, I progress theoretically in accessing hard-to-reach populations which provides opportunities and inspiration for future research.

CHAPTER ELEVEN: CONCLUSION

To summarise and conclude the thesis, I recap the unique findings that have been drawn out from the study. First, the experience of using a food bank was both physically and mentally challenging for the women who were working. Physically, not only was it sometimes difficult to fit in the collection of a parcel amidst hectic schedules and responsibilities, but the women also faced physiological and social problems such as living off the basic provisions which were given to them. Psychologically the women found it upsetting and conflicting with their identity as a worker that they still had to use a food bank. Additional to this, those who were mothers felt an additional guilt from not being able to provide food for their families without the help of charity.

In relation to IWP, the precarious labour market was the key contributor in driving workers to need food banks. Having to accept the food parcel was a degrading and humiliating consequence, especially for women persevering to make a living through work, and again heightened the detrimental physical and psychological impacts. Women engaged in precarious work often because it was all that was available, or for some all that was available which fitted in with their other responsibilities. In the cases of single mothers, of whom I found were some of the most severely impacted by both IWP and food bank usage, the take up of precarious work meant that during school holidays or if their children were ill, they were out of work and without an income. In these situations, they were even more vulnerable to poverty and needing a food bank. In-work benefits were another key reason for the women needing food banks from within work. Within Universal Credit the administration of in-work welfare seemed to be complex and time-consuming when combined with precarious work, rendering it inefficient in providing timely support.

The food banks themselves, especially the volunteers, attempted a noble balance between providing a compassionate service whilst putting all possible processes in place to avoid long term dependence on food charity. This included a necessary vigilance to the referral system but alongside a growing network of support services and partner organisations to sign post users to. As independent charities however, whilst this at times granted them with more autonomy to support their visitors it also meant that volunteers were faced with difficult decisions regarding the allocation of resources.

Having detailed the ways the thesis addresses the specific research questions in the previous chapter, I return to the more general aims and objectives of the study. To briefly summarise, the study sought to consider the stories and experiences of women who were using a food bank despite current or recent employment. Simultaneously to this I aimed to contextualise not only the role and position of

the food bank, additional to the injustices that were culminating at the food bank for the women involved. Adopting an immersive strategy of ethnography, I spent two years[10] dedicating at least three hours, often more, to getting involved in all aspects of the food bank and especially getting to know those using the food banks. This methodology meant that I had access to the women, both during informal conversations at the food bank but also in more depth during interviews. Both allowed the depth and detail of their stories to surface. These stories touched on valuable insight into the impact of other institutions such as work and their experiences with Universal Credit. Furthermore, as a volunteer I witnessed the women's ordeal of collecting their parcels, exposing the sad reality of the experience of using a food bank through my own observations. Volunteering at the food bank in the same capacity as any of the other volunteers, I learnt not only about the operations, logistics, and practicalities of the food bank but also of the profound philosophy and ethos of the food bank. They were aware and committed to the wider challenges and complexities of poverty, inclusive of IWP, and even arguably advocates in their own way of trying to prevent the exponential growth of food bank use in the future.

Having both explored and endeavoured to explain my own emotions within the findings chapter, I conclude this section with a mention of my own journey. Although during my time volunteering, I was confronted with the harsh reality of inequality in Britain as well as hearing many upsetting stories, overall, my experience was positive, uplifting, and life changing in many ways. Due to the themes of the research, my thesis does not do justice to the kindness, generosity, and warmth that I witnessed at the food bank. This was not just amongst the volunteers but also those donating, supporting, and even claiming from the food bank. As an individual, my work with the food bank was eye-opening but also demonstrated the power of kindness. As a researcher, the experience taught me patience, empathy, and perspective - all which I acknowledge with value as I embark on my own professional career as an academic. From this, the following section will consider how this thesis can be applied and developed in future professional pursuits amongst both myself and others.

Moving Forwards

Considering the contributions that the thesis presents, I further reflect on the journey of the research by tying together the findings and considering their applicability in both academia and society more generally. As I embarked on my research into food bank usage and IWP, the issues that I chose to explore seemed bleak and hopeless. The literature presented an environment where food bank usage

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[10] Although I still volunteer on a more casual basis at one of the food banks, I officially brought observations and interviews to an end after two years.

was increasing almost uncontrollably, and that women in the UK were particularly vulnerable to IWP, facing significant barriers in finding decent and meaningful work. My findings consolidated this and additionally built on the complex factors involved in the intersecting phenomena. Conversations and critical discussions around these themes and injustices seemed hushed and restricted to limited and private spaces. The damaging and deprecating media portrayals of food bank users appeared uncontested. Over the three years completing my doctorate study, the engagement with both the food bank and the users impacted by IWP allowed me to consider implications for the future. I consider how I can use my own research experiences and outputs practically, feasibly, and meaningfully for the benefit of both food bank users and anyone else afflicted by IWP.

