Exploring the Experiences of Frontline Food Security Service Providers

in Thunder Bay, Ontario

A Thesis Submitted to the Department of Psychology in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements

for a Degree of Master of Arts in Clinical Psychology

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Abstract

In Canada, staggering rates of household food insecurity are emblematic of broader issues, such as systemic discrimination, poverty, and a global, capitalist food system. The means to address food insecurity are contested within the nation. For example, community-based programs (e.g., food banks), continue to be common, despite concerns that they may induce shame and guilt in those who access them and fail to address the root causes of the issue. Despite this, some authors have argued that such spaces may offer transformational potential to bring community members together in-common across class divides *in the meantime*. Limited research exists on the experiences of frontline food security service providers, and more specifically on how they conceptualize their work. In this thesis, semi-structured interviews and photovoice were used, following an interpretive phenomenological design. Specifically, I sought to explore how frontline food security service providers in Thunder Bay experienced their work, and the interactions between their intrapsychic factors and processes, organizational practices and their visions for the future of their work. Three superordinate themes emerged, demonstrating that participants were thinking about broad issues (e.g., poverty, racism), found tensions in the role of lived experience (e.g., as both a motivation to come to the work and a risk factor for burnout), and saw their role as care work underscored by shared values. The findings also highlight the importance of an interactional approach, exploring how an individual's early life experiences, values and sense of self, alongside organizational factors and others in the field, worked in concert to create their experience. While this work does not intend to make broad claims about the experience of all food security service providers, it highlights some of the voices in Thunder Bay, Ontario, and the opportunities they have in transforming food access to be more just and equitable for all.

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Lastly, I am incredibly lucky to have been surrounded by a wonderful community here in Thunder Bay and at home in Southern Ontario. To my dear Mum, who thought every idea I had in developing my thesis topic was "very interesting and important" and who acted as an unofficial advisor through the last few months, thank you. And to my beloved partner, other family members, and friends, whose calls, texts, deliveries of food and brainstorming of ideas have meant the world to me.

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in Thunder Bay, Ontario

Prominent critical scholars have referred to our mainstream food systems as corporate, global, industrialized and capitalist in nature (De Schutter, 2017; Friedman, 2017; Holt-Giménez, 2017; Sumner, 2017). While such systems have made significant achievements in the last few decades in their ability to provide plentiful amounts of food to some areas of the world, they are also increasingly recognized as being unsustainable and cause for growing public health concern (De Schutter, 2017; IPES-Food, 2017; Niles et al., 2017). The crises within our food system are wide ranging; from soil degradation and agrarian distress to emptying fisheries and prolific diet-related diseases (De Schutter, 2017; IPES-Food, 2017; Jones-Bitton et al., 2019; Niles et al., 2017; Wiebe, 2017; Sundar, 2017). The impacts of the predominant food systems on human health, planetary health and economic inequity are recognized around the globe. Indeed, such impacts are also felt in wealthy nations.

One component of a capitalist food system is such that profits are regarded as the ultimate aim, as opposed to feeding the people (De Schutter, 2017; Weis, 2017). Such a system is evident when considering the prevalence of food insecurity in Canada, where rates continue to rise annually (Statistics Canada, 2020; Statistics Canada, n.d.). Many community groups across the country work to aid community members facing food insecurity through programs and services such as free meal programs, food banks or pantries, community kitchens, and vouchers for fruits and vegetables. Such programs remain prevalent despite criticisms that they may slow further government action on the issue (Riches, 2002). There is also evidence that these spaces may continue to induce shame for community members who access them (e.g., see scoping review by Middleton et al., 2018). Some scholars, however, have recently described how staff in these spaces

may be working to both address immediate needs and also structural factors associated with poverty and disenfranchisement (e.g., Williams et al., 2016). Also, authors Cloke and colleagues (2016) have written about their observation that food banks may offer a potentially transformative space *in the meantime*, where people have a rare opportunity to be in-common across class divides before more massive societal changes to end poverty and exploitation take place.

In speaking with key informants in the community, including my committee member Dr. Levkoe, I became concerned about rates of burnout in food security service staff in Thunder Bay. Beginning to read some of the literature on service providers in this field, coupled with my own experiences as a "helper", had me begin to question how staff may cope with being caught at the intersection of complex and interdependent challenges (e.g., corporate food systems, colonial legacies, racism); overwhelming individual need at the community-level and abroad; insufficient action taken by those in positions of power; and spaces where caring can be constrained and insufficient, directed by organizations with limited means. At the same time, such staff also seemed to have an incredible opportunity, considering the power food has to connect us to culture, tradition, and land, and which provides us with essential nourishment, medicine and comfort. I began to question, how do food security service providers navigate such interrelated and complex challenges, and how do they create meaning or conceptualize their actions?

In general, there is a paucity of academic literature which investigates the psychological experiences of food security service providers. Only one such study could be found that was conducted in Canada (Rondeau et al., 2020). Also, other than ethnographic studies, I could not find any published papers, internationally, which incorporated a participatory methodology. Thus, it was my hope to add to the effort of qualitative scholarship, in facilitating the sharing of perspectives of frontline food security service providers using a participatory approach. To

accomplish this, I used photo-elicitation and semi-structured interviews to investigate two research questions: (1) how do frontline food security service providers in Thunder Bay experience their work; and, (2) what are the interactions between their intrapsychic factors and processes (e.g., motivations, values, wellbeing), organizational practices and their visions for the future of their work? Given the exploratory nature of the research question, an interpretive phenomenological design was chosen, which allowed participants to inform more specific psychological variables of interest.

To begin this thesis, I will first describe the importance of reflexivity in research and my own position's influence on this project. This is followed by a literature review, which will describe in more detail the issue of food insecurity and some of the community-based means to address it. I will then review the literature on volunteer and paid staff in this field and some of the important psychological and contextual factors influencing this work, namely motivation, beliefs, values and organizational policies. This is followed by the methods, results and discussion sections of this novel research study. Finally, I conclude with some of the implications and possible future directions based on the conclusions that were derived from its findings.

Reflexivity in the Current Project

Reflexivity, or "thoughtful conscious self-awareness" (Finlay, 2002, p. 532), offers a method for researchers to acknowledge and address the subjectivity inherent in research, and use it as an opportunity to strengthen their trustworthiness and the integrity of their results (Finlay, 2002). A reflexive approach engages a researcher to examine how their biases, values and life experiences interact with their research contribution at all stages of the project (e.g., topic selection, formation of the research question, data collection, etc.) (Creswell & Poth, 2017; Finlay, 2002). This then allows others to understand with more clarity how it is that a project came to be

and the interpretations the researcher came to (Sword, 1999). One is cautioned, however, to remain focused primarily on the participant, and to use reflexivity to strengthen the nuances and lens as opposed to losing sight of the phenomenon altogether (Finlay, 2002). Thus, a balance is required.

While reflexivity is used in many thought traditions (e.g., social constructionism, psychodynamic), it is highly emphasized in interpretive phenomenological analysis and other phenomenologies (Finlay, 2002; Pietkiewicz & Smith, 2014). Based on select readings on this topic, cited above, I engaged in writing reflexive passages throughout the research process. Some are included in the thesis, for example, 'Positioning Myself' which was written reflexively during my topic selection and creation of the question, in numerous iterations. Other deliberate exercises were included particularly in the recruitment and analysis stage, and are referenced there. My overarching goal, however, was to have reflexivity infused throughout this thesis, both in its method and throughout the written document.

Positioning Myself in this Work

Meanings are seen to be negotiated between researcher and researched within a particular social context so that another researcher in a different relationship will unfold a different story. Research is thus regarded as a joint product of the participants, the researcher, and their relationship: It is co-constituted. (Finlay, 2002, p. 531)

Through a review of the literature, I became interested in the psychological processes which may underlie emancipatory or oppressive experiences of food aid, and what may contribute to a more just and equitable experience for all. With this overarching goal, this study will focus specifically on staff perspectives. This is due in part because I heard from several key community members that wellbeing and burnout amongst staff in this sector in Thunder Bay is cause for concern and for research attention. I have also been in multiple roles as a social service provider,

and thus respond to this call to action both as an outsider who is new to Thunder Bay, while also bringing a certain insider perspective.

I identify as a white-settler, able-bodied, cisgender woman, who is in an ongoing process of learning and reflecting on my own privileges within the systems in which we live. My family hails largely from England and Scotland, while a significant proportion of ancestors immigrated to North America as early as the 1700's. I was raised in London, Ontario, and completed my undergraduate degree in Ottawa. I began my journey in International Development and Women's Studies, and later completed my Bachelor degree in Psychology. During my teens and twenties, I spent significant chunks of time living in Thailand, India, Sri Lanka and Nepal, often staying in monasteries or meditation centers learning about Eastern philosophy and meditation. Buddhist ethics have played a significant role in my moral education and undoubtedly guide my sense of right and wrong in research and activism. I also participated deeply in volunteer and development projects in Thailand, learning to speak Thai and living with local families for one year. While in Ottawa, my development work manifested into psychoeducational workshops and support groups for many different populations. I have worked as a volunteer and professional staff for a variety of organizations such as Best Buddies Canada, The Children's Hospital of Eastern Ontario and the Child Development Institute.

In feeling like a "helper" all my life, I am deeply interested in such roles, how we conceptualize ourselves and others in them, and how this interacts with our wellbeing. While it will be important to understand multiple stakeholder experiences in Thunder Bay (e.g., those experiencing food insecurity, frontline staff, donors, management), I hope that I may contribute one piece toward this community's conversation on what is working and not working in food

access services, the impacts this has on those involved, and how we might collectively build the system we want to see.

Literature Review

Food Security

Defined by the U.N. Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) at the 1996 World Food Summit, "food security exists when all people, at all times, have physical and economic access to sufficient safe and nutritious food that meets their dietary needs and food preferences for an active and healthy life" (EC-FAO, 2008, p.1). While food insecurity, commonly referred to as hunger, is defined as "the inability to acquire or consume an adequate diet quality or sufficient quantity of food in socially acceptable ways, or the uncertainty that one will be able to do so" (Government of Canada, 2020).

Levels of food insecurity in Canada are measured predominantly through the Canadian Community Health Survey (CCHS), administered by Statistics Canada. The CCHS has included the Household Food Security Survey Module (HFSSM) since 2004 to assess a households' experience of food insecurity in the previous 12 months. The HFSSM consists of 18 items which ask respondents if they have experienced such conditions as worrying about not having enough food, modifying food intake or skipping meals, hunger, or going a full day without eating (Tarasuk, Mitchell & Dachner, 2014). Statistics Canada categorizes households into three categories based on their responses on the HFSSM:

1. Food secure: there was no (or only one) indication of difficulty with access to food because of inadequate income.

2. Moderately food insecure: the quality and/or quantity of food consumed were inadequate.

3. Severely food insecure: respondents indicated that they reduced their food intake and/or experienced disrupted eating patterns (Statistics Canada, 2018, Defining Food Insecurity section).

Results from the HFSSM indicate that food insecurity is an issue which impacts millions of Canadians and that the numbers are growing. Statistics Canada reported 7.7% of households were food insecure (moderate or severe) in 2007-2008, 8.3% in 2011-2012, and 8.8% in 2017-2018 (Statistics Canada, 2020; Statistics Canada, n.d.). Researchers at the University of Toronto, however, argue that such figures are conservative estimates of the true prevalence of food insecurity. In their analyses, Tarasuk et al. (2014) differentiate between food secure households who endorse zero items on the HFSSM and those who endorse one item, a *marginal food insecurity* category. Their rationale comes from literature indicating that this group is more likely to experience a poor quality of life than those who do not endorse any items (Coleman-Jensen, 2010; Tarasuk et al., 2014). In including those who are marginally food insecure, the latest available statistics (from 2011-2012) indicated that 12.6%, or one in eight households, described some level of food insecurity. This amounts to over 4,000,000 Canadians, and the highest number on record to date (Tarasuk et al., 2014). While the CCHS is administered to 600,000 Canadians per cycle, it also excludes multiple vulnerable populations such as those living on First Nations reserves and those without a fixed address, thus further underestimating the actual prevalence of food insecurity (Dachner & Tarasuk, 2017).

Studies indicate that food insecurity has considerable impacts on an individual's health and wellbeing, and represents a significant public health concern (Tarasuk et al., 2014; Ramsey et al., 2011; Seligman et al., 2010; Stuff et al., 2004). Such impacts are disproportionately experienced in different areas and by different populations. For example, studies consistently find that Indigenous

peoples experience much higher rates of food insecurity (FNIGC, 2018; Willows et al., 2011), which is further exacerbated in northern and remote communities. For example, a 2007-2008 report found that Inuit people experienced rates of food insecurity at 68% in Nunavut (Rosol et al., 2011), representing the highest documented rates of food insecurity of any Indigenous population in the developed world (De Schutter, 2012).

As it is currently quantified in Canada, food insecurity is largely a measure of financial constraint; however, this may not capture the full range of experiences. For the majority of individuals and households food poverty demonstrates a level of material deprivation which goes beyond food (Dachner & Tarasuk, 2017; Tarasuk et al., 2014). While the causes of food insecurity for Indigenous communities may include poverty, they are also multiple and complex, as they are for other groups residing in Canada. Unlike white settlers to the region, however, Indigenous peoples continue to experience the most detrimental impacts of historic and ongoing colonial expansion, environmental dispossession, genocide, violence, and systemic racism (Council of Canadian Academies, 2014; TRC, 2015a; Robin, Dennis, Hart, 2020). Food insecurity in some of these communities relates not only to income, but also to a loss of skills in growing and harvesting traditional or "country" foods, concerns over contamination of the sources of local foods, and high-cost, low nutrient-based foods available for purchase (Stroink & Nelson, 2012). Traditional food represents a critical aspect of health and wellbeing for many Indigenous peoples, and even within urban areas or for individuals where income may not be a concern, significant barriers can exist in accessing it and in culturally valued practices of reciprocity. Thus, it has been argued that cultural food security should also be considered as one domain of food security (Power, 2008).

Efforts to Address Food Insecurity

In response to the economic recession of the early 1980's, as income inequality grew, the first food banks opened in Canada to address household food insecurity. These were modeled after similar initiatives in the US (Dachner & Tarasuk, 2017; Friedmann, 2017). While such programs were being established by communities and nongovernmental organizations, sweeping reforms to social policy resulted in a decrease to the social safety net at provincial and federal levels (Dachner & Tarasuk, 2017). Given the crumbling welfare state, Canadian food banks, initially envisioned as short term "emergency" services during an economic depression, have been relied on with increasing frequency in the decades since they opened (Riches, 2002). The number of visits has grown from 378,000 nationally in March of 1989, when statistics were first reported by the Canadian Association of Food Banks, to an astounding 1,084,386 visits in March of 2019 (Dachner & Tarasuk, 2017; Food Banks Canada, 2019).

While demand continues to grow, food banks are criticized for providing a band-aid solution which does not address the root causes of the inequities of a capitalist system, and reifying food poverty as a problem which should be addressed through charity rather than policy (Riches, 2002). Indeed, Food Banks Canada themselves are advocates for significant, systemic changes to food systems and wealth redistribution, for example stating: "While food banks are finding new and innovative ways to provide healthy, nutritious food and a wide variety of services to support those they serve, only long-term policy solutions can address the root causes of hunger in Canada" (Food Banks Canada, 2019, Recommendations section). While calls to action which seek to address the underlying causes of food insecurity remain, emergency food aid initiatives such as food banks, soup kitchens, food pantries and other community-based programs continue to provide services to those in need now.

Community efforts to address food insecurity rely on staff. While recent qualitative research has largely reported that those accessing emergency food services have found volunteers to be friendly and supportive, Middleton et al. (2018) found in their international scoping review that food-access service users continue to report a strong sense of felt stigma (e.g., one's own perception of stigma regarding one's need to access services, and fear of being discriminated against for it). They also reported that the way services are often offered can have a negative impact on clients' self-esteem, dignity, and identity.

There are many different terms used in the literature to reference this group of staff. Often, the term is specific to the nature of the organization, for example *food bank worker, soup kitchen volunteer, volunteers in food rescue organizations*. In this project, I was interested in speaking with frontline providers who spanned different types of organizations engaging in food aid work, however. Thus, the terms food security service provider or food access service provider are used to describe those more generally working in this area in this thesis. The following section begins to introduce the literature involving food security service providers, alongside the psychological variables of motivation, beliefs, and values.

Motivation

Psychological Literature on Motivation

Motivations are psychological constructs which include the rationale for behaviours or actions taken by an individual, and may explain why and how one responds in a particular situation (Eccles & Wigfield, 2002; Kanfer et al., 2017; Mousa & Freeland-Graves, 2017). In general, the construct of motivation represents a massive scholarly tradition investigating what factors underlie changes in initiation, direction, intensity and persistence of voluntary action. While early work (e.g., Sigmund Freud and William James) focused primarily on the biological bases of motivation,

such as drives and instincts, modern theorists have studied how beliefs, values and goals relate to purposive action (Eccles & Wigfield, 2002; Kanfer et al., 2017). Given this breadth of scope, the study of motivation is understood to represent investigation into multiple and interrelated constructs. This field has been criticized for lacking in conceptual clarity and cohesion. In order to address this issue, there have been several attempts to provide metaframeworks to integrate and organize various theories of motivation (e.g., Ford, 1992; Kanfer et al., 2017).

In the realm of motivation related to work behaviour specifically, Kanfer and colleagues (2017) developed a meta-framework. Here the authors distinguish between three broad categories: content-based, context-based, and process-based approaches. Content-based theories include both realms of normative and trait-based investigations. Self-determination theory by Deci, Ryan and colleagues (1985), is one example of a leading approach to understanding universal motivations and a content-based theory. It states that workers' performance is impacted by the intrinsic motivation to fulfill one or more of three basic needs: autonomy, competence and relatedness. This theory has been applied to previous qualitative work demonstrating that through meeting these psychological needs the experience of volunteering in a food bank led to a sense of increased psychological wellbeing in participants (Armour & Barton, 2019).

In terms of context-based approaches, Kanfer et al. (2017) include theories which relate to how the environment provides or constricts opportunities for motive satisfaction. These approaches have highlighted specific features of the work environment which promote certain behaviours and have led the scientific movement of workplace interventions to enhance performance. Hackman and Oldham's (1975,1976) Job Characteristics Theory is a critical example of one such theory that has sparked significant research in organizational and industrial (I/O) psychology. Job Characteristics Theory specified five features of work (skill variety, task identity,

task significance, autonomy, and feedback) and three key psychological processes through which they operate (meaningfulness of work, experienced responsibility, and knowledge of results). While this theory acknowledged the moderating influence of individual differences, it posited that optimizing job features created environments in which performance at work became internally rewarding for most workers, perpetuating cycles of positive motivation and self-generated rewards (Hackman & Oldham, 1976).

Meta-analytic work by Humphrey et al. (2007) found support for Hackman and Oldman's model, which can be further understood with Self-Determination Theory (Deci & Ryan, 2000). Specifically, they reported strong correlational support for the positive influence of the five job characteristics on measures of job satisfaction, growth satisfaction, internal work motivation, job performance and absenteeism (negatively related in this case). This was found by synthesizing the results of 259 work design studies. Humphrey et al. (2007) also found that work conditions predicted a unique amount of variance in stress, larger than the five motivational factors. In terms of the pathways which may mediate these relationships, Humphrey et al. (2007) found that experiencing meaning at work added the greatest level of mediation to the model. In contextualizing this finding, Humphrey et al. (2007) drew on the work of Deci and Ryan (2000), which has shown that the basic need of autonomy is critical in creating self-determination and meaning. Such factors also have important implications for wellbeing.

A recent meta-analysis found that self-rated meaningful work predicted work engagement, job satisfaction and commitment, which subsequently predicted performance, organizational citizenship behaviours and withdrawal intentions. The authors concluded: "people with meaningful work *feel* better and work *better*" (Allan et al., 2019, p.514). Experiencing meaning more generally has been found to promote happiness and wellbeing (Zika & Chamberlin, 1992).

Overall, these meta-analyses and related studies highlight the applicability of multiple theories of motivation to understanding the phenomenon of what relates to positive outcomes at work and overall wellbeing of staff. These may include theories which focus on the individual themselves (content-based, e.g., self-determination theory) or those related to factors within their environment (context-based, e.g., job characteristics theory), and how such frameworks have been used together in the literature in order to elucidate the interactional effects of person and environment, and how these interactions impact important outcomes (Allan et al., 2019; Humphrey et al., 2007).

In Food Security Services: Quantitative Contributions

Three quantitative studies were found in the literature on food security service providers and all explored their motivations for involvement. These were conducted in Portugal (Agostinho & Paço, 2012), the U.S. (Mousa and Freeland-Graves, 2017), and Canada (Rondeau et al., 2020). There are several significant themes which emerged from these works. In all three studies, it was found that endorsing humanitarian values and the desire to help others was listed as the primary motivation for being involved in food security services (Agostinho & Paço, 2012; Mousa & Freeland-Graves, 2017; Rondeau et al., 2020). In both studies in North America, it was also evident that investing time was inspired by congruent values related specifically to the mandate of the organization. In other words, participants were motivated given their interest in food insecurity or food systems challenges (e.g., food waste) (Mousa & Freeland-Graves, 2017; Rondeau et al., 2020). The motivations of skill development (i.e., enhancement) and promise of fostering increased social connections was also seen as being important in all studies (Agostinho and Paço, 2012; Mousa & Freeland-Graves, 2017; Rondeau et al., 2020). There have also been qualitative

studies on the experiences of food security service providers that asked participants about their

motivations for this kind of work. This is explored in next.

In Food Security Services: Qualitative Explorations of Motivation

Two qualitative studies also explored motivation as a central variable of interest. Similar to

the quantitative studies, it was found that helping others was described as a primary motivation.

These were conducted in Germany and the U.S. (Horvath, 2018; Rombach, Kang & Bitsch, 2018).

In interviews with a small sample of German food bank volunteers (n = 5), Rombach, Kang and

Bitsch (2018) found that the principal motives for volunteering were: serving the community,

being part of a social network, and continuing to be part of the workforce. These mirror the

quantitative findings previously reviewed, in which participants endorsed altruistic intentions, as

well as motives of increasing their social networks and career development (Agostinho & Paço,

2012; Mousa & Freeland-Graves, 2017; Rondeau et al., 2020).

In an ethnographic study, Horvath (2018) found that a desire to help others was discussed

as the primary motivation to volunteer in a mobile soup kitchen, but the author also provided

nuanced accounts which complicated this intention. Horvath's sample consisted primarily of long-

term volunteers, who described similar narratives of their own backgrounds of affluence and

privilege. Such individuals felt guilty about their respective jobs' contributions to society and/or

the state of homelessness in their community. As a way to mitigate these negative feelings, they

became involved in addressing food insecurity through the mobile soup kitchen. Such a detailed

account of the experiences of service providers helps to elucidate the nuances in motivation and

intention, further enhancing our understanding of altruism as perhaps also being combined with

self-focused goals. Behaviour which is seemingly prosocial, and likely spurred by intentions to

help and serve the community, or a desire to build social networks, can also be intertwined with

more complex and convoluted motives and feelings (e.g., guilt, shame, anxiety reduction).