Given the themes and issues that were prevalent throughout the thesis, perhaps the most obvious policy recommendations to come out of the findings would be the regulation of precarious work, a review of the in-work benefit system, and stricter employment regulations. These however are beyond the capability of a PhD alone, therefore the implications I explore for the future are those that I deem realistic and achievable. Therefore, within my findings and my own experience I propose areas for development and progression in both the education and awareness of injustices that are present amongst food bank users, and in the mobilisation of a movement to affect change. I achieve this through the following areas for development following on from the thesis.

1. Recommendations to Reform the Practices of Food Banks

Findings from my thesis have a practical and organisational value at the food bank, for example amongst the volunteers and the trustees who execute organisational decisions. The findings revealed intricacies about food bank use amongst women, including the role that their work circumstance played in this, as well as other factors such as benefits, debt, and domestic situations. This knowledge shared with not only the food banks where I volunteered but also with wider networks will strengthen the position of food banks and their volunteers, predominantly in their ability to provide useful and targeted support. This can include expanding their network of organisations that they sign post users to, for example to include mental health support; meet ups for single mothers; agencies providing free legal advice; and trade union awareness. Furthermore, the depth of knowledge of the stigma that women experience has already contributed to changes made at the organisational level in one of the food banks where I volunteered. *The People's Project* changed the way that they managed and rotated stock without having to write on tins or on bags, which was a significant move in reducing stigma for users and realised following discussions about my own fieldwork and findings. Other practical

adjustments communicated through the food bank teams and networks will have a key impact in reducing stigma and improving the quality of life not just of women but all food bank users.

2. Mobilising Activism

Whilst many of the findings relating to the experiences of the women were shocking and stark, the depth of the injustice that they experience that is presented within the thesis (surrounding their employment for example) can act as a leverage to mobilise both activism and societal pressure. This could contribute to awareness or even positive changes in society in diverse ways on behalf of vulnerable populations. Such an activism could be generated through various channels, firstly in academia, for example in conferences and workshops as well as publications in journals. This could also be extended to articles in the more accessible press, such as newspaper articles or online blogs. Activism, pressure, and lobbying could also be mobilised amongst activist networks for example women's groups, or through the food bank communities themselves. The goal of this ultimately is to contribute to, complement and spur movements seeking justice for marginalised and disadvantaged populations in the UK. Furthermore, if such an activism was accessible and available for the food bank users themselves, it could give them the platform to get involved. In this way it could be a catalyst for women to take a direct and active involvement in their own future.

3. Encouraging Honest Conversations about Food Banks and Food Bank Users

As I engaged in the fieldwork for my doctorate, as well as documenting experiences for the purpose of data collection, I also often shared them with my friends and family. Whilst this was somewhat cathartic, it also felt important. Much like the reflections I discussed in the findings of my own reactions, at times the experiences I shared made listeners uncomfortable or shocked - especially for those who had never experienced the poverty or deprivation that I spoke of. Many were from a similar background to me - middle class and financially comfortable. These honest recollections and conversations, I hoped would make people question food banks and consider those using them and why they needed to do so. Not only this, but through word of mouth I believe that sharing messages in this way will provide potential to extend more empathy and thought to those using food banks but also to encourage anybody to support food banks, either through donating or indeed volunteering. Although in essence I speak of micro and individual level impact, I am optimistic that if enough voices speak loud enough then they begin to be heard and considered. This thesis provides a starting point for this, and the impact could have significant implications in the future for tackling the stigma around claiming help from a food bank.