All of this work regarding motivations (quantitative and qualitative) investigated volunteer

motivations. While some participants were described as having full time, permanent positions, it is

not clear if the findings are relevant to paid staff as well. Alongside motivations, two other

important psychological processes underlying involvement in food insecurity initiatives are beliefs

and values.

Beliefs and Values

The reviewed studies on food security service providers highlighted their motivations as

being linked to direct support for a specific cause, their personal connection to it, and their values

(Agostinho and Paço, 2012; Horvath, 2018; Mousa & Freeland-Graves, 2017; Rondeau et al.,

2020). Values are understood to be "desirable, trans-situational goals that vary in importance as

guiding principles in people's lives" according to the foundational theory of basic values by

Schwartz and colleagues (Ros et al., 1999, p. 51). Several parts of this definition are noteworthy.

First, the *trans-situational* component denotes that values are enduring and can be seen across

situations. Second, despite this, what goals individuals seek to work towards are still understood as

changing, occurring in interaction with the specific context and needs of the individual at that time.

Lastly, that values are desirable goals and guiding principles links them directly to the concept of

motivation. Indeed, other scholars have noted that values are the enduring, desirable end states,

while motivations are the means of goal achievement (Kesberg & Keller, 2018; van Riper et al.,

2020).

Beliefs are defined for the purposes of this paper as "primary convictions about events,

causes, agency, and objects that subjects use and accept as veridical" (Connors & Halligan, 2015,

p. 2). Beliefs can be conscious or unconscious. This does not mean that they are inaccessible, but may remain outside of immediate awareness (Connors & Halligan, 2015). In the context of the proposed study, beliefs of interest are the mental convictions that service providers hold, for example, regarding the nature of food insecurity, its causes, who experiences it and why.

In Food Security Services

Qualitative studies exploring the experiences of food security service providers not yet included in this literature review have also noted themes around the important role that values and beliefs play in this work. Dresler and Tutt (2019) for example, interviewed volunteers at two free grocery stores in New Zealand (N = 34), and reported that many described their participation as aligning with previously held beliefs, (e.g., everyone deserves to eat, food should not go to waste), and environmental values (e.g., non-human beings and the ecosystems they depend on should be protected or cared for) or social justice values (e.g., striving for the equitable distribution of wealth and opportunities for all). The opportunity to volunteer allowed for staff to perform and express such convictions and goals, which in turn validated their identities as environmentalists, justice-oriented or helpful people. Such enactments were very important to volunteers and experienced positively. Thus, while participants may have long held beliefs and values surrounding issues of food insecurity or justice, this social setting allowed for them to be behaviourally enacted, which was perceived as having positive benefits to their own wellbeing.

Dresler and Tutt (2019) also found that participants described shifting beliefs, due to their participation in "Free Stores" (i.e., grocery stores where everything is free). Volunteer staff, through their contact with different community members, described their previously held stereotypes and beliefs about others being challenged and reconceptualized. Other qualitative studies also found staff's beliefs could shift while working in food security services.

In a large food bank in Southern England, Williams et al. (2016) conducted an ethnographic study where they were participant-observers. They found a wide array of beliefs related to food insecurity, and reported that for some, beliefs shifted over time in the context of the work. When conceptualizing food insecurity and its causes, for example, staff members espoused a range of convictions (e.g., the poor were to blame, the state was to blame). The beliefs were not static and could change depending on the conversation during a particular shift. There were also noticeable shifts over time in some staff members' convictions. For example, some staff who had previously self-identified as being apolitical, disinterested or conservative in their beliefs had become increasingly aware of the structural causes of food insecurity. Williams et al. (2016) described this as a "care-justice transition" for food bank personnel. The effects of working in this food bank were not uniform across all staff though. Others did not exhibit this transition, highlighting the importance of the interaction between the individual and their environment. Thus, while it is important to understand how staff may conceptualize their motivations or values which led them to this work, it is also recognized that such processes are dynamic and fluid and may be influenced by the work itself.

The congruence between the beliefs and values of staff members can also have behavioural implications. For example, in instances of care-justice transitions, Williams et al. (2016) reported that individuals began engaging in other anti-poverty activities, such as lobbying local authorities or joining advocacy groups. Some described becoming catalysts for social change within their personal networks, initiating difficult conversations and trying to garner political support. The opposite was also reported, wherein a staff member who did not espouse beliefs of structural causes of food insecurity left the organization, and others with similar convictions began to complain (Williams et al., 2016). Both of these behavioural outcomes (i.e., becoming advocates for

broader changes or leaving the organization) are important to understand in terms of the

sustainability of such organizations, should staff feel their values are not reflected and potentially

leave. They also represent important lessons toward the journey of ending food insecurity, in

which such spaces may have a meaningful influence in pointing staff towards engaging in

structural change. Value congruence and its implications on work outcomes is an area of

considerable interest in I/O psychology.

Value Congruence

Value congruence, the similarity between the values of the individual and organization, has

been widely studied in I/O psychology. While personal values are seen as guiding principles for

decision and action, organizational values outline how staff should behave and how to allocate

resources (Edwards & Cables, 2009). Fit theories, such as person-organization fit (Kristof, 1996),

have foundations in interactional psychology which outlines that joint effects of the individual and

the environment interact to produce behaviour (Terborg, 1981). Specifically, in the context of

work, it is proposed that a stronger fit is preferred by individuals and leads to positive outcomes

and attitudes about work (Amos & Weathington, 2008; Verquer et al., 2003). Empirical support for

fit theories, and specifically the importance of value congruence, has been demonstrated in

numerous studies. For example, in two meta-analyses of person-organization fit, value congruence

showed the highest associations of any other dimensional measure (e.g., goal congruence,

personality congruence) (Kristof-Brown et al., 2005; Verquer et al., 2003). Value congruence has

been found to be strongly to moderately associated with many positive work outcomes such as job

and organization satisfaction, organizational commitment and intentions to quit (negative

correlation) (Amos & Weathington, 2008; Kristof-Brown et al., 2005; Verquer et al., 2003). In

reviewing the literature, it is clear that the fit between the person and their organization's values

may play a critical role in their experience of work and their visions for their future work. This element of fit, or value congruence, was also mentioned in studies of food security service providers.

In Williams et al. (2016), one staff member described their belief that food banks represented one strategy of many, needed to address food insecurity:

"we are in a slightly strange situation because actually we'd love to put ourselves out of business...I kind of see we've got a dual role and that's where I think being part of the Trussell Trust is really helpful. A) we are feeding people, which really needs to be done, but B) we are shouting about the fact that actually it's not acceptable that we are and we shouldn't have to, and there are long-term causes that people need to look at" (participant in Williams et al., 2016, p. 2308).

Here the participant highlighted her conceptualization of her work as being meaningful but not the only task necessary to address food insecurity. She also highlighted how the foodbank franchise which she worked for, the Trussell Trust (the largest in Britain), aligned with her beliefs in this regard (Williams et al., 2016). In another paper by the same authors, they described such a phenomenon as highlighting the potential for food banks *in the meantime*. While it is recognized that such forms of emergency food services have their limitations and may warrant larger discussions about their involvement in propping up a shrinking welfare state and insufficient government action, they also demonstrate potential spaces of care and of being in-common across class divides (Cloke et al., 2017). Having such conceptualizations may allow justice-oriented individuals to continue working in the food access sector, while also contributing to ending poverty through other means, as seen in the quote above. This may be understood as an example

that values are prioritized differently at different times, as psychological theories on work values

highlight (Ros et al., 1999).

These studies demonstrate the importance of values and value congruence at work,

including in the field of food access services. Studies with service providers also found that beliefs

and values were not static and might be influenced by the work itself (Dresler & Tutt, 2019;

Williams et al., 2016). The authors attributed such changes to certain organizational policies and

procedures, which coincides with theories of interactional psychology previously reviewed (e.g.,

Humphrey et al., 2007; Terborg, 1981). Other studies with food access staff also mentioned factors

in the environment which may be limiting or enhancing the ability for workers to demonstrate care

(Cohen et al., 2017; Rombach, Kang & Bitsch, 2018), and these contextual factors are described in

more detail in the following section.

Contextual Factors

Williams et al. (2016) described five key facilitators they saw to care-justice transitions in

their ethnographic study of a food bank in England. First was the importance of clients sharing

their stories with staff. Second were opportunities for care and connection between service

providers and users which reduced power differentials and led to senses of being in-common (e.g.,

discussing shared interests, continuing conversations after the food bank had closed, using

humour). Third were reflections for both parties on the nature and realities of poverty, and

constructions of deserving/undeserving poor - a theme which is highlighted in the UK media and

reinforced by the voucher system used in food banks (Cloke et al., 2017). Fourth, broader political

conversations amongst personnel regarding the causes underpinning food bank use, during which a

diversity amongst staff perspectives created opportunities for previously held beliefs to be

challenged. Lastly, materials from the food bank and other partnering organizations, such as

pamphlets and handouts which highlighted service users' stories or outlined the inadequacies of government welfare provisions. These five processes were seen as instrumental in shifting individual staff's perspectives on food insecurity and its causes (Williams et al., 2016).

Lambie-Mumford (2013) also reported on some of the practices described in Williams et al. (2016) in four other food banks which are part of the same franchise. Namely, the practices of taking time to sit and have a "chat" with food bank users, getting to know them and their stories, and collecting their stories as important sources of data were mentioned. These were linked to the franchise's model of being an inclusive, non-judgemental space. This highlights that some of the processes mentioned by Williams et al. (2016) relate to organization-level directives, as opposed to being dependent on the particular group of volunteer or professional staff at a specific site.

Such practices may serve multiple functions. For example, they were seen by frontline and managerial staff as being a response to criticisms that food banks were degrading or humiliating experiences for clients (Lambie-Mumford, 2013). Such practices were also highlighted as being critical for individual shifts toward systems thinking (Williams et al., 2016). Lastly, in Lambie-Mumford (2013) managerial staff commented that they were necessary for the organizational goals of being advocates for systems change. Thus, practices which were valued by staff were also seen as important for clients and larger organizational goals of radically addressing poverty.

While such organizational policies and processes are seen as beneficial, they do not resolve food banks of their tensions completely. For example, the Trussell Trust foodbanks (studied in Lambie-Mumford, 2013, and Williams et al., 2016) require clients to have vouchers from pre-approved care providers in order to access their services. In times where clients came without vouchers, frontline staff found themselves at a juncture, caught between organizational protocols and the immense needs of clients. Indeed, the need is significant: the franchise provided 1.9

million 3-day food parcels last year (The Trussell Trust, 2020). When means testing is in place, it may result in a crisis of competing values for frontline service providers, between their desire to help clients and their desire to follow protocol and be an honest or integrous employee. These tensions have important implications. Of utmost significance are the painful implications for service users when staff must turn them away or question their eligibility for support, demonstrated from the staff perspective in Williams et al. (2016) and confirmed in other studies of user perspectives describing the means of emergency food aid provision as inducing shame (Enns et al., 2020; Lambie-Mumford 2013; Van der Horst et al. 2014). Thus, while some policies may be in place to reduce power differentials between staff and clients, others remain firmly entrenched and can have negative implications for staff and clients.

Other qualitative studies highlighted similar themes. In New Zealand free grocery stores, Dresler and Tutt (2019) report that a customer-to-volunteer transition promoted less social distance between helper and helpee. The Free Stores also promoted justice and dignity through several other policies (e.g., no means testing, the store looks like a regular grocery store). These practices were highlighted as impacting staff and customers' sense of wellbeing, as such practices aligned with their values and created opportunities for positive social interactions. In this study, volunteer staff also mentioned shifts in their individual beliefs and stereotypes about others. Thus, the organizational practices which promoted staff and service users being in-common, having positive interactions and ensuring dignity were linked to positive experiences of volunteer work.

Rombach, Kang and Bitsch (2018) found in German food banks that there was a strict professional code, which dictated that all recipients must be treated with dignity, however, staff continued to experience difficult tensions between client's needs and organizational capacities. While customers described positive interactions with service providers in these food banks, staff

reported that they felt powerless and uncomfortable at times. For example, staff described not wanting to deny clients extra food when they requested it, however, knew that doing so went against organizational rules. This resulted in feelings of guilt. They also reported not knowing how to aid recipients with the range of challenges they were experiencing. Thus, while interactions on the surface appeared to be polite and positive, in line with organizational policies, frontline service providers described internal realities of feeling morally guilty and weak, particularly when they did not heed organizational rules. Rombach and colleagues (2018) point out that in such interactions staff actually held much more power than clients, as staff could determine whether or not someone would be served or how much they would receive, for example. The experiences described by staff serve to elucidate some of the tensions between organizational constraints and the overwhelming burden of food insecurity, the relative nature of power and staff's emotional experiences. Such descriptions of tensions match those in Williams et al. (2016).

In an ethnographic study of soup kitchens in Israel, Cohen et al. (2017) found unwritten organizational policies which kept distinct and sharp boundaries between service users and staff. As the authors conclude:

"The current study points to soup kitchens as arenas of assistance, compassion, and goodness whose practices create the diners as others and attach to them a generalized and flat image that denies their humanity and subjectivity" (p. 410)

Such practices included no opportunity for diners to become volunteers or staff, even when personnel were needed. Staff and clients also did not eat together; staff would eat standing in the kitchen in order to avoid sitting with clients. There were also interpersonal boundaries, whereby staff did not get to know the names or stories of the diners. When asked why they didn't get to know them, staff expressed that getting to know diners was too painful emotionally. From the

interpretation of the study authors, the distinction between the assumed painful experiences of

diners as abnormal and too traumatic to hear was a mechanism and instrument for othering them.

The authors reflected that other staff and individuals in their life also experienced pain, trauma,

and hardship, as did the diners (Cohen et al., 2017). This study highlighted how it may be critical

to examine policies and procedures which are unwritten and yet may influence staff's experiences

of their work. It also points to the complexities involved in wellbeing, for example if coping

strategies used by staff are perceived as hurtful and oppressive to clients (e.g., not getting to know

them because it is perceived to be too painful emotionally).

Conclusion

Recognizing the scope of food insecurity in Canada and the contested ways in which it is

being addressed, research is needed in order to better understand the state of service provision. The

frontline staff who work in such spaces are seen as key resources in both the survival of such

organizations and also in terms of the insights they can provide about the nature of their work.

While there has been some work investigating the experiences of food security service providers,

this work is scarce and focuses mostly on perceptions of volunteers. It is also noted that only one

study conducted in Canada was found. It was also conducted in Southern Ontario, focused solely

on one organization, on volunteer staff, and on their motivations and the perceived benefits of their

involvement (Rondeau et al., 2020). Thus, this project responds to the dearth of literature in this

field.

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Methodology and Conceptual Framework

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The ecotone of critical community psychology and critical food studies

Critical community psychology (CCP) seeks to understand the psychological processes of

individuals and groups within and in interaction with political-economic and sociocultural systems

(Kagan et al., 2020). It has a pervasive concern for the welfare of groups, and prioritizes the values of liberation, diversity, ecological analyses, critical perspectives, methodological pluralism, interdisciplinary collaboration and social change (Angelique & Culley, 2007; Burton et al., 2007; Kagan et al., 2020). While I used the level of analysis of the individual, I have attempted to contextualize this within an understanding of larger systems and do so within a framework of justice and with the goals of equity and raising critical consciousness. While CCP is very useful, it may have its limitations in cause-specific knowledge, particularly concerning food systems. This has prompted Stroink, Levkoe and Barnett (in press) to propose a novel conceptual framework which combines CCP with critical food studies (CFS). More specifically, we have argued that both disciplines may better seek to understand and promote psycho-social-ecological well-being through food systems by harnessing the strengths in each field, and committing to research which involves systems thinking, a critical lens and action-based research. This Ecotone framework is further explored below (For more detail on the Ecotone framework see Stroink, Levkoe & Barnett, in press).

CFS is recognized as an emerging and eclectic field of study, which seeks to "read the world" through food (Sumner, 2013). This involves researchers and practitioners examining the complex systems which bring food to our plates, from planting to distribution and eventually waste, and the relationships which interact to produce its possible varied outcomes (Koç et al., 2017). In its ideal and most critical form, scholars who identify with this field share many of the core values espoused by critical community psychologists. This manifests in the analyses of societal problems, investigating power relations and engaging in action-based work to disrupt and possibly transform these structures (Koç et al., 2017). CFS has much to offer community psychologists in its vast network of scholars hailing from different backgrounds. This provides the

field with breadth and depth of knowledge regarding the nature of food systems, emphasizing the systems perspective. While community psychologists, particularly those with a critical approach, have written extensively about community transformation, processes of change and psychological sense of community (Kagan et al., 2020), they lack the in-depth knowledge CFS scholars have in terms of food systems. Bringing these disciplines and scholars together, then, represents an opportunity to ground food systems analyses and engaged research in community, highlighting psychological wellbeing and processes for change, while also linking these experiences to broader food movements, patterns and systems on both the local and global scale.

In envisioning harnessing the strengths of both CCP and CFS, Stroink, Levkoe and Barnett (in press) conceptualized an ecotone framework, with three distinct and interrelated pillars: a systems perspective, critical lens and place-based or engaged research. Ecotones refer to the space where two distinct systems meet and interact, sharing diverse resources and creating opportunities for innovative growth and abundance (Kagan et al., 2020). Taking interdisciplinary classes during my graduate training, and spending time learning and reviewing the literature in both food studies and psychology, produced my literature review and research question, which attempt to consider how individuals in the emergency food sector are conceptualizing themselves and their work. With it, I hoped to recognize and acknowledge the systems of individual well-being, how they interact with organizations, society, and broader social movements. I have also adopted a critical lens, investigating the flows of power within our current food systems, and how solutions to food insecurity may be conceptualized as an issue of equity as opposed to charity. Lastly, I attempted to bring a level of engagement and action-orientation to this research. These values are also reflected in the specific methodologies chosen (e.g., IPA and photovoice).

Interpretive phenomenological analysis

The nature of this study was exploratory, seeking to engage in a meaning-synthesis process with food access providers about their work in Thunder Bay; how they came to it and where they saw it going in the future. It positioned the researcher as a key instrument in this meaning-making process and valued participants' multiple and conflicting perspectives. While there is some literature written on the topic of food security services, I agreed with other scholars that such experiences are context-dependent (e.g., Armour & Barton, 2019; Power et al., 2018; Rombach, Kang & Bitsch; Williams et al., 2016). These qualities of the project made it well suited to a qualitative design (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Pietkiewicz & Smith, 2014; Smith, 2018).

Specifically, I chose a popular qualitative method in psychology known as interpretive phenomenological analysis (IPA). IPA is both an epistemological position and method of qualitative inquiry founded in phenomenology, the philosophical work of Husserl, and symbolic interactionism (Smith, 1996). Phenomenology comes from the Greek *phenomenon*, or something which is hidden, and *logos* meaning analytical. In IPA, the phenomenologist presents the opportunity for participants to share, and also "makes sense of the appearing" (Smith, 2018, p. 171), creating an opportunity to illuminate more hidden aspects of meaning in experience (Burton, 2018; Smith, 2018). In this way, IPA has been described as a double hermeneutic, wherein the participant is trying to make sense of their world, and the researcher is trying to make sense of the participant trying to make sense of their world (Smith, 2004).

Particularly important in the development of IPA, has been the work of Heidegger (1962) and Gadamer (1975). Such philosophers have urged that our experience is based on our *horizons*, combinations of our prior experiences, knowledge and assumptions. Through asking participants about their experiences, we are exploring their horizons together, attempting to bring to the surface

and become as acquainted as possible with their *lifeworld* (Burton et al., 2017; Langdridge, 2008). As such, IPA recognizes the inherent biases and preconceptions of all individuals and thus acknowledges that meaning-making in research is a dynamic and interpretive process between the participant and the researcher (Smith, 1996). This view of the researcher as embedded within the meaning-making process and outcomes of research is advocated for by prominent critical community psychologists (Kagan et al., 2020).

IPA responds to criticisms of nomothetic methods in psychology which report the commonalities of a sample and yet fail to describe or explain the experience of any individual participant (Smith, 2004), missing nuanced understandings, contradictions and idiosyncrasies which are fundamental to the human experience and possible even within one person's experience (Smith, 2018). While IPA began as a formalized method in health psychology (Smith, 2004) it has since been used in clinical and counselling psychology (Carradice et al., 2002; Rhodes & Jakes, 2000) and social and community psychology studies as well (Chryssochoou, 2000; Touroni & Coyle, 2002). IPA was also used in another study investigating the experiences of food bank volunteers and their wellness (Armour & Barton, 2019).

Semi-structured interviews were used in the current project as they allow the researcher to engage in meaning-making in real-time with the participant. While these are recommended as the "gold standard" in IPA, other academics have begun to combine it with visual methodologies (e.g., Burton et al., 2017; Papaloukas et al., 2017; Plunkett et al., 2012; Smith, 2018).

Visual methodologies: Photovoice

Visual methodologies can add richness to research data, allowing one to see into the participant's everyday world. They have also been found to add more insights than may have been captured in an interview alone, and to enlarge participant's responses to include broader themes

(Balmer et al., 2015; Wang & Burris, 1997). These may be of particular interest for those engaging in IPA, as sharing photographs may allow researchers to become that much closer to our participants' lifeworlds, as we see some of their experience through their lens.

Increasingly popular in research, is the action-based methodology of photovoice, which incorporates the use of photos alongside an ethical, participatory-action framework. Wang and Burris developed the technique in the 1990's, inspired by Paulo Freire's empowerment-focused educational processes, and feminist critiques of participatory research and documentary photography (Wang & Burris, 1997).

Fundamental to photovoice is the acknowledgement that often in research what the researcher deems important may neglect what the community deems to be important. Photovoice seeks to reverse such a gaze, by encouraging photographs to be taken around a particular research question or community need. This fundamentally alters traditional power dynamics, demonstrating the stance that participants are experts when it comes to their lived experiences and defining the needs of their communities (Wang & Burris, 1997). This is of particular interest in this project. While I am committed to facilitating space for participants to critically reflect on their experiences and offer some skills in terms of meaning-making and synthesizing, it is my goal to ultimately reinforce that staff are experts and have agency should they wish to make changes to the system.

Given the sensitive nature of engaging with participants about their place of employment, I was particularly conscious of not asking participants to place themselves at any kind of increased risk of harm (e.g., taking part in the study having any negative ramifications on their employment security). Staff at food security services also engage with clients who are vulnerable, and I did not want them to be captured in photographs when they may not have had enough power and autonomy to freely decline. As such, while remaining committed to the values of photovoice, this

project chose to use photographs as elicitation tools in interviews with participants inspired by studies such as Wilde et al. (2019). While it is also common for photovoice projects to publish or utilize photos to further community change, I asked that participants take photographs only for the research team. In order to retain an action-orientation, however, the interview guide included questions about next steps participants wanted to see from this project. Further ethical considerations follow.

Ethical considerations

It is important to consider possible risks of harm for participants. Given the sensitive nature of engaging with participants about their work, risks could include damage to their reputation or the security of their employment. In order to mitigate this, a number of measures were taken.

First, the recruitment strategy did not include contacting participants through their work or contacting employers to recruit their employees (see Sampling and Recruitment section below). By contacting individuals directly, and not organizations, it was hoped that it would be clear to potential participants that this study was personal and confidential, and involvement would be outside of any professional obligation.

During data collection, participants were asked to take photographs of their daily experience. Recommendations for ethical photography for research purposes were developed (Appendix D). In particular, participants were asked not to photograph any of their clients. Also, given COVID-19 precautions, participants were advised not to take any photographs within their workspace. I wrote this advisory in order to ensure that no participant would place themselves at any increased risk (e.g., walking to a particular workstation or area of their organization which they don't usually visit just to take a certain photograph), and to reaffirm to participants that their involvement in this study was not meant to change their daily movements aside from clicking their

camera button. Participants were assured that the purpose of their photographs was to express their experience of work, which could be symbolic. As mentioned above, participants were also made aware that photographs would be viewed only by the research team and would not be published in anyway by myself or my supervisors (including as part of this thesis). Appendix D was reviewed with each participant, and I made sure to check mark beside each bullet point, indicating that they understood the parameters for their photographs.

During their interviews, there was a risk of harm to participants psychologically. Speaking about one's experience of work might be challenging, and at times bring up feelings of distress or discomfort. To mitigate these risks, participants were reminded that they did not have to answer the questions asked during their interview and could end the interview at any time. I also prepared a list of local mental health resources which was attached to the Information Letter and reinforced before their interview.

The Information Letter (Appendix B) detailed for participants that they would have one week after their interview to review their transcript or withdraw from the study. This ensured participants could withdraw their data if they felt they had misspoken or regretted their responses; while also ensuring that once data analysis looking across participants began, I would not have to untangle certain participants' responses and remove them. These steps were reviewed with each participant before their interview began as well. In consultation with my committee, I decided not to pursue member checking given the time demands on service providers in this field. No participant requested to review their transcript or withdraw their data.

In terms of data analysis and reporting, all participants were kept anonymous. Specific organizations where participants worked are not named and all organizations are described as a group in general terms. Given that the community of Thunder Bay is relatively small, and

especially within food security services, all efforts were made to de-identify quotes and themes presented in the results of the study (i.e., participants specific ages, characteristics, or positions). I also chose not to use pseudonyms in my results section. This allowed me to present small, relevant parts of narratives within a theme, which are disconnected from other narrative examples in other themes. This was thought to provide extra precaution for participant's identities, in case someone was to read through all of the quotes presented and be able to identify someone. This was explained during the informed consent process, in the information letter and before each interview as well.

More broadly, there was a risk of damage to the community or specifically food security services if they were portrayed by participants in a negative light. While I aimed to take a critical stance within this thesis and explore participants' potential criticisms of the industry or organization in which they work, it was also my intention to frame these in a way which fostered community growth and avoided shame or blame. In writing up the results, I attempted to report participant's experiences and insights as learning opportunities and potential for growth. In taking these various steps, I hoped that the risk of participation in this study was low.

Data collection

Sampling and Recruitment

Criteria for participation was to be a full time, frontline food security service provider within Thunder Bay. Food security service provider was described as any worker who seeks to provide service for those who may be experiencing food insecurity, and a frontline worker is one who engages directly with clients. Services could include, but were not limited to, food banks or food pantries, soup kitchens or hot meal programs, community gardens (if they are geared toward

community members facing food insecurity), and community kitchens. It was not a requirement that services be engaged in means testing with clients to establish their need for services.

Professional (i.e., paid) and volunteer staff could participate, where the distinction was drawn instead around how significant they felt this role was in their life at the time. For some, a paid position might not be possible (e.g., unavailable, unable to attain due to qualifications or language competencies), however, such individuals may be fiercely committed and spend a large portion of time providing services. A specified amount of time was also not provided, recognizing that for some with different abilities 15 hours a week may be the primary role they play in the community outside of their home (work or volunteer); whereas for others, 15 hours a week may feel less significant. This rationale also applies to the amount of time they have spent in the industry.

This rationale may be understood further in Smith's writings (2018; Smith, Flowers & Larkin, 2009) which refer to the importance of hot cognition for IPA. That participants are actively engaged in meaning-making about their experience is what is crucial to collecting rich data, versus whether the event is past, present, full or part-time. This was discussed with potential participants. For example, in one case, an individual was concerned that her role in providing service did not make-up full time hours each week. When we spoke over the phone, I asked her if she felt that her role had a meaningful or significant quality to it right now. She explained that she saw it as part of her being, or a way of being with other community members whether she was on or off-shift. Thus, despite her hours "on shift" being low each week, we agreed she met criteria for participation.

IPA samples typically fall within the one to 15 participant range (Pietkiewicz & Smith, 2014). I chose to recruit four individuals following guidance from Smith et al.'s (2009) guide to

conducting IPA, where they recommend three to six participants for a novice interpretive phenomenological analyst. This number allows for an in-depth exploration of each case, critical to IPA in its idiosyncratic commitment, as well as some analysis across cases without becoming overwhelmed. IPA is also quite a lengthy and involved process, even in comparison to other qualitative methods. Thus, a group of three to six participants has been suggested to be feasible within a Master's project timeline (Smith, Flower & Larkin, 2009).

To recruit participants, I used purposeful sampling and more specifically criterion sampling. This is a technique wherein interviewees are selected based on a particular rationale and set of criteria derived from the research question (Collingridge & Gantt, 2008). A representative sample based on demographic factors is not possible in IPA studies given small sample sizes. Instead, participants are selected given that they have lived experience of interest (Pietkiewicz & Smith, 2014; Smith, Flower & Larkin, 2009). This strategy has been used in other similar projects involving food security service providers (e.g., Power et al., 2018; Rombach, Kang & Bitsch, 2018).

Recruitment for this project depended upon community relationships. This is work which commenced long before the inception of this project. Both my primary supervisor and committee member, Dr. Levkoe, have been involved in food-related community-based research in Thunder Bay and elsewhere for many years. Upon moving to Thunder Bay, I also began to build networks within this sector. For example, I volunteer at a local food access organization. I am also involved in numerous different activist groups in the city, which include folks who also work in food access. During my first year of my master's, I attended various AGMs of food security organizations and food access-related conferences and events (e.g., TBAFS, 2019). The conception of this project, the research question and recruitment relied on these preexisting relationships.

In consultation with my committee, I decided not to recruit from the organization at which I volunteered, due to fear of incapacity for others to give free consent (i.e., may feel beholden to me for my volunteer service). Following my proposal defense and an REB application, a document was made which outlined the criteria for participation and a brief overview of the proposed process for the study. This was shared with my supervisor, committee member (Dr. Levkoe), and two key informants. One key informant worked at a food security service organization in Thunder Bay. They were asked to provide contact information for anyone they thought might be interested outside of their organization. The second key informant was leading a cross-agency working group which sought to reach any organization providing food access programs during COVID-19. This key informant was critical in her awareness of which services were operating during the pandemic, as the landscape of services had changed significantly during this time. Both key informants provided me with names of individuals to invite.

I arranged the suggestions made by the committee and key informants into a list, ranking contacts based on fit with the criteria and demographic factors - in an effort to speak with individuals from different social locations (e.g., gender, age, ethnicity) and different organizations. This was reviewed with my supervisor and Dr. Levkoe. I then contacted the first four on the list. When one person declined, I asked the next person on the list, and so on. A recruitment text was developed (Appendix A) and used either verbally (over the phone) or in an email to potential participants. For some individuals, I knew them personally and reached out to them directly. Others were sent a preliminary email by one of the key informants, describing who I was and why I was contacting them, before I sent them the recruitment email. In total, eight individuals were contacted, and four declined to participate. Two people said they were too busy at first contact - one of these individuals offered the name of someone else, who was added to the list and

contacted. One person who declined to participate said that they were very busy, but would be happy for me to follow them around while they worked and I could ask them questions. When I explained that I could not visit them due to COVID-19 precautions and the agreement with REB, they said they could manage a 45-minute interview but could not take any photographs. When I agreed to this amended process, they declined stating that they were too busy. The fourth person to decline, was interested at first, but confused about the photographs and requested a phone call. During this call, they insisted that they had to take their photographs at their work, saying that taking them anywhere else felt too "removed". I discussed this further with my supervisor and sent them the appendices with more information, as requested. A follow-up email was also sent. They did not reply to either of these emails. The four others agreed upon first contact to have more information sent to them, and proceeded through the informed consent process (described following the Demographics section).

Demographics

Four participants were interviewed from four different organizations in Thunder Bay which provide food access services. Such services took many forms, such as offering meals, food parcels, a food bank or subsidized food, teaching about food or food-related skills, growing or cultivating food. For two participants, food was explicit in the mandate of the organization they worked for and central to its purpose. For the other two participants, food-related work had become a part of what the organization did because of the needs of the community members they interacted with. In the latter two organizations, providing food access had been a significant part of their services for at least one year at the time of the interview.

All participants worked some of their time in a frontline capacity related to food services, although three participants also held other roles within their organization related to planning or

management (e.g., board member, leadership role). Two participants were paid, and two worked as volunteers. All participants were involved in food access on a regular basis and felt that this work was a significant part of their life at the time of the interview.

All four participants described their ethnicity as white and their gender as female. Participants ranged in age from mid-20s to mid-60s.

Procedure

Potential participants who were interested in more information following the initial recruitment text (Appendix A), were sent an email containing the study's information letter (Appendix B) and a copy of the consent form (Appendix C) for their review. If they were interested in participating in the study or learning more, I spoke with them over the phone or Zoom at a specific time, based on their preference. During this initial discussion, the purpose of the study and consent form were reviewed, and any questions they had were answered. If they agreed to participate, and signed the consent form, I went on to describe the instructions for part 1 of the study (see Appendix D).

Part 1 involved participants taking or collecting photographs over a one-week period to depict their experiences or sentiments about their work. Some advice was provided, such as: consider how you would describe your work, through photographs, to someone who has no understanding of what you do, how you do it, and how you feel or think about it. Leaving the photographic prompt very broad was intentional to allow for participants to determine the more specific topics of interest (Sutton-Brown, 2014; Wang, Cash & Power, 2000). Participants could also utilize the internet or other means to visually capture their experience (i.e., taking digital screenshots of relevant images or headlines found online; taking photos of magazines, newspapers, etc.). Participants were asked to write a caption for their photos in the moment, and to upload them

to a secure institutional Google Drive, accessible only by myself. Reminder messages in their preferred medium (e.g., email, text, call) were delivered during the weeklong period, at intervals they requested. These and other recommendations previously mentioned around ethical photography were outlined in Appendix D, which was given to participants via email and discussed over the phone.

Part 2. After Part 1, an invitation for an interview was sent to participants. Interviews were conducted over Zoom at a time convenient for both the participant and myself.

Interview Guide. It is appropriate, and encouraged for novice researchers, to use an interview guide in IPA (Pietkiewicz & Smith, 2014; Smith, Flowers & Larkin, 2009). In following the creators of the photovoice method, I chose to base this one on the SHOWeD acronym: What do you See here? What's really Happening here? How does this relate to Our lives? Why does this problem or this strength exist? What can we Do about this? (Wang et al., 1998). The acronym was amended with additional prompts related to the research question and Ecotone framework (Appendix E). This document was used as a guide to explore participant's photographs and their experience, while novel insights related to the research question were followed, as IPA is understood to be an emergent process guided by participants' lived experiences (Smith, Flowers & Larkin, 2009). Demographic questions were included in order to assess the homogeneity of the sample. Demographic questions were asked at the end of the interview, in order to facilitate a tone of narrative sharing, as opposed to short, factual responses (Dr. L. Galway, personal communication).

Interview Process and Reflexivity. I began the interviews by asking participants about their photographs using the interview guide (Appendix E) in a flexible manner, dependent on conversational flow and their insights. Interviews following IPA involve using both empathetic

and questioning tactics during the interview, in order to clarify and deepen the meaning-making process for the researcher and the participant (Smith, 2004). Interviews took approximately 90 minutes to complete.

Conducting semi-structured interviews in a rigorous way entails training as an interviewer (Pietkiewicz & Smith, 2014). I felt that I had gained training in some of the important qualities, such as how to build rapport and trust with participants; asking questions without presumptive guiding or intonation; determining when to ask probing, open or closed ended questions; being conscientious of verbal and nonverbal cues; and judging how the interviewee might be faring emotionally given the subject matter; and when or how to support them should they become distressed (Pietkiewicz & Smith, 2014; Smith, 2004). Such skills were acquired during several key training opportunities including: developing and facilitating psychoeducational and support groups for youth at the Children's Hospital of Eastern Ontario for 3 years; interviewing and facilitating focus groups with service providers and those experiencing homelessness, under the supervision of Dr. Cheryl Forchuk in London, Ontario (1 year); completing various trainings in suicide prevention and crisis de-escalation (e.g., ASIST, CPI); and beginning my training as a clinical psychologist, which included taking a graduate level course in clinical interviewing. Although there is always more to learn in this domain, I felt confident in using a project involving semi-structured interviews given these experiences.

Although participants determine when they answer questions and when to terminate a research interview, researchers still hold a significant amount of power in the interviewing process (Karnieli-Miller et al., 2009). In line with my conceptual frameworks and emphasis on power-sharing methodologies, I tried to incorporate a flatter power structure in several ways. One such way was through self-disclosure, whereby I told participants parts of my own story, sometimes in

response to theirs and sometimes as an offering with no prompt. These were used judiciously and deliberately, so as not to detract from a focus on them, but to offer some reciprocity in a sharing of information (Sword, 1999). Self-disclosure can also improve the likelihood of hearing valuable insights, and can be seen more generally as part of the rapport-building necessary in qualitative research to be granted more authentic sharing from participants (Karnieli-Miller et al., 2009; Smith, Flowers & Larkin, 2009). I was also conscious to ask participants which photographs they wanted to begin with, and to allow them to direct the sequence of the interview based on their photos.

Notes were taken during and after the interview and reviewed before the next interview in a process of epistemological reflexivity. For example, I was cognizant of wanting to show my participants respect and gratitude for their time. I was particularly conscious of the fact that their time may serve the broader community and themselves, but ultimately allowed me to finish my graduate degree. In my first interview, I prefaced our conversation by saying "in case we do not have time to get through all of the photographs… ", and could see that my participant was visibly flustered. She said that she would keep an eye on the time if necessary to make sure we got through all of them. I immediately made note of this, and in all following interviews agreed on an end time with participants, and then assured them that I would budget our time so that we reviewed each photo they had submitted. Participants in multiple ways showed me how much time and effort they had put into selecting their photos, and from then onwards I was conscious to make sure there was space for their efforts to feel fruitful and worthwhile.

In another interview, I knew the interviewee personally. She was likely also aware that I knew and have known others who worked in her organization. Toward the end of the interview, in speaking about the future of her work, I asked her where she thought she might be in the future and

would she still be working for the same organization. I asked this quickly and off-the-cuff, without considering its implications. The participant looked a bit shocked and replied that my question was very bold. I realized how serious the question was to her, but having built rapport, I laughed. This broke the tension and she laughed too. She then responded to the question generally but left her intentions with her specific organization vague. In reflection after this interview, and in conversation with my supervisor, I recognized that asking her so pointedly was not fair. In future interviews, I was conscious to ask questions but not to be so specific, for example "where do you see yourself in the future", as opposed to asking about their current workplace. This went over well in future interviews. I think it left enough space for them to be able to decide what information they felt comfortable sharing. I also made a note of this to consider during my analysis, that while many seemingly intimate details and opinions were shared, I could not be 100% confident that participants would share completely openly with me, on this and perhaps in relation to other questions. Such processes of reflection strengthen the integrity and trustworthiness, and ultimately validity, of qualitative findings (Finlay, 2002; Sword, 1999).

   Data Storage and Security. Zoom was used to record and transcribe all of the interviews. All files from the interview (e.g., Zoom recordings, Word documents with notes, NVivo files) were stored on my personal, password-protected computer, accessible only by myself. After the completion of the project, all data will be saved in Dr. Stroink's office on a password-protected computer for a minimum of 5 years. Data security and storage was outlined for participants in Appendix B, and in the REB application.

Research Setting

   This project took place in Thunder Bay, a city with a population of approximately 120,000 (Statistics Canada, 2016), which was settled on the traditional land of the Fort William First

Nation, signatory to the Robinson Superior Treaty of 1850. This treaty, although intended to be

acted upon in good faith, resettled Ojibway people from their large territory to a tiny tract of land.

Outside the reserve, Fort William was established by settlers and used as a post during the fur

trade. Many settlers moved to the area, particularly from Finland. To this day, many Finnish

traditions remain embedded in the cultural fabric of the region, including saunas and Nordic

skiing. In 1970, two neighbouring towns were amalgamated to create one city: Thunder Bay (City

of Thunder Bay, 2018). According to the 2016 census, Thunder Bay has the highest proportion of

urban Indigenous residents of any Canadian city, at 12.7% (Ministry of Indigenous Affairs, 2020).

Figure 1.

Lake Superior's Coast

(Barnett, 2020)

Thunder Bay is surrounded on all sides by natural wonders (see Figure 1). Nestled on the edge of the boreal forest and the shore of Lake Superior (the world's largest freshwater lake when measured by surface area, Holman et al., 2012). See map in Figure 2. Major settler economies have been based on resource extraction in the area. This includes mining and logging projects which have polluted surrounding waterways and decreased more-than-human populations (City of Thunder Bay, 2018). Meanwhile, biking, hiking, fishing and camping continue to be favourite pastimes of locals.

Figure 2.

Map of Lake Superior, Thunder Bay, and Surrounding Region.

(Maps of World, n.d.)

While close in proximity to the United States, Thunder Bay remains geographically isolated. It is one of the only cities of its size east or west in Canada for nearly 700km, and nothing of its size exists to the north. It is, however, on the major highway which runs the length of the country and is home to the Thunder Bay International Airport. As such, Thunder Bay acts as a regional hub, providing services such as education and health care, including to surrounding First Nations communities.

A local municipal and public partnership group, EarthCare Thunder Bay, reported in 2014 that food travels an average of 3,500km to reach Thunder Bay. They also reported that local farming and food production has decreased over the last 30 years (EarthCare, 2014), when only 70 years ago most food consumed here was grown locally (TBAFS, 2015). This can be seen to be in line with an increase in the use of the capitalist, global food system more widely in Canada. Food insecurity also remains an issue in Thunder Bay, as it does in other Canadian cities. Both of these are being actively tackled by groups such as the Thunder Bay and Area Food Strategy and EarthCare, who are working to increase local food systems capacities through multiple channels and in sustainable ways (e.g., EarthCare, 2014; TBAFS, 2015). Thunder Bay was also chosen to be part of Ontario's basic income pilot in 2016 (Ministry of Children, Community and Social Services, 2021), and many groups here continue to work toward anti-poverty and social justice efforts. Which approaches should be taken though continue to be contested locally. For example when it comes to food access, some prominent groups have advocated for registering clients and requiring ID for service. Others have criticized such barriers (Kaufman, 2020). Indeed, during the time of this research project, many groups working in the sector came together to create a manifesto for values-based, dignified food access (Roots to Harvest, 2021).

This thesis also took place during the COVID-19 pandemic. While the research question was not related to COVID, it inevitably impacted its findings. First, it changed the nature of the research which could be done. While I would have loved to spend time with staff in their organizational space, and observed community member interactions, such methods were inappropriate given public health guidelines. At the time of my ethics application, any in-person research was prohibited by Lakehead's Research and Ethics Board (REB). Second, it changed the landscape of food access services, thus inevitably impacting who was recruited and the voices represented in this study. Third, as is mentioned in the results section, COVID restrictions changed the way services could be provided. This both illuminated the ideal work that participants wished they could do, and the creativity they took to resist a delivery system thrust upon them.

This thesis, its results and discussion, are intimately connected to this place, and cannot be separated from this time.

Data Analysis

In combining photovoice and interpretive phenomenological analysis, scholars have recognized that: "data analysis begins at the onset of data collection and continues for the duration of the research" (Plunkett et al., 2012, p. 161; also see Smith, Flower & Larkin, 2009). Indeed, as a double hermeneutic process, from the moment participants began capturing their lived experience through photographs, into our interviews together, and during the formal analysis of transcripts and photographs, we were both engaged in processes of rethinking, reflecting and recognizing (van Manen, 1997). These processes are in turn likely to continue beyond the dissemination of the results of the project, through my own reflections and ongoing conversations with participants and community members.

While there are authors who suggest that phenomenological research does not require strict methods, and that the measure of quality is determined by the "interpretive sensitivity, inventiveness, thoughtfulness, scholarly tact, and writing talent of the human science researcher" (van Manen 1997, p. 34), van Manen and others have also suggested some steps to consider, particularly for the novice researcher (Papaloukas et al., 2017; Pietkiewicz & Smith, 2014; Plunkett et al., 2012; Sutton-Brown, 2014). I framed my analysis most closely on the steps of Smith, Flower and Larkin (2009), the founders of the IPA method. These steps are outlined in Table 2, with further details in the following sections. I have also added the step of "Meaning-Making Prior to Data Collection" to capture some of the meaning-making participants engaged in prior to their interview.

Meaning-Making Prior to Data Collection

Participants truly began the process of analysis through their depictions of their work through photographs. This was evident not only in the acts of submitting photos, but also in creating captions to describe their photos. Captions are listed in Table 1. Several participants described in their interviews how much they had contemplated their entries for the project. For example, "when you asked me to take pictures, I made little notes, and I made notes related to sort of four topics". Thus, participants themselves had begun the process of distilling the central elements of their experience through the photography and captioning process.

Table 1.

Photos Captions

Pseudonym	Captions
Ivy	Food Parcels*; Nothing But Love; Strength; Giving Back; Sharing
Jasmyn	Empty Shelves; Food Parcels*; Produce; My Fridge; Improving

Rebecca	My dream food parcel*; My reality food parcel*; How I live; How the people I serve live
Sonam	Food justice means everyone has the right to nourish themselves in ways that feel best for them; Manufactured crises targeting certain communities & privilege in the food system; Root & underlying causes of food insecurity relating to structural injustices; Poverty & food insecurity are devices of suppression; Mutual aid, community care & community-led safety: we keep each other safe.