Further Research

Whilst my own research at the food bank focused on those facing IWP and women, what volunteering at the food banks over an extended period revealed was that many other groups of people also needed the food banks help, and indeed for multiple reasons. Food banks have become an unfortunate hub of working-class societal anxieties in the UK, and whilst debates persist about their position and what it means, there remains little research that explores the people using food banks and why they need to so. As my own research has exemplified, targeting demographics who find themselves needing not only food banks but also charities that have seen alarming increases in recent years could help to highlight how institutions could mobilise and adapt to provide a better quality of life and fairer society for those living in the UK. In this way this thesis opens opportunities for future research into other groups of society using food banks for example victims of domestic violence, people facing homelessness, or those claiming any type of governmental benefits. Whilst I remain under no pretence that my research will eradicate poverty, I conclude its presentation with the optimism that my own experience will open eyes and ears not only to the women of my own study but also of others using food banks here in Britain.

APPENDICES

Appendix A - List of Named Individuals in Study

Named Participant Observation Participants (Those who weren't interviewed)

Name	Gender	Group Set	Age Group	Personal Status	Work Sector	Work Status (Current or previous)	Circumstances of using the food bank
Anna	Female	Food Bank Volunteer	60 and over				
Caroline	Female	Food Bank Volunteer	45-60				
Marjorie	Female	Food Bank Volunteer	60 and over				
Carl	Male	Food Bank Volunteer	60 and over				
Rosie	Female	Food Bank Volunteer	18-30				
Cathy	Female	Food Bank User	Under 18	Single Mother	n/a	n/a	Benefits
Donna	Female	Food Bank User	18-30	Single Mother		Working part time	Domestic Violence
Carly	Female	Food Bank User	18-30	Single Mother	Admin	Waiting to work	Money spent on work uniform
Kelly	Female	Food Bank User	30-45		Nursing	Out of work	Couldn't afford a DBS to progress with applications
Emilia	Female	Food Bank User	30-45		Cleaning	Lost Job	Out of work for injury
Maria	Female	Food Bank User	30-45	Single Mother			Out of work for mental health reasons

Interview Participants

Name	Gender	Group Set	Age Group	Personal Status	Work Sector	Work Status (Current or previous)	Circumstances of using the food bank
Laura	Female	Volunteer	45-60				
Penny	Female	Volunteer	45-60				
Matthew	Male	Volunteer	45-60				
Sarah	Female	Volunteer	45-60				
Mary	Female	Volunteer	45-60				
Imogen	Female	Referral Organisation	45-60				
Maddy	Female	Referral Organisation	45-60				
Anna	Female	Referral Organisation	18-30				
Gaby	Female	Food Bank User	30-45	Single Mother	Customer Service	Full time employment	Debt
Cate	Female	Food Bank User	30-45	Single Mother	Cleaning	Multiple employment and claiming benefits	Insufficient work available
Perry	Female	Food Bank User	30-45	With Partner	Agency Work (Manual Labour)	Intermittent employment and claiming benefits	Insufficient work available
Marianne	Female	Food Bank User	30-45	Single Mother	Cleaning	Part-time employment and claiming benefits	Loss of employment through ill health
Margaret	Female	Food Bank User	45-60	Single Mother	Hospitality	Part-time employment and claiming benefits	Absence from employment
Lily	Female	Food Bank User & Volunteer	30-45	Single Mother	Retail	Full time employment	Loss of employment
Kristen	Transgender Female	Food Bank User & Volunteer	18-30	Single	Cleaning	Part-time employment and claiming benefits	Insufficient work available
Jazzy	Transgender Female	Food Bank User & Volunteer	18-30	Single	Retail	Part-time employment and claiming benefits	End of temporary employment
Angie	Female	Food Bank User & Volunteer	30-45	Single Mother	Education	Full time employment	Relationship breakdown / mental health

Appendix C - Interview Guides for Two Group Sets

QUESTIONNAIRE 1 - VOLUNTEERS

Individual
How long have you been working at the Food Bank?
What motivated you to volunteer at the Food Bank?
How do you find the work - in particular the interactions with visitors..?

Wider environmental factors
What common characteristics (if any) have you recognised amongst food bank users.
What is the role of the benefit system and the labour market in visitors need for the food bank in your opinion?
Is, and if so in what way is the food bank experience different for Women/mothers/single mothers?

Work factors
Amongst those who either are or have recently worked, in your view what has been their experience of jobs and the labour market?
Do you think that any practices or policies from jobs that visitors have had have impacted their need for the food bank? Discuss
Do you see any common themes in the types of work that visitors partake in? (industry, job structure, quality of job etc)

Impact and effects
How do you think the experience of visiting a food bank effects people?
In general, what future prospects do you envision for food bank users?
In terms of reform, what factors do you see as the most important in ensuring that food banks do not become a long term solution in the UK (state, organisation, society etc)

QUESTIONNAIRE 2 - FOOD BANK USERS

Individual
Can you tell me a bit about yourself?
What is your personal situation? Married/Children/Single etc.
What is your circumstance eg. working/claiming benefits/looking for work

Experience of Using a Food Bank
What factors contributed to you needing a food bank?
Is this your first experience of needing a food bank or a similar charity?
How was the experience for you?
Did the reality of the experience meet your expectations (good or bad). How/Why?
Were you aware of the food bank prior to using it? What was your opinion?