*The term "Food Parcel" was substituted for organization-specific language used for packages of food which are made for individuals or families. This action was taken to enhance anonymity.

Table 2.

Description of Analytical Steps

Analytical steps suggested by Smith et al. (2009)	Description of analytical steps taken in this study
Step 1: Reading and Re-reading	Interviews were transcribed. Transcripts were reviewed in conjunction with watching the recording to ensure accuracy of transcription, and non-verbal behaviour was recorded. The audio was listened to several times in order to immerse in the lifeworld of the participant.
Step 2: Initial Noting	The transcript was uploaded to NVivo. There it was read several times, and exploratory notes were taken using the 'Annotations' function. Notes included descriptive, linguistic and conceptual ideas. Personal and epistemological reflexivity was deliberately included at this stage.
Step 3: Developing Emergent Themes	The transcript alongside its marginalia were reviewed. NVivo's 'Coding' function was used to highlight sections of the text and provide an initial descriptive label. Each specific statement was considered on its own, and within the context of the whole.
Step 4: Searching for Connections Across Emergent Themes	The list of emergent themes was reviewed, looking for patterns, polarity, and/or overall meaning or connections between them. Attempts were made to define the themes using the 'Codebook' function. Some codes were clustered and provided a higher-order descriptive label. Codes were not collapsed at this stage. Initial codes were reviewed by my primary supervisor.
Step 5: Moving onto the Next Case	I began again at step 1 with the next participant, and so on, until all participants were finished. For step 3, new passages of relevant text were either added to an existing code, or a new code was created.
Step 6: Looking for Patterns Across Cases	The process of step 4 was conducted with data from all participants, moving back and forth between the specific, idiosyncratic themes and the superordinate, shared themes. Some themes were collapsed at this stage. A list of superordinate themes and subthemes was created, with associated linkages described. This was compiled into Word, and iteratively reviewed by my supervisor.

Step 1: Reading and Re-reading

A transcript is necessary for qualitative analysis in IPA, and interpretations should be made based on its close reading (Smith, Flowers & Larkin, 2009). Thus, while Zoom was used to make a transcript, it was essential to validate it thoroughly. An undergraduate RA began the process of transcript validation for each participant. In conjunction with our Research and Ethics Board approval, I then removed all identifying proper nouns from the transcripts (e.g., names of organizations or people), and deleted the Zoom transcript. While immersing myself fully in the participant's narrative, I watched the video of the interview and validated the transcript a second time. I found only minor errors and added nonverbal expressions that were deemed to be relevant (e.g., cues that would help to understand how the participant said something). Listening to the participant's voice alongside their written words helps to immerse in their lifeworld and ensure better understanding of their meaning, increasing validity of the interpretations (Smith, Flowers & Larkin, 2009).

Images submitted by participants were not analyzed for visual qualities; instead having been embedded into the transcript though conversation during their interview. Transcripts provided rich detail and descriptions of each photo and thus were analyzed as written content.

Step 2: Initial Noting

In stage 2, I read transcripts multiple times, making notes, rereading and reflecting using the software program NVivo. I began by making broad exploratory notes of thoughts as they emerged. These could broadly be classified as being descriptive, linguistic or conceptual in nature (Pietkiewicz & Smith, 2014; Smith, Flowers & Larkin, 2009). I created a guide with my research questions and other prompts in a Word document to prompt my reflections and deepen the analysis during this stage (see Appendix F). I was careful to deliberately include practices of reflexivity,

both personal and epistemological (e.g., how does the methodology determine the response) in order to encourage critical analysis and understanding of the text and its boundaries and increase the integrity of the research findings (Pietkiewicz & Smith, 2014; Plunkett et al., 2012).

The process of notetaking was extensive. In the first transcript I made 467 individual annotations. Later participants had a range from 129-207 per participant. I believe the differences reflected my initial reading as being largely untethered to the research question (in confusing an exploratory study for one without a question at all), and discerning that many of my notes were repetitive. In future readings, I included my research question at the top of Appendix F and was more intentional about returning to it. I also read larger segments of the transcript, reflected and then made my note, so as to capture some thoughts only once per segment.

Step 3: Developing Emergent Themes

In stage 3, notes and segments of text were transformed into emerging themes. Table 3 illustrates this process with one sample from the original transcript. This was conducted in NVivo, using the coding function to label sections of text. Themes were based on my interpretation and impossible to fully separate from the readings or life experiences I have had. While acknowledging this, IPA requires that the researcher strives to base them on a close reading of the passage, and no extant literature or specific theoretical frameworks were applied at this stage. I was also conscious of moving back and forth between analyzing a specific statement on its own, and how it fit within the larger whole of the narrative. Sometimes it is within a larger context that we can more fully understand an individual segment of text (Pietkiewicz & Smith, 2014; Smith, Flowers & Larkin, 2009).

Table 3.

Example of Exploratory Notes and Emerging Themes.

Original Transcript**	Exploratory notes	Emerging Themes*
P: We had some internal debates. I'll tell you that. And I know that this happens everywhere, and people are - some people will say you know what, "if you're hungry enough you eat what you're given". [small pause] Right? [smiles] I: Mmm [nodding] P: We're a charity. We're giving you this. You should be grateful and take it, and if you're hungry enough, you will eat it. I: [nodding] P: Even if you don't like lentils, you will happily take these lentils, right? I: [small laugh] Yes. P: Uhm, and my response and several of us- others of us are: why would we want people to take food that they don't want? I: [nodding] P: Why wouldn't we let them have some choice? You know, you and I go to a grocery store and we choose what we want or wherever we shop we choose, uhm, based on what our personal	While this was initiated due to COVID restrictions initially, it actually comes down to more of a debate between values/philosophy about choice, and should clients have the right to choose or should they just take whatever is given to them because they are receiving it for free. Debates: internally. Amongst staff presumably and not clients. Who counts as internal? How and why. "Happens everywhere": widespread opinion or internal debates? (I think the opinion based on watching her answer in video) "If you're hungry enough": charity idea; person should be grateful, person should be happy with anything they are given, even if they don't like what they're given, because it is free they should be happy, grateful and eat it. No choice. If you're poor = no choice. Choice: widespread opinion within this field (or broader community?) if you're hungry/poor/going to a charity you do not get a choice. You will take whatever is given to you, and you should be happy and grateful and eat it. Even if you don't like it, it was free so... etc. Value congruence: or shared perspective, with some other staff. Not all, but some. Choice: because others in the community get to choose (so should the poor/clients not have same as others); because we have personal preferences; because we have different food knowledge and means to prepare food.	Value incongruence *Initially*: "If you're hungry enough"; *later on:* Client-> Stigma -> "If you're hungry enough" Value congruence *Later on:* Dignity -> type of food -> food that is useful/desirable. Dignity -> choice Values -> equity

preferences are and how we know we can prepare that. I mean, there's also that. We don't know, uhm, how people come fro- how people- how much they know and how much they have the ability to prepare food either, so…	Equity? Comparing to others in the community: shouldn't clients have the same ability to choose as others in the community?	*Later on:* Clients -> Relationship with clients
I: Mm hmm [nodding]. P: There's all that debate.	Debate: not all agree within organization about choice if you're poor/a client.	Value incongruence

**Original transcript contains the responses of the participant (e.g., 'P'), and the interviewer (e.g., 'I'), with nonverbal responses written in square brackets.

*Emerging Themes contains labels which were initially given in a first round of coding, as well as labels which were provided or altered in later stages of analysis (e.g., Step 6, once all data had been analyzed once). Some labels remained throughout analysis (i.e., those without any qualifier), while others were changed (i.e., those with qualifiers *initially* and *later on*), and some were added only in the later stage (i.e., those with only the *later on* qualifier). It also uses arrows to denote firstly a larger theme, and after the arrow a subtheme.

Step 4 & 5: Searching for Connections Across Emergent Themes

The list of emergent themes was reviewed, using several strategies mentioned in Smith, Flowers and Larkin (2009) (e.g., abstraction, polarization, contextualization, numeration). Attempts were made to define the themes using the 'Codebook' function. Some codes were clustered and provided a higher-order descriptive label. Codes were not collapsed at this stage. A preliminary codebook (i.e., document with all emerging themes, within their hierarchical structure, and the number of references in each), and emerging themes and their associated quotes were shared with my primary supervisor for auditing after the first participant was complete. This was followed by **Step 5, Moving onto the Next Case**, where I began again at step 1 for the next participant, and so on, until all were finished. As I added each participant, I was very conscientious to carry the idiosyncratic commitment for an IPA project. While Smith, Flowers and Larkin admit

one is inevitably influenced by what they have already read (2009), I followed their advice in bracketing as much as possible my impressions based on others' transcripts as I read through.

Step 6: Looking for Patterns Across Cases

Once steps 1-4 had been completed for all participants, I returned to the emerging thematic structure within NVivo. This stage represented once again an immersive phase in the data. Looking for patterns and meaning within the 129 codes involved reading through each one and its associated quotes, looking for patterns, differences and similarities within and between cases. I began by looking at the frequency of referenced text segments per code and the number of cases which had included this code. As it turned out, the most highly referenced codes were predominantly those seen in more than half of the cases. In order to adhere to an idiosyncratic commitment, I also reviewed the low frequency codes, to discern if they were integral to the overall experience of work for these participants (Pietkiewicz & Smith, 2014; Smith, Flowers & Larkin, 2009). I made a small table with each participants' photo captions and bullet points of their associated narratives. I referred back to this document throughout this stage to ensure the emerging structure captured each of their experiences. During this stage I expanded and collapsed many codes, working toward superordinate themes.

Through journaling, analytical writing and discussion amongst colleagues and the committee, a framework of the superordinate themes and subthemes, which answered the research question, were written. This initial stage included pseudonyms and additional quotes to the final version, which was audited by my primary supervisor.

Results

Overview of Results

In response to the research questions (i.e., how do frontline food security service providers in Thunder Bay experience their work, and what are the interactions between their intrapsychic factors and processes [e.g., motivations, values, wellbeing], organizational practices and their visions for the future of their work?) 3 superordinate themes and 8 subthemes were found. They are overviewed in Table 4. This way of organizing draws out key patterns in the data, but it should be noted that boundaries are arbitrarily drawn by the researcher. In fact, all themes should be understood to be overlapping and interacting to create a full understanding of the experience of food access work for participants.

As written by the founders of the IPA: "Some of the best IPA has this dual quality - pointing to ways in which participants represent unique idiosyncratic instances but also shared higher order qualities" (2009, p. 101). In this spirit I hope I have produced something which highlights themes, while staying true to participants' unique lived experiences. The results are presented in a predominantly thematic manner. I chose not to use pseudonyms, and to present only pieces of participants' narratives within a theme, (as opposed to their narratives flowing throughout the entire results section), to help protect their anonymity. As a reminder to readers, no photographs are presented in this thesis in order to best protect the anonymity of participants and their job security.

Table 4.

Overview of the Themes

Superordinate Theme	Subtheme	Description
Addressing Immediate Needs vs. Conducting Broader-Level Work	Thinking about Broad Issues	Evidence of thinking about broad issues (e.g., poverty, colonialism, capitalist food system) and how this shapes their experience of work.
	Drawn to Frontline Service	Examples of reasons or motivations for engaging in frontline or direct service provision.
	Creating Opportunities for Thinking More Broadly	Examples of creating opportunities to engage in thinking about broader issues alongside doing frontline work, both inside and outside the organization about which they were interviewed.
Tensions in the Role of Lived Experience	Disparities in Lived Experiences	Tensions experienced for participants between their lived experiences and those of people accessing services.
	Lived Experience Bringing People to the Work & Compounding its Tolls	Tensions in the role of lived experience as both a motivating factor and also one which can compound the emotional tolls of frontline work.
	Barriers to Bringing People with Lived Experience to the Work	Tensions in regards to desiring individuals with lived experience to partake in food access work and leadership, while also recognizing the barriers that exist to doing so.
Food Access as Care Work: Values and Structures Interact	Values of Care, Common-Humanity and Inclusivity	Evidence of values of either care, common-humanity or inclusivity and their interactions with structural aspects, which produce experiences of work.
	Importance of Value Congruence	Evidence of the importance of shared values in their experience of work and the structural implications this had.

A Note on Role Labels

Participants used many different terms for themselves, and many different terms for clients/community members. To capture their varied preferences, while ensuring anonymity, I switch back and forth between describing participants' roles as: service providers, staff, or those providing or working in food access services. I refer to those accessing services as: clients, community members, or those accessing services. This is in order to distinguish who I am speaking about and make the results clearer. I do think it is critical to mention, though, that some participants saw themselves like any other community member, and that the "help" they may have been providing was part of a reciprocity essential to community life. An overview of information about participants' organizations (which could be found online), showed that each participant's terminology for "client" matched their organization's terminology. This is also thought to relate more broadly to values and participant's ultimate aims for their work, themes which are explored in more depth throughout the results section.

1. **Addressing Immediate Needs vs. Conducting Broader-Level Work**

Participants described various themes surrounding addressing immediate needs in the community versus conducting broader-level work. First, it was clear that all participants were *thinking about broad issues* and were conscious that food access services alone could not address them (subtheme 1). Second, participants were *drawn to direct service* for various reasons, including their values, early childhood experiences and a desire to witness immediate changes (subtheme 2). Third, participants described barriers to, and acted in ways to *create opportunities for thinking more broadly* (subtheme 3). While this superordinate theme may be seen as common sense, in that most of the participants held roles as both frontline service staff and upper-management, this is seen to be an important finding in understanding why individuals who are

conscious of broader issues continue to engage in frontline work and how it shapes their

experience of it. This is discussed further in the discussion section.

Thinking about Broad Issues

Participants were conscious of broad issues. This was evident in how they discussed their

work and the solutions they proposed. This way of thinking also revealed a tension: engaging in

providing direct service while seemingly conscious that their services could not end food

insecurity. These points make up the first subtheme: *thinking about broad issues.*

In their interviews, all participants spoke about some of the broader issues which they saw

as being connected to their work in food access programs. These included: subsidies, the price of

food and alienation from participating in anything other than the corporate, global food system;

racism; colonialism and resource extraction; poverty and income inequality; the nonprofit

industrial complex and a siloing of care work. As stated by one participant:

That's again like being able to connect back to those root causes, or those structural pieces:

histories of trauma, intergenerational trauma, you know, harm like colonization, racism,

like kind of all of those, those things that kind of are happening for people in their, in their

lives and are really kind of what are the contributing pieces to what's going on for them.

There was variability in the extent to which these were discussed. While all participants

mentioned some of the systemic challenges impacting their work, the participant above most

clearly linked broader factors to community members' challenges - demonstrating more complex

and systems thinking. All other participants focused predominantly on prices of food in a capitalist

food system and poverty as factors related to food insecurity.

An awareness of broad issues was also evident in how participants discussed the future of

their work. This was evident in their advocating for solutions such as defunding the police and

land-back for Indigenous peoples (one participant), guaranteed basic income (two participants),

and Canada-wide subsidies for fresh fruits and vegetables, so healthful food could be more

affordable for all (one participant). Two participants spoke directly about their dreams for the

future of their work as seeing an end to food access programs all together. As one participant

voiced:

> My dreamiest dream would be that we wouldn't do food banks anymore, that we would
>
> just cease. Food banks are terrible. They're a horrible thing. They were, you know, created
>
> 50 some odd years ago, 60 years ago. They were meant to be, you know, a stopgap
>
> measure, and they turned into a way of life for people. Food banks are not the answer.
>
> Freedom from poverty is the answer. Basic income is the answer, you know? That's what
>
> needs to happen.

In this passage the participant describes her desire to see an end to some of the services

they provide, entirely. She also highlights some of the underlying factors associated with food

insecurity (e.g., poverty), the chronicity of the issue, and the inability for food access services to

end food insecurity for community members. Indeed, another participant who advocated for a

guaranteed basic income similarly remarked: "It's funny, I mean, that that word 'emergency' has

been in our sort of description. Yet I think so many of our clients come every single time. Is this an

emergency? This is just a necessary piece of life." This passage again demonstrates that while

services may continue to use the labeling of emergency or short-term, both participants

acknowledge that their clients had been dealing with this on an ongoing basis, and that food banks

were not enough to solve this issue. A third participant also spoke about the chronicity of this

issue, and related it to racial inequalities:

It's kind of wild to me because it feels, it feels super known and super evident at this point

that it's continued time and time again through, you know, so much research and ways like

reports and things that like, where it's just time and time again kind of shown who

continues to be most directly impacted, like Indigenous folks, like black folks, like new

Canadian communities.

Thus, we can see a tension in this experience.[1] While these three participants acknowledged

some of the underlying causes of food insecurity, (e.g., poverty, cost of food in a global food

system, colonialism, racial hierarchies), and the inability for their services to address these causes,

they continued to work in the area. As this participant went on to describe, while there was a need

for structural transformation, meeting community members' needs now was also a priority:

Knowing that structurally and systemically things are violent for people and the ways that,

you know, you can work out the root causes, which I think is addressing those pieces, but

in the, in the same way, also there's kind of needing to meet people's immediate needs. And

so that feels like the harm reduction piece, so then it does look like, you know, getting hot

meals, like getting Big Macs for people just because that's the immediacy and the urgency

of in the moment. And then also trying to agitate around and do work addressing the root

causes, as much as possible and knowing that that's kind of like ongoing really long vision

type of work.

In this passage, the third participant acknowledges that the structural pieces take time, but

that hunger could not wait. She relates this to a harm reduction response to substance-use. This can

be understood to demonstrate her awareness that while they won't eradicate hunger through

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[1] *Tension* is a word that emerged in one participant's narrative, who submitted 2 sets of 2 photos and described the tension that existed between them. Prior to this, many of the interviews had been labeled with the overarching theme of "duality", because so many aspects of the work involved a push and pull of ideal and reproachable. This was replaced by the term tension, and it is hence used throughout the results section very deliberately.

providing a hot meal, they can prevent more serious harm and suffering in the moment. It was not clear how other participants conceptualized a resolution to this tension between meeting immediate needs versus doing structural work.

Drawn to Frontline Service

While all participants were conscious of broader issues, they were all engaged in providing direct services to help community members access food now (i.e., were *drawn to frontline service*). Participants described a range of reasons for engaging in frontline work, which included: their values, action as a response to suffering, work where they could see or exert change, and a sense of identity and purpose.

For one participant the move to action toward addressing broad issues was values-based, and had begun early in her life: "It was very early in my youth, I'd say, that I started, yeah, this mindset of this inequity in society, and I think that's just grown over the years. I became involved in politics when I was still a teenager." She also described developing a sense of everyone helping out in her nuclear family as a child:

> My father, you know, he didn't make a great living. It wasn't - we weren't anywhere close
> to wealthy, but we always had enough, and we always had a lot of joy in our family and a
> lot of - yeah, we all helped out. We had to. We had all our chores to do, etc, and help out
> with things.

While the value of helping out appeared to be related to this early family experience, she described her commitment to social justice as being incongruent with the political leanings of her parents. She attributed her lens to books she read as a teenager and to her peer group.

For this participant, values of social justice continued to drive her behaviour into adulthood. She mentioned being involved in food access work due to its link to poverty and equity,

and was engaged in roles in other nonfood-related organizations. A value of helping out, and more specifically service work, had also persisted throughout her adult life:

> Within me is always- I feel volunteer work is a necessary part of my life and it should be almost, well, I believe it should be for everybody. But I know it's not. But I think it's part of what we owe our communities. And then it also makes you feel I think more fulfilled and more participatory within your community.

In this passage we can see that being a volunteer emerges as one part of her identity, something that is always within her. It was also noted that engaging in these roles offered her feelings of fulfillment and participation. Similar positive feelings were described specifically about her frontline service roles: "I also selfishly wanted that feeling of accomplishment and, yeah, working hard for a few hours and knowing you really accomplished something. And it wasn't just working towards a long term goal like so much planning is, right?" Something similar was mentioned by another participant quoted at the end of subtheme 1, who discussed "really long vision type of work", highlighting that structural work happens on a long-term scale. What is illuminated here are some of the benefits of direct service (i.e., the feelings that come from seeing much more immediate and tangible changes happen).

Thus, we can see for this first participant that helping out was demonstrated early in her life. After becoming invested in social justice and equity, she continued to seek out ways of participating in her community around related causes. This appeared to be related to her identity and sense of herself, as well as providing positive feelings of fulfillment and accomplishment. This was especially true in relation to frontline service, versus her other planning or leadership roles. Fulfillment appeared to be based on taking action in the community which aligned with her values, regardless of the particular organization she worked for.

Another participant also described her work as being values-based, and that she experienced positive feelings in response to such actions. For example, she stated that she knew she was not likely to see huge, sweeping changes in her lifetime toward social equity, but that there were small wins, "and that feels good, to know that was – that there was a hand in that". Continuing to provide direct service was very important to this participant, despite her leadership role: "I went to school to work with people, so I have a very hard time keeping my hands out of, you know, that kind of work. So, I still run programs. I still interact with our [clients] all the time." This participant spoke at length of client interactions and of being part of seeing changes happen in their life. This can be understood to be connected with those feelings of accomplishment described by the participant above. What emerges in both narratives appears to be an important aspect of motivation in frontline work to both contribute to larger goals, which fit within participants' broader value sets, but also seeing some immediate results of this, which planning or structural work does not provide.

The second participant also described values and a commitment to actively helping others as stemming from early childhood experiences. For example, witnessing members of her parents' church helping one another, and particularly her parents' attitudes toward helping:

I also remember my parents just giving people the shirt off their backs. [...] They would know of people that were just hanging on by a thread. And my parents were not well-to-do, but they would always make ends meet, and they would always figure it out to help out that other person.

The second participant, however, had also experienced living in a homeless shelter and visiting a food bank for a brief period of time. This provided unique motivation to want to work in this area and change the nature of services that community members would encounter:

I remember what it was like living in a homeless shelter and having no dignity left. I know

what it's like to have to use a food bank. And so, yeah. I think it's just honoring those

memories and saying, you know, I can do this better. You know? I can absolutely do this

better. I can make sure that at least in my place, people are treated with more dignity.

Thus, for two participants, being drawn to direct service was related to values (e.g.,

helping, social justice), early childhood experiences, and positive feelings associated with

witnessing immediate changes in people's lives. This was understood to be in contrast to planning

roles which might not afford these same positive feelings due to their longer-term manifestations.

One participant also described a unique motivation of lived experience.

Unlike the previous two participants, the third participant did not mention early childhood

experiences in her interview. She did, however, speak about coming to her current work with a

conceptualization of systemic issues, particularly related to the corporate, global food system. She

relayed that this stemmed from her own reading and university coursework many years prior.