Work History/Situation
What is your current work situation? Sector/contracts/duration etc
What is your general work history?
How did your work situation impact your need for a food bank?
How did you feel having to access the food bank as a worker?
What do you think are the biggest challenges in the labour market at the moment?
Do you think finding and maintaining work is harder for women in your region? Why?
Do you enjoy work? What are your professional aspirations?

Thoughts for the Future
Where do you see yourself in 5 years time?
Can you imagine yourself needing a food bank again in the near future?
Did you experience deter you from using the food bank again?
What do you think the future is for food banks in the UK based on your own experience?

Appendix D - information Sheet Provided to Participants

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Participant Information Sheet

Title: In-Work Poverty in the UK: The Experience of the Working Women using Food Banks

Researcher: Cat Spellman (PhD Management)

Contact: catherine.spellman@durham.ac.uk Tel: 07469952142

Institution: Durham University Business School, Department of Management

Abstract/Aim of Study:
For this study, I want to learn about the work experiences of women from those who are visiting or have visited a food bank parallel to current or recent employment. I am interested in this particular demographic as I find it extremely concerning that women are facing such adversity to not be able to put food on the table for themselves and their families despite either a job and/or the drive and capability to work. I refine the study to women because of the struggles and barriers that women face in the labour market in current day Britain, and I want to identify if and how gender discrimination on a micro or macro level has contributed to inadequate work situations which have impacted the need for a food bank. I believe that it is important to carry out this study to highlight matters of social justice and equality in the labour market, and to give the women who find themselves facing this phenomena (and others involved) the opportunity to vocalise their experiences. I want to use their stories and experiences as a driver to highlight deprivation which is occurring as a by product of British institutions, and ultimately to propose reform, particularly in the labour market. I hope for a future not only without food banks, but also with accessible work that is able to provide sufficient quality and value to keep people away from needing to claim food charity.

Method:
The research will use the method of a semi-structured interview at the participants convenience, discretion, and comfort. The interview is intended to be relaxed and informal, and all information shared from any participant will remain anonymous throughout the process. All names of individuals and organisations will be completely anonymised and non-traceable. I am happy to share anything that is reproduced with anybody who takes part in the study, and also to adapt the procedure to accommodate anybody who is open to participating in the study.

For more information, please feel free to contact me via. the details above at any time.

</div>

Appendix E - Consent Form for Participants

CONSENT FORM

TITLE OF PROJECT: The Experience of Food Bank Users

(The participant should complete the whole of this sheet himself/herself)

	Please cross out as necessary
Have you read the Participant Information Sheet?	YES / NO
Have you had an opportunity to ask questions and to discuss the study?	YES / NO
Have you received satisfactory answers to all of your questions?	YES / NO

Have you received enough information about the study and the
Intended uses of, and access arrangements to, any data which
you supply ?YES / NO

Were you given enough time to consider whether you want to participate?	YES/NO

Who have you spoken to?   Dr/Mr/Mrs/Ms/Prof...

Do you consent to participate in the study?	YES/NO

Do you understand that you are free to withdraw from the study:

> * at any time and
> * without having to give a reason for withdrawing and
> * without any adverse result of any kind?   YES / NO

Signed ....

(NAME IN BLOCK LETTERS) ....……............................

Signature of witness ....

(NAME IN BLOCK LETTERS) ....……............................