In relation to being drawn to direct service, this participant spoke about providing acts of

service as an important aspect of her social and emotional health:

Being able to do something to give back. And I think a lot of people are really

struggling during the pandemic right now because they can't. [...] That's definitely

what's kept me afloat in my own mind being able to do that because it's such a

bigger part of who I am, you know? The whole love languages thing, [name of

interviewer], that I'm sure you know all about, the five love languages, but I'm all

about acts of service. And so, if I can't do that, then I feel trapped. And I am, yeah,

everyday grateful that I have a job that allows me to do those acts of service.

Similar to the first participant presented in this subtheme who stated, "within me is always", a commitment to direct service emerged as part of this participant's identity, as she relays that her work acts in service of how she sees and understands herself, stating "it's such a bigger part of who I am". Being able to act in these ways, ones that were congruent with this version of self, provided her mind stability and without those opportunities she suffered. This participant went on to describe the most exhausting part of her work as seeing her clients suffer and not being able to do anything about it; whereas the good days were seeing them succeed. Thus, her draw to direct service might be understood as a function of forming a congruent sense of self, as well as a coping tool to manage her strong empathetic feelings in the face of suffering.

This work also provided strong positive feelings for this participant, who stated several times she had meaningful work, with a sense of fulfillment and purpose. This was also thought to be a shared experience on her team, "and our work is always that way. It's always like giving, you know, giving us hope and giving us fulfillment". She also described it as a reason she would find it hard to leave her job:

> I have applied for other jobs and turned them down because it's really hard to leave work that feels so good. Doing such meaningful work every day and having the opportunity to contribute and to grow and to change all the time, is very powerful. For who you are, as a person.

Thus, once again we can see how intimately connected this role is to her identity. Her narrative also points, once again, toward the positive feelings of agency or autonomy in being able to exert change. This was seen in other participant's stories as well, and as being particular to frontline versus broad-level work. For this participant, meaning was perceived to be particular to her role and her organization.

The fourth participant also related this work to a sense of identity, which was changing and deepening over time:

Interviewer: I wondered if thinking about some of these things, about structures and systems of power and privilege, other things you've been talking about - racism - does this bring you to the work, or does this sort of come out from doing the work?

Participant: Hmm. Uhm, I think it's both. Yeah, I think maybe it's what brought me to the work for sure, but it's also what makes me feel more and more committed to it if that makes sense. Because, I think, yeah, continuing to kind of be involved, or like feeling called to kind of like action and to take up kind of - I feel like more and more what I'm what I'm understanding is like a role or responsibility. Just as someone who is continuing to kind of exist in these times, yeah, it feels, I feel very called to be doing this. But yeah, the more, the more I do it, I feel like the more I, I am committed to doing it and feel kind of grounded in purpose.

In this passage what emerges is part of this participant's narrative of being drawn to action based on her values (e.g., equity) and understanding of systemic causes. As she behaves with more congruence towards these goals this feeling builds and enhances her larger sense of purpose. For this participant the sense of purpose was not connected to her role necessarily, and she spoke more generally of her experience in multiple different activism campaigns, both food-related and not. What also emerged in this narrative is mirrored in the first participant presented in this subtheme, who mentioned service work as a responsibility, stating it was "part of what we owe our communities". While it was not clear from the first participant's interview who exactly owes this or why, this next participant seems to relate it to a responsibility by sheer matter of being alive.

While this participant had been engaged in activism for many years, she also described finding ways to act more congruently with her values over time:

I think there were probably ways that I was feeling called to do work but was still kind of figuring it out in those ways that feels kind of like ouchy and messy and like you're kind of fumbling along [...] But I think probably around school, moving into university, I guess in ways that I felt more pulled into, or was feeling, yeah, more pulled towards radicalized ways of getting involved, I guess. Yeah, which is kind of where, I mean, there was kind of fumbling prior to that, and I think, things that felt kind of adjacent to doing the work but were definitely complicated and potentially like doing more harm. You know … I, yeah, in ways that people feel like it's the do-good type of stuff, like the volunteering kind of like abroad. I don't know. Things that kind of now feel looking back is like more trouble. Yeah, but yeah, I think through just in university is where I can feel like the things were kind of more moving into place for me and my own thinking.

In this passage the participant really highlights a tension between being drawn to action based on her values, but not always being able to enact it perfectly. While similar to the work she wanted to do, this incongruence actually felt painful (e.g., "ouchy"). This highlights, once again, how much this work was values-based and a part of participants' identities in general. She described this process of discovering what work felt most congruent as something which would continue throughout her life: "I think it's just going to be continuing. Like it's going to just be ongoing. But, yeah, definitely more as of late."

Through this participant's narrative also emerged the idea of action as a response to witnessing suffering, particularly when responses did not seem to be happening elsewhere:

I think it kind of activates something within people, because when you see how
there's a crisis happening, and you don't yeah, you don't see a lot of action
happening from the positions of power, where it should be, where those responses
should be coming from, that's jarring. And then it also activates something, I think,
in wanting to support people, you know, and just kind of respond.

This mirrors other participants who discussed wanting to act in response to witnessing their own or others' suffering.

Thus, in this second subtheme, (*drawn to direct service*), we can see how early childhood and university experiences contributed to a sense of identity and values for participants. Food access service organizations allowed them an opportunity to enact such values-based identities, affording them with positive feelings of fulfillment, meaning and purpose. This was seen as being particularly salient in frontline roles where they were able to see the immediate impact of their actions, which strengthened their feelings of agency in the face of suffering and commitment to such values and roles. The relationship between their work and their sense of self was also understood to create the necessity to perform their work in particular ways, and some participants describe challenging psychological states when they could not (e.g., ouchy, trapped). A unique motivation of lived experience also emerged for one participant.

Creating Opportunities for Thinking More Broadly

Even though participants spoke about their enjoyment in providing direct service, they discussed the tension of doing this work without proper space to keep broader issues in mind. In response to this, they described *creating opportunities to think more broadly*, instances which

make up the third subtheme in the larger theme of *Addressing Immediate Needs vs. Conducting Broader-Level Work.*

      Attempting to think broadly while meeting immediate needs was challenging for a number of reasons. Three participants mentioned the demands involved in frontline services. For example:

      Also, some of the bigger picture things, and I think we have, you know, an

      opportunity and responsibility to figure out how to advocate to government, people

      in power, the whatever systems. We need to try to get some change that means less

      people are vulnerable, fewer people, hardly anybody is vulnerable… Yeah, it's

      pretty easy to go, you know, chugging along, cause we- our service is needed, and

      so this is, how are we going to do it, and dat da dat dada. You know, make sure we

      have enough food, enough people, the structures, the la-and then, but are we

      thinking about- like it's been 40 years, apparently, since the first food bank was

      opened in Canada. And it was supposed to be a temporary measure. 40 years. You

      know. And before that, we know there were informal, you know, ways of accessing

      food from churches and neighbours etcetera, so yeah. Change is needed.

      Thus, what emerges here is an understanding of the business of frontline work and running that type of service. It also elucidates the in-the-moment-focus of this work, which can both be desirable for participants, but can mask the chronicity and structural factors which also need to be addressed. Another participant highlighted the ways that the COVID-19 pandemic had made this even more challenging:

      I mean, in COVID like there... I think there's been some pivoting, and I think there's

      been some ways that I guess kind of things have collided together to create just

      super extreme crises for the folks that we would be supporting. And yeah. And so, I

think that there's just been a lot of movement and shift around the work that we've

been doing. And I think that feels hard, internally to kind of have those shifts

happening and also so rapidly when you're pivoting because you don't, in the

moment, really have a time to, I think, stop and question and think about the moves

that are happening and whether like what that means, whether that still aligns.

That's the that's the hard thing about doing reactive work.

Thus, while meeting immediate needs was so important, and felt meaningful, it also

made it very easy to lose sight of the broader picture, particularly in relation to doing the

work in a way which was congruent with their intentions and values. This participant also

highlights in this passage an important part of this theme which is the toll that this takes on

staff. Perhaps frontline work would be less challenging if staff were not considering both

the larger issues as well as the immediate needs. But this was not the case with the

participants interviewed in this project. Indeed, their awareness of systemic issues seemed

to be a keystone in bringing them to the work.

A third participant also spoke about the demands of frontline services during

COVID as preventing broader conversations amongst team members, however, later on

stated that this was not significantly different from pre-pandemic times. She identified the

type of organization as being a structural factor involved in creating this pace, comparing it

to her previous position in a governmental organization:

It was much easier work. You had time to read things. Think about things. Process things.

You don't have that kind of time in a not-for-profit world. I don't have that kind of time in

the way that the work that I do is structured anyways.

This participant later elaborated that the funding of nonprofits is such that to remain afloat, organizations are forced to continuously create new projects. With so much growth and change, and a general lack of time to meet all of their demands, conversation amongst team members was limited. This had led to a lot of frustration amongst her team, including frustration for her. While conversations and time to process continued to be a scarce resource, she described that they had made a shift in the power structure of their organization which had helped to create some space for reflexivity. This new model distributed responsibility amongst several people in leadership, as opposed to their previous pyramid structure with one person at the head. While clearly there remained a desire for more reflection in her work, she described this change as being very positive:

> So, I'm super grateful for that. I imagine the rest of the [management] team is too, but yeah. It and it creates an opportunity for us to have conversations about how we grow, and when we grow. And yeah. And how we think about things like those conversations about dignified food access and what that means for us.

In this narrative, a change in the structure of the organization interacted with the participant's (and according to her, her team's) sense of wellness. The flatter power structure allowed for more autonomy for staff to make their own individual decisions without the need for approval, "what decisions you can make [...] there was just more autonomy". It also resulted in more opportunity to provide feedback and elicit change, "to be able to say what you think and have it received in a way that allows for reflection and conversation". Thus, while the nature of frontline work in a nonprofit was expressed to be challenging for someone who wanted to process and be reflexive, structural changes in relation to power, autonomy and opportunity for feedback within the organization were felt to be very helpful. She linked these feelings to her sense of commitment to her role.

Another participant also spoke about funding structures in a nonprofit context as restricting the amount of meaningful work she could do:

I am forced to create work plans and develop strategies that are based on what the funder thinks, not what my community thinks. Who am I trying to reach the funder or the community, right? You know, so this is the difficult- that's the tension that exists, and that's the greatest tension. And so, so what it means, is 'Fine I'm going to do all of this work in order to get funding to keep my doors open, so that I can do all of this work [hands wide apart] that is meaningful, that is not funded, that I do off the side of my desk.' And when I say I, I mean my whole staff, my whole team, my whole organization.

In this passage, the participant refers to meaningful work which was not supported by external funders. This included food access programming because it fell outside the organization's direct mandate. While the link was not explicit, she described in her interview that providing food access helped clients to meet other health related needs. Thus, through her narrative what emerges is an example of some of the narrow ways that projects are funded, without considering some of the interrelated causes and relationships involved. This meant finding fundraised dollars for some projects. "It's all fundraised dollars. There's no government money for that, so it's it's a tough go." Due to this participant's strong desire to complete her work in ways that addressed her clients' needs more broadly, she acted in resistant and creative ways around this system (e.g., sought donations). This led to emotions of pride:

So on my good days, I look back on it with pride when I look at all the barriers that were set in front of us, to prevent us from doing this really great work and we got it done anyways. I look at my staff, I look at my team, I look at it with great pride that we were able to pull it off.

But also difficult emotions such as being overwhelmed and thinking about leaving:

I swear I've got: this is my mandate [makes a narrow column with both hands]. And then

this is the work that I do off the side of my desk [gestures with both hands wide]. [...] So

it's overwhelming, overwhelming on a good day, it's overwhelming, right? [...] You know,

any other job - being a barista sounds so much better, right now, you know, so so yeah, it's

it's it's hard.

The challenges of thinking broadly with this type of siloing of community needs and

funding streams in the nonprofit sector was also discussed by another participant. She pointed to

how silly it was to think of having food-specific organizations, and how it took away from

investigating the systemic issues within the community. She linked this to power, and the ways

that being rigidly focused and bogged down by bureaucracy may prevent wider social changes:

"what would be kind of radical kind of resistance work to the state, kind of being siphoned into

these - if you think about it, kind of rigid rigid structures of work." She related this to

professionalization of community-care work, and the emergence of a nonprofit industrial complex.

For this participant moving away from traditional funding streams and looking toward

mutual aid funding, such as Go Fund Me pages, were an option to avoid being pigeon-holed into

rigid mandates and the criteria and slow pace of external funding agencies. Thus, once again, we

can see a tension between the intrapsychic factors of work that aligns with participant's values and

engages more broadly in the community's needs, and structural factors (e.g., mainstream external

funding options). While this presented a challenge for participants, who wanted to think more

broadly about these issues, they described ways to resist through changing power structures within

their organizations and looking for community-based funding options.

Another participant described her organization's focus as solely on serving immediate food access needs (i.e., did not include services other than providing food). She described planning to advocate for this to change. If this was not possible, she felt committed to expanding the range of her work on her own time:

> Becoming more of a voice for change is important to me, personally. I would like to put it forward to the board too, like, do we, you know, start to take a more vocal stance about social issues or do I do it personally. It doesn't matter. So that's sort of where I see the future.

A second participant also spoke about seeking out ways to engage in structural work through helping in various different activism campaigns outside her role in the organization providing food access. For both of these participants, their organizations did not appear to have opportunities to engage in broader-level work (i.e., the organization provided one frontline service only). These were also the two organizations with predominantly volunteer staff. Conversely, the two paid-staff participants spoke about projects within their organizations where they could engage on a broader-scale, such as research projects or partnerships with regional- or national-level impacts. While all four participants described challenges related to inadequate funding, it may be that larger organizations who had the funds to pay staff were also able to provide both frontline and broader-level change programs. Thus, while all participants were working to *create opportunities to think more broadly* (e.g., changing leadership structures, seeking alternative funding), the volunteer staff's motivations, in interaction with their organization type, meant seeking out opportunities outside their food access organization.

__Summary of Theme 1__

Theme 1 and its subthemes (i.e., *thinking about broad issues*; *drawn to direct service*; and *creating opportunities to think more broadly*) exhibit how participants' intrapsychic factors such as values (e.g., equity, helping out) and early life experiences led them to engage in organizations offering food access programs. Frontline work in particular seemed to reinforce their commitment, through feelings of accomplishment and ability to witness change, which further reinforced their sense of identity and purpose. All participants were conscious of larger, systemic issues and described actions to contemplate these in conjunction with their frontline roles. Various interactions with organizational practices were observed, such as the demands of frontline services, rigid mainstream funding options and organization-type.

Overall, trying to address immediate needs and conduct broad-level work was not an easy task for any participant. Three of four participants described some of the challenging psychological experiences involved (e.g., exhausting, overwhelming). This was seen as being related to various structural factors in interaction with their sense of identity received from their work, producing a strong incentive to perform their roles in specific ways. While organizations might make changes to accommodate such staff, some were willing to seek out other opportunities which would align.

2. Tensions in the Role of Lived Experience

Various tensions were described in the role that lived experience plays in the work of providing food access, making up the second superordinate theme. This included tensions summarized under three subthemes: *disparities in lived experiences*; *lived experience bringing people to the work and compounding its tolls*; and *barriers to bringing people with lived experience to the work*.

Disparities in Lived Experiences

Participants in this project described tensions between the disparities in their own lived experiences and the ones of other community members. This led to feelings such as sadness, anger and guilt. Such emotions spurred reflections about privilege for some participants, through which they seemed to create meaning, seeing themselves as being in common with others or reframing individual problems as products of broader systems. Such reflections seemed to commit participants even further to advocate for those who are marginalized.

All participants described stories of interactions with clients which brought up challenging emotions. Most of these stories seemed to include worry and sadness, as well as frustration at the injustices that their clients had to face. For example, "it's the emotional toil- toll that that I get when our [clients] or our past [clients] aren't doing well [...] where you have the [client] whose trauma stuff is so high, addiction stuff is so high, and suicidal ideation is part of your conversation." All participants spoke about how clients were facing numerous different challenges and vulnerabilities, including dying too early and too often from preventable chronic disease, sleeping outside in inadequate makeshift shelters in the winter, being isolated, scared, ashamed and not respected in the broader community. As is noted in the passage above, all participants described a toll to bearing witness to this kind of suffering in their frontline capacity.

For some participants, disparities also led to feelings of guilt. For example, two participants submitted photos of their own kitchens, and used them as prompts to describe the differences in their clients' lived experiences. For example,

I cannot for the life of me begin to imagine what it would be like to lay my head down at night and wonder if I'm going to freeze to death or wake up the next morning, and when I do wake up, what's going to change. So that is very hard to know that and to come home,

and lucky me, I've got that great place. [...] That tension that exists in you and that guilt that you feel for for having what you have.

For this participant reflections on these disparities led from guilt to privilege. She described privilege as factors such as race and access to education, which gave unearned advantages within our society. This understanding seemed to allow her to connect more deeply with community members, and see herself as in common with them:

I'm not different from the people I serve other than privilege, right? So, I've had some lucky breaks along the way. I've had some privilege being white, being able to access education, you know? These are things- these are points of privilege, right? And so, yeah, so I feel that I'm just luckier than a lot of people."

The second participant used a photograph of her own kitchen to describe moving from guilt to privilege:

When I finish a day at [name of workplace] and I come home, you know, I just open the fridge and there's all this wonderful food that I've bought [...] I mean, I sometimes I feel a little guilty about, yeah, what my privilege is in that I have no worries about money, no worries about security and comfort.

In this case, disparities in lived experiences led her to reflect on her individual privileges (e.g., having money, security). She went on to profess:

I just, you know, my strongest feeling is that everyone in our society, a society as rich as our Canadian society, everyone should be able to buy their own food, have the choice of food, have a good, safe place to live with a fridge and a stove and all of that.

In this passage what emerges is an important shift, from expressing her own guilt and individual privileges to a broader commitment to equity and fundamental human rights for all

Canadians. This may be understood as a way to transfer her negative feelings (e.g., guilt) at seeing the suffering of others, which interacts with her value set (e.g., equity), to further drive her desire for social change.

A third participant spoke about privilege and linked it to broader systems of power, in turn deindividualizing it as a problem:

> I think privilege is kind of hard for people to talk about in ways because it feels personal, I guess. Like I've definitely had my moments of kind of like reckoning with my privilege but being able to not, I guess, take that so personally as like a personal fault but, kind of again place it in these kinds of bigger structures of power. Because like making it personal can lead to, I think, this immense sense of just hopelessness sometimes, and immobility, and also super defensiveness, and just all of these things to wrestle with and- but, that's not it. I think what really is important is to connect it back to the those like bigger power pieces. And, like, then situate yourself within that.

In this passage we see how frontline staff might move from guilt or thoughts of privilege into a deeper understanding of the inequities in society on a systems-level. This participant also described applying this logic to community members' struggles:

> I guess what happens is those those get individualized. Like those get seen as, like, individualized problems. It gets faulted on on the individuals for their substance use or for chronic houselessness or whatever, that would be. And that's just not that's just not it, right? And that's again like being able to connect back to those root causes, or those structural pieces.

She went on to talk about seeing individual problems:

What just happens is it just continues those cycles of harm for people. And, yeah, I mean, it's also been said that it's like a strategic tool by the state, for example, or or capitalism like in terms of making those things, like, individualizing those things for folks. To be like that's a that's a you problem, like, you need to fix that. Not that it's the responsibility of us as like community. Wanting to kind of uplift each other. Be in community with each other.

Here this participant highlights that the act of reframing individual problems as being rooted in systems is one of resistance. She identifies that, in her thinking, individualizing can continue cycles of harm, and that it supports a capitalist system whereby everyone must take care of themselves. This removes the responsibility of the state to care of its citizens, and also degrades community ties of shared responsibility and care. This can be further understood in relation to her thinking broadly (theme 1) and identifying the numerous and interwoven structures of power which come to create situations of food insecurity, as well as aligning with her values of equity, justice and community care (captured in theme 3).

Later this participant described that while reframing from individual to systems is helpful, it can also be challenging, "hard to kind of connect and make those connection pieces when you see someone in the moment", but that she engages by reminding herself when she meets someone: "I don't know this person's story. I don't know this person's history."

Thus, while participants described tensions between witnessing the disparities in their lived experiences and those of their clients, for three participants this also allowed for deeper reflections on the nature of privilege and their commitment to their values (e.g., social justice, seeing each other in common humanity). This subtheme should also be viewed in relation to theme 1, which described participants' sense of meaning and purpose in the face of suffering. While so, this

subtheme highlights that all participants also experienced challenging emotions when witnessing

marginalization and oppression in the lives of community members.

Lived Experience Bringing People to the Work & Compounding its Tolls

What also emerged as a subtheme in *Tensions in the Role of Lived Experience*, was the role

that lived experience can play in both bringing people to food access work while also

compounding its emotional tolls. It is possible that this is mediated by qualities of the lived

experience (e.g., severity, past or present).

Several participants spoke about individuals coming to this work through an emotional

experience of suffering similar to community members requiring food access support (i.e., lived

experience). For example, as presented in theme 1, one participant described having experience

using a homeless shelter and food bank. This seemed to serve as a motivating force, inspiring her

to commit to providing services in a different way: "I can make sure that at least in my place,

people are treated with more dignity". Another participant described someone in her organization

offering to provide a mental health initiative to young people who were struggling, alongside their

food parcel. This person was moved to do this having recently known a young person who died

from suicide. While describing this story, the participant herself cried in her interview. A third

participant described how many in her organization are motivated by their own experiences of

crises and trauma. This was described as being very challenging and had led to service providers

needing to step back from their roles:

It's triggering for people, especially people with histories of trauma [eyes filling with tears],

who have, yeah, have been surviving ongoing crises, I think, in lots of ways. Yeah, so I

don't know. It's, yeah, it's really shaken people in ways. And I think many people step back

in ways that, I think, they're trusting their own bodies and, like, needing to do that for their own health and wellbeing.

Here the third participant highlights the different ways that coming into contact with suffering may impact staff in this sector. This phenomenon was further elucidated in another part of her interview where she explicitly stated the tension that exists between being motivated by, but also uniquely impacted by, trauma: "It is hard work. I think it can be like activating and triggering for people. And in the same breath, it's like that's- this is what's calling certain people to the work as well." Thus, while lived experience may compound emotional tolls, it may also explain why certain individuals join the movement to begin with.

Two factors which may be important in understanding this phenomenon are the severity of the trauma and the role that active suffering may play. For example, the participant who had experienced living in a homeless shelter was now living a life of relative security and comfort. She also described varying degrees of suffering: "I was homeless. I wasn't sleeping in the bush homeless, right? There are degrees of poverty. There are degrees of homelessness. There are degrees of being disenfranchised." In contrast, the other participant mentioned that those who were retraumatized "have been surviving ongoing crises [...] in lots of ways." Thus, the nature of the trauma may have been ever-present in some service providers' lives (i.e., "ongoing"). "In lots of ways" may also indicate that these levels of marginalization were profound. While she did not elaborate on these further, reading both narratives together might hint to some of the variables influencing emotional tolls and burnout.

Thus, subtheme 2 encompassed the tensions that participants described in terms of lived experience acting as both a motivating influence and something which may compound its

emotional tolls. Investigating whether service providers are facing ongoing traumas, and their severity, might be helpful in understanding burnout in this field.

Barriers to Bringing People with Lived Experience to the Work

In the final subtheme of theme 2, two participants spoke distinctly about a desire for more individuals with lived experience to engage in their organization. This was complicated by barriers, such as stigma, overburdening of certain groups and social network-based recruitment.

In her interview, one participant spoke about her hopes for the future of her work as including more people with lived experience in transforming food access services:

> There has to be a food bank movement, right? Like if we're going to shift this, it shouldn't be us on top saying this is how food's going to be delivered, it should be people who need to access that saying 'this is what we need from you', right? 'You guys are the system. This is what the system needs to look like to meet our needs.' Right, and so we want to create a ground swell on this.

She also spoke about how there had been a large increase in the number of people working at her organization who had lived experience akin to the community members they served. This was accompanied by great pride for her, as she had advocated for having more staff with this experience. This was related to increasing power for clients, and she spoke about how "when we make decisions in the organization to do something, it's with that lived experience voice at the table as a decision maker". While this shift was not described in detail, she mentioned the creation of programs that supported clients to become advocates and mentors, as well as a reduction in the stigma of certain lived experiences.

Another participant spoke about how they were hoping to engage more diverse representation with lived experience of different social positions, but that this was challenging:

Want to look at making sure that we're, in addition to welcoming clients from any

background, welcoming volunteers and increasing our representation somehow of

volunteers that represent the community we serve. We have a big percentage of our clients

who are Indigenous. It would be ideal to have in some way involvement from that group

[...] and yet I know that almost everybody is saying that these days, and I kind of think that

must put a bit of pressure on that that group to come up with, like, how- people to to work

in that capacity.

While in this passage she spoke about Indigenous people in particular, she also spoke about

recruiting folks from other social locations in her interview (e.g., younger folks, individuals who

spoke languages other than English). Some of the barriers she discussed were the overburdening of

members of certain communities, and other structural factors, such as their hours of operation.

What also seemed to be important, and emerged in other parts of this participant's

narrative, was the predominant make-up of staff in her organization and the role of social networks

in recruitment. For example, she herself was recruited through her social network; through going

to different local events and meeting people who worked there. This was related to theme 1, and

seeking out ways to enact her values and interest in social justice. Since joining, she described that

many of her social connections (e.g., friends, family), were also interested in becoming involved.

At one point in her interview, she identified what seems to be critical in understanding this

phenomenon, which is that: "who's [involved] begets more of the like". Thus, some factors in

understanding who becomes involved in providing food access may be looking into who is already

involved and how recruitment is being conducted. This also speaks to the finding of how important

value congruence was for participants, which is discussed in theme 3.

Summary of Theme 2

Theme 2, *Tensions in the Role of Lived Experience*, included the ways that participants described the disparities between their own lived experiences and those of other community members who accessed food services. For some participants, challenging emotions led to reflections on privilege and a recommitment to social justice. It also described how lived experience may be seen as a push and pull factor, both drawing certain individuals to this work while presenting a unique challenge and risk for burn-out. Lastly, this theme explored some of the tensions in the desire to have folks with lived-experience join in service provision, and various barriers to doing so (e.g., stigma, recruitment methods, homogenous staff). One participant in particular described seeing an increase in the amount of service providers with lived experience in her organization and reported that this was in tandem to decreasing stigma and organizational support programs to recruit and retain such individuals.

3. Food Access as Care Work: Values and Structures Interact

While participants endorsed common values of social justice and equity (theme 1), they also endorsed similar values of care, common-humanity and inclusivity which made up a separate theme: *Food Access as Care Work: Values and Structures Interact*. What emerged from the interviews was an understanding that food access work was deeply relational, and for most participants was described as care work (subtheme 1). What also emerged was a sense of how important these values were and how the work relied on them being shared (i.e., value congruence). This was juxtaposed with participants encountering value incongruence in the community and in other organizations (subtheme 2). Some of the interactions between value sets and structural factors were also discussed.

Values of Care, Common-Humanity, and Inclusivity

What emerged across all four participants was an emphasis on the relational aspects of food access work. This was found to be linked to values, and specifically ones of *care, common-humanity, and inclusivity* making up this subtheme. The interaction of these psychological constructs, organizational structures, and participants' suggestions for the future of their services interacted in unique ways depending on the specificities within participants' value sets.

While food was discussed in all interviews, what emerged for three participants was that food served as a way to show their love and care for other community members. For these participants, there was also an emphasis on providing care regardless of who the person was - their background, habits, lifestyle, etc. This was defined as a set of shared values, including care, common-humanity, and inclusivity. For example,

> Food is just a thing, right? But it's about the love and the connection to people, regardless of who they are, or what state they're in, or what culture they come from, or what their sexual orientation is, or all of those things. What we want them to know is that they're loved.

Food access work was really a type of relational social service work for these participants. While this may be similar to other interventions where staff use themselves or other resources as a conduit for care (e.g., mental health care, case management), some of the unique aspects of using food as a facilitator emerged in their interviews as well. For example, food was discussed as something which connects us to our traditions, cultures, and relationships with the earth. As one participant highlighted:

In my family, like so many families, you know, that's how you show you love, that's how you show you care, right, is by cooking. And so, a number of our staff are like that, and so, yeah, we'll get busy in the kitchen and get things happening.

This passage speaks to how food as a conduit for care begins early in many of our lives. This was a sentiment shared by many amongst this participant's team. Their work allowed them an opportunity to continue this tradition. This passage also highlights that food access work can expand familial-type care to other community members.

Another participant also identified various ways that food and food preparation bring people together to share culture, traditions, skills and connectivity. At several points, she also described that her work with food connected her to the economic market as well as to land and place, which is seen as being unique to food.

These three participants also spoke about other needs that could be met through providing food. For example, two participants spoke about how deliveries of food could be paired with important mental health supports or community-based check-up's. Food is what got them in the door, or to the door, in this case. Two participants also spoke about how their food access programs worked in tandem with other physical healthcare services. One participant highlighted that some community members were so taxed trying to meet their basic needs that healthcare appointments became unmanageable. Providing access to food alongside other services ensured community members could engage in them. This was seen as being particularly significant during the pandemic, where deliveries of food ensured frontline staff could provide education on COVID-19 symptoms, provide PPE and other symptom-relief packages to marginalized or isolated people. While all of this was seen as being important, it was inseparable for these three participants from their underlying values of deep care and non-judgment, and the desire to convey this to fellow

community members. It was not merely about providing food, but about making sure community members were taken care of.

Their values of care and common humanity were also evident in their descriptions of how they imagined the future of their work in a larger sense. For example, one participant described her hope that all organizations providing food access would let go of a charity model and replace it with a community development one. Another participant described her vision as going beyond a service model, and instead hoped community caring would be seen as a collective work. Similarly, the third participant described her future work being centered in food regardless of need:

> We would still sit down and eat a meal, with a group of people and might not be about them, you know, because they can't afford to feed themselves, but it would be about the importance of sharing a meal together and sharing the conversation that comes with that meal, and sharing the skills that you know their grandmother taught them and how they made the best dumplings.

This participant also described a desire to see community members engaged in asserting more control over their own food system, for example through producing more of their own food. Thus, for three participants what emerged were narratives of community care and community development which in the long-term involved an increase in egalitarian relationships centered both around food and more broadly. This manifested in the present through participants' use of food as a conduit for building relationships and assisting community members to meet various life-needs.

The fourth participant did not explicitly mention love or the purpose of food access as providing care, although she did discuss similar values in her interview. For example, she spoke about believing that all people were basically good and trying their best to do the right thing. She also spoke about basic human rights for all, respect, and inclusivity. Thus, her values of respect

and inclusivity were seen as similar, but different from those of care and common humanity expressed by the other participants. These differences in values could be seen in aspects of her work. For example, she did not discuss her food access service as meeting other needs outside of food provision (e.g., going in tandem with mental or physical-healthcare needs as others had described). Indeed, her organization seemed to be focused quite narrowly on food, as opposed to the others' which had broader mandates around health and community development. While such differences were noted, there were also commonalities between the structural practices her and the other participants were striving for, particularly in the short-term. For example, all participants spoke about advocating for dignified food access.

Dignified food access encompassed practices which considered the social and emotional needs of community members as they accessed food from social services. Such practices included (compiled from all participants): providing choice in the types of food being offered; considering the usefulness and quality of food items offered; giving regardless of and eliminating means testing; providing an inclusive and friendly environment; and altering practices which singled clients out as unlike other community members (e.g., waiting in line in public for food access services, or receiving food in packaging which indicated it was received from food access services). Thus, while values of care and common-humanity were not demonstrated by all participants, what was common amongst them was that providing food was much more than giving calories for someone's survival. The specific type and nature of the food, how it was given, and in what social context was described as central to all participants' intentions for their work.

While all participants were advocates for dignified food access, they identified several barriers to this within their organizations or larger systems they were a part of. For example, a small physical space was described as limiting social opportunities, choice of foods, and requiring

line-ups for service (one participant). Limited budgets or reliance on donations prevented providing clients with their choice of food or stated preferences (all participants). COVID-19 restrictions had also meant that many organizations were forced to offer pre-packaged food parcels, as opposed to providing some food options, choice, or more social engagement (two participants). Prepackaged food and its implications were a significant theme for participants, as further evidenced by the fact that three participants included photos of their current food parcels and discussed how they were trying to adapt or change them to be more dignified. What was clear from conversations with all participants was that they were highly driven by their values. When organizational practices constrained their abilities to conduct work in line with showing care or practicing respect and inclusivity, all participants resisted, advocated for change, and planned for different future practices. These acts of resistance and creativity included: finding alternative income streams to be able to provide clients with specialized foods; creating food donation policies; planning to end food parcels and offer meal programs; repackaging food to be in mainstream or nondescript bags; allowing clients to sort through their parcel and discard or swap items; and eliciting feedback from clients to embed some choice into pre-packaged parcels.

Thus, participants described how their experience of providing food access was highly relational. This seemed to emerge from their values of either care and common-humanity, or inclusivity and respect. While all participants advocated for dignified food access, slight differences in values aligned with different scopes of practice and hopes for the future of their work. For example, those who spoke about care discussed meeting multiple needs through food access programs and participating in community development work which went beyond need.

Importance of Value Congruence

Participant's values were salient in the ways they described their clients and their intentions for how to provide food access (subtheme 1). They also became particularly salient in conversation about the other types of values and beliefs they heard expressed in Thunder Bay, which makes up the second subtheme: *importance of value congruence*. The concept of value congruence emerged as being particularly important in a number of narratives, both as a foundation for their work as a team, and as a mediator in intentions to stay in their role. Conversely, value incongruence resulted in numerous negative work outcomes.

Three participants mentioned encountering ideas, attitudes and values which did not align with theirs (i.e., value incongruence). For example, all three participants described hearing about discrimination or degrading treatment toward community members they supported from the larger community through their work. This was related to stigma. For example, one participant described routinely receiving food donations which were inadequate (e.g., half-eaten), "like what do you think, that people they're hungry, you can give them your garbage? Basically, is what it seems in some cases". Another participant described encountering stigma more broadly in society:

> I've heard things said, and like you definitely see, like, for example on social media in
>
> comment sections and stuff people saying, and using stigmatizing language like druggies,
>
> crackheads, things like that, specifically around folks who use drugs. But also you hear that
>
> around, like, folks who are like housing insecure, as well. And then there's always kind of
>
> like racism imbued in all of that as well. Like anti Indigenous racism, specifically here in
>
> Thunder Bay.

And as stated by the third participant:

I'm afforded a certain level of courtesy. I have those same expectations for my [clients].

Every time a business wants to partner with us, I always say the same thing, you know, I'm

a privileged white woman who walks in and generally gets what she wants, where she goes.

My [clients] don't get the same, we're done. Like it's scorched earth with us. We're kind of,

you know, really adamant that our people be treated right and well, and when they're not,

that's a problem.

In describing such examples, participants visually appeared to be emotional, demonstrating

anger, frustration, sadness and discomfort. It also had an impact, as one participant described, on

how they conducted their work, breaking partnerships if clients were not treated in the spirit of

common-humanity.

While such stories were powerful examples of incongruence in the general public, what

seemed to be the most distressing was encountering stigmatizing attitudes in other service

providers. For one participant this manifested in covert ways:

Not that anyone would explicitly say, or like not, not that people are going around being

like you don't deserve food because, you know, you're a drug user or anything like that, but

I think it just comes up in so many covert ways, and coded ways.

While she did not elaborate on covert messaging, she did describe community members'

testimonials of accessing social services that were perceived to be discriminatory (e.g., shelters,

food banks). Due to this, her organization was aware that many in Thunder Bay were living "off

the land" (i.e., outside), to avoid having to use such services. In response, her team provided food

access in the streets or wherever they found community members in need. Her work in food access

might be understood to be a response to value incongruence, which rendered services

discriminatory and demanded an alternative solution (i.e., her organization).

The two other participants described encountering stigmatizing attitudes in other service providers which were quite overt. This had serious implications on how they experienced their work. For example, both participants described hearing comments such as, "if they're hungry enough they'll eat it", or that they needed to be wary and safeguard against theft and greed from those accessing services. Both participants described hearing such statements at interagency meetings in the city and advocating to view community members differently. The response did not appear to make much headway. This had caused one participant to stop attending those meetings. The other participant described advocating further and seeing an end to certain partnerships because of it. She described strong emotional reactions to this incident, such as anger. This persisted into her home life: "I would go home, and I have to tell you, I had quite the rage about it." Interestingly, one of these participants was the one identified to have the value set of respect and inclusivity, and the other care and common humanity (subtheme 1). Thus, even though there were slight differences between these value sets, both described being disturbed by the same comments encountered in other service providers in Thunder Bay.

For one of these participants, hearing stigmatizing statements (e.g., "if they're hungry enough"), also occurred within her own organization. Similarly, to a desire to leave the interagency meetings, this had caused her to consider leaving her role in her organization. After advocating for her way of seeing clients amongst her team, she described that the stigma had become less prevalent. She related value congruence to feeling "philosophically safe". This demonstrated how important value congruence was in her experience of work (e.g., perception of safety, informing intentions to stay).

Interestingly, this participant was the only one to describe value incongruence within her organization and to have the unique value set (i.e., inclusive versus being in common). Her work

was also seen to have the most structural factors condemned by other participants, such as line

up's, food packaged in ways that indicated it was given by charity, and less feedback from and

relationship with clients. The participant who worked there did express noticing such things and

wanting to change them, but was limited by structural factors (e.g., budget, physical space, COVID

restrictions). She also described at times feeling timid to bring her suggestions to decision makers

who she imagined would express: "well, no, well, we never do, you know, that's not what we do".

This also seemed to work in conjunction with her appraisal that she was fairly new to her role.

That being said, she did describe trying to advocate for her team to see clients more

empathetically, and that she was feeling *philosophically safe* at the time of the interview. She

reported that she would stay committed to the organization if she could remain feeling this way.

Thus, in this narrative the psychological factors of values, value congruence, and perception of

position within the organization worked closely in interaction with organizational policies and

structural factors to produce this participant's experience of work and influence her intentions to

stay.

The other three participants spoke of more harmonious outlooks within their own team.

These participants used "we" statements frequently when describing how their teams' saw clients

in common-humanity or their work as care work. One participant described how this was integral

to the organization, in that they recruited new staff based on values as opposed to skills. While she

described that differences in opinions continued to exist, at the core of the work was a shared value

in seeing others in common humanity:

Skills is something I can teach, but values is a software that your Mama teaches you and

you should come pre-loaded with that software. I'm not interested in teaching you values.

So, yeah, so I I I really like to have staff who who have a kind of a shared view of the

people we serve. It doesn't mean that values don't shift and change over time as we learn

new information and, you know, that sort of thing, but, you know, your overall values of

people, yeah, you got to come preloaded with that. So, and I think that it shows up in

situations like this. There's lots of things that my team and I fight about for sure where we

don't see eye to eye, but, you know, on these types of things, there is a shared shared value

of how people see each other.

Interestingly, this coincided with the three participants who were found to have the

common value set (e.g., common-humanity and care), and whose organizations had broader

mandates which included community development-based approaches.

Lastly, one participant spoke about how value congruence had led to cross-province

partnerships. This had also opened up new funding opportunities. This further illustrates the

importance of value congruence, both within organizations across Thunder Bay, and also more

widely.

Summary of Theme 3

Participants demonstrated two similar value sets surrounding care, common-humanity and

inclusivity. These values were evident in their descriptions of clients, how they conducted their

frontline work, and their hopes for the future of their work. In these ways, most participants

described using food as a facilitator to meet various needs, and most importantly, as a tool for

relational care work. Alongside this, food emerged as a unique tool which could connect us beyond

need.

Multiple participants described encountering incongruent values and views of their clients,

both from the broader community and within the realm of food access across Thunder Bay. Such

participants were acting to push against this in order to change or alter these discourses and their

associated structures. This is seen as aligning with their value sets of common-humanity or inclusivity and respect, as well as social justice and equity (theme 1). What emerged was insight into how the intrapsychic factors of values, value congruence, and personality worked closely in interaction with organizational policies and structural factors, to produce participant's experiences of work. One participant described how this had impacted organizational partnerships. Another participant described value congruence as impacting her intentions to stay in her organization. Interestingly, the only participant to describe value incongruence within her organization, also described the most narrow mandate for their food access program and structural practices the most highly condemned by all participants.

Discussion

This project was framed through an ecotone CCP and CFS framework, which values ecological perspectives and explanations of phenomena as interrelated. As such, I was inspired to create a graphic which might illustrate the findings beyond the discrete themes presented in the Results section. What emerged was rooted in participants' photos, words, and perspectives, inspired by food which connected them all to this project. In answer to the questions *how do frontline food security service providers in Thunder Bay experience their work, and what are the interactions between their intrapsychic factors and processes (e.g., motivations, values, wellbeing), organizational practices and their visions for the future of their work*, I produced the image in Figure 3, which is described below.

Participants and their internal processes are symbolized by the **carrot** in the center of the diagram. The bottom of the image represents the past.

In discussing the experiences of food security service providers, what emerged was the importance of earlier life experiences which individuals brought with them to their work. This

made up **the roots** of their beings and included early childhood experiences and critical times in university. Participants spoke about how these had led to the development of values and ways of thinking. Values that were shared amongst participants were helping out, social justice, inclusivity, common-humanity, and community-care. In concert with their values, participants demonstrated that they were thinking about broad issues, and had been prior to beginning their current position. They were also drawn to working directly with people, where they could see the results of their actions in real-time. This manifested into frontline service, and in particular providing dignified services. Feedback between these two forms of action and their values fed their core: a sense of self and identity (i.e., the **center of the carrot**). These are seen as being mutually reinforcing in an infinity shaped loop, whereby engaging in more action was described as reaffirming their sense of their values and larger purpose.

From their earlier experiences, values, and sense of self also grew their hopes and dreams for their work, which are represented by the **leaves** of the carrot. In the short-term, this included providing dignity through choice, good food options, and social, friendly environments (**short leaves**). In the long-term, this included seeing an end to poverty and needs-based services, and moving toward reciprocal community care (**longer leaves**).

At the same time, participants were not free to move or grow in any direction they chose. Indeed, as the carrot relies on nutrients and space within the **soil**, so too were participants' experiences shaped by structural factors. These included the organizations' types, leadership structures, and funding models (represented as **rocks in the soil**). While lots of participants' energies were channeled towards providing a dignified frontline service (i.e., growing out of the soil), participants also demonstrated how they created opportunities for thinking more broadly and

being reflexive in their approach to food access (i.e., **growing and creating change arrows** which represent their advocacy for changes to funding streams, leadership structures and stigma).

Figure 3.

An Illustration of the Experience of Four Food Security Service Providers.
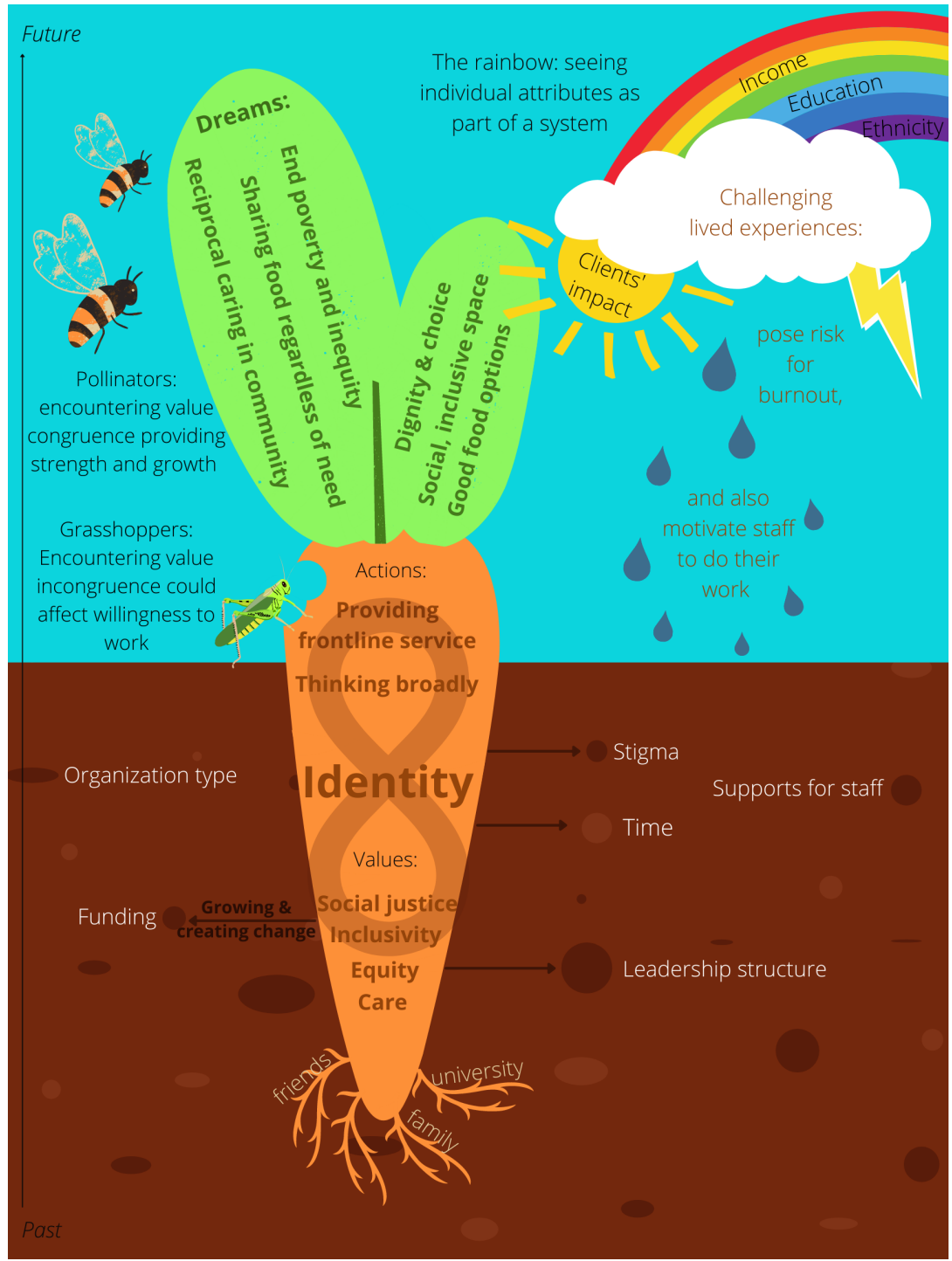
Participants worked within social settings and were part of social networks. Some participants described encountering others who expressed very different values from their own (i.e., value incongruence), for example, espousing stigmatizing or degrading views of their clients. These attitudes caused one participant to consider leaving her organization, and ended meaningful partnerships for another. Thus, value incongruence was seen to have the potential to devastate an individual's involvement in direct service work, should it be left unchecked. While in this metaphor other humans would be depicted as carrots or other vegetables, the clash of values between them (i.e., value incongruence) is depicted as a **grasshopper**. In the image, the process of value congruence is taking a bite out of a participant's growing top, their practice of dignified food services.