Appendix F - Coding Strategy (Interview Transcripts)

WY - VOLUNTEERS (Group Interview)			
Speaker	**Transcript**	**Code**	**Memo**
L	No, because that was one of the, I'm not gonna say the name, but that young girl that was coming in a lot, her problem was that she was waiting to be 18 in May, and she wasn't getting the full level of benefit and the sheer amount she was having to pay out on nappies and things was just wiping out her money every week, because I did a budget with her. Erm, some people, yeah.. young women, it is a lot about the fact that they are then struggling because they are single mums, and just trying to cope with that, and the cost of everything for that. Because the benefit just doesn't cover it, does it. And, you know, just cost of gas and electric of course.	Food bank usage, money issues	Volunteers - don't just distribute food. Manager taking on a somewhat 'maternal' role to help with budget and advice.
P	To be honest I wouldn't even say that benefit is the main reason that people come in here these days, I have seen a lot of people with jobs in the last few weeks..		
L	No, some of them are, some of the younger ones I've seen in particular are on zero hour contracts, so they are like working for Uber taxis or something or they are delivering for Deliveroo or things like that where you just haven't got…	Contracts, type of work	
P	And that is kinda where I am think that alot of the people that are on, maybe they might not have masses of qualifications so therefore they are kinda thrown on to the cheap job market. And then, they find it really…and because they are doing these odd hours on zero hours contracts, you are never going to get your benefits sorted because they have to reassess it virtually on a weekly basis, and I don't think that the DWP are in a position to be on top of that so there is always going to be delays.	Qualifications, Benefits	Disconnect between work and benefit
L	And if it is not flexible enough to cope with that… I mean and the other example of like, just from today, people that were in today… one was a builder by trade and the work just dried up and the other one that has been in was an electrician. And they are not trades that you would think would be without work. But they are saying that the recession is hitting them because people aren't having work done. And, you know, we kinda know that's true for ourselves don't we.	Types of work, Austerity	

Within the transcript, I highlighted in red certain sections and included the corresponding code in a separate column to be able to efficiently refer back to them in ongoing analysis.

The text from the transcript above is highlighted and coded in the same way as the rest of the data, however has been further highlighted in bold to demonstrate where the data is relevant to my target demographic - women in recent or current employment using the food bank.

A column for memos during the data analysis allowed me to continuously note down reflections as the process was underway, of which I was later able to revisit.
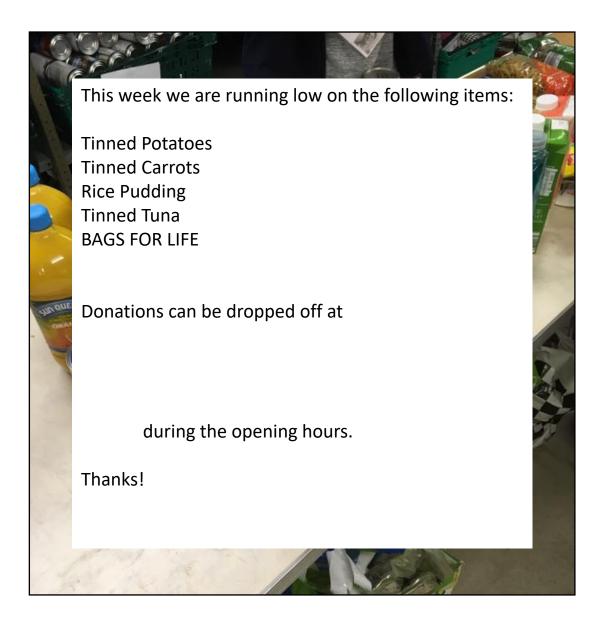
Appendix G - Coding Strategy (Field Notes)