Similarly, participants also described encountering those who expressed similar attitudes to themselves on their teams or in other partnerships. The appraisal of perceived value congruence is depicted as **bees and other pollinators**, which are known to provide a necessary function in the growth and development of plants. Encountering common values sets was life-giving for participants and was seen as providing aid to the growth of strong frontline services.

It is worth restating, that the bees and grasshoppers do not represent other people but are meant to depict the congruence or incongruence in value systems and how either appraisal impacted participants and their work.

Lastly, the sky represents the role of lived experiences in the present and future. Frontline roles working with diverse community members were seen as being particularly important for participants. Like taking in **UV light from the sun** to power photosynthesis, they described feelings of fulfillment and purpose in working with people, which fed the core of who they were. Participants also described how encountering suffering in other community members could bring

about sadness, frustration and worry (i.e., like **clouds** blocking out the sun). This is complicated

though, in that some participants acknowledged they themselves had had challenging life

experiences which brought them to the work. Thus, challenging life experiences had a dual quality,

both nourishing this sector with valuable service providers who come with lived experiences of

marginalization (i.e., like the nourishing and necessary **rain**), while also bringing the potential for

increased hardship and burnout (i.e., **lightning**). Certain barriers, such as stigma and other

structural factors, were identified that may keep people with certain lived experiences from joining

certain organizations. This can be seen as the rain falling down within the structure of the soil,

impacting how much it may nourish or reach frontline service providers.

Encountering suffering also led some participants to feelings of guilt. In light of these

feelings, some participants were able to expand from seeing individual qualities of privilege or

oppression to systems of power and inequity. This is illustrated as seeing the **rainbow** as a whole,

as opposed to individual rays of light traveling through water droplets.

All of these experiences, the happenings in the sky and the soil could not be separated from

the carrot, growing and influencing its environment as much as it was influenced by it. Indeed,

participants in this study demonstrated the dynamic and interacting ways that they changed,

altered, and advocated for structural changes and service provision standards. Indeed, the

subthemes described in the results section (e.g., thinking about broad issues, tensions in lived

experiences, values of care) were really working in concert to create the lived experiences of food

access service providers in Thunder Bay. What follows is further discussion on some of the major

findings, in conversation with relevant literature.

The Carrot and the Soil: Role Identity, Meaning and Structural Support

What emerged throughout the interviews with participants were some of the motivating forces for being involved in food access work. Mirroring the quantitative and qualitative studies reviewed, participants in this study described having values of wanting to help others and being motivated by concerns about food insecurity or food systems challenges (Agostinho & Paço, 2012; Horvath, 2018; Mousa & Freeland-Graves, 2017; Rombach, Kang & Bitsch, 2018; Rondeau et al., 2020). Conversely, participants in this study did not speak about an enhancement motivation (e.g., increasing their skills, learning something new), as was found in prior works (Agostinho & Paço, 2012; Mousa & Freeland-Graves, 2017; Rombach, Kang & Bitsch, 2018; Rondeau et al., 2020). This could be because all previous studies found were conducted with volunteer and not paid staff; whereas this study included the voices of both. The participants in this study showed similar motivations across groups (i.e., paid or volunteer). Such a small sample negates the ability to generalize the findings to either group more broadly though. Qualitative methods, however, can illuminate more complex themes and explain them within their narratives, providing deeper insight into the psychological pathways involved (Smith, Flowers & Larkin, 2009).

For example, Horvath's (2018) ethnographic study of a soup kitchen in the U.S. described how humanitarian motivations, or "giving back", were a response to witnessing the suffering of others who were asking for money on the streets. However, when this was further unpacked, participants described being moved to volunteer by guilt about their own social status, and by suspicion and mistrust of giving money to individuals. As a way to mitigate their negative feelings they volunteered for charity. In the present study, while participants had values of wanting to help others - with one participant even titling a photo "Giving Back" - and described acting in response to witnessing suffering, this did not appear to be motivated by guilt (an emotion which was

described in response to their work, and not seen as being related to motivation). In fact, given their values of social justice, common humanity and respect, participants in this study did not endorse a mistrust of individuals, with some participants even working to challenge such views when they encountered them in Thunder Bay. All participants described some positive affective states in response to working and witnessing changes towards their goals (e.g., sense of fulfillment, achievement, purpose), in this way receiving something for their contributions. This pathway, however, appeared to be very different from the guilt management described in Horvath (2018). More narratives within this field are needed to understand the complex and diverse motivational pathways for serving one's community, and their relationships to values.

Meaning & Valued Role Identity

Participants in the current study described their work to be meaningful, providing a sense of fulfillment, purpose, or accomplishment. In their meta-analysis, Allan et al. (2019) defined meaningful work as "the global judgment that one's work accomplishes significant, valuable, or worthwhile goals that are congruent work with one's existential values" (p. 502). This definition may describe the findings in the current study, in that all participants' descriptions of work were deeply connected to their personal values. These did not appear to form during their work experience, and were linked to critical earlier experiences (e.g., early childhood, university). Thus, this work is seen as being much more intimately connected with participant's identities. Indeed, several participants used phrases such as "bigger part of who I am" in describing various aspects of their work.

In the current study participants linked their sense of purpose to various positive effects, such as increasing their commitment, feeling participatory in the community, gratitude for their role, and positive emotions (e.g., pride, joy). Armour and Barton (2019) also found that

volunteering at a foodbank allowed participants to enact a valued role identity and linked this to the positive psychological benefits they experienced from their work. Role identity in this context refers to "definitions of the self in terms of the social roles that one holds and enacts" (Thoits, 2012, pp. 360-361). Studies have shown that the more time spent volunteering, the more participants formed a volunteer role identity, felt needed by others, and thus felt their role was meaningful. This was proposed to increase wellbeing (Thoits, 2012). Indeed, other studies have found that volunteering increased eudemonic wellbeing, or a sense of purpose (Son & Wilson, 2012). And in meta-analyses related to work and meaning, Allan et al. (2019) also found that meaningful work had large correlations with work engagement, commitment and satisfaction, as well as moderate correlations with life satisfaction, meaning and general health. Thus, previous work has demonstrated the links between meaningful work (both paid and volunteer) and wellbeing, which may be mediated by the concept of a valued role identity or more broadly, working toward one's personal values.

While in their structural roles, participants were presumably working toward values-based goals as well (e.g., social justice and equity), they continued to be drawn to frontline service. What seemed to emerge from these narratives is the important role that feedback on their valued role identity played. It is proposed that seeing an immediate result from their actions reinforced their feeling of purpose, as well as their sense of agency in the ability to create change or alleviate suffering. Agency or autonomy is seen as critical to self-determination (e.g., Ryan & Deci, 2020), and linked in meta-analyses to wellbeing (e.g., Ntoumanis et al., 2021) and meaning-making (e.g., Humphrey et al., 2007). In the current study this was seen as being unique to frontline roles and was compared by several participants to their structural or planning work which did not seem to produce these same feelings. This is also thought to be related to participants' comments of

distress at not seeing changes from those in power. It is proposed that by increasing their sense of

agency through acting in their sphere of influence, participants experienced positive benefits and a

larger sense of purpose. While frontline work may in itself be rewarding, organizational factors

were also seen as being important to supporting staff in their enactment of valued roles and pursuit

of values-based goals.

Contextual Factors

When an organization can deliver certain features which support wellbeing and identity

expression, staff may be more committed to their role. One participant in the current study

described that she had applied for other work in the past but it was hard to leave a role which

provided so much meaning and ability to exert change. This participant spoke specifically about

changes to the organization's leadership structure which had increased her own, and other staff's,

sense of wellness. Her narrative once again reflects tenets of Self-Determination theory. In her

case, structural changes may have increased her sense of *competence* in the organization's ability

to succeed and grow, *autonomy* to make decisions which contributed to this growth, and

relatedness or sense of being a team and feeling valued in the group (e.g., see Ryan & Deci, 2020).

In reviewing various trials, Ryan and Deci (2000) posited that certain contextual events (e.g.,

feedback, communications, rewards) can increase feelings of competence, which when paired with

an internal locus of causality (i.e., autonomy), increase intrinsic motivation. This may be further

explained through meta-analytic work by Humphrey et al. (2007) which showed that experienced

meaning at work mediated the relationship between work design characteristics (e.g., autonomy,

feedback, task significance) and work outcomes (e.g., satisfaction, commitment, performance).

Thus, this small qualitative study may provide an illustration of the importance of considering the

organizational structures which support food access staff to experience meaning through their work, and thus increase their commitment and performance.

Future directions

Participants in this study demonstrated that engaging in food access work can be very meaningful. It was seen as affirming valued role identities and allowing staff to enact personal values and work towards important goals. It also highlights one example of how structure within the organization, and its attention to basic psychological needs (e.g., autonomy, competence, and relatedness), may be significant in terms of retention of such individuals. Future research would do well to investigate more thoroughly the elements of self-determination and job characteristics within this field, and to see if in fact they did correlate with positive work outcomes (e.g., intentions to stay, work engagement, low absenteeism) by following participants over time. Any future studies, however, should also consider the active role that staff play in creating meaningful conditions. Indeed, the current study demonstrated that staff were pushing against, redefining, and advocating for structures which would allow them more time for reflexivity and to provide their services in ways that aligned with their values. This narrative account demonstrates how interactional perspectives in work are truly necessary. The next section explores how staff also interacted with others and their own personal value sets in Thunder Bay.

Bees & Grasshoppers: Values and Fit as a Process

Literature reviewed for this thesis identified that value congruence is also an important quality of work, associated with many positive outcomes such as job satisfaction and organizational commitment (Amos & Weathington, 2008; Kristof-Brown et al., 2005; Verquer et al., 2003). Indeed, participants in Thunder Bay highlighted numerous ways that value congruence was critical. For example, participants spoke about creating partnerships, accessing funding, and

even staffing organizations based on value congruence. On the other hand, when values were incongruous, participants spoke about leaving inter-agency meetings, breakdowns in partnerships, and intentions to leave their organization. Thus, in line with previous research, value congruence emerged as an important theme for participants in this study.

Fit as a Process

Value congruence has been examined in I/O psychology in terms of fit theories, such as person-organization fit (Kristof, 1996; Kristoff-Brown et al., 2005; Verquer et al., 2003), with some studies examining how individuals self-select organizations that match their values (Cable & Judge, 1996), and others demonstrating how socialization practices within an organization inculcate staff towards the organizational value-set and alter fit (Cable & Parsons, 2001; Cooper-Thomas et al., 2004). In the current study, one participant spoke about encountering value incongruence within her organization, and this leading to intentions to leave unless she could stay feeling "philosophically safe". This finding cannot be separated from the structural elements of her work, wherein she described more barriers to dignified food access than other participants. While this organization did seem to align with the participant's values more broadly (e.g., addressing inequity through redistribution of goods), it did not seem to align with her sense of social justice, respect, and dignity. This participant described finding ways to advocate for her viewpoints amongst her team, as well as advocating for oppressive structures in the organization to shift. Thus, it is possible that staff whose values are partially aligned with their organization may stay and influence the culture and structures over time, thereby increasing the fit.

Future Directions

While person-organization fit may be important in predicting work outcomes, this narrative provides more depth in understanding what might be an interactional process. This has been a

criticism of fit-theory research, which predominantly fails to investigate fit as a process (Boon & Biron, 2016; Vleugels et al., 2018). Future studies which investigate person-organization fit over time may help to better understand this phenomenon. This finding, however, cannot be separated from the relative power within this narrative (i.e., holding both a frontline and leadership role). Thus, perceptions of one's ability to make change within the organization should also be investigated in relation to fit and intentions to stay.

Interestingly, other qualitative studies on food access providers have described shifting or changing views for some staff over time. This was thought to be related to engaging with community members with different lived experiences, in ways which promoted common-humanity and reduced power differentials (e.g., having coffee together; Dresler & Tutt, 2019; Williams et al., 2016), as well as reading materials provided through their work about structural oppression and clients' lived experiences, and dialogue to explore these matters and challenge one another's preexisting beliefs (Williams et al., 2016). While it seemed that participants in this study came to their work already conscious of systemic issues and with pre-existing values of social justice and common-humanity, their descriptions revealed that some local service providers did not share these views. Future research in Thunder Bay might examine if care-justice transitions, as they were dubbed by Williams et al. (2016), are in fact occurring in food access spaces and what some of the contributing factors are. And for those who come to the work already with such intentions (i.e., participants in this study), it might be beneficial to ask specifically about care-justice transitions to better understand their trajectory (i.e., did a care justice transition occur in another setting prior to their current role?). While participants in the current study pointed to some formative experiences in early childhood or university these were not fully explored.

The Sky: Opportunities for a Transformational Practice

Participants in this study demonstrated in numerous ways that food access work was people work, about meeting various needs both food-related and not. Indeed, one participant even referred to herself as a social worker. Providing food access was seen as highly relational, and practices were underscored by the values participants saw in themselves and in others. Scholars and activists have discussed how social work practices can be used to both regulate and control oppressed people, or to work alongside social movements and processes of change (Fortier & Hon-Sing Wong, 2019; Sinclair, 2004; Thompson, 2002). Some dominant approaches to social work and psychology have followed a medical model, which focus on *treating the individual* who may be seen as passive and dependent (Kagan et al., 2020; Moreau, 1979). Evidence of seeing client's struggles as individual problems has been noted in many studies of social service providers offering food banks or meal programs (e.g., Gokani & Caragata, 2021; Horvath, 2018; Power et al., 2018), and is understood to be part of a neoliberal ideology which promotes individual culpability for oppression and poverty (Harms Smith, 2017). In opposition to this are critical practices such as CCP and structural social work.

Structural social work represents a form of critical practice rooted in similar anti-oppressive values found in CCP (Kagan et al., 2020), whereby individual "problems" are understood to be manifestations of the inequities in society (George & Marlowe, 2005; Moreau, 1997; Närhi & Matthies, 2018). This might be understood as an example of systems thinking (Randle & Stroink, 2018), combined with values of social justice and equity, and a commitment to act on them. In contrast to a traditional psychological or social work practice, where an intervention is concerned with treating the individual, structural social work involves working to dismantle oppressive structures and address root causes (George & Marlowe, 2005; Moreau,

1979). While participants in the current study were recruited and asked to document how they conceptualized their *frontline* food access work, they were drawn to discussions of broader issues (e.g., theme 1). Indeed, within critical community psychology or structural social work, broader systems and frontline practices are intimately connected.

Structural social work and CCP can be seen as a simultaneous two-pronged approach, in one way working outside of the system (i.e., radical structuralism) to address root causes, while also working within the system to alleviate individual distress (i.e., radical humanism) and link individuals and families to broader political groups (George & Marlowe, 2005; Moreau, 1979). This is understood to be informed by Friere's work, advocating for connecting those who are marginalized and raising critical consciousness to illuminate the structural, as opposed to personal, failings (Kagan et al., 2020). "The guiding principle for structural social work practice is that everything we do must in some way contribute to the goal of social transformation. This does not mean that the legitimate, here-and-now immediate needs of people are ignored." (Mullaly, 1993, p. 153, in Thompson, 2002). Thus, such authors highlight that when frontline work is done in this two-pronged fashion, it can be transformational. This type of frontline work can be understood as part of broader systems-level work.

Systems Thinking and Situating Privilege

Lines of thinking akin to structural social work or CCP have been found in studies about frontline food access service providers. For example, Williams et al. (2016) describes narratives of food bank employees, including those who want to be put out of business, attending to immediate needs while also doing advocacy work around structural change to end food insecurity. Participants in the current study also demonstrated such themes in their narratives. One participant in particular highlighted her intention to deindividualize what are seen as personal problems. This

was understood as a form of resistance to predominant capitalist narratives. Within systems of

oppression, this participant also placed herself and her privileges (theme 2). Scholars have noted

that we must consider privilege as well as disadvantage if we want to make radical changes toward

anti-oppression. For example:

> Disappearing privilege from discussions of health equity is an important shortcoming,
>
> because the framing of a problem sets the universe of possible solutions that will follow. If
>
> inequity is framed exclusively as a problem facing people who are marginalized, then
>
> responses will only attempt to address the needs of these groups, without redressing the
>
> social structures causing this disadvantage, or the complicity of the corollary groups who
>
> receive unearned (and unfair) advantage from these same structures (Nixon, 2019, p. 2).

This has been attributed to Freire, once again, who wrote about how "those who suffer

injustice and subjugation as well as those who perpetrate injustice and subjugation are

dehumanized" (George & Marlowe, 2005). Thus, particularly for one participant, seeing herself as

part of systems, and not separate from that which impacts other community members,

demonstrates the mindset of radical food access work. This mindset had also taken form in her

praxis. For example, in her organization's explicit choice not to separate client versus service

provider in their language. It also manifested into her visions for the future of her work which

included seeing all community members becoming involved in caring for one another in

reciprocity.

While other participants did not describe such explicit examples of radical frontline service

provision, they did hint at it in a number of ways. This included their descriptions of systemic

issues and being engaged in work with broader-level impacts (theme 1), seeing themselves as

being in common with their clients (theme 3), and being conscious of their privilege (theme 2).

Two of these participants also described their visions for the future of their work as moving

beyond need and toward community development (theme 3), and one described wanting to see a

foodbank movement that included the voices of service-users (theme 2). A more in depth look at

how participants described including those with lived experience follows.

Including those with Lived Experience

A central tenet of a transformational practice is creating structures to share power and

lessen the social distance between "provider" and "client" (George & Marlowe, 2005; Kagan et al.,

2020; Moreau, 1979). Such programs can be used to "dissolve social hierarchies, to make public

services accountable and to ensure that everyone is treated with the respect that each human being

deserves" (Donnison, 1998, p. 67, in Thompson, pp.717-718). In the disabilities movement, the

"nothing about us without us" slogan is used to express the rights we all have to ownership and co-

creation about matters which impact us (e.g., Charlton, 1998)*.* In mental health, the integration of

peer support programs alongside traditional methods has become almost mainstream. In the

broader food movement, food sovereignty is a term defined by the peasant movement *La Via*

Campesina, which centers locals and food producers in democratically determining their own food

systems - as opposed to a corporate or top-down determination (Food Secure Canada, 2011).

In studies related to food access service provision, Dresler and Tutt (2019) described a

client-to-volunteer transition as being explicitly incorporated to reduce power differentials and

tackle stigma related to food insecurity; whereas Cohen et al. (2017) found that not offering such

transitions kept in place an oppressive social order. In the current study, while three participants

mentioned the involvement of people with lived experience providing services, only one person

mentioned that this was an explicit attempt by the organization. While this was not discussed in

detail, this participant described pride around this topic, having had participated in creating this

shift within the organization. She also reported that this went in tandem with structural factors, such as programs to support and retain individuals with lived experience. For this participant, this shift was related to increasing power in decision-making for those who are personally affected by the issue[2]. This can be seen as a type of partnership-based model of working alongside those with lived experience (Thompson, 2002).

Some barriers were discussed, however, about including those with lived experience in food access provision in Thunder Bay. The aforementioned participant described that societal stigma kept some individuals from wanting to identify themselves as having lived experience. Another participant described recruitment through social networks, and a homogenous staff group. What may be illustrated through these case examples is the need for both structural factors and cultural ones (i.e., reduction in stigma) to be integrated into organizations wanting to include those with lived experience in food access work.

The findings of this study also highlighted that providing food access services was hard. Services were not merely about food, and participants spoke about seeing community members suffer from the byproducts of intersecting forms of oppression (e.g., dying from preventable chronic illness, sleeping outside in the winter, considering suicide, suffering with addictions). While largely participants spoke about a sense of purpose, fulfillment and pride, they also described their work as exhausting, overwhelming, relentless and hard. Thus, this paper highlights a need to support food access workers, and in particular those who may be more sensitive to trauma and burnout - as was highlighted by one participant in particular. It is noted that this was not the participant who spoke about a program to recruit and retain individuals with lived

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[2] It is noted that this was not the same participant to demonstrate systems thinking in relation to privilege described above.

experience. Food access programs might consider more deeply how they support their staff based on such stories. The literature on organizational secondary trauma, sometimes referred to as vicarious traumatization or compassion fatigue, may prove useful to develop strategies for this sector (e.g., Bell et al., 2003; Dunkley & Whelan, 2006; Figley & Ludick, 2017; Hesse, 2002).

Working with Indigenous Peoples

Two participants reported that most clients they came into contact with were Indigenous. For one of these participants there was a strong goal to increase Indigenous representation in her organization[3]. This must be contextualized with an understanding of the relationships between social work and settler colonialism. Social workers and social work programs have been used explicitly by the Canadian government to assimilate and control Indigenous peoples (CASWE, 2017; McCauley & Matheson, 2018), which many Indigenous and non-Indigenous scholars argue is far from behind us. This is evident in both discourse analysis of policy, practice and training, and structural factors, such as funding allocations (e.g., Fortier & Hon-Sing Wong, 2019; see Longman, 2018, for an interview with Raven Sinclair). This also relates explicitly to food access work. Food has been used as a tool to control and oppress Indigenous peoples by the government, including abhorrent and inadequate food at residential schools (e.g., TRC, 2015b, "Food: Always Hungry" section) and the outlawing and erosion of cultural food practices (e.g., Stroink & Nelson, 2012). This, once again, has been criticized for continuing in the 21st century through programs such as Nutrition North and state-regulations on country food access and distribution (e.g., Owen, n.d.; Ingaged Creative Productions, 2020). While all participants in the current study identified as being white, only one participant described settler colonialism and working toward decolonial efforts explicitly (albeit outside of her food access role). The other three participants, to varying

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[3] This was not the participant to describe programs to recruit and retain individuals with lived experience.

degrees, described projects working with Indigenous partners, or trying to improve services for this group. While this was not explicitly asked of participants, it was noted that the other narratives did not include conversations of how much power they hold as individuals and how this must be considered, particularly when working with Indigenous clients. This is understood to be another key component of a transformational frontline service. A gap in addressing settler colonialism has been identified in food movements, specifically in Thunder Bay in recent years (Bohunicky et al., 2021).