WY FIELD NOTES			
Date	**Transcript**	**Code**	**Memo**
20.3.2018	I was greeted at the FB today with good news that Rosie had finally found a permanent job which gave her more hours and a bit more stability. She had completed her maths course and also a day course in retail and had secured a position at Home Bargains which gave her 16 hours a week. She seemed really happy about it and excited to start, although mentioned that she still wanted to keep volunteering at the FB if she could work her hours around it. She had had a busy weekend working at the pub, despite having had arrived a bit late and her manager had been a bit annoyed with her. Having had a few referrals come through for the day, we started getting the food parcels ready for those which were due in that day. Of these one was a request for a vegetarian pack, which just had a few alterations and vegetarian alternatives for the meat products. As the pack was mainly just staple items such as cans of soup and pasta it was not too difficult to change them to accommodate this. Some of the volunteers had done a collection at the weekend at Dewsbury supermarket. They said that due to the weather it had been extremely cold and also they had not managed to collect much in the way of foodstuffs but had possibly made a decent amount of money to go towards money to re-stock the shelves with things that they needed. It was also very humbling to see how much time the volunteers took out of their own lives to make efforts for the FB such as standing in a cold supermarket on a Saturday yet never seemed to complain about it. The team always made the most of the time in the FB by trying to have a nice time together and they really all seemed to be good friends and always worked to help each other out and make each others lives as easy as possible. Most of the volunteers were older, and one gentleman was even quite ill, having complained of chest infection yet always made an effort to give as much time as he could to volunteering at the FB. Finishing up the backlog of the referrals, again there was a variety of low income and benefit related referrals coming from the usual sources as well as schools and churches. It still surprised me to see that in some cases visitors were coming to the FB for the 18th or 19th time, due to problems mainly with benefits not being paid or occurring problems with sanctions and inability to receive their benefits. Also in a lot of cases by the time they had received their benefits the money had already been paid out on rent and bills, so it seemed to a vicious cycle of debt whereby the FB was still needed in order to be able to get food and basic toiletries. A few more cases arose of card and bank account frauds where banks or CAB were inefficient in helping people as and when fraudulent activity had happened on their account, and with no other back up they were left without money for food. A couple came in having been referred that day from their Vicar, with two small children. **The father had been doing a couple of informal driving jobs and the mother had had to give up her job because due to the irregularity of her partners job they were left without childcare however without two incomes they were struggling to make enough money for childcare such as nappies and baby products therefore had been referred to the FB for help.** They both looked extremely young - possibly under 20.	Volunteer role and attitude, food bank usage, loss of employment, family structure, money issues, benefits, disability, donations.	Precarious job situations for the volunteers themselves - not just the visitors. Gendered dynamics - female first to give up her job in a partnership

Appendix H - First and Second Order Codes into Overarching Themes

First Order Coding	Second Order Coding		Overarching Themes
Volunteer role and attitude			
Food bank interventions			
Operations and Management	The Food Bank		
Relationship with partners			Food Banks in the UK
Donations and Stock			
Food banks in society			
Demographics			
Food Bank Usage			
Emotions and Trauma	Food Bank Visitors		
Food Bank exploitation			
Deprivation			
Money Issues		The Experience of In-Work-Poverty	
Travel and practicalities			
Access to technology			
Disability	Situation of individuals		
Wellbeing and health			
Family/Children/ Personal Relationships			
Housing			
Adverse Circumstances			
Institutional Processes			
Benefits	Insitutions		Social Justice and Gender Equality in the UK
Access to institutions			
Community Support			
Qualifications			
Motivation to work			
Finding and applying for work			
Career prospects and progression			
Child care	Individual experience of work	The role of institutions in individual experience of In-Work-Poverty	
Work hours and flexibility			
Pay			
Types of work			
Loss of employment			
Contracts			
Cost cutting in industry			
Employment rights			
Recruitment practice	The role of Organisations		
Progression and stability			
Work discrimination			
Employment regulation			
Austerity		Wider causes and consequences In-Work-Poverty and Food Banks	
Country instability	Wider societal impact		
Wider attitudes to unemployment			
Implications of poverty and IWP			

This week we are running low on the following items:

Tinned Potatoes
Tinned Carrots
Rice Pudding
Tinned Tuna
BAGS FOR LIFE

Donations can be dropped off at

during the opening hours.
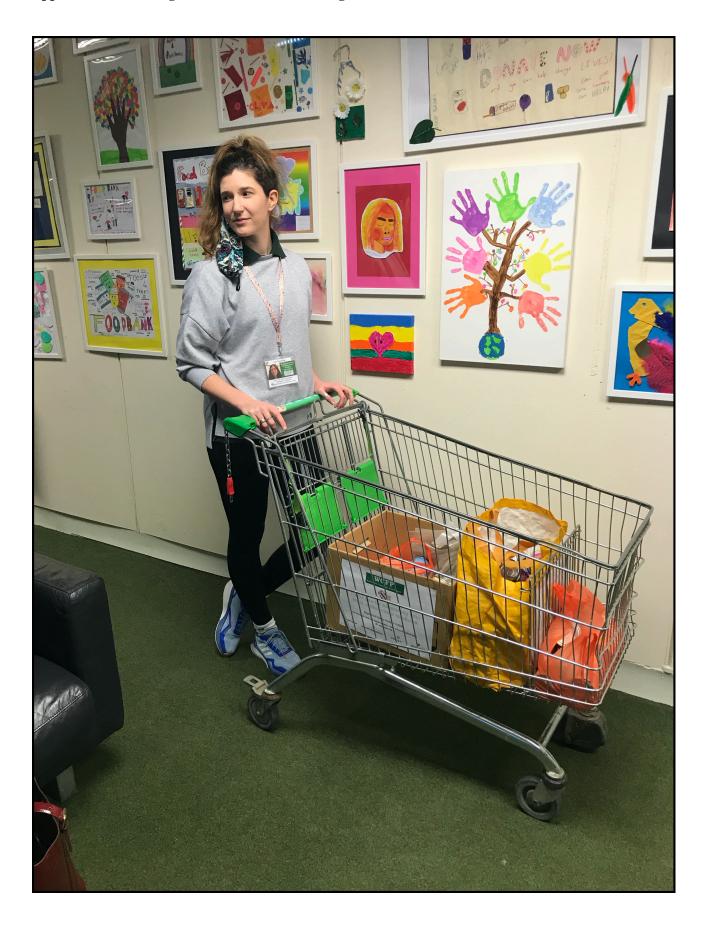
Thanks!

Appendix J - Example of a Referral Form

Washington Community Food Project   **EMERGENCY FOOD PARCEL REFERRAL**

1.   **Who is the emergency food parcel for?**

Name..

Address...

Post Code...   Telephone...

Housing status: □ Gentoo Tenant   □ Private Tenant   □ Owner Occupier   □ Homeless

2. What are your main reasons for needing emergency support? *(Please mark all that apply.)*

□ Bereavement   □ One off loss or expenditure   □ Sanctioned benefit

□ Sickness   □ Homelessness   □ Delay in benefit

□ Delay in wages   □ School holidays   □ Change from one benefit to another

□ Family changes   □ Debt   □ Fleeing domestic violence

□ Working fewer hours □ Loan shark   □ Unemployed and no benefit yet

□ Other *(Please give details.)*

....

3. Do you think this is a long term need?
How many weeks does the referral agency believe support be required for? ....   *See Repeat parcel note.*

4. How many people is the food parcel for? ...... *(Please provide age breakdown below.)*

Under 2 years	3 – 10 years	11 – 17years	
18 – 25 years	26 – 50 years	50 – 69 years	
70+ years		**TOTAL**	

5. Who is making this referral?

Name...   Organisation...

Agency Signature..   Date...................................

Complete below only if not Gentoo, WWIN, CAB, Victoria Road Health Centre or the Jobcentre:

Address...

Telephone...   or Email...

I have approached Washington Community Food Project for assistance and hereby give consent to the disclosure of any information confidential or otherwise regarding my/our affairs, which they may require.

This is a request made within the provisions contained within Section 34(b) of the Data Protection Act 1984.

Signature upon receipt of parcel..   Date ....

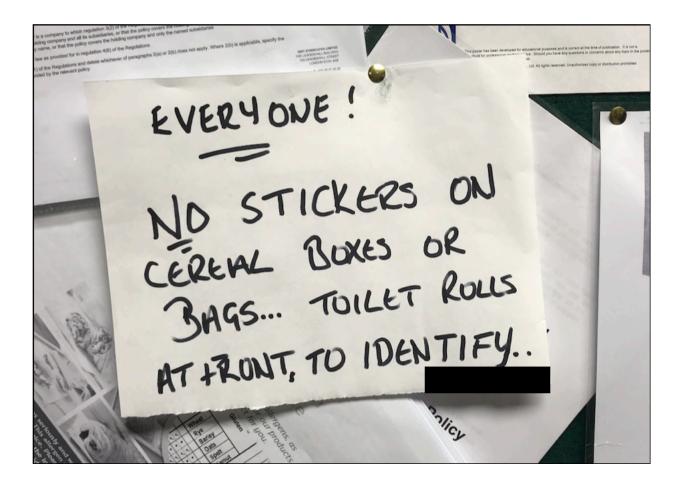**Appendix K - Working as a Volunteer - Collecting Donations from the Public**

Appendix L - Left-over Food from Greggs and Marks and Spencers to be Distributed

Appendix M - Fixed List to Include in a Standard Food Parcel for One Person

ONE PERSON

CEREAL OR PORRIDGE	1
POTATOES	1
PEAS	1
CARROTS	1
TOMATOES	1
OTHER VEG	1
SOUP	2
BEANS	1
TINNED SPAGHETTI	1
TINNED MEAT (HOT DOGS ETC)	1
RICE PUDDING	1
CUSTARD	1
TINNED FRUIT	1
DRIED PASTA, SPAGHETTI OR RICE	1
PASTA OR CURRY SAUCE	1
BISCUITS	1
TEA, COFFEE OR HOT CHOC	1 (NO TEA)
PKT PASTA N SAUCE	1
PKT NOODLES	1
PKT RICE	1
~~SUGAR~~	~~500gm~~
CORNED BEEF OR HAM ETC	1
FISH	1
MILK	1
TOILET ROLL **SOAP.**	1
BREAD	1