Future Directions

While some aspects of systems-level food access work were mentioned by all participants, it is not clear the full extent to which such staff, or staff more broadly in this sector, are enacting a critical, structural practice. It is also unknown how much their intentions may be actually translating to "clients'" sense of empowerment. Future work in Thunder Bay, in Canada and abroad, might investigate specifically how frontline food access workers are engaging in both humanitarian and structural work, and how radical their attempts are by using the theoretical frameworks of structural social work or CCP. Such projects might also use psychometric measures of systems thinking (e.g., Thibodeau et al., 2016; Randle & Stroink, 2018), and values (e.g., Clary et al., 1998/1999) to investigate their interactions, and compare their enactment within various structural environments - looking for constraining and facilitating factors. Future work in Thunder Bay may also be conscientious of the risk for burn-out in this sector, particularly for those who are providing service and have a history of trauma.

Limitations

In choosing a qualitative method with in-depth interviews with a limited number of participants, it is not possible to produce generalizable themes which may be applied across all

contexts, nor applied in a quantitative manner in comparison to existing literature. Instead, it was my intention to explore and provide interpretation of the complexities of the psychological experiences taking place in food access provision during this specific time and context. Convenience sampling also has limitations as it is inherently biased by the researcher's connections and network. Specifically, it is noted that the members of my recruitment team, including myself, Dr. Stroink, Dr. Levkoe and our key informants all hold values of social justice and equity. This perhaps precluded speaking with anyone who did not share these values. I also recognize that this team was more aware of individuals holding leadership as well as frontline roles. While this was not the intention when the research question was created, it inevitably impacted the findings. Thus, while efforts were made to reduce bias, such as deliberately including reflexivity and presenting it in the findings, and consulting with the committee and broader community, I recognize that my own views and those of my committee cannot be disentangled from the meanings derived from the project.

There are also limitations regarding the full expression of IPA and photovoice in this thesis. While I remained committed to the values and philosophies of both methodologies, the risk of potential impact on participant's job security precluded reporting full narrative accounts, as is recommended in IPA (Smith, Flower, & Larkin, 2009). It had been my intention to present the results in a narrative style until I began to analyze the data and realized that in removing all identifying information their narratives became hollowed out and meaningless. This realization meant that results had to be summarized and presented in a thematic fashion. While I attempted to convey unique aspects of participant's experiences within their context, this could not be fully realized within this format. While some of the benefits of the IPA method were certainly lost due to this circumstance, I retained this methodology throughout the thesis in the hopes that my labour-

intensive interpretive phenomenological data analysis provided rich detail and nuance. The IPA methodology had also informed the development and creation of the project (e.g., development of the question, data collection methods), and thus it felt important to retain it in the thesis.

Similarly, due to concerns about the confidentiality of participants, as well as concerns regarding sharing organizational materials without their consent, this study was designed in such a way that photos were not shared outside the research team. While this may not be a traditional photovoice project, the continued belief in the values of photovoice were retained, for example, in its ability to allow participants to determine the topics of interest and to provide an alternative means for self-expression (Balmer et al., 2015; Wang & Burris, 1997). I also hoped that Part 1 of the study, or collecting images, allowed participants to begin considering their experience before the interview began, thus enhancing the quality of the data collected during their interviews (see, within Data Analysis, Meaning-Making Prior to Data Collection section). Similarly, while no formal action component has been disclosed during this report, an action prompt was included in all interviews with participants. This has two potential benefits. First, it may have provided an opportunity for participants to consider their own agency within systems, and to spur reflection and possible action on their part within their spheres of influence. Second, it provided an opportunity for participants to share with the research team what they would like to see come from this project. Indeed, once the required components for the master's thesis are complete, I intend to follow-up with participants in order to ascertain what might be feasible and useful to them at that time. Some of their initial thoughts included pamphlets that they might share with clients, or presentations to their organization's board of directors. Thus, while a more traditional photovoice approach was not followed, I believe I retained many of its essential features given the context and that it strengthened the project substantially.

Implications

While this thesis cannot say definitely "this is the experience of all food security service providers in Thunder Bay", through highlighting an in-depth account of some of its voices it points to several important implications. This includes those for service providers or those concerned with addressing food security through community interventions, as well as for researchers and the scientific literature.

Recommendations for Food Security Service Organizations

The findings of this thesis point to a number of important implications for practitioners, policy-makers and others who may be concerned with addressing food insecurity in contexts similar to Thunder Bay. First, it reinforces the notion of Cloke and colleagues (2016), which is that emergency or community food security services have immense potential to provide transformational spaces, while more structural changes take place to address the root causes of food insecurity. In fact, this study highlights that frontline staff may also want to be involved in this structural work. As such, it is recommended that food security services provide staff with as many opportunities as possible to work with a two-pronged approach: both providing radical frontline services - which connect marginalized individuals to one another, increase systems thinking, and reduce power differentials, highlighting commonality and care - and to address structural deficits. Even more beneficial might be finding ways to weave in the parts of frontline service that staff so crave into structural work that were pointed to by participants in this study (e.g., seeing immediate results, seeing changes manifest in relationships with clients). This is seen as being beneficial for retaining equity-focused staff and for providing the best possible frontline services to clients.

While one study participant highlighted that their staff are hired based on value congruence with the organization, I believe there are merits to including a diverse range of staff in food security services. While organizations must determine cut-off's and requirements for onboarding, which protect clients and other staff, I think it is important to consider how we can keep lines of communication open with those who may not yet be equity-minded, and to provide opportunities to increase care-justice transitions wherever possible. Organizations with capacity to do so, may consider those factors found to be facilitative of care-justice transitions in the literature. These include: highlighting client's narratives, circulating evidence of the structural causes of poverty and food insecurity, and finding space to come together to discuss the underlying beliefs held by diverse groups of service providers (Dresler & Tutt, 2019; Williams et al., 2016).

This study also highlights the important finding that staff may be vulnerable to burn-out in this sector. Indeed, food security services do not entail merely the delivery of meals. Clients coming to access services were dealing with a breadth of issues, and participants in this study described being impacted by the stories they heard. For some, this had resulted in difficulty continuing in the work. This points to a need to consider how organizations, and the community more generally, supports staff working in these spaces. This is seen as being particularly relevant to organizations looking to hire those with lived experience.

Implications for Research

This study also offers a number of critical areas for future research, which have been highlighted in the "Future Directions" sections in the discussion. Specifically in Thunder Bay, future partnerships with community-based research teams might investigate in larger trials how variables such as values, systems thinking and organizational structures are working together to create food access spaces, and what is being done elsewhere to promote dignity and inclusion.

More broadly, this study highlights the need for process and interactional models of research in organizational contexts. Indeed, while participants reinforced many previous research findings related to values, meaning and motivation at work, they were also sharing narratives of changes over time. Participants recounted being both recipients of, as well as actors in, changing work contexts and their own experiences. Thus, future research in the food security sector, or more broadly with service providers, is recommended to use mixed-methods and multiple time points in their designs.

Lastly, this project took a unique methodological approach to research. While some other studies have combined photovoice and IPA (e.g., Wilde et al., 2019), none have done so with the confidentiality requirements of this project. Future research might continue to explore the intersection of both approaches and what they have to offer one another, particularly in unique applied contexts.

Conclusion

This project sought to explore the questions: how do frontline food security service providers in Thunder Bay experience their work, and what are the interactions between their intrapsychic factors and processes (e.g., motivations, values, wellbeing), organizational practices and their visions for the future of their work? In doing so, it found that food access workers held deep seeded values of social justice, equity, care and common humanity. Participants also described that while they were engaged in frontline service provision, they knew that their services alone could not address broader-systemic challenges facing community members. These views were rooted in critical moments, such as early childhood experiences and university learning. Their ways of thinking and values emerged in resistance to work structures which at times constrained their ability to show community members the care or respect they wanted. In response, these food

access staff were engaged in creatively making workarounds and planning for how to conduct their roles in ways that aligned with their values. Participants spoke about this work as part of who they were, and indeed, acted as though it was a reflection of them personally.

Many aspects of participant's descriptions pointed to radical understandings of service provision, demonstrating the transformational potential for this sector. Future work in Thunder Bay might further explore how structural or radical practice tenets are being applied to frontline service provision, and the barriers to more fully enacting them.

At the same time, participants demonstrated that their work would go on, past the need for food access programs altogether. Indeed, some participants were actively engaged in planning and dreaming of times when they would engage with community in a space beyond need. For some, food emerged as a unique aspect of both service and this collective future. Indeed, food is the medicine that we can all count on taking each day, long after poverty has ceased. It connects us to our cultures and traditions, to each other and the Earth. In this way, food access workers may see themselves as even-more critical. Holding the opportunity to share this message, and build community based on connection and care. As the Australian Aboriginal activist Lilla Watson has said: "If you have come to help me, you are wasting your time. If you have come because your liberation is bound up with mine, then let us work together." (Lilla, n.d.). Indeed, it is time for all of us "service providers" to consider our stake in the matter, and what we might have to gain in ending food insecurity as well.

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Appendix A: Recruitment text

To be used in emails or verbally.
Text will be adapted to address individual participants.

Email subject line: Request for participation in research study to explore your experience of food security work.

Dear [name of participant],

I am contacting you about participating in a research study titled **Exploring the Experiences of Frontline Food Security Service Providers in Thunder Bay, Ontario.** This research seeks to explore your experience of your work in order to understand services addressing community need and your own experience being part of this system. Results from the study are intended to inform conversations about how to best address the issue of food insecurity both in our community, and abroad. I am completing this project as part of my Master's degree at Lakehead University.

Your participation in this study would involve collecting images (4-5 max; could be photographs, screenshots) which symbolize your experience of work, and then participating in an interview (approx. 1 hour long). The images you choose will guide our conversation. Your identity would remain confidential in any results and your participation is completely voluntary.

If you are interested in participating, please respond to this email or contact me by phone to receive more information about the study.

Sincerely,

B. Mackenzie Barnett
MA Clinical Psychology Student
Department of Psychology
Lakehead University
bbarnet1@lakeheadu.ca
226-926-4742

**Understanding the Experiences of Frontline Food Security Service Providers
in Thunder Bay, Ontario**

Dear potential participant,

Thank you for your interest in this research project. Your time and help are truly appreciated. This information letter provides a brief overview of the research and outlines what you can expect including benefits and risks, and how the data will be handled and used. Please feel free to ask questions at any point; contact details are at the end of the document.

What is this research about?

This research seeks to explore your experience of your work, in order to better understand the factors involved in the unique contexts of frontline service provision for those experiencing food insecurity. Results from the study are intended to inform conversations about how to best address food insecurity both in our community, and abroad.

What is being requested of me?

You are being asked to participate in this study because you have a valuable perspective of how food security services are provided and perhaps ideas for how to build more community resilience. As an individual engaging in this work, we would like to invite you to participate in a two-part process:.

1) You will be invited to collect images (4-5 max; could be pictures you already have, taking new pictures or taking screenshots) over a one week period using your own camera, phone or other device. These images can be of anything you think would help another person to understand how you think, feel and understand your work and your industry. These photos can be symbolic (for example, the sky may look like your mood at work). Images will be uploaded to a confidential Google Drive, accessible only to the research team. You will be provided with reminders over the week.
**Due to COVID-19, photos or images should only be taken or collected from within your own personal space. We must all follow regional restrictions and guidelines. We do not want anyone going places or moving in ways that might put them at any increased risk.

2) After one week, you will be invited to a Zoom interview. The research team will provide you with a link, which requires you to have stable internet access. Interviews will take

approximately 45-90 minutes, and will explore your experience of work beginning with looking at your images.

Your identity would remain confidential, results will be published anonymously, and participation is completely voluntary. You may refuse to answer any questions and can withdraw from the study at any time without facing any negative consequences.

What are the benefits and risks?

The benefits of your participation are an opportunity to share your perspective and experience "on the ground". We hope this research will inform researchers, communities and organizations about some of the realities of providing food security services in Thunder Bay; what is working well and what could be improved upon, from service providers' perspectives.

There are also some potential risks involved. We understand that speaking about your work can put you in a vulnerable position. In order to safeguard your identity, all of your images and interview materials will be kept confidential, accessible only to the research team. The results of the study will also be anonymized so that you or the organization where you work cannot be identified.

Speaking about our experiences of work can also be challenging and at times bring up feelings of distress or discomfort. You may refuse to answer any question during the interview, and may end the interview at any time. Should you experience some further distress or wish to speak about your feelings related to your work with a trained mental health professional, we have provided some resources at the end of this letter. These will also be provided before the interview.

What will you do with what I tell you?

Your identity and that of the organization you represent will remain anonymous. In other words, nothing you say will be attributed to you or the organization you represent. Every effort will be made to remove identifying characteristics in all reports of the project's results. Your position and organization will be described in generic terms, for example "participants worked in organizations which offered the following types of services: hot meal programs, vouchers…". Only members of the research team will have access to the data, including the images, audio-recording, consent form, supplemental notes and any other identifiable materials related to you and your organization. During the study, all data will be stored on a password-protected computer. Once the study has concluded, all data will be stored in a secure office space in Lakehead University's Department of Psychology and destroyed a minimum of five years after the completion of the research.

Findings will be published as part of B. Mackenzie Barnett's Master's of Psychology Thesis as well as in a summary report shared with participants, popular articles and peer-reviewed publications. They will also be shared at both academic and community-based conferences and gatherings. We would also like your input on how and where to disseminate the findings in a meaningful way.

You are free to withdraw from the study at any time. Once you have completed your interview, however, we will not be able to withdraw your data. At this point, data will be de-identified and stored with other participant's data, and it may not be possible to distinguish your responses from theirs.

How can I learn about the findings?

If you are interested, a summary report of the results will be sent to the email you provide in the consent form after the project's completion (anticipated fall 2021). The research team also intends to send you notifications of future presentations and/or publications this way. Once again, your input on how to share these findings is invaluable. Any future collaboration in sharing these results would be greatly welcomed.

If you have any questions or concerns, please contact **B. Mackenzie Barnett** at bbarnet1@lakeheadu.ca.

Thank you again for your time and contribution,
B. Mackenzie Barnett
MA Clinical Psychology Student
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This study has been approved by Lakehead University Research Ethics Board. If you have any questions or concerns about this study, please contact Dr. Mirella Stroink at mstroink@lakeheadu.ca. If you have questions related to the ethics of the research and would like to speak to someone outside of the research team, please contact Sue Wright at the Research Ethics Board at 807-343-8283 or research@lakeheadu.ca.

Mental Health Resources

Please know that most services which were previously offered in person, have moved online or over the phone due to COVID-19. Please contact them or check their websites in order to have the most up to date information on their services.

Thunder Bay Counselling
Free, "talk-in" (phone) counseling during
COVID-19
Monday-Friday
(807) 700-0090
https://www.tbaycounselling.com/

Dilico Anishinabek Family Care
Walk-in counselling, Tuesdays 1pm to 7pm
Dilico Heath Park Site, 1115 Yonge Street
(807) 624-5818
http://www.dilico.com

ConnexOntario
Call about any mental health or addiction
concern. They can support you to find the right
service, across Ontario.
(866) 531-2600
https://www.connexontario.ca/en-ca/

Appendix C: Consent form

**Understanding the Experiences of Frontline Food Security Service Providers
in Thunder Bay, Ontario**

Your signature below indicates the following:

- I have read and understood the information letter
- I agree to participate
- I understand the potential risks and benefits
- I understand that my participation in this study is voluntary, that I can withdraw from the study at any time (although once my interview is complete, I cannot withdraw my responses), and can refuse to answer any question without any negative consequences
- I have had the opportunity to ask questions and have received satisfactory responses
- I have received a copy of the information letter for my own records
- The data I provide will be securely stored at Lakehead University for a minimum of 5 years following completion of this project
- I understand that the results of this study may be distributed in academic journals, conference presentations and other publications
- I will remain anonymous in any publications and presentations of research findings and all potential identifying information will be kept confidential

Do you consent to the interview session being audio and video-recorded?   ☐ Yes ☐ No

Would you like to receive a summary report of the research findings?   ☐ Yes ☐ No

Email: _____

I am fully aware of the nature and extent of my participation in this project as stated above

_____   _____   _____
Participant name (printed)   Participant signature   Date

This study has been approved by Lakehead University Research Ethics Board. If you have any questions or concerns about this study, please contact Dr. Mirella Stroink at mstroink@lakeheadu.ca). If you have questions related to the ethics of the research and would like to speak to someone outside of the research team, please contact Sue Wright at the Research Ethics Board at 807-343-8283 or research@lakeheadu.ca.

Appendix D: Guidelines for part 1 of the study

□   Information letter and consent form reviewed
□   Consent obtained
□   Participant asked if they have any questions

Review the following document with participants and give them a copy before they begin part 1 of the study.

Part 1 of the study: Understanding the Experiences of Frontline Food Security Service Providers in Thunder Bay, Ontario.

For Part 1 of the study, we invite you to collect images (4-5 max; could be pictures you already have, taking new pictures or taking screenshots) using your own camera, phone or other device.

These images can be of anything you think would help another person to understand how you think, feel and understand your work and your industry.

These photos can be symbolic (for example, the sky may look like your mood at work; a rock or shadow might remind you of your coworkers or clients). These images will help us to unpack your experience together during your interview.

We will send you a link to a secure Google Drive, where you can upload your images with a caption.

How to create or capture images:

● **Due to COVID-19** we ask that all images be collected from within your own personal space, so that you are not moving about in other spaces or in ways which could put you at any increased risk.

● Instead of photographs, you may also capture your experience or thoughts using other types of images. These could include **screenshots of things you see on the internet. Please be conscious not to share any shots of information or documents from your work which would not be appropriate to share with the general public**.

What to capture:

● You might consider how you would describe your work, through images, to someone who has no understanding of what you do, how you do it, or how you feel or think about it.

● We are interested in your unique experience and insights. Images do not need to be "beautiful" or "artistic", so long as they are meaningful or represent something for you.

● You might consider multiple aspects of your work.

● You might consider some of the challenges and strengths you perceive in your role, how it is structured, and perhaps the field of services for food security more generally. What is working well and what could be improved?

● **Please do not include any personal photographs of other people.** You can include photographs of yourself. If choosing photos from the internet, you may include "public images" which include others.

Steps for the research team:

1. I will send you reminders over the week to capture or collect some images.

2. I will send you a link to a secure Google Drive, where you can upload your images and captions.

3. After one week, I will send you an invitation to set up an interview.

4. Your images and ideas will guide the interview and our conversation together. I will look them over before we meet.

Before you being Part 1 of the study:

❏ Do you have any questions about this part of the study?

❏ Are the recommendations clear that we do not expect you to take photos **at** your work? **Due to COVID-19, all photos and images should be collected from within your own personal space.**

❏ In what method would you like reminders to collect images over the one week period (i.e., email, text, phone call)?

Appendix E: Interview guide

☐　　Participant asked if they have any questions
☐　　Consent obtained to begin recording

1. Would you begin by telling me a little bit about where you work and what some of your responsibilities there are?

2. Based on images:

   a. **What do you s̲ee here, or is described here?** Describe what I am looking at in this image. Why did you choose to capture this?

   b. **What's really h̲appening here?** What phenomenon or lived experience does your image capture? What is happening in this image that I cannot see? Does this represent a potential problem or strength?

   c. **How does this relate to o̲ur lives?** How does it relate to your experience? How about others' experience, for example clients, coworkers, management, or the broader community?

   d. **If there is a problem or strength shown here, w̲hy does it exist?**
      i. Is this problem or strength related to or impacting factors unique to you? (for example, your wellbeing, your values or motivation to work in this field)
      ii. Is this problem or strength related to structural factors, for example processes within your workplace, organization or society?
      iii. Are there other problems or strengths related to your experience of work which are not captured in your images?

   e. **What can we d̲o about this?**
      i. How could the problem(s)/strength(s) we have discussed be improved or further explored?
      ii. How do you envision the future of this sector, in the most ideal sense?
      iii. What can we do about what we have discussed using this research project?
         ○ Would you like to share the results of this project?
         ○ If so, with who? In what form?

3. Demographics
   a. How old are you?
   b. How do you identify in terms of gender?

c. In terms of ethnicity?
d. What would you call your position across organizations in the city? Is there a broader term for what you do?

Appendix F: Questions to Guide Analysis

Research Questions*

Ask: How do frontline food security service providers in Thunder Bay experience their work? What are the interactions between their intrapsychic factors and processes (e.g., motivations, values, wellbeing), organizational practices and their visions for the future of their work?

* This was moved to the top of the document for the second participant.

Reflexivity
Epistemological

Ask: "How does the research question define and limit what can be found? How does the study design and method of analysis affect data and its analysis? If the research questions were defined differently, how would this affect the understanding of the phenomenon under investigation?" (Pietkiewicz & Smith, 2014, p. 7)

Personal
Ask: "how might personal characteristics of the interview, such as gender, age, social status, affect the rapport with the participant" (Pietkiewicz & Smith, 2014, p. 12)

Ask: how and where were you adding to power dynamics, adding to the findings' meaning or interpretation? (Finlay, 2002).

Latent to Manifest content (example in Smith 2018, p. 175)

Ask: What are participants saying? What does it mean?

"Experiential meaning - thus is for a subject, of something, in a field"
(Taylor, 1985, pp.21-3 in Smith, 2018, p. 169)

Ask:
● For who?
● Of what? (e.g., there is a description, and this person's description)
● In what context? (e.g., occurs in relation to other things)

Typology of meaning (Smith, 2018, p. 167-8)
Ask:
1. What does that mean (literal - linguistic definition)

2. What does she mean (pragmatic/textual - puzzle), "what does this *actually* mean?"
3. What does it mean (experiential - significance)**
4. What does it mean for my identity (existential - significance)
5. What does my life mean (existential - purpose)

The density of focus for IPA will be strongest for level 3, according to Smith (2018). "Experiential significance of the thing that's happening. Indeed, that's the centre of gravity for IPA" (Smith, 2018, p. 168). Although we must understand levels 1 and 2 in order to derive level 3. More rarely but possible, is that questions about the experiential meaning can also migrate toward matters of identity and the meaning of life itself (Smith, 2018).