Appendix N - Notes in the Food Bank to Prevent Bags and Parcels Being Marked
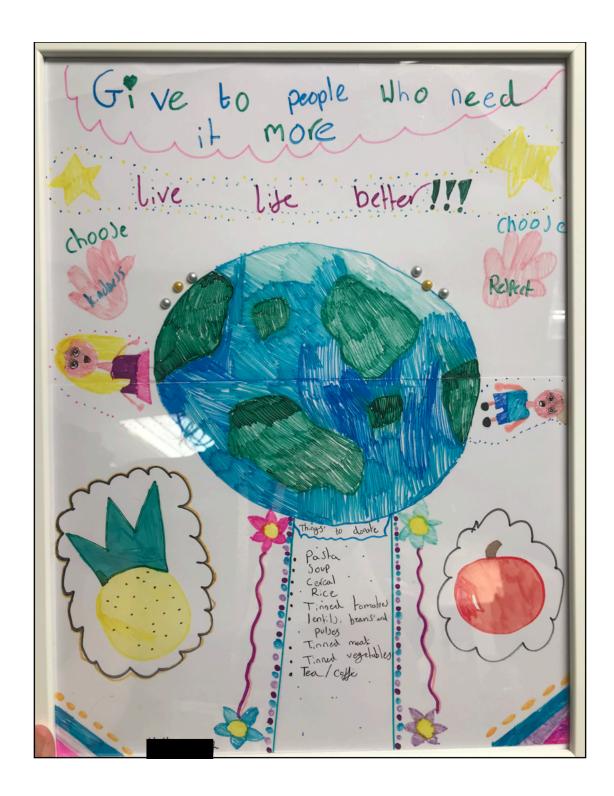
2. ▉▉▉ **Core Values**

▉▉▉ is committed to providing a safe environment for all volunteers and for all adults and children who access our services.

▉▉▉ will not discriminate against anyone using our services due to their age, gender, disability, religion, ethnicity or sexual orientation.

▉▉▉ will be supportive and non-judgemental at all times to all those accessing our services.

▉▉▉ will provide emergency food parcels for those people who are facing times of hardship or crisis.

▉▉▉ signpost people to other appropriate services if required e.g: financial and debt advice, counselling.

▉▉▉ expects all volunteers and individuals using the service should conduct themselves in such a way that they do not cause offence to any other person.

Any abuse of power or privilege whether by volunteers, visitors or people using our services should be dealt with promptly.
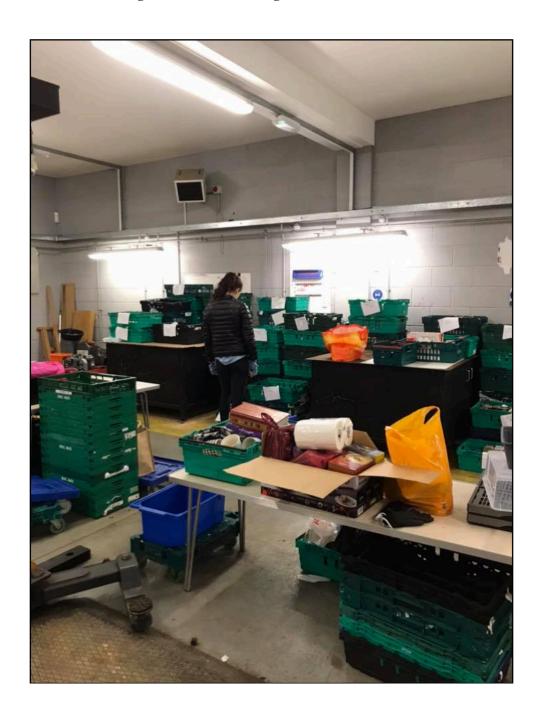
Appendix P - Leaflet provided in the Food Bank about Supporting Services

Appendix Q - Illustrations Provided to the Food Bank from Local Schools

Appendix R - Inter-rim Storage Location in a Garage

Appendix S - Opening Day at *The People's Project* New Location

Appendix T - Fundraising Day

Appendix U - Redistributing Food on Christmas Eve

